



THE ALLIANCE
FOR CHILD PROTECTION
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



Concept Note

Webinar for Child Protection Practitioners:

Handover Protocols for the Transfer of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups, Including CAAFAG in Detention

Date: Thursday, March 24, 2022

Time: 14:00 CET – 15:00 CET / 9:00 EDT – 10:00 EDT

Registration Link: https://unicef.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Gkg_z9WMRDGIsWtX_2xz8w

Background

Thousands of children in situations of armed conflict are doubly victimized: first, at the hands of armed groups or forces that recruit and use them in their ranks, and then by parties to the conflict who detain them for their alleged association with those groups or forces. Many of these children never receive the reintegration support and services they need.

Handover protocols are agreements by governments or armed groups to swiftly transfer children allegedly associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) in their custody, or whom they have encountered, to child protection actors for appropriate support services, including, but not limited to, reintegration assistance.

Handover protocols are an explicit recognition by states and, at times, armed groups, that CAAFAG are first and foremost victims of grave human rights and humanitarian law violations. They offer CAAFAG a safe avenue to leave armed forces and armed groups and receive the care, protection, and reintegration support they need. As a practical matter, handover protocols also systematize and standardize the process of transfer of CAAFAG, as well as strengthen coordination and cooperation between security, civilian, and child protection actors, particularly during security operations. They are an especially useful tool for promoting the release of CAAFAG in detention. Handover protocols have been signed and operationalized in at least eight countries and have provided a critical pathway to reintegration for many children. The current trends in the recruitment, use, and detention of children in situations of armed conflict highlight the critical need for handover protocols and their operationalization.

In March 2022, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (Watchlist), the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (the Alliance), and its Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups Task Force (CAAFAG TF) will publish an operational guidance on negotiating and implementing handover protocols. The operational guidance aims to support the signing and implementation of handover protocols by providing child protection actors with good practices, lessons learned, and other useful information on previous and ongoing negotiations and implementation processes in various countries. It seeks to support child protection actors to initiate and strategically navigate handover protocol negotiations, to promote the release of CAAFAG in detention and improve standards for their prosecution, to strengthen the implementation of handover agreements, and to safeguard children at every stage of handover.

The guidance targets child protection actors working within the UN system, governments, and civil society. It outlines possible roles and responsibilities for these various stakeholders in the negotiation and implementation of handover protocols and provides recommendations on how they can effectively coordinate to better protect children. Although the webinar is oriented towards child protection practitioners, it is open to the broader child rights and protection community and anyone interested in learning more about handover protocols.

Objectives

- Increase the awareness and understanding of child protection actors working within the UN system, governments, and civil society and other stakeholders about handover protocols as an effective tool for promoting the protection of children's rights and particularly for addressing the detention of CAAFAG.
- Identify key factors stakeholders should consider during the negotiation of a handover protocol.
- Support practitioners and other stakeholders to initiate and strategically navigate handover protocol negotiations by providing good practices and lessons learned from previous processes.
- Provide recommendations to practitioners and other stakeholders to strengthen the implementation of these agreements and to safeguard children at every stage of handover.
- Highlight one case study (Mali) where the handover protocol has been successfully implemented and where it has contributed to the protection of children's rights.

Format

The one hour-long moderated webinar will feature a presentation of the Operational Guidance and a case study of good practices and lessons learned from the negotiation and implementation of the handover protocols in Mali. After the presentations, the moderator will open the floor to questions from audience members.

Speakers:

- Welcome Remarks: Ms. Camilla Jones, the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (5 min)
- Presentation of the Operational Guidance: Ms. Janine Morna, Research Consultant, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (15 min)
- Case Study on Mali: Ms. Solange Vasse, Chief Child Protection, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (10 min)

Moderator:

- Ms. Adrienne Lapar, Director, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

After registration, participants will receive a confirmation email containing information on how to join the webinar.

Read the *Operational Guidance on Negotiating and Implementing Handover Protocols for the Transfer of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups*: <https://watchlist.org/publications/operational-guidance-negotiating-and-implementing-handover-protocols>

For additional background, please see:

- Watchlist's 2020 policy note, *A Path to Reintegration: The Role of Handover Protocols in Protecting the Rights of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups*: https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/2416-watchlist-policy-note-dec-2020_final.pdf
- Watchlist and Human Rights Watch's 2019 policy note, *Military Detention of Children in Armed Conflict: The Role of Handover Protocols in Protecting Children's Rights*: https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/2362-watchlist-military-detention-policy_note-lr.pdf