



Conclusions of the Cross-Regional Event “Child Resilience in Insecurity Contexts”

Bali, 29-31 May 2024

We, experts and representatives of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, the Philippines, held a three-day dialogue discussing strategies and measures to prevent and respond to child association with terrorist groups¹.

We remain convinced that child association with terrorist groups continues to gravely affect children’s well-being and enjoyment of their rights, while also posing considerable security concerns to the countries affected by this phenomenon. As such, this phenomenon deserves immediate attention and demands comprehensive intervention.

We endorse the 2019 [“UNODC Roadmap on the Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremis Groups”](#) and we reaffirm the following principles as the basis for a comprehensive, just, and sustainable approach to the treatment of these children.

Adherence to international law shall guide all actions aimed to prevent and respond to child association with groups designated terrorists. In particular, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* sets out the fundamental rights of children, based on the recognition of their ongoing developmental process and their entitlement to special care and assistance. Furthermore, its *Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict* establishes fundamental commitments to protect children from recruitment and from its harmful consequences on child development as well as on sustainable development, peace and security.

It is necessary to tackle the root causes of child recruitment and association, devising comprehensive strategies and measures that provide a bridge between development, security and peacebuilding efforts. Strengthening the nexus between these areas of interventions is key to responding to children’s lived experiences and enhancing the potential for societal resilience. Integrated and comprehensive interventions require coordination and cooperation among different sectors, including (but not limited to): health, education, child protection, justice and security sectors.

Tackling child association with terrorist groups also requires taking into account and supporting children’s agency to actively take part in decision-making processes that impact their lives. This includes providing opportunities for children to contribute ideas, voice their opinions, and shape interventions that affect them. In parallel, participatory mechanisms and platforms should be in place to allow community perspectives and needs to be integrated throughout the policy formulation and intervention development process.

¹ In accordance with Article 1 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, this document refers to children to indicate all human beings below 18 years of age.



We recognize the following key principles for interventions aimed to bridge the gap between child rights and public safety.

Recognition of children's victim status

Child recruitment, in all its forms and regardless of the denomination of the groups who perpetrate it, is a serious form of violence against children and a grave violation of child rights, which leads to victimization and exploitation. Mindful of the fact that terminology and narratives matter and may undermine the understanding of children's victimization, it is suggested to refrain from using terms such as 'radicalization' and 'deradicalization' when referring to children.

Any form of child recruitment for the purposes of exploitation and/or participation in violent and illicit activities should be criminalized and perpetrators should be held accountable.

Any child recruited and exploited by an armed, organized criminal or terrorist group is the victim of a crime according to international law, their legal status as primarily victims shall be recognized, and their treatment should prioritize their rehabilitation from victimization.

Fostering knowledge creation and data collection

Historical, social and political grievances play an important role in shaping and fostering child association with terrorist groups: this interaction should be researched for the development of effective policy-making.

Developmental needs of children and gendered social dynamics are purposefully instrumentalized by terrorist and violent extremist strategies with the aim of maximizing the success of recruitment campaigns: research into these mechanisms will be crucial to elaborate relevant strategies and measures.

The safety of children is threatened by recruitment tactics both offline and online: increased knowledge of online recruitment methods is crucial to devise comprehensive and effective strategies to address this phenomenon.

Systematic, comprehensive and qualitative data collection, research and analysis on the phenomenon of child association with terrorist groups are key preconditions for understanding the nature and extent of the phenomenon and for designing and implementing evidence-based and effective policies. Mutual learning and sharing of promising practices among countries that face this phenomenon is also instrumental to more effective intervention.

Enhancing comprehensive prevention efforts



Prevention efforts should be comprehensive and aimed at enhancing a protective environment framework for children, online and offline. This requires recognition of the principle of shared responsibility towards respecting, protecting and fulfilling child rights by State and non- State authorities and the need of promoting public-private partnerships to this end.

The security and justice sectors have a key role to playing protecting society from the threats associated with terrorism and violent extremism, and this requires prioritizing the prevention of child recruitment and exploitation by terrorist groups.

To enhance effectiveness of preventative actions by security and justice professionals, in particular by law enforcement, it is key to promote the safety of all citizens within communities, without discrimination and paying particular attention to protecting marginalized groups, thus strengthening institutional trust.

Supporting rehabilitation and social reintegration as a priority

Rehabilitation and reintegration shall be the primary goal of any action addressing children associated with terrorist groups. This requires developing strategies that are inclusive, child-rights based, child- and gender- sensitive, and trauma-informed, and that may involve disengagement support when appropriate, as well as a focus on capacity building to professionals.

The first step in providing reintegration support shall be the conduct of individual psychosocial assessment, that focus on resilience and take into account needs and vulnerability factors. Harmonization of individual assessment models and methods, as well as multi-agency coordination are prerequisites for preventing secondary victimization of children.

Reintegration support requires the provision of specialized assistance to the families and communities of return with a view to addressing the stigma of the perceived association with terrorism.

Children who have travelled outside their country of origin and those who were born in a third country due to linkages with the foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) phenomenon have diverse experiences. While some may have been recruited, the majority of them has not taken any active or supportive role within terrorist groups. Their treatment should be based on a case-by-case understanding of their circumstances and take into account their experiences of adversity, violence and trauma.

Acknowledging the importance of repatriation measures, when in line with the child's best interests, as instrumental for effective rehabilitation and reintegration processes and for the security of both these children and their communities of origin.

Promoting justice responses adapted to children and conducive to rehabilitation and reintegration



The standards and norms related to child justice are non-derogable and should be applied fully to any child alleged as, accused of or recognized as having committed a terrorism-related offence. Specialized capacity-building support for professionals is necessary to ensure compliance.

Children's victimization through recruitment and exploitation should be fully taken into account during justice proceedings. As victims, children have the right to special protective measures. Alternatives to formal judicial proceedings and alternatives to deprivation of liberty are better suited to preventing secondary victimization and re-traumatization and more conducive to rehabilitation and reintegration. Deprivation of liberty shall always remain a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.