GENDER, AGE AND CONFLICT:
ADDRESSING THE DIFFERENT NEEDS OF CHILDREN

Save the Children

Cover photo: Selina*, fled Myanmar with her family when their village was attacked and they are now living in a makeshift camp in Cox's Bazar district, Bangladesh.

Photo: GMB Akash / Panos Pictures / Save the Children

*names have been changed throughout the report to protect identities

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BACKGROUND

"The hardest part of being a girl is going to the well to get water. It is a very long distance."

Robina, 9

Robina, 9, lives in rural Uganda. After her best friend was abducted, tortured and kills while fetching water alone, Robina now collects water with her friend Charity. Save the Children is helping ensure girls like Robina are safe and feel safe, including through our "Buddy System" that pairs up girls to collect water together.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This study was commissioned by Save the Children Canada as part of its commitments to gender equality and to protecting children in conflict. It seeks to identify:

- The gender dimensions of the six grave violations committed against children in conflict-affected areas.
- How some grave violations expose or impact children differently depending on their gender.
- Prevailing socio-cultural norms, perceptions and understandings of gender identity.
- The variable establishment, evolution and enforcement of international norms and standards for the protection of children in armed conflict – and the potential gender-based drivers behind this.[1]

In addition to these primary guiding questions, the possible intersectionality of factors such as context, disability, religion, race and ethnicity, as well as Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)[2] are brought to the forefront whenever there is evidence to allow for this.

This report provides an overarching gender analysis of the available data sets, policies and practices, while also highlighting any gaps. It serves as a point of departure for the formulation of recommendations and potential ways forward in programming, advocacy, and data collection for field practitioners, donors and the wider humanitarian community. It indicates future areas of research that will be required to ensure a more in-depth understanding of the diversity of ways in which conflict impacts the lives of children depending on their gender and other inter-related factors.

Given the absence of systematic gender- and age-disaggregated data this study takes the form of an initial scoping exercise. Primary research at the country level would be necessary to fully address these data gaps.

This study was conducted between December 2018 and November 2019, employing the following methodology:

Desk-based review: Available literature from relevant sources were consulted, including:

- UN reporting mechanisms. This was primarily the Secretary-General's annual and country-specific reports on Children and Armed Conflict, and annual reports from complementary protection agendas under the Security Council such as Women, Peace and Security and Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict;

- Case files from the International Criminal Court;[3]

- Reports and mandates from independent investigations under the purview of the UN Human Rights Council. This included the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar,[4] Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen,[5] as well as those under the UN Security Council such as the Panel of Experts on Yemen,[6] and those stemming from the UN General Assembly such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) on the Syrian Arab Republic,[7] amongst others;

- Research reports, published articles, and grey literature – especially those including children's own views and experiences. Sources included Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UNICEF and UNICEF/Innocenti, All Survivors Project, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, the International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and Save the Children itself, amongst others;

- Media reports.

Key Informant Interviews: A joint identification of key informants internal and external to Save the Children was undertaken to seek out a diversity of experiences and perspectives. Key informants included representatives from UN agencies, and international NGOs, covering technical and advocacy advisors, field practitioners, international criminal justice investigators, academics and government diplomats. Semi-structured interviews based on the agreed research questions gathered insights not necessarily available in existing publications. To ensure the confidentiality of key informants, all individual contributions have been anonymised. Identifying details, such as role or organisation, are not provided where information presented could be attributed to individuals. Where information is publicly available, a full citation to source material has been included

Validation: Oversight and orientation were provided by an internal Steering Committee from Save the Children. Preliminary findings were shared with key stakeholders before finalisation of this report, allowing for feedback and confirmation of the analysis and recommendations.

Olha*, 4, almost lost her life when she picked up a mine thinking it was a whistle. She had to travel 4 hours to reach the nearest functioning hospital. The shrapnel in her liver, bladder and parts of her stomach cannot be removed and she will live with this for the rest of her life. Save the Children provides Mine Risk Education classes to thousands of children along the contact line in Eastern Ukraine, to prevent Children becoming victims of unexploded ordinance.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

- **Cisgender:** A joint identification of key Refers to people who are not transgender. A cisgender person's gender identity corresponds with the sex that was assigned to them at birth.

- **Gender-based violence:** This encompasses violence that is directed at an individual based on their biological sex, gender identity or perceived lack of adherence to socially defined norms of masculinity and femininity. Violence against people based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression (SOGIE) is a form of gender-based violence.

- **Gender expression:** External manifestations of gender, expressed through one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behaviour, voice or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine or feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture.

- **Gender identity:** Refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

- **Gender non-conforming:** People whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity or femininity. Not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming. Gender fluid, queer or non-binary are terms which are often used to describe a person who does not identify with the male/female binary but somewhere outside or between. Some prefer to use pronouns like "they" and "them" instead of "he" or "she."

- **Gender roles:** These are behaviours, attitudes and actions that society feels are appropriate or inappropriate for a man or woman, boy or girl, according to cultural norms and traditions. Gender roles are neither static nor universal, but vary between cultures, over time, between generations, and in relation to other social identities such as social class, socio-economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, ability and health status.

- **Intersex:** People who are intersex are born with physical sex characteristics that do not fit medical norms for female or male bodies. Intersex people are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male.

- **Sex characteristics:** These include primary sex characteristics (e.g. inner and outer genitalia and/or chromosomal and hormonal structure) and secondary sex characteristics (e.g. muscle mass, hair distribution and stature).

- **Sexual orientation:** Refers to each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

- **Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex that they were assigned at birth. People under this umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms – including, but not limited to, transgender. Some transgender people may take prescribed hormones to change their bodies, and some may also undergo surgery. However, not all transgender people can or will take these measures, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AoR	Area of Responsibility
ARV	Anti-Retroviral Treatment
CAAC	Children and Armed Conflict
CAFAAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
CAR	Central African Republic
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CEFM	Child, Early and Forced Marriage
CPA	Child Protection Advisor
CPMS	Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
CPO	Child Protection Officer
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CTFMR	Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
FARDC	*Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* or Congolese National Army
FARC-EP	*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo* or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FFM	Fact-Finding Mission
GCPEA	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
GHN	Global Horizontal Note
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICL	International Criminal Law
ICTJ	International Centre for Transitional Justice
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IIIM	International, Impartial, Independent Mechanism
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army

LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
MARA	Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Central African Republic
MONUSCO	United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict
MSF	*Médecins Sans Frontiers* or Doctors Without Borders
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPAC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict
OSRSG-CAAC	Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
OSRSG-SVC	Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PoC	Protection of Civilians
RMNCH	Reproductive Maternal Newborn and Child Health
SCWG-CAAC	Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SELC	Saudi and Emirati-led Coalition
SG	Secretary-General
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SOGIE	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SRSG-CAAC	Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation
WPA	Women Protection Advisor
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today 420 million children live in areas afflicted by armed conflict,[8] double that of the early 1990s.[9] These girls and boys must confront multiple violations of their rights – the most egregious of which are known as the 'six grave violations' encompassing:

- Recruitment and use of children;
- Killing or maiming of children;
- Rape or other forms of sexual violence against children;
- Attacks against schools and/or hospitals;
- Abduction of children; and
- Denial of humanitarian access.

These grave violations correlate, overlap and intersect with one another. Their nature and prevalence can vary across contexts, and continually evolve throughout the lifecycle of a conflict. Yet gender also plays an influential role. An individual child's self-identified or perceived gender – be it boy, girl or non-binary, can determine the ways in which they are exposed to and experience these grave violations.

Gender norms are deeply rooted in socio-culturally prescribed beliefs, attitudes and expectations. While context-specific, the onset of armed conflict can often exacerbate existing gender inequalities and gender norms may become increasingly restrictive or regressive, amplifying discriminations. The way girls experience conflict is inextricably tied to their standing in society and their frequently subordinate role within the overarching patriarchy.[10] Girls are more likely to be economically dependent, with less social and political agency. As a consequence, girls may be at increased risk to physical, sexual and emotional harms[11] while restrictions on their movements may curtail their access to essential educational or medical services, including sexual and reproductive health services.[12] Boys, can also be targeted and instrumentalised owing to gender-driven expectations, resulting in increased risk of killing and maiming, or recruitment and use in armed forces and armed groups, for example.

Commissioned by Save the Children Canada as part of its commitments to gender equality and to protecting children in conflict, this study is premised upon the view that armed conflict and its impacts are inherently gendered. Applying a gender analysis to the framework of the grave violations makes visible the differentiated and multiplicity of ways in which girls, boys and children with non-binary gender identities are exposed to and impacted by armed conflict, both in the short and long-term. It underscores that homogeneity among children should not be assumed. Just as gender can play an influential role, so too can age. The risks and impacts of grave violations can vary between adolescent and younger children, highlighting the need to better identify and understand the intersections between gender and age.

To understand the gendered impact of conflict on children, this report examines three principles areas of work:

- the extent to which existing **international norms and standards to protect children in conflict,** protect girls and boys equally in practice;
- when crimes or grave violations are committed against children in conflict, the extent to which age and gender play a role in securing **justice for children** of different genders;
- the extent to which **practical action for children impacted by conflict** applies a gender-sensitive or gender-transformative approach, specifically identifying and addressing the gendered needs of children impacted by or recovering from the grave violations and other horrors of war.

KEY FINDINGS:

There are inherent difficulties in gathering data on the grave violations – principally related to security and capacity issues. Any disaggregation of data therefore becomes even more challenging. The UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), tasked with identifying, documenting, verifying and reporting on grave violations, is not designed to give a comprehensive picture of violations. Therefore, UN reports on the grave violations should be understood as purely illustrative or symptomatic of the grave violations perpetrated against children in conflict. The MRM does not – and cannot be expected to – represent the entire caseload, nor does it explore secondary harms.

Using data from UN reporting on the grave violations, together with secondary sources and key informant interviews, and applying a specific gender lens to the impacts of conflict on children, this report finds that:

- **Of all verified incidents of sexual violence against children in the UN's 2019 report, at least 94% were against girls.** Out of 933 verified incidents, almost 95% (881) were listed as girls. The exact proportion may be higher, with none of the 38 incidents of sexual violence in Syria disaggregated by sex – including rape, forced marriage, trafficking, and sexual violence against children deprived of their liberty.[13]

- **80% of grave violations against boys are from only two violations: killing and maiming, and recruitment and use by armed forces and groups.** Of all violations involving boys, killing and maiming represents 50%, while recruitment and use represents another 30% of all violations perpetrated against boys.

- **Some violations are more consistently disaggregated by sex than others: abduction (99%), sexual violence (96%) and recruitment and use (94%) had the highest levels of disaggregation** in the UN's 2019 report. In comparison, disaggregation for incidents of killing or maiming was less consistent, with 83% verified incidents divided according to sex, and none of the verified incidents of attacks on hospitals were disaggregated by sex – or age – in 2019 or 2018 reports.

- **The degree of disaggregation by sex also varies significantly across from one country to the next.** In Libya none of the violations captured in the UN's 2019 report were disaggregated by sex, and in Syria, only 29% of verified violations were disaggregated by sex.[14] This is in stark contrast to Somalia and Afghanistan, which saw 97% of violations and 91% of violations respectively, disaggregated by sex.[15]

- **There is an overall increase in sex-disaggregated data in UN reporting on the grave violations.** In 2018, just 54% (12,158 out of 22,681 verified violations) were sex-disaggregated – and in 2019 reporting, this increased to 82% of incidents – 19,357 out of the 23,579 verified incidents of grave violations.

- **Most of the grave violations occur in the public sphere – which during conflict, boys are more likely to occupy, whereas due to social norms relating to age and gender, girls may be more restricted to the private sphere.** This is supported by reporting on the grave violations, where in 2019, 77% of verified incidents were against boys (14,981 incidents), while 23% were against girls (4,376 incidents).

- **When it comes to disaggregation by age specifically, the particular needs or risks faced by adolescents vis-à-vis younger children are often completely overlooked.** Beyond the dichotomy of under/over 18 years old, it is rare to see any further disaggregation by age across reports from the UN, international NGO and media publications.

What is needed is a comprehensive consideration for the ways in which children straddle multiple domains, occupying at once spaces related to gender and age. There is an opportunity to adopt a much more nuanced approach, founded upon an understanding that gender-sensitivity must equally be applied to children, as much as a child-sensitivity must be applied to questions of gender. At present, policy and practice tend to divide the two, failing to fully grasp how children experience both age and gender related differences. The dual tendencies to conflate girls, boys and non-binary children together under the overall umbrella of children; and to conflate women and girls together, and men and boys, means that the distinct needs of girls and boys, and the specific needs of younger girls and boys, adolescents or children of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) are often not addressed.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations that derive from this gender analysis of the grave violations aim to promote more nuanced, gender-inclusive policies and practices, closing the gender gap between how international norms, standards and accountability processes, as well as programming, are conceived and applied.

GENDER, AGE AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

1. To ensure children's protection in conflict is mainstreamed across peace, security and broader humanitarian agendas, the use of recurring normative language that is age and gender-sensitive, and consistently championed across various fora, is essential. This will also support enhanced legal standards and accountability for children of all genders. To strengthen a gender-sensitive approach to the protection of children of all genders, **UN Member States should proactively champion the protection of children of all genders who are impacted by conflict, across bilateral and multilateral fora.**

2. **Looking for complementarity and consistency across initiatives:** While the unique needs and risks of children in conflict merit a standalone mandate with dedicated political space and resources, there is potential for improved information sharing and synergy between different UN mechanisms feeding into the Security Council. In particular, consistent application of common definitions and data disaggregation in relation to age, gender, sex and disability could enable a common lens to crisis specific items on the Security Council's agenda. **UN actors responsible for developing and implementing Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), Protection of Civilians (PoC), Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (with Sexual Violence in Conflict (SVC)) policy frameworks should recognise the individual specificity and points of complementarity between these agendas.**

PHOTO: FREDRIK LERNERYD/SAVE THE CHILDREN

In Uganda, Save the Children works to support Congolese refugee children who have survived the conflict, providing safe spaces to play, learn and receive psychosocial support. Children continue to flee the DRC, where militias routinely abduct, recruit, kill, abuse and exploit girls and boys, forcing them to commit atrocities and into sexual slavery.

GENDER, AGE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

3. **Inclusive mandates and investigations:** Given the disproportionate and gendered impact of armed conflict on children, crimes against children of all genders must be given due consideration. **Likeminded UN Member States should use their positions on multilateral fora to jointly advocate for age and gender to be at the centre of mandates of all future investigations and inquiries** conducted on behalf of the International Criminal Court, international and national tribunals, international Commissions of Inquiry, Fact-Finding Missions and other accountability mechanisms.

4. **Adequate human resources:** In order for the MRM and other conflict-related accountability mechanisms to yield dividends for children of all genders, they must have appropriate human resourcing. **UN bodies and other accountability mechanisms responsible for selecting investigatory teams must work to ensure consistent inclusion of specialist experts on both gender and children within investigatory teams. They must also ensure adequate training and tools for investigative teams, including these are both age and gender-sensitive.**

Investigatory teams in turn must seek to:

• **Consistently include local expertise** to ensure full understanding of the prevailing context (including any pre-conflict gender-based and age-based norms, perceptions and practices and understanding how conflict has impacted on these norms);

• **Push for and participate in training on how to monitor, investigate and document grave violations against children of different genders and ages,** ensuring sensitization to the contextually-specific connections between gender-based violence and children's rights violations; and

• **Recognise and collaborate with local women's rights organizations and other relevant local and national partners, including human rights defenders, for the important role they play, working to highlight and address gaps in resourcing and capacity.**

5. **Financial capacity:** Recognising that child protection and gender-based violence are both severely under-funded sectors within wider humanitarian response,[16] resource allocation is a major barrier to ensuring qualified personnel on the ground – who within local, national and international civil society organisations, UN agencies and UN missions, are often among those who either collect relevant data themselves or provide support to investigations. **Donors and UN Member States must urgently increase investments to the full range of actors conducting monitoring, reporting and investigations towards accountability for crimes and violations against children, ensuring both gender and sensitive approaches** to monitoring, recording, and investigation.

UN bodies responsible for budgetary decision-making must ensure sufficient dedicated resourcing to allow for the inclusion of an adequate number of qualified Child Protection Advisor (CPA), Child Protection Officer (CPO) and Women Protection Advisors (WPA) posts across UN peacekeeping and political missions. Parallel investments in both gender and child protection will help both work-streams to leverage their full potential and make concrete advances on the ground while achieving political traction.

GENDER, AGE AND PRACTICAL ACTION

6. **Age and gender-responsive approaches:** Without disaggregated data, analysis and investments specifically targeting the intersections between gender and age, gender-responsive action for children in conflict – at the scale required to address growing need – is extremely challenging. This includes tailored and targeted prevention, response and advocacy strategies, which take into consideration the unique age and gender specificities of girls, boys, and children of diverse SOGIE who are impacted by conflict and require practical support. In relation to children in conflict, there must also be increased recognition of the ways in which disability can expose children to grave violations, as well as how violations can exacerbate or cause disability. **Actors on the ground collecting data on civilian impact of conflict settings, must consistently and comprehensively disaggregate all data by age, gender, and disability.**

7. **Ethical, safe and responsible data collection:** It is imperative that data collection and information management protocols comply with sector-wide standards, including the MRM guidelines, in relation to ethics and safeguarding.[17] This is especially important given the potential for retributions against survivors and victims of the grave violations, as well as their families, and communities, in addition to witnesses or other information providers, staff members and agencies involved in the process. Policies and practices must be child-friendly, gender-sensitive and inclusive. Security and safety considerations, as well as the psychological well-being of survivors and others, must outweigh any attempt to establish prevalence or incidence data.[18] **Teams undertaking identification, documentation, investigation and/or verification of grave violations must ensure ethical, safe and responsible practices.**

8. **Linking documentation and action:** The MRM translates monitoring and reporting into concrete legal, political and practical action to prevent and respond to violations against children.

- **Humanitarian actors should consistently disaggregate data and analysis on gender, age and disability,** and use external sources of disaggregated data, including the MRM where relevant, to inform strengthened gender-responsive programming.

- **Humanitarian donors must significantly increase their investments in gender-sensitive and, where possible, gender-transformative programming** for children impacted by conflict with a specific focus on addressing the immediate and long-term gendered impacts of the grave violations. Where possible this should include flexible and multi-year funding, which allows for a more gender transformative approach.

- **To better capture data disaggregation and more detailed analysis** from grave violation documentation, the UN should consider relevant modifications to the MRM reporting format.

- **In developing its Action Plans with listed parties,** the UN should aim to specifically address the ways in which grave violations differentially target different children based on their age, gender and disability.

- **UN Member States, UN agencies, and humanitarian actors should consistently seek to listen to and amplify the voices and experiences of children** of all genders in guiding humanitarian response and adherence to international norms and standards that protect children in conflict.

José David, 17, was only 8 when he was shot and injured in both legs, caught in the crossfire between the FARC and government troops in Colombia. With support from Save the Children, José David is now a youth leader in his community, working to build sustainable piece.

GENDER, AGE AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRAVE VIOLATIONS

Prompted by the 1996 publication of the 'Impact of Armed Conflict on Children' report,[19] the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voted in favour of the establishment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC) the following year.[20] In 1999, the increased international recognition of the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on children led the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to identify especially egregious violations of children's rights.[21] These have become commonly known as the 'six grave violations' of children's rights in armed conflict. They consist of:

- **Recruitment and use of children;**
- **Killing or maiming of children;**
- **Rape or other forms of sexual violence against children;**
- **Attacks against schools and/or hospitals;**
- **Abduction of children; and**
- **Denial of humanitarian access.**

Founded on the principles of international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as international jurisprudence, these six grave violations represented the foundation of a new global protection regime for children affected by armed conflict. In 2005, a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) was established by the UNSC Resolution 1612.[22] Co-led by the Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC) – in close cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) – the ways in which the MRM has been operationalised at national and international levels have evolved over time.

These developments broke new ground and were critical to advancing specific protections for children affected by armed conflict. To build on this progress, bringing in a systematic gender-based analysis of the effects of armed conflict on children could further strengthen their protection – helping to meet the ambitions in the Agenda for Humanity to Leave No One Behind. The 'Impact of Armed Conflict on Children'[23] report was a powerful historic report that helped shape this agenda. In the more than twenty years since its release, there has been a shift within the humanitarian community to bring greater focus on the need for gender analysis as a means to strengthen the protection of all children in conflict.

Historically, children were often viewed as a homogenous group, with little analysis of how gender can play an influential role in determining how children are impacted by various violations of their rights. Two exceptions relate to (a) sexual violence, where the targeting of girls has often been underscored,[24] and (b) child recruitment by armed groups and forces and groups, where the disproportionate use of boys has been similarly highlighted. However, even for these violations, how children of other genders experience them have only been explored more recently. A more nuanced examination of the influence of gender across all the grave violations, employing both quantitative and qualitative gender analysis, provides an opportunity to understand the specific risks, needs and experiences of children of all genders.

One opportunity to introduce a gender analysis of the six grave violations is through a consideration of their selection, formulation and definition. Gender shapes how, when and why children use public and private spaces, resulting in differing 'environmental ranges' for girls and boys. Despite certain contextual differences, boys and men are frequently able to access and remain present in the public domain (with or without an objective purpose), while girls and women are more often constrained to private spheres.[25] This may in part be due to the volume of housework or childcare for which they remain

primarily responsible in many contexts, as well as fears for their safety.[26] In certain contexts, it is linked to social norms that determine the acceptable level of visibility of women and girls in the public sphere, emphasise female modesty, and/or underline cultural practices of separating genders. The prescribed role and reputation of women and girls in the maintenance of family honour may also be another factor. Girls often have to be accompanied by adults or peers to access and use public spaces.[27]

Pre-existing social norms may be exacerbated in conflict settings. Girls may face increased controls on their movements influencing their exposure to or experience of violations. Under such restrictions, girls may become more susceptible to particular violations of their rights such as child marriage (with correspondingly higher exposure to intimate partner violence), domestic violence, sexual violence and/or limited access to protective services such as educational, economic or medical services. Conversely, the relative presence of boys in the public domain may render them more vulnerable to other violations, including recruitment and use, abduction and/or killing or maiming. Incidents pertaining to boys do constitute the majority of violations included in UN reports on the grave violations. Analysis of 19,357 verified incidents that were disaggregated by sex in the Secretary-General's 2019 report on Children and Armed Conflict shows that 77% were against boys (14,981 incidents), while 23% were against girls (4,376 incidents). Of incidents involving boys, two grave violations are especially prominent: killing and maiming represents 50%, while recruitment and use represents another 30% of all violations perpetrated against boys.

However, selection of the grave violations assumes gender neutrality. Most of the six grave violations are linked to the public sphere where males are frequently more present. Moreover, for incidents to be defined as a grave violation, they must be perpetrated by members of armed forces or armed groups. Although individual variations exist, incidents of recruitment and use, abductions, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and

hospitals by armed forces or groups predominantly take place in public settings. This may explain the high proportion of verified incidents against boys, as compared to girls. In contexts where girls are constrained to private spaces such as homes, for example, egregious violations of their rights (not necessarily perpetrated only by members of armed forces or groups) are correspondingly less visible – even when these violations are a consequence of conflict. There is an opportunity to consider how the selection and framework of the grave violations can more fully address the issues faced by girls in conflict settings, particularly when social norms lead to differences in the spheres girls and boys occupy.

Thinking and formulation of the grave violations has evolved since their inception. For example, the first violation originally referenced the 'recruitment and use of *child soldiers*,'[28] reflecting conventional representations of armed and uniformed combatants.[29] The many and varied wartime roles of children – including that of girls – as domestic workers, spies, labourers, porters, or for sexual purposes – were not clearly captured by this initial terminology. This was evidenced by the striking invisibility of girls in early Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) efforts across many countries.[30] The wording of this violation was subsequently revised to the *'recruitment and use of children associated with armed forces and armed groups'*[31] (CAAFAG) as the result of an iterative process and growth in understanding over time.[32] Boys are predominantly targeted for recruitment and use for military purposes in contexts all across the world, hence the archetypal imagery of an armed adolescent boy continues to dictate much of the discourse.[33] The reformulation of this violation was an intentional step to be more inclusive to the diverse roles of both girls and boys, paving the way for further analysis on the gendered drivers and impacts of the recruitment and use of children.[34]

The formulation of the violation of 'rape and other forms sexual violence'[35] can lead to a focus on physical manifestations of sexual violence, potentially eclipsing related violations disproportionately affecting girls in conflict settings.

The forced marriage of children when perpetrated by members of armed groups or forces, for instance, is formally included within the definition of this violation.[36] However, references to verified cases of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) within official UN reporting on the grave violations are sparse. "Forced marriage" of children is only referenced ten times across five years of reporting between 2013 and 2018 – frequently in relation to documented and not verified cases.[37] This is likely reflective of the security and sensitivity concerns related to collecting such data. However, there may be improvement as the 2019 Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict[38] includes greater consideration of the practice, particularly as it pertains to abduction.[39]

Discourse on sexual violence in conflict settings has historically centred exclusively on female survivors. Despite recent efforts to better identify and respond to the varying risks and needs of male survivors, this is often hampered by the sensitivities surrounding such cases, rendering the task of identifying, documenting and verifying incidents much more challenging, particularly in conflict settings. As a gender analysis of the grave violations continues to evolve, the reality of child survivors who are either boys or children of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) will require further attention.

Where incidents are directly linked to conflict, a formulation informed by the full range of harms encompassed under the framework of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) – as opposed to solely rape and other forms of sexual violence – could enable a more comprehensive attempt to identify and address the varied risks and needs of all children.

Moreover, when it comes to children of diverse SOGIE, there is an almost complete absence of formal research, programming or documentation across all the grave violations. Where obtaining sex-disaggregated data per violation is challenging, obtaining gender-disaggregated data including children with distinct gender identities and expressions is even more so, particularly given the contextual realties of reporting in conflict settings.[40]

EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN

Over the years legislative and normative frameworks[41] to enhance protections for different children affected by armed conflict have advanced.[42] Concurrently, political and social perspectives, attitudes and understanding of gender, including the existence of diverse identities and expressions, have substantively evolved. Gender has been factored into these processes and protections to varying degrees, several of which have been particularly instrumental in bringing gender to the forefront of discourse on the grave violations, including:

• Increasing attention to the involvement of children in armed conflict;

• Complementary UNSC agendas;

• Global efforts to mitigate attacks on education; and,

• Initiatives to highlight, nuance and integrate conceptions of gender.

By examining each of these areas of work, it is possible to underscore the ways in which approaches to gender, within a broader framework of the grave violations, have changed over time and where certain gaps remain today.

Increasing attention to the involvement of children in armed conflict:

• *Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC):* Prior to the MRM, in 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC).[43] Ratified by 170 countries[44] this protocol made crucial headway in promoting attitudinal and behavioural change regarding the involvement of children in conflict at the global level.[45] While the OPAC's preambulatory text does note the "special needs of those children who are particularly vulnerable to recruitment or use in hostilities…owing to their…gender,"[46] its later articles do not reference gender.

• *Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups:* The 2007 Paris Principles[47] were developed, in part, with a view to recognising and redressing the historical invisibility of girls especially from earlier release and reintegration efforts.[48] They indicate that "pro-active measures must be taken to ensure the full involvement and inclusion of girls in all aspects of

Arsal, 12, lost her father in an explosion from a suicide attack in Kabul. While she now leaves in fear of going out, she is determined to continue her education. *"I am scared because our life is in danger. Even when we go to the shop, there is a possibility that a suicide attack might happen, or a fight might start."* Arsal has also started supporting other girls to learn. *"I help them with letters and maths. Girls constitute half of society. If a girl is illiterate, it means society is incomplete."*

prevention of recruitment, release and reintegration, and services should always respond to their specific needs for protection and assistance."[49] Attention is drawn to the immediate and long-term support needs of "girl mothers and of children born to girls as a result of their recruitment."[50] The Paris Principles highlight the need for interventions to be based on a comprehensive understanding of the context – including through gender analysis and risk assessment. In applying a gendered perspective systematically across all aspects of the recruitment and use of children, the Paris Principles represent a significant and critical departure from prior efforts. However, the Paris Principles could say more about the specific needs of boys, their greater vulnerability to recruitment and detention, and how to tailor prevention and response interventions to the needs of boys.

- *Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers:* The 2017 Vancouver Principles[51] recognise the centrality of child protection and the specific role of peacekeepers in preventing the recruitment and use of children. They acknowledge the importance of gender, noting that Member States should account for the "differential impact of conflict on girls and boys"[52] as well as their "specific needs, including those based on gender, age and other identity factors."[53] The accompanying implementation guidance[54] details ways to apply a gender lens. In accordance with the broader Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, they recognise the contribution of women to peacekeeping operations, citing their capacity to "often access populations and venues that are closed to men…" and to "communicate and engage with children differently."[55] The increasing role of women in peacekeeping could improve accessibility. Furthermore, the Vancouver Principles promote the adoption of these principles into doctrine and training for military and police personnel at national level, potentially positively impacting national practices even when they are not formally engaged in peacekeeping missions.

Complementary UNSC agendas:

Over time, attention on other grave violations has been further consolidated by complementary developments on the Security Council's formal agenda, notably within the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (PoC),[56] Women, Peace and Security (WPS),[57] and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas. Although established as separate streams, they intersect significantly with the grave violations. The PoC agenda, for example, covers questions relating to education, health and humanitarian access. The WPS agenda calls for the mainstreaming of gender analysis across all of the Security's Council work, as well as, an end to impunity for conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. However, this attention is not yet fully visible at the field level, especially in terms of funding; standards and services tailored to the needs of all survivors of sexual violence; and programmes implementing gender and age inclusive practices for girls, boys and/or those of diverse SOGIE.

- *The Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on conflict-related sexual violence:* As part of the broader WPS agenda, the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC) was established in 2009,[58] followed by the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on conflict-related sexual violence in 2010.[59] Similar to the MRM, the MARA verifies and reports upon sexual violence, though against both adults and children. Both the MARA and the mandate of the OSRSG-SVC were intentionally designed to be separate from the MRM. While not specific to children, the MARA and the OSRSG-SVC pave the way for additional identification, documentation and provision of services to child survivors.

  Momentum for the intentional inclusion of male survivors has followed with acknowledgement in international fora and statements – including the 2013 G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict[60] as well as the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict[61] which was signed by 113 Member States during the 68th UN General Assembly. As gender analysis evolves there is an opportunity to look at targeting and needs of male and gender non-conforming survivors, to advance the spirit of the *Leave No One Behind* ambitions while retaining the focus on women and girls who are the majority of survivors and those at risk.

Global efforts to mitigate attacks on education:

Aided by the establishment of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) in 2010, the violation of 'attacks on schools' has gained increasing visibility in recent years. Dedicated capacity at the global level has boosted knowledge on this topic.[62] 'Education Under Attack' and other country-specific reports make information on this violation more accessible, some of which have brought the gender dimensions of attacks to the fore.[63]

Advocacy efforts at global and national levels, have also helped elevate the issue of attacks on schools. Championed by Norway and Argentina, the 2015 *Safe Schools Declaration* showed the political commitment of states. *The Safe Schools Declaration*[64] reflects upon the differential experiences of girls and boys, noting that "attacks on schools and universities have been used to promote intolerance and exclusion – to further gender discrimination, for example by preventing the education of girls…"[65] The *Toolkit to Guide Understanding and Implementing Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*[66] describes the influential role of gender in determining risk factors for student populations, particularly where recruitment and use of children is prevalent. While the Safe Schools Declaration can only be endorsed by states, the guidelines can be adopted by all parties to conflict, including non-state actors.[67] The GCPEA has also developed a series of recommendations to guide gender-responsive implementation of both the Safe Schools Declaration and associated guidelines.[68]

Initiatives to highlight, nuance and integrate conceptions of gender:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC)[69] and the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[70] apply across all contexts – conflict or not. The monitoring of their implementation is an underutilised pathway for ensuring accountability for children affected by conflict. For example, the respective Committees of these two conventions issued a joint General Recommendation in 2014 regarding harmful practices, indicating that their use is influenced by gender-based attitudes, persistent inequalities and discriminatory practices such as child and/or forced marriage.[71]

Developments related to gender have, at times, risked conflating the needs of girls with their adult counterparts. However, girls have needs and experiences that are distinct from adult women because of compounding age factors. They also have explicit rights and protections under international law precisely due to their status as children. Beyond the rights enshrined in the CRC and resolutions under the CAAC agenda, there are specific provisions for girls under CEDAW and WPS as well. Girls themselves are not a homogenous group given the distinct needs of girls of varying ages. Nonetheless, adolescent girls are frequently no longer viewed as children once they are of reproductive age, married and/or have a child.[72] They may face greater restrictions on movements due to fears of sexual violence, de-prioritisation of education, as well a rising incidence of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).[73] This underscores the needs for greater nuance in relation to the potential intersections between gender and age in future.

In the last decade, violence and discrimination perpetrated against individuals due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) have received increasing attention. The first-ever related resolution passed by the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2011[74] was updated in 2014,[75] culminating in the designation of an UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity in 2016.[76] While not specific to children or conflict, a report published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the intervening period highlighted that "homophobic and transphobic violence has been recorded in all regions."[77] The UN confirmed that "these attacks constitute a form of gender-based violence, driven by a desire to punish those seen as defying gender norms."[78]

Indeed, evolution in thinking and learning around gender – and its intersections with age – has been marked by both phased and piecemeal advances, much of which has been a reflection of the times that these different resolutions, declarations and mechanisms were first passed and subsequently implemented. Today there is a stronger understanding and prioritisation of gender inclusivity within both the humanitarian and political arenas. Yet there are still gaps when it comes to legal, political and programmatic protections for children in conflict that account for the ways in which gender can differentially expose or impact girls, boys and children outside of the gender binary to grave violations of their rights – in addition to justice for children in conflict more generally.

GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE GRAVE VIOLATIONS

Why a gender analysis?

Analysing the grave violations from a gendered perspective makes visible the differentiated and multiplicity of ways in which girls, boys and children with non-binary gender identities are exposed to and impacted by armed conflict, both in the short and long-term. Gender analysis is an opportunity to examine how and why prevailing socio-cultural norms, beliefs and attitudes can influence children's experience of conflict, depending on their actual or perceived gender. Gender analysis can reveal the often hidden biases among policy makers and practitioners. It is an opportunity to recognise the potential role of actual or perceived sexual orientation, especially non-heteronormative or non-conforming orientations, including any relation to an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Gender analysis brings into focus the gender-driven differences in how individual children in conflict settings access and enjoy their fundamental rights, improving the possibility to bridge the gap between international norms and standards and their application.

In undertaking a gender analysis of the grave violations, it is possible to examine the ways in which international norms and standards, designed for the protection of children affected by armed conflict, are actually protecting girls, boys and children of diverse SOGIE in practice. 420 million children worldwide live in conflict-afflicted areas today,[79] double that of the early 1990s.[80] 142 million of them are living in so-called high-intensity conflict zones, with over 1,000 battle-related child deaths per year.[81] Children are grappling with the direct and indirect short and long-term consequences of armed conflict.[82] The nature and prevalence of violations varies from country to country and evolves throughout the life-cycle of a conflict. The various grave violations correlate, overlap and intersect with one another. While children of all genders may be affected by the same violations, the way they are impacted by each violation and the risks they face can often differ due to gender.

Conflict can exacerbate existing gender inequalities, impacting the ways in which **girls** experience maltreatment. Gender norms may become increasingly restrictive or regressive during times of trouble, while discriminations are often amplified. The way girls experience conflict is inextricably tied to their standing in society and their frequently subordinate role within the overarching patriarchy.[83] Such experiences also vary with their age. The intersection of age and gender means that girls are more economically dependent on others and have less social and political power and agency. This vulnerability leads to an increased risk that girls experience harm – physical, sexual and emotional.[84] When violence erupts, the societal impulse to protect girls may mean their movements are curtailed, including restriction to the home with limited access to school and/or recreational activities.[85]

Boys, too, are differentially impacted for reasons rooted in socio-cultural gender norms and practices. Wherever the recruitment and use of children as combatants is commonplace, boys are the primary targets. This blurs the lines between victims and perpetrators, conflating their standing as civilians with combatants. The corollary of this is that pre-adolescent and adolescent boys, in particular, are often judged to be security threats in the context of ongoing hostilities.[86] In addition to explicit targeting resulting in killing or maiming, this assumption can render boys vulnerable to other risks, including harms associated with violent extremism,[87] arbitrary arrest and detention[88] and torture.

The role of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) in exposing children to increased risk of the grave violations is an aspect which has

been accorded almost no consideration. While there are certain donor governments who may support SOGIE-related efforts domestically, it is not generally prioritised internationally – especially in terms of the specific vulnerability of children of non-conforming SOGIE in conflict contexts. Given the sensitivity of this issue – particularly in conflict settings – there is little evidence on the influence of children's self-identified or perceived non-conforming gender identity and/or sexual orientation on their vulnerability to the grave violations. There is an absence of standard operating procedures or training on how to appropriately engage with non-binary children or children with non-heteronormative sexual orientations. Coupled with widespread misinformation, misunderstandings and misgivings about the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community locally and globally, these children are likely to be amongst the most marginalised.

Unfortunately, data in relation to all six grave violations against children of diverse SOGIE in conflict settings are virtually non-existent. However, data from elsewhere show that LGBTI individuals are more vulnerable to physical violence.[89] The rates of

sexual violence in the LGBTI community are amongst the highest.[90] They are also thought to experience barriers to healthcare access even in non-conflict settings.[91] Incidents of discrimination against LGBTI persons in armed forces have been noted globally – indicating that those who are recruited in times of conflict may face specific forms of violence or abuse.[92] Attempts to include considerations for LGBTI persons in policy and programming in conflict settings do not sufficiently consider age as an intersecting factor, and do not provide any specificity as to the risk, needs and experiences of children as opposed to adults.[93] Broadly speaking, amongst field practitioners, there is a need to address social, cultural and religious attitudes and beliefs. Same-sex incidents of sexual violations are often conflated with homosexuality, and the motivational drivers behind such acts in conflict settings are not sufficiently researched or understood.[94] The eruption of violence frequently exacerbates existing prejudicial biases against those who do not conform to established gender norms.[95]

Given the influence of gender, it is revealing to examine the potential gender dimensions specific to each of the grave violations in turn.
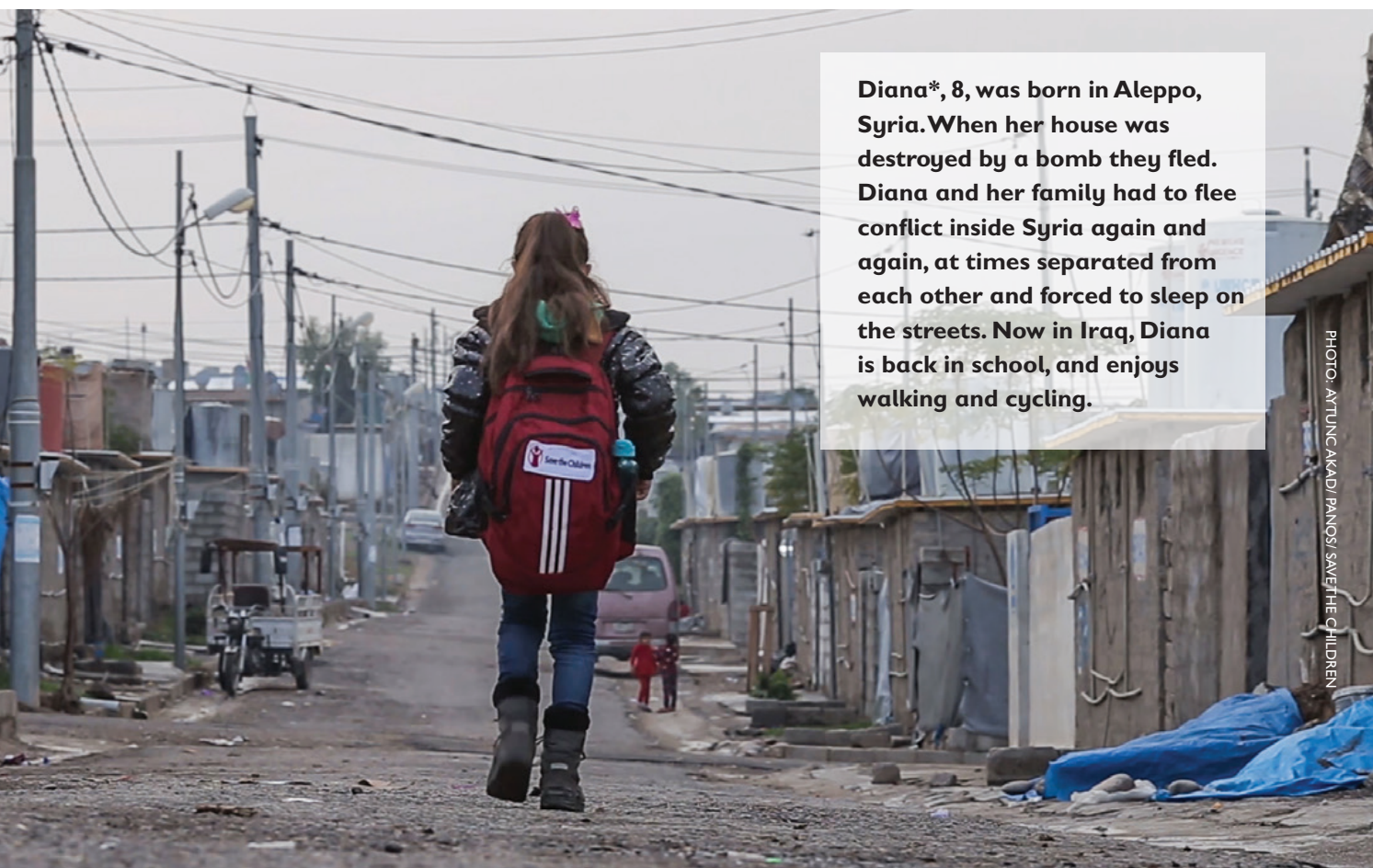
Diana*, 8, was born in Aleppo, Syria. When her house was destroyed by a bomb they fled. Diana and her family had to flee conflict inside Syria again and again, at times separated from each other and forced to sleep on the streets. Now in Iraq, Diana is back in school, and enjoys walking and cycling.

PHOTO: AYTUNC AKAD/ PANOS/ SAVE THE CHILDREN

RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN

Meta-analysis of the Secretary-General's Annual Reports on Children and Armed Conflict from 2005 to 2019 shows that at least 61,852 children – including girls and boys – have been reportedly recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups.[96] Despite the promulgation of numerous legislative and normative frameworks to the contrary, the recruitment and use of children continues to persist. In 2018, UN-verified cases of recruitment and use across 13 countries included 5,240 children (4,449 boys, 427 girls, 364 sex unknown).[97] Children are often targeted for recruitment and use precisely because of their age, given that their cognitive, emotional and social functions are still under development, facilitating their conditioning, coercion and control by armed actors.[98] In some contexts, children are viewed as "an economically efficient alternative to adult combatants."[99]

In analysing data from the last two Secretary-General's Annual Reports on Children and Armed Conflict, just under 9% of verified cases that had been disaggregated by gender were girls.[100]

In reality, exact numbers are virtually impossible to ascertain given challenges in ensuring comprehensive identification, documentation and verification of cases. Some groups have previously estimated that between 30 to 40% of children recruited and used in armed settings are girls.[101] The differences in estimated proportions of children recruited and used may also be a reflection of the growing recognition of the many ways in which girls have been recruited and used in armed forces and armed groups – as evidenced by the evolution of increasingly gender-sensitive international norms and standards.

Although trends vary greatly across countries and throughout the evolution of any particular conflict, what is clear from MRM reporting is that while girls are

targeted for recruitment and use in several contexts, boys are disproportionately targeted in every context. In some cases, the gender disparity is striking. Of the 2,300 children reportedly recruited and used in Somalia in 2018, only 72 were girls, while 2,228 were boys.[102] In some countries, armed forces and groups only rarely target girls. In Afghanistan, for example, according to the Secretary General's Annual Report in 2017, there were 84 verified cases of recruitment and use (all boys), and the documentation of an additional 643 cases (all boys).[103] In 2018, only 1 girl was verified as being recruited and used, compared to 45 boys.[104] In one mass recruitment exercise in South Sudan, no girls but at least 150 boys were recruited and armed with weapons at a cattle market in Unity State.[105] While MRM data is not able to cover every incident, these numbers demonstrate the overwhelming risk of recruitment and use faced by boys relative to girls.

Broadly speaking, both girls and boys associated with armed forces or groups play a wide variety of roles, including as combatants, spies, cooks, cleaners, messengers and porters, amongst others. However, gender stereotypes are at times reflected in the ways in which girls and boys are recruited and used in specific contexts – and both can be instrumentalised because of their gender, albeit in different ways.[106] The influence of patriarchal socio-cultural attitudes, perceptions and expectations of males can be seen in the disproportionate involvement of boys in heavy fighting and physically laborious tasks across many contexts. In certain areas, boys are subjected to military training and forced to participate in the curtailing of movements, conducting patrols or guarding checkpoints.[107] In Syria, for example, 98% of boys recruited by armed actors were deployed in military functions, ranging from frontline fighting to conducting executions to perpetrating suicide attacks.[108] In Yemen, boys have adopted combat functions as well as security and logistical roles.[109] In Iraq, a 15 year old boy was used by ISIL to drive a car bomb into Fallujah city.[7110] In South Sudan, boys living in pastoralist, cattle-raising communities are at particular risk for recruitment due to social norms that dictate that boys should join militias once they reach puberty.[111]

Girls, however, have not always been exempt from these frontline activities and have been involved in direct combat roles. They have also fulfilled sexual and support functions which reflect stereotypical roles such as food preparation and other domestic tasks in addition to sexual slavery and/or as 'wives' of fighters[112] Research in Syria has shown that girls forcibly married

RECRUITMENT AND USE: MANGENI'S STORY

Democratic Republic of Congo

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mangeni* and her family were forced to flee once the conflict and started armed men arrived at the house to take everything. They tied Mangeni* up, beat her mother and took her father into the forest where they shot him dead in front of her. After the killing they blindfolded her then took her to their camp. She was just eleven years old. Many people were killed in the time she was there. She was one of the sole survivors who escaped. Now reunited with her mother and siblings, Mangeni worries about the future.

"One day people came and took my father away and tied him with ropes and also tied me with ropes and took us to the forest then shot my father dead."

"After the killing of my dad they started beating and torturing me. They would step and kick on my ribs and stomach. They kept me for half a year with them in the bush and I used to cook, wash the utensils and work for them."

"When I saw the suffering was too much, I decided to escape."

"The trauma was too much. Whenever I remember how my father was killed and how life started to be difficult, I feel sad in my heart."

"I am ever in pain and when I look at all these things and think about it I feel very sad."

"I cannot go back to Congo because war is still there too much and my father was killed and if I go there they may find us and kill us."

"I don't see any future for us."

in this way were frequently abandoned, divorced or left widowed due to the re-deployment or death of their 'husband.'[113] In addition, girls were often obliged to accompany their 'husbands' – placing themselves at physical risk due to their proximity to hostilities.[114] Although ultimately delisted in the Secretary-General's 2019 Annual Report, Colombia's largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army *(Fuerzas armadas revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo, FARC-EP)* – was widely known for the recruitment and use of some 11,000 children during its 50-year armed struggle.[115] Women and girls were thought to constitute up to half of all FARC-EP recruits. Girls were used alongside boys in a variety of military and security functions including making and laying landmines.[116] In other contexts, girls were obliged to have sex with members of opposing groups as part of intelligence gathering missions.[117]

The roles assigned to girls and boys within recruitment and use, are influenced by socio-cultural beliefs about gender. For example, in the Kasaï region of central Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) girls are believed to be impervious to bullets due to magical powers – with some as young as 4 years old sent to the frontlines as human shields for the protection of other fighters.[118] Special powers that are activated during ritualistic fire ceremonies known as *'tshiota'* are believed to render militia members invincible.[119] However, girls – called *'ya mamas'* or 'little mothers' – are touted as having especially strong powers, bolstered by charms and straw skirts believed to be capable of repelling bullets.[120] Girls have been sent into combat with nothing more than sticks, brooms, mops or kitchen utensils – all deemed to have magical powers.[121] According to some reports, 89% of girls recruited by Kamuina Nsapu were directly involved in armed hostilities. This stands in stark contrast to the reported use of girls by armed groups in the eastern DRC.[122]

The recruitment and use of girls is not a new phenomenon. In Sierra Leone, girls were used as part of an incentivised system for the recruitment of men and boys. Male fighters were reportedly rewarded with 'wives' for their contributions to battlefield operations.[123] In Yemen, girls have been threatened with expulsion from school if they refuse to convince male family members to join ranks.[124] In 2018, the UN verified for the first time the recruitment of 16 girls, aged 15-17, for this purpose.[125]

In the past, girls associated with armed forces or armed groups – many of whom may have performed more secretive, sexual or support roles – have run the risk of never being officially released and reintegrated. Research in Sierra Leone, for example, highlights that more than half of girls formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups were unable to access formal programmes due to a lack of weapons or ammunitions to present in exchange for enrolment.[126] The fact that those under 18 years old were not obliged to meet this requirement in order to gain admission was unknown by the majority of girls.[127] Global recognition of the extent to which girls were excluded from early DDR efforts in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in the 1990s has translated into a significant paradigm shift in how girls are accounted for within broader international norms and standards, as well as in current release and reintegration programming. Operational and conceptual challenges persist, however. For example, the complexity of addressing the needs of girls who have been labelled as 'wives' and have had one or more children with members of an armed force or group.[128] Like boys, girls may also be abandoned by their group or leave spontaneously of their own volition. The challenge then becomes how to locate and process them and their diverse needs – particularly when some may be in hiding.[129] Numerous attempts to better address the needs of female combatants through the WPS agenda have fallen short for girls, who have distinct age-related needs and rights relative to adult women.[130]

The experiences of girls and boys after they exit from armed forces or armed groups also differ. In addition to physical injury and death, children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups face a multitude of immediate and life-long challenges. Both girls and boys can suffer from physical, developmental and mental health conditions, substance abuse, and increased risk of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They must overcome barriers in terms of access to health services, educational or employment opportunities, and social reintegration due to loss of identity and severed family or community ties.[131]

Of girls formerly associated with armed forces or groups, those that have been subjected to sexual violence, returning pregnant or with children likely face additional challenges. Babies born of conflict-related sexual violence may face a lifetime of rejection or stigmatisation,[132] and are rarely accepted by families and communities where they are seen as "children of the enemy."[133] In Iraq, for example, such children have been categorised and labelled as "Da'esh terrorists" on their birth certificates by local authorities.[134] Girls often require tailored social reintegration efforts to overcome

family rejection, shame and isolation because of a more restrictive application of cultural norms regarding sexual relations outside of marriage, forced marriage with someone not sanctioned by their family and/or time spent away from the family home.[135] This can also be linked to gender discriminatory laws and policies at government level.

Boys also risk rejection by their communities of origin upon release. Assessments conducted by Save the Children in both Somalia and Nigeria show that boys fear being killed upon return home.[136] This is inextricably tied to societal views that pre-pubescent, pubescent or adult males are potential threats. This perception has also been used as grounds for their arbitrary detention, especially when there is a real or perceived link to violent extremism.[137]

There is an alarming trend of arbitrary arrest and detention of boys – often due to their assumed association with certain armed actors – which has been inadequately documented in the past. A new UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty published in October 2019 aims to address some of these gaps.[138] Even though it is not formally recognised as a grave violation, the Secretary-General is mandated to include deprivation of liberty as part of his reporting on CAAC and has opted to do so with increasing regularity in recent reporting.[139] It is probable that the disproportionate targeting of boys for recruitment and use underlies their increased vulnerability to arbitrary arrest and detention due to their actual or perceived association with armed groups, even in countries where membership in such groups is not illegal.[140]

In spite of the special protections extended by international law, detention can render boys vulnerable to other harms, including – and especially to – sexual violence.[141] In many contexts, sexual violence can manifest as opportunistic or tactical torture, punishment or humiliation of boys in detention.[142] Perceived emasculation – resulting from gender-related societal constructs – can have serious psychological impacts on male survivors.

The push/pull factors which cultivate the circumstances in which recruitment and use of children is made possible are complex and – at times – can result from a multiplicity of intersecting elements, including social norms related to gender, religion, ethnicity, age and other factors, need for income, belonging or revenge, and protection of self, family or community. Children may be targeted due to their ethnicity and/or religion, sometimes with gendered dimensions. In the case of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), reports of the abduction of boys indicate that this is for training and deployment in combat roles in Syria.[143] In contrast, of the up to 500 Yazidi women and girls reportedly kidnapped by ISIL from a village in southern Sinjar, 150 are believed to have been transferred to Syria to be "sold as sex slaves or given to fighters as a reward."[144] The girls were reportedly forced to "self-identify by not covering their heads."[145]

In 2018, incidents of arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as deprivation of liberty, were referenced in relation to 12 out of 15 countries on the Security Council's formal agenda. Of the 1,796 verified incidents that were disaggregated by sex, 96% consisted of boys.

KILLING AND MAIMING OF CHILDREN

Provisions under international law afford protection for civilians, including children, from deliberate and disproportionate attacks during conflict. These provisions are founded upon the overarching principles of distinction and proportionality.[146] Nonetheless, neither girls nor boys are exempt from physical violence in conflict. In some contexts, accurate mortality rates are almost impossible to establish – and any figures may be largely underestimated.[147] In the case of Syria in 2015 the UN estimated that thousands of children had died due to hostilities, yet security constraints limited official verification to only 591 child deaths and 555 children injured.[148]

In Yemen UNICEF confirmed the death or injury of at least 5,000 children after nearly 1,000 days of fighting, but stated that "actual numbers are expected to be much higher."[149]

Because data for killing and maiming is not consistently disaggregated by sex, it is often difficult to ascertain to what extent gender is a factor in the relative exposure or impact on children. In the Secretary-General's 2018 Annual Report on CAAC, 7 countries out of 15 did not provide any sex-disaggregated reporting of verified incidents of killing and maiming.[150] Yet there are numerous instances of the direct and deliberate targeting of children during armed conflict. For example, in Somalia children were subject to public execution at the hands of Al-Shabaab.[151] In South Sudan, children have been "beaten to death, hung from trees, thrown into burning houses, tied up, executed and run over by military vehicles."[152] In October 2016, twenty-two children died after being locked inside a shipping container by fighters from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in southern Unity State.[153]

Children may also be collateral victims of large or small-scale attacks as the result of crossfire, the deployment of cluster munitions or during aerial bombardment. In Sa'ada, north-western Yemen, for example, a school bus carrying students on their way to a field trip was hit by an airstrike in 2018 killing 40 boys, the majority of whom were under 10 years old.[154]

There are instances, however, where data indicate that children's gender may have been specifically targeted. In northern Nigeria, children have been used as suicide bombers by Boko Haram. Of the 48 children used in suicide attacks in 2018, 38 were girls, according to UNICEF reports.[155] In 2017, 146 children – including 101 girls – were used in the same way.[156] Already in the first quarter of 2019, two suicide attacks have been reportedly perpetrated by girls.[157] The advent of female suicide bombers is not new nor unique to Boko Haram. Examples also exist elsewhere such as the Black Widows of Chechnya and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, although the clearly disproportionate instrumentalisation of girls (as opposed to adult women) is not as marked.[158] The use of females offers certain tactical and strategic advantages, primarily linked to broader socio-cultural biases that inform perceptions of girls and women as non-threatening, or as victims rather than perpetrators.[159] This affords female bombers the ability to move about without arousing suspicion. Gender norms further limit the probability that females will be subject to invasive searches, enabling them to escape detection.[160] Child suicide bombers, especially girls, also offer many of the same advantages – in addition to being more vulnerable to coercion, ideological indoctrination or manipulation, particularly in the aftermath of correlated violations such as forcible recruitment and/or abduction.[161]

Recent research from Save the Children underscores the increased vulnerability of children in conflict to explosive weapons and describes the resulting impact. Children have a higher probability of death and or head injuries when compared to adults, which is due to their shorter stature. Furthermore, children tend to sustain multiple injuries, including burns that affect a larger proportion of their body.[162] Children under two years old have thinner skin and are therefore more susceptible to full thickness burns. However, the differences in impact based on gender amongst children is not clear – partly due to an absence of consistent sex- and age-disaggregated data in casualty reporting.[163]

Of the 5,340 reported child deaths or injuries due to explosive weapons in the Secretary-General's 2018 report, 97% (5,200 incidents) were not disaggregated by sex.[164]

KILLING AND MAIMING OF CHILDREN: LALI'S STORY

Colombia

Lali, 17 years old, grew up in Nariño, Colombia, until armed groups came into his village.

"The first time I heard the shots, I remember that I was very scared, that I didn't know what to do. After that it was normal that there were confrontations between the legal and illegal armed groups that were present in the area. People already knew what to do and took refuge in the school, we would go and spend hours there until we no longer heard noise, but it was not always safe to return and what we did was wait until dawn and we could at least see where we were stepping.

One day I heard a loud noise and I stayed still, then I heard a soldier who shouted "we're being attacked." I saw how a grenade took the head of a soldier and I reacted, I ran very fast and I hid behind the school, they were all there, I felt that my heart was beating very strong. I was afraid and I couldn't stop remembering the explosion and the damage it had done to that soldier. I just wanted them to stop shooting and throwing bombs so I could go home."

"The guerrillas shouted and started shooting at us. I tried to climb the stairs, as fast as possible but they didn't stop shooting. I felt a cramp and couldn't keep running. My cousin and I were wounded. They let us go, wounded, with blood everywhere and with my heart racing."

By the time Lali got to safety, two hours had past, and his cousin had died from his wounds. "I was sweating, anguished and still scared, my arm began to hurt and I realized that I had another injury there. Because of the seriousness of the wounds, they sent me to [another location] and I was there for two weeks. I almost didn't get treatment because I didn't have my health card, but finally they treated me, , they gave me food and they treated my wounds.

"I had to go through therapies to recover, I was there for almost three months."

"I was afraid to come back, I couldn't hear loud noises or blows, because I was very scared, I began to tremble and sweat a lot. If this happened at school the children would laugh at me, and my mother would only hug me at home."

Where sex-disaggregated data for the same time period were available from other sources, such as the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, the largest proportion of child causalities from explosive remnants of war (ERW) were boys – 84% in 2017. This is a trend also recorded in previous years.[165] That same year, men and boys represented 87% of all casualties globally, while women and girls made up 13% (where sex was known).[166]

These numbers, and the disproportionate vulnerability of boys, are echoed in earlier studies of the Syrian crisis. As early as 2013, examination of merged data sets of 11,420 children showed that more than twice as many boys were killed than girls.[167] This gender disparity was even more remarkable when analysed together with age: four times as many boys than girls are killed in the 13 to 17 year old range, whereas the ratio between boys and girls under 8 was 1:1.[168] While explosive weapons – generally more indiscriminate in nature – accounted for 74% of the death of girls, adolescent boys were more likely to have been killed by the kind of small arms typically used in summary executions and targeted sniper fire.[169] It is plausible that the specific vulnerability of boys, particularly adolescents, may be a reflection of the gender norms that dictate when and where boys and girls spend the majority of their time. Syrian boys are possibly more exposed to risk in public spaces.[170] Adolescent boys may be perceived as threats and/or enemy combatants, in part because they are more likely to be conflated with older male counterparts.[171]

Although age was not reported, the increased exposure of boys to attacks during public demonstrations is clear from verified cases of child casualties in Gaza. 33 boys (and 1 girl) were killed by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) during demonstrations in Gaza during 2018.[172] Eighty-eight percent of them were "shot by live ammunition to the upper body, while reportedly posing no imminent threat of death or serious injury to Israeli forces. Two more boys died after being struck in the head by tear gas canisters."[173] In the West Bank, another 8 boys were killed by IDF soldiers, including being shot during demonstrations.[174]

In many contexts, children have been killed or maimed purportedly as a result of their association or perceived association with armed groups or forces. In June 2016, 44 children were killed and 7 were maimed in Wau, South Sudan – in part due to their alleged support for opposition groups.[175] There are cases in which boys have been specifically targeted owing to their gender. After the May 2015 attack by soldiers in Unity State, South Sudan, reports that soldiers had stated that "boys would be killed and castrated" were confirmed by the discovery of the bodies of castrated boys in multiple locations.[176]

THE GRAVE VIOLATIONS AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Approximately 150 million children worldwide have disabilities.[177] Specific protections secured for children with disabilities through:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),[178]

- The UNCRC, and OPAC.

These are applicable in both conflict and non-conflict settings.

Recently there have been efforts to consolidate gains, specifically the adoption of the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action[179] at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

Existing disabilities can render children vulnerable to the potential risks and impacts of all six of the grave violations. Reports from the World Health Organisation (WHO) testify to the increased vulnerability of children with disabilities to be targeted for violence when compared to children without disabilities, noting that they are 3.7 more likely to be victims of violence – and 2.7 times more likely in relation to sexual violence specifically.[180] **The deliberate targeting of children because of their disabilities was evident in the practices of the Iraqi-based youth wing of Al-Qaeda. Called "Birds of Paradise," the group instrumentalised children under age 14 – including those with mental disabilities – to perpetrate suicide attacks.[181]**

According to UNICEF guidance, some 10% of the population under age 14 should be estimated to consist of children with disabilities in all settings, with a likely higher proportion in conflict-affected areas.[182] However, children with disabilities are rarely included in data collection exercises,[183] while data are not consistently nor systematically disaggregated by disability. This makes it difficult analyse how disability and gender intersect to compound or counteract the risks and impacts of the grave violations, and to ensure an adequate programming response. Further research and analysis is required to better understand and address the impact of disability on children in relation to the grave violations.

RAPE AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is experienced worldwide and is endemic in both conflict and non-conflict settings.[184] Its prevalence is widely under-reported owing to factors such as social stigmatisation, fear of reprisal or rejection, and a lack of access to or confidence in the legal system to deliver justice.[185] The dearth of representative data makes it difficult to measure the exact scope of the problem. In most conflict-afflicted contexts, sexual violence increases at the onset of conflict – often used for tactical purposes.[186] Globally, the overwhelming majority of survivors are women and girls. In the Secretary General's 2019 report, out of 933 verified incidents of sexual violence against children, almost 95% (881) were listed as targeting girls. The exact proportion may be higher, with 38 incidents of sexual violence in Syria not disaggregated by sex – including rape, forced marriage, trafficking, and sexual violence against children deprived of their liberty.[187]

Sexual violence against children of all genders in conflict settings can manifest in a myriad of ways, including deliberate sexual mutilations, rape with objects or weapons, deliberately humiliating and/or public sexual acts with family members or animals, amongst many others.[188] For girls, ethnic cleansing can be one of the driving forces behind sexual violence, with the objective of 'erasing' or 'polluting' the ethnic group of the victim. Sometimes the aim is the destruction of female survivors' 'purity' or 'honour' – sabotaging future marital prospects or family standing.[189] Girls abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, for example, have been subjected to forced impregnation.[190] The UN reports cases also in Burundi, Chad and Sudan.[191] Girls can also be subjected to forced abortion. In Colombia, the FARC-EP implemented a 'sexual freedom' policy in which girls as young as 12 were required to comply with contraceptive measures such as inter-uterine devices or hormonal injections.[192] Any subsequent pregnancies were dealt with through forced abortion. In 2018, a 17-year-old girl was subjected to sexual abuse as well as forced to use injectable contraception by dissident elements of FARC-EP.[193] These physical manifestations of sexual violence have significant and long-term impact not just on physical health, but on mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The strategic targeting of women and girls with a view to controlling or eliminating their childbearing capacities continues to play out, given their specific utility vis-à-vis ethnic or communal survival.[194] Recent atrocities perpetrated against Rohingya women and girls – including various forms of sexual violence such as "rape, gang rape…, forced public nudity…, and sexual slavery in military captivity" – are indicative of a broader strategy of collective persecution and forced displacement.[195]

The forced marriage of children, when perpetrated by members of an armed force or group, can and should be monitored as part of the grave violation of 'rape and other forms of sexual violence'. According to the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, the forced marriage of girls to armed men in Syria has "become commonplace."[196] In some cases, the consent or complicity of parents has been coerced through physical threats, financial incentivisation and even home visits conducted by delegations of women.[197] There is some evidence to suggest that parents have opted to make marital arrangements with community members to circumvent the possibility of marriage to fighters, as part of a perceived coping mechanism.[198]

A growing body of research shows that child, early and forced marriage often increases as a direct consequence of conflict and has multiple consequences on both the immediate well-being and future prospects of child brides and child grooms.[199] Globally, CEFM exacts its heaviest toll on girls – with 1 in 5 girls married before age 18[200] Some data indicate that, in comparison, just 5% of boys are married before age 19.[201] Although the first ever analysis of available data on child grooms underscores the extent to which boys can also be impacted. In certain conflict settings such as in Central African Republic (CAR), 28% of boys were found to be married before the age of 18.[202] Research in Afghanistan has shown that child grooms face additional pressures to raise money for bride prices or dowries, as well as starting and supporting families.[203] However, girls are still more likely to be married early and experience more severe impacts on their individual health as a result.[204] In addition – unlike boys – girls are faced with greater barriers in relation to traditional gender and power dynamics within family settings.[205]

The stigma of sexual violence alone can be lethal. Worldwide, it has led to retaliatory attacks, so-called 'honour' killings, suicide, untreated diseases and unsafe abortion.[206] While some impacts are specific to girls, such as obstetric fistula, pregnancy, and the risks associated with unsafe abortion, the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence can be debilitating for children of all genders. Physical injuries such as abrasions, lacerations, bruising and broken bones are common. There is evidence to show that this may be even more so for very young girls whose bodies are not yet biologically prepared for intercourse.[207] This is in addition to the discrimination and stigmatisation girl survivors may face as a result of gender norms associated with

SEXUAL VIOLENCE: ZAHRA'S STORY

Syria

Zahra, 17, is from Azerbaijan, and was taken with her siblings to North West Syria six years ago by their father, to an area controlled by ISIS. There was fierce fighting around them and they were displaced many times. One airstrike caused their house to collapse around them, but luckily they escaped without serious injury. The family tried to escape from ISIS but were caught by fighters. The children were separated from their father and later saw him being killed on an ISIS propaganda video. Zahra was taken back to Raqqa to marry a fighter. When she was forced to marry, Zahra was just fourteen years old and her husband was twenty-two. She didn't understand what men or marriage was, but she became pregnant just three months later, *"when I fell pregnant, I was still playing with a skip rope"*. Zahra gave birth to a healthy son, Omar*, who is now almost five years old.

Meanwhile she had no idea where her siblings were or whether they were even still alive. There were airstrikes "every single day without fail" and she witnessed beheadings, executions, and torture. Her husband was killed in battle and she was forced to marry another man. She always wanted to escape but knew that the risks would be enormous.

The siblings hate life at the camp and are scared of the other people living there. They want to return to Azerbaijan and be reunited with their mother. Zahra works at the Child Friendly Space, where her son and siblings also attend and receive psychosocial support.

Zahra's story in her own words:

"They said I was old enough to marry and was forced to wed a Turkish fighter who was older than me. Life with my new husband was scary and confusing. I was so young and didn't know about men or marriage - I didn't even know how to cook rice. Just three months later I was pregnant, but I didn't understand what was happening to my body or what to expect. I was still playing with a skip rope while I was pregnant. I later gave birth to my son, Omar, and my childhood ended.

I hated my life. My father had been killed, I'd lost my siblings, I was in a foreign country where I didn't speak the language, and I was married to a man I didn't know. There were airstrikes every single day without fail and I could see missiles falling from my window.

My first husband died in battle and I was forced to marry a different fighter. I tried to refuse, but they kept saying that it was for my own good. Can you imagine that I was a widow and with my second husband when I was 14 years old? I always wanted to escape, but knew that deserters are raped, set on fire or hanged naked in the square.

In the end I found a smuggler to get us out. We got into a car and drove through the desert but then reached a point where it was too dangerous to continue by car so we had to continue by foot. I was so scared that we'd be caught - ISIS said that if we were captured, they would rape me and take the children away.

Finally we reached the camp but I was still so afraid. I burst into tears because I thought the guards would rape me. But they treated us so well."

I'd like to say; please, please, please take us home. I want to be reunited with my mother, my language, my country. When I get home I will never leave again. I want my child to have a good life without all this horror and misery. I want to wake up in the morning, wear my own clothes, eat breakfast, go to work, maybe even go to the gym! I just want a normal life. I don't think there is anything more beautiful than that.

Our parents have destroyed our lives. We are only children and we want to go home. We have done nothing wrong. Our father was slaughtered by ISIS and I was forced to have a baby by a fighter when I was still a child. Nobody hates ISIS more than I do."

honour and purity, and the direct psychological impacts more broadly of recovering from trauma of sexual violence. Subsequent psychological trauma, mental health issues and distress are commonplace, sometimes resulting in suicide.[208]

Girls who become pregnant subsequent to rape face a multitude of challenges, including lack of prenatal/antenatal care and possibly life-threatening complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Maternal mortality rates for girls aged 15 and younger are five times higher than for women in their twenties.[209] Girls face elevated risks of anaemia, eclampsia, haemorrhage, as well as, premature, prolonged or obstructed labour.[210] Globally, complications from pregnancy and childbirth is the leading cause of death of adolescent girls aged 15-19.[211] In emergency and fragile contexts, more than 500 women and adolescent girls die from pregnancy-related complications every day.[212]

The provision of sexual and reproductive health services that are adapted to the needs of children, and as part of an overall package of integrated care, in the context of conflict is therefore a necessity for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.[213]

This may include, for example, the timely provision of child post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits in the event that the incident of sexual violence was still recent, or alternatively access to appropriate pre-natal, ante-natal or safe post-abortion care.

Despite increasing international visibility, there remain significant gaps in knowledge and broader understanding of the challenges faced in conflict settings by child survivors across the gender spectrum.[214] Because the majority of survivors and those at risk of sexual violence are women and girls, actors addressing sexual and gender-based violence have historically focused primarily on females. While there are attempts to better document incidents of sexual violence against boys, this continues to be limited. For example, the Secretary-General's 2019 Annual Report on CAAC includes information on just 14 boys in 5 of 15 countries on the Security Council's formal agenda.[215] A continued focus on SGBV, including within humanitarian contexts, provides an opportunity to better understand and address the contributing factors, risks, and impact upon boys. Given the ongoing prevalence of SGBV against women and girls, efforts to unpack the driving forces behind the targeting of males should not detract from addressing issues facing female survivors.

Given the absence of verifiable data and longer-term trend analysis on boy survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, the contributing factors of the targeting of boys can mainly be hypothesised. In cases where boys have been specifically targeted, such as Syria, it has sometimes been perpetrated with the underlying objective of the feminisation or emasculation of the enemy.[216] The rationale for this is rooted in the wider patriarchal perception that females are less than males. While gender inequality is recognised as one of the key drivers behind sexual violence, other reasons have also been documented: humiliation, fomenting fear, forced de-identification, severing family ties, and eliciting security intelligence, amongst others.[217]

Sexual violence against men and boys can take many different forms, sometimes distinct from sexual violence against women and girls.[218] This can comprise being forced to watch acts of sexual violence on others, as well as being forced to perform sexual acts on another person – including their own family members or the dead.[219] Other manifestations include "castration, sterilisation, genital shocks and beatings, forced masturbation of self and others, insertion of objects into the urethra,…oral and anal rape with objects such as rifles, sticks or broken bottles."[220] There are also reported cases of older boys committing sexual violence against younger boys within conflict settings.[221]

The All Survivors Project has highlighted that diverse cases of conflict-related sexual violence, particularly against boys, in CAR have not been formally reported under the MRM. One example is an incident documented by MINUSCA, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic, in September 2015 of the forcible circumcision of 15 boys during captivity by non-state armed groups.[222] The International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) has

argued in other conflict settings that forced circumcision should be categorised as sexual violence.[223]

Boy survivors can suffer from a wide-range of consequences: physical injuries and conditions can include anal fissures, painful urination, bloody stools, genital mutilation, forced circumcision, and erectile dysfunction, as well as testicular, penile or rectal pain;[224] psychological impacts such as "shame, loss of confidence, sleep disorders, feelings of powerlessness, confusion and suicidal thoughts;"[225] and, issues with social exclusion, stigmatisation and family reintegration. The pervasiveness of culturally or religiously prescribed gender-specific attributes, behaviour and expectations around the masculinity, sexuality and protective functions of males should not be under-estimated.[226] It can lead male survivors to have "feelings of emasculation and self-blame" as well as fears and anxieties about being perceived as homosexual.[227] Former male detainees in Syria, for example, are viewed as 'heroes' upon release, but there is a silencing and denial of the question of sexual violence during detention despite knowledge of its widespread nature.[228]

BACHA BAZI:
Sexual Violence Against Boys in Afghanistan

Prevalent across Afghanistan, the practice of *'bacha bazi'* – roughly translated to mean "boy play" or 'dancing boys' – involves the sexual objectification, exploitation and abuse of young boys. Socio-cultural norms in Afghanistan confine women to private spaces, preventing public interactions between men and women, as well as prohibiting their participation at social events. This void has been historically filled by pre-adolescent and adolescent boys.[229] Boys are dressed up and made-up to resemble girls, forced to dance at private social events, and sometimes subsequently compelled to perform or be subjected to sexual acts.

While boys are used for the purposes of social and sexual gratification, the phenomenon is also inter-linked with societal perceptions of power and status.[230] *Bacha bazi* are commonly employed by men in positions of power – including members of armed forces and groups – for the purposes of entertainment.[231] This partly explains why the practice is not commonly viewed as homosexual or paedophilic in nature. In fact, it is often understood as a cultural tradition or custom, rather than a criminal act punishable by law.

While the practice was driven underground during the Taliban's imposition of *Sharia law, bacha bazi* has resurged in many corners of the country. It persists despite revisions

and additions to the Penal Code in 2018 that protect male and intersex children, including *Bacha bazi.*

Although the practice is widely reported, formal verification is challenging due to the extreme sensitivities involved.[232] While the Secretary-General's 2019 Annual Report includes only two verified cases perpetrated by Afghan police,[233] the 2018 report includes 78 documented cases of sexual violence against boys, the majority of which relate to the practice of *Bacha bazi.*[234]

While sometimes boys are kept for the purposes of *Bacha bazi* alone, sexual violence against boys in the form of *Bacha bazi* can intersect and overlap with other grave violations such as recruitment and use as well as abduction. Impunity for perpetrators is widespread. These boys, as is the case with many survivors, "…risk being twice traumatized: first by the action of the perpetrator, then again by the reaction of society and the State."[235] Beyond the daily abuse encountered by these boys during their enslavement, the impact of being *Bacha bazi* is profound and long-lasting. Once they reach adulthood, these former dancers typically face societal and familial stigmatisation and rejection. They may also have to grapple with issues related to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, and are frequently driven to return to prostitution of some kind because of their limited economic opportunities.[236] They may also suffer severe health-related problems, including internal bleeding, broken teeth, bone fractures, throat injuries and intestinal protrusions.[237]

While there is a paucity of both child-specific and conflict-related quantitative research in relation to the sexual victimisation of individuals of diverse SOGIE, studies from other non-conflict settings such as the United States, United Kingdom and Canada indicate higher rates of sexual violence against homosexual and bisexual men, and limited access to inclusive services.[238] In Syria, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry confirms reports from human rights campaigners that atrocities have been perpetrated against people who are or perceived to be LGBTI, including "torture, stoning, beheading, and burning people alive."[239] Studies by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) show that LGBTI persons are targeted in both Syria and in

their countries of asylum by "multiple opportunistic perpetrators."[240] A global review of efforts to protect LGBTI asylum-seekers and refugees reported that parties to conflict can "disproportionately subject LGBTI persons to discrimination, homicide, torture, displacement, sexual violence, amongst other…violations."[241] Such discrimination has also taken the form of "anti-gay pamphleteering, beating and murdering LGBTI protestors and their defenders…[and] sexual exploitation of transgender individuals."[242] It can only be assumed that in times of conflict when violence is enacted with impunity, those who are perceived or identify as LGBTI will also face increased risk.

ATTACKS AGAINST SCHOOLS AND/OR HOSPITALS

Based on recent Annual Reports on CAAC, as well as complementary publications from the GCPEA and the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, it is clear that the current state of attacks on education and healthcare is truly catastrophic. In almost every country mentioned in the Secretary-General's 2017 Annual Report, infrastructural damage to schools and hospitals from air strikes and ground operations was evident.[243]

When it comes to conflict-related attacks on health, over 700 incidents were recorded in 2017 alone.[244] In 2014, Syrian hospitals were subjected to shelling or bombing over a hundred times – "…more than had been documented in any other conflict." By 2018, the numbers were five times worse.[245]

Attacks against health facilities sometimes fall under the category of so-called 'impersonal violations,' given there may not have been a physical impact on a specific child at that point in time despite later substantial consequences for children.[246] In some cases, where attacks have taken the form of aerial bombardment, it may not always be possible to accurately document the number, age or gender of people affected.[247] Coupled with a lack of explicit focus on the unique experience of children amongst several key actors[248] – even in

cases where data on children could have been collected and analysed – this means that much of the reporting around attacks on hospitals is not disaggregated. In fact, **none of the UN-verified incidents reported in the 2019 or 2018 Annual Reports on CAAC were disaggregated by sexand/or age.[249]**

It is difficult therefore to extract a fuller analysis regarding the potential influence of gender in both the immediate and long-term. However, there have been individual cases which underscore a gender dimension that is likely lost in the current data collection and analysis practices. The Taliban-led attacks on Afghani doctors providing medical services to women and girls, for example, is indicative of deep-seated socio-cultural beliefs around the pervasion of Western-inspired practices.[250]

Attacks on health facilities and healthcare workers can result in limited, damaged or non-existent obstetric or gynaecological equipment, or the absence of female doctors.[251] Where closer facilities have closed due to attacks, women and girls may not be able to access service points further afield, owing to childcare responsibilities, lack of financial resources to travel, limited mobility due to increased safety fears and/or to the persistence of restrictive social norms related to how, when and why women and girls are able to exit the confines of their homes to access and use public spaces.

Unfortunately, much of this kind of secondary harm analysis as it pertains to gender is often overlooked. The impact of attacks on hospitals on all population sub-groups is severe. However, these immediate and long-lasting effects may be experienced differently according to gender. In Yemen, for example, analysis conducted by

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS: ABRAR'S STORY

Yemen

12-year-old Abrar is originally from northern Yemen. She was forced to flee her home with her family soon after the outbreak of the conflict, after her school was hit by an airstrike. Following the attack when she saw many of her friends injured and her school destroyed, Abrar became afraid of going to school again and refused to get back in a classroom for three years. In that time, Abrar forgot how to read and write.

"I first went to school when I was six years old, and I had very high marks until Grade Two. However, just two days after the war started my school was destroyed in an airstrike and I had to drop out.

Luckily I stayed at home the day my school was bombed, as my father was afraid that I would get hurt in the airstrikes. My school was hit around midday when all the students were leaving or playing in the yard. I heard the explosion so ran out to see what had happened. It was so horrible. Two of my friends were badly injured, and I felt so scared when I saw blood all over their bodies and uniforms. Some of the shrapnel reached my house, but thankfully none of my family was injured.

I always feel upset when I think about the airstrikes, my bombed school and my injured friends. I thought that it was the end of my education and I'd never get the chance to go to school again. I heard the explosion and saw the destruction with my eyes — it was the saddest day of my life.

My father bought a truck the morning after my school was bombed and we fled. I felt so sad when the truck was driving away from my home and I saw my home and flattened school disappear out of view.

After we fled, I didn't go to school for three years as I was scared. However, I still felt left out and sad when I saw other children and my brothers carrying their school bags. I stayed at home and helped my mother do the washing, cooking food, cleaning the tent, and looking after my brothers.

Six months ago, Save the Children staff visited us in our tent and told us about their free school, which they encouraged me to join. On the first day I was really scared, but after a week my fear had disappeared. I told my family I wanted to carry on going to school, and I've been there ever since. I love the Save the Children school because it feels safe, the teachers are kind, and I learn lots of new things. I'm really happy because I can read and write again."

CARE International showed that – just one year into the crisis – the reported number of pregnant and lactating women had spiked from 22.4% before the crisis started to 44.3%.[252] Researchers found that limited or lack of access to family planning services, compounded with husbands spending more time at home due to loss of employment during the ongoing conflict, was responsible for this trend.[253] The reduction in medical personnel can have serious impacts as well. In countries where coverage has been affected, maternal mortality rates are higher – partly due to lack of skilled personnel for assisted births.[254]

Verified **attacks on schools** have increased 400-fold since 2005.[255] In various contexts around the world, schools and universities are being deliberately bombed, torched, and destroyed, and students and teachers are being abducted, raped, recruited, and even killed, at and on the way to school. Schools and universities are used by armed forces and armed groups as bases, barracks and temporary shelters, defensive and offensive positions or observation posts, weapons' stores, and detention and interrogation centres. Educational facilities are also used for military training and to forcibly recruit children. Sometimes schools and universities are used partially or entirely for military purposes, making them inaccessible to students. The presence of troops and weapons inside a school can turn the school into a target for attack by opposing forces. In addition to the risks of death or severe injury from attacks, students may be exposed to recruitment or sexual violence perpetrated by soldiers, they may witness violence, and their safety may be jeopardised by the presence of weapons or unexploded ordnance.

Four years into ongoing hostilities, some 700,000 children in eastern Ukraine are obliged to learn in appalling conditions, "…sitting in classrooms pock-marked with bullet holes and playing in schoolyards with unexploded ordnance."[256] The 400,000 children who live within 20 kilometres of the 'contact line' are especially vulnerable to periodic shelling and the pervasive use of landmines.[257] In Syria, prior to the conflict, there was near universal enrolment of children in primary school. It took just two years of civil war to "…erase all education progress made since the start of the century."[258]

Like hospitals, attacks on schools are rarely reported with any sex disaggregation or related analysis in the Secretary-General's Annual Reports. Nonetheless, **there is also a growing trend of systematic attacks on students and school infrastructure to prevent or interfere specifically with the provision of education for girls.** According to the GCPEA, female

students and teachers have been "directly targeted, including through bombings of girls' schools, abduction, rape and harassment, in at least 18 countries facing conflict and insecurity."[259] In Afghanistan, for example, the GCPEA reported in late 2018 that in the last six years the country has witnessed an increasing proportion of attacks that have targeted schools for girls, as well as female students and teachers.[260] In Nigeria, Boko Haram's attacks on schools, and the subsequent abduction of hundreds of girls – as well as the name of the insurgency itself ('Boko Haram' is Hausa for 'Western education is forbidden') – collectively represents a clear ideological stance against Western education.[261] Indeed, the group later "boasted of the kidnapping as a warning against girls participating in Western education."[262]

Incidents in Pakistan have had similar ideology. In January 2015, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was detonated inside a girls' high school, levelling three classrooms. The group responsible for the attack issued a written warning calling girls' schools "brothels" and warning the community to stop educating females. The note referenced an attack on a school in Peshawar, Pakistan, and stated that a failure to cease girls' education would result in a similar attack."[263] Indeed several schools across the country have received threats demanding closure due to their Western curriculum;[264] and media reports suggest that more than 1,100 girls' schools have been destroyed in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) alone in the past decade.[265] At times, attacks on girls' education have manifested in threats and direct targeting of their teachers. [266]

While sexual violence is considered to be a standalone grave violation, when these incidents occur against students on their way to and from school by members of armed forces or armed groups, or at school itself, this is classed as an attack on education.[267] According to the GCPEA, parties to conflict were responsible for sexual violence in both educational settings and along school routes in at least 17 countries.[268] Perceived threats of sexual harassment or violence can restrict female students to their homes, especially adolescent girls – often viewed as being at greatest risk of attack.[269]

In some cases, boys may be at increased risk of attacks on schools given that in some cases they are more likely to be present in educational facilities.[270] Moreover, **educational attacks related to boys have sometimes been linked to their perceived potential or actual participation in hostilities.** There have been cases in Iraq and Syria were ISIL militia divided male and female school children,

and subsequently abducted or killed the boys.[271] Boys attending religious schools in Somalia, known as *madrasas*, have been targeted by Al-Shabaab.[272] Encouraged to do well in class, boys were promised a 'reward' as enticement. The 'reward' was being taken and forcibly recruited by Al-Shabaab forces. In one incident in Aleppo, Syria, approximately 150 boys were abducted by ISIL elements on their way home from school exams. While in captivity they were subjected to physical abuse and indoctrination into violent practices.[273]

Attacks on schools have long-lasting implications for all children regardless of gender. The loss of educational opportunities – due to temporary suspension or permanent drop out – can lead to negative outcomes for children's prospects in terms of basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as, employment and other economic opportunities affecting both boys and girls.[274] Involvement in the attack itself can be devastating for individual children's physical and mental health.[275] Affected children in Nigeria have reported "recurring nightmares, anxiety, being easily frightened, an inability to focus, and other signs commonly associated with trauma."[276] Such repercussions pose significant impediments to the pursuit of education and the continuation of daily life in general,[277] including loss of economic and personal autonomy, amongst others.

However, the specific ways in which girls and boys experience the consequences of an attack on education is linked to the prevailing cultural context, and any harmful gender norms and practices are often further exacerbated.[278]

As a result of this, girls face different immediate and long-term consequences to being out of school.[279] There is evidence that girls, once out of school, are less likely to return to their education.[280] Enrolment in secondary schools is nearly 30% lower in conflict-affected countries (relative to developing countries), and enrolment rates are far lower for girls.[281] Across conflict-affected countries, 11 million girls of lower-secondary age are out of school.[282]

The reasons for this can be diverse. Where schools are used for military purposes, the presence of armed men often discourages families from sending their daughters, in particular, to school for fear of sexual and other violence. Increased insecurity and risks prevent parents and caregivers from allowing their female children to return to school after an attack, preferring to restrict them to the home or possibly opting for child marriage as a perceived protection measure.[283] In some countries such as Pakistan – where child marriage is pervasive[284] – it is both a "…consequence and a cause of girls not attending school."[285] Faced with limited resources, harmful gender norms may encourage parents to prioritise the education of their male children – and even more so during times of conflict.[286] Limited or lack of education for girls can have knock-on effects on any future children they may bear. Conversely, higher levels of education among girls have been correlated with lower levels of infant and child mortality across many countries.[287]

ABDUCTION

UN-verified incidents in 2018 showed a total of 2307 cases of child abduction, including 1,951 boys, 342 girls and 14 cases of unknown sex.[288] Motivations for abduction of children in conflict settings have historically been 1) for recruitment and use in armed forces and armed groups; and, 2) for use in child exploitation (physical labour, sexual slavery, etc.).[289] While abduction is recognised as a primary form of forced recruitment of children by armed forces and armed groups, it also serves as an entry-point for exposure to further grave violations. The drivers behind abduction may be predicated on gendered expectations of what purpose child abductees will later serve.

At times, abductions can be very widespread, with a reported 70% increase in cases of child abduction globally in 2017.[290] This has comprised cases of large-scale abductions, which have been a common feature for a number of years, including several infamous incidents of mass abduction such as that of 139 girls by the LRA from a school in northern Uganda in 1996 and mass abductions of both girls and boys by the LRA in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2008.[291] Indeed, the LRA has been consistently cited for the presence of children throughout their ranks – including members of its top leadership – many of whom had been abducted themselves.[292]

More recently, in Somalia, 550 children (predominantly boys) were abducted by Al-Shabaab in July and August 2017, in a year which saw over 1,600 children abducted. This is double the number of children abducted the year before.[293] Abductions of children, the vast majority of whom were boys (1,479 boys, compared to 130 girls), were carried out purportedly for their later use in combat and support roles in the ongoing violence.[294] A similar rationale was applied to door-to-door searches conducted by Johnson Olony's armed group in Upper Nile, South Sudan – where 36 boys above 12 years old were abducted for the purposes of recruitment.[295]

The high-profile abduction of 276 girls from their school in Chibok, northern Nigeria in April 2014 by Boko Haram reveals another *modus operandi* behind abductions – to curtail the access of girls to Western schooling. Videos subsequently released by Boko Haram showed the group's intention to punish girls for their attendance.[296] Abduction in this case cannot be disconnected from the attack on education it represents, nor from an evolving bias against girls. In the early years of the insurgency, Boko Haram "did not broadly target women and girls based on their gender."[297] Since mid-2013, however, numbers have escalated dramatically. Although exact figures are difficult to establish, estimates range anywhere from 2,000 to 8,000 women and girls have been abducted.[298] This trend has continued in recent years, including another large-scale abduction of more than 100 girls from their school in early 2018.[299]

Once in captivity, female abductees have been subjected to other violations such as forced religious conversion, extreme physical labour, trafficking, as well as, participation in armed operations and sexual violence including forced marriage and unwanted pregnancies.[300] The impact of abduction is long-lasting even after a successful rescue, escape or exit.

The extensive use of female suicide bombers has galvanised fear, suspicion and further stigma against girls returning from captivity. Additional challenges range from family reintegration, social isolation, and psychological trauma to needs stemming from any secondary consequences such as exposure to STIs including HIV, obstetric complications, pregnancy, birth and primary care responsibilities for any resulting children. Children fathered by Boko Haram insurgents are vulnerable to marginalisation and outright rejection. Amongst some, there is a belief that "children conceived as a result of sexual violence or sexual relations… will become the next generation of fighters, as they carry the violent characteristics of their biological fathers."[301]

The fear of abduction can lead families to limit education opportunities for female children. In Libya, for example, OHCHR reported that in areas under Ansar al-Sharia control, parents "were afraid to send their daughters to school for fear they would be abducted."[302] These same fears have been echoed across various other contexts.[303]

ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN: HALIMA'S STORY

Nigeria

Halima, 16, was abducted by insurgents in Northern Nigeria and was married to one of them for 4 years. Having escaped, she is now at a displacement camp in Maiduguri. In addition to providing her with clothes, blankets, mats and soap, Save the Children supports caseworkers to give her emotional and psychosocial support and help her start to recover from her experiences.

"I was captured when I was 13. I was with them for 4 years. They killed my father, then tied my mother to a tree and eventually shot her. When they had killed everyone else they told me to come with them. I resisted so they threatened me with a gun. They tied my hands and tied me to a tree. They told me I would get married to one of them. I told them I never would after they had killed my family. They told me I had no choice. I was married two days later. I didn't even know who he was. I didn't even see him during the ceremony.

All I could think was that my family was dead and I had no-one. The women were all kept in their tents and no-one was allowed to see each other. When my husband came I made trouble. I wouldn't get him water or cook him food or acknowledge he was my husband.

Sometimes my husband and I would talk, and I would say 'I will escape', but he said 'you never will'. I was completely isolated the whole time. I was not allowed to mingle with others. Sometimes I would go a whole week without food. I could only go between my room and the latrine.

Eventually I became pregnant. When I was 8 months pregnant came the news that my husband had been killed in the fighting. Soon after, I heard the sounds of war and I knew it was the military. Others ran to the bush, but I ran towards them. The military were surprised and asked why I didn't run away. I said I had been waiting for this moment. They gave me bread and water and took me away. Eventually they brought back the other women as well."

DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

In the early years of the MRM, this violation was rarely referenced or documented in the Secretary-General's Annual Reports on CAAC. There is now international interest in the subject of humanitarian access – a principle which is enshrined within the Geneva Conventions.[304] Deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers and the disruption of humanitarian convoys and aid supplies have garnered media attention, as has the denial of access and travel to aid workers.[305] Whilst there is data disaggregated by gender is limited, indications are that humanitarian access is an ongoing and serious concern. Between 2010 and 2017, reported incidents of denial of humanitarian access increased by 1,500%.[306] This likely reflects a sharper focus on this violation, increased documentation and a reduction in humanitarian space in numerous conflicts over time.[307] In contrast, the Secretary-General's Annual Report covering 2018 shows a 65% decrease in verified incidents from the previous year.[308] However, this may be indicative of increased restrictions to gathering information and barriers to access, as opposed to a general improvement.[309]

In Syria over 400,000 people are trapped inside besieged areas and blocked from life-saving humanitarian aid.[310] Where near universal healthcare coverage once existed, now some 12.8 million Syrians have little or no access to basic healthcare services.[311] In 2016 children in the Gaza Strip faced the highest rate since 2010 of delayed and denied applications to cross the Erez checkpoint for the express purpose of medical treatment. Altogether 2,490 children (1,026 girls and 1,464 boys) were delayed, while another 87 children were outright denied.[312]

A deeper analysis of the potential gendered dimensions of the denial of humanitarian access is impossible at present. This is largely due to the historical lack of data on this violation, coupled with a lack of systematic disaggregation across both formal MRM reporting as well as publications from other actors such as the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition.[313]

With the notable exception of reporting from Israel and State of Palestine, none of the data related to denial of

humanitarian access was disaggregated by sex in either of the Secretary-General's Annual Reports from 2018 or 2019.[314] This may partly be due to the nature of the incidents, sometimes categorised as an 'impersonal violation' where the direct physical impact on a specific child is not always evident but for which consequences for children are probable.[315]

It is possible that girls suffer more severely due to cultural and social restrictions on their movements, exacerbating their dependency on adult and/or male counterparts, and thereby further limiting their access to essential aid and services.[316] It is clear that additional primary research would be required to fully establish the scale and scope of this violation as it pertains to gender and age.

DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS: AZIZ'S STORY

Myanmar

According to UN reporting in 2018, humanitarian access to affected townships in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state was systematically denied after 25 August 2017.

After fleeing violence in Myanmar, Aziz*(8), now lives with his mother Sharifa* and other family in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Their village had been attacked repeatedly in 2017, including one attack where Aziz was separated from his family and was shot twice in his leg. He also fractured his arm when he fell after being struck by the bullets. When his family found him, they had to take him into hiding with them for one week, during which time he couldn't access any medical services. By the time he was able to access a hospital, his leg had become infected and had to be amputated. His injured arm also did not make a full recovery, and now he only has partial use of his hand. His mother Sharifa remembers what happened:

"An armed group came to our village and started shooting and beating people. When we heard the armed groups starting to shoot people, we ran to a nearby hill. I didn't realise Aziz wasn't with us until we got to the hill. We searched everywhere for him.

"I was told that someone saw Aziz running from where he had been playing, and took his hand to bring him to us. But then he got hit with two bullets in his leg. He broke his arm as he fell to the ground, after being hit.

"When the armed groups left, the girls and the women stayed in the hills, but the men and boys started searching for missing people. There were many people lying on the ground, dead and alive. That's when they found Aziz. He was totally senseless. We thought he had died. When we realized he was still alive, we took him to the hill with us and stayed there hiding for a week. During that week, we couldn't do anything for his leg. He lost so much blood, he turned white. There was nothing we could do.

"When it was safer, we left the hill, and took Aziz to a hospital. The doctor saw him, and said he had to amputate his leg. They amputated his leg from his body. We stayed with him in hospital after his operation. It was very expensive to treat him there. We sold all our property to make sure he could receive treatment. After 25 days, we took him home."

"The village was bombed by the armed groups. Then they started shooting at us. All our family members and neighbors fled the village and went to the hills to hide. When we were on the mountain, we watched our village burn down. The next day we started to walk. We didn't have any food or water.

"We walked for nine days to get to Bangladesh. We camped in villages, on riverbanks, on mountains. There was very heavy rain and it was very difficult to walk. In some places the clay and mud went up to our thighs. I was carrying Kohima*, and my older daughter was carrying Aziz. We passed some villages that had been burned to the ground, and other villages that were still standing but were completely deserted."

Now in Bangladesh, Aziz was provided a prosthetic leg and crutch from Save the Children, who also helped him and his family relocate to a flatter part of the camp. He now loves to play hide and seek.

"I can go out here. I can go anywhere if needed.

PART II:

GENDER, AGE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CHALLENGES TO POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Holding individual or State perpetrators to account for crimes committed against children is a necessary first step to securing justice for children in conflict. This accountability can be sought through different legal and political means. When exercised judiciously, political accountability has the potential to offer dividends in terms of justice for children in conflict. This is evidenced by the degree of interest and importance accorded to the annexes of the Secretary-General's Annual Report on CAAC. As part of a 'naming and shaming' strategy which has incrementally expanded over time,[317] armed forces and armed groups are listed within these annexes if found responsible for the recruitment and use of children,[318] sexual violence as well as killing and maiming (since 2009),[319] attacks on schools and/or hospitals (since 2011),[320] and abductions (since 2015).[321] These are commonly known as 'trigger violations'[322] and are grounds for listing parties to conflict.

In order to be delisted, parties to conflict must agree to comply with international law through Action Plans consisting of time bound and concrete steps to prevent and address grave violations. Within the framework of the MRM, a 'toolbox' of approaches and actions are available to achieve compliance with international law. This repertoire covers a number of measures, including political visits, technical assistance, improvements on peacekeeping mandates and even the threat or enforcement of UN sanctions regimes.[323] It is worth noting that while recommendations for such measures stem from the Security Council Working Group for Children and Armed Conflict (SCWG-CAAC) which reviews of the Secretary-General's Annual Report, the final decisions on how to proceed are made uniquely by the Security Council.[324]

Similarly, recommendations issued by the SRSG-CAAC to list a party to conflict can only be approved and accepted (or not) by the Secretary-General before publication of the Annual Report itself.[325] Such decisions can therefore be intentionally or unintentionally subjected to political interferences depending on interests of individual Member States on the Security Council and their close allies. This is one of the reasons why there is sometimes a lack of synchronisation between recommendations and decision-making at different levels within the MRM architecture.[326]

These challenges notwithstanding, the broader CAAC agenda has yielded concrete results. In 2018, South Sudan became the 168th country to ratify OPAC. Furthermore, the Child Soldiers Prevention Act List[327] from the US State Department has been updated, with the restoration of Myanmar and Iraq as well as the addition of Iran and Niger for the first time.[328]

The MRM is a unique mechanism, elevating the issue of violations committed against children in conflict and placing them firmly on the agenda of the Security Council ensuring action and accountability. Political accountability leveraged specifically through the MRM architecture has given rise to some positive progress. Annual Reports (with accompanying annexes) and Action Plans informed by the MRM process represent a critical entry point for bringing perpetrators to account. Currently CTFMRs to monitor grave violations against children are operational in 20 locations worldwide, and 31 Action Plans have been adopted.[329] Over the same period, 13 parties to conflict have been delisted.[330]

While more violations now trigger the listing of parties to conflict, Action Plans continue to focus primarily on steps to end the recruitment and use of children – a violation which primarily affects boys. When overlaid with gender-driven stereotyped perceptions of boys as threats, not only at community level, but also within broader global peace and security, it is no surprise that this violation has historically garnered the greatest attention from Member States.[331] At present, only three Action Plans expressly include annexes on sexual violence (South Sudan, Afghanistan and Mali), while another includes killing and maiming of children (Somalia).[332] All Action Plans, while designed to address the violation(s) for which a party is listed, do cover prevention of all six grave violations. However, given the significant disproportionality with which girls and boys experience the various violations, there is a need for Action Plans to more systematically cover all violations in future.

Decisions around deterrence, compliance and accountability have historically not given due consideration to sexual violence – a violation which overwhelmingly affects girls relative to boys – as a standalone criterion. The recruitment and use of children has been considered to be a 'trigger violation' from the outset, whereas sexual violence was accepted as such seven years later. Whether or not its historical lack of visibility as a sanctionable violation is a reflection of its the de-prioritisation of girls' issues, this has contributed to a pervasive culture of impunity for perpetrators, despite the universal occurrence of diverse forms of sexual violence across all conflict settings and the largely unexploited potential of sanctions regimes to bring individuals and entities to account.

This may be slowly beginning to change. For example, the sanctions regime in CAR has for the first time featured sexual violence as a key criterion on its own. In other cases, sexual and gender-based violence has been either entirely absent or included only as part of a longer list of human rights violations.[333] In South Sudan, all but one of the individuals listed in the 2018 sanctions regime were designated for sexual violence, alongside other crimes. According to the UN, "…such measures indicate that the strategic use of sanctions can be an important tool to enforce compliance by parties to a conflict."[334]

Moreover, in April 2019, Germany – a vocal proponent of the WPS agenda – tabled a resolution at the Security Council to improve justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.[335] In addition to underscoring the exposure of men and boys to conflict-related sexual violence, the resolution makes clear the need for additional support to children born as a result of wartime rape, as well as to their mothers.

Nevertheless, it is significant that the final text left out key areas originally proposed for inclusion. Additional safeguards for LGBTI people who may be targeted for sexual violence, for example, were removed for clear political and ideological reasons, as was any specific mention of access to safe abortions for survivors.[336]

Despite the underlying motivations of Resolution 2467 to push for greater accountability for sexual violence in conflict, it fell short of expectations – in particular in relation to the anticipated establishment of a UN monitoring body regarding sexual violence, which could have supported increased accountability.

CHALLENGES TO LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY

At the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, the Secretary-General called upon Member States to "redouble their efforts to combat impunity and establish a truly global justice system"[337] in order to address violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Despite positive progress in some respects, globally speaking there continues to be very little accountability when it comes to crimes against children. It is striking how rarely prosecutions exist for such crimes, and indeed even how few dedicated Fact-Finding Missions or International Commissions of Inquiry have been instigated for violations against international law, particularly those that include investigations of crimes against children within their mandates. Various driving forces may be behind this, including a lack of political will to push international judicial and humanitarian actors or donors in this direction.[338]

Established by the 1998 Rome Statue,[339] the International Criminal Court (ICC) began sitting in 2002 and is now touted as "one of the great achievements of the past 25 years."[340] It is a platform through which accountability for children can and should be secured, particularly in cases where national systems have proven unable or unwilling. The ICC was the first instrument of international criminal law to criminalise and convict on the grounds of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.[341] **However, the scarce instances of successful prosecution over the years do not address the multiplicity of crimes committed against children worldwide. Let alone does it fully address the differential gender and age dimensions of these violations.**

Beyond the ICC, there have been historical instances of ad hoc courts such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), as well as the present-day Special Criminal Court in CAR, established for the purposes of investigating war crimes, crimes against humanity and/or genocide – in addition to national courts (either in the country where crimes took place, or in third countries under universal jurisdiction). In recent years, there have also been a handful of non-judicial mechanisms to investigate alleged human rights abuses, notably the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) for Syria, the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen and the Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Myanmar, amongst others.

Nevertheless, as is the case for similar accountability regimes for war crimes and crimes against humanity, **the overall framework and process of the six grave violations focuses almost entirely on primary victims and does not capture secondary harms (many of which are experienced differently according to gender). Furthermore, crimes against girls in transitional justice efforts have often been "almost exclusively [focused] on sexual crimes, limiting attention to the multitude of other…violations… such as loss of education, livelihood and land, as well as forced labour, slavery, exploitation and trafficking."[342] Such a narrow focus on sexual violence denies girls the totality of their experiences and limits their access to appropriate services, justice, and reparations.** Indeed, reparations to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have been implemented in only a handful of cases to date – notably in Colombia – despite the fact that reparations are an obligation of States under international law.[343]

OHCHR's recently released "Integrating a Gender Perspective into Human Rights Investigations: Guidance and Practice"[344] attempts to address these gaps by underlining the importance of factoring gender into all areas of practice. It offers valuable and in-depth recommendations in how to apply a gender lens to team composition, contextual understanding, as well as, information gathering, analysis and reporting. These are all critical to a comprehensive gender analysis to human rights violations, and must be built on in future work to strengthen consideration of how gender and age can intersect and what this means for the commission of violations against children of different genders.

THE ICC'S "POLICY ON CHILDREN":

The International Criminal Court recognises that crimes against children can take multiple forms, including direct targeting, as well as indirectly through crimes which have a disproportionate impact on children. It openly acknowledges the overlap with the six grave violations of children's rights in conflict.[345]

In 2012, the ICC appointed a Special Adviser on Children in and affected by Armed Conflict as part of its broader strategy,[346] bringing crimes committed against children into focus to "close the impunity gap."[347] This was a precursor to its 'Policy on Children' – developed for the Office of the Prosecutor and instituted in 2016 – which calls for a "child-sensitive approach" to international criminal justice.[348] The policy underlines the important ways in which children fall under the Court's mandate, and the recommended practices and special considerations to involve child victims and witnesses in both field investigations and courtroom procedures while upholding their fundamental rights and best interests.

While the ICC acknowledges that children are not "a homogeneous group,"[349] neither the 2016 'Policy on Children' nor the earlier 2014 'Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes'[350] fully engages with the differentiated ways in which girls, boys and children with non-binary gender identities or non-conforming sexual orientations are exposed to or experience crimes in armed conflict – both in the immediate and long-run. Nor are the intersecting gender- and age-sensitive measures to undertake during the preparation and prosecution of cases concretely considered together in a comprehensive manner.

While the 'Policy on Children' does recognise that the accessibility and availability of sources and services for the support of child victims vary according to gender as well as age, the integration of these dynamics is only highlighted insofar as they influence efforts to provide reparations or facilitate reintegration.

Children playing amongst ruins of West Mosul neighbourhood, northern Iraq

What is needed is a comprehensive consideration for the ways in which children straddle multiple domains, occupying at once spaces related to gender and age. There is an opportunity to adopt in the future a much more nuanced approach, founded upon an understanding that gender-sensitivity must be equally applied to children, as much as child-sensitivity must be applied to questions of gender. At present, policy and practice tend to divide the two, failing to fully grasp how children encapsulate and experience both age and gender related differences.

The tendency to conflate women and girls together, and men and boys, means that the distinct needs of girls and boys (as opposed to their adult counterparts) and the specific needs of younger children, adolescents or children of diverse SOGIE are often not addressed.

There is currently a gap between policy and practice. Despite the existence of evolving guidance, the reality is that criminal and human rights investigators working for these types of complementary and overlapping accountability mechanisms are not necessarily well-equipped to tackle crimes against children.[351] According to key informants, there is a certain degree of reluctance to interview children, perhaps borne out of a fear of re-traumatisation or because of the sensitivity of the subject matter under investigation.[352] There may also be an increased risk of raising unmanageable or unrealistic expectations amongst children and/or their families.[353]

Despite policies to the contrary, investigators and judges on the ground may be lacking in both specialist expertise and awareness of the child-specific dimensions to the

crimes committed in armed conflict. The investigatory teams may not always have the diverse backgrounds and skills necessary to effectively, safely and ethically tackle the complexity of crimes against children, nor will its composition be necessarily gender balanced. Structural gaps and gender disparities persist across judicial structures, with inadequate numbers of female investigators.[354] While the team may lack sufficient time in the field to establish rapport and trust with victims and witnesses, particularly children, when conducting investigations, they may also be limited due to a lack of in-depth training and preparation to engage appropriately with children.[355] They may not have the skills to pursue cases involving younger children or for tailoring interview and investigatory techniques for the specific needs of girls, boys or children of diverse SOGIE.[356]

Another major challenge is the ethical implications related to the absence of reliable witness protection services for children (or adults) in the vast majority of countries under investigation, rendering witnesses more vulnerable to backlash for their participation.[357] There have been some tangible efforts, such as the creation of the Victim and Witness Protection Unit of the Special Criminal Court in CAR. However, the Secretary-General notes in his 2019 Annual Report on conflict-related sexual violence "little systematic or sustained improvement in this regard."[358]

During the prominent Lubanga case at the ICC in 2012,[359] weaknesses in the evidence chain became apparent.[360] The prosecution of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo was notable because: first, the court confirmed the irrelevance of the dichotomy between voluntary and forced recruitment of children; and, second, the ICC adopted a broad interpretation of "active participation in hostilities" to ensure justice for both girls and boys, irrespective of if they had been armed or unarmed.[361] However, a number of testimonies were recanted after discovering that some of the child witnesses may have been influenced to deliver falsified or embellished testimonies, which they thought met the expectations of the court.[362] One of the repercussions may be a reluctance to use children as witnesses in future cases.[363]

More recently, Bosco Ntaganda – who served as former deputy chief of staff under Lubanga – has been convicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the crime of sexual slavery. The July 2019 judgement is the first time that the ICC has held a commander responsible for sexual violence perpetrated within their own ranks, including against children who were subjected to recruitment and use.[364] It represents an important milestone in ensuring accountability for children in conflict.

CHALLENGES IN SOURCING DISAGGREGATED DATA

The collection and analysis of credible and consistently disaggregated data is essential in order to define, locate and process gender-based barriers to justice for children. However, there are inherent difficulties in gathering data on the grave violations in the first place – principally related to security and capacity issues – which are explored in detail below. Any disaggregation of data therefore becomes even more challenging.

The MRM is not designed to give a comprehensive picture of violations. At the national level, information regarding the perpetration of the six grave violations against children is reported by national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local civil society organisations (CSOs) to UNICEF for verification. According to MRM guidelines, this data should be disaggregated by sex.[365] The publicly-available output of the MRM is the Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, with accompanying annexes, as well as periodic country-specific reports.[366] However, reports from the Secretary-General should be understood as purely illustrative or symptomatic of the grave violations perpetrated against children in conflict.[367] It does not – and cannot be expected to – represent the entire caseload, nor does it explore secondary harms.[368]

The MRM is not currently set up nor operationalised to document or analyse long-term impacts and evolution over time, nor was it intended to. It is deliberately designed to be "case-based and time-bound"[369] and

therefore cannot be expected to delve deeper into the causes, consequences and context in which violations are taking place. This has led to blind spots in both analysis and programming which can and should be alleviated through the use of other sources of information to complement what is offered by the MRM.

Beyond the Secretary-General's Annual and country-specific reports stemming from the formal MRM process, there are additional sources of complementary information regarding the grave violations. These include specific reports and policy notes by UN agencies, international non-governmental organisations, coalitions, think tanks, media outlets, Fact-Finding Missions and International Commissions of Inquiry, as well as international and national tribunals, amongst others.

Inconsistent data disaggregation: The level and extent of disaggregation by gender and/or age is inconsistent across all sources, UN or otherwise. In the context of MRM data specifically, variations in the depth and detail of reporting are evident over time, across country contexts and for different violations. The way in which information is summarised and presented in the Secretary-General's Annual Report on CAAC does not facilitate data compilation per violation across all settings. Data from individual violations and conflict settings has to be manually counted in order to conduct a meta-analysis across even a single reporting cycle. This means that trend analysis is difficult, including in relation to gender.

Saja*, 11, lived for six months under shelling before fleeing to another town in Iraq. Her school was also targeted in the conflict. Now in a camp for displaced people, Saja attends Save the Children's Child Friendly Space, where she can play, learn and receive the psychosocial support she needs.

Of the 23,579 verified incidents of grave violations reported in the Secretary-General's 2019 report, 19,357 were disaggregated by sex – representing 82% of incidents.[370] This is a significant improvement compared to past reports. In the preceding year, 12,158 violations – or just 54% – of 22,681 verified violations were sex-disaggregated.[371]

There are significant variations in the degree to which violations are disaggregated by sex from one country to the next. In some countries, MRM data is less disaggregated than in others. In Libya, for example, there were clear gaps in reporting across all violations, and none were disaggregated by sex.[372] In Syria, only 29% of verified violations were disaggregated by sex in the 2019 Annual Report, as opposed to 97% of violations in Somalia and 91% of violations in Afghanistan.[373]

The degree of disaggregation also varies significantly across violations. While some of the grave violations may more easily be disaggregated, others are more challenging. For example, in situations of aerial bombardment or other attacks of an indiscriminate nature, the subsequent killing and maiming of children is often gender-unaware. It can be difficult or even impossible to determine the exact age or gender of victims. This reality is reflected in Annual Reports in recent years where there are attempts to indicate "sex unknown" in certain cases of killing and maiming.[374]

Denial of humanitarian access to children is also a difficult violation to quantify or qualify. Definitions provided for this violation within the MRM guidelines are perhaps too vague,[375] and much is left open to interpretation. It can therefore be complicated to accurately document and verify the violation, disaggregate data, and avoid political bias.[376] The burden of proof is onerous when it is challenging to establish the circumstances around the violation – for example, whether the denial was deliberate or accidental. Age and/or gender may not necessarily be an overriding factor, although it is difficult to draw firm conclusions given the lack of available data.[377]

Not surprisingly, therefore, the lowest levels of disaggregation were found amongst incidents relating to both attacks on schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access. Of 1,129 verified attacks on schools or hospitals in the Secretary-General's 2019 Annual Report, none were disaggregated. In terms of denial of humanitarian access, 762 incidents were verified but not disaggregated across 9 countries in 2019 – not including Israel and Palestine. In fact, only data pertaining to access to medical care for children originating from the Gaza Strip were divided according to gender.

In contrast, the highest levels of disaggregation were found for abduction (99%), sexual violence (96%) and recruitment and use (94%). Disaggregation for incidents of killing or maiming was less consistent, with 83% of 11,439 verified incidents divided according to gender. 28 cases were specifically recorded as "sex unknown" but there were 1962 cases of killing or maiming where gender was not included in the Secretary-General's report at all. The vast majority of these (1854) occurred in Syria.

The need for disaggregation by age: Age determination is another challenge, particularly amongst unaccompanied or separated children who may not know their exact age, or amongst children who were never registered at birth or in cases where deliberate falsification of documents is rife.[378] Indeed, age is a standard question because of the necessity to determine whether the violation in question fits within the mandate of the MRM (i.e. covering any person under 18 years old). In certain contexts, pre-adolescent or adolescent boys and girls may not be perceived as children by their communities – particularly when they have reached puberty, had children or been married.[379] This is a particular challenge when it comes to recruitment and use, as well as sexual violence.

Age determination is – or should be – an automatic question during data collection.[380] MRM guidelines advise on recording the age at which a violation was perpetrated and not the present age of the victim (i.e. in cases where time has elapsed between the incident and its documentation).[381] At times, directly asking the age of a child is insufficient and personnel involved in verification may need to employ special techniques to determine age.[382] Even in cases where specific or approximate age is documented during data collection at field-level, it is not systematically captured within final Annual Reports nor does it necessarily figure into the global analysis on the grave violations as a key determining factor.

When it comes to disaggregation by age specifically, the particular needs or risks faced by adolescents vis-à-vis younger children are often completely overlooked.

Beyond the dichotomy of under/over 18 years old, it is rare to see any further disaggregation by age across reports from the Secretary-General or the UN more broadly, as well as other international NGO and media publications. Even information gathered and stored through the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, for example, is not automatically disaggregated by age and requires further statistical manipulations to conduct an age-specific demographic analysis. Groupings according to age ranges are not standardised across current and historical data sets, within and without the remit of the MRM.

Broadly speaking, efforts to systematise disaggregation should not be overly challenging, since sex and age are often foundational questions during data collection. The lack of disaggregation may be more closely linked to a question of prioritisation during later reporting and analysis. **Across the humanitarian-development nexus, it is rare to find research or programming in which intersectionality is fully integrated. In the future, however, the data captured for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly for indicators 16.1.2 on conflict-related deaths and 16.1.3 which includes tracking for the proportion of the population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence**[383] **– could be potential mechanisms for gathering systematically disaggregated data.** Additionally, UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have been working on how to record and track recruitment under goal 8.7 on the worst forms of child labour.[384] These may be important entry points into mapping the gender-driven impacts of conflict on children. Nevertheless, existing challenges of filtering and simplification at later stages of publication may still need to be addressed.

Resourcing, capacity and access: The Secretary-General's Annual Report on CAAC primarily comprises verified incidents, although sometimes documented incidents (i.e. those that are not verified by the UN but have been reported by other actors) are also included.[385] The challenging realities of reporting and verification on the ground must not be underestimated. It demands sufficient resourcing (human and financial) as well as adequate access. Minimum standards for verification are set out in the MRM Field Manual. Testimony must be obtained from a primary source, then judged credible by a trained monitor, and finally verified by a designated member of the CTFMR.[386] Verification therefore is inherently lengthy, and ultimately dependent on the availability and capacity of relevant UN staff.[387]

Moreover, evidence gaps are inevitable when accessibility is restricted due to security concerns. Where access is limited by security protocols, international actors may rely on other stakeholders. In this case, rigorous training on data collection and verification is necessary in order to meet the standards set out by the MRM.[388]

Personnel, and the agencies they work for, may also be subject to security threats and incidents. While membership in the CTFMR should be confidential, agencies on the ground may fear backlash from communities and/or governments if they are overly outspoken regarding violations.[389] Authorisation and access could be curtailed, in turn hampering the implementation of interventions on the ground. The security of staff, victims, survivors and witnesses, as well as any community members or other relevant stakeholders is also a key consideration. Where violations occur in private settings, such as inside homes, the ability of agencies to identify, access and verify such incidents may be adversely affected. Data can therefore also be sometimes subject to gender-driven spatial biases.

Structural barriers: One of the barriers to disaggregation may in fact be structural. While the MRM Field Manual spells out that "information on the violation of children's rights should be disaggregated according to sex (girls and boys) during data collection,"[390] the raw data sets collected on behalf of the MRM are not publicly released. It is therefore impossible to conjecture on the level and scope of disaggregation within original data sets across countries, but it is likely that not every detail is captured in the final report.[391]

The Global Horizontal Notes (GHNs) produced at country-level by the CTFMR though reportedly more detailed[392] are subject to three-page limitations.[393] They are prepared for use by the SCWG-CAAC and are not publicly circulated. In addition, country-specific reports are restricted to a maximum of 8,500 words.[394] This may have repercussions in terms of the scope or depth of analysis and disaggregation in the Secretary-General's Annual Reports, and some complexities are likely lost as a result.[395]

Lack of longitudinal or secondary harm analysis: While the MRM and subsequent Annual reporting is able to illustrate some immediate effects of violations on children, capturing second and third order effects which extend over time is outside the MRM's scope. Having said that, there is some recognition of significant increases in some violations (for example, doubling of recruitment and use of children and abduction in Somalia between 2015 and 2017[396]) within the Secretary-General's reports. Longitudinal data needed to understand secondary

harms are more diffuse and harder to measure, let alone the differential consequences on girls and boys or children of diverse SOGIE.

An examination of children born of conflict-related sexual violence is one example of where an analysis of possible risks and secondary harm is critical to comprehend gender differences. While research on the subject is limited, it does suggest that many of these children face a multitude of challenges throughout the rest of their lifetime. Challenges include discrimination, marginalisation, stigmatisation, abuse, abandonment and the denial of basic rights.[397] Mothers may have ambivalent feelings towards children who were born as a result of rape.[398] Where the father is unknown or unacknowledged, some children struggle even to obtain identification and/or nationality documents depending on in-country legislation.[399]

When it comes to recruitment and use, longitudinal research conducted in Mozambique has demonstrated the importance of strong reintegration support for men who have been recruited and used when they were boys.[400] Save the Children in Côte d'Ivoire found girls have different support needs to ensure recovery and acceptance in the long-run.[401]

Such analyses of secondary, long-term and sometimes intergenerational impacts are beyond the scope of the MRM. Nonetheless, it does offer insights into better understanding the long-term gender-driven impacts of the grave violations which should in turn be reflected in advocacy and programming efforts.

Social norms and stigma: In some cases, disaggregated data are not necessarily voluntarily excluded, but rather the result of a lack of contextual awareness or training amongst the staff responsible for collecting and analysing data.[403] Even those responsible for making staffing decisions must do so with adequate sensitivity to the male: female ratio and other contextually-relevant characteristics (ethnicity, religious background, etc.) of data collection teams.[404] For example, documentation of sexual violence perpetrated during the Rohingya crisis has sometimes almost exclusively focused on girls. Cases involving boy survivors were completely missed, in part due to the conservative societal context in which identification and documentation was taking place.[405] The lack of data for certain violations may be attributed to the reluctance of target communities to share evidence on culturally sensitive or taboo subjects such as boy survivors of sexual violence or same-sex practices.[406] There may be limited understanding, cultural acceptance or historical sensitivities around the fact that boys too may also be survivors of sexual violence. The same could be argued for a wide range of contexts. In other cases, politically-motivated interests and international media attention have brought attention to certain violations, such as the sexual violence perpetrated against the Yazidi community in Iraq, that would perhaps otherwise have remained hidden.[407]

Furthermore, gender norms may dictate other secondary harms. For example, where females routinely adopt the role of caregivers, girls may be required to care for survivors of attacks on schools and/or hospitals, or maiming.[402] They may also be less likely to return to their own schooling as a result. Denial of humanitarian access leading to limited food supplies and widespread malnutrition may also disproportionately affect girls who in many societies are the last to eat.

Harriet*, 14, at school, Bidi Bidi Refugee settlement, Northern Uganda. "When a girl child is given a chance, she can do what a boy child can do," says 14-year-old Harriet. In a refugee settlement in Uganda this confident, smiling student is showing just what girls are capable of.

PART III:

GENDER, AGE AND PRACTICAL ACTION

GENDER-SENSITIVE PROGRAMMING

The Secretary-General's 2019 Annual Report points to an upward trend in grave violations against children. Over 24,000 violations were verified in 2018, including record numbers of incidents of killing and maiming of children.[408] Future improvements in upholding international norms and standards and ensuring justice for children notwithstanding, practical actions on the ground to protect children and support their recovery are urgently required yet remain significantly underfunded.[409] In addition, agencies designing and implementing solutions must continue to question whether or to what extent they are employing, investing in and sharing the most relevant and appropriate approaches, including gender- and age-sensitive protection interventions.

Real or perceived gender identities can heavily influence children's experience of armed conflict in both the immediate and long-term. This underscores the need for gender-sensitive[410] protection programming for children at risk of or recovering from grave violations

Yet many humanitarian agencies continue to implement programming that is age and gender-unaware, including using outreach methods which are not adapted to children of different genders, failing to incorporate mobile, home-based or school-based services, or to ensure information is provided using easily accessible language and pictures for child and adolescent audiences. Compounded with pre-existing social and cultural restrictions, age and gender-unaware programming can result in disproportionate experiences for those the programming is trying to reach, further restricting access to preventive or responsive services. [411]

Actors on the ground must have the capacity and commitment to involve children of diverse ages and genders in all stages of programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.[412] For example, all agencies collecting data should disaggregate information comprehensively, including options for other gender expressions to be captured or not disclosed. Such

information facilitates the development of prevention, response and advocacy interventions that are founded on empirical data, and not on stereotypical gendered perceptions and attitudes. It enables a clearer understanding of causes, consequences, prevalence and trends in relation to the grave violations, thereby also dispelling myths, questioning assumptions and overturning stereotypes that influence decision-making behind resource allocations, programming priorities and advocacy efforts.[413]

In addition to analysing empirical evidence, consultations help ensure that interventions are designed to be equally responsive to the evolving needs of all children, including boys, girls and children outside of the gender binary in ways that are safe and dignified. This would help address gender-based barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance. In addition to increasing the use of gender-transformative approaches in humanitarian contexts where possible, the child protection sector should review established child protection approaches and seek to increase their gender sensitivity. This should include increased efforts to respond to the grave violations through gender-sensitive as well as victim or survivor-centred approaches to humanitarian programming, ensuring confidentiality for those who have disclosed violations. However, all actions require organization and sector-wide commitments to improving attitudes, beliefs and practices with regards to gender, gender expression and SGBV in order to improve response capacity. These initiative only work when senior management of field level response personnel view gender and age as important.

Appropriate programmatic targeting in conflict-affected areas could more appropriately take into account the vast spectrum of survivors of the grave violations, who may include: girls, boys, and children of diverse SOGIE; infants, young children, and/or adolescents; children with disabilities; and, children from minority or indigenous groups. Humanitarian agencies which are cognizant that the populations that they are working with have experienced grave violations should seek to ensure that the services they are delivering have safe and confidential points of entry for disclosure and complementary service provision. Certain types of programming are particularly critical for addressing populations affected by grave violations; for example, gender-sensitive or even transformative mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services are vital to ensuring that the specific needs of all child survivors of grave violations can be effectively met particularly because these needs vary according to gender. For example, tailoring

psychosocial approaches to the interests of different ages and genders should be accompanied by the provision of accessible options so that boys and girls can benefit from non-stereotypical activities. In addition, space must be created, maintained and safeguarded to ensure girls have equal access to safe spaces to recover, including for example girl-friendly spaces.

To move towards gender transformative approaches to mental health and psychosocial support, programming should seek to promote positive forms of masculinity, including expressions of emotion and openness with feelings, and/or can be adapted from existing programs that focus on healing and recovery through the arts. Other examples, include the development and dissemination of materials that support equal power structures and positive emotional expressions, establishment of parent support groups that promote equal power-sharing between caregivers, and efforts to support gender equality in the home. Indeed, increased MHPSS work is emerging as a serious and ongoing need in protracted crises and is critical to supporting children of all genders to recover and regain their childhood after exposure to grave violations.[414]

Some additional foundational child protection interventions, such as case management, release and reintegration efforts, or initiatives to improve access to education and healthcare for survivors of grave violations should be reviewed for their age- and gender-sensitivity. In addition, multi-sectoral reporting and referral pathways and services that are accessible, gender-sensitive, and address the varied needs of a diverse range of survivors, may encourage increased reporting of grave violations, further supporting the MRM.

Beyond child protection, efforts to ensure systematic inclusion of a gender-sensitive or – where appropriate – transformative approach to education, health, nutrition, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) must also be made. These should cover response to the gendered needs of children impacted by attacks on schools and hospitals, or denial of humanitarian access. While this is broadly recognised as important, there is still potential to increase specific capacity in identifying and integrating gender and age considerations into programming across sectors.

IN DEPTH: Age- and gender-sensitive responsive programming for child survivors of conflict-related sexual violence

Survivor-centred care within sexual violence interventions have historically focused on females, given they constitute the vast majority of survivors. In reality, while many health professionals may be knowledgeable in conducting examinations on adult women, for example, this may not be equally the case for girls and even less so for boys or intersex children.[415] Relative to females, male survivors often face additional challenges and 'structural exclusion' when it comes to accessing appropriate care.[416] Where female survivors may sometimes have access to safe spaces, shelters, or reporting and referral pathways – though these interventions may be severely limited in conflict settings – there is rarely an equivalent for male survivors (and are virtually absent for non-binary individuals).

Where available, service points for survivors are often located within broader maternal and child health (MCH) programmes, serving as a real social and psychological impediment to access for men and boys. According to research conducted by *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) across six African countries, where MCH and sexual violence services were conflated the proportion of male survivors was just 2%. Where response services were offered without any specific link to sexual violence or MCH, the rate of utilisation by male survivors was 17%[417]. Similarly, standard operating procedures regarding the clinical management of rape are not always inclusive or cognisant of male survivors, and often nor is national legislation. More than 60 countries worldwide still do not integrate male survivors into national legislation on sexual violence.[418]

Although reporting rates of sexual violence against women and girls are much higher, they are still likely lower than actual prevalence rates because women and girls also face barriers to disclosure. Depending on the context, repercussions of disclosure for girls in particular can include, for example, forced marriage or even death (in the case of 'honour' killings).[419] While individuals of diverse SOGIE may face daily stigmatisation, threats and targeting, when it comes to access to appropriate services, these survivors face many of the same structural barriers as their cisgender heterosexual counterparts.[420] Like men and boys, and in some cases young, adolescent or unmarried girls, individuals of diverse SOGIE are not sufficiently accounted for in intervention design. They may face dismissive or ostracising attitudes; a lack of adequate knowledge, amongst service providers; and limited legal protections.[421] The illegality of transgender or homosexual status within certain countries means that any targeted interventions must be carefully conceptualised to ensure the safety of individual children against *de facto* criminalisation and detention.[422] Together, these challenges point to the opportunity to strengthen both gender transformative and age-sensitive approaches to conflict-related sexual violence against children, Humanitarian actors could connect with a wider range of service providers – including, for example, HIV testing centers, health clinics, transit shelters for the homeless, and refugee registration desks – to enable a greater rate of disclosure, referral of incidents, and provision of case management support.

At age fourteen, Safiya* was kidnapped from her home and taken as a child bride by insurgents in north-east Nigeria. Her son Hussein* was born out of that forced marriage.

The current international political climate is not always favourable to advancing protections. Resolution 2467 is a case in point.[423] While the need for sexual and reproductive health services has been highlighted in previous UN resolutions[424] – with clear implications for the future psychosocial, health and economic outcomes of survivors – some Members of the Security Council are against abortion and block any related language in new UN resolutions.[425]

Despite the need for adequate resourcing to strengthen efforts to address grave violations, the sector remains severely under-funded as a whole. Relative to overall humanitarian funding, child protection receives a minimal share of total resources allocated to humanitarian aid – just 0.5% – despite the extensive needs of children.[426] SGBV interventions for children face particularly acute funding shortages, despite increased media attention on sexual violence.[427] Moreover, national and local level actors receive only a fraction of these funds in a highly competitive environment. This runs contrary to agreements by major donors to ensure that 25% of humanitarian funding goes "as directly as possible" to such actors.[428] Given the vital present and potential role played by local and national entities, particularly given linguistic, socio-cultural, security and access considerations, in monitoring, reporting and responding to violations, under-resourcing is a major barrier.

SUPPORTING THE MONITORING AND REPORTING MECHANISM (MRM)

Current efforts in monitoring and reporting grave violations could be further enhanced with the incorporation of gender-sensitive approaches, particularly in information gathering, verification, analysis, reporting and dissemination. Specific opportunities to bring in a stronger gender component include:

- **Data disaggregation:** Because empirical data is still the bedrock of evidence-based advocacy and programming, bolstering the operationalisation of the MRM and other data collection efforts is critical to addressing the gendered needs of child survivors of the grave violations. Without reliable and comparable disaggregated data, responses cannot meet the unique needs of different children. This is noted within the MRM guiding principles, highlighting the importance of MRM practitioners remaining "sensitive to the specific needs and coping mechanism of girls and boys when dealing with all violations against children, but particularly those that may relate to a child's sexuality or self-image" and noting that girls and boys have different ways of experiencing violations, different coping mechanisms and different needs. MRM staff need to be sensitive to this, as well

as to the responses needed by children." Indeed, the MRM itself is also meant to lead to appropriate protection responses.

- **Consent and confidentiality:** One drawback of the MRM's current design is the necessity of formal verification of individual incidents of sexual violence. This requires interviewing survivors and any witnesses – a potentially high visibility process that can impact on confidentiality in addition to running the risk of re-traumatisation. Concerns around appropriate information handling throughout the MRM process, lack of consent about how data collected will be used, as well as possible consequences for survivors, witnesses and their families have led some agencies to limit their participation in the mechanism.[429] This impacts how much information can be collected through the MRM. Particular attention is therefore required to ensuring both informed consent and confidentiality through a carefully managed verification process.

- **Staffing:** The ability of the MRM to address grave violations is clearly strengthened when there are sufficient, qualified staff within UN Missions, UNICEF and organizations contributing to the MRM to undertake timely, continuous and accurate documentation and verification of incidents at field level, and pursue dialogue with parties to conflict, engaging them in Action Plans and other steps towards preventing future violations.

Key posts, such as Child Protection Advisors (CPAs) and Women Protection Advisors (WPAs) within UN peacekeeping missions, Child Protection Officers (CPOs) at UNICEF, and expert counterparts amongst civil society actors, must be prioritised during budget negotiations at the UN, and in decision-making on direct funding to UN agencies and expert civil society actors contributing to the MRM. Given the critical role they play in documenting, verifying and reporting violations, as well as following up Action Plans, such personnel must be well resourced and supported. Indeed, when staff receive supplementary training and tools on how to conduct their work in a gender-sensitive manner, the collective effort to counter the impact of armed conflict on children is further enhanced. This allows for the specific needs of all children, regardless of gender, to be appropriately factored into reporting, programming and advocacy initiatives. This applies to not only UN personnel, but also to international and national NGOs, and local civil society actors who can and should participate in CFTMRs, particularly when the need for complementary and multi-disciplinary skill sets, as well as increasingly localised approaches is needed in order to conduct ethical, safe and responsible documentation, verification and follow up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is premised upon the view that armed conflict and its impacts are inherently gendered. While comprehensive data are lacking in some areas, the analysis of available information underscores the differentiated and diverse ways in which girls, boys and children outside of the gender binary experience armed conflict. Findings point to a need to consider the intersecting ways in which age and gender can render both adolescent and younger children vulnerable to the risk or impact of grave violations. While not covered in depth in this report, disability too must be considered in relation to analysing the impact of the grave violations on children of different ages and genders. Just as children should not be viewed as a subset of adults, homogeneity among children should not be assumed.

What follows are a number of recommendations that derive from this gender analysis of the grave violations. Apart from analysis of available data, these suggestions are informed by the experience and expertise of the wide range of informants consulted for this paper. These recommendations aim to promote more nuanced, gender-inclusive policies and practices, closing the gender gap between how international norms, standards and accountability processes, as well as programming, are conceived and applied.

UPHOLDING INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT:

1. **Shifting implementation of protection norms towards gender-sensitivity:** To ensure children's protection in conflict is mainstreamed across peace, security and broader humanitarian agendas, the use of recurring normative language that is age and gender-sensitive, and consistently championed across various fora, is essential. Further mainstreaming across peace and security as well as broader humanitarian agendas will help to enhance legal standards and accountability for children of all genders. To strengthen a gender-sensitive approach to the protection of children of all genders, Save the Children recommends **UN Member States to:**

- **Proactively champion the protection of children of all genders who are impacted by conflict, across bilateral and multilateral fora.** This includes ensuring that future legal and normative frameworks – and their implementation – recognise and address the distinct age and gender related needs of children with and without disabilities in conflict contexts. These considerations should be consistently and concretely reflected across all areas of work, including:

  - **Within multilateral fora:** The differential impacts of violations on children due to age, gender and disability should be regularly referenced throughout resolutions, discourse and decision-making. This should include UNSC, UNGA and HRC resolutions; reports, briefs, Presidential Statements; UN Mandate Holders and other Special Procedures; and, recommendations issued to Member States under Universal Periodic Review (UPR) as well as other human rights treaty body mechanisms.

  - **Within Member States' own legal and policy frameworks and their implementation:** including age and gender-sensitive review of implementation of legal human rights obligations such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; as well as non-binding commitments such as the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Paris Principles and Vancouver Principles; and adherence to relevant international trade obligations including the Arms Trade Treaty.

- **Within bilateral fora:** Members States should champion the endorsement of frameworks to protect children in conflict within bilateral relationships. This should include the Safe Schools Declaration, the Paris Principles, the Vancouver Principles, and all Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition Member states should encourage gender-sensitive implementation, including through developing and sharing best practice to support learning and wider adherence to international standards to protect children of all genders impacted by conflict, including by addressing gender-based barriers to protection.

2. **Looking for complementarity and consistency across initiatives:** RWhile the unique needs and risks of children in conflict merit a standalone mandate with dedicated political space and resources, there is potential for improved information sharing and synergy between different UN mechanisms feeding into the Security Council. This should include the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda, the Protection of Civilians (PoC) agenda, the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda (also encompassing the Sexual Violence in Conflict (SVC) mandate). In particular, consistent application of common definitions and data disaggregation in relation to age, gender, sex and disability could enable a common lens to crisis specific items on the Security Council's agenda. Together this could enable collective progress towards the common adoption of an age, gender and disability lens to crisis specific items on the Security Council's agenda. Specifically:

- **UN actors responsible for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), Protection of Civilians (PoC), Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (with Sexual Violence in Conflict (SVC)** should seek to strengthen information sharing, synergize relevant recommendations for data disaggregation and relevant data sharing across relevant UN mechanisms

- **UN Security Council members responsible for developing and implementing these policy frameworks should recognise the individual specificity and complementary of these agendas.** This should be reflected in the UNSC reports stemming from each agenda, as well as in all resolutions and Presidential Statements.

- **Humanitarian, peace and security, as well as civil society actors working to champion and promote implementation of the CAAC, PoC, YPS, WPS and SVC agendas should continue to collaborate where agendas align,** such as sexual violence in conflict and accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence and other gender-based violations; and on the linkages between arms control, gender-based violence and the killing and maiming of children in conflict.

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN IN CONFLICT:

3. **Inclusive mandates and investigations:** Historically, few accountability mechanisms, mandates and investigations have been instigated to bring perpetrators of crimes against children to account. Given the disproportionate and gendered impact of armed conflict on children, crimes against children of all genders must be given due consideration. Investigations and inquiries must be mandated to examine gendered and age-related violations, and where possible explore barriers to justice based on age or gender to ensure accountability without discrimination. To achieve this:

    Likeminded UN Member States should use their positions on multilateral fora to jointly advocate for age and gender to be at the centre of mandates of all future investigations and inquiries conducted on behalf of the International Criminal Court, international and national tribunals, international Commissions of Inquiry, Fact-Finding Missions and other accountability mechanisms.

4. **Adequate human resources:** In order for the MRM and other conflict-related accountability mechanisms to yield dividends for children of all genders, they must have appropriate human resourcing. In particular:

UN bodies and other accountability mechanisms responsible for selecting investigatory teams must work to ensure consistent inclusion of specialist experts on both gender and children within investigatory teams. The inclusion of relevant experts is critical to safely and thoroughly investigating violations committed against children of all genders and would enable more robust and rigorous preparation for evidence gathering, as well as strengthened and increased child- and gender-sensitive approaches to analysing and reporting available information. Where possible, investigators should have the necessary capacity to also consider any pre-existing or intersecting forms of discriminations, and how this can factor into differentially exposing girls, boys and children of diverse

SOGIE to violations, as well as how this may compare to violations or crimes committed against their adult counterparts.

UN bodies and other accountability mechanisms must also ensure adequate training and tools for investigative teams, including these are both age and gender-sensitive. Such training should aim to **enhance behaviours and competencies relating to engagement with children of all genders,** and should include:

- Age verification techniques, alongside updated tools that include an agreed range of age categories (e.g. children 0-18, comprised of early childhood 0-8, pre-adolescence 8-10, and adolescence 10-18);

- Gender-sensitivity considering all genders, including how to discuss and categorise gender differences in culturally sensitive ways, alongside updated tools that include a list of gender identities on-binary forms

- How to understand and take into consideration any pre-existing or intersecting forms of discrimination, and how these can factor into differentially exposing girls, boys and children of different gender identities to violations, as well as how this may compare to violations or crimes committed against their adult counterparts.

Investigatory teams in turn must seek to:

- **Consistently include local expertise** to ensure full understanding of the prevailing context (including any pre-conflict gender-based and age-based norms, perceptions and practices and understanding how conflict has impacted on these norms);

- **Push for and participate in training on how to monitor, investigate and document grave violations against children of different genders and ages,** ensuring sensitization to the contextually-specific connections between gender-based violence and children's rights violations; and

- **Recognise and collaborate with local women's rights organizations and other relevant local and national partners, including human rights defenders, for the important role they play, working to highlight and address gaps in resourcing and capacity**

In relation to the MRM specifically, co-chairs of **CFTMRs must seek to promote local and global partnerships with organisations outside of the UN that offer complementary skill sets and operational reach, as well as further linkages**

between the international community and local counterparts, including local human rights defenders. This can include better collaboration with members of both the Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Areas of Responsibility (AoR), as well as invitations to specialist agencies such as those working on health issues to join CTFMRs where the MRM is operational.

5. **Financial capacity:** Recognising that child protection and gender-based violence are both severely under-funded sectors within wider humanitarian response,[430] resource allocation is a major barrier to ensuring qualified personnel on the ground – who within local, national and international civil society organisations, UN agencies and UN missions, are often among those who either collect relevant data themselves or provide support to investigations. To ensure adequate and appropriate financing for accountability:

Donors and UN Member States must urgently increase investments to the full range of actors conducting monitoring, reporting and investigations towards accountability for crimes and violations against children, ensuring both gender and sensitive approaches to monitoring, recording, and investigation. Funding should recognise the complimentary skills, operational reach, and local expertise of different actors, including UN agencies, expert non-governmental organisations, and local human rights defenders, taking into account the need for teams with diverse skills and training. For example, teams should include experts with experience in working with survivors of sexual violence, as well as with vulnerable children, and should include civil society actors including local partners to ensure consistency where access may be limited to UN actors due to security or other considerations.

UN bodies responsible for budgetary decision-making must ensure sufficient dedicated resourcing to allow for the inclusion of an adequate number of qualified Child Protection Advisor (CPA), Child Protection Officer (CPO) and Women Protection Advisors (WPA) posts across UN peacekeeping and political missions. Dedicated CPAs and CPOs play a vital role in the operationalisation of the MRM at field level – in both documenting and verifying of grave violations, as well as following up on the implementation of Action Plans. Similarly, WPAs are critical to ensuring gendered dimensions are appropriately factored into all areas of work. Parallel investments in both gender and child protection will help both work-streams to leverage their full potential and make concrete advances on the ground while achieving political traction.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN CONFLICT

6. **Age and gender-responsive approaches:** While there is increasing recognition of the need for gender responsive humanitarian action, there is still insufficient data and investment to take to scale emerging evidence-based best practices on how gender norms impact specifically on children in crises. Without disaggregated data, analysis and investments specifically targeting the intersections between gender and age, gender-responsive action for children in conflict – at the scale required to address growing need – is extremely challenging. This includes tailored and targeted prevention, response and advocacy strategies, which take into consideration the unique age and gender specificities of girls, boys, and children of diverse SOGIE who are impacted by conflict and require practical support. In addition, the push towards disaggregation by age and sex in humanitarian response must be extended to include disability. In relation to children in conflict, there must also be increased recognition of the ways in which disability can expose children to grave violations, as well as how violations can exacerbate or cause disability.

To ensure age-sensitive and gender-responsive humanitarian action is informed by data, **actors on the ground collecting data on civilian impact of conflict settings, must consistently and comprehensively disaggregate all data by age, gender, and disability.** As far as possible this should include the following:

- **Age:** Record the age of survivors and victims at all times. For children, wherever possible this should be done in accordance with guidelines given in the updated Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS),[431] and therefore be broken down into the following age categories: Early childhood, birth to 8 years (comprising infants (0-2), toddlers (3-5), early school age (6-8)); Pre-adolescence, aged 8-10 years; Adolescence, 10 – 18 (comprising early adolescence (10-14) and middle adolescence (15-18))[432];

- **Gender:** Include disaggregation options that recognise diverse gender identities. Wherever possible this should include girl, boy, other, and unknown. The systematic use of different gender identities – including those outside the gender binary – in MRM data collection could be

field-tested by agencies contributing to the CTFMR. This should be accompanied by a sector-wide commitment to ensure non-judgmental, respectful, dignified, safe and ethical data collection on information related to individuals of diverse SOGIE.

- **Disability:** To improve the precision of disability-related information, establishing prevalence rates and facilitating comparable data collection from across contexts for later analysis,[433] organisations working on the prevention and response to grave violations should use the Washington Group Questions for disaggregation of data by disability status,[434] in line with Sphere recommendations. Organizations should also seek to field-test the use of the Washington Group Questions by agencies contributing to the CTFMR.

Humanitarian donors must ensure funding decisions are based on analysis of need that includes age and sex disaggregated data, ensuring assistance appropriately and proportionately addresses the specific and gendered needs of affected populations, including children.

Recognizing the under-reporting of SGBV, donors should include prevention, response to SGBV in humanitarian responses funding, including meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of survivors of sexual violence, including children.

7. Ethical, safe and responsible data collection: It is imperative that data collection and information management protocols comply with sector-wide standards, including the MRM guidelines, in relation to ethics and safeguarding.[435] This is especially important given the potential for retributions against survivors and victims of the grave violations, as well as their families, and communities, in addition to witnesses or other information providers, staff members and agencies involved in the process. Policies and practices must be child-friendly, gender-sensitive and inclusive. Security and safety considerations, as well as the psychological well-being of survivors and others, must outweigh any attempt to establish prevalence or incidence data. [436]

Teams responsible for identification, documentation, investigation and/or verification of grave violations must ensure ethical, safe and responsible data collection and verification. This includes the following measures:

- Follow Guiding Principles set out in the MRM Field Manual, alongside other best practices covered in:

  - The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2015) Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action;

  - The IASC (2017) The Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action;

  - Gender Based Violence Area of Responsibility (2019) The Inter-agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming;

  - The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2019) Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS); and,

  - World Health Organisation's (WHO) Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies[437]

- Put in place adequate processes for confidentiality, referral and follow up prior to carrying out any data collection;

- Ensure expertise on local social norms – including those related to age and gender – and take these into account in team composition, and in planning prior to and during the collection of data. Where possible, teams should consider how diversity of nationality, ethnicity, religion, language skills, race, within a team can help ensure that survivors, victims, witnesses, their communities and other information providers are at ease as well as ensure that no further harm is done through the collection of data.

- Supporting partners from UN, international or national NGO or local civil society actors involved in reporting or verifying violations to use gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches in their work, while ensuring consistent adherence to the principle of *Do No Harm.*

8. Linking documentation and action: The MRM translates monitoring and reporting into concrete legal, political and practical action to prevent and respond to violations against children. Given the challenges to data collection and verification

in conflict settings there is a need to consider ways to bridge the gap between case-by-case documentation and large-scale situational and trend analysis, and data-informed response. The MRM's granular approach could be complemented by other methodologies such as demographic analysis and qualitative research – including direct consultations with children of varying ages and genders. Better links between the MRM and other research and analysis, constructing a fuller picture of the nature, scale and scope of the impact of conflict on girls, boys and children of diverse SOGIE will tailor practical action for children in conflict to the unique needs of children of different genders and ages. Fostering closer working relations between local service providers such as doctors, nurses, health workers, teachers and school administration, with education, protection and health experts within humanitarian agencies, can also support both increased operationalized of the MRM as well as strengthened referral mechanisms to address specific children's needs. Collaboration with national and local counterparts is critical to building programming for children of all genders on a strongly contextualised understanding of the situation on the ground.

- **Humanitarian actors should consistently disaggregate data and analysis on gender, age and disability, and use external sources of disaggregated data, including the MRM where relevant, to inform strengthened gender-responsive programming.** The consistent collection and use of disaggregated data could serve to enrich humanitarian actors' understanding of the gendered impact of conflict on children, strengthening gender analysis in both programmatic and advocacy responses. In addition, humanitarian actors should proactively seek to identify, multiply and strengthen links between programming and advocacy for children of all genders impacted by conflict. This should include consistently ensuring gender, age and disability dimensions in needs assessments, and sharing of data across programs and advocacy.

- **Humanitarian donors** must significantly increase their investments in gender-sensitive and, where possible, gender-transformative programming for children impacted by conflict with a specific focus on addressing the immediate and long-term gendered impacts of the grave violations. This should include prevention and response to sexual violence against children, ensuring safe access to education including addressing gender-based barriers to safe access, and gender responsive mental health and psychosocial support, and other targeted interventions to meet the protection, education and health needs of children impacted by the grave violations. Where possible this should include flexible and multi-year funding, which allows for a more gender transformative approach.

- **To better capture data disaggregation and more detailed analysis from grave violation documentation, the UN should consider relevant modifications to the MRM reporting format.** This should include the age, gender and disability related dimensions of grave violations. Incidents in which these factors played a significant role should be highlighted, as well as any overarching trends. There should also be a greater emphasis on inter-linkages between violations, particularly where gender and age play a significant role in either targeting or impact.

- Similarly, in developing its Action Plans with listed parties, **the UN should aim to specifically address the ways in which grave violations differentially target different children based on their age, gender and disability.**

- **UN Member States, UN agencies, and humanitarian actors should consistently seek to listen to and amplify the voices and experiences of children of all genders in guiding humanitarian responses, as well as in adhering to international norms and standards that protect children in conflict,** as part of existing broader commitments to uphold the rights of children. The views and experiences of children of all genders must be solicited in a safe and sustainable way, to inform and influence the implementation of Members States' legal and policy commitments. The gendered experiences and needs of children of all genders must be actively and consistently addressed by Member States and humanitarian agencies through the conflict cycle and into post-conflict recovery and reconstruction.

ENDNOTES

1   The initial terms of reference for this work are included in Annex I. The original research questions were refined based on limitations in available data, proposed methodology and timeframe.

2   See Save the Children (2019), *Policy Position: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)*, https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/15414/pdf/save_the_children_sexual_orientation_gender_identity_policy_position.pdf

3   Case files from the ICC can be found at: https://www.icc-cpi.int/cases

4   OHCHR (27 August 2018), Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar: https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/myanmarFFM/Pages/ReportoftheMyanmarFFM.aspx

5   Findings of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen are contained within OHCHR (September 2018) Annual report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/252/79/PDF/G1825279.pdf?OpenElement

6   Reports to date from the Panel of Experts on Yemen can be found at: https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/2140/panel-of-experts/work-and-mandate/reports

7   Reports to date from the IIIM in Syria can be found at: https://iiim.un.org/reports-to-the-general-assembly/

8   Save the Children (2019), Stop the War on Children: Protecting Children in 21st Century Conflict, www. stopwaronchildren.org/report.pdf

9   Save the Children (2018), *The War on Children: Time to end grave violations against children in conflict*, https:// www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/waronchildren/pdf/waronchildren.pdf

10   As reported by multiple key informants.

11   As reported by multiple key informants.

12   As reported by multiple key informants.

13   United Nations, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General's on Children and Armed Conflict.* S/2019/509 (20 June 2019): https://undocs.org/s/2019/509

14   United Nations General Assembly, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.* S/2019/509 (20 June 2019): https://undocs.org/s/2019/509; and, United Nations, A/72/865-S/2018/465, (16 May 2018), *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict,* https://undocs.org/s/2018/465

15   United Nations General Assembly, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.* S/2019/509 (20 June 2019): https://undocs.org/s/2019/509

16   Save the Children (2019), *Unprotected: crisis in humanitarian funding for child protection*, available at: https:// resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/15501/pdf/child-protection-funding-report-web.pdf

17   See OSRSG-CAAC, UNICEF & DPKO (2014) *Field Manual: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations Against Children in situations of Armed Conflict*: http://www.mrmtools.org/mrm/mrmtk_1115.htm

18   Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015), *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action,* available at: https://gbvguidelines.org/en/

19   United Nations (1996), *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,* Report of the expert of the Secretary-General, Ms. Graça Machel, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157, 26 August 1996: https://www. refworld.org/docid/3b00f2d30.html

20   United Nations General Assembly A/RES/51/77 (20 February 1997): https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/51/77

21   United Nations Security Council S/RES/1261 (30 August 1999): https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1261%20(1999)

22   United Nations Security Council S/RES/1612 (2005): https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/SecurityCouncilResolution1612_en.pdf

23   United Nations (1996), *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,* Report of the expert of the Secretary-General, Ms. Graça Machel, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157, 26 August 1996: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f2d30.html

24   In Resolution 1261 on the grave violations – the only reference to gender is centred on the need for "special measures to protect children, in particular girls, from rape and other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violence..." – echoed this singular focus. United Nations Security Council S/RES/1261 (30 August 1999): https:// www. un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1261%20(1999)

25   See for example: OHCHR Manual on Human Rights *Monitoring, Monitoring and Protecting the Human Rights of Women (chapter 28)*; Aolàin, Fionnuala (2016) "*The Gender Politics of Fact-Finding in the Context of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda" in The Transformation of Human Rights Monitoring,* Oxford University Press

26   See for example: OHCHR Manual on Human Rights *Monitoring, Monitoring and Protecting the Human Rights of Women* (chapter 28); Aolàin, Fionnuala (2016) "*The Gender Politics of Fact-Finding in the Context of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda" in The Transformation of Human Rights Monitoring*, Oxford University Press

27   Johnson, Rochelle (2018) *My Vision for a Safe and Equal Future: An Adolescent and Youth Focused Assessment on Gender-Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Jordan.* Plan International and CARE International.

28   See United Nations Security Council S/RES/1612 (2005) https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/SecurityCouncilResolution1612_en.pdf

29   Stark, Lindsay & Boothby, Neil & Ager, Alastair (2009) *Children and fighting forces: 10 years on from Cape Town,* Disasters

30   UNICEF (February 2005), *The Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls in West and Central Africa and the UNICEF response*, https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_25262.html

31   See "MRM Basics" (webpage) http://www.mrmtools.org/mrm/mrmtk_1115.htm; Armed forces refers to the military institution of a State, while armed groups are defined by article 4 of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC)

32   See for example the evolution in terminology between The Cape Town Principles and Best Practices (April 1997) https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles(1).pdf and, more recently, The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (February 2017) https://www.unicef.org/ emerg/files/ParisPrinciples310107English.pdf

33   Stark, Lindsay & Boothby, Neil & Ager, Alastair (2009) *Children and fighting forces: 10 years on from Cape Town,* Disasters

34   Stark, Lindsay & Boothby, Neil & Ager, Alastair (2009) *Children and fighting forces: 10 years on from Cape Town,* Disasters

35   See United Nations Security Council S/RES/1612 (2005) https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/ SecurityCouncilResolution1612_en.pdf

36   See OSRSG-CAAC, UNICEF & DPKO (2014) Field Manual: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations Against Children in situations of Armed Conflict: http://www.mrmtools.org /mrm/mrmtk_1115.htm

37   Analysis of Secretary-General's annual reports on Children and Armed Conflict between covering 2013 to 2018

38   Subsequently sometimes referred to as "Secretary-General's Annual Report" throughout this paper for ease of reference.

39   United Nations General Assembly, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.* S/2019/509 (20 June 2019): https://undocs.org/s/2019/509

40   While gender-disaggregated data is necessary in order to ensure inclusivity of children outside the gender binary, the challenging realities of documenting, verifying and reporting data in conflict settings must be considered. Systematic disaggregation of data by sex should be ensured at a minimum, while acknowledging that disaggregation by gender is ideal.

41   Although normative frameworks are not legally binding, they do facilitate compliance to existing international law.

42   All of the protections specifically highlighted by the grave violations are also prohibited by other international norms.

43   United Nations, *"Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict"* (webpage), https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/optional-protocol/

44   United Nations, *"Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict"* (webpage), https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/optional-protocol/

45   See for example remarks issued by the SRSG-CAAC on 20 February 2019 at the event called *"Free Children From War: the role of the Paris principles and commitments."* Available at: https://childrenandarmedconflict. un.org/free-children-from-war-the-role-of-the-paris-principles-and-commitments/

46   United Nations, *"Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict"* (webpage), https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/optional-protocol/

47   UNICEF (February 2007), *The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups*: https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/ParisPrinciples310107English.pdf

48   Stark, Lindsay & Boothby, Neil & Ager, Alastair (2009) *Children and fighting forces: 10 years on from Cape Town*, Disasters

49   UNICEF (February 2007), *The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups*: https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/ParisPrinciples310107English.pdf

50   UNICEF (February 2007), *The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups*: https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/ParisPrinciples310107English.pdf

51   (15 November 2017), *Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers,* https://www.vancouverprinciples.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/17-204-Vancouver-Principles-Doc-EN-v3.pdf

52   (15 November 2017), *Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers,* https://www.vancouverprinciples.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/17-204-Vancouver-Principles-Doc-EN-v3.pdf

53   See Article 12 of the *Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers,* https://www.vancouverprinciples.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/17-204-Vancouver-Principles-Doc-EN-v3.pdf

54   (2019), *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/vancouver-principles.html

55   (2019), *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/vancouver-principles.html

56   The Protection of Civilians agenda is framed by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1265 (1999), 1674 (2006) and 1894 (2009)

57   The Women, Peace and Security agenda is framed by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), and 2247 (2019)

58   United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1888 (30 September 2009) https://undocs.org/S/RES/1888(2009)

59   United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1960 (16 December 2010) https://undocs.org/S/RES/1960(2010)

60   Ministers underlined "the importance of responding to the needs of men and boys who are victims of sexual violence in armed conflict, as well as to the needs of those secondarily traumatized as forced witnesses of sexual violence against family members" during the *G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict* (April 2013): https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/G8%20Declaration%20Sexual%20Violence%20in%20Conflict%20-%20 April%202013.pdf

61   Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244849/A_DECLARATION_OF_COMMITMENT_TO_END_SEXUAL_VIOLENCE_IN_CONFLICT__TO_PRINT....pdf

62   As reported by key informant

63   See, for example, Global Coalition to Protect Education From Attack (April 2019), *"All that I have lost" Impact of Attacks on Education for Women and Girls in Kasai Central Province, Democratic Republic of Congo*, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/drc_kasai_attacks_on_women_and_girls.pdf; and, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (October 2018), *"I Will Never Go Back to School" The Impact of Attacks on Education for Nigerian Women and Girls*, available at: http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/ files/documents/attacks_on_nigerian_women_and_girls.pdf

64   (2015) *The Safe Schools Declaration*, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf

65   (2015) *The Safe Schools Declaration,* http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf

66   Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Implementing the Guidelines: A Toolkit to Guide Understanding and Implementation of the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military* Use during Armed Conflicts, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/toolkit.pdf

67   Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflicts*, http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf

68   Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks, *What can be done to better protect women and girls from attacks on education and military use of educational institutions?* Available at: http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/what_can_be_done_to_better_protect_women_and_girls.pdf

69   United Nations (20 November 1989) *"Convention on the Rights of the Child":* https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

70   United Nations (18 December 1979) *"Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women"* https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx

71   United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Committee on the Rights of the Child (14 November 2014) CEDAW/C/GC/31-CRC/C/GC/18, *Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No.18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices:* https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fGC%2f31%2fCRC%2fC%2fGC%2f18&Lang=en

72   As reported by multiple key informants.

73   See United Nations Security Council (16 April 2018) S/2018/250, *Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, https://undocs.org/S/2018/250; United Nations Security Council (29 March 2019) S/2019/280, Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, https://undocs.org/en/S/2019/280; and, Plan International (September 2015), *State of the World's Girls 2015 : Unfinished Business,* https://plan-international.org/publications/state-worlds-girls-2015-unfinished-business

74   United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 17/19, A/HRC/RES/17/19 (14 July 2011), *Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity,* https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/148/76/PDF/G1114876.pdf?OpenElement

75   United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 17/19, A/HRC/RES/17/19 (14 July 2011), *Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity,* https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/148/76/PDF/G1114876. pdf?OpenElement

76   United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 32/2 (15 July 2016) A/HRC/RES/32/2, Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/ GEN/G16/154/15/PDF/G1615415.pdf?OpenElement

77   United Nations Human Rights Council, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/19/41 (17 November 2011), *Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity*, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/A.HRC.19.41_English.pdf. See also Kareel Blondeel et al. Bulletin of the World Health Organisation (2017), *Violence motivated by perception of sexual orientation and gender identity: a systematic review*, https://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/96/1/17-197251.pdf

78   United Nations Human Rights Council, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/19/41 (17 November 2011), *Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity,* https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/A.HRC.19.41_English.pdf

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80   Save the Children (2018), *The War on Children: Time to end grave violations against children in conflict,*
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81   Save the Children (2019), *Stop the War on Children: Protecting Children in 21st Century Conflict,*
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83   As reported by multiple key informants.

84   As reported by multiple key informants.

85   As reported by multiple key informants.

86   As reported by multiple key informants. See also Oxford Research Group (November 2013), *Stolen Futures: The
      hidden toll of child casualties,* https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/173769/Stolen%20Futures.pdf

87   See United Nations University (February 2018), *Cradled By Conflict: Child Involvement with Armed Groups in
      Contemporary Conflict*: https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:6409

88   International Committee of the Red Cross (2014), *Children and Detention,*
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89   https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/crime-prevention-criminal-justice/module-9/key-issues/3--discrimination-and-
      violence-against-individuals-that-identify-as--or-are-perceived-to-be--lgbti.html

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      "Most of the men want to leave" Armed groups, displacement and the gendered webs of vulnerability in Syria,
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91   See ILGA Europe: https://www.ilga-europe.org/what-we-do/our-advocacy-work/health

92   Examples include in Turkey (https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5195f1290.pdf) and Serbia (https://www.undp.org/
      content/dam/serbia/Publications%20and%20reports/English/UNDP_RS_Being_LGBTI_in_SERBIA%20report_
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      gender-based violence,"* https://www.icrc.org/en/international-review/article/letting-go-gender-binary-charting-
      new-pathways-humanitarian

94   All Survivors Project (February 2018), *"I don't know who can help" Men and boys facing sexual violence in
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      Republic.pdf

95   All Survivors Project (2018) *"Destroyed from within" Sexual violence against men and boys in Syria and Turkey,*
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      by armed groups,* https://www.child-soldiers.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=38e90749-3a76-4441-82dc-
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104   United Nations, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.* S/2019/509 (20 June
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105   United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in South Sudan,*
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377   As reported by key informant.
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380   See for example: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2018), *Integrating a Gender Perspective into Human Rights Investigations: Guidance and Practice,* (advance version) available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/390992552/UN-GenderIntegrationintoHRInvestigations
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382   As reported by key informant.
383   See Sustainable Development Goals: Knowledge Platform (webpage) available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300
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412   This capacity and commitment to the participation of crisis-affected populations is reflected in the Core Humanitarian Standards and Grand Bargain workstreams. For more information, see: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/participation-revolution-include-people-receiving-aid-making-decisions-which-affect-their-lives

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Save the Children