

GLOBAL GOOD PRACTICES STUDY

Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict

November 2013



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Global Good Practices Study – Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict

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Disclaimer

This study, conducted by a team of external consultants, aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices among the United Nations (UN) agencies and their partners. The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the official position, policies or views of the United Nations.

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¹ See Annex 1 for more details on the composition and role of the Technical Advisory Board.

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Foreword

We are pleased to present the *Global Good Practices Study -- Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict*. This publication is a useful tool for field practitioners implementing the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). It is intended to help all child protection personnel working in conflict-affected areas in their efforts to enhance the protection of children.

The study brings together the many lessons learned and good practices that have been developed in the field by the MRM task force co-chairs and child protection practitioners. Its findings will help personnel to address challenges and take advantage of opportunities provided by the MRM, with the objective of yielding tangible results for children. It complements and should be read in conjunction with the MRM *Guidelines* and *Field Manual*.

This study was designed to be a practical reference guide. We hope it will facilitate the exchange of experiences among practitioners, as part of a broader community of practice. We sincerely thank all the individuals who provided their valuable time and constructive contributions.

The *Global Good Practices Study* is a living document. We encourage you to provide feedback to us through your MRM team, especially information on good practices that have proved effective in the field. We hope this process will foster continuing dialogue, which is essential for the success of the MRM and the greater protection of the world's most vulnerable children.

As always, we stand ready to support you.

Sincerely,

Leila Zerrougui
SRSG CAAC

Anthony Lake UNICEF
Executive Director
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Hervé Ladsous
Under-Secretary-General for
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New York, November 2013

Acronyms

BINUB	United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi
CAAC	Children affected by armed conflict
CAAFAG	Children associated with armed forces and armed groups
CPA	Child protection adviser
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CTFMR	Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i>
FNL	<i>Forces Nationales de Libération</i>
GBV	Gender-based violence
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICC	International Criminal Court
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMS	Information management system
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISAF	Afghanistan International Security Assistance Force
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement (Sudan)
JVMM	Joint Verification Monitoring Mechanism

LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MINURCAT	<i>Mission des Nations unies en République centrafricaine et au Tchad</i>
MONUSCO	<i>Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo</i>
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHRI	National human rights institutions
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPAC	Optional Protocol to the CRC on children and armed conflict
OSRSG-CAAC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
RC	Resident Coordinator
RTF	Regional Task Force
SCWG-CAAC	Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SRSR	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SSR	Security sector reform
TMVP	<i>Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal</i>
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
UNPOL	United Nations Police
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Force
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on children and armed conflict has offered a unique opportunity for country teams to strategically engage with parties to a conflict to address grave violations against children. The information collected through the MRM has served not only to highlight the impact of conflict on children but also as a basis for the 20 Action Plans negotiated and signed by parties to conflict in at least 13 situations since the MRM was established by the Security Council in 2005. This has led to the release of thousands of children from armed forces and armed groups. Indeed, a key strength of the MRM is its capacity to assert political pressure, rooted in the listing of parties to the conflict in the annexes of the United Nations Secretary-General's Annual Report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. The MRM has also provided a strong framework for advocacy with wider audiences, such as Member States and other actors in a position to influence change. MRM data have also served to inform and trigger preventive action and programmatic response for affected children, linking monitoring to response. The MRM has thus proved to be far more than a data collection tool or an effort to 'name and shame' parties to a conflict. Rather, it is a mechanism that calls for immediate attention to the situation of children affected by armed conflict and equips actors at the country level with tools that can be used to address grave violations.

As stated by one co-chair of a country task force on monitoring and reporting (CTFMR), "The MRM is not so much here to make a point, but to make a difference. We need to link the monitoring and reporting with the underlying response, presenting the MRM not so much as a blame and shame mechanism but as a tool to help people move into a better situation."

Finally, the MRM is one part of a broader collective effort to improve the protection of children. In the child protection continuum from prevention to redress and rehabilitation, the MRM plays an important role in pushing for accountability of parties to a conflict. In this regard, the CTFMR offers a unique space to devise ways of capitalizing on the efforts and resources invested in the MRM to support and feed into these wider and longer-term developments. In fact, these task forces have brought together both humanitarian and development-oriented organizations to look into ways of maximizing the impact of the MRM in-country.

With little existing global guidance on how to implement the MRM in its initial stages, the good practices documented in this study are rooted in the testing and learning from the field by CTFMRs themselves. As time has progressed, a body of practice has emerged that reflects strategic and innovative ways in which the task forces have addressed common challenges, such as sensitive political situations and limited access in conflict zones. This study aims to capture what has worked well at the country level, which could serve as inspiration for possible replication by other MRM teams facing similar challenges or opportunities.

The study has researched and documented good practices that were selected based on whether they can be linked to positive outcomes that may (directly or indirectly) benefit

children in armed conflict situations. The main positive outcomes of the MRM in-country found through the study are its use by country teams:

- a) As a framework to systematically monitor and report grave violations against children;
- b) As a platform to engage in constructive dialogue with parties to the conflict to address grave violations;
- c) As an opportunity to link monitoring to response, thus building accountability for violations into programming.

Key to achieving these outcomes has been a series of strategies, or good practices, carried out by CTFMRs:

a) Using the MTR as a framework for in-country systematic monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children

The MRM's value is largely based on the high-level and unique framework it provides for partners to monitor and report grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. This is a major shift from the early days of the MRM, when many field actors largely considered reporting grave violations as being outside their mandate.² Further, it has provided a system to systematically track grave violations. The main good practices found to contribute to this outcome include:

■ UN partners' ownership

Broad participation and ownership of UN partners has been found to be fundamental to maximizing the MRM's potential in-country, as UN partners bring a range of specific technical expertise, advocacy, monitoring and programmatic capacity. All of this contributes to a strong combination of institutional and individual capacities, and hence a stronger platform for engagement with parties to the conflict and for broader advocacy. The MRM is strengthened by the participation of partners with human/child rights expertise. Country offices of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and child protection and human rights components of missions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Political Affairs (DPKO/DPA), as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have been found to be an asset to the MRM due to their institutional mandates and capacity for human/child rights and protection monitoring and advocacy. It must also be stressed that the personal engagement and support of

² In 1997, Ms. Graca Machel, in her landmark report, highlighted both the lack of monitoring and reporting of grave abuses against children, as well as the pressing importance of such activities, in situations of conflict: "Where protection of children is concerned, much broader participation in the monitoring and reporting of abuses is required. Many of those working for relief agencies consider that reporting on infractions of either humanitarian or human rights law is outside their mandate or area of responsibility. Others are worried that they will be expelled from the country concerned or have their operations severely curtailed if they report sensitive information. But a balance must be struck. Without reports of such violations, the international community is deprived of vital information and is unable to undertake effective monitoring." Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, UN Document A/51/306 (1996), para. 239.

principal³ CTFMR co-chairs have been fundamental in mobilizing commitment from heads of UN agencies.

- Ability to build on existing mechanisms and support local structures for monitoring

Setting up a system for monitoring grave violations requires dedicated human capacity and resources to collect information on a broad scale. This has been done most efficiently when utilizing existing relevant monitoring mechanisms, such as DPKO mission-led and protection cluster monitoring systems. The MRM monitoring builds on the potential for alerts or data collection by those existing networks. In addition, and especially with a view to obtaining local ownership and continuity of child rights monitoring over time and in a sustainable manner, it has been found to be key to engage and support local structures. Using community structures, such as village committees and community leaders, has proved effective due to their knowledge of the local situation and potential capacity to assist in devising protection strategies, including their links to local power structures (such as churches or traditional authorities). Engaging independent national human rights institutions and national human rights NGOs in the MRM has also been an asset in some situations. It should be noted, however, that associating NGOs and local actors directly in MRM functions may not always be prudent, as it may raise questions about their independence or impartiality and put their security at stake.

b) Using the MTR as a platform to engage in constructive dialogue with the parties to stop violations

The MRM has been used as a tool for constructive dialogue with parties to the conflict, particularly to secure the release and reintegration of children from armed forces and armed groups. CTFMRs have consistently reported that the MRM has provided an important additional platform for their engagement and advocacy with both the parties and other political actors in a position to exercise influence on the parties. Key good practices found to contribute to this outcome include:

- Maximizing MRM data and public reports as tools to engage in dialogue with parties to the conflict

A key good practice found in the study has been maximizing the use of MRM data and public reports in all relevant and appropriate forums at country level in order to obtain the parties' acknowledgement and commitment to address the violations. CTFMRs have used evidence on grave violations to engage in constructive dialogue with armed forces and groups in most contexts, including in Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda. MRM-based evidence has also been utilized to strengthen engagement with security sector reform (SSR) and peace verification structures, which have been particularly effective entry points to engage with parties to the conflict to address grave violations. This has worked well in Burundi, for example, where a

³ 'Principal co-chairs' refers to the UNICEF Country Representative and UNDP Resident Coordinator or the Deputy SRSG in situations where there is a peacekeeping or political mission.

commitment to release children from the *Forces Nationales de Libération* (FNL) was secured as part of the Joint Verification Monitoring Mechanism (JVVM).

- Maximizing MRM data to advocate to wider audiences

The use of the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict and data analysis for advocacy with wider audiences, both at international and national levels, has been a key good practice utilized by all CTFMRs that have succeeded in having parties sign Action Plans to address grave violations. It has proved particularly effective to provide regular updates and engage with Member States and donors at the country level for their cohesive and consistent messaging on MRM issues with parties to the conflict, and to make strategic use of alternative reporting and accountability mechanisms. This has been particularly useful in reporting on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on children in armed conflict, and in supporting national and international judicial bodies to strengthen accountability for perpetrators of grave violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

c) Linking monitoring of grave violations to response

Monitoring and reporting activities have allowed in some cases for relatively sophisticated data analysis on the occurrence of grave violations, which has helped inform or trigger response. For example, MRM information management systems (IMs) have assisted in identifying vulnerable locations, and thus led to preventive actions, such as a protective presence in the case of the State of Palestine. Key good practices in linking monitoring to response include:

- Building monitoring into existing programming (as appropriate)

The MRM is not only an avenue for reporting and advocacy on the situation of children, but also a tool to strengthen actual remedies for victims. Where monitoring is linked to existing child protection-related programming, there is a stronger likelihood that victims may receive immediate assistance or join reintegration programmes. At the same time, programming offers an entry point to better understand violations that are taking place: engaging NGO partners implementing protection programmes has helped to increase the quantity and quality of data on grave violations in cases such as Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal and Uganda. However, this may be not possible in certain conflict situations where the operational continuity and staff security of NGOs may require disassociating monitoring from programmatic response, as in Afghanistan, Darfur (Sudan) and Somalia.

- Linking the MRM to the cluster system

A key good practice found in the study is strong links between CTFMRs and the cluster system. This linkage has helped to increase the amount of data collected, diversify platforms for advocacy and increase referral of children to services. In some situations, the child protection sub-cluster or Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) has mapped available services and set up referral pathways that have been of great value for CTFMRs to use in cases of grave violations. The education cluster has also played an important role in

responding to attacks on schools and military use of schools, by engaging education actors in alerting CTFMRs to such violations and in advocacy at the local level.

With regard to main challenges, a common challenge faced by CTFMR co-chairs was found to be obtaining cooperation and compliance by persistent perpetrators. To address this, the task forces have realized the need to position the MRM within a broader framework for action and also ensure the engagement of local partners and resources, to add pressure and complement international advocacy. Another key challenge is that while the MRM has succeeded in reporting grave violations in a systematic way to an international audience, this may not always translate into tangible changes for children and communities on the ground. Even in cases where children have been able to access immediate assistance and programmes, achieving justice and healing may take a long time. This is exacerbated in situations where there is generalized impunity and lack of adequate support for survivors. While addressing these challenges may fall beyond the MRM's mandate and duration in-country, the MRM provides a framework and opportunity to lay the groundwork for wider and longer-term accountability and social changes, as the following recommendations suggest:

Recommendations for CTFMRs

1. Integrate strategic thinking systematically into the structure and functioning of CTFMRs

Where CTFMRs have made significant progress in addressing grave violations, the MRM has been used strategically as a means for constructive engagement with parties to the conflict, and for advocacy with Member States and other actors well placed to influence change. In order to take full advantage of the opportunities that the MRM presents, it is recommended that the **principal CTFMR co-chairs⁴ request that all CTFMR members designate senior technical-level staff to meet on a regular basis to carry out collaborative strategic thinking**, with an action-oriented approach, so as to devise ways in which the MRM can be better utilized to stop violations.

2. Establish automatic allocation of funding to CTFMR co-chairs⁵ to implement the MRM

The capacity of CTFMRs to deliver on their mandates has been significantly impacted by the availability of dedicated resources to the MRM. Many of the good practices highlighted in the study were made possible where CTFMRs were able to raise sufficient funds to cover MRM activities. In order to provide a solid foundation upon which CTFMRs can implement the MRM,

⁴ "Principal co-chairs" refers to the UNICEF Country Representative and the Resident Coordinator, or the UNICEF Representative and the Deputy SRSG in situations where there is a peacekeeping or political mission.

⁵ "CTFMR co-chairs" refers to the co-chair organizations, i.e., UNICEF and the other designated UN agency at the country level, such as the Child Protection Section in situations where there is a peacekeeping or political mission.

it is therefore recommended that **principal CTFMR co-chairs take a proactive approach to securing adequate resources for the MRM, such as by ensuring that it is included in the co-chairs' country office operations budget.** In addition, the co-chair organizations should ensure that MRM activities are included in all components of the UN planning process (common country assessment, United Nations Development Assistance Framework [UNDAF] and all appropriate peacebuilding efforts).

Implications for headquarters:⁶ Headquarters (HQ) should support the allocation of dedicated resources for the MRM, as part of co-chair country office operations budgets. These resources should be made automatically available in all situations where parties to the conflict within the country of concern are listed and the MRM is therefore required to be implemented.

3. Strengthen institutional commitments from UN agencies at the country level

Given the important role of strong participation from different UN agencies in the overall effectiveness of the MRM, it is recommended that **principal CTFMR co-chairs prioritize securing a commitment from the heads of UN agencies to participate in the MRM efforts.** In addition, appropriate Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) clusters and Areas of Responsibility (AoRs/sub-clusters) – especially those dealing with protection, child protection, gender-based violence (GBV), education and health – can play an important role in responding to grave violations. **Principal CTFMR co-chairs should mobilize cluster lead agencies and cluster coordinators to contribute to the MRM,** emphasizing the mutual benefits of collaboration. Finally, the MRM framework provides opportunities for further collaboration across different sections within UN country offices. To strengthen **cross-sectoral engagement**, it is recommended that each CTFMR member agency facilitate internal dialogue to discuss the added value and opportunities that the MRM offers to its respective programmatic sectors, such as education and health, and to develop internal guidelines for greater engagement.

With commitment from leadership of UN agencies at the headquarters level, MRM ownership by agencies and clusters at the country level could be strengthened and made more consistent. Agencies should intensify their mobilization of senior leadership at headquarters level as well as the cluster lead agencies at global level to secure stronger institutional commitment and buy-in for active participation in the MRM.

4. Strengthen the CTFMR's approach to sexual violence

Security Council Resolution 1882 and other related resolutions pertaining to conflict-related sexual violence (including Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960) have made it

⁶ "HQ" refers to the principal agencies charged with supporting the implementation of the MRM, i.e., the Office of the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and DPKO at HQ level.

clear that conflict-related sexual violence is a priority that needs further attention. Monitoring and reporting on cases of sexual violence against children was a challenge raised by many CTFMRs. To address the challenge of collecting information on sexual violence and to clarify how CTFMRs and partners can best ensure that the 'do no harm' principle is applied in all stages of MRM implementation, it is recommended that the CTFMRs undertake the following:

- Explore further opportunities for collecting information on sexual violence through existing sources of information as appropriate and through other data collection systems in use at the country level;⁷ and engage with GBV sub-cluster lead agencies (UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] and sub-cluster members. Involving GBV service providers in the MRM is a practice worth replicating and strengthening. All actors must understand, however, that GBV service providers should only be involved when their agencies freely decide that it is safe for both service providers and service seekers to do so. Precautions must be in place to safeguard GBV service providers involved in the MRM and to ensure that their association will not lead to negative repercussions for survivors who seek services from these providers.
- Recommend adherence to global standards on GBV prevention and response in humanitarian contexts⁸ (based on existing key principles on interviewing survivors, informed consent on the use of information and standard definitions of rape and other sexual violence). Encouraging any action at the country level should also be guided by existing GBV-related inter-agency frameworks including standard operating procedures (SOPs) to address GBV and/or national comprehensive strategies on GBV or sexual violence. It should also be based on consultation with experts and service providers working on GBV prevention and response.
- Appoint a GBV technical expert as a permanent member of the CTFMR to systematically provide guidance to the task force on the above recommendations. Where relevant, terms of reference could be developed for joint work involving the CTFMR and any other sexual violence monitoring frameworks in order to promote consistency and coordination.

5. Devise communication strategies around the six grave violations, as appropriate

The MRM's framework offers an opportunity to influence social norms on the protection of children in conflict. The six grave violations provide a clear, focused and internationally accepted framework for communication and advocacy, which can be used as a 'code of

⁷ Evidence and trends of occurrence of sexual violence could be generated from anonymous records of service-user attendance at medical and psychosocial service centres. This could be supplemented with tracking of extent of cases that have reached the police and criminal justice system, disaggregated by age and type of perpetrator.

⁸ World Health Organization, Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies, WHO, Geneva, 2007; 'Reporting and Interpreting Data on Sexual Violence from Conflict-Affected Countries: Do's and don'ts', UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 2008; Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility Working Group, 'Handbook for Coordinating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Settings' GBV AoR, July 2010; Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IASC Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on prevention of and response to sexual violence in emergencies, IASC, Geneva, September 2005.

conduct' towards children in conflict. For this reason it is recommended, as deemed safe and appropriate, that **devising communication strategies around the grave violations at national and local levels should be an integral part of the CTFMR's work.**

6. Define the function of the CTFMR post-delisting

The MRM phase-out and any continued role of the CTFMR post phase-out should be discussed within the CTFMR and be clearly defined and planned. In countries where the de-listing of parties has been achieved or is anticipated, CTFMRs should discuss potential strategies and roles for promoting the sustained monitoring of relevant child rights violations over time. Where the CTFMR has been strong and committed, the platform should be utilized for continued advocacy on remaining or related child protection issues. A lesson learned from the transitions experienced in some MRM situations is that **the objectives and focus of the CTFMR after phase-out, including ongoing monitoring and reporting, need to be discussed in advance in coordination with headquarters and defined among CTFMR members.**

7. Explore opportunities to support reparations for children

The MRM falls within the broader child-protection continuum that includes redress and rehabilitation for affected children. In order to contribute to broader accountability initiatives, the **CTFMRs should also consider the possible linkages between the MRM and transitional justice initiatives at the country level.** The MRM offers a record of verified incidents and individual cases of grave violations against children that could be of great value to transitional justice initiatives, **such as reparations.** MRM data analysis could inform policies on individual or collective reparations, such as rehabilitation programmes, and be considered in the context of peace negotiations and peace agreements. It could also be used to ensure that grave violations against children are included within the focus of truth commissions. Information from the MRM could inform security-sector reform, such as vetting of security forces through information on alleged perpetrators of grave violations, as well as for prosecutorial strategies. Given that OHCHR is the assigned lead agency on transitional justice within the UN system, where it is a CTFMR co-chair or member and is involved in supporting transitional justice processes, opportunities could be explored to link work on the MRM with transitional justice initiatives.

8. Include the State's response to violations in MRM reporting

The State is the primary duty bearer for protecting the rights of children within its jurisdiction. Reporting on the State's due diligence in responding to grave violations is one of the most important components of child protection. It is recommended that **CTFMRs systematically include in their reports the positive steps taken by States to address grave violations.** This information would also expand opportunities for the CTFMR to engage with State authorities on actions taken to prevent or respond to grave violations, at local and national levels. MRM information management systems could systematically indicate whether the State provides services to affected children and whether local and national law enforcement and justice officials take follow-up actions towards perpetrators of grave violations.

MRM Good Practices Index

The following table presents a brief summary of the key good practices detailed in the *Global Good Practices Study*, accompanied by the relevant good practice area, sub-heading and page number for ease of reference. For further details on the relevant good practice, please refer to the specific section of the study.⁹

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 2. Establishing the MRM	a. Personal engagement and leadership of senior representatives of CTFMR co-chair organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal co-chairs' personal engagement and leadership played a key role in mobilizing other UN heads of agencies, and the concerned government's acceptance of the MRM; e.g., Myanmar. The role of CTFMR senior leadership was crucial in mobilizing UN agency participation in the MRM; e.g., Chad, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Sudan. Prior to formal establishment of the CTFMR, strategic engagement of senior representatives was essential in laying the groundwork for setting up a monitoring system, such as by identifying and engaging partners and commencing monitoring activities; e.g., Yemen. 	30
	b. UN partners' engagement and ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN partners' engagement and ownership of MRM objectives and processes was found to significantly strengthen the functioning of the CTFMR; e.g., International Labour Organization (ILO) in Myanmar; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and World Health Organization (WHO) in Afghanistan; OHCHR in Colombia, Nepal and Uganda; and UNDP, UNFPA and UNHCR in Chad. UN partners' level of engagement in the MRM was strongest where partners considered MRM participation as an added value to their work; e.g., WHO in Afghanistan and UNHCR in Chad. 	32
	c. Strategic engagement of non-UN actors for local ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging national/local NGOs in the MRM is helpful in strengthening their capacity to carry out child rights monitoring, with a view to enhancing local ownership and continuity of child rights monitoring over time; e.g., Colombia. Openly discussing with the partner agency any risks and concerns of the NGO in taking on MRM functions and developing strategies and measures to reduce any perceived risks or concerns; e.g., the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. Ensuring the neutrality and impartiality of all CTFMR members, including state institutions. National human rights institutions (NHRIs) that are CTFMR members must have been awarded 'A' status by the International Coordinating Committee for NHRIs.⁹ Before the NHRI joins the CTFMR, it is recommended to discuss the risks and opportunities of being a CTFMR member; e.g., Philippines. 	34

⁹ For further details, please see <<http://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/ICCAccreditation/Pages/default.aspx>>.

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 2. Establishing the MRM	d. Ensuring strong human rights as well as child rights expertise within CTFMRs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring strong human rights as well as child rights expertise within CTFMRs was found to strengthen their monitoring, reporting, public advocacy capacity and judicial follow-up; e.g., OHCHR participation in Colombia, Nepal, State of Palestine and Uganda. 	36
	e. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities within the CTFMR for increased predictability and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing internal rules and/or codes of conduct for CTFMR members clarifies their roles and responsibilities, leading to enhanced predictability and internal accountability; e.g., Afghanistan and Colombia. Designating 'lead' CTFMR members for specific violations has led to increased depth in monitoring and analysis; e.g., Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and State of Palestine. 	38
	f. Securing adequate financial and human resources for effective MRM implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing existing capacities and resource needs, identifying potential partners and mobilizing the necessary resources is essential to effectively deliver MRM functions; e.g., feasibility studies in Iraq and Sudan. Utilizing the MRM as a platform for donor investment in the MRM and broader children and armed conflict prevention and response programmes is key to delivering tangible results for children; e.g., Chad and Nepal. Seconding international NGO staff to support MRM activities was recommended by some CTFMRs, in order to quickly secure essential technical expertise at crucial stages of MRM implementation; e.g., Colombia, Iraq and Sudan. Appointing a core MRM specialist with a solid legal or human rights law background and strong coordination and leadership skills is extremely beneficial for enhancing analysis, evidence-based advocacy and cooperation among agencies. Assessing the local security context and determining appropriate composition of MRM teams (particularly in relation to the use of national officers) has led to risk mitigation strategies for staff; e.g., Somalia, Sri Lanka and Sudan. 	39

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 2. Establishing the MRM	g. Utilizing all relevant components of DPKO/DPA missions for increased efficiency in monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Utilizing all relevant DPKO/DPA mission sections maximizes channels for data gathering and advocacy on grave violations against children. ■ Strengthening cooperation between UNICEF and the Peacekeeping Mission helps to utilize comparative advantages of political leverage, monitoring and advocacy capacity and improves the accountability focus of the mission and UNICEF's child protection programming, thus enhancing linkages between monitoring and responses and ultimately results for children; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo (secondment of a UNICEF staff to DPKO Child Protection Section to serve as MRM National Focal Point). ■ Identifying how the MRM may support the mission's mandate and political priorities ensures the effective integration of MRM issues into the mission's agenda; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo. ■ Sensitizing mission staff on the MRM and discussing entry points for integration, such as providing alerts and monitoring grave violations, helps to engage mission components' participation in the MRM; e.g., South Sudan. ■ Ensuring clear division of roles and responsibilities between UNICEF and the mission enhances the partnership and the effectiveness of MRM implementation; e.g., Chad and Nepal. 	41
	h. Establishing sub-national MRM Task Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decentralizing the MRM by establishing sub-national task forces (that mirror the membership and functions at the national level) helps to strengthen the effectiveness of the MRM by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — increasing data collection via locally adapted monitoring strategies; — enhancing ability to verify cases; — mitigating security risks (in certain circumstances); — raising the possibility to directly engage with local stakeholders for advocacy; and — increasing trust and direct feedback to local communities. 	43
	i. Ensuring office-wide engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Setting the MRM as an office-wide responsibility enhances cross-sectoral collaboration and accountability and improves monitoring coverage, analysis and linkages for advocacy and programmatic responses for affected children; e.g., Afghanistan. 	45
Chapter 3. Monitoring grave violations against children	a. Integrating MRM data collection into existing monitoring and programming structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Utilizing existing monitoring and programmatic structures carried out by national and international NGOs helps to increase efficiency and foster sustainability of monitoring child rights' violations; e.g., Burundi and Nepal. ■ Expanding partnership activities with NGOs helps in monitoring support and child protection programming response, enabling monitoring in remote areas and enhancing the linkages between monitoring and responses for children; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar. 	47

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 3. Monitoring grave violations against children	b. Engaging community structures to provide alerts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using community structures such as child protection and village committees, community focal points and community/religious leaders/elders who have been sensitized to child protection issues improves the quality of monitoring by utilizing local knowledge and assists the development of community-based protection strategies and responses, enhancing sustainability; e.g., Afghanistan, Central African Republic and Sri Lanka. ■ Engaging and strengthening local structures aids sustainability and a smooth transition when a DPKO/ DPA mission withdraws; e.g., Chad. ■ Linking community-based organizations with local human rights NGOs in order to expand the monitoring network at the grass-roots level and improve the quality of reporting; e.g., State of Palestine. 	49
	c. Contextualizing violations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adopting a flexible approach to monitoring of other child protection concerns (which are generally not reported to the Security Council) helps to enhance the local relevance of monitoring and hence retain credibility in communities, encouraging sustainable participation of partners and maximizing the utility of the coordination platform; e.g., Sri Lanka (missing children), Colombia (displacement), Nepal and State of Palestine. 	50
	d. Devising strategies for remote monitoring in restricted access areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishing a robust system of safeguards and support for local monitors enhances the protection of monitors and communities and strengthens the coverage and quality of data collection in remote areas; e.g., Somalia. ■ Establishing and maintaining reliable networks of trained focal points in inaccessible areas by organizing regular MRM orientations and trainings with local NGOs or community leaders in areas the CTFMR can access helps to increase monitoring coverage as well as the quality and reliability of reporting; e.g., Iraq. 	51
	e. Utilizing the cluster system to identify alerts of grave violations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Training cluster members on the MRM, linking the cluster-led monitoring networks to the MRM (e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda) and ensuring the participation of cluster coordinators/representatives at CTFMR meetings aids in expanding the alert system and monitoring coverage, as well as in triggering appropriate prevention and responses; e.g., education, health and protection clusters in Afghanistan, education cluster in Democratic Republic of the Congo. 	52
	f. Establishing real-time alerts for rapid monitoring and response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using SMS by community members in remote areas to rapidly alert a central focal person from the local NGO or other MRM partner helps to trigger the necessary follow-up verification and appropriate responses; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo and State of Palestine (SMS alerts on attacks on schools). 	53
	g. Joint verification systems for greater scrutiny and consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensuring verification standards are well understood and streamlined among all CTFMR members at all (central, regional, local) levels and that verification is a shared task among CTFMR members (rather than the sole responsibility of one co-chair) increases ownership, participation and scrutiny of cases, leading to improved reporting; e.g., Afghanistan and Colombia. 	54

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 3. Monitoring grave violations against children	h. Safeguards for upholding key monitoring principles: 'do no harm', security and impartiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mapping monitors and coordinating field visits helps prevent duplication of interviews and aids in coordination of monitoring and response, consistent with the 'do no harm' principle; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo and State of Palestine. ■ Establishing clear policies and safeguards and utilizing the experience and expertise of relevant human rights defenders' organizations and protection networks in dealing with security issues aids in protecting the security of MRM staff and monitors on the ground; e.g., Iraq and Democratic Republic of the Congo. ■ Broadening the scope of monitoring to all perpetrating parties and geographic areas helps to control biased monitoring; e.g., Afghanistan, State of Palestine. ■ Structuring the monitoring system to the greatest extent possible around areas where survivors are located improves the accuracy and impartial coverage of reporting; e.g., in certain geographic areas, such as cross-border monitoring in refugee camps, or places where affected children come into contact with services, if safe and appropriate. 	55
Chapter 4. IMSs	a. Flexibility of IMS to meet country- specific needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Flexibility in recording data (e.g., whether standardized forms are used or not) and adapting the IMS to meet agreed objectives maximizes the utility of MRM data documentation to meet country-specific objectives; e.g., Colombia, Sri Lanka and State of Palestine. 	58
	b. Comprehensive MRM information security policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishing a comprehensive information security policy increases consistency and emergency preparedness in the CTFMR; e.g., Colombia, Somalia and Sudan. 	59
	c. Maximizing MRM data analysis to strengthen advocacy, accountability and reponse programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishing an MRM IMS that is capable of data analysis aids in identifying trends and patterns of violations and informs advocacy, accountability, response and prevention strategies; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka and State of Palestine. 	60
Chapter 5. Reporting	a. Strengthening contextual analysis in reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Integrating existing research and undertaking specific research on children and armed conflict issues strengthens contextual analysis in MRM reporting; e.g., attacks on schools in Afghanistan. 	62
	b. Closing the feedback loop: reporting back to monitors and local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regular feedback and dialogue between the CTFMR at national level with those directly involved in collecting information at field level; e.g., Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. 	63
	c. Utilizing additional reporting avenues for added pressure on governments to take action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reporting on MRM issues to other human rights mechanisms, including Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council (e.g., State of Palestine and Sudan) and Treaty Bodies, such as ILO mechanism (e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar) and Committee on the Rights of the Child's review process on the Optional Protocol on children and armed conflict (OPAC) (e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda) enhances accountability of concerned governments to address grave violations. 	64

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 6. Accountability	a. Investing in preparatory steps to lay the groundwork for ownership and compliance by the signatory party of the Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in sufficient preparation before the signing of the Action Plan, including ensuring a strong understanding of the MRM and of the implications of signing an Action Plan, among the party's leadership and other involved actors, enhances the ownership and implementation of the Action Plan after signature; e.g., Uganda. Strong coordination among CTFMR co-chairs during the Action Plan negotiation process facilitates cohesive, consistent and hence stronger messaging to the parties; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Ensuring focal points with strong leadership and political clout convene key actors in the Action Plan negotiations encourages compliance; e.g., South Sudan and Sri Lanka. 	67
	b. Addressing context-specific needs and issues in the Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in detailed dialogue between the signatory party and the UN during the preparatory process to clearly define the terms of the agreement helps to attain ownership and compliance by the signatory party; e.g., Uganda. Adaptation of standard HQ Action Plan templates by the signatory party to reflect local relevance further strengthens ownership and should lead to increased compliance; e.g., Afghanistan Action Plan includes annexes on other grave violations. 	68
	c. Designating a separate body with relevant CTFMR members to monitor the Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a separate and distinct UN body/task force to monitor implementation of the Action Plan, with the appointment of dedicated staff to oversee and support implementation, helps to maintain pressure on the signatory party; e.g., Nepal, Philippines, South Sudan and Sri Lanka. Establishing a clear, agreed process to monitor and implement the Action Plan, which is understood and accepted by all actors as transparent and impartial, enhances ownership and strengthens compliance by the signatory parties; e.g., Uganda. Coupling the monitoring of Action Plans with sensitization on child protection standards enhances understanding and cooperation from local commanders; e.g., Chad and South Sudan. 	69
	d. Other accountability initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing MRM information for judicial and other accountability initiatives, when appropriate, enhances accountability; e.g., MONUSCO's 'conditionality policy' in Democratic Republic of the Congo. 	71
Chapter 7. Engaging with parties to the conflict	a. Designating focal points within the government as MRM interlocutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In designating government focal points to act as MRM interlocutors, choosing people who are strategic and influential and have strong leverage and coordination capacity helps to ensure high-level engagement and support from relevant ministries; e.g., Afghanistan. Designating child protection focal points within national armed forces helps to raise awareness within their units on prohibited grave violations and Action Plan commitments; e.g., Burundi and South Sudan. 	73

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 7. Engaging with parties to the conflict	b. Setting up inter-ministerial committees on children and armed conflict (CAAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocating for the establishment of inter-ministerial bodies to deal with MRM issues helps to strengthen the collaborative participation of all concerned ministries and authorities; e.g., Afghanistan and Sudan. ■ Engaging ministries (e.g., education, health) to address specific grave violations helps to monitor and respond to attacks on and military use of schools and hospitals; e.g., Afghanistan and State of Palestine. 	75
	c. Using SSR framework as an entry point to engage with parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Including CAAC issues and MRM objectives on the SSR agenda increases pressure on parties utilizing SSR forums; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. 	76
	d. Using peace agreements and peace/ceasefire structures to engage with the parties on CAAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using peace agreements and peace/ceasefire structures to engage with the parties on CAAC (while keeping negotiations on Action Plans separate) helps to strategically engage in dialogue on MRM issues with parties to the conflict; e.g., Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal and Sudan. ■ Using peace verification structures helps in monitoring and raising CAAC concerns, and addressing historical violations; e.g., Burundi and Sudan. ■ Involving armed groups in dialogue at early stages of peace negotiation, and training armed group leaders on children's rights so they develop an understanding of international child protection standards, is essential in attaining the cooperation and commitment of the armed group on the MRM; e.g., Chad. 	77
Chapter 8. Programmatic response	a. Using the MRM data analysis to inform and trigger programmatic response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using information recorded through monitoring grave violations to identify areas where violations are more prevalent helps to trigger or inform targeted responses; e.g., Afghanistan and State of Palestine. 	80
	b. Engaging the cluster system for referral and response to grave violations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engaging the cluster system - such as by training cluster members on the MRM; articulating ways of collaborating in briefings to cluster members or in MOUs (e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo); and ensuring the participation of cluster representatives, particularly coordinators, as CTFMR members (Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and State of Palestine) - improves referral and response. ■ Linking the MRM with the protection cluster (e.g., Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and State of Palestine); the CPWG (e.g., Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen); the education cluster (e.g., engaging UNESCO and State of Palestine Education Ministry); and health cluster (e.g., Afghanistan) benefits monitoring, reporting, prevention and response. 	81
	c. Establishing an emergency fund to provide short-term assistance to affected children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishing a small emergency fund for monitors to use, especially in remote areas with limited services, for immediate assistance of survivors – such as to cover the cost of transporting a child to medical services – empowers monitors and encourages their committed engagement in the MRM; e.g., Nepal and Somalia. 	84

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 9. Advocacy	a. Advocating with Member States to pressure parties to conflict to stop grave violations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Holding regular briefings of relevant donors and embassies on CAAC issues mobilizes international pressure on parties to conflict and aids fundraising; e.g., Sri Lanka and State of Palestine. ■ Establishing a 'Friends of CAAC' diplomatic group at the country level (e.g., Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sri Lanka) and strategically engaging individual ambassadors (e.g., Burundi, Chad, Somalia and Sri Lanka) helps to pressure parties to address violations. 	85
	b. Coordinating between country-level and international advocacy for greater synergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishing solid communication and synergy between the SRSG-CAAC and CTFMR principal co-chairs improves advocacy; e.g., Colombia and Sri Lanka. 	87
	c. Building advocacy on a cooperative approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensuring regular communication between the CTFMR and the government and offering a collaborative approach aids efforts to achieve de-listing and common child-protection objectives; e.g., Chad. ■ Ensuring cohesive advocacy efforts by the CTFMR as a whole, rather than leadership by a single agency, strengthens advocacy influence and reduces potential risks to specific CTFMR members; e.g., Sudan. 	87
	d. Raising awareness and promoting social change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devising communication strategies that increase outreach of CAAC reports by the Secretary-General and utilizing the MRM information in various modalities helps in raising awareness and mobilizing support; e.g., State of Palestine and Sudan. ■ Engaging religious leaders helps to influence social behavioural change on grave violations; e.g., Afghanistan. 	88
Chapter 10. Regional cooperation	a. SOPs to prevent armed forces from re-interviewing children to be repatriated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing SOPs helps to protect children from being re-interviewed by armed forces (e.g., Uganda People's Defense Force [UPDF] regarding Lord's Resistance Army [LRA] child abductees in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan). This example of a national army agreeing to put children's best interests above other intelligence or military interests may provide a model for other armed forces. 	90
	b. Reporting with a regional perspective to broaden analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishing regional reporting structures, as appropriate, to capture the scale, movements and impact of certain perpetrators, helps to develop and coordinate effective regional strategies to address the violations; e.g., LRA. 	91
	c. Cross-border cooperation for monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conducting cross-border country visits aids in establishing or strengthening cooperation on cross-border monitoring, reporting, prevention and response; e.g., Chad and Sudan. ■ Ensuring an institutional commitment from UN agencies operating across borders and conducting monitoring activities within a broader child protection framework helps to minimize risks and enable monitoring activities. 	92

Good practice area	Sub-heading	Good practice	Page
Chapter 10. Regional cooperation	d. Regional advocacy for enhanced regional cooperation in stopping violations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting regional advocacy, including utilizing influential regional bodies such as the African Union and the European Union, enhances regional cooperation in addressing violations; e.g., N'Djamena Declaration at the Regional Conference on Children and Armed Conflict in Chad. 	93
Chapter 11. Child participation	a. Incorporating children's views in monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating listening to children into regular monitoring, as appropriate, is a means to better understand the context in which the violations occur and the impact of the conflict and peace process on children; e.g., Sudan and Democratic Republic of the Congo. 	94
	b. Communicating on grave violations: involving children in awareness-raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving children in awareness-raising on child rights, as appropriate, enables children to be peer communicators on remedies available to child survivors or children at risk of grave violations; e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo. 	94
Chapter 12. MRM phase-out	a. Strong engagement with civil society and government for sustained child rights monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging and supporting national Human Rights Commissions helps in building capacity for sustained child rights monitoring over time; e.g., Philippines, Sri Lanka and Uganda. 	96
	b. Linking the MRM to longer-term accountability and reparations processes	<p>Using the MRM to inform consultations with children on reparations; e.g., Uganda.</p> <p>Investing in legally binding commitments that outlive MRM time-bound commitments in Action Plans to protect children in the longer term; e.g., adoption of Sri Lanka's 'Emergency Regulation on Children Associated with Armed Groups'.</p>	97

1. Introduction

a. Purpose and scope of the study

The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism was formally established in 2005 by Security Council Resolution 1612. It applies in situations where parties to conflict are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's Annual Report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. The purpose of the MRM is "to collect and provide timely, objective, accurate and reliable information" on six grave violations in order to ensure "well-informed, concerted and effective response," with the aim of achieving greater protection of children in armed conflict.¹⁰ The MRM is currently being implemented in 12 countries; it was but is no longer operational in another 5 countries.

The Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in 2005 envisioned that CTFMRs would "undertake periodic assessments of best practices and lessons learned" and share these practices and lessons with HQ and relevant parties in concerned country situations.¹¹ Child protection practitioners from DPKO, UNICEF and other organizations involved in the implementation of the MRM also requested a compilation of good practices to provide further guidance and inspiration from other teams dealing with similar challenges. In this light, the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and DPKO agreed to conduct a joint global study on MRM good practices to document what has worked well in different situations and may be replicable in other country contexts, with the aim to strengthen ongoing and future MRM efforts.

The study looked at all situations mandated by the Security Council to implement the MRM between 2005 and 2012. As the study focus is on implementation of the MRM at country level, the research centred on the work of CTFMRs and partners. Actions by the SCWG on Children and Armed Conflict and the Security Council in response to MRM reports have been well documented elsewhere and are beyond the scope of this study. Further, it should be noted that although there is not an MRM in Israel/State of Palestine, good practices from the Children and Armed Conflict Working Group there have been included in this study, due to its sound and innovative experience and the potential value of its lessons learned in other settings.

For the purpose of the study, a "good practice" is understood as a process, approach or practice that is effective in achieving the MRM objectives, as defined by Security Council Resolution

¹⁰ Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005). The six grave violations at the focus of the MRM are the recruitment of use of children by armed forces or armed groups, abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access, as detailed in the Secretary-General's Annual Report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, S/2005/72, 2005.

¹¹ S/2005/72, 2005, para. 90.

1612 and related resolutions.¹² In addition to effectiveness, the study considers maximization of existing opportunities and capacity development, with a view to strengthening in-country capacity for sustained monitoring and reporting of violations against children over time.

However, a specific practice that has proved effective in a certain situation may not be equally effective in a different context. Apart from obvious geographical or political differences, some successes have been the result of a unique combination of factors, such as having the right staff in key positions at the right time, or being able to seize a unique opportunity or political momentum.

The study looked into possible linkages between the practices that have worked well in fulfilling specific MRM functions and positive outcomes that directly or indirectly benefit children. For this purpose, survey and interview questions asked participants to identify the most significant positive outcomes of the MRM in-country, and the key factors and processes that contributed to those outcomes. While it is outside the scope of the study to establish clear causality between practices and their impact for children, this component of the research offers additional value.

b. Methodology

Methodological tools used for the study consisted of a general survey, interviews, literature review and three case studies between September 2011 and April 2012. A survey was administered to the members of all CTFMRs, and a supplemental survey was administered to CTFMR co-chairs. Responses were received from at least one CTFMR member agency in all but one country, with a total of 33 general surveys received and 11 supplemental surveys from co-chairs. Phone interviews were also conducted with approximately 125 staff members who currently or previously worked on the MRM at country level, in order to obtain information about MRM practices over time. Approximately 130 additional interviews were carried out with staff undertaking MRM-related work at the country level during the country visits, and with several UN and international NGO partners working on MRM issues at the global level.

Country visits were carried out in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, as well as a short visit to Nairobi in order to learn about MRM practices being implemented in Somalia, from the Somalia CTFMR members and partners based in Kenya. The selection of country case studies was based on providing for a diversity of political contexts (i.e., ongoing conflict, transition and post-conflict), geographical representation and maturity of the MRM practice (minimum two years of MRM implementation). Consideration was also given to ensuring that at least one case study met the following additional criteria: existence of a DPKO/DPA mission in the country; parties to the conflict having signed to an Action Plan; engagement of local actors in the MRM process; and cross-border issues being addressed through the MRM.

¹² MRM objectives are the gathering of timely, accurate and objective information on six grave violations of children's rights, leading to well-informed, concerted and effective responses to ensure children's protection and compliance with international and local protection norms, as per Security Council Resolution 1612.

The visits were also determined by a number of practical and logistical factors, such as security and access issues and the availability of CTFMRs to host a research team within the time frame of the study. The research team spent seven working days in Afghanistan, where interviews were carried out with members of the CTFMR, government officials and NGOs. The team spent two weeks in Democratic Republic of the Congo, including in Kinshasa, and travelled to conflict-affected areas in the east (Bukavu, Bunia, Dungu and Goma) to meet with CTFMR members, local NGOs and government officials. In Uganda, the research team spent four days in Kampala and a day in Gulu, in northern Uganda conflict-affected areas, to meet with key actors involved in the MRM.

c. Challenges and limitations

Security and time constraints restricted the research team's mobility, such as in Afghanistan outside of Kabul, preventing researchers from accessing informants based in the regions. Furthermore, given the high rate of staff turnover in conflict situations, many of the staff involved in the initial stages of the MRM implementation at the country level had departed those countries, which posed the challenge of tracking down and engaging former staff members.

2. Establishing the MRM

The establishment of the MRM at the country level involves setting up the CTFMR so it can effectively implement the core functions of the mechanism. The good practices described below carry long-range implications for the ability of the MRM to deliver its mandate effectively and in a sustainable manner. CTFMRs have the added value of bringing together partners that deal with humanitarian action, human rights and development, to work together on a common objective and with a continued focus to stop grave violations against children and enhance the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Thus, the task forces offer a unique, high-level platform for concerted and strategic efforts, particularly given the value of the diversity of mandates, expertise and skills of members. This potential has been maximized where there has been a **strong mix of expertise** within the CTFMR and common **ownership** of objectives and processes by its members.

Key good practices in establishing the CTFMR include:

- a) Personal engagement and leadership of senior representatives of the CTFMR co-chair organizations
- b) UN partners' engagement and ownership
- c) Strategic engagement of non-UN actors (for local ownership)
- d) Strong human/child rights expertise within the CTFMR
- e) Clear roles and responsibilities within the CTFMR for predictability and accountability
- f) Adequate financial and human resources to implement the MRM
- g) Access to/use of all relevant components of DPKO/DPA missions
- h) Establishment of sub-national task forces
- i) Office-wide engagement.

a. Personal engagement of senior representatives of the CTFMR co-chair organizations

The study found that the personal engagement and leadership of principal co-chairs played a key role in mobilizing other UN heads of agencies and achieving the concerned government's acceptance of the MRM. CTFMRs are co-chaired by the UNICEF Country Representative and the Resident Coordinator. In situations where there is a peacekeeping or political mission, they are co-chaired by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) on behalf of the SRSG and the UNICEF Representative. Their support has been crucial, particularly in high-level advocacy with parties to commit and implement measures to address

and cease violations; addressing possible implications of the MRM for operational agencies; and mobilizing UN agency support for the MRM. The co-chairs have also played a key role in providing a strategic vision for the MRM in the immediate and longer-term context.

A key benefit of engaging senior-level leaders in the CTFMR is their ability to engage at the highest levels of government to raise the profile of CAAC issues and the priority given to addressing grave violations (see box 1). The principal co-chairs can also raise sensitive issues with parties to the conflict in a way that may protect the operations of UN agencies.

Box 1: Effective senior-level engagement with the Government of Myanmar

In order to minimize any risk to the operations and programming of UNICEF and other UN agencies in Myanmar, when the MRM was being established it was decided that the RC, as Co-Chair of the CTFMR, would take the initial lead in engaging with the Government of Myanmar. A subsequent visit of the SRSG on CAAC was also a pivotal factor, as it created an opportunity to engage the Government in constructive dialogue on the purpose and nature of the MRM and the steps required by the Government for its armed forces to be de-listed. As a result of strong senior leadership at country and international levels, an understanding was created with the Government that allowed the CTFMR to move forward with the MRM.

The role of senior leaders is also fundamental in mobilizing UN agencies to participate in the MRM. This has been done most effectively through briefings to heads of agencies. For example, in Sudan, the support of the DSRSG, including through express written instructions to heads of agencies, helped secure the UN head of agencies' buy-in of the MRM. In Chad, the DSRSG of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) reached out to UN agencies in personal briefings on the MRM and addressed initial resistance from some agencies. Personal engagement of heads of agencies was then reflected in inter-agency teamwork at the technical level. Likewise, in the early stage of establishing the MRM in the Philippines and Sri Lanka, the UNICEF Country Representative personally briefed the heads of UN agencies on the MRM and how each agency could concretely participate, which generated their interest.

Obtaining the personal engagement of the principal co-chairs has also been particularly key to speeding up the formal establishment of the CTFMR, which otherwise may be a lengthy process. This initial process was accelerated in Iraq, for example, by **including the MRM in the RC's work plan, which required the RC to report and be accountable against it**. This significantly speeded up a process that had been delayed.

The establishment process has been delayed in some contexts due to senior staff turnover; instability, political adversity and deterioration in the security situation; and occasional lack of engagement by senior leadership. Despite delays in some contexts, a key lesson and good practice learned has been to initiate the groundwork of setting up a monitoring system, even before a formal CTFMR has been established, by identifying and building the capacity of partners and commencing monitoring activities. For example, in Yemen, despite the deteriorated security situation, political instability and delay in formally establishing the CTFMR, UNICEF commenced engaging and briefing NGO partners, with the aim of building a network of sources and potential MRM partners (see box 2).

Box 2: Strategic preparation for the MRM in Yemen

Leading up to the establishment of the MRM in Yemen, UNICEF as Co-Chair proactively reached out to a broad range of UN partners to secure their engagement in the MRM. This included both humanitarian and development agencies not traditionally involved in child protection-related activities but possessing the capacity to provide information on grave violations and/or with a strong capacity for response. A feasibility study was also undertaken to identify areas where monitoring of grave violations could be integrated into existing child protection structures. In parallel, early efforts to inform and engage the Government of Yemen yielded a greater understanding of the MRM within the Government, as an opportunity to improve the situation of children, resulting in concrete government commitment to addressing grave violations.

b. UN partners' engagement and ownership

UN partners' engagement and ownership of MRM objectives and processes has been found to significantly strengthen the functioning of the CTFMR.¹³ Key benefits resulting from UN partners' participation include thematic technical expertise, ability to monitor specific violations and advocacy and programming capacity that can be used in responding to victims. Additionally, the MRM provided a framework for organizing information on violations against children and for concerted efforts to respond. Furthermore, in situations such as Colombia and Sri Lanka, the MRM reportedly placed children's rights on the agenda of the UN country team. Specific roles of UN agencies are summarized below:

¹³ For this reason the Security Council has particularly stressed the responsibility of UN country teams to participate in monitoring and reporting on progress done to implement SC resolutions on CAAC. See Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005), paragraph 10.

The **ILO's** International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour is engaged in some MRM countries in supporting the economic reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG). ILO particularly brings its technical expertise on vocational training programmes.¹⁴

OCHA's involvement in the CTFMR has been particularly key to reporting on the denial of humanitarian access, as in the case of Democratic Republic of the Congo. OCHA's involvement in MRM sub-national task forces in Afghanistan enabled local-level advocacy with international security forces on military use of schools and hospitals, building on OCHA's mandate and experience in negotiating with parties to the conflict.

OHCHR: see later section on human rights capacity within the CTFMR.

UNDP's participation in the MRM can be a particular asset through its Rule of Law and Justice programme, which can support the monitoring and strengthening of justice response to grave violations,¹⁵ and its involvement in the livelihood sector, for response purposes.

UNHCR, as protection cluster lead, manages protection monitoring systems, focusing on internally displaced/refugee communities, who often hold substantial information about grave violations against children. UNHCR played an important role in contributing information on grave violations to the CTFMRs in countries such as Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Uganda (see box 3).¹⁶

WHO may contribute substantially to the MRM through data collection and verification of attacks and other violations on health facilities, hospitals and medical personnel, as well as on sexual violence, killing and maiming of children, and denial of humanitarian access. As health cluster lead, WHO may play an important role in linking medical assistance responses.

The level of engagement and quality of participation by UN partners in CTFMRs varies widely.

Engagement in the MRM has been found to be the strongest where UN partners consider MRM participation as an added value to their work. For example, WHO in Afghanistan used MRM data on attacks on hospitals as evidence to advocate with the International Assistance Security Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) on interference with health services. Similarly, MRM data on child recruitment provided evidence for ILO's engagement with governments on their implementation of the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182, which prohibits compulsory child recruitment. This is a significant benefit to ILO when it has no monitoring capacity on the ground.

Box 3: Added value for UNHCR's involvement in the MRM in Chad

For UNHCR in Chad, gathering information on child recruitment by armed groups in refugee camps provided a basis to advocate for respect for humanitarian space in the camps. UNHCR at HQ advocated for funding child protection positions in Chad, a unique practice for UNHCR operations globally at the time. UNHCR child protection officers focused on broader child protection issues, such as best interest determination, and also on the MRM, with a specific focus on child recruitment.¹⁸

It is suggested that principal co-chairs could enhance UN partners' engagement by identifying the added value that each UN partner can bring to the MRM, as well as by presenting the value added of engagement in the MRM to support partners' agenda and priorities in-country.

c. Strategic engagement of non-UN actors for local ownership

The MRM has a unique value in bringing together programming and humanitarian actors, whose strength is in response, with human rights organizations, which bring human rights monitoring expertise. This allows for a combination of case-based information with 'anonymized' service-based data. In particular, the participation of NHRI and NGOs can offer clear benefits to the work of the CTFMR, but this needs to be considered carefully. Factors such as the level of independence of the NHRI and the real or perceived impartiality of NGOs carry implications for the MRM.

- 14 ILO support to economic reintegration of CAAFAG is envisaged in South Sudan and the Philippines. A major asset of ILO is its technical expertise in gaining understanding of the local labor market and hence devising relevant vocational training options for children.
- 15 In Chad, information from the MRM was particularly useful and relevant for UNDP for its mobile courts in camps. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNDP runs a judicial accountability project that can be particularly relevant for MRM analysis. Through this project, it is possible to disaggregate sexual violence cases that reached courts, by age and type of perpetrator and the treatment of cases through the justice system.
- 16 In some cases, UNHCR provided monitors with a separate MRM monitoring form to be filled out alongside their standard protection monitoring form to be passed to the CTFMR. In others, UNHCR staff who have been trained on the MRM screen the protection monitoring forms they receive, and pass relevant information to UNICEF.
- 17 ILO uses the Secretary-General's CAAC reports to elaborate project documents and for meetings with country delegations, and most importantly, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Standards refers to the SG CAAC reports in its comments on Convention 182 cases. For instance, the 2010 Report of the Committee of Experts referred to the Secretary-General reports on CAAC for the following 182 Convention cases: Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda.
- 18 UNHCR Chad reported it currently has child protection focal points in each office in Chad. These focal points monitor child protection issues as part of their overall protection functions, including MRM. The UNHCR N'Djamena office has one Associate Child Protection Officer who is in charge of Child Protection on a full-time basis. Apart from monitoring the recruitment of refugee and internally displaced children by armed forces and/or groups, each UNHCR office also conducts frequent home visits to monitor the reintegration of former CAAFAG and provide them with assistance where necessary. Each office keeps an Excel list of former CAAFAGs to track the actions taken in each case.

National and/or international NGOs have been members of the CTFMR in some countries. The strategic selection of NGOs as members entails consideration of the benefits and risks of their participation. Key added values that NGOs bring to the CTFMR include:

- Extensive presence within communities that are hard to access and where violations are likely to occur and access to victims of violations in remote locations;
- Programming capacity that can be used as a basis for monitoring, prevention and response;
- Strong networks for conveying messages to local and national actors;
- Human/child rights monitoring and reporting expertise.

Engaging national/local NGOs in the MRM can also become an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of local actors to carry out child rights monitoring, with a view to enhancing local ownership and continuity of child rights monitoring over time (see box 4).

Box 4: Value of NGOs for the CTFMR in Colombia

In Colombia, where the UN has limited field presence, the wide field coverage of local NGOs was an asset for the MRM task force. The Colombian CTFMR includes six UN agencies and three NGOs. Places on the CTFMR were rationed by a rotational membership system, with one NGO as a permanent member. The permanent NGO member represented a coalition of local organizations that supported an observatory on children and armed conflict, which enabled communication with diverse groups and brought a broader non-UN perspective to the analysis. The technical expertise of Colombian NGOs has also been a major asset, particularly in guiding the CTFMR on public policies and legal analysis.

In addition to the added value of NGO participation, the study found several risks that may pertain to some contexts and need to be mitigated, including:

- Keeping a manageable number of NGO participants so the CTFMR does not become too large. Having two to four NGOs allows for a balance between UN and non-UN members;
- Ensuring that NGO participation does not compromise the real and/or perceived political neutrality of the CTFMR. Engaging NGOs requires political judgement – for example, specific social and political groupings may be over-represented among NGOs, and this can undermine the requirement of impartiality.¹⁹

¹⁹ In Myanmar, a starkly divided civil society operates in two zones, controlled by armed groups or the Government, and NGOs in zones controlled by armed groups may adopt political positions on the need for armed struggle. In Nepal, many NGOs were linked to a political party hostile to former armed groups, and drawn from a relatively narrow social grouping.

Beyond these factors, there are some contexts where NGOs prefer to participate informally or not at all in the MRM, due to the potential risks to their operational capacity and security that association with the MRM may entail. In cases where UN agencies are increasingly incorporating MRM alerts and data collection into partnership agreements with NGOs, **an important practice has been open discussion about risks and concerns** facing the NGO in taking on MRM functions, and developing strategies and measures to reduce risks or concerns, such as ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of the relationship.²⁰ In Somalia, for example, given the high level of insecurity and risks involved, UNICEF held regular meetings with the international NGO managing local NGO monitors contributing to the MRM to discuss the responsibilities of each partner organization to protect their involved staff. In LRA-affected areas of Democratic Republic of the Congo, the integration of the MRM into programmatic work ensured the documentation of violations at the same time as registering children's details for programmatic response. Monitoring and reporting is therefore 'integrated' into the daily programme work, which de-sensitizes and reduces risks and enables a more protective way of monitoring.

NHRIs have contributed to the work of the CTFMRs in countries such as Colombia, the Philippines and Uganda. The advantage of an independent NHRI's participation in the task force is that it may enjoy credibility, adding legitimacy to the reporting, as in the case of the *Defensoria del Pueblo* or Ombudsman Office in Colombia. NHRI mandates and relationships with the government can be helpful in liaising with national and local authorities, for example, in the case of the Human Rights Commissions in Afghanistan and Uganda. NHRIs can also make important contributions to negotiations on Action Plans or in advocacy on specific incidents. Involvement of NHRIs can also assist in the transition towards phase-out of the MRM, to ensure continuity and sustainability of monitoring and reporting on serious child rights violations. In comparison, in situations like Democratic Republic of the Congo where there is no NHRI, information-sharing, acknowledgement of MRM issues and commitment of the Government may be more time-consuming.

However, issues around political neutrality and the independence of the NHRI need to be considered. On occasion, change in the leadership of NHRIs as well as political developments have resulted in complications for the CTFMR. NHRIs are often subject to political pressure and must address threats to their independence, which can possibly become exacerbated by their participation in the MRM. These factors can also create distrust among CTFMR members in sharing information openly, out of fear that membership of an institution linked to government might compromise the confidentiality of the information. For this reason, during the initial phase of the MRM in the Philippines, CTFMR co-chairs spent much time discussing the MRM with NGOs to build trust. It is thus good practice to ensure that the NHRI has been awarded 'A' status by the International Coordinating Committee for National Human Rights Institutions, and

²⁰ In some cases, humanitarian and service-delivery NGOs may see their humanitarian neutrality compromised by being a CTFMR member. When the MRM was established in Sudan, UN agencies deemed it too risky for NGOs to join the CTFMR. In other situations, the capacity of NGOs was deemed too weak to fully engage in MRM functions.

to discuss the risks and opportunities with the NHRI prior to engaging it as a CTFMR member.²¹ If the NHRI does not have 'A' status on independence, a separate forum for discussion and information-sharing with the NHRI or other relevant government institutions should be set up to complement the CTFMR. This would address the issue of neutrality while ensuring constant dialogue with authorities in relation to accountability, prevention and response.

d. Strong human rights and child rights expertise within CTFMRs

Ensuring strong expertise in human rights, as well as child rights, within CTFMRs has been found to strengthen their monitoring, reporting and public advocacy capacity. Where OHCHR is present in an MRM implementing country, as a country office or human rights component of a mission, its engagement has made a significant contribution to the MRM. Monitoring functioned particularly well where OHCHR co-chaired the CTFMR, such as in Nepal and Uganda (see box 5). In the State of Palestine, OHCHR provides technical advice such as legal language for public reports, and collaborates by providing input on human rights standards and advocacy in trainings and briefings. In Colombia, UNICEF seconded a United Nations Volunteer to OHCHR, a CTFMR member, to work specifically on MRM case verification.

Key contributions that OHCHR can bring to the CTFMR include:

- Institutional mandate to monitor, report and address human/child rights violations;
- Expertise in rights monitoring;
- Background in engaging with security forces;
- A large field presence of human rights monitors who can collect case information on MRM violations, particularly when part of a mission;
- Technical expertise in handling individual protection cases;
- Established and trusted relationships with human rights NGO networks in-country;
- Greater space for public advocacy, as it does not have significant humanitarian programmes whose operational interests must be weighed against the need to denounce abuses;
- Expertise in legal monitoring and supporting the fight against impunity (e.g., rule of law projects in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan).

At the same time, in some cases it has been found that OHCHR's participation in the MRM has increased its commitment to address children's rights in the country. This has been the case in

²¹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'National Human Rights Institutions', <www.ohchr.org/en/countries/nhri/pages/nhrmain.aspx>. This good practice is in accordance with the MRM Global Guidelines and Field Manual on criteria for CTFMR membership.

Colombia, where OHCHR has increased its documentation of children's rights violations and begun to systematically disaggregate data based on age.

Box 5: Ensuring a strong mix of skills, including human rights expertise, in the CTFMR in Uganda

Uganda was one of the first MRM implementing countries, and the CTFMR greatly benefited from the leadership in human rights monitoring and reporting that OHCHR contributed as CTFMR Co-Chair. This experience was directly applied to the establishment of the MRM, including the development of tools to report incidents, an IMS and training of NGOs on monitoring grave violations. While UNICEF brought a more programmatic approach to child rights work, OHCHR was more comfortable – particularly in the first stages of the MRM – in taking a more public advocacy role and engaging with the military on the MRM. The Uganda Human Rights Commission's membership on the CTFMR also helped to strengthen the MRM's legitimacy vis-à-vis the Government and the armed forces.

The inclusion of an NGO coalition on the CTFMR was also an asset, due to its broad civil society-based network and its mandate to monitor and report to UN Treaty Bodies (through submission of alternative NGO reports). Thus a clear link was made between the MRM and the NGOs' submission on CAAC to the Committee on the CRC under the OPAC. This provided an extra incentive for the Ugandan Government to sign the Action Plan.

e. Clear roles and responsibilities for predictability and accountability

Clarifying CTFMR members' roles and responsibilities has been particularly effective when done at the outset in writing, to ensure predictability and institutional continuity, especially given high staff turnover in conflict zones. In addition to the standard Terms of Reference, some CTFMRs developed additional internal rules and/or codes of conduct for their members. For instance, the Afghanistan CTFMR adopted a Code of Conduct that was also used by its sub-national task forces. In Colombia, an internal technical guide on the contextual interpretation of each MRM violation was developed, as well as an internal agreement on how decisions are taken within the CTFMR. The Colombian task force also established an internal technical committee to work on specific activities at certain times of the year (e.g., drafting of the annual report). The internal rules specify the role of each member and agreement on external sharing of data, including elements of cases to be included in public reports (e.g., geographical areas are to be indicated very generally to avoid any possible localization of victims). Similarly in Democratic Republic of the Congo, CTFMR members agreed as a rule not to mention individual agencies in the various reports to ensure confidentiality of NGOs undertaking MRM work.

In some situations, in order to increase efficiency and coverage of the six grave violations, **CTFMR members have been designated as 'leads' for specific violations.** Assigning agencies to specific violations has enabled agencies with a thematic focus to play a strategic role, which maximizes resources in areas of expertise and fosters ownership and internal

accountability. For instance, Save the Children's education programme in the State of Palestine is the lead on education-related violations. Lead agencies there triangulate reports on specific violations from their network of sources, before submitting monthly reports to UNICEF for further verification and inclusion in the CAAC database. UNICEF then cross-references the incidents with two to five community-based organizations and local NGOs. If there are discrepancies, the case is referred back to the lead agency to double-check the information.

The Afghanistan CTFMR also assigned monitoring of specific violations to lead agencies (for example, OCHA on denial of humanitarian access; the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan on killing and maiming). Agencies also devolve responsibility for advocacy: UNICEF works with the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare, and the Child Protection team of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan took the lead on advocacy with the Afghan and ISAF forces.

However, while this approach has improved efficiency and increased ownership in some contexts, it carries the risk of narrowing the contribution that CTFMR members might otherwise be able to make, and more comprehensively, on other grave violations.

f. Adequate financial and human resources for effective implementation

Resourcing the MRM has been found to be a prerequisite for effective MRM implementation. The importance of resources cannot be underestimated.²² Monitoring and reporting is a human-resource intensive and time-consuming activity that requires both technical skills and strong monitoring capacity on the ground. The study found that the MRM can only meet its full potential for comprehensive reporting and strong advocacy when it is adequately resourced. In particular, as one of the lead agencies in implementing the MRM, UNICEF is required to invest resources in staffing, training and administrative support to the MRM that are not part of its regular resources, particularly when there is no UN field mission. While UN agencies may rely more on NGO partners for geographical coverage and data collection, they still have demanding responsibilities in the verification process.

During the MRM establishment phase, it is especially important to identify and assess existing capacities and needs to effectively deliver MRM functions, and to mobilize the necessary resources. Before establishing the MRM process, feasibility studies have been found to be useful in certain contexts, including Iraq and Sudan (see box 6). Feasibility studies aim to identify and assess existing capacities and potential partners; consider ways to maximize opportunities and mitigate risks; propose an operational budget; and better understand the programmatic and other practical implications of implementing the MRM, given the specific political and security

²² Initially it was envisaged that the MRM would be implemented "within existing resources" (Security Council Resolution 1612, para. 3). This has been found to pose limits on the scope and depth of reporting, hence requiring designated resources.

context, local capacities and geographical coverage.

Box 6: Using feasibility studies to identify resource and capacity needs

In Sudan, a three-month feasibility study was conducted in 2005, including a six-week period of field missions to assess Khartoum and Darfur states. This was particularly useful for Darfur, as there was limited UN child protection presence there at the time. The study's findings helped to define which agency could take the lead on the various violations and the budget required to undertake the MRM responsibility.

In Iraq, the feasibility study conducted in early 2007 identified interested agencies and created awareness of the MRM among UN 'sector outcome teams' (as humanitarian clusters are named in Iraq). Linked to the feasibility study, three workshops for UN agencies and NGOs generated interest and initiated some simple coordination mechanisms – for example, UNICEF began to receive reports from the UN Department of Safety and Security.

Although some opponents have suggested that the MRM is a costly mechanism that potentially diverts programmatic funding, it has been found that the MRM platform has been successfully used to galvanize donors' attention and investment on the MRM as well as broader CAAC prevention and response programmes, such as in Chad and the State of Palestine.²³ In Chad, for example, the MRM framework helped to mobilize funds for the release and reintegration programme for children. The CTFMR in Chad met with donors and embassies to brief them on the CAAC situation and to discuss the challenges of reintegration, including the need for long-term, flexible funding. In Nepal, the CTFMR undertook regular briefings with Member States, which resulted in the mobilization of significant funding, including from the UN Peace Fund, which supported comprehensive programming on CAAC.

In terms of human resources, the secondment of international NGO staff to support MRM efforts, particularly in the initial phase or for specific assessments (such as feasibility studies or database establishment) was recommended by some CTFMR members. In Iraq, UNICEF seconded staff from the Norwegian Refugee Council to work on the MRM and the management of the database. The MRM teams in Colombia and Sudan also benefited from Council and ProCap secondments. Secondment has been also useful to 'recycle' individuals who can bring MRM experience from other countries.

Ensuring appropriate human resources for monitoring activities can be particularly challenging given sensitivities, security concerns, the ability to engage local actors on the ground and the geographical coverage of areas requiring monitoring. In Sudan, the CTFMR and NGOs deemed it too risky for both international and national NGOs to actively engage in monitoring, as it could compromise their ability to deliver humanitarian aid if it became known that they were

²³ Bo Viktor Nylund and Ida Margarita Hyllested, 'Protecting Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Accountability for monitoring, reporting and response', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2010.

involved in MRM work.²⁴ Similarly, in Sri Lanka, it was deemed too sensitive for national staff to be involved in advocacy with the parties to the conflict. Thus if national staff attended the meetings, it was solely for translation purposes. International staff with the assistance of national staff undertook the majority of the monitoring and verification. Likewise in Darfur in early 2007, UNICEF recruited international and national staff in each Darfur state to specifically work on the MRM.

In Sri Lanka, child protection officers based in the field addressed all child protection concerns, including grave violations of children monitored under the MRM. It has been argued by some respondents that it is more effective for child protection staff to have a combination of responsibilities – i.e., child protection officers with both MRM tasks (monitoring, reporting, training and advocacy) coupled with child protection programming responsibilities. A combination of both roles can enable the necessary linkages between monitoring and response, such as back-to-school reintegration programmes for CAAFAG in Sri Lanka. Other respondents believe that it is better to separate the two functions, as it is a complex job to hold the parties to the conflict accountable while also supporting the government counterparts with programming. For example, in certain political contexts, such as Somalia, it was deemed too sensitive and risky for programme staff to also monitor and advocate against grave violations.

Finally, the study also found that the core MRM specialist with a solid legal and/or human rights law background was particularly useful, since the MRM requires solid analysis of violations and understanding of the legal implications for parties to the conflict. Strong coordination and leadership skills have also been found to be an asset for MRM specialists to maximize the CTFMR members' contributions and engagement.

g. Use of all relevant components of DPKO/DPA missions for monitoring efficiency

Utilizing all relevant DPKO/DPA mission sections has maximized channels for both data gathering and advocacy on grave violations against children. The regular monitoring work carried out by mission components (such as UN Police [UNPOL], Human Rights and UN Military Observers) presents ample opportunities for accessing information, including in remote UN military outposts, with minimal added resources from the CTFMR. Utilizing these resources most effectively requires a strong mainstreaming of child protection across mission components and can be further strengthened through training of mission components on child protection. One crucial aspect for this is the deployment of child protection advisers to mainstream child protection in missions (and the utilization of all resources for the MRM).

UNICEF and DPKO/DPA Child Protection complement each other: the UN mission brings political leverage, monitoring capacity and a focus on accountability for violations. UNICEF

²⁴ This caution increased after the indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of the President of Sudan in 2009 for crimes committed in Darfur, followed by the immediate expulsion of 13 international NGOs and closure of local NGOs accused by the Government of Sudan of exceeding their humanitarian mandate by allegedly collaborating with the ICC prosecutor.

brings expertise in child protection programming and in capacity development of partners (see box 7). Together, they utilize their comparative advantages in order to enhance linkages between the monitoring and responses and, ultimately, results for children.

Effective strategies that have increased the mainstreaming of the MRM into a DPKO/DPA mission include:

- Deployment of child protection advisers within missions;
- Strengthening the awareness of other relevant mission components regarding their role in contributing to the MRM;
- Within the child protection component, having dedicated capacity for MRM reporting and coordination with UNICEF and partners on the MRM;

Box 7: Strengthening cooperation between UNICEF and the Peacekeeping Mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo

In Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO Child Protection focuses on monitoring, verification, reporting and addressing impunity, while UNICEF focuses on programming and capacity development of local partners.²⁵ Due to the large geographic size of the country and of the mission, coordination is crucial. A unique arrangement was set up in 2006, whereby a UNICEF-funded MRM Specialist was seconded to sit within the MONUSCO Child Protection section. This arrangement facilitated the information flow and coordination between MONUSCO and UNICEF, with the MRM Specialist serving as national coordinator for MRM activities (reporting, advocacy, liaising with response, mainstreaming within the mission and training). This formula has also created a bridge between organizational perspectives and established an institutional commitment to sustained cooperation.

- Identifying how the MRM may support the mission's mandate and political priorities (see box 8).²⁵

²⁵ Except for the Uélé, where both monitoring and programming are interlinked.

Box 8: Use of MRM information to implement the mission's mandate in Democratic Republic of the Congo

Directly linking the MRM to the mission's other mandated areas of political priority has been key to ensuring the effective integration of MRM issues in the mission's agenda. MRM monitoring has proved critical in the implementation of MONUSCO's policy on conditionality, which makes MONUSCO's support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's armed forces (FARDC) in joint UN/FARDC operations conditional on the non-commission of grave human rights violations. FARDC commanders requesting MONUSCO's military support are checked against the MRM database for any alleged violations against children monitored by the MRM, and the mission leadership is informed accordingly. On this basis, commanders were denied support by MONUSCO or excluded from trainings due to their commission of grave human rights violations, including the six grave violations against children documented by the MRM. The MRM also contributed to the mission's agenda to support the professionalization of the national army, by helping to identify children in the course of armed groups' integration process into the regular armed forces. This was particularly evident in 2009, when a massive separation of children in North Kivu occurred during the rapid reintegration of armed groups into the FARDC.

A main strategy to effectively engage mission components has been to conduct briefings on the MRM to sensitize mission staff and discuss entry points for integration. In this regard, a particularly innovative practice introduced by the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) Child Protection Unit (CPU) was to second an UNPOL officer to the UNMIS CPU, with a view to enhancing the performance of UNPOL Gender and Vulnerable Persons and Child Officers and of the local police. The UNPOL officer coordinated and guided the work of UNPOL Gender and Vulnerable Persons and Child Officers in the field, and liaised with the Southern Sudanese Police hierarchy. This formula has great potential for effective integration of MRM monitoring into UNPOL's work, particularly for monitoring the national police's response to grave violations. A lesson learned from this UNPOL arrangement was the need to ensure that the CPU is involved in the selection of the post holder, and for post holders to have a deployment period for longer than the usual UNPOL six-month deployment, if possible. This proactive engagement is in accordance with DPKO's policy to mainstream child protection, including contributing to the MRM, across the work of all relevant mission components.²⁶

In sum, together, DPKO and UNICEF can be a powerful force, due to their comparative advantages and complementarity: the political leverage and monitoring capacity of the DPKO mission is coupled with UNICEF's leadership in child rights programming. Where such complementarity has been best attained, there has been a clear division of roles and responsibilities between UNICEF and the mission. In Chad and Nepal, for example, the

²⁶ As per DPKO policy on 'Mainstreaming the Protection, Rights and Well-Being of Children affected by Armed Conflict within UN Peacekeeping Operations', 2009, para. 37, "Child Protection Advisors shall actively coordinate with relevant mission components especially Human Rights, Political, the Rule of Law Unit or Judicial Section, DDR, SSR, the UN Police, and Military Observers to ensure the mission's effective contribution to implementation of the mechanism (MRM)."

mission took the lead on political matters, and UNICEF carried out the programmatic responses on violations.

h. Establishment of sub-national MRM task forces

Setting up sub-national MRM task forces has facilitated development of locally adapted strategies for monitoring and response to grave violations (see box 9). While the MRM is usually managed at the technical and principal level by staff based in the country's capital, the quality of information and response depends largely on staff and partners located in areas where violations are occurring. For this reason, decentralizing the MRM by establishing sub-national task forces that mirror the membership and functions at the national level has been found to significantly strengthen the effectiveness of the MRM.

Key contributions that a sub-national presence of the task force has made to the MRM include:

- Increased data collection through the development of locally adapted monitoring strategies;
- Stronger ability to verify cases due to close proximity to incidents and sources;
- Mitigation of security risks (in some cases) due to a collective CTFMR presence, rather than a single agency operating alone;
- Possibilities for locally adapted advocacy strategies, including through direct engagement with local authorities and community leaders who can speak out on grave violations;
- Increased opportunity for building trust and providing direct feedback to local communities.

Box 9: Setting sub-national task forces in Afghanistan

With an MRM focal point only able to carry out limited monitoring and reporting in the southern region of Kandahar, Regional Task Forces (RTFs) have been established in four regions of Afghanistan. The RTFs replicate the composition of the central CTFMR and have adopted its code of conduct, terms of reference and reporting format. RTFs are chaired by UNICEF MRM focal points together with another CTFMR member agency operational at the regional level. Monitoring responsibilities are divided among RTF members based on their respective mandates, level of field presence and ability to access particular areas. Thus, the RTFs have maximized the capacity for monitoring and advocacy, building on member organizations' capacities and institutional relationships at the local level.

The RTFs are particularly valuable in enabling locally adapted strategies to gather information and link to responses, and to address issues at the local level. The RTFs are involved in advocacy with local authorities, briefings to community leaders and referrals for services to victims. RTF members have been skillful in making use of specific mandates, institutional relationships and personal connections to assist victims and advocate on their behalf with the respective authorities. For instance, OCHA has been particularly instrumental in liaising with the ISAF on the military use of schools and with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission on advocacy with the authorities in some regions, particularly with respect to detention cases.

Sensitization of community elders has also become a regular practice by all RTFs, which has served to bolster awareness of grave violations against children and contributed to increased reporting of incidents, particularly from conflict-affected and inaccessible areas. For example, following an alert by a community member to the RTF that a school in the region had been occupied by international forces for more than three years, the RTF verified the incident and organized a meeting with community elders and the Ministry of Education from the province. The RTF then worked with the CTFMR at the national level and raised the issue with the NATO Civilian-Military Advisor and the U.S. Embassy through OCHA. As a result of this advocacy, the school was vacated.

In Afghanistan, the RTFs were formally established with a degree of autonomy in determining membership, internal procedures, advocacy strategies and other core functions. This has not been the case for all situations where CTFMR functions have been decentralized. For example in Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal and Uganda, local MRM meetings take place under the umbrella of the central CTFMR.

An additional innovative initiative has been to set up a sub-national task force with a specific focus on a specific violation(s) occurring within a set geographical location. The State of Palestine CAAC Working Group set up a thematic and geographic subgroup, led by an international NGO member of the Working Group, to monitor arrests and detentions of children in Silwan in East Jerusalem.²⁷

While a collective UN agency presence through a sub-national task force in the field can mitigate the risk of a single agency being targeted for its work on the MRM, it should be noted that this may not be the case in all situations. Collective monitoring of grave violations may, in certain situations, attract unwelcome attention and create a sense of risk, especially where parties to the conflict are active in the area. This was the case of the sub-national Task Force in Sri Lanka located in the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) stronghold in the eastern region of Batticaloa. There, Task Force members reportedly feared disclosure of information and potential reprisals, and hence were reluctant to share any information.²⁸

Regardless of the specific form of the CTFMR structure, it has been found essential to have a sufficient field presence in order to fully maximize the effectiveness of the MRM in areas where the violations against children are actually occurring.

i. Office-wide engagement

Cross-sectoral collaboration has been a way of maximizing agencies' capacity for data collection, advocacy and programmatic response on grave violations. As a key actor charged with co-chairing the MRM task force, UNICEF devotes a significant amount of time and resources to the MRM in each implementing country (see box 10). As the MRM covers violations that span across UNICEF's programmatic areas, the organization is in a strategic position to access and gather information on various grave violations against children.²⁹ Besides the daily engagement of the management and the child protection sections, the involvement in the MRM of the education and health sectors, as well as the mine-risk education programmes in certain situations, has already demonstrated the potential of cross-sectoral collaboration for increased quality and quantity of information and conduct of prevention activities and responses to grave violations. However, to date it has not been systematic in all contexts.

²⁷ The international NGO trained facilitators from the communities and then convened workshops for children and parents, to strengthen their awareness of child rights that would reduce the vulnerability of children. The success of the workshops has been documented, demonstrating that in some cases soldiers are hesitant to violate the rights of children during arrest if children claim their rights. This worked in some instances, although it is still quite a new initiative.

²⁸ The establishment of a sub-national Task Force in Batticaloa, the stronghold of the TMVP, did not increase local reporting. Despite requesting contributions from Task Force members, UNICEF only received some anonymous calls, due to fear of reprisals by the TMVP, which was present and actively violating in the region.

²⁹ Areas of UNICEF's work particularly relevant to the MRM include child protection programming and coordination, including release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces/groups; psychosocial support; education; health; water, sanitation and hygiene; humanitarian operations; mine-risk education; GBV prevention; response; and coordination.

Box 10: Enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration

■ Making the MRM an office-wide responsibility: UNICEF's internal guidelines in Afghanistan

In order to address cross-sectoral collaboration on the MRM within UNICEF Afghanistan, UNICEF's Country Representative endorsed internal guidelines on MRM implementation in December 2011. These describe the responsibilities and points of entry for engagement in the MRM for all relevant sections and senior leaders within the country and field offices (e.g., health, security, communications, education, operations). Most importantly, the guidelines require each programme/section to include its relevant MRM contribution in its work plan, in order to ensure institutional continuity.

■ Locating the MRM Specialist under the UNICEF Country Representative in Sri Lanka:

When the MRM was being established in Sri Lanka, the MRM Specialist (and Secretariat of the CTFMR) post was managed directly by the UNICEF Country Representative. This enhanced cross-sectoral engagement, as the MRM was perceived as an important 'all office' issue and not solely as a child protection programme issue. Thus, the MRM Specialist could easily communicate with all sector teams, linking with the education and health teams in relation to attacks on schools and hospitals and with the operations, supply and logistics team in relation to denial of humanitarian access.

■ Linking mine-risk education and MRM teams

In Chad, the landmine education programme and MRM teams collaborate and share relevant information. The UNICEF mine risk education officer systematically fed the MRM IMS with data on incidents of maiming or killing of children due to unexploded ordnance.

■ Linking education and MRM teams

In 2011, UNICEF Chad reviewed its cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure that all sectors realized the linkages between their work and the MRM and understood their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to the MRM. This was triggered by a discovery that the UNICEF education section was aware of an occupation of a school by an armed group for approximately four years, but it had not occurred to the section to link and utilize MRM reporting and advocacy opportunities. Since then, data from the education programme are used by the MRM team to report and address the military use of schools.

In the Philippines, UNICEF MRM and education teams devised complementary advocacy on attacks on schools. In 2010, UNICEF's education section launched a campaign to address attacks on education, specifically in the southern Philippines. Simultaneously, the MRM team conducted orientation sessions with education cluster members and engaged with the Department of Education to cooperate in disseminating materials on a national law that recognizes children as zones of peace and prohibits the use of schools by armed forces and groups (Republic Act 7610). Similarly, in Democratic Republic of the Congo, education inspectors (*inspecteurs d'éducation*) from the Ministry of Education have been sensitized on child protection and reporting of attacks against schools.

3. Monitoring grave violations against children

The MRM provides a unique framework and opportunity for country teams to systematically gather information on grave violations against children and to channel it to the highest levels, nationally and internationally, to secure adequate and appropriate advocacy and response. Monitoring and reporting is a time-consuming and human resource-intensive undertaking that can be especially challenging in situations where access is limited. To enhance efficiency and sustainability, the study found that building on existing relevant monitoring and programming efforts in order to collect information on grave violations is a good practice. CTFMRs have also improved the quality of monitoring by engaging community structures and local leaders in order to raise alerts to the CTFMRs. The study also found that having a clear and well-understood information verification system, which strikes a balance between the strict evidentiary standards of UN MRM verification and the upholding of the best interests of the child and the ‘do no harm’ principles throughout the process, was of critical importance for the MRM to retain support and credibility.

Key good practices in monitoring:

- a) Integrating MRM data collection into existing monitoring and programming structures;
- b) Engaging community structures to provide alerts;
- c) Contextualizing the violations;
- d) Devising strategies for remote monitoring in restricted access areas;
- e) Utilizing the cluster system to identify alerts of grave violations;
- f) Establishing real-time alerts for rapid monitoring and response;
- g) Developing joint verification systems for greater scrutiny and consistency;
- h) Establishing safeguards to uphold key monitoring principles: ‘do no harm’, security and impartiality.

a. Integrating MRM data collection into monitoring and programming structures

The study found that monitoring and programmatic work carried out by national and international NGOs provided ample opportunities to integrate MRM data collection in many situations. In Burundi and Nepal, for example, human rights and child protection NGOs played an important role in collecting information that was used to alert CTFMRs to grave violations (see box 11).

Box 11: Integrating data gathering on grave violations into NGO monitoring in Nepal

In Nepal, the collection of information on grave violations was strengthened by the contribution of six national and international NGOs, which collectively had a strong operational presence across the country prior to the MRM's establishment. Several of the NGOs already had a strong human rights monitoring focus, thus providing an existing structure that had the technical capacity and local networks to provide alerts to the CTFMR on grave violations. It carried out a mapping of all agencies present in different regions of the country, in order to ensure that there was a monitoring presence throughout the country. A referral pathway was also created to link the monitoring organizations with the services available in their region to assist affected children.

In addition, the MRM has provided opportunities for the UN to expand partnerships with NGOs to carry out monitoring in combination with child protection programming response. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, monitoring has been integrated into partnership agreements between NGOs and UNICEF. For instance, an international NGO partner reported grave violations while running a reintegration programme for children released from armed forces/groups. MRM activities and indicators were also included in strategic programmatic documents such as the UN Country Programme Action Plan and UNDAF, which supported the integration of MRM into programmatic work.

In particular, in Democratic Republic of the Congo there are two projects integrating MRM and response, one in South Kivu and one in Uélé. The project in Uélé commenced as a combined project.³⁰ It entails the presence of international NGO mobile teams that carry out missions in remote locations and identify violations ('proactive action'). The South Kivu project organizes a system of focal points per territory that are contacted when protection issues are raised and missions are organized.³¹ The NGO staff, who have been trained on the MRM, sensitize local child protection committees composed of community focal points (teachers, traditional leaders) to alert on cases of violations. Utilizing programmatic resources in this way allows for monitoring in remote areas and links the monitoring to responses, such as the provision of emergency medical care.³² This approach has been found to increase the quantity and quality of MRM reports and has addressed the practical and ethical question of linking monitoring to response.

³⁰ There was no other programming or monitoring in place, as it was the first time humanitarian actors were able to access the area.

³¹ Local NGOs in the villages reach out to 'local child protection committees', which are composed of community leaders. They verify the information reported by the protection committees and complete the MRM incident form.

³² The monitoring component includes training of community structures and management of MRM data collection through NGO focal points in six territories. The reintegration component includes medical and psychosocial care, family tracing, reunification, and school and economic reinsertion.

A similar strategy has been used by the CTFMR in Myanmar, where creating opportunities for partner NGOs to raise awareness and provide alerts on grave violations slowly reduced the fear and sensitivity on engaging on this issue. Integrating MRM alert functions into existing structures offers the potential for strengthening the capacity of local actors to engage in child rights monitoring over the long term, thus potentially offering a way to sustain progress.

b. Engaging community structures to provide alerts

Establishing the MRM has been done most efficiently where the MRM has been integrated into existing relevant local structures. Relying on and supporting community structures have been particularly useful where CTFMR co-chair organizations are under-resourced or have limited access to communities. CTFMRs have been able to draw from existing ‘child protection committees’ or ‘community focal points’ that have been sensitized to child protection issues. As these committees have a broader child protection focus, the committee members feel greater protection, given the potential sensitivity of reporting grave violations by parties to the conflict. For example, the MRM team in the Central African Republic sensitized child protection committees in villages as part of the process of establishing local networks to receive alerts on grave violations. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, UNICEF utilized relationships with community members to distribute basic information on family reunification of children associated with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and TMVP, which led parents to report their child’s abduction and/or recruitment directly to UNICEF’s field offices.

Using community structures, such as village committees and community leaders, has proven to be particularly effective due to their knowledge of the local situation and their capacity to assist in devising protection strategies. This includes ensuring linkages to the community power structures, such as traditional leaders or churches. For instance, in Afghanistan influential community elders and religious leaders have been a key target group, as they possess a strong interest in protecting their own communities (see box 12).

Box 12: Creating a network of elders in Afghanistan

A major challenge in Afghanistan is accessing information, due to the prevailing insecurity and mobility restrictions for humanitarian actors. A strategy to access information on grave violations has been to create a network of elders and community leaders, who receive a briefing on the MRM. For example in 2011, the sub-national task forces in the regions organized orientation sessions on the MRM for 250 community leaders, resulting in a network of potential sources. Some leaders have subsequently undertaken concrete initiatives. For instance, following an orientation with religious leaders in the Western region, mullahs participating in the session dedicated Friday prayers to explaining children’s rights and the danger of child recruitment.

Engaging and strengthening local structures has been particularly useful for sustainability and a smooth transition when a DPKO/DPA mission withdraws, given the potential post-mission gaps in gaining access to remote locations and in data collection capacity. This was the case in

Chad where the CTFMR increased its engagement with the Child Protection Working Group NGO network and other partners, after MINURCAT's departure.

A strategy that worked well to expand the MRM monitoring network at the grass-roots level and improve the quality of reporting has been to link community-based organizations with local human rights NGOs. In the State of Palestine, it was initially difficult to ensure consistent quality of reporting and verification of reports from community-based organizations. Now a Palestinian human rights NGO acts as a referral link between the community-based organizations and the CAAC Working Group, and also provides training to its field workers on child rights monitoring, identification of grave violations and referral of cases.

c. Contextualizing violations

Contextualizing grave violations has enhanced the local relevance of monitoring, encouraging the participation of partners and maximizing the utility of the coordination platform. The globally agreed definitions of each grave violation covered by the MRM may require clarification and local contextualization when applied to real-life situations. A good practice adopted by some CTFMRs has been reviewing the definitions of each violation to ensure clarity and consistency on how the definitions are applied within the local context (see box 13).

Box 13: Clarifying grave violations in the Colombian context

In Colombia, the CTFMR analysed and discussed the manifestations of the six grave violations in light of the Colombian conflict, in order to reach a common understanding on the meaning and scope of each violation, taking into account the specific context. For example, it was agreed that the relation between child recruitment and forced displacement should be analysed. An internal document was produced that captures the conclusions of the CTFMR's debate after examining the applicable domestic legislation and other legal sources.³³ In this example, members viewed this initial exercise of local contextualization of the six grave violations as a useful practice, as it made the monitoring more locally relevant and avoided continued debate on the meaning of violations during the report drafting. The agreed contextualized definitions are also used at training sessions with armed forces by CTFMR members.

Finally, with a strong monitoring system in place, teams may also be able to monitor other child protection concerns raised by the monitoring system, although these violations are generally not reported to the Security Council. A flexible approach helps retain credibility in the communities and response to their own priorities. In Sri Lanka, interactions with communities in the course of MRM monitoring led UNICEF to also document cases of missing children due to shelling or

displacement (more than 2,000 cases were reported), in order to assist with family tracing and reunification.

d. Devising strategies for remote monitoring in UN restricted access areas

In some contexts direct access to information is impossible or highly cumbersome and expensive due to security and access restrictions. However, it is often in these highly insecure and inaccessible areas where the most violations against children occur, as there is also less presence of protection actors, and hence a greater need for monitoring. Implementing the MRM in countries such as Iraq and Somalia has required creative strategies to access information, as well as careful measures that ensure the reliability of the information. In these contexts, UN agencies have extremely limited field presence and have run programmes primarily from a regional office, such as Amman or Nairobi.

In such cases where the UN has little presence and remote monitoring is the only feasible option, a good practice has been to establish a robust system of safeguards and support for local monitors in order to enhance the protection of monitors and communities, and to strengthen the coverage and quality of data collection in remote areas. Somalia is one of the most difficult places to implement the MRM due to its overwhelming UN access restrictions coupled with a high level of insecurity for monitors (see box 14). Some measures to address these challenges that have evolved in Somalia over time include: creating a clearly defined pathway for sharing case information; establishing security measures and multiple layers of cross-checking of information; and supervision and accountability within the country and remotely.

³³ The document will be updated as manifestations of violations have developed over time, and the CTF is planning to edit an internal manual in 2012.

Box 14: Building a remote monitoring system in Somalia through partnerships

Despite UN agencies' lack of access to certain parts of Somalia, the MRM is being implemented, with the support of an international partner that has contracted local partners to support the monitoring of grave violations in UN-restricted areas. When the MRM was set up in Somalia, monitoring of grave violations primarily relied on a 'protection monitoring network' of local NGOs that employed monitors to carry out general protection monitoring within designated areas. As the UN agencies had almost no way to cross-check cases themselves, it was difficult to ensure that the information sent by the monitors was fully accurate. Moreover, there was also limited room for UN agencies to control any duplication of recorded incidents. Due to the lack of access, UN agencies often utilized the same NGO network and sometimes the same monitors for data collection.

To address these shortcomings, a new monitoring system has been established to collect information exclusively on the MRM, with additional stages of verification, including the appointment of a field-based MRM focal person, in order to ensure to the greatest extent possible that the information collected is both accurate and non-duplicative. An international partner is currently responsible for managing a network of local monitors in southern/eastern Somalia. The monitors are required to work exclusively on the MRM; they are not given responsibility to carry out broader protection monitoring.

A further challenge in situations with very limited UN access due to security restrictions is how to create a network of reliable and trained sources, maintain contact with them and ensure the quality and reliability of reporting. A strategy devised by CTFMRs to address this challenge has been to organize regular MRM orientations with local NGOs or community leaders, bringing participants for training or follow-up discussions into areas the CTFMR can access. For example, in Iraq, the CTFMR trained a broad range of local NGOs on the MRM who could then be used in monitoring grave violations. Thus, UNICEF created a network of focal points for raising alerts in main locations who could identify where violations occurred (mainly based on media, security or other reports) and mapped potential partners operating in those locations to assist in cross-checking information. Refresher training sessions were organized to sharpen skills and maintain the motivation of NGOs, since only 30 to 50 trainees were actively reporting initially out of the 395 people trained in one year.

e. Utilizing the cluster system to identify alerts of grave violations

The MRM has been linked with the IASC cluster system in several ways.

While this linkage has been particularly useful for response to grave violations, the clusters have also been used to provide alerts on grave violations to CTFMRs. The main strategy has involved training cluster members on the MRM and having cluster representatives at CTFMR

meetings.³⁴ Many CTFMRs have carried out trainings on the MRM for the child protection sub-clusters or child protection working groups at field level, while a few education and health clusters have also been engaged (see box 15).

Box 15: Education cluster participation in the MRM in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Particularly since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1998, the education clusters have begun to take a more active role in collecting and reporting information on attacks on schools to CTFMRs. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the education cluster coordinator is a member of the CTFMR and has organized trainings on the MRM for cluster members. This has worked especially well where the MRM is seen as adding value for the cluster, such as in Dungu, where the MRM provided a platform from which the cluster advocated against the military use of schools.³⁵ The education cluster coordinator was instrumental in ensuring the inclusion of MRM reporting in the Humanitarian Action Plan in the country.

³⁴ In Afghanistan, protection and health cluster coordinators sit at senior CTFMR meetings. In December 2011, it was reported that both the education and health clusters would assign representatives to attend regular CTFMR meetings.

³⁵ In Dungu, an education cluster member indicated that the MRM made the monitoring of attacks on schools more systematic and integral to their work. Education cluster members (school principals, education authorities, churches) generally have higher levels of educational attainment, which enhanced the reporting quality.

Linking the protection cluster monitoring networks to the MRM has also been a strategic way of increasing geographical coverage for MRM data collection, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Protection cluster members have been trained on the MRM, and in some cases they have been provided with MRM incident forms or have integrated grave violations into their protection monitoring incident forms.

The engagement of cluster coordinators as CTFMR members has also been critical to mobilizing cluster members' support of the MRM. For example, as the UNICEF education cluster coordinator is an active CTFMR member in Democratic Republic of the Congo, cluster members in the country's regions have been mobilized to provide alerts on the military use of schools. In Afghanistan, the WHO health cluster coordinator, as a CTFMR member, solicited its members to report on a voluntary basis on MRM health-related violations.³⁶ The UNHCR protection cluster coordinator, also a CTFMR member in Afghanistan, initiated advocacy with government and international forces on the protection of civilians, including on CAAC issues. Other examples of cluster collaboration are provided in section 8, programmatic response.

f. Establishing real-time alerts for rapid monitoring and response

Violations occurring in isolated areas with limited resources risk being under-reported. The use of SMS alert systems in remote communities has in some cases proven a useful tool for supporting the monitoring of grave violations (see box 16).

³⁶ Health cluster members were provided with a reporting format on grave violations, yet in practice not all cluster members report, for fear of security repercussions. There is little data collection or reporting on attacks on hospitals, health facilities and medical personnel.

Box 16: Using SMS for rapid alerts in remote areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

SMS system links village committees to a local NGO

To address issues of access in Democratic Republic of the Congo, the international NGO Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict has provided training and funding to a local NGO to manage an SMS-based alert project in a defined axis in South Kivu. Through the distribution of cell phones, community members in remote areas send SMS alerts to a central focal person from the local NGO, who follows up on cases by visiting the location of the incident in order to collect the information. A coding system has been developed to convey the types of violations and perpetrators involved. Each child protection committee in the targeted villages has been provided with a mobile phone and solar charger, with 20 committees linked to the system.

‘Community Alert Networks’ links to MONUSCO for rapid (military) response

MONUSCO’s Community Alert Network is a system of protection monitoring in remote areas through the appointment of Community Liaison Assistants who are stationed in MONUSCO military outposts.³⁷ The Assistants are civilian national staff who communicate regularly with community focal points provided with mobile phones or a radio in remote areas in order to issue alerts in real time on threats or incidents occurring in their areas. Alerts are communicated immediately by Community Liaison Assistants to MONUSCO local commanders, and MONUSCO rapidly deploys military protective presence or intervenes.

g. Developing joint verification systems for greater scrutiny and consistency

Developing joint verification systems within CTFMRs has increased scrutiny and consistency in the verification process. Verification of data is a common challenge for CTFMRs, given the diversity of actors involved and the limited UN presence in some areas, which hampers direct data collection by the UN. A key good practice regarding verification is to ensure that the verification standards are well understood and streamlined among all CTFMR members and at all (central, regional, local) levels. To increase ownership and scrutiny, a useful initiative has been to share the task of verification among CTFMR members, rather than make it the sole responsibility of a CTFMR co-chair (see box 17).

³⁷ Community Alert Networks have been set up in 25 locations in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Box 17: Verification committee in Colombia

In Colombia, the CTFMR established working groups to work on different tasks according to the time of year, such as on report drafting. The cases committee (*comité de casos*) is a permanent working group that meets on a bimonthly basis to assess all of the received cases and determine which will be reported in the Global Horizontal Note. After reviewing all cases the committee classifies them into four categories: verified, reported, requiring further information or discarded. It decides whether they are sufficiently viable to be reported to the Security Council based on accuracy and contextual analysis. If cases need further verification the cases committee requests checking by CTFMR members and recommends the follow-up required.

Similarly, in Afghanistan, there has been extensive discussion among members of the national and sub-national task forces to clarify the verification process required to report on a violation. After the sub-national RTF verifies a case to the best of its ability, it is considered by the CTFMR Co-Chairs at the national level, where two assigned staff members from both co-chair organizations jointly review all of the cases in order to assess if they comply with the agreed verification standards.

Given the great difficulties in directly accessing areas in many contexts, cross-checking of cases is not always possible. For the purpose of the Global Horizontal Note,³⁸ some CTFMRs report credible but only partially verified violations as ‘allegations.’ This is helpful in alerting about an incident, possible emerging trends or urgent actions to be taken as soon as possible.

h. Upholding key monitoring principles: ‘Do no harm’, security and impartiality

‘Do no harm’ principle: SOPs to prevent re-interviewing children

Avoiding the re-traumatization of victims and witnesses is a basic monitoring rule and hence a core element of MRM training. For example, in the State of Palestine, in order to avoid re-traumatization, a mapping of monitoring actors is undertaken and a field directory established and shared among monitoring organizations, in order to avoid duplication of interviews and assessments and to coordinate the monitoring and response. Furthermore, joint field visits are coordinated to improve information-sharing, and focal points for particular thematic areas are assigned. There have also been attempts to coordinate visits to victims/families through the cluster system, so as to avoid duplication. Similar systems have been developed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect child survivors of grave violations from being re-interviewed (see box 18).³⁹

³⁸ As opposed to the Secretary-General's reports, where only verified information is included.

³⁹ For further information specifically in relation to gender-based violence, please see: International Rescue Committee and United Nations Children's Fund, ‘Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for health and psychosocial service providers in humanitarian settings’, IRC, New York, 2012, <www.unicef.org/protection/files/IRC_CCSGuide_FullGuide_lowres.pdf>.

Box 18: Preventing multiple interviews of children in transit centres and hospitals in Democratic Republic of the Congo

To avoid interviews of children by multiple actors, in Dungu (Uélés district of Orientale Province, an LRA-affected area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), for example, it has been agreed that whenever MONUSCO Child Protection needs additional information for verification/triangulation or specific data for analysis purposes, the international NGO implementing the reintegration programme reviews the child's file or asks the child for the specific necessary information.

Security: Clear standing on protection of staff and monitors

The 'do no harm' principle, as a fundamental MRM principle, also applies to staff. In some situations, CTFMRs have engaged NGO contractual partners in data collection on grave violations without clarity on how the organizations will respond in cases of a security incident.

Establishing clear policies and safeguards to protect the security of MRM staff and monitors is part of adhering to the 'do no harm' principle.

In Iraq, as part of the MRM training, NGO monitors were briefed on self-protection security measures, such as having coded numbers for the database and ensuring separate email addresses for MRM purposes, which could not be traced back to individuals or their organizations. While these are positive developments, in situations where the MRM is being implemented there is need for greater clarity on the level of protection provided to monitors by their respective organizations and on additional steps the CTFMR could take in this regard.

In order to address this gap, CTFMRs could utilize the experience and expertise of relevant organizations and protection networks focused on human rights defences in dealing with security issues. For example, the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo advises on the protection of human rights defenders, witnesses, victims and established NGO protection networks across the country. The office also trained partners on ways of protecting victims and witnesses, as well as its own staff.⁴⁰ MRM teams could liaise with similar protection programmes developed by OHCHR or other expert organizations for dealing with individual protection cases, and integrate similar training into the core MRM training in addition to the existing topics.

⁴⁰ The UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) Protection Unit supported and trained more than 200 local human rights NGOs and developed 40 protection networks (throughout provinces and territories) to tackle protection issues of victims and witnesses. Some 11 UNJHRO national protection officers are based in field offices to train NGO partners and coordinate responses to requests for individual protection. Individual protection measures range from regular contact by phone with persons at risk to their in-country relocation in specific cases.

Impartiality: Broadening the scope of monitoring to control bias

A particular challenge in MRM monitoring is to ensure that the cases reported evenly reflect all of the violations committed by all parties to the conflict. In the State of Palestine, measures have been put in place to strengthen the monitoring of violations carried out by all parties to the conflict, against both Israeli and Palestinian children, by building partnerships and contacting key focal points both in the State of Palestine and in Israel.⁴¹ Similarly, in Afghanistan, the CTFMR has strengthened its monitoring of violations carried out by international forces (ISAF, NATO, etc.).

In all contexts, there is never complete information on the situation for children. Hence, it may not be possible to know the extent to which the monitoring system is mitigating bias towards different parties to the conflict. However it has proven useful to **structure the monitoring system to the greatest extent possible around where survivors are** – whether that means in certain geographic areas or in terms of the services or institutions they may eventually come into contact with. However, this in itself may lead to biased reporting; hence caution must be taken to ensure balanced reporting.

For example, in a difficult-to-access region, UN agencies commenced monitoring child rights violations along the border areas, mainly inside refugee camps. The majority of reports received within the camps pertained to children recruited by armed groups. As NGOs started contributing information from outside the refugee camps, it became apparent that active child recruitment was also being carried out by governmental forces outside of the camps. In order to maintain neutrality in the monitoring process, it was necessary to broaden the scope of the monitoring to all areas where grave violations were reportedly occurring. While verifying cases outside camps has been more challenging for UN agencies, data could eventually be gathered by reaching out to a broad range of credible sources in other locations.

⁴¹ Violations by Palestinian factions against Palestinian children generally go unreported due to monitors' concerns on the risks to their security of documenting such violations. Currently, the Israel/State of Palestine working group is developing an agreement with an NGO in Gaza to increase monitoring of violations by Palestinian factions, ensuring that these violations are documented and reported.

4. Information Management Systems

Implementing the MRM generates an extremely valuable pool of information. It is useful for descriptions of specific incidents as well as for analysis of trends and patterns over a period of time in order to gain a better understanding of the conflict's impact on children. In addition to Security Council reporting, information derived from the MRM has been instrumental in informing and triggering strategies to prevent violations and programmatic responses for affected children. Credible evidence on grave violations has also been the basis for dialogue and cooperation with parties to the conflict. MRM information analysis has also been used as a tool for evidence-based advocacy with Member States and to inform other accountability and reporting avenues for action. This potential has been maximized where there is an effective IMS in place, and where CTFMRs have been strategic in using MRM-based data analysis to mobilize action.

Key good practices for MRM information management systems include:

- a) Establishing a flexible IMS to meet country-specific needs;
- b) A comprehensive data security policy;
- c) Maximizing MRM information analysis to strengthen advocacy, accountability and programming response.

a. Establishing a flexible IMS to meet country-specific needs

In addition to reporting to the Security Council, information collected through the MRM serves a number of purposes in-country, such as informing advocacy, programme planning, devising immediate responses and linking to accountability initiatives. For this reason, it has been found that **flexibility in adapting the IMS to meet the local requirements** aids efforts to maximize the use of data for different purposes.

Reconciling different objectives

While CTFMR members share overall MRM goals, often they have differing priorities in relation to the outcomes sought through the MRM in-country. Human rights organizations or political missions prioritize triggering Security Council action or/and national accountability measures, including prosecutions. Humanitarian agencies and NGOs, on the other hand, may prioritize programmatic response. Different objectives can carry significant implications for the type of information that is collected and how it is managed.⁴² For this reason, a good practice involves having CTFMR members define their objectives for use of information, beyond reporting to the Security Council, in order to adapt the IMS to meet the agreed objectives.

⁴² In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, MONUSCO Child Protection manages the MRM database and makes a point of recording the name of superior commanders in order to identify the chain of command responsibility.

Flexibility in recording and storing information

Currently, the documentation and storage of data collected by CTFMRs varies from country to country. For instance, while in some countries a unified MRM reporting format has been established (e.g., Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sri Lanka), other teams found it more pragmatic to incorporate MRM issues into their existing data collection forms. Furthermore, some NGO partners, such as in Afghanistan and Darfur (Sudan), do not feel comfortable for security reason in completing forms, and hence they report verbally to UN protection staff or send their own agency's form by email. For these reasons, a good practice has been to have sufficient flexibility in data recording to allow it to be adapted to the local context and needs.

CTFMRs have consistently stated that a global IMS model, while ensuring consistency, would not necessarily be effective unless it is **sufficiently flexible to accommodate country-specific needs** (e.g., country-specific entries and modifications). Hence before establishing an MRM IMS, some CTFMRs have resorted to testing existing database systems to assess their suitability to their needs. For example, in Colombia, software was developed initially based on the MRM database used in Iraq and other databases used in Colombia. However, given its specific requirements, the CTFMR decided to develop software tailored to its needs, such as inclusion of data entries on ethnic groups. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the under-age recruitment database was built around individual cases, as the identity of the children recruited was fully documented through interviews with parents or children, for advocacy and other responses.

Some systems are also able to record incidents as both collective and individual cases, although it may sometimes be necessary to resort to non-individualized information. For instance, during the last phase of the Sri Lankan conflict, the CTFMR used rapid household surveys conducted in camps for internally displaced people by Protection Cluster agencies, since in-depth interviews were not possible. Although this did not allow for follow-up of specific incidents and cases, it enabled a rapid assessment of the scale of killing and maiming of children.

Flexibility also involves addressing the question of how to best aggregate data from different pre-existing databases. For example, in the State of Palestine, existing IMSs were reviewed and assessed in order to develop linkages between the various databases, so that relevant data from different agencies could be uploaded for MRM purposes. As several partners had existing databases, an Excel form was developed for these partners to draw MRM-related information from their systems and transfer it to the CAAC database. A Memorandum of Understanding was subsequently agreed on a tripartite collaboration for MRM data management.

b. Establishing a comprehensive MRM information security policy

The establishment of a comprehensive information security policy has increased consistency and emergency preparedness within CTFMRs. In highly insecure areas, such as in Somalia, Darfur (Sudan) and Democratic Republic of the Congo, MRM monitors have devised different strategies to secure MRM data. For example, monitors avoid carrying papers when

monitoring – in carrying out rapid assessments they obtain data verbally and only record interviews at the office. They also use the Internet at certain times of the day and have separate email accounts for MRM communication, which are changed periodically. Additionally, forms used by monitors do not contain names of victims, sources or perpetrators. The names of the monitors and of alleged perpetrators are also coded, so that if the information is intercepted, there is no identifiable information that could put monitors, victims or witnesses at risk. In Somalia, once MRM paper forms are scanned and sent to Nairobi, monitors delete emails and scanned forms from their computers.

While these are positive measures at the field level, a key good practice in securing data is to have a **comprehensive approach to data security** (see box 19), including:

- A security protocol agreed by CTFMR members;
- A contingency plan, including on how to dispose of sensitive files in an emergency;
- A policy on storage of high-risk documents;
- A safe back-up system that is regularly updated in-country and also abroad (e.g., regional office).

Box 19: Colombia task force IMS security protocol

Data security is a protection measure for victims, witnesses, monitors and communities, particularly where retaliation against victims is common, as in Colombia. Following an incident that highly compromised the security of MRM data in 2009, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) conducted a risk assessment and evaluated security measures in place at the CTFMR secretariat office in Bogotá, resulting in development of a security protocol. Much tighter MRM data security measures were put in place: no ‘cases committee’⁴³ meetings take place outside the CTFMR secretariat office; papers are shredded after meetings; use of email for MRM-related communications is restricted; and the office has lockers and video surveillance.

Similarly, UNICEF Sudan developed an office-wide contingency plan that included rapid disposal of sensitive information, which was implemented in 2009. As many files were on paper, they would have to be burned, which could take up to several hours. A lesson learned is to ensure that the contingency plan includes data disposal provisions to avoid having to improvise when a crisis occurs, and as much as possible to maintain only electronic files.

⁴³ CTF internal verification committee set up to screen cases for use in MRM reports.

c. Maximizing MRM data analysis to strengthen advocacy, accountability, response and prevention

MRM data analysis has assisted CTFMRs to better understand the circumstances in which grave violations occur and thus inform preventive actions and responses to violations. Furthermore, a strong evidence recording system has been instrumental in engaging in effective dialogue with parties to the conflict and in supporting accountability initiatives.

Using MRM data analysis to map trends of violations

In Security Council Resolution 1882, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to include, in the annexes to his reports on CAAC, parties engaging in ‘patterns’ of killing and maiming of children and/or rape and other sexual violence against children. An effective MRM IMS with adequate data should be capable of identifying patterns and trends of grave violations occurring.⁴⁴ In Sri Lanka, for example, analysis of data revealed that recruitment of children by the LTTE was cyclical and occurred over three-month cycles. The analysis was used in planning targeted prevention and response strategies, including setting up protective presences in locations where recruitment was most likely to occur and at specific times of the year.

Using MRM data as a tool for effective dialogue with parties to the conflict

Accurate and reliable data have proved to be a solid foundation for engaging in dialogue with parties to the conflict. In Sri Lanka, the LTTE initially denied any occurrence of child recruitment within their ranks. UNICEF started to track and record child recruitment cases in a database in 2002, and by the end of the year it had documented more than 2,500 cases. This allowed UNICEF to advocate⁴⁵ with the LTTE and subsequently with the TMVP and the Government, with solid evidence of detailed accounts of child recruitment. As the database was built around individual cases, the identity of the children recruited was fully documented. Hence, the database was a powerful advocacy tool, as UNICEF could check on the situation of each child and advocate on his or her specific case, if requested by the child’s parents.

Maximizing the MRM IMS to support accountability initiatives

The MRM database in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was established in 2008 to facilitate the reporting of violations and has increasingly been used for accountability purposes. The database includes entries for names of perpetrators, the units and battalions they belong to, and details on the State’s responses to violations, including arrests and the various stages of judicial follow-up. Recording the identity of superior commanders proved particularly important to feed into the DPKO mission’s conditionality policy and to support prosecutions. This demonstrates the MRM IMS potential for informing eventual screening procedures in the context of SSR and prosecutorial strategies as appropriate, or historical documentation in the context of truth-telling and memory.

⁴⁴ Efforts to draw trends based on the aggregation of verified individual cases may fall short or lead to false assumptions if external factors that affect data collection are not taken duly into account, such as greater or lesser access to victims or capacity to monitor. In places with highly limited UN access, such as Afghanistan, Iraq or Somalia, MRM teams have used individual cases to illustrate broader phenomena as developments in the conflict, or present them as indications of possible larger occurrence of violations.

⁴⁵ For specific cases with the expressed consent of the child’s parents.

5. Reporting on grave violations

The MRM provides a system to compile “timely, objective and reliable” information on grave violations into concise and regular reports to the Security Council. In fact, the Secretary-General’s Annual Reports on CAAC have been a powerful tool for political advocacy: many parties to the conflict are concerned by their inclusion in the annexes of the reports and thus on the Security Council’s ‘name and shame’ list, which has led some parties to sign Action Plans to address the violations. While the inclusion of cases or incidents in the Secretary-General’s reports on CAAC must meet strict verification standards, which may reduce the number of cases reported, it strengthens their advocacy weight with parties to the conflict.

The enormous efforts deployed to produce these reports can be further capitalized by maximizing the use of information as a tool for broader awareness and action. In many cases, CTFMRs have also utilized other reporting avenues to further pressure the parties.

The study found that reporting on grave violations has been strengthened by the following good practices:

- a) Strengthening contextual analysis in reporting;
- b) Closing the feedback loop by reporting back to monitors and local communities;
- c) Utilizing additional reporting avenues for added pressure on governments to take action.

a. Strengthening contextual analysis in reporting

The primary objective of the MRM is the systematic reporting on grave violations that “leads to well-informed, concerted and effective response to ensure protection for children in armed conflict.”⁴⁶ Understanding the causes and context in which the violations occurred is key to achieving this. However, given that the MRM is implemented in situations where access to the areas where violations occur is often limited, the information reported through the MRM will not capture the full scale of the violations taking place. Further, given the inherent limits of MRM reporting, since it is primarily case-based and time-bound, it is also often difficult to gain a deep understanding of the causes and context of violations.

The study found that reporting is strengthened by consideration of additional existing research on CAAC carried out by broader sources. UN reports, NGO and academic research, and reports by credible media outlets have been considered by CTFMRs, particularly where limited access has made analysis of trends of grave violations difficult. Undertaking broader research

⁴⁶ Secretary-General’s Report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, A/59/695-S/2005/72.

can also be a way of gaining a deeper understanding of specific violations. For example, in Afghanistan, UNICEF engaged in a study on attacks on schools to better understand the context in which these violations occur. The research examined which key factors contributed to schools' vulnerability to attacks and which modalities of communities' engagement were most effective in protecting schools. This was a follow-up to a research study conducted in 2009,⁴⁷ which documented communities' perceptions on which schools were more at risk – such as assumptions that schools constructed by reconstruction teams funded by international forces were at greater risk of being targeted. This is a promising initiative, as it will serve to contextualize attacks on schools for advocacy and policy recommendations, including in providing guidance to international security forces and donors on school reconstruction, which may help to prevent further occurrence of such violations.

Integrating this wider research will assist in the analysis of the MRM reports, from focusing on reporting individual cases to **a stronger focus on explaining how the nature of the conflict, or the peace process, is impacting children**. This broader focus will also increase the MRM reports' value to inform advocacy and programme response.

b. Closing the feedback loop: Reporting back to monitors and communities

Regular feedback is essential to sustaining the motivation and contribution of the MRM monitors on grave violations. Communities are also more likely to provide alerts or report if they see that their reporting directly benefits children. The study found that in many cases, field monitors and MRM partners had a keen interest in knowing whether the information they contributed had been used by the CTFMRs for the Secretary-General's CAAC reports or other advocacy efforts, and learning the impact the reports had on the Security Council and other influential actors. A key good practice in this area has been regular feedback and dialogue between the CTFMR at the national level with those directly involved in collecting information at the field level (see box 20).

Box 20: Sharing the Secretary-General's CAAC reports with Colombia CTFMR partners

In order to provide feedback to members who are particularly instrumental in gathering information on grave violations, the CTFMR in Colombia organizes meetings with its NGO members and the Ombudsman Office to brief them on the final contents of the Secretary-General's reports on CAAC. The meetings provide an opportunity for the organizations to see how the information they reported is used, which has increased transparency, trust and ownership in the process.

In addition to sharing public CAAC reports by the Secretary-General, increased communication at all levels could be extremely beneficial, such as regular conference calls between the

⁴⁷ 'Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on education in Afghanistan, risks and measures for successful mitigation', by CARE International in Afghanistan and the Afghan Ministry of Education, September 2009.

CTFMR at the central level and partners in the field, in order to provide clarifications and updates. In Iraq, MRM updates are shared with the NGO MRM focal persons. In Democratic Republic of the Congo, summaries of CTFMR submissions for the Secretary-General's CAAC reports are translated into French for sharing with local NGO partners. In Sri Lanka, translated copies of relevant advocacy statements by high-level international envoys were provided to local partners to encourage them and communities to continue reporting, as this demonstrated that the information they had provided resulted in action related to children.

Feedback on insufficient or inadequate information is also provided to local NGO partners in order to improve the quality of reports. Some NGOs who provided alerts to CTFMRs reported that feedback from the task force has been extremely helpful in strengthening their ability to contribute valuable information to the MRM. One NGO in Myanmar, for example, stated that feedback on what acts fall within the scope of specific grave violations, and the details needed by the CTFMR, improved the quality of reporting on attacks on schools occurring in the area.

c. Utilizing additional reporting avenues to pressure governments to take action

The Secretary-General's annual reports on CAAC have been utilized to mobilize wider audiences and thus influence parties to the conflict to address grave violations. In particular, utilizing additional existing reporting avenues has added pressure on governments to take action. A good practice has been to report on MRM-based issues to other human rights mechanisms, including Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council and Treaty Bodies. It has been particularly useful to report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, especially during its review of State parties' implementation of the OPAC. The ILO mechanism that supervises State parties' compliance with ILO conventions has been utilized as another avenue to push for governments to apply country-specific recommendations from the Security Council on child recruitment and use.

OPAC review process

The OPAC review process has provided opportunities for the Committee on the Rights of the Child to recommend measures in line with Security Council resolutions and country-specific recommendations on grave violations. According to the Committee's secretariat, CAAC reports by the Secretary-General, as well as related reports available for the country under review, are routinely used for the analysis of children's rights in the country and to guide the dialogue with State parties (see box 21). It is reported that the MRM reports have informed the drafting and adoption of lists of issues and the Committee's concluding observations.⁴⁸ In 2008, for example, the Committee's review of Uganda under OPAC was guided by MRM documents. The Committee's concluding observations on Uganda included a

⁴⁸ Examples of recent cases where MRM reports have been used as background documents in consideration of State parties reports under the CRC with Optional Protocols include: Myanmar (3rd-4th periodic report under the CRC; in preparation for the review, three MRM documents were used as background documents); Afghanistan (January 2011); Burundi (September 2010); and Sudan (September 2010, 3rd and 4th periodic report under the Convention).

recommendation for follow-up to the Secretary-General's CAAC report to the Security Council, and this put more pressure on the State party to adopt an Action Plan.⁴⁹

Box 21: Using CRC reporting to advance the MRM agenda: OPAC review in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In Democratic Republic of the Congo, a detailed confidential submission was prepared in May 2011 under the OPAC review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, describing steps taken and still required to end child recruitment and use by armed forces/groups. MRM data were used to prepare this briefing to the Committee. The fact that this information was based on sustained monitoring under the MRM added weight to the submission. Following the Committee's public recommendations (which underscored the urgent necessity to engage in the commitments/Action Plan required by the MRM), the Government took concrete steps to work with the UN. In October 2012 the Government signed an Action Plan to stop and prevent the recruitment and use of children, and also called for steps to protect children from sexual violence.

Combined leverage

Some Human Rights Special Procedures country mandate holders work on conflict situations, such as on Burundi, Myanmar, Somalia, State of Palestine and Sudan. The Special Rapporteur on Burundi invoked the Secretary-General's CAAC reports on Burundi during country visits. Similarly, the Special Rapporteur on State of Palestine utilized information from the CAAC Working Group. The combined political leverage, along with other pressure factors, can be very influential on parties. Following repeated recommendations to the Government of Sudan by a range of bodies – Committee on the Rights of the Child, Special Rapporteur on Sudan, Security Council, SRSG-CAAC and Darfur peace monitoring bodies – plus follow-up advocacy by child protection actors, important amendments to the Child Act, including increased penalties for grave violations, were adopted in 2010.

Reporting on child recruitment to the ILO

Compulsory child recruitment is considered one of the worst forms of child labour banned under ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182. Every two years, State parties are required to submit reports to the ILO on the measures they have taken to implement the ratified Convention, which are examined by the independent Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.⁵⁰ Particularly serious cases are referred to the annual International Labour Conference, where States parties are represented by a tripartite delegation

⁴⁹ CRC/C/OPAC/UGA/CO/1.

⁵⁰ The Committee of Experts refers to the Secretary-General's CAAC reports and its comments on Convention 182 cases. For instance, in its 2010 report, the Committee referred to the Secretary-General's reports on CAAC for the cases of Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda.

and are invited to respond before the Conference Committee on the situations in question.⁵¹ The Government of Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, was called to the International Labour Conference to discuss Convention 182. Further, countries who are State parties to Convention 182 (including Democratic Republic of the Congo) are required to develop National Action Plans as part of the global action plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016. Hence the CTFMR used this opportunity to ensure that a reference was included to the Security Council recommendations to address child recruitment in the country, including the adoption of an Action Plan by the Government.

In cases where there are acute problems or persistent non-observance of a ratified Convention, the ILO Constitution provides for an *ad hoc* complaint procedure to be implemented in the country of concern (see box 22).

Box 22: Using the ILO complaint mechanism to strengthen reporting on child recruitment in Myanmar

A Supplementary Understanding between ILO and the Government of Myanmar has been in place since 2002 to address the State party's compliance with the Forced Labour Convention No. 29 (1930), through the establishment of a complaint mechanism.⁵² While the Supplementary Understanding covers different forms of forced labour, a large percentage of the complaints received have been for under-age recruitment. From March to November 2011, for example, 155 formal complaints related to under-age recruitment were assessed as falling within ILO's mandate.⁵³ This mechanism also can provide clear trends on the use of children by the Tatmadaw (armed forces) regarding geographic location, age breakdown and economic and social factors impacting vulnerable children. The complementarity of the mechanism has allowed the ILO in Myanmar, as a member of the CTFMR, to contribute directly to monitoring, reporting and response to child recruitment and use.

To date, in almost every case of child recruitment taken up by ILO with the Government of Myanmar through this mechanism, some form of accountability measure, prosecution or disciplinary action has been taken against the perpetrator. While this form of agreement remains unique to Myanmar for the ILO thus far, it shows the value of exploring complementary mechanisms to support the achievement of MRM objectives.

⁵¹ The Committee's reports are submitted to the International Labour Conference, where they are discussed by a tripartite committee (made up of government, employer and worker delegates), including discussion of selected individual cases. Situations of children's forced labour in some countries have received international attention this way. See Noguchi, Yoshie, 'ILO Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Convention on the Rights of the Child', *International Journal of Children's Rights*, vol. 10, no.4, 2002, pp. 355–369.

⁵² Understanding between the Government of the Union of Myanmar and the International Labour Office concerning the appointment of an ILO Liaison Officer in Myanmar (2002); Supplementary Understanding between the Government of the Union of Myanmar and the International Labour Office (2007).

⁵³ Developments concerning the question of the observance by the Government of Myanmar of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (no. 29), ILO Governing Body, 312th Session, Geneva, November 2011, GB.312/INS/6, para. 3.

6. Accountability

By deterring violations and addressing impunity, accountability provides redress for affected children. Accountability may include judicial action and administrative measures, such as investigations and disciplinary sanctions. In this regard, a good practice has been found to be **support for justice responses** to grave violations, with due consideration and safeguards for the protection of children and witnesses.

Action Plans are a specific accountability tool requested by the Security Council to be used to address grave violations. Key **good practices in negotiating and implementing an Action Plan** found in the study include:

- a) Investing in preparatory steps to lay the groundwork for ownership and compliance;
- b) Addressing context-specific issues in the Action Plan;
- c) Designating a separate body with relevant CTFMR members to monitor the Action Plan, as appropriate.

a. Laying the groundwork for ownership and compliance

The study found that sufficient preparation, including sensitization on the implications of an Action Plan, can strengthen implementation once the Action Plan has been signed. In some cases, parties are keen to sign an Action Plan quickly in the belief that it will grant them increased international support or financial resources or that it will lead to their de-listing. For this reason, it has been found to be good practice to first invest time in building a strong understanding of the MRM and of the implications of signing an Action Plan among the party's leadership and other actors who may play a role in implementing the commitments in the Action Plan (see box 23).

During the negotiation process, technical briefings and sensitization workshops explaining the process of the Action Plan and discussion on draft versions of the text have been found to strengthen ownership by the parties, and hence the prospects for commitment and compliance. In Uganda, for example, one UPDF commander involved in the implementation of the Action Plan stated that building trust between the UPDF and the CTFMR was necessary “so [the UN] was not seen as a spy but being there to cooperate.” As a Ugandan CTFMR Co-Chair said, “You cannot neglect the human side – it is important to understand where people are coming from, and to build trust, starting with an informal education process.”

Strong coordination among CTFMR co-chairs during the negotiation process is important for cohesive, consistent and hence stronger messaging to the parties. For example, in March 2012 in South Sudan, UNMIS, in close collaboration with UNICEF, organized a workshop for

drafting the Action Plan signed with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The fact that the Co-Chairs of the CTFMR participated in the workshop lent weight to the discussions.

The study also found it important to ensure that focal points with strong leadership skills and the political clout to convene key actors are involved in the negotiations. This was the case in Sri Lanka, where the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice intervened in the negotiations and became an instrumental player in bringing the TMVP faction to an agreement. Likewise, during the negotiation process of a renewed Action Plan with the SPLA in South Sudan in March 2012, the continued engagement by the SPLA top leadership was ensured because the facilitator of the workshop was a highly placed and respected SPLA officer. The draft Action Plan was also shared with five different divisions of the SPLA, which increased ownership of the Action Plan among high-ranking officers.

Box 23: Laying the groundwork for effective implementation of an Action Plan in Uganda

Prior to signature of the Action Plan to address child recruitment by the UPDF in Uganda, a series of preparatory steps were taken that created a strong foundation for understanding the commitments to be agreed to by all actors involved. This led to greater consensus and commitment to implement the agreed terms once the Action Plan was signed. The UPDF was de-listed from the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report to the Security Council on CAAC the year following their signing of the Action Plan. It is worth noting that since the de-listing of the UPDF, its MRM Focal Points have continued to routinely carry out training on children's rights, including on grave violations, for UPDF forces, some of whom are deployed in the region. The UPDF also includes child protection in its training of international forces deployed in Somalia. (See annex 2 for a summary of the key outcomes and processes undertaken for the effective implementation of the Action Plan in Uganda.)

b. Addressing context-specific issues in the Action Plan

Addressing context-specific issues in the Action Plan has improved local relevance and ownership of the Action Plan (see box 24). The effective implementation of the Action Plan relies on a clear understanding of the terms of the agreement as they apply to the specific situation. The study found that detailed dialogue during the preparatory process, to clearly define the terms of the agreement, is a key investment in attaining ownership and compliance by the signatory party. It also allows for clarity for both the signatory party and the UN when confronted with monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan to address any issues raised during the compliance monitoring.

Standard templates of Action Plans, provided to CTFMRs by UN Headquarters as guidance, thus should be carefully discussed with the parties engaging in the Action Plan. This may improve adaptation and strengthening, ensuring local relevance and ownership. For example, in at least one case, an Action Plan was locally devised to strengthen accountability for grave

violations committed by parties beyond the specific violation for which the party had been listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report on CAAC.

Box 24: Afghanistan Action Plan on child recruitment, including annexes on other grave violations

In Afghanistan, the Action Plan on the recruitment or use of children signed by the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police in January 2011 also includes annexes on addressing rape and other forms of sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children, despite the fact that the National Army and National Police have only been listed for child recruitment and use. This is a positive development and could be a model for other MRM teams to explore, as it illustrates a more comprehensive and proactive approach to addressing grave violations, which is supported by an official commitment by the signatories to the Action Plan. Furthermore, the Afghan Ministries of Interior and Defence and religious leaders used the Action Plan and its annexes as a foundation to include in their decrees and fatwas, respectively, thus prohibiting and condemning not only child recruitment but also these other grave violations.⁵⁴

c. Designating a separate body with relevant CTFMR members to monitor the Action Plan

A key aspect of strengthening the implementation of an Action Plan is to have a clear, agreed process that is understood by all actors involved in implementing and monitoring compliance with the Action Plan. In order for the findings of the monitoring body to be accepted, the process must be seen as transparent, neutral and impartial by the parties involved. In Uganda, for example, the participation of UPDF Human Rights Department officials in the monitoring⁵⁵ of the Action Plan led by the CTFMR lent credibility to the process. This is because it demonstrated not only the UPDF's commitment to compliance with the Action Plan, but also transparency by both the UPDF and the UN.

In some contexts creation of a separate and distinct UN monitoring body is an effective strategy for monitoring the Action Plan. This was the case in Nepal, for example, where an independent monitoring body was established solely for the purpose of monitoring the terms of the Action Plan. The monitoring team consisted of nine UN staff members hired specifically for this purpose, the majority of whom were based in OHCHR field offices in order to monitor specific cantonments within their regions. The close reporting line to senior UN officials, especially the

⁵⁴ The National Ulema Council adopted a fatwa in March 2011 that states: "...4- The Ulema Council, has seriously asked the concerned authorities to **stop and prevent the recruitment of children into the armed forces** and for the sake of their education the government should provide essential facilities to their families, because our country experienced a long period of war and the number of educated people is insufficient because of the war. So the children are in need of education in general, especially Islamic education.... 5- The Ulema Council strongly condemns the unmerciful and cruel **killing including women, the elderly people and children** by the brutal airstrikes of the international military forces or the suicide attacks by anti-government elements."

⁵⁵ The UPDF Human Rights Department officials participated in monitoring the implementation of Action Plan, which included visiting barracks; participating in Task Force capacity-building initiatives; and monitoring and reviewing UPDF recruitment procedures in the recruitment centres throughout Uganda.

Child Protection Adviser, allowed the monitoring team to raise issues of concern with the parties to the conflict through the SRSG and RC directly. This served to maintain pressure on the signatory party (UCPN-M) to comply with the terms agreed to.

Additionally, having a task force focused on the Action Plan implementation, located where violations mostly occur, has proved an effective strategy to decentralize the monitoring to where the Action Plan implementation is mainly taking place. This was the case in Sri Lanka, where a sub-national Task Force was established in Batticaloa, in the Eastern region (the location of the TMVP's headquarters), in accordance with the Action Plan signed by the TMVP in 2008. The monitoring body was composed of the CTFMR Co-Chair as well as a Government Agent, the police, the Sri Lankan Army, the Probation Department, the National Child Protection Authority and the TMVP. This task force composition allowed for active involvement of the Government in the monitoring of the Action Plan implementation, which facilitated the release of children from the ranks of the TMVP. To aid verification, UNICEF brought its own lists of children who had been recruited by the TMVP, which were then cross-checked and used to inform the monitoring. By involving the Sri Lankan Government in the monitoring, the findings were not subject to dispute, and there was also greater compliance by the TMVP.

Another useful initiative with regard to monitoring the implementation of Action Plans has been to couple the monitoring with sensitization on child protection standards. Some CTFMRs have used monitoring visits to barracks also as an opportunity to raise awareness on child protection standards among commanders, as in Chad and South Sudan. This double verification/sensitization strategy proved particularly effective in gaining further cooperation from local commanders.

These examples demonstrate that monitoring compliance with the Action Plan is labour intensive. For this reason, some CTFMRs have found it necessary to assign a staff member specifically to focus on the Action Plan implementation, particularly in the early stages, as in the case of the Philippines and Sudan (see box 25).

Box 25: Designating a focal point within the CTFMR to work on the Action Plan

An international CPA within the Child Protection section of the DPKO mission in South Sudan was assigned to work on building and strengthening relationships with SPLA commanders at central and local levels and supporting the implementation of the Action Plan signed by the SPLA. The adviser held regular meetings with the SPLA Child Protection Chair; assisted in the development of a plan for joint verification visits to barracks; organized sensitization activities for the SPLA; and facilitated contacts of CPAs in the field with SPLA commanders. This led to increased awareness within SPLA ranks and reportedly led in some cases to officers informing about children present in the barracks.

UNMIS Child Protection and UNICEF work in close coordination on the Action Plan implementation. UNMIS and UNICEF jointly supported the secondment of a staff member to provide technical assistance to the SPLA CPU at SPLA headquarters. The staff member spends three days a week in the SPLA CPU and two days in the UNMIS CPU and with UNICEF for debriefing and related work. This unique arrangement aims at strengthening the SPLA mechanisms for the monitoring and implementation of the Action Plan. It has also identified measures for CTFMR support of the SPLA.

d. Other accountability initiatives

MRM support for justice responses to grave violations

The study found that MRM information has been effectively used in other initiatives to hold responsible parties to account for grave violations. However, caution is required, given security and ethical issues such as protection of victims and witnesses and the need for confidentiality and informed consent of survivors to use their information for justice purposes. Nevertheless, experience has demonstrated some possibilities for strengthening accountability.

For example, information collected on grave violations in Democratic Republic of the Congo is being recorded and used with an accountability lens: MRM data fed into the DPKO/MONUSCO mission's conditionality policy⁵⁶ and information submitted through the MRM to the Security Council has led to individuals being specifically targeted by the Security Council Sanctions Committee for recruitment and use of children (see box 26). Further, MONUSCO Child Protection draws up a judicial monitoring table of sexual violence cases, and child protection officers regularly follow up with local judicial authorities on progress of investigations and judicial processes on such cases. Tracking of judicial cases allows for an assessment of the cases that reach the justice system; tracking of the proportion of cases resulting in arrests, trial, judgement and execution of sentences; and identification of blockages.

⁵⁶ The conditionality policy makes MONUSCO support to the FARDC in joint UN/FARDC operations conditional on the non-commission of grave human rights violations, including grave violations against children.

Box 26: Opportunities and limitations in pursuing individual accountability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

A good illustration of some of the opportunities and limitations of the MRM in terms of individual accountability is the Biyoyo case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2006, Jean Pierre Biyoyo was charged with having committed serious military offences. Following his arrest, MONUC alleged to military prosecutors that he was also responsible for recruiting children. On 17 March 2006, Biyoyo was convicted for violations of order including child abduction and other charges by the Military Garrison Tribunal of Bukavu, South Kivu. As there was no provision expressly criminalizing child recruitment under Congolese criminal law at the time, he was condemned for illegal detention of children under military criminal law.

This case demonstrates how national justice can foster accountability related to grave violations against children and create jurisprudence in this area. It should be noted that there is a fine line between seeking exemplary punishment of perpetrators of child recruitment on one hand and on the other maintaining access to children remaining in armed forces or groups to enable their release and reintegration. One potential effect could be that children associated with armed groups are at risk of being left behind by commanders if other commanders have been directly targeted for recruiting or using children.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has taken accountability for grave violations against children a step forward with the Lubanga case. The ICC prosecuted former rebel leader Thomas Lubanga in 2006, and in 2012 he was tried and convicted on child recruitment charges. This has raised awareness of child recruitment among armed groups in the country. Among the few witnesses, an ex-MONUC CPA provided evidence for the case on recruitment and use of children. Similarly, the April 2012 conviction of former Liberian President Charles Taylor further acts as a deterrent against grave violations. He was convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for aiding and abetting war crimes committed by the Revolutionary United Front during Sierra Leone's civil war from 1991 to 2002.

7. Engaging with parties to the conflict

A main added value of the MRM reported by CTFMRs is its support for engagement with high-level parties to the conflict on protecting children. The MRM has been particularly effective in engaging with governments seeking to receive or maintain international support, or with armed groups holding political aspirations.

Practices in engaging with parties to the conflict found to be particularly effective in building collaboration to address grave violations include:

- a) Designating focal points within the government as interlocutors on the MRM;
- b) Setting up inter-ministerial committees specifically to deal with grave violations;
- c) Using SSR and peace verification structures to raise MRM issues.

a. Designating focal points within the government as MRM interlocutors

Designating focal points within the government as MRM interlocutors has allowed for continuity of dialogue with the government and sped up negotiations on Action Plans. In addition, having child protection focal points within armed forces has proved useful to raise awareness among commanders and units and for monitoring of grave violations from within.

Assigning focal points in the government

Building trust and understanding of child protection takes time. The lack of a clear interlocutor on the MRM within the government can make engagement extremely time-consuming and at times fruitless, as in the case of Somalia (until late 2011) and Iraq. To overcome this obstacle, several CTFMRs have pushed for the early assignment of a formal focal point within the government with whom the CTFMR can advance discussion on technical issues. This person can also serve as an entry point for higher-level advocacy. Identifying and educating a focal point on the MRM at an early stage also helps to save time in laying the groundwork for a future Action Plan, as in the case of Uganda. Moreover, it has proved particularly effective to strategically place a focal point with strong political leverage and coordination capacity close to the high-level representative in the President's office to ensure high-level engagement and support from relevant ministries. MRM focal points have often been appointed in coordination with high-level advocacy support by the SRSG-CAAC, as in the case of Afghanistan and Somalia (see box 27).

Box 27: Strategic advocacy for a MRM focal point in Afghanistan

Afghanistan offers a good example of strategic advocacy for a MRM focal point. In October 2009, a senior official within the Afghanistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose mandate involves advising the Presidential cabinet, was designated as MRM focal point with responsibility for liaising with the CTFMR. From the beginning, the UN advocated for a senior official located in the Ministry to be designated as the government's MRM focal point interlocutor. This was a strategic choice, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Afghanistan is well placed to garner presidential attention and mobilize the relevant ministries. The Ministry also has a direct link to the Afghan Ambassador to the UN in New York, thus bridging the dialogue on the MRM taking place concurrently in New York and at the country level. The MRM focal point has been instrumental in placing the CAAC agenda on the Ministry's agenda at the national level.

Designating child protection focal points within the armed forces

A particularly effective practice has been to designate child protection focal points within national armed forces, as they raise awareness within their assigned units on prohibited grave violations and on Action Plan commitments. Burundi and South Sudan offer good examples (see box 28).

Box 28: Child Desks in the Sudan People's Liberation Army

Child Desks have been established in every unit of the SPLA in South Sudan, as stipulated under the Action Plan on child recruitment signed by the SPLA in 2009. Thus 1,044 child protection focal points were appointed, as was an overall SPLA Child Protection Chair. This also encouraged sustainability, by institutionalizing child protection within the army. The SPLA child protection officers participated in Action Plan verification missions, which have reportedly enhanced their monitoring skills; they incorporate a civilian approach into the military setting and thinking, which is particularly useful for a former armed group developing into a professional army.⁵⁷ As a result of this focal point system, the CTFMR raises MRM-related cases regularly and openly with the SPLA Children's Desk. The cases are then relayed to the SPLA Senior Military Command for appropriate action. Further, with a view to institutionalizing accountability for grave violations within the SPLA, the CTFMR has commenced work with the SPLA Military Justice Directorate. Cases of grave violations, such as military use of schools, are being referred to this Directorate by the SPLA Children's Desk.

Similarly in Burundi, through the Joint Verification Mechanism of the Ceasefire Agreement, the CTFMR advocated for the appointment of child protection focal points in all FNL battalions.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ While these appointments show political will at the leadership level, awareness and commitment by the SPLA at the lower level remains a major challenge. This is largely due to communication gaps and political differences between some senior SPLA commanders, based on tribal differences and dominance.

⁵⁸ Joint Verification Monitoring Mechanism of the Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of Burundi and the FNL.

As a result, the FNL appointed eight child protection focal points, who were trained by the CTFMR and regularly followed by the *Bureau Intégré de l'Organisation des Nations Unie en Centrafrique*. Their role was to identify and verify the children within their ranks and to provide a list of all of their names.

b. Setting up inter-ministerial committees on CAAC

A further challenge is to ensure the collaborative participation of all concerned actors in the government in addressing grave violations against children. A strategy used by CTFMRs to address this challenge has been to advocate for the establishment of inter-ministerial bodies to deal with MRM issues (see box 29).

Box 29: Establishment of Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan

In July 2010, an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict was set up in Afghanistan to address CAAC issues jointly across government ministries. The MRM focal person in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serves as chairperson, and members of the Steering Committee include, inter alia, the Deputy Ministers of the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Defence, Education and Public Health. Through this structure, the Deputy Ministers' designated focal points within their respective ministries formed a Technical Working Group that is charged with implementing the Action Plan. This has been particularly effective because the ministries are not well coordinated in Afghanistan, making it difficult to achieve collaborative results. A time-bound implementation matrix based on the Action Plan was jointly devised with the CTFMR, and a reporting format was developed based on this matrix enabling each ministry to report against the activities undertaken regarding the Action Plan. Media campaigns with the Ministry of Information and Culture, statements by the religious authorities and Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence decrees banning child recruitment demonstrate that the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee served to effectively engage the Government of Afghanistan at various levels.

Inter-ministerial committees can also be an effective space to enter political dialogue with the government on CAAC issues, especially where human rights public reporting is a highly sensitive issue. In Sudan, the UNMIS Child Protection Section and UNICEF used the MRM as an entry point to engage in dialogue with the Government and to bring children onto the highest political agenda. As a reaction to the Secretary-General's report on CAAC in Sudan in 2007, the Government in 2008 established a committee to deal with children and armed conflict issues, including the Secretary-General's recommendations. This led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to organize training on child protection for the Sudanese Armed Forces. Subsequently, they established a Child Rights Unit to enhance soldiers' understanding of grave violations.

Finally, engaging with individual ministries has been particularly useful to address specific grave violations. For example, education and health ministries have aided in monitoring and

responding to attacks on and military use of schools and health facilities. In the State of Palestine, the lead agency for education-related violations within the CAAC Working Group compiles data for the Working Group, such as monthly reports on violations received from the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education and Higher Education. This includes reports from all government schools on incidents affecting schools, students, teachers and other education personnel on their way to and from school. This body, however, does not report on similar violations by Palestinian armed groups. Similarly, the Afghanistan CTFMR receives reports from the Ministry of Education on attacks on schools, although the reports primarily address attacks committed by the Taliban or armed groups. In such cases, CTFMRs have also sought alternative sources of information for balanced, impartial and credible reporting.

c. Using the security rector reform framework as an entry point to engage with parties

An effective strategy to engage with parties to the conflict has been the inclusion of CAAC issues and MRM objectives in the SSR agenda. SSR coordination meetings have served as an entry point for CTFMRs to engage with decision-makers (government, UN and donors) on prevention and response to address grave violations. SSR processes that can advance MRM objectives include army registration and recruitment procedures (that allow for verification of the presence of children in the security forces) and vetting of security forces (MRM records can help screen out perpetrators of grave violations). The SSR is also a window for longer-term MRM objectives, because it provides an opportunity to institutionalize training on grave violations within the armed forces.

The CTFMRs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia have strategically addressed SSR forums to convey how Security Council resolutions on CAAC relate to SSR objectives. In Somalia, where foreign donors are under pressure to ensure that their support to the Transitional Federal Government is not linked to the recruitment of children, the information collected through the MRM, as well as CTFMR advocacy efforts, has led Member States participating in SSR to exercise tighter pressure on the Transitional Federal Government regarding recruitment and use of children.⁵⁹ A promising way to keep the SSR working group engaged on CAAC issues has been to expressly include prevention and response activities on child recruitment, including the adoption of an Action Plan, in the Joint Security Committee's work plan.⁶⁰ As a result of this combined pressure, the Transitional Federal Government signed an Action Plan on the recruitment and use of children in July

⁵⁹ For example, the provision of military funding and support by the United States Government to foreign armed forces is bound under the US Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008, which prohibits military aid or cooperation to countries found to recruit children. While a series of waivers were issued in 2011 to allow continued support to countries listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report on CAAC, it is not clear if such waivers will be issued in the future. The US has been a key ally to put pressure on the Government of Somalia, and to get the CTFMR to participate at the SSR Joint Security Committee meetings and the Government to agree to develop an Action Plan to end child recruitment.

⁶⁰ Section 4 of the Joint Security Committee's work plan deals with 'Prevention and Response to the Use of Children in Conflict' and includes the drafting of an Action Plan, development of reintegration programmes for CAAFAG and secondment of a child protection adviser to the African Union Mission in Somalia.

2012, and also a separate Action Plan to address the killing and maiming of children (the first Action Plan on Killing and Maiming) in August 2012.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the main SSR entry points to address grave violations have been the census, registration and regimentation of the armed forces. These processes are supported by the European Union Mission to provide advice and assistance for SSR in the country. Child protection actors were present when possible to ensure age verification during the registration procedures, thus aiding separation of children from the military. In addition, the MRM team supported the drafting of a child protection module for an official training manual for the national army.

d. Using peace agreements and peace/ceasefire structures to engage with the parties on CAAC

Peace verification structures and peace negotiations have been strategic entry points to engage in certain levels of dialogue on MRM issues with parties to a conflict. With regard to peace agreements, experience of peace negotiations in several countries (such as Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan) has shown that while peace negotiations provide space to advocate for Action Plans or other political commitments on CAAC,⁶¹ it is better to keep the negotiations separate. Thus, if peace negotiations fail or get stalled, negotiations on Action Plans may continue. At the same time, ensuring reference to an Action Plan or to commitments on CAAC within the text of a peace agreement – as achieved in the Goma Peace Accord of 2008 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo⁶² – can be extremely useful, particularly if the peace agreement subsequently becomes law, such as the Juba Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation, which is now legally binding in Uganda.⁶³

The case of Central African Republic offers an example of utilizing parallel negotiation tracks. The DPA mission in the country, in the course of its political dialogue on a peace process with armed groups, raised MRM issues with the armed groups, particularly on the question of de-listing and the reintegration opportunities and services for the released children. The direct engagement of the in-country SRSG through the CPA was particularly important in including CAAC issues in this political dialogue. Nepal also offers a positive example of tabling the MRM objective to end child recruitment in peace negotiations, since the issue of children

⁶¹ Security Council Resolution 1612 especially “stresses that any dialogue established under the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanism by United Nations entities with non-State armed groups in order to ensure protection for and access to children must be conducted in the context of peace processes where they exist...” (para. 2 (d)). It also “calls upon all parties concerned to ensure that the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict are specifically *integrated into all peace processes (and) peace agreements...*” (para. 14), emphasis added.

⁶² The prohibition of recruitment and use of children was expressly included in Article 2 of the Goma agreement signed at the January 2008 Goma Conference on Peace, Security and Development. A ceasefire was then signed by several armed groups, including the CNDP (Congrès national pour la défense du peuple), PARECO (Patriotes Résistants Congolais) and Mai Mai groups in the presence of representatives of the international community.

⁶³ The Juba Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation, signed by the LRA and the Government of Uganda, in Agenda 3 includes justice for vulnerable groups: women and children. The Government of Uganda is seeing these smaller agreements signed at the Juba peace process as legally binding and is implementing some of them.

associated with armed forces or armed groups was integrated as an important component of the peace agreement. The CPA within the mission also continually advocated with the major political parties to ensure that the release of children associated with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) remained high on the political agenda.

In some contexts, after a peace accord is agreed, a peace verification structure – involving the parties to the conflict, the UN and other international actors – is established to monitor compliance with and possible breaches of the peace or ceasefire agreement. These structures can be useful to monitor child rights violations, address historical violations and raise child rights concerns. For example, the CTFMR Co-Chairs in Burundi and Sudan utilized these structures as an entry point to engage in dialogue with parties on grave violations and on forms of cooperation, such as training for the military on child rights and child protection. As a strategic practice, CTFMRs could press DPKO to have a CTFMR representative as a permanent observer in ceasefire monitoring commissions or structures (see box 30).

Box 30: Using the Joint Verification Monitoring Mechanism in Burundi

The Joint Verification Monitoring Mission (JVMM) in Burundi – comprised of the SRSG for the UN mission, the African Union, the Ministry of Defence and the leader of the FNL – was established to review the Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of Burundi and the FNL on a regular basis. Key embassies were also involved. The JVMM became a complementary forum to raise the issue of child recruitment and to ensure that the release of children was an integral step within the peace process.

Even though the CTFMR was not a formal member of the JVMM, the Co-Chairs of the CTFMR (UNICEF Child Protection and the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi [BINUB] CPA) attended the JVMM meetings to advocate for the release of children. The CTFMR briefed the JVMM on the MRM, including updates on grave violations against children that were being documented but could not be verified due to lack of access. The CTFMR also raised with the JVMM the issue of the FNL's unwillingness (at the time) to support the release of children. The ongoing presence of the CTFMR Co-Chairs in the process led to inclusion of CAAFAG in the JVMM agenda, thus providing regular technical inputs on child protection. Furthermore, by engaging in the JVMM process, the CTFMR was also able to establish a cooperative relationship with the FNL focal points facilitated by the BINUB CPA, which fostered the subsequent release of children from the ranks of the FNL.⁶⁴

Similarly, in Sudan, ceasefire structures monitoring the parties' compliance with Peace Agreements in North and South Sudan were used by the CTFMR Co-Chair to raise child rights violations related to the conflict and the release of children. Although it had limited

⁶⁴ Through this process, the FNL later submitted a list of children in its ranks, and following further negotiations, a declaration was signed in December 2008 stipulating the immediate and unconditional release of children. Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Burundi, S/2009/450, 10 September 2009.

success in stopping violations, it attracted high-level attention to serious violations, particularly in Darfur. UNMIS CPAs were observers in these peace/ceasefire structures.

With regard to armed groups, the modalities of engagement by the CTFMRs varied according to the context. They ranged from regular visits to armed group locations; to face-to-face discussions with the leadership of armed groups (e.g., Central African Republic and Sri Lanka);⁶⁵ to sporadic encounters with leaders of armed groups in access-restricted, armed-group controlled areas or even abroad (Darfur armed groups). Useful strategies to engage with armed groups included dialogue at the early stages of the peace negotiation and combining dialogue with education of the armed group leadership on children's rights. In fact, an entry point for some CTFMRs to engage with armed groups to address grave violations has been the organization of child rights training. For example, in Chad, training was conducted during the process of integrating armed groups into the regular armed forces – in Mongo in 2007 with the chiefs of the United Front for Change / *Front uni pour le changement*, and in Moussoro since 2008 with the rest of the armed groups.⁶⁶ The training resulted in an understanding of child protection international standards, which is essential to attain the cooperation and commitment of the armed group.

Challenges encountered while engaging with certain armed groups include the difficulty of determining the scale of child recruitment and verifying association of children, as children may not wear uniforms and may live in the community, as in the case of the children associated with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines. Additionally, monitoring the implementation of Action Plans has been highly compromised in situations where the UN has difficulty accessing areas controlled by armed groups.

⁶⁵ In Sri Lanka, the under-age recruitment database was used to generate monthly child recruitment caseloads that were shared with the LTTE at the local level, and later with the TMVP, if advocacy was requested by the recruited child's parents. The lists were useful for evidence-based advocacy with LTTE commanders, who would verify which children were or were not in their ranks.

⁶⁶ The training included awareness on Security Council Resolution 1612, the N'Djamena Declaration and other commitments by the Government of Chad against the use and recruitment of children in armed forces.

8. Programmatic response

The primary objective of the MRM is to report timely, objective and reliable information on the grave violations that leads to “**well-informed, concerted and effective response**” to ensure protection for children in conflict (emphasis added).⁶⁷ The MRM framework offers a unique opportunity to link the monitoring of grave violations with responses and to address, to some extent, the causes and consequences of violations. In this way, accountability has been linked to programming. CTFMR respondents for the study consistently stressed that linking service referral and programmatic response is an integral part of the MRM, even an ethical premise for monitoring grave violations. As one CTFMR Co-Chair stated, “The MRM is not so much here to make a point, but to make a difference. We need to link the monitoring and reporting with the underlying response, presenting the MRM not so much as a blame and shame mechanism but as a tool to help people move into a better situation.”

CTFMRs should plan and strategize on linking monitoring with appropriate responses to address the violations. With this action-oriented approach, key good practices in programmatic response include:

- a) Using MRM data to inform and trigger programmatic response;
- b) Engaging the cluster system for referral and response to grave violations;
- c) Establishing an emergency fund to provide short-term assistance to affected children.

a. Using the MRM to inform and trigger programmatic response

Information recorded through monitoring grave violations has been used by some CTFMRs to identify areas where violations are more prevalent, which has triggered or informed targeted responses (see box 31).

⁶⁷ Secretary-General's Report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, A/59/695-S/2005/72.

Box 31: Information used for vulnerability mapping in State of Palestine

In the State of Palestine, information drawn from the CAAC Working Group's database has served to identify 'vulnerability spots' where children had difficulties in getting to schools, due to harassment by settlers on their way to school. Information analysis also identified the most sensitive checkpoints, where children were exposed to daily violence and intimidation by soldiers. As part of the response from April to May 2011, the protection cluster initiated a mapping of vulnerable locations in the southern West Bank, which was then replicated in the northern and central West Bank. The mapping guided organizations providing protective presence to include monitoring of these locations, and in some cases to re-structure their field presence to cover such locations. Monitors were subsequently deployed to cover 'at-risk' checkpoints to help prevent violations, improve documentation of the situation and refer cases in need of further support.

Following the mapping, the Ministry of Education also allocated funding for buses to transport children safely to school. In addition, through Consolidated Appeals Process funding secured by UNICEF from the Government of Japan, protective presence organizations were able to increase their coverage at several 'at-risk' checkpoints and at two schools in the West Bank threatened by settler violence, benefiting approximately 2,000 students. Through the same funding, the Ministry of Education was provided with eight new school buses and four 4x4 vehicles to transport children safely to schools in 12 West Bank communities.

MRM IMS used to inform programmatic response in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the MRM IMS served to inform programme planning. MRM data analysis on killing and maiming of children through mines and unexploded ordnance revealed that a high percentage of the casualties were boys aged 9 to 14 years old who were out of school and engaged in metal scrubbing for income generation, mainly in the Eastern and Southern regions. A mine-risk education project is being planned to reach out to this vulnerable group, which had previously not been targeted by such programmes.

b. Engaging the cluster system for referrals and response to grave violations

Linking the cluster system to the MRM has broadened the scope of potential MRM partners beyond traditional child protection actors, particularly by associating with relevant education, health and protection actors. It also provided additional platforms for advocacy on MRM issues, and the collaboration has strengthened the CTFMR's advocacy capacity, including the mobilization of funding. The cluster system has been primarily engaged in training cluster members on the MRM; articulating ways of collaboration in the form of an agreed 'briefing' or memo (e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo); ensuring the participation of cluster coordinators as CTFMR members (Afghanistan and State of Palestine); and designating a cluster representative to regularly attend CTFMR meetings at the technical level (Afghanistan and Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Linking the MRM with the protection cluster

The protection cluster has also offered an opportunity for advocacy and programme planning on MRM issues. With respect to advocacy, the protection cluster expanded MRM-based advocacy channels by enabling CTFMRs to raise MRM issues at cluster-led advocacy forums, such as on the protection of civilians with international forces in Afghanistan, or on settlers' violence in the State of Palestine. With regard to programmatic planning, the protection cluster provided a link with the humanitarian agenda and an avenue for accessing humanitarian funds. In Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the protection cluster coordinator reported using MRM data analysis provided by the CTFMR to inform its planning under the Consolidated Appeals Process, thus targeting groups of particularly vulnerable children.

Linking the MRM with the CPWG

The CPWG has been a key support in linking MRM monitoring to response, particularly through mapping of services and referral pathways. For example, the CPWG in various countries has mapped the availability of NGOs and services per geographical location and established protocols and referral systems for victims to access services (such as in the Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan). The CPWG also engaged in assessments to identify key child protection issues and gaps, particularly following a crisis (e.g., the Somalia famine and Yemen civil unrest/conflict). These assessments provided important background information for MRM monitoring, especially when the CTFMR is in the initial stage of establishing the monitoring system, as in the case of Yemen. The CPWG can also be particularly valuable to the MRM in places with difficult access, such as Somalia, where agencies necessarily have to rely on each other to obtain information.

A good practice has been to link the CPWG to the MRM, while also ensuring that appropriate boundaries between the two mechanisms are maintained for confidentiality and security reasons regarding MRM information and sources. This is particularly important where the CPWG includes government representatives, or where CPWG NGO members opt to remain disassociated from conflict-related human rights monitoring or advocacy, dealing only with programmatic response (e.g., Afghanistan). An effective practice has been to keep both groups as separate entities, but to link them for responses. To achieve this in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the CTFMR Co-Chairs advocated for the MRM to be systematically included as an agenda item of the CPWG meetings in the field. Thus, CPWG members are updated on MRM developments, such as advocacy undertaken on an Action Plan, and can incorporate relevant MRM updates in their planning of prevention/remedial responses to violations.

Linking the MRM to the education cluster

While the MRM benefits from associating with the education cluster to collect data and respond to education-related violations, some education clusters have also utilized the MRM as a stronger basis for advocacy with the parties to the conflict and as a framework for their regular monitoring.

The State of Palestine offers an example of synergy in responding to education-related violations by the CAAC Working Group and the education cluster. Close communication between child protection and education colleagues led to the development of an inter-cluster response framework by the education cluster and the CPWG. The framework outlines minimum standard responses to frequent education-related violations, such as the demolition and damage of schools and attacks against children on their way to school. A response plan was also developed that includes both emergency education and protection interventions: material support, legal aid, learning/teaching support, psychosocial support and advocacy. A good example of this cooperation is the Gaza emergency education project (see box 32).

Box 32: Engaging UNESCO and the Education Ministry to train teachers on reporting grave violations in the State of Palestine

Following the Protecting Education from Attack conference in Paris in 2009, UNESCO received funding for an emergency education programme in Gaza (in what is now the State of Palestine). One of the Gaza projects was ‘promoting schools as safe zones’. The CAAC Working Group was identified as an appropriate partner due to its well-established data collection system. While UNESCO provided technical advice on education indicators, the database on grave violations identified vulnerable schools and communities to target through the programme, particularly schools in Gaza’s border areas. UNESCO therefore decided to apply a Conflict-Disaster Risk Reduction package to 12 schools in those areas, with Ministry of Education engagement at all stages of implementation.

Staff from the 12 vulnerable schools were trained on monitoring, schools were provided with a camera and an SMS alert system was developed by SoukTel, all designed to contribute to reporting on grave violations. SMS messages were exportable into a database and could be used to triangulate existing reports or reveal new incidents. Thus, during the high-intensity bombings in March 2011, all schools were able to submit reports to a local human rights NGO member of the Working Group. For example, after a school in Gaza issued an alert about a risk of attack, UNESCO and other partners were able to raise it with the UN Humanitarian Country Team for timely follow-up. Given the success of the increased reporting resulting from the training and alert system, the project has been expanded to 17 additional schools in Gaza.

Linking the MRM to the health cluster

In comparison to links with education, MRM linkages with the health cluster have been less explored to date. However, the health cluster has the potential to channel information on a number of grave violations, particularly through its access to Ministry of Health reports on killings and injured people recorded at health facilities; sexual violence cases (as appropriate), documented by health actors; attacks on hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access to health services. The cluster also provides a platform for advocacy with health authorities and parties to the conflict in this area (see box 33).

Box 33: Health cluster-led protocol in Afghanistan on entry into health facilities by armed forces⁶⁸

In Afghanistan, WHO is a CTFMR member, which has assisted in linking the health cluster to the MRM. A particularly significant initiative by the health cluster has been the establishment of an official protocol with NATO to stop and prevent entry and intimidation by international armed forces in health facilities. The protocol was negotiated with NATO by the health cluster, at both global and national levels.⁶⁹ It clearly states the formal commitments agreed to by the international forces in terms of respecting health facilities and personnel as protected spaces and persons and refraining from unlawful and inappropriate actions, such as entry of armed personnel and intimidation of health workers. The protocol is included in the military training package for new ISAF commanders and staff. The protocol is an important achievement as an official commitment by international security forces to respect international standards on health facilities and health personnel, and as a model for other MRM teams facing similar situations. But it could be further strengthened by having similar prohibitions under domestic legislation, thus binding national armed forces in the long term.

c. Establishing an emergency fund to provide short-term assistance to affected children

A traditional challenge with human rights monitoring is the frequent lack of linkage between data collection and service provision for victims. While many challenges for bridging this gap remain, the MRM has provided a unique framework for linking the monitoring of violations with provision of a response, even if the quality and quantity of the response varies. To address the issue of immediate assistance, especially in remote areas with no/limited humanitarian presence or adequate services, a good practice has been to set up small funds for monitors to utilize.

In Somalia, for example, an emergency grant fund has been created to support the work of the monitors to provide victims with immediate assistance. Thus, when encountering a case of rape, the monitor has been able to cover the cost of the child's transport to the medical clinic to be treated. Thus far these limited funds have been largely used for transportation or to provide medical care. At the same time, the funds have empowered monitors by providing some kind of response, even if limited. This prevents the feeling of frustration at not being able to directly assist victims encountered and encourages their continued engagement in the MRM. Monitors in Somalia felt it was culturally and morally unacceptable to solicit information without being able to provide assistance to the victims or their families. Similarly, in Nepal, an emergency fund was established to enable monitors to assist victims.

⁶⁸ The CTFMR in Afghanistan reported that the ISAF, in conducting joint operations with the Afghan National Security Forces, routinely entered health facilities to search for wounded, conduct arrests, use the premises for military purposes or intimidate health workers because of their assistance to certain wounded individuals. Government officials also reportedly at times entered hospitals heavily armed, putting patients and health workers at risk.

⁶⁹ For almost three years the Health Action in Crisis for the global health cluster led by WHO held negotiations with NATO headquarters on entering both a national and global protocol.

9. Advocacy

The MRM provides a powerful framework and evidence base for CTFMRs to advocate on grave violations. Some CTFMRs have ensured that the MRM data continue to 'live' beyond MRM reports by packaging and utilizing the data to mobilize action – for example, by galvanizing response by senior leadership and donors'. While the MRM is set up primarily to trigger a response from the Security Council, CTFMRs have seen the need to also engage in both broader and localized advocacy to achieve the changes sought through the MRM, particularly by engaging Member States and other actors who can influence change. Response, including advocacy, should be undertaken at all levels, as appropriate, to maximize its benefits for children. Further, even where the Security Council action or threat of action has exercised effective pressure, leading parties to act or change their behaviour, as in Afghanistan, Chad and Uganda, it has been found that the pressure of the Security Council has been supported with additional pressure, such as political pressure from donor governments.

It has been found that advocacy by CTFMRs has been more effective when CTFMR members speak with one voice, as appropriate. This avoids perceptions of division by the parties to the conflict, or conflicting messages. The most successful outcomes have also been found where there has been synergy between international and country-level advocacy. In view of these findings, key good practices regarding MRM-related advocacy include:

- a) Advocacy with Member States to pressure parties to the conflict to stop grave violations;
- b) Coordination between the country level and international advocacy for greater synergy;
- c) Building advocacy on a cooperative approach;
- d) Awareness raising and promotion of social change.

a. Advocating with Member States to pressure parties to the conflict to stop grave violations

Regular briefings of relevant donors and embassies on CAAC issues has proved to be a good practice, resulting in mobilizing international pressure on the parties to the conflict. This has been particularly effective in generating political support for the adoption and implementation of Action Plans and other measures to prevent or address grave violations, such as through SSR or Justice Sector Reform, as well as for fundraising purposes.⁷⁰

Strategies that have been found to work well in engaging Members States for the purpose of advocacy is the establishment of a 'Friends of CAAC' diplomatic group at the country level, as

⁷⁰ See section 2, on establishing the MRM, for more information on advocacy for fundraising purposes.

in Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sri Lanka, as well as strategic engagement by CTFMRs with individual ambassadors (see box 34).

Box 34: Engaging state ‘Friends of CAAC’ in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

A strategic initiative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was to establish a ‘Friends of CAAC’ diplomatic group⁷¹ mirroring the global Friends of CAAC diplomatic group, which meets in New York. The group serves as a platform for political dialogue on CAAC issues, such as providing international support for an Action Plan. For instance, group members are involved in security and justice sector reform in the country, and are hence strategically placed to advocate with the FARDC and the Congolese Government on accountability for grave violations and implementation of an Action Plan. Embassies also rely on MRM findings as a credible source of information that can be used to shape their own funding and political agenda on CAAC issues. Hence, the forum provides an ongoing opportunity to engage Member States to allocate funding or to take political action on CAAC.

Similar CAAC thematic briefings have been conducted at monthly meetings with the diplomatic community in the State of Palestine by UNICEF, as the CAAC Working Group chair. Embassies and donors are able to use the verified and credible data on children in armed conflict for bilateral and collective advocacy with parties to the conflict. The CTFMR in turn partners with strategic ‘allies’ to support the CAAC agenda, particularly where the CAAC and Member States’ agendas concur, such as States’ military support to national armed forces, which is conditional on non-recruitment of children. In some instances, Member States’ domestic legislation relating to grave violations has created opportunities to strengthen joint advocacy. For example the US Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 prohibits military aid or cooperation to countries found to recruit children. This creates a direct link with MRM findings on child recruitment, increasing pressure on parties that receive support from the US Government to stop violations. In Somalia, for example, the US played an active role throughout the SSR process with the Somali Transitional Federal Government in raising the issue of child recruitment and the need for an Action Plan, largely in response to this legislation. Similarly, briefings to the European Union have been found to strengthen advocacy in situations such as Sri Lanka, where children’s issues were placed within the agenda of a trade agreement signed between the European Union and the Government of Sri Lanka.

In some cases, it has worked particularly well to engage specific ambassadors for the purpose of political advocacy, based on their level of influence and weight in the diplomatic community on certain issues. In Burundi and Chad, for example, the French embassy became highly involved in advocacy efforts to address grave violations with the respective Governments.

⁷¹ Participation in this group has included representatives from the embassies of Belgium, Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Sweden, the UK and the US.

b. Coordinating between country level and international advocacy for greater synergy

The study found that the SRSG-CAAC country visits galvanized attention, exercised political pressure, informed parties on how to be de-listed and framed the MRM as an opportunity. Indeed, CTFMRs have unanimously reported that the SRSG-CAAC country visits have provided strong support for achieving the political commitment by the parties, especially at critical stages, such as getting the mechanism established and obtaining agreement and final sign-up to Action Plans (see box 35). SRSG-CAAC visits have also strengthened the engagement of heads of UN agencies and NGOs in the MRM.

Most importantly, SRSG-CAAC visits have effectively supported CTFMRs to raise essential issues that may be too politically sensitive for the UN to take up at country level, which in certain political contexts could jeopardize UN operations in-country or strain its relations with the government. Solid communication and synergy between the SRSG-CAAC and CTFMR principal co-chairs has proven to be fundamental on this front.

Box 35: Special Envoy mission to Sri Lanka

In 2007, the SRSG-CAAC sent a Special Envoy to Sri Lanka to assess the situation of children affected by the conflict. The Special Envoy's mission resulted in an advocacy breakthrough: public acknowledgement that the TMVP was abducting and recruiting children and that certain elements of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces were complicit. This was an extremely sensitive issue for the UN in-country to raise. The Special Envoy's findings attracted diplomatic interest and affected economic agreements. In response to the visit and the listing of the TMVP in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual CAAC report, the Government undertook concrete actions that eventually led to an Action Plan, signed in 2008 by the TMVP and the Government, for the release and reintegration of children.

CTFMRs, working in the local context, also play a critical role in guiding international advocacy efforts. This is based on their in-depth knowledge of the field realities of implementing the MRM and the sensitivities involved.

c. Building advocacy on a cooperation approach

An effective strategy for advocating with governments has been to approach the MRM from a cooperative angle, so that compliance on MRM issues is seen as a means to work together to achieve the common objective of enhancing the protection of children. One way of achieving this is by ensuring regular dialogue between the CTFMR and the government, such as through advance warning that a report on its situation will be considered by the Security Council, and offering collaboration to achieve de-listing. This approach was adopted by the CTFMR principal Co-Chair (MINURCAT DSRSG) in Chad. After a negative US State Department report on Chad, the DSRSG initiated a meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss

how the UN could support the Government to address the exposed shortcomings and violations in order for the Government to be de-listed. Trust was built between the Government of Chad and the CTFMR, and the Government was very cooperative, enabling a team comprised of the Government, donors and the UN to access barracks and monitor compliance with an Action Plan.⁷² A further example of cooperation has been to alert the Government that the Secretary-General's CAAC reports were to be publicly issued. For example, in the Philippines, at times of acute child recruitment, the principal CTFMR Co-Chair contacted high-level authorities to inform them that the report was to be issued. The CTFMR also informed the Human Rights Office in the Armed Forces on its potential of being listed.

Advocacy efforts have also been found to be stronger when there have been cohesive efforts by the CTFMR as a whole, rather than having a single agency lead efforts. An example is the case of joint advocacy by the Sudan CTFMR that resulted in the release and amnesty of 114 children associated with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), including 25 children from Chad, in relation to an attack on Khartoum in May 2008. Advocacy was also successful on the protection of children as witnesses in the judicial process against other JEM members. This advocacy was possible largely due to strategic collaboration: UNMIS Human Rights focused on monitoring of JEM detainees, including children and judicial follow-up; UNICEF mobilized local lawyers, who agreed to provide legal support to the children and mobilized the national child authorities (National Council of Child Welfare); UNMIS Child Protection ensured that the mission's leadership was involved; and the SRSG-CAAC was called upon to exercise political leverage.⁷³ A joint advocacy strategy was developed, which included agreement on common policy positions, approaches and advocacy messages to the Government.

Additionally, the CTFMR in Sudan produced an internal advocacy matrix in June 2007 that included key recommendations to the Government of Sudan issued by the SCWG, as well as the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other human rights mechanisms. The matrix mapped out, for each party to the conflict and authority, the advocacy focus/outcome sought, the advocacy steps taken to date and the follow-up required and by which agency. In parallel, a document that listed the recommendations from the Security Council, Secretary-General, Committee on the Rights of the Child and Human Rights Council reports was shared with the Sudanese Government, to discuss and identify ways to address the situation of CAAC.

d. Raising awareness and promoting social change

Strategies found to be effective in raising awareness and promising to influence social change have included devising communication strategies that reinforce the MRM public reports and engaging religious leaders to influence social behavioural change on grave violations.

⁷² The Action Plan resulted in the release and reintegration of 1,030 children from armed forces and groups.

⁷³ JEM attacked the Sudanese capital in May 2008. Many of its forces were children, and many were captured when the attack was repulsed. Nearly all of those children were released – a successful example of coordinated UNMIS-UNICEF advocacy. High-level advocacy resulted in an amnesty exempting 100 children from conviction.

Devising MRM communication strategies

Some CTFMRs have devised communication plans around the Secretary-General's CAAC report, involving wide dissemination of the report, press releases and coverage of the report in the media, in addition to sharing the report with government bodies (see box 36). For example, the entire first Secretary-General's CAAC report on Sudan in 2006 was published in a South Sudan newspaper, and the story on the report ranked very high in the news at the time, which also happened to be during the peak of international concern on Darfur.

Box 36: Producing a 'CAAC Bulletin' based on MRM data to serve as an advocacy tool in the State of Palestine

An innovative practice by UNICEF in the State of Palestine is production of a newsletter on CAAC that is widely disseminated online among the humanitarian and diplomatic community, donors, NGOs, journalists, Palestinian authorities and key international actors in New York and Europe, including for fund-raising purposes. The CAAC Bulletin is informed by data in the CAAC database and offers a bimonthly overview and analysis of grave violations against children. It is based on consolidated data in the public domain and hence protects confidential information. The CAAC Bulletin is reportedly highly appreciated in the State of Palestine as a reliable source of information.

Engaging religious leaders as advocates against grave violations

Religious leaders in societies with deeply embedded religious cultural norms can play a powerful role in shaping social behaviours. In such contexts, it can be a good practice to engage the religious leaders, when appropriate, for advocacy against grave violations. In Afghanistan, for example, UNICEF engaged moderate religious leaders in identifying synergies between child protection standards and Islamic prescriptions, including on grave violations. A training of trainers for religious leaders was organized in Kabul in July 2011 in cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Al Azhar University from Cairo. Trained leaders subsequently explained the linkages to other religious leaders, as potential drivers for change in their own communities. This is an approach worth exploring in similar societies. However, this level of engagement may be risky or not possible in areas of intense conflict where religious leaders may be targeted by parties to the conflict.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ In the southern region of Afghanistan, it has reportedly not been secure for mullahs to get involved in child rights' issues, even for the polio campaign, as they are being closely watched by the parties to the conflict. In Somalia, religious and clan leaders used to be mediators between the parties and the UN for humanitarian access and programmes, however, these leaders have been reportedly increasingly marginalized.

10. Regional cooperation

The causes and consequences of armed conflict, including its impact on children, often stretches beyond national borders. Hence, a regional perspective is needed to effectively address the causes and the consequences on children. This raises questions for the MRM, a mechanism whose framework relies on the national jurisdiction of States over armed forces and groups. It also carries implications for CTFMRs, especially when children are abducted or recruited by armed forces or groups across borders or are otherwise subject to grave violations in border areas. The situation in Uganda is illustrative of this issue. Once the LRA was pushed out of the country, the Uganda CTFMR was unable to effectively monitor abductions and other violations against children carried out by the LRA. Despite significant challenges in this area, the study found a number of practices that have worked well in addressing the regional dimensions of grave violations against children.

Key good practices regarding regional cooperation include:

- a) SOPs to prevent armed forces from re-interviewing children to be repatriated;
- b) Reporting with a regional perspective to broaden analysis;
- c) Cross-border cooperation for monitoring;
- d) Regional advocacy for increased regional cooperation in stopping violations.

a. SOPs to prevent armed forces from re-interviewing children to be repatriated

A system for protecting children from being re-interviewed has been formalized with the UPDF in Uganda. It addresses cases of former LRA child abductees outside of Uganda who arrived at UPDF bases in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan (see box 37).

Box 37: UPDF procedures on LRA children

As the LRA was pushed out of Uganda into Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, Ugandan children abducted by the LRA were taken away from their home country, and children in neighbouring countries were also abducted by the LRA. As the UPDF expanded its presence in these countries to pursue the LRA, they encountered cases of abducted children who had escaped from the LRA and needed to be repatriated to Uganda or to their home country. As children were returned, however, reports surfaced that they had been interviewed by UPDF intelligence and other officials, causing significant concern as to their best interests. As a result of sustained advocacy by the OSRSG CAAC and child protection actors, in May 2011 the UPDF adopted SOPs that provided clear guidelines on the treatment of LRA-abducted children once they are in the custody of the UPDF.⁷⁵ It was agreed that the UPDF should alert the UN to the presence of children within 48 hours; they should not hold children for longer than seven days; and interrogation of children is forbidden. The UPDF also established child protection units within their bases, specifically to receive children who escaped from the LRA. These units receive and assist children using personnel specially trained on communicating with children, before transferring them to a designated child protection agency.

The signing of the SOPs by the UPDF is a significant example of a national army agreeing to put children's best interests above other intelligence or military interests. The whole process around the development of the SOPs was in itself an achievement, bringing together armed forces, governments, humanitarian and human rights actors and advocacy groups. This shows that the process may be politically complex and lengthy, yet possible, and may provide a model for other armed forces operating on the LRA in the region.

b. Reporting with a regional perspective to broaden analysis

Where parties to conflict are increasingly operating across borders, grave violations against children are taking on regional dimensions. These can be reported from a regional perspective, in order to capture the scale, movements and impact of certain perpetrators, so that effective strategies to address the violations can be developed (see box 38).

⁷⁵ SOPs for reception and hand over of children rescued from the Lord's Resistance Army, 17 May 2011.

Box 38: Establishment of a regional MRM on the LRA

Following discussion with the OSRSG CAAC and UNICEF, a regional reporting system has been developed to respond to the extra-territoriality of the grave violations committed by the LRA. Under it, the CTFMRs in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan send reports on violations perpetrated by the LRA to UNICEF (which has been designated as secretariat to coordinate the regional reporting mechanism) in Kampala, Uganda, for regional analysis and compilation. The regional cooperation commenced in October 2009, with the first official regional report submitted in March 2012. Regional reporting has proven challenging, given the variations in monitoring and reporting practices in the three countries. Currently, there are efforts to streamline coordination and build consensus on issues such as how to report on incidents (e.g., based on date reported or date occurred) and streamlining standards for verification. Despite the challenges, a regional approach not only strengthens the situation analysis by offering a regional perspective, but also provides an entry point for regional advocacy and early warning. For example, the African Union is to establish a regional force to fight the LRA in the region, and advocacy with the African Union on child protection procedures will be important in this regard.

Regional reporting also needs regionally coordinated responses to victims. An example is the 2009 'Operational Plan for Cross Border Repatriation, Care and Reunification of Children escaped/rescued from LRA'. It establishes lines of responsibility for different agencies responding to LRA child victims in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Uganda.

c. Establishing cross-border cooperation for monitoring

Where armed conflict has spilled across neighbouring countries, children located in border areas have become more vulnerable to grave violations. This has been the case along the border of Chad and Sudan, for example, where refugee children have been recruited into armed groups. There have also been reports of Afghan children being taken across the border into Pakistan to be trained to carry out attacks in Afghanistan. Refugee populations close to border areas are hence an important source of information on grave violations committed not only in the countries they fled but also in border areas.

These scenarios call for cross-border cooperation, with due safeguards to protect agencies' operations on each side of the border (see box 39). **Country visits by colleagues across the border have worked well in establishing or strengthening cooperation.** For example, in response to reports of child recruitment by armed groups in Chad, UNICEF Child Protection, together with a team of Sudanese Government officials, travelled to Chad to hold a meeting on cross-border cooperation. As a result of this meeting, children were released and reunited with their families.

Box 39: Monitoring grave violations in border areas

At the time the MRM was being established in one of the situations examined for this study, it became increasingly clear that the agencies operating in the refugee camps across the border, through their regular programming, had access to a lot of information on CAAC-related violations. Due to access and sensitivity challenges in-country, the cases reported by agencies operating across the border made up a significant portion of the overall cases reported under the MRM. A monitoring system was hence developed to collect information in refugee camps on a more systematic basis. In order to protect the security and confidentiality of the information, case details were removed and compiled in anonymous verification forms, which were then transported by hand across the border by a UN staff member.

In this situation, the institutional commitment from UN agencies operating across the border was a key factor in carrying out reporting on grave violations. What has been particularly useful, for sensitivity and security reasons for the agencies involved, is to place the monitoring of grave violations occurring in border areas within a broader child protection framework, as part of a reintegration programme for CAAFAG.

d. Advocating regionally to enhance cooperation in stopping violations

Regional political bodies appear to be underutilized at the country level for advocacy on MRM issues. However, in some contexts regional bodies, such as the African Union and the European Union, can exercise important pressure on peace and security issues, including on CAAC issues, and regional arrangements provide a framework for cooperation. For example, the Conference on Children and Armed Conflict was organized by the Government of Chad together with UNICEF Chad, in N'Djamena (Chad) in June 2010. The conference brought together government, UN and NGO actors from Central African Republic, Chad, Cte d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria and Sudan. States participating at the conference signed the N'Djamena Declaration, which served as a basis for effective advocacy. For example, advocacy with the Chadian Government led to its adoption of an Action Plan on child recruitment and to ensuring that participating States adhered to the CRC Optional Protocol on children and armed conflict.

11. Child participation

Children are at the heart of the MRM. However, it is not envisaged that children should report or monitor grave violations directly under the mechanism, but rather that they should benefit from the implementation of the mechanism. For that very reason, their views on how to prevent or address grave violations can be crucial for improving the mechanism's effectiveness.

a. Incorporating children's views in monitoring

An area yet to be substantially explored is children's role in providing information on grave violations to the MRM (see box 40). While children have been sources of information, such as in the case of detained children who are interviewed by child protection staff, there have been legitimate concerns as to whether involving children in the monitoring mechanism per se exposes the children to heightened risk. A good practice identified in this regard has been to integrate listening to children into regular monitoring, as a means to better understand the context in which the violations occur and the impact of the conflict and peace process on children.

Box 40: Listening to children as part of monitoring in Sudan

During the first two years of operation of the Child Protection Unit of the DPKO mission in Sudan, child protection monitoring was to a certain degree research-based. The monitoring contributed to mission-mandated reporting, but it also sought to understand the root causes of the situation of children, such as street life, gender-based violence and the impact of the peace process on children. Listening to children's concerns was part of child protection monitoring activities. This challenged some of the Child Protection section's priorities and made the section consider broader sectoral issues, such as health and education. A 'listening to children' section was designated in the child protection weekly reports, which contributed to MRM reporting. With the MRM, the Child Protection Unit monitoring became less research-oriented and increasingly incident-based, reactive and more focused.

Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the *points d'ecoute* (listening points) are spaces run by NGOs where children discuss issues of their concern. Children in need of services have been brought to the attention of NGO workers. This triggered a project to involve children in raising awareness among children and communities on the grave violations and services available.

b. Communicating on grave violations: Involving children in awareness-raising

Children can become peer communicators on remedies available to child survivors or children at risk of grave violations. Due to the sensitivity of the MRM, though, in many contexts this possibility is not being explored. In Democratic Republic of the Congo, Save the Children piloted a project that directly engages children in raising awareness on the prevention of grave

violations and availability of services to communities, including for children (see box 41).⁷⁶ The project does not aim to collect information on violations, nor does it promote or explain the mechanism to large audiences, given the sensitivity of the issue and associated risks.

Box 41: Involving children in developing child-friendly tools on grave violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In 2011, Save the Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo developed a project, 'Developing child friendly tools to improve the MRM', which aimed at developing child-friendly MRM resources that could be used during sessions with children and communities to discuss the six grave violations and identify responses. The project was initiated in Dungu (Haut Uélé, Oriental province), where children clubs' participants noted cases of children who had left the LRA without any reintegration support. To reach these vulnerable children, it was decided to raise initial awareness of the MRM through a training session for partners and a workshop for children. The children's workshops resulted in posters produced by and for children, with the support of local artists, and radio broadcasts that were used to reach children who could benefit from reintegration services. These tools were conceived in partnership with children's clubs and in collaboration with other children from the community.

In North Kivu, during a similar children's workshop, the children decided to produce a comic book in Kiswahili. The children discussed their experiences relating to the grave violation in question and explained the key messages to be portrayed in the comic book. Artists then produced the final version of the comic book in Kiswahili. It was translated into Lingala and French and disseminated to children's clubs and other children's organizations.

Security risk and sensitivity were addressed by taking the following steps:

- Staff explained the aim of the project to the children and encouraged children to discuss the project among themselves before deciding who should represent them during the workshop.
- All children who participated in the workshop are members of children's groups well known by staff. The first list of selected children was double-checked by the staff to ensure the children selected were not at risk of being re-traumatized.
- During the workshop, children were accompanied by adult mentors and child protection specialists, supported by two programme managers, so they could be referred to services, as required.
- Project implementers focused on the six grave violations rather than on the MRM itself, as it could represent a risk for children and community members.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Note that the project was carried out in line with the political and security situation as experienced in Haute Uélé and the Kivus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and risk and sensitivity issues were considered in regard of the specific contexts.

⁷⁷ 'Developing Child Friendly Tools to Improve the MRM', Save the Children Democratic Republic of Congo project report, December 2011.

12. MRM phase-out

In some countries, the MRM has been in place for several years, and de-listing may possibly take a few more years. Hence, it is prudent to plan how to capitalize on MRM investments over the years and build on their dividends. This has been achieved by some CTFMRs, by strategically selecting MRM partners and devising exit strategies. Additional guidance from headquarters is required on the potential continuity of CTFMR functions after phase-out and on the continued use of MRM information for longer-term accountability or rehabilitation purposes.

From a sustainability viewpoint, key good practices in planning for the phase-out of the MRM include:

- a) Strong engagement with civil society and government authorities for sustained child rights monitoring;
- b) Linkage of the MRM to longer-term accountability and reparations processes.

a. Engaging with civil society and government for sustained child rights monitoring

In Uganda, for example, the Uganda Human Rights Commission's membership on the CTFMR was an asset during MRM implementation as well as for the longer term, given its constitutional mandate to monitor human rights violations and raise them with the Government, and the plan for it to become the lead post-conflict agency for the protection sector.⁷⁸ OHCHR envisaged an exit strategy with the Commission, starting with joint planning and regular meetings. It also anticipated having the Commission manage the Peace Building Fund in Gulu, Northern Uganda. In Sri Lanka, the CTFMR also focused on building the capacity of the NHRI, a CTFMR member. Special children's rights units within the NHRI are planned to reinforce its complaints mechanism and investigations capacity.⁷⁹ Similarly, in the Philippines, the CTFMR trained local government authorities on the MRM, and the Council for the Welfare of Children uses MRM updates when developing policies and guidelines on CAAC.

⁷⁸ Civilian military operation centres were funded by OHCHR and the Uganda Human Rights Commission, as a neutral ground where the population could raise complaints against soldiers or the police. The OHCHR provided technical advice and logistical support and these have been mainstreamed now into the Commission.

⁷⁹ UNICEF established a cooperation project with the Human Rights Commission in the East (Batticaloa) that would consider violations and provide a response to individual cases reported, or refer the cases to those who could provide a response.

b. Linking the MRM to longer-term accountability and reparations processes

The linkages between the MRM and transitional justice are clear, even though so far they have only been explored to a very limited extent at the country level.⁸⁰ Transitional justice consists of the range of processes and mechanisms (judicial and non-judicial) that societies use to deal with legacies of past human rights abuses. It may include prosecutions, reparations to victims, institutional reform, vetting, truth-seeking and memorials. These initiatives may be combined and complement each other (see box 42).

Box 42: Use of the MRM to inform consultations with children on reparations in Northern Uganda

In Uganda, as part of its work on transitional justice, OHCHR organized consultations with groups of victims to gather and document their perceptions of justice and views on adequate reparations, in relation to human rights violations during the conflict in northern Uganda.⁸¹ OHCHR, as Co-Chair of the CTFMR, was closely involved in monitoring child rights violations. Thus, the MRM informed the methodology of the consultations held with children. Persons consulted indicated general locations of serious human rights incidents, and the MRM confirmed the locations. Focus group discussions with children in the course of consultations were organized in those locations. MRM information also corroborated that both the LRA and the UPDF had to be held equally accountable.

Transitional justice processes to deal with past abuses are being considered or are under way in a number of MRM implementing countries.⁸² However, as there is generally not much awareness of the potential linkages between the MRM and transitional justice initiatives, there is also generally little collaboration between actors working on the MRM and those engaged in transitional justice work at the country level.

Finally, with a sustainability approach, the MRM has been used at times as a platform to advocate for long-lasting measures, such as legal reform, that outlive MRM time-bound

⁸⁰ The Secretary-General, in his report on the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies, defines transitional justice as “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation. These may include both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, with differing levels of international involvement (and none at all) and individual prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, institutional reform, vetting and dismissals, or a combination thereof.” In practice, transitional justice measures are interlinked and may be implemented as an integrated package, rather than as separate initiatives. Report of the Secretary-General, 23 August 2004, S/2004/616.

⁸¹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Making Peace our Own: Victims’ perceptions of accountability, reconciliation and transitional justice in Northern Uganda*, OHCHR, August 2007; *The Dust has not yet Settled: Victims’ views on the right to remedy and reparation – A report from the Greater North of Uganda*, OHCHR, Kampala, 2011.

⁸² For example, in Colombia there have been prosecutions and judicial reparations for child recruitment; in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ICC first trial on child recruitment, prosecutions and trials for killings, child recruitment and sexual violence against children by national courts; in Uganda, ICC indictments on LRA leaders including on child abductions, and there are prospects of a reparations policy; in Nepal, there have been debates on reparations and a truth-seeking/commission; and in Sudan, ICC indictments include charges for serious crimes against children in Darfur, and peace agreement frameworks include compensations.

commitments in Action Plans. Investing in legally binding commitments has been particularly important since the political influence of the MRM may diminish or fluctuate, even during its full implementation phase. In Sri Lanka, for example, releases of children from the LTTE were quite effective when there was a lull in intensive fighting. However, when the conflict intensified, access to children diminished and, reportedly, so did the MRM's weight. At the peak of the conflict, armed groups needed forces and recruited children, despite political commitments. The CTFMR in Sri Lanka contributed to some extent to the development of Regulation 1580/5 of 15 December 2008, the so-called 'Emergency Regulation on Children Associated with Armed Groups'. This law was particularly positive for children's rehabilitation, as it provides for a judicial procedure to both determine and supervise the reintegration measures applied to children released from armed groups. This has supported the prevention of re-recruitment; the application of reintegration measures thus disposed is followed up by probation officers under judicial control, and this close supervision means that children have been less vulnerable to re-recruitment.

13. Recommendations

1. Integrate strategic thinking systematically into the CTFMR's structure and functioning

The MRM presents a unique opportunity for UN agencies to engage collaboratively at the country level to address grave violations against children. Where CTFMRs have made significant progress in addressing grave violations, the MRM has been used strategically, as a means for constructive engagement with parties to the conflict and for advocacy with governments and other influential actors. In the majority of cases, however, the primary focus of the CTFMRs is on the time-intensive processes of data collection and reporting. While this constitutes a core component of their mandate, it has made it more difficult for the task forces to allocate time and resources to developing strategies to address the violations themselves.

Strategies cannot be developed independently of the context, but potentially replicable strategies include: identifying opportunities for funding and for new partnerships to better respond to violations; linking the MRM to longer-term in-country developments, such as rehabilitation initiatives; and exploring ways of better supporting legal and justice systems that could further enable national prosecution of perpetrators of grave violations against children. In order to ensure this strategic-thinking function, it is recommended that **principal CTFMR co-chairs⁸³ ensure that members' agencies designate senior technical-level staff to meet regularly to carry out collaborative strategic thinking.** The objective is to develop an action-oriented approach to using the MRM better to stop violations.

2. Establish automatic funding allocation to CTFMR co-chairs⁸⁴ to implement the MRM

The capacity of CTFMRs to deliver on their mandates has been significantly impacted by the availability of resources dedicated to the MRM. MRM funding has thus far relied largely on initiatives taken at the country level, with ad hoc funding provided from HQ. Many of the good practices highlighted in this study were made possible because CTFMRs were able to raise additional funds to cover MRM activities. The RC in Nepal, for example, included the MRM in peace-related funding. As a result, the independent monitoring team that was set up to monitor the Action Plan in Nepal was created through funding from the UN Peace Fund. In other cases, CTFMRs have raised funds with individual Member States to support MRM-related programmatic response. In order to provide a solid foundation upon which the CTFMRs can

⁸³ "Principal co-chairs" refers to UNICEF Country Representative and Resident Coordinator, or the Deputy SRSG in situations where there is a peacekeeping or political mission.

⁸⁴ "CTFMR co-chairs" refers to the co-chair organizations, i.e., UNICEF and the other designated UN agency at the country level, such as the Child Protection Section in situations where there is a peacekeeping or political mission.

implement the MRM, it is therefore recommended that **principal CTFMR co-chairs take a proactive approach to securing adequate resources for the MRM, such as by ensuring that resources are included in their country office operations budget.** In addition, the co-chairs should ensure that MRM activities are included in all components of the UN planning process (common country assessment, UNDAF and any peacebuilding efforts). Adequate resources are a foundation for the mechanism's effectiveness, and the prioritization of funding allows for greater sustainability of its impact.

Implications for headquarters⁸⁵

Dedicated resources for the MRM should be made automatically available, as part of the co-chairs' country office operations budgets, in all situations where parties to the conflict in the country of concern are listed and the MRM is required to be implemented.

3. Strengthen institutional commitments from UN agencies at the country level

Given the important role that strong participation from diverse UN agencies plays in the effectiveness of the MRM, it is recommended that **principal CTFMR co-chairs prioritize securing a commitment to support the MRM from the heads of UN agencies.** Further, the MRM framework provides opportunities for further collaboration across different sections within UN country offices. In order to strengthen **cross-sectoral engagement**, it is recommended that each CTFMR member agency facilitate internal dialogue to discuss the added value and opportunities that the MRM offers to respective sectors, in order to develop internal guidelines for greater engagement.

Implications for headquarters

Headquarters should intensify its mobilization of UN agencies' senior leadership at the HQ level, in order to secure institutional commitment to actively participate in the MRM. This will make for stronger and more consistent ownership by agencies and clusters at the country level.

4. Strengthen the CTFMR's approach to sexual violence

Security Council Resolution 1882 and other related resolutions pertaining to conflict-related sexual violence (including Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960) clearly note that

⁸⁵ "HQ" refers to the principal agencies charged with supporting the implementation of the MRM, which is the Office of the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and DPKO at HQ level.

conflict-related sexual violence is a priority that needs further attention. Monitoring and reporting on cases of sexual violence was a challenge raised by many CTFMRs. While this challenge may reflect broader phenomena of under-reporting of sexual violence due to lack of protection, social stigma or inadequate services for survivors, the MRM creates a space to collaboratively consider how to better address sexual violence against children. To address the challenge of collecting information on sexual violence, and to clarify how CTFMR members and partners can best ensure that the 'do no harm' principle is applied in all stages of MRM implementation, it is recommended that the CTFMR undertake the following actions:

- Further explore opportunities for collecting information on sexual violence through existing sources of information and other data collection systems in use at country level, such as data from the the Gender-based Violence Information Management System,⁸⁶ as appropriate; and engage with the GBV sub-cluster lead agencies (UNICEF and UNFPA) and sub-cluster members. Engaging GBV service providers in the MRM is a practice worth replicating and strengthening. However, all actors must understand that GBV service providers should only be involved when their agencies freely decide that it is safe to do so. Precautions must be in place to ensure that involving GBV service providers with the MRM will not lead to negative repercussions for survivors who seek services from these providers or for the service providers themselves.
- Ensure adherence to global standards on GBV prevention and response in humanitarian contexts,⁸⁷ including the soon-to-be-developed MRM guidance on addressing sexual violence (based on existing key principles on interviewing survivors, informed consent on the use of information and standard definitions of rape and other sexual violence).
- Ensure that any action at the country level is also guided by existing GBV-related inter-agency frameworks, including SOPs, to address GBV and/or national comprehensive strategies on GBV or sexual violence, and is based on consultations with both experts and service providers working on GBV prevention and response.
- Appoint a GBV technical expert (e.g., GBV sub-cluster coordinator, UN mission Women Protection Adviser, UNICEF GBV Specialist, etc.) as a permanent member of the CTFMR to provide systematic guidance and technical support to the task force on these recommendations. Where relevant, terms of reference for joint work involving the MRM CTFMR and other sexual violence monitoring frameworks could be agreed upon, to ensure greater coordination.

⁸⁶ The Gender-based Violence Information Management System is an inter-agency initiative (UNFPA, IRC, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO) that is able to disaggregate data by age and type of perpetrator.

⁸⁷ World Health Organization, *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies*, WHO, Geneva, 2007; 'Reporting and Interpreting Data on Sexual Violence from Conflict-Affected Countries: Do's and don'ts', UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 2008; Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility Working Group, 'Handbook for Coordinating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Settings' GBV AoR, July 2010; Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *IASC Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on prevention of and response to sexual violence in emergencies*, IASC, Geneva, September 2005.

5. Have CTFMRs devise communication strategies addressing the six grave violations, as appropriate

The MRM's framework offers an opportunity to influence social norms on protection of children in conflict. The six grave violations provide a clear, focused and internationally accepted framework around which communication and advocacy can be framed, and which can then be used as a 'code of conduct' towards children in conflict. This social change approach could maximize the impact of MRM investments at the country level, by fostering a culture of non-acceptance of violations against children. Hence it is recommended, as deemed safe and appropriate, that **development of communication strategies addressing the grave violations at national and local levels be made an integral part of the CTFMR's work**. This could involve, for example, the development and dissemination of flyers in local languages explaining the grave violations (and, where appropriate, including domestic legal provisions prohibiting or criminalizing the violations, and/or indication of where to access adequate services).

6. Have CTFMRs define their post-delisting functions

The MRM phase-out and any continued role of the CTFMR should be discussed within the task force and with the OSRSG-CAAC, UNICEF HQ and DPKO HQ (as relevant), and should be clearly defined and planned. In countries where de-listing has been achieved or is anticipated, CTFMRs should discuss potential strategies and roles for ensuring that monitoring of child rights violations is sustained over time. Especially in situations where the CTFMR has been strong and committed, it is extremely useful to continue to build on this platform for ongoing advocacy on remaining or related MRM issues. A lesson learned from such situations is that **during the transition period, the objectives and focus of the CTFMR and of its continued monitoring and reporting role need to be discussed among task force members and clearly defined**.

Implications for headquarters

Headquarters should provide guidance to the CTFMRs on the criteria to determine full compliance and de-listing, as well as on potential CTFMR functions after de-listing.

7. Explore opportunities to support reparations for children

The MRM falls within the broader child protection continuum, from prevention of violations to reparations, including rehabilitation for the children affected. In this regard, the MRM can contribute to other aspects of child protection over the long term, that is, beyond monitoring and reporting of grave violations. Hence **CTFMRs should consider the possible linkages between the MRM and transitional justice initiatives at the country level**. MRM data, as deemed appropriate, could be of great value to transitional justice initiatives, such as reparations. In fact, MRM data analysis could inform policies on individual or collective reparations, such as rehabilitation programmes. It could also be used to ensure that

information on grave violations against children is included in the focus of truth commissions and memorials; to inform SSR, such as vetting of security forces through information on alleged perpetrators; and to inform prosecutorial strategies. Given that OHCHR is the assigned lead agency on transitional justice within the UN system, opportunities could be explored, as appropriate, to link work on the MRM with transitional justice initiatives wherever OHCHR is a CTFMR co-chair or member and is involved in supporting transitional justice processes.

8. Ensure that CTFMRs report on State responses to violations

As the primary duty bearer for preventing and protecting the rights of children, CTFMRs need to adopt the view that reporting on the State's due diligence in responding to grave violations and providing remedies to victims is as important as reporting on the violations themselves. For this reason, it is recommended that **CTFMRs systematically include in their reports the positive steps taken by States to address the grave violations**. This information could also provide greater opportunity to engage and follow up with State authorities on actions taken to prevent or respond to grave violations, at both local and national levels. MRM IMSs could systematically indicate whether services to affected children are provided by the State, and could also provide information on the follow-up actions taken by local and national law enforcement and justice officials.

9. Ensure that CTFMRs broaden engagement with regional and thematic mechanisms

Utilizing MRM reports **to inform relevant thematic and country mandates of UN Special Procedures** is an opportunity that, thus far, seems to be under-explored. Especially given the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1998, the Special Rapporteurs on the right to education and the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health could be more frequently engaged to raise international and in-country attention on attacks on schools and hospitals and the impact of denial of humanitarian access on the education and health sectors. For example, the current Special Rapporteur on Education raised in his 2011 Report to the General Assembly the importance of monitoring attacks on education to address invisibility and impunity.⁸⁸ Thus far, however, the Special Rapporteur on Education has reportedly not received information pertaining to education-related violations directly from CTFMRs, nor visited any situation where the MRM is being implemented. The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders could be also informed and alerted regarding especially risky situations for MRM monitors, such as Afghanistan and Somalia. Similarly, the

⁸⁸ A/66/269.

Special Rapporteurs on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution; Working Groups on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, and arbitrary detention; and country mandate holders of Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan and Syria could be engaged as appropriate.

Other strategic, advocacy targets that have thus far been under-utilized by CTFMRs are the **African Union and the European Union**. The African Union Peace and Security Council plays an influential role in MRM implementing countries, such as Somalia and Sudan, and in military response to the LRA in the region. The European Union has produced guidelines on CAAC that require diplomatic and military representatives to include in their reports an analysis of the effects of conflict or looming conflict on children, particularly with regard to the same six grave violations against children in conflict, as the focus of the MRM.

10. Create opportunities for cross-country learning at the level of technical and principal co-chairs

In order to strengthen the sharing of practices that have worked well in different contexts, **CTFMRs could initiate exchanges with other CTFMRs**. These could take a number of forms, including hosting seminars and organizing video or phone conferences. Such initiatives could be an occasion for CTFMRs to share experiences on addressing specific thematic issues or related to common challenges faced by MRM practitioners (e.g., reporting on sexual violence, protection of MRM monitors/staff, engaging with armed groups).

Implications for HQ

Headquarters could support such exchanges and learning opportunities, for example, by facilitating participation of technical experts in seminars or video conferences. Headquarters should develop and include MRM policy and guidance in pre-deployment briefings and in training for DPKO/DPA mission leadership, Humanitarian Coordinators and RCs, as principal CTFMR Co-Chairs. This would address a finding in the study that further guidance is needed for senior leadership in-country on good practices and lessons learned in dealing with common challenges faced by principal CTFMR co-chairs, such as risk management.

Annex 1: Composition and role of the Technical Advisory Board

The Technical Advisory Board (TAB) consisted of Rosalie Azar, Kumar Anuraj Jha and Alec Wargo (Programme Officers, OSRSG-CAAC), Ann Makome (DPKO Child Protection Adviser and Focal Point), Marianne Bauer (Associate Child Protection Officer, DPKO), Krishna Belbase (Senior Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF), and Stephane Pichette and Lara Scott (Child Protection Specialists, UNICEF).

As indicated in the Terms of Reference for the MRM Good Practice Study:

"The project will be an inter-agency initiative jointly led by OSRSG-CAAC, DPKO and UNICEF. Any decisions related to the implementation of this initiative will be discussed and jointly agreed by the TAB. The TAB will be comprised of OSRSG, DPKO and UNICEF. Two members and one technical expert from each organization will be represented in the TAB. Any other members will be invited as agreed by the TAB.

"UNICEF HQ will provide the administrative support for the study. The TAB will provide the technical support to carry out the study. At the country level where both UNICEF and DPKO are present a focal point will be assigned from the two organizations to coordinate the work and provide technical, administrative and logistic support. In the countries where DPKO is not present UNICEF will provide the support.

"This TAB will provide input, advice and oversight throughout the process as follows:

- a) Provide advice and overall oversight in the implementation of the study;
- b) Participate in the selection of the consultant to carry out the study;
- c) Provide input in selection of the countries for the study;
- d) Review and comment on various draft reports produced as part of the study;
- e) Participate in triangulation workshops."

Annex 2: Summary of key outcomes and processes for implementation of the Action Plan in Uganda

Key outcomes	Processes
Training and capacity development of the UPDF	UNICEF and other organizations carried out a number of trainings with the UPDF on child rights. From 1998 to 2008, Save the Children Denmark carried out a Training of Trainers programme with the UPDF to do capacity development on child rights, including on grave violations. The fact that it was a Training of Trainers equipped UPDF leaders to deliver the training themselves, which helped get the message across among peers.
Reform in UPDF policies and disciplinary procedures, and additional training on these procedures	The above training was accompanied by new disciplinary measures that enforced respect for child rights and enhanced accountability. Child protection actors also successfully pushed for an amendment to the UPDF Act of 2005 that incorporated provisions of the Uganda Child Act. The reformed law was then incorporated into ongoing training.
Use of CTFMR members' relationships and contacts to create points of entry with the UPDF and Government of Uganda	OHCHR and the Uganda Human Rights Commission were able to utilize their pre-existing contacts and relationships within the UPDF and Government of Uganda as points of entry for discussion of an Action Plan. It was through these relationships that they were able to persuade officials to designate high-level focal points on the MRM.
Designation of high-level Focal Points to liaise with the CTFMR	UPDF appointed two high-ranking officers as MRM Focal Points , who were in regular contact and worked closely with the CTFMR in the drafting process for the Action Plan.
Strong leadership and coordination by CTFMR Co-Chairs in liaising with UPDF	OHCHR took the lead in the early stages of negotiation of the Action Plan, particularly when the political dynamics were more sensitive. UNICEF later took over the lead in coordinating the negotiations.
Mutual agreement among UPDF and CTFMR members on a clear strategy for how the Action Plan would be implemented and monitored, once signed	During the course of negotiation of the Action Plan, the CTFMR and the UPDF held a joint workshop on the development of the Action Plan . This created space for discussion and agreement on how the implementation of the Action Plan would be monitored and who would be involved in the monitoring.
International-level advocacy to create pressure on the Government to sign an Action Plan	Visits by the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict were capitalized on by the CTFMR to push for the signing of an Action Plan, raising the visibility of the issue and pressure on government officials.
Creation of an implementation matrix attached to the Action Plan that laid out all tasks involved in implementing the Action Plan and the key individuals responsible	Because there was clarity from all sides as to how the Action Plan would be implemented, as well as on the key individuals and agencies responsible, the CTFMR, UPDF and Government began to take steps to carry out their responsibilities without delay once the Action Plan was signed. Clarity during the negotiation process meant that there was consensus on what was meant by compliance with the Action Plan. This created added incentive for compliance because the steps necessary for being de-listed were clear and practical.