Children, adolescents, youth and small arms and light weapons
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Foreword

The United Nations (UN) Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) mechanism strives to improve the UN’s ability to work as one in delivering effective policy, programming and advice to Member States on curbing the illicit trade, destabilising accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. Established by the Secretary-General in 1998 with the task of coordinating the small arms work of the United Nations, CASA today unites more than 20 UN bodies active in policy development and/or programming related to small arms and light weapons.¹

Building on previous UN initiatives to develop international standards in the areas of mine action (International Mine Action Standards)² and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants (Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards),³ the United Nations has developed a series of International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) with the aim of providing clear and comprehensive guidance to practitioners and policymakers on fundamental aspects of small arms and light weapons control. The present document constitutes one of more than 20 ISACS modules that provide practical guidance on instituting effective controls over the full life cycle of small arms and light weapons (all ISACS modules can be found at www.smallarmsstandards.org).

ISACS are framed by existing global agreements related to small arms and light weapons control, in particular the

- **UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons In All Its Aspects** (UN PoA);

- **International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons** (International Tracing Instrument);

- **Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime** (UN Firearms Protocol); and

- **Arms Trade Treaty**.

Within this global framework, ISACS build upon standards, best practice guidelines, model regulations, etc. that have been elaborated at the regional and sub-regional levels. ISACS seek to cover the fundamental areas of small arms and light weapons control on which the United Nations may be called upon to provide advice, guidance and support.

ISACS were developed, and continue to be improved and supplemented, by a broad coalition of small arms control specialists drawn from the United Nations, governments, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector (a full list of contributors to ISACS is available at www.smallarmsstandards.org).

ISACS modules were drafted in accordance with the rules set out in ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2, *Rules for the structure and drafting of International Standards*, under the oversight of the CASA Working Group on ISACS, co-chaired by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

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¹ For a full listing of CASA partners, see www.poa-iss.org/CASA/CASA.aspx.
² www.mineactionstandards.org
³ www.unddr.org
Introduction

Armed violence perpetrated with small arms and light weapons puts children, adolescents and youth at risk by threatening their security, health, education, wellbeing and development, both during and after conflict, as well as in times of peace. As a group, children, adolescents and youth are the primary victims, witnesses and perpetrators of armed violence. They are also — as recognised in UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security — powerful agents of change.

The negative impacts of armed violence on children, adolescents and youth are varied and far-reaching. They include death, physical injury, psychosocial distress and trauma, disrupted access to nutrition, education and healthcare, displacement, loss of opportunities, gender-based violence (including sexual violence), intimidation, exploitation and abuse.

Such impacts are preventable. The death, injury and mistreatment of children, adolescents and youth can be avoided or at least significantly reduced through responsible action by adults to protect them and also through action by children, adolescents and youth themselves, as agents of change. One means of doing so is to ensure that children, adolescents and youth are protected from the risks associated with the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

The use of small arms by children, adolescents and youth is not always associated with inter-personal or inter-group violence. In many countries, young people use small arms for recreational purposes (e.g. hunting and sport shooting) in secure, regulated and organized settings. In some countries, young people use small arms to engage in subsistence hunting in order to supplement the livelihoods of their families or to mark their coming of age in societal rites of passage.

Even in well-regulated contexts and even in otherwise peaceful societies, however, small arms can be misused, either intentionally or unintentionally, with devastating consequences for children, adolescents and youth. While acknowledging the diversity of contexts in which young people may interact with small arms, it is important to focus on minimising the risks that such weapons pose to this age-group.

Children, adolescents and youth are the future and are powerful agents of change. Their active and meaningful participation in efforts to control small arms and light weapons can foster sustainability and can bring much-needed creativity and energy to bear on this issue.
Children, adolescents, youth and small arms and light weapons

1 Scope

Aspects of the illicit trade, uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons as they relate to children (aged 0-17), adolescents (aged 10-19) and youth (aged 15-24) have been incorporated where appropriate into all modules of the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS).

This document draws together the threads of other ISACS modules that relate to children, adolescents and youth and provides practical guidance on designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating initiatives to control small arms and light weapons—whether they be at the level of legislation, policy, programming or projects—that are sensitive and responsive to the specific rights, needs and capacities of children, adolescents and youth.

Issues related to children and youth in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants are covered in the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards—IDDRS 5.20, Youth and DDR and IDDRS 5.30, Children and DDR—and are not addressed in detail in this module.

Issues related to small arms and light weapons control as it relates to gender are covered mainly in ISACS 06.10, Women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

*The Convention on the Rights of the Child*

*Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict*

*Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*

*Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, International Labour Organisation (Convention No. 182).

*The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups*

*Children Participating in Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Ethics and Your Responsibilities as a Manager, UNICEF.*
3 Terms and definitions

3.1 General

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISACS 01.20, Glossary of terms, definitions and abbreviated terms, and the following apply.

In all ISACS modules, the words 'shall', 'should', 'may' and 'can' are used to express provisions in accordance with their usage in International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards.

a) “shall” indicates a requirement: It is used to indicate requirements strictly to be followed in order to conform to the document and from which no deviation is permitted.

b) “should” indicates a recommendation: It is used to indicate that among several possibilities one is recommended as particularly suitable, without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required, or that (in the negative form, ‘should not’) a certain possibility or course of action is deprecated but not prohibited.

c) “may” indicates permission: It is used to indicate a course of action permissible within the limits of the document.

d) “can” indicates possibility and capability: It is used for statements of possibility and capability, whether material, physical or casual.

3.2 Children, adolescents and youth

The UN defines children to be aged 0-17, adolescents to be aged 10-19, and youth to be aged 15-24 (all numbers are inclusive).

Since the category “youth” encompasses children, adolescents and young adults (see Table 1), it is important to remember that the majority of adolescents, as children, have a unique set of rights and protection measures enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child that are not applicable to young adults.

It is also important to consider that, although the UN definitions are universally applicable, there can be considerable differences between different contexts. Social, economic and cultural systems often define the age limits for specific roles and responsibilities of children, adolescents, youth and adults.
Table 1 — Use of age-specific terms

4 United Nations framework

4.1 General

This document provides practical guidance on the implementation of commitments related to children, adolescents and youth that are contained in United Nations multilateral instruments related to small arms and light weapons control.

4.2 UN Programme of Action

In the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN Programme of Action), all UN Member States declare:

a) “Gravely concerned about its devastating consequences on children, many of whom are victims of armed conflict or are forced to become child soldiers […] and in this context, taking into account the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children” (section 1, paragraph 6); and agree

b) “To address the special needs of children affected by armed conflict, in particular the reunification with their family, their reintegration into civil society, and their appropriate rehabilitation” (section 2, paragraph 2); and

c) To promote dialogue and a culture of peace by encouraging, as appropriate, education and public awareness programmes on the problems of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, involving all sectors of society (section 2, paragraph 41).

4.3 Arms Trade Treaty

States party to the Arms Trade Treaty have agreed to the legally-binding commitment that

a) “The exporting State Party, in making this assessment [export assessment], shall take into account the risk of the conventional arms covered under Article 2 (1) or of the items covered under Article 3 or Article 4 being used to commit or facilitate […] serious acts of violence against […] children” (Article 7.4).

5 Small arms-related violence in childhood

5.1 General

Children can be exposed to violence, including armed violence, at every stage in their growth, even within the womb. However, both the nature of the violence and its potential impacts can differ
according to children’s levels of emotional, cognitive and physical development, as well as the family context and community in which they grow up. Violence features in every stage of childhood, from prenatal to age 17, and is experienced differently by boys and girls.

5.2 Prenatal period and birth

During the pre-natal period and at birth, the health and well-being of the foetus and newborn child are inextricably bound up with that of the mother who, during pregnancy, may face physical, sexual or emotional violence from her intimate partner, family members or others. When a small arm is kept in the home, the probability that domestic violence will result in death or serious injury — for the mother and the child in utero — increases significantly.

5.3 Early and middle childhood

Throughout early and middle childhood (0-9 years), children who live in households where a small arm is insecurely stored — or in communities where small arms are widely available — are at risk of being injured or killed through accidental discharge of such arms, whether caused by themselves or by their siblings or friends.

NOTE For guidance on keeping small arms out of the reach of children, see ISACS 03.30, National regulation of civilian access to small arms and light weapons, Clause 8.2.4.6 on “safe storage.”

5.4 Adolescence

During adolescence, children become more independent and interact with wider groups of people. Adolescents can be particularly vulnerable to violence from a range of sources. In addition to violence perpetuated by adults, adolescents are much more likely to encounter violence from their peers than at any other stage in life.

Adolescent boys are more likely than girls to be physically attacked or to suffer intentional and unintentional injuries. There is also an increase in fighting between adolescent children, sometimes with knives or small arms. Adolescent boys, are at greater risk of dying from homicide, including homicide perpetrated with small arms.

Adolescents, especially males, sometimes use small arms to gain the respect of their peers, attain a new social status or assert their independence, with most of the associated violence directed towards other adolescents and youth. Such behaviour can be validated by some young women, thus reinforcing the stereotype of violent masculinity.

Adolescent girls become vulnerable to the kind of aggression directed towards older women in general, including sexual assault.

Culturally-defined gender roles and social norms that link masculinity with power, physical force and arms contribute to higher levels of violent behaviour among adolescent men than among adolescent women.

NOTE For further guidance on gender considerations, see ISACS 06.10, Women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons.

During adolescence, boys and girls may also begin to use small arms for recreational and sporting purposes such as hunting and sport shooting. To help avoid accidental injury during such activities, guidance provided by ISACS 03.30 (National regulation of civilian access to small arms and light weapons) — especially with regard to licensing, age restrictions, safe use and safe storage — shall be applied.

5.5 Children associated with armed forces or groups

As armed conflict proliferates around the world, increasing numbers of children are exposed to the brutalities of war. There is a clear correlation between the easy availability of small arms and light
weapons, on the one hand, and children’s involvement in armed conflict, on the other. In numerous countries, boys and girls are recruited by armed forces and groups, either forcibly or voluntarily.

Children are susceptible to recruitment by manipulation or may be driven to join armed forces and groups because of poverty or discrimination. Often, they are abducted at school, on the streets or at home. Once recruited or forced into service, they are used for a variety of purposes. While many children participate in combat, others are used for sexual purposes, as spies, messengers, porters, servants, to lay or clear landmines, etc. Many children serve multiple roles.

Children may be recruited for several reasons. In countries that are already poor, armed conflict tends to further deteriorate economic and social conditions, thereby forcing families into deeper economic hardship. As a result, children may join armed forces or groups in order to secure daily food and survival.

Conflict is also likely to disrupt children’s education. When schools are closed, children are left with few alternatives and may be more easily swayed to join armed groups or forces.

When a conflict is prolonged, armed forces and groups are more likely to use children to replenish their ranks. This tendency is facilitated by the availability of small arms and light weapons that can be easily handled by children aged 10 and younger.

Children who are used as soldiers are robbed of their childhood and are often subjected to extreme brutality. Children are often drugged before being sent out to fight and are forced to commit atrocities against their own families as a way to destroy family and communal ties. Girls are frequently used for sexual purposes, commonly assigned to a commander and at times gang-raped.

Note 1 The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict raises the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities to 18 years from the previous minimum age of 15 years specified in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other legal instruments. The treaty also prohibits compulsory recruitment by government forces of anyone under 18 years of age, and calls on State Parties to raise the minimum age above 15 for voluntary recruitment, and to implement strict safeguards when voluntary recruitment of children under 18 years is permitted. In the case of non-state armed groups, the treaty prohibits all recruitment – voluntary and compulsory – under age 18.

NOTE 2 The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defines the following acts as war crimes:

- "conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities" in an international armed conflict; (Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi)); and
- "conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities" in a non-international armed conflict. Article 8(2)(e)(vii).

NOTE 3 Article 3 of the Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention No.182) declares that forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict is among “the worst forms of child labour.”

5.6 Strategies to prevent violence against children

The World Health Organization, UNICEF, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and other partners have jointly identified seven key strategies for preventing violence against children.” They are

a) implementation and enforcement of laws;

b) norms and values;

c) safe environments

d) parent and caregiver support
e) income and economic strengthening;

f) response and support services; and

g) education and life skills.

NOTE Guidance on the implementation of these strategies, which include limiting youth access to small arms and other weapons, can be found in the report, “INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children” (Geneva: World Health Organisation, 2016).

6 Impacts of armed violence

6.1 General

The impacts of armed conflict and violence on children, adolescents and youth are diverse, complex and multifaceted and can result in serious physical, developmental, emotional and mental harm.

Most directly, they suffer death and injury, both intentionally, by being targets of armed violence, and unintentionally, through accidents that occur as a result of interacting with small arms and light weapons. They also suffer psychosocial distress and trauma as a result of being a victim, witness or perpetrator of armed violence, which can have serious negative repercussions for their subsequent development.

Children, adolescents and youth also suffer serious indirect effects of the availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons, including the death and injury of parents, other family members and peers, conflict-related displacement and reduced access to, or quality of, education and healthcare services.

Small arms present a particular risk to children. Their small size and light weight make it possible for children who come across them to pick them up and handle them, which can lead to death or injury through accidental discharge. Their uncomplicated design means that children associated with armed forces or groups can quickly be taught to use and maintain them.

Despite these serious impacts, children, adolescents and youth can be endowed with internal resilience mechanisms that help them cope with the trauma and distress they experience through the misuse of small arms and light weapons.

6.2 Direct impacts

6.2.1 Death and injury

Children, adolescents and youth can be exposed to the risk of death and injury inflicted using small arms and light weapons from when they are in the womb to when they reach adulthood.

The presence of a small arm in the home significantly increase the risk that intimate partner, family-related and domestic violence, as well as suicide attempts, will be fatal or lead to serious injuries, including for pregnant women.

Children who live in households where small arms are kept under unsecured conditions are at heightened risk of accidentally killing or injuring themselves or others through accidental discharge of small arms that they find.

By far the greatest risk of death and injury by gunshot, however, is borne by adolescents, youth and young adults, in particular young males aged 15-29. Most of the victims and perpetrators of illegal armed violence in almost every region of the world come from this cohort. Moreover, the World Health Organisation has estimated that, for every youth homicide, there are approximately 20-40 victims of non-fatal youth violence receiving hospital treatment.
While adolescent boys and young men are at greater risk of engaging in and becoming victims of armed violence, adolescent girls and young women are at greater risk of becoming victims of gender-based violence, including sexual violence. The manifold abuses committed at gunpoint reflect the coercive power and multiplier effect of small arms availability and misuse.

Tens of thousands of children are associated with and used by armed forces or groups in conflict zones around the world and many thousands more are exploited through and participate in organized armed violence in urban settings worldwide. Children in armed groups perpetrate, witness and become victims of violence.

While such children are often portrayed as perpetrators, this hides the fact that they are victims of exploitation at the hands of adults and that their experience in armed groups will have severe negative effects on their physical and mental health, wellbeing and development.

Girls and young women are particularly at risk of becoming victims of gender-based violence, including rape, forced prostitution, sexual humiliation and harassment, trafficking and domestic violence both in and outside of conflict zones. The misuse of small arms and light weapons in such situations acts as a multiplier of such violence.

### 6.2.2 Psychosocial distress and trauma

In addition to the visible impacts of death and physical injury, the availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons also have invisible impacts on children, adolescents and youth, which can negatively affect their psychological and social (i.e. psychosocial) behaviour and development.

Affected children may show symptoms of depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder, which may result in aggression, fear, bedwetting, nightmares and social isolation. This can have a negative affect children’s school work and on their relationships with family and friends. Both victims and perpetrators of armed violence can experience psychosocial distress and trauma.

The psychological distress that children suffer as victims, witnesses or perpetrators of armed violence can be severe and long-lasting. Especially if built up through repeated distressing experiences, psychological distress can develop into trauma and lead to longer-term mental health problems.

Unless support is provided to help strengthen the natural resilience of children, adolescents and youth in the face of such shocks, their wellbeing and development are likely to be negatively affected. When provided with appropriate and adequate psychosocial support, however, children, adolescents and youth who have been affected by armed violence can show great resilience and an impressive ability to recover from such experiences.

In addition to internal resilience factors, external resilience factors also play a role in helping children cope. A supportive home, school and community environment can promote and strengthen the natural coping strategies of children, adolescents and youth.

Important elements of supportive environments include community support, family cohesion, a healthy attachment to caregivers, the caregivers’ psychological health and capacity to cope, adequate health and education services, and social infrastructure. Such environments can reinforce personal resilience while reducing the severity and duration of psychosocial impacts resulting from armed violence.

### 6.3 Indirect impacts

#### 6.3.1 General

While young men are at the highest risk of direct conflict death, indirect deaths affect all age groups, including children under the age of five.
6.3.2 Death and injury of family members and peers

Changes resulting from the death or injury of parents, other family members or peers as a result of armed violence can affect children, adolescents and youth psychologically, socially and emotionally.

Such changes can also present them with new practical realities. The death or injury of a breadwinner, caregiver or other supportive adult can have a profound impact on the socio-economic situation of a family and can force children, adolescents and youth to assume new responsibilities in the household or force them find paid jobs to provide for their families, often to the detriment of their own education.

Loss of family income as a result of the death or injury of a breadwinner can put children and adolescents at risk of exploitative labour and separation from their families. Children whose parents have been killed may also join armed groups or gangs to seek the perceived protection that these groups offer.

6.3.3 Displacement

War and conflict are major causes of forced population movements and about half of all refugees and displaced people are children, adolescents and youth.

Children separated from their families due to violence or displacement are also separated from the primary source of their emotional security and protection. Separated children can be especially vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation, including sexual violence, abduction and recruitment into armed groups. Displacement also impacts children’s access to basic needs such as nutrition, healthcare and education.

Displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, including sexual violence, due to inadequate safety and law enforcement in camps and other displacement sites, exposure to strangers, overcrowding, loss of livelihoods and associated feelings of disempowerment.

These risks are compounded in situations where small arms and light weapons are widely available. When refugee camps become militarized, armed groups can target refugee communities to recruit children, adolescents and youth and to carry out such abuses as rape, forced prostitution, and slavery.

The misuse of small arms and light weapons often continues to affect refugee and displaced children, adolescents and youth — in refugee camps and displacement sites, as well as within the community at large — even after conflict has ended.

6.3.4 Reduced access to essential needs and services

6.3.4.1 Nutrition

Although a significant number of children, adolescents and youth are killed and injured every year as a direct result of armed conflict, many more who are exposed to armed conflict die as a result of indirect effects, especially malnutrition and disease. Infants and children are particularly prone to malnutrition because of their proportionally high nutritional requirements.

Many of today’s armed conflicts take place in some of the world’s poorest countries. Armed conflict can exacerbate already high levels of malnutrition and disease by disrupting food production and distribution and by hindering the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Children under five years of age are especially vulnerable to malnutrition and infection.

6.3.4.2 Healthcare

Conflict limits access to health care, which can have a disproportionate effect on children. In conflict situations, health facilities are often targets for armed groups, who loot medicines and medical supplies and abduct medical staff to attend to their own wounded. Under such circumstances, health facilities are often forced to close. Those that do remain open are often difficult to reach due to movement restrictions or insecurity.
In conflict situations where healthcare services have been impaired or cut off, children are more likely not to receive essential vaccinations and other preventive treatment and are more vulnerable to succumbing to preventable diseases such as malaria, measles, diarrhoea, pneumonia, tuberculosis and acute respiratory infection.

Conflict can also result in water and sanitation systems being damaged, polluted or destroyed, which can increase vulnerability to water-borne diseases such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid.

Reproductive health services are critical to the health of pregnant adolescents and women, as well as to their children's health. Girls who give birth before the age of 15 are many times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their twenties. When healthcare services decline during armed conflict or violence, the situation for young expecting mothers deteriorates. Health education, care, and counselling are especially important for women and girls who have been raped.

Likewise, in non-conflict settings that nevertheless experience high levels of inter-personal armed violence, the strain placed on the healthcare system by the necessity to direct scarce resources towards the treatment of gunshot wounds can reduce the quality of care available for more basic treatments, including for children.

### 6.3.4.3 Education

Reduced access to education is one of the pervasive impacts of armed violence on children, adolescents and youth. Schools can be forced to close due to rampant instability, especially in situations where armed groups and fighting forces view schools and educators as strategic targets for attack or use schools as barracks to hide and protect themselves and their weaponry. The quality of education can be affected if qualified teachers are not available due to displacement or fear.

As places where children and adolescents are concentrated, schools can become targets for child recruitment into gangs or other armed groups, selling drugs, kidnapping for ransom or attacks against children on their way to or from school, or even at school. Girls' schools and female students can be particularly vulnerable to such attacks, especially in areas where opposition to the education of girls exists. Gang-related violence can spill over into schools, especially when students are also gang members who bring small arms into schools.

Schools that are used as polling-stations in politically contested, conflict-affected areas can become targets for opposition groups that wish to disrupt elections.

The psychosocial impacts of witnessing, surviving or perpetrating armed violence can have negative impacts on children’s cognitive development and on their ability to participate effectively in class and learn while in school.

**NOTE** For further guidance, see the “Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict” contained in Annex F.

Outside of the context of armed conflict and gang violence, the presence of small arms in schools can also disrupt the education of children, adolescents and youth and can put them at risk of physical and psychological harm. Children can be driven by a range or motivations to bring a small arm to school, whether to carry out a premeditated attack, to threaten teachers or classmates, to impress peers or to protect themselves against aggression or bullying.

### 6.4 Context of exposure to small arms and light weapons

Small arms and light weapons can be misused in many ways, and in many different contexts. Small arms and light weapons control initiatives that target children, adolescents and youth shall take into consideration the specific circumstances in which the initiative is to take place. Contexts include but are not limited to: conflict and post-conflict settings, societies in time of peace, transitional contexts, urban and rural environments, etc. In each context there may be specific entry points for small arms and light weapons control initiatives and particular issues to consider.
EXAMPLE While children associated with armed forces or groups are generally linked to armed military or armed group structures in conflict zones, organized crime, including organized criminal gang violence, can cut across all contexts. In some contexts, linking to DDR efforts may be essential while in others strengthening national legislation or countering small arms as symbols of power and status can be identified as programme priorities.

The different types and intensity of exposure to small arms and light weapons, as well as the conditions and settings in which children, adolescents and youth live, shall inform the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of small arms and light weapons control initiatives.

NOTE For further information, see ISACS 04.20, Designing and Implementing Community Safety Programming; ISACS 04.30, Awareness-raising; and ISACS 05.10, Conducting small arms and light weapons surveys.

7 General Principles

7.1 Respect for children’s rights

All small arms and light weapons control initiatives that involve or are expected to have an impact on children, including adolescent minors, shall be carried out in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular,

a) children shall be protected and cared for, in line with their inherent right to life, survival and development; and

b) the best interests of the child shall be considered in all activities related to them while embracing the principles of participation, non-discrimination, empowerment and accountability.

7.2 Protection from all forms of violence

All appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures shall be taken to protect children, adolescents and youth from all forms of physical and mental violence and injury.

Small arms and light weapons control programming involving children, adolescents and youth should be developed by people with a sound knowledge of child development, children’s rights and child protection.

Discussions and programme development relating to children, adolescents, youth and small arms and light weapons should include representatives of and input from UNICEF.

Programme planners should take into consideration the 7 strategies, approaches and sectors for preventing violence against children that have been jointly developed by the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, the UN Office of Drugs and Crime and others (see Clause 5.6 and Annex A).

Participatory work with children, including adolescent minors, shall be based on a Child Protection Policy (see Clause 8).

Organisations have a duty of care towards children, adolescents and youth they work with and shall mitigate risks of abuse and exploitation.

7.3 Security and safety

Small arms and light weapons control initiatives shall take all necessary precautions to minimise the risks to which children, adolescents and youth are exposed.

Small arms and light weapons control initiatives that involve or impact children, adolescents or youth shall ensure that the affected individuals are repeatedly exposed to risk education regarding the
hazardous nature of small arms, light weapons and their ammunition, in accordance with ISACS 04.30, *Awareness-raising*.

Children — especially young and pre-adolescent children — shall be kept physically apart from small arms, light weapons and their ammunition at all times.

While it may not always be possible to keep adolescents and youth physically separate from small arms, light weapons and their ammunition in the context of a control initiative (e.g. when adolescents and youth are handing over small arms during a collection initiative), such physical separation should be imposed to the extent possible in order to minimise risks.

In any environment where small arms or light weapons are present, children, adolescents and youth — especially boys and young men — will be tempted to interact with them even if they have been sensitised to the risks involved. This is especially true in contexts where prevailing social norms accept or encourage the possession and use of small arms and light weapons.

Children, adolescents and youth may also be vulnerable to being targeted by actors seeking to discourage or spoil small arms and light weapons control initiatives. Special attention should be given to ensuring their protection and security.

### 7.4 Participation and consultation

The priorities and input of children, adolescents and youth should be taken into account, as relevant, throughout the small arms and light weapons control programme cycle.

Participation by children, adolescents and youth in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation can lead to greater levels of ownership, acceptance and sustainability of the programme in question. However, because of the risk of it becoming tokenistic, care shall be taken to ensure that such participation is not merely symbolic — it should entail equal representation and power sharing.

The participation of children in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of small arms and light weapons control initiatives should be managed in accordance with relevant best practice guidelines, such as those proposed by UNICEF at [https://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/resourceguide_ethics.html](https://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/resourceguide_ethics.html). Such guidelines provide practical guidance on how to ensure that

- a) adult organisations and workers are committed to ethical participatory practice and to the primacy of children’s best interests;
- b) children participate in processes and address issues that affect them — either directly or indirectly — and have the choice as to whether to participate or not;
- c) children experience a safe, welcoming and encouraging environment for their participation;
- d) child participation work challenges and does not reinforce existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion, and encourages those groups of children who typically suffer discrimination and who are often excluded from activities to be involved in participatory processes;
- e) adult staff and managers involved in supporting or facilitating children’s participation are trained and supported to do their jobs to a high standard;
- f) child protection policies and procedures form an essential part of participatory work with children (see Clause 8); and
- g) respect for children’s involvement is indicated by a commitment to provide feedback and/or follow-up and to evaluate the quality and impact of children’s participation.
7.5 Collaboration and synergies

Small arms and light weapons control initiatives should link where possible to other programming related to children, adolescents and youth; e.g.

a) disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants;
b) reintegration of children associated with armed forces or groups;
c) survivor and victim assistance;
d) justice for children;
e) adolescent and youth employment initiatives;
f) security sector reform;
g) efforts to transform harmful social practices and norms; and
h) community-based child protection and policing.

7.6 Gender, age, culture and context

Children, adolescents and youth are as diverse as, if not more diverse than, adults. The needs and experiences of adolescents and youth are generally different than those of young and pre-adolescent children. Individuals of the same age might not have the same understanding, experience, skills, interests and abilities vis-a-vis small arms and light weapons.

Identity markers such as age, gender, class, race and income-level — as well as the culture and the context in which the individual finds themselves — should be taken into account when developing small arms and light weapons control programmes involving children, adolescents or youth.

8 Child protection policy

8.1 General

All organisations that work directly or indirectly with children shall develop and implement a child protection policy. A child protection policy is a statement that makes it clear what an organisation or group will do to keep children safe.

8.2 Contents

A child protection policy should include

a) a statement setting out the organisation’s commitment to protecting all children;
b) details of what the organisation will do to keep children safe and respond to concerns; and

c) a list of the supporting procedures that accompany the policy.

8.3 Questions to consider

When drafting a child protection policy, the following questions should be considered:

a) What are the potential risks to children? Who may pose a risk? What situations may increase risk? What are the gender-specific risks?
b) How have people who work or volunteer for the organisation been vetted and how is this carried out for new hires / volunteers.

c) What are the different ways in which someone might raise a concern?

d) How should the organisation respond to concerns or allegations of harm?

e) How does the child protection policy link up with other relevant policies and procedures?

f) Should the organisation provide training for staff and volunteers?

g) How will you raise awareness of the importance of child protection for everyone involved with the organisation?

8.4 Drafting

When drafting a child protection policy, an organisation should

a) tailor the policy and procedures to suit the needs of the organisation;

b) use words and phrases that will mean the most to the group or community;

c) involve people from different parts of the organisation to make sure the policy is relevant for everyone;

d) think about how you can involve children and incorporate their perspectives; and

e) ask different people in different roles to read the policy and provide feedback in order to ensure that it is relevant to everybody in the organisation.

8.5 Structure

A child protection policy should be concise (preferably less than 2 pages) and should include the following:

8.5.1 Purpose and aim of the policy

Identify the organisation, its purpose and function. Set out the organisation's commitment to keeping children safe and how, in broad terms, the organisation will meet this commitment.

8.5.2 Links to relevant guidance

Briefly cite the main laws, norms and other guidance that support the policy, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Explain how the policy links to other relevant organisational policies and procedures such as taking photographs and videos, internet use, recruitment, etc.

8.5.3 Equality statement

Include a statement to the effect that all children and young people have the same protection regardless of any characteristic such as age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, etc.

The policy should state the organisation's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and should explicitly recognise the additional needs of children from minority ethnic groups and disabled children and the barriers they may face, especially in relation to communication.
8.5.4 Scope of the policy

The policy shall cover all children and should apply to all adults in the organisation (staff and volunteers, full-time and part-time), not only those who work directly with children.

8.5.5 Dates

The policy shall include

a) the date the policy comes into force; and

b) the periodicity of its review (e.g. annually).

9 Programming for children, adolescents and youth

9.1 General

The involvement of children, adolescents and youth with small arms and light weapons is largely dependent on the context in which they live. In order to design an effective control programme targeting children, adolescents and youth, it is essential to understand the factors contributing to the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

Poverty, war, abuse, lawlessness, impunity, unemployment, inequality, underdevelopment, urbanization, the need for protection and a sense of belonging, anger, revenge and social and cultural norms may be amongst the reasons why some children, adolescents and youth become victims, witnesses and perpetrators of armed violence.

Children, adolescents and youth can play a positive role in small arms and light weapons control programming. When given the opportunity to become safely and actively involved in programme design and implementation, they can become invaluable agents of change.

Children, adolescents and youth should be provided with opportunities to safely and meaningfully participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes that target them. Where it is safe and appropriate, they should have the right to decide the scope and terms of their participation.

While at times there is a tendency to identify children and youth, especially young males, as primarily part of the problem in the context of armed violence, it is important to remember that often the worst perpetrators among children and youth have become so due to particularly difficult life circumstances and as a result of abuse, exploitation and manipulation perpetrated by adults.

Children, adolescents and youth — including those who have been successfully rehabilitated following perpetration of violence and those who have shunned and evaded violence — have an important role to play as positive role-models in influencing their peers.

The programming sub-sections below are informed by and adapted from the UNICEF Protective Environment Framework to ensure that small arms and light weapons control initiatives create a safe, secure and nurturing environment for children, adolescents and youth.

9.2 Gender and age considerations

Small arms and light weapons control initiatives shall be planned and implemented in a gender- and age-sensitive manner in order to ensure that the different vulnerabilities, risks, interests, needs and priorities of boys, girls, young men and young women are adequately addressed.

Adolescent boys and young men are most directly impacted by small arms and light weapons misuse, both as victims and perpetrators. The risks to and behaviour of adolescent and young men are often
influenced by social and group norms related to masculinity and manhood. Community and culturally-defined roles and social norms that link masculinity with power, physical force and arms contribute to higher levels of violent behaviour among young men than young women.

While the majority of the victims and perpetrators of armed violence are adolescent males and young men, girls, boys and young women suffer particular impacts. These may include the loss of a male breadwinner or protector, the burden of caring for an injured family member, the collapse of public services, displacement and sexual violence.

Moreover, rape, domestic violence, murder and sexual abuse are significant causes of female mortality and are primary causes of injury for women aged 15 - 44. It is also important to remember that while girls and women may face particular vulnerabilities, they can also be perpetrators of armed violence.

Children do not constitute a homogeneous group. Boys and girls of different ages can be impacted by small arms and light weapons in different ways. To address age-specific dimensions, it is useful to apply a life-cycle approach to analysing and addressing impacts on children at different stages of life. Given that both boys and girls face the greatest small arms-related risks in adolescence, it is particularly relevant to analyse and address impacts at the various stages of adolescence, namely: early (10-13 years), middle (14-16 years), and late (17-19 years).

As young men constitute the primary victims and perpetrators of small arms and light weapons misuse, they should play a central role in the development of control initiatives. Equally, girls and young women, both as victims and perpetrators, can offer an alternative and no less important perspective on small arms and light weapons misuse.

Specific interventions may be necessary to ensure that adolescent boys, including those perceived primarily as perpetrators, are given an opportunity to safely participate and contribute. Efforts shall also be made to correct gender imbalances in order to make sure that the voices of girls and young women, as well as boys and young men, are listened to during the planning phase, and that initiatives that are being developed equally benefit boys, young men, girls and young women.

NOTE For more information on approaches to small arms and light weapons control programming as it relates to gender, see ISACS 06.10, Women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons.

9.3 Voice and representation

9.3.1 General

Children, adolescents and youth shall be included in processes that affect their security and safety. In the context of small arms and light weapons control, they have the right to have a voice and to be represented. They should be given the opportunity to influence and participate in — in a meaningful and safe way — the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of small arms and light weapons control initiatives.

NOTE Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that children have a right to be heard. The application of this right has been broadly conceptualised as ‘participation,’ which is widely used as a shorthand to describe children’s right to involvement in decisions and actions that affect them and to have those views taken into account.

Special attention should be paid to including hard-to-reach groups, which are often the most vulnerable to and the most knowledgeable about the misuse of small arms and light weapons, without compromising their safety, security and right to confidentiality.

NOTE Hard-to-reach groups include street children, out-of-school children, children associated with organized criminal groups (e.g. criminal gangs) or armed groups, children in conflict with the law, survivors of armed violence and displaced and other marginalized children.
9.3.2 Questions to consider before asking children, adolescents and youth to participate

There are significant budgetary and human resource implications of creating space and opportunities for children, adolescents and youth (especially the most marginalised) to participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives to control small arms and light weapons. Before making decision on inclusion, organisation should ask themselves the following questions:

a) Why have we not done it before?
b) What do we hope to achieve?
c) What will children, adolescents and youth get out of it?
d) Are we prepared to resource it properly?
e) Are we prepared to involve children, adolescents and youth from the start?
f) Are we being honest with the children, adolescents and youth?
g) What are our expectations?
h) Are we prepared to give up some power?
i) Are we prepared to take some criticism?
j) Do we recognise this as a long-term commitment?
k) Are we prepared to build in long-term changes, and not just have a one-off event?

9.3.3 Reasons to involve children, adolescents and youth

Children adolescents and youth should be involved in small arms and light weapons control programming because

a) they know their situation best and have ideas of how to effect change;
b) they have a democratic right to articulate their views and experiences and to take part in decision-making that affects their future;
c) their involvement improves understanding within organisations and institutions of the particular needs of children, adolescents and youth, which can lead to the elaboration of appropriate and relevant responses; and
d) they have an important role to play as positive role-models for their peers.

9.3.4 Nature of participation

The participation of children, adolescents and youth shall be

a) safe, age- and gender-appropriate;
b) meaningful rather than tokenistic, and

c) on their own terms and with the discretion to set their own parameters on commitments and time.

The experiences of adolescents and youth as they relate to small arms and light weapons are usually different from those of younger children. Depending on their life circumstances, individuals of the same age are also likely to have different understandings, experiences, skills, interests and abilities.
The individual and special needs of children, adolescents and youth shall be taken into account in order to ensure equal access to participation, especially by the most marginalised.

9.3.5 Levels of engagement and power-sharing

9.3.5.1 Consultative participation

At this level of engagement, adults seek the views of children, adolescents and youth to build knowledge and understanding of their lives and experiences. Consultative participation is often initiated, led or managed by adults. It may or may not lead to the sharing or transferring of decision-making processes to children themselves, but its central concept is that children have expertise and perspectives that need to inform adult decision-making. Consultation is an appropriate means of enabling children, adolescents and youth to express views to inform research or analysis or to contribute to planning, designing, monitoring or evaluating small arms and light weapons control programmes.

9.3.5.2 Collaborative participation

This level of engagement provides a greater degree of partnership between adults, on the one hand, and children, adolescents and youth, on the other, with the opportunity for active engagement by the latter at any stage of a decision, initiative, project or service. Collaborative participation

a) is adult-initiated, although it can be child-initiated;

b) involves partnership with children;

c) empowers children to influence or challenge both process and outcomes;

d) allows for more self-directed action by children over a period of time.

The establishment of collaborative structures, such as children’s advisory boards, can provide a means for more systematic and regular information-sharing, dialogue and collaborative action planning with children, adolescents and youth.

9.3.5.3 Child-led participation

At this level of engagement, children, adolescents and youth are afforded the space and opportunity to initiate activities and advocate for themselves. It generally means that

a) children, adolescents and youth themselves identify issues of concern;

b) adults serve as facilitators rather than leaders; and

c) children, adolescents and youth control the process.

The role of adults in child-led participation is to act as facilitators to enable children to pursue their own objectives, through provision of information, advice and support.

9.3.6 Basic requirements for children’s meaningful and ethical participation

The participation of children, adolescents and youth in initiatives to control small arms and light weapons shall be:

a) Safe — children shall not be put in harm’s way. Children should feel safe when they participate and should know where to go for help if they feel unsafe while participating. Risks to children shall be identified, as well as ways of mitigating such risks in order to keep children safe.
b) **Transparent and informative** — children shall have sufficient information about the initiative to make an informed decision about whether and how they may participate; and information shall be shared with children in child-friendly formats and in languages they understand.

c) **Voluntary** — children shall be given enough information and time to make decisions about whether or not they wish to participate and shall be allowed to stop participating at any time they wish.

d) **Respectful** — Children’s own time commitments (e.g. to study, work, play, etc.) shall be taken into consideration and respected. The ways of working with children shall respect local cultural practices. Support shall be gained from key adults in children’s lives (e.g. parents, care-givers, teachers, etc.) to ensure respect for children’s participation.

e) **Relevant** — The issues being discussed and addressed shall be of real relevance to children’s lives. Children should not feel any pressure from adults to participate in activities that are not relevant to them.

f) **Child-friendly** — Child-friendly approaches and methods that build self-confidence among girls and boys of different ages and abilities shall be used, including child-friendly meeting spaces that are accessible to children with disabilities.

g) **Inclusive** — Girls and boys of different ages, abilities and backgrounds, including younger children, children with disabilities and children from different ethnic groups, shall be given opportunities to participate in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner. Children should be encouraged to address discrimination through their participation.

h) **Accountable** — Children shall be supported to participate in follow-up and evaluation processes. Adults shall take children’s views and suggestions seriously and act upon them. Children shall be given feedback on any requested support needs and follow-up.

i) **Supported by training for adults** — The adults facilitating the participation of children shall be appropriately trained in order to ensure that their approach is child-friendly, that they have the confidence to facilitate children’s participation and that they are able to effectively support children’s participation in the community.

### 9.3.7 Participation in decision-making

The concerns of children, adolescents and youth relating to small arms and light weapons control shall be fed into relevant policymaking and programming processes. They shall have the possibility to provide inputs to decision-making processes on issues that affect their security and safety, including the development of

a) National Action Plans (see ISACS 04.10, *Designing and implementing a National Action Plan*); and

b) Community Safety Plans (see ISACS 04.30, *Designing and implementing community safety programming*);

In order to ensure their formal participation in decision-making processes related to small arms and light weapons control (including regional and international meetings), governments and non-governmental organisations may include children, adolescents and youth on their official delegations.

### 9.3.8 Diversity in participation

While children, adolescents and youth who are survivors of, or who are at risk of harm through, the misuse of small arms and light weapons are key stakeholders, those who do not have such direct experiences are also stakeholders. The latter might know peers affected by armed violence and they are likely to understand their peer group needs and how to address them. Child, adolescent and youth participation in small arms and light weapons control processes should also include those who are differently abled, such as children with disabilities and survivors of small arms-related violence.
9.3.9 Engagement with the media and other decision-makers

When children, adolescents and youth participate in decision-making processes related to small arms and light weapons control, it is likely that they will engage (directly or indirectly) with the media and adult decision-makers, whether national, regional or international.

Dialogue meetings may be organised between children, adolescents and youth and adult policymakers and decision makers in order to ensure that the former can present their key messages and proposed action-points on small arms and light weapons control issues.

Full and informed consent of both the individual child and their parent or guardian shall be secured prior to a child’s participation in meetings that require interaction with the media or adult decision-makers.

The best interest and safety of the children, adolescents and youth involved shall be the primary consideration in such engagement. Media interaction with children shall be undertaken safely and in accordance with the best interests and needs of the children involved. Younger children may need an adult or a young person to act as a spokesperson.

9.4 Age-disaggregated data

Small arms and light weapons control initiatives should be based on a comprehensive analysis of age- and gender-disaggregated data. In the absence of such data, efforts should be made to improve data gathering and analysis in order to enable age- and gender-specific analyses.

Age disaggregated data from small arms and light weapons surveys and injury surveillance mechanisms should serve as a reference framework for all small arms and light weapons control initiatives targeting children, adolescents or youth. Such data should be used to establish baselines, targets and performance indicators.

Data and analysis specific to children, adolescents and youth should inform the development of National Action Plans on small arms and light weapons control, as well as the development of local community safety plans, in accordance with ISACS 04.10, Designing and implementing a National Action Plan, and ISACS 04.20, Designing and implementing community safety programming. Such data and analyses can also be used to inform other relevant processes such as legislative reforms, security sector reform, mine action, child reintegration in the context of DDR, etc.

9.4.1 Small arms and light weapons surveys

Small arms and light weapons surveys shall be carried out in accordance with ISACS 05.10, Conducting small arms and light weapons surveys, in order to ensure the collection of age- and sex-disaggregated data. Specifically in relation to children, adolescents and youth, a small arms and light weapons survey should

a) shed light on the demand for small arms and light weapons among children, adolescents and youth, including historical, economic and cultural factors driving demand among male and female children, adolescents and youth;

b) map armed violence patterns and hotspots, as well as risk factors and protective factors in relation to children, adolescents and youth;

c) identify existing and emerging positive coping mechanisms and possible drivers for change relevant to children, adolescents and youth, including social and cultural norms, constructive peer groups and other positive role-models; and

d) identify child-, adolescent- and youth-specific entry points for programming.

NOTE For further guidance see ISACS 05.10, Conducting small arms and light weapons surveys.
9.4.2 Armed violence monitoring systems

National mechanisms that monitor armed violence, crime and/or injury — e.g. conflict early warning systems, crime or violence observatories and public health injury surveillance systems — can provide critical ongoing evidence about the magnitude, nature and dynamics of the impact of small arms and light weapons misuse on children, adolescents and youth, including changes over time and temporal patterns that one-off surveys may not capture. Where they exist, armed violence monitoring systems should provide sex- and age-disaggregated data on

a) the locations of armed violence incidents, in order to identify the most dangerous areas for children, adolescents and youth that should be prioritized for small arms and light weapons control initiatives;

b) the profiles of victims, in order to identify the most vulnerable children, adolescents and youth who could most benefit from awareness-raising and risk education activities;

c) the profiles of perpetrators, in order to help in the design of small arms and light weapons control initiatives, as well as the targeting for outreach.

NOTE In some contexts, the profile of perpetrators should not be documented due to security risks and sensitivities. Such data shall only be collected when it is safe to do so.

d) the circumstances of incidents of armed violence, in order to identify the main risk-taking behaviours among children, adolescents and youth for the design of appropriate risk education messaging;

e) the types of small arms and light weapons involved, in order to inform risk education messaging and the design of appropriate small arms and light weapons control initiatives;

f) the number of deaths and injuries (and injury type), in order to inform the design of victim and survivor assistance support and facilitate monitoring of the impact of small arms and light weapons control activities on children, adolescents and youth; and

g) the timing of armed violence incidents, in order to inform an analysis of the temporal dynamics of incidents and help with the design of risk reduction initiatives targeting children, adolescents and youth.

9.5 Linkages to related initiatives

9.5.1 General

Related initiatives — e.g. in the areas of DDR, youth employment, victim assistance and juvenile justice — may be relevant to initiatives to protect children, adolescents and youth from becoming victims or perpetrators of armed violence. Where feasible, appropriate linkages should be made to such related initiatives.

9.5.2 Reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups

The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of children, adolescents and youth associated with armed forces and groups includes aspects related to small arms and light weapons control. Increasingly, the reintegration of such children is undertaken in the absence of peace agreements or formal DDR programmes. As such, even in contexts were DDR programmes are not present, there may be child reintegration programmes with which linkages could be made. Linkages should also be established with schools in order to support efforts to reintegrate children associated with armed forces and groups back into the community.

NOTE For further guidance on this issue, see IDDRS 05.20 (Youth and DDR) and IDDRS 05.30 (Children and DDR).
9.5.3 Schools

In contexts where the education and safety of children, adolescents and youth is threatened or disrupted by the presence of small arms in schools, and in support of Target 4.a of the Sustainable Development Goals to “provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”,

a) laws, regulations and administrative procedures to address the problem shall be put in place and enforced, including the designation of schools as gun-free zones as well as preventive, disciplinary and rehabilitative measures targeted at those who bring small arms to school;

b) mechanisms shall be put in place to identify early warning signs in children, adolescents and youth that could indicate a risk of bringing a small arm to school;

c) information systems (e.g. registry of incidents, student surveys, etc.) shall be established in order better to understand the context of small arms presence in schools, taking into account the different motivations that children may have to bring small arms to school (see Clause 6.3.4.3), the profiles of perpetrators and victims of small arms-related incidents in schools, and students’ access to small arms; and

d) communication and awareness-raising campaigns shall be organised among school communities (school staff, parents and students) and small arms-specific components shall be incorporated into school violence prevention programmes.

In implementing the above measures, school authorities shall take special care to respect the human rights of children, adolescents and youth and to avoid stigmatising or criminalising them.

9.5.4 Youth employment

Youth employment, apprenticeship and vocational training can be relevant to small arms and light weapons control work, especially if the focus is on older adolescents and youth. Adolescent and youth employment and economic integration can play a significant role in preventing adolescents and youth from becoming involved with, or continuing involvement with, armed groups or organised criminal groups.

When implemented as part of a livelihood programme aimed at a broad age-group encompassing children, adolescents, youth and adults, care shall be taken to ensure that the employment opportunities and activities in which children may participate are age appropriate and do not contribute to labour-related exploitation of children.

Such programmes shall be implemented in accordance with the United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration.

9.5.5 Victim assistance

Violence has a contaminating effect. It affects not only the victim and the perpetrator but also the families, friends and colleagues of both, as well as witnesses of violent acts and the broader community. Small arms and light weapons control initiatives can be especially relevant to, and can support, programmes focused on assisting young victims of violence perpetrated with small arms or light weapons.

9.5.6 Juvenile justice

In many countries, especially those experiencing heightened levels of insecurity and armed violence, criminal acts perpetrated by children and adolescents are often processed through the adult justice system, especially in contexts with inadequate legal and institutional frameworks and systems for juvenile justice.

While perpetrators who are children and adolescent minors should be held accountable for their actions, accountability measures should focus on rehabilitation and social reintegration, rather than on punitive actions.
Lack of access to age-appropriate justice measures that promote rehabilitation can result in the perpetuation of the cycle of violence, and contravenes children’s rights to special protection as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

There are clear linkages between small arms and light weapons control initiatives and efforts to strengthen child protection systems, since both focus on strengthening laws, policies and institutional mechanism to prevent and respond to violence. This includes strengthening laws, regulations and administrative procedures that aim to protect victims, witnesses and child perpetrators of crimes, including those perpetrated with small arms and light weapons.

### 9.5.7 Awareness-raising

Raising awareness of the risks associated with the illicit trade, widespread availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons shall be carried out in accordance with ISACS 04.30, Awareness-raising.

An important factor in successful small arms and light weapons control efforts is to make children, adolescents and youth, both female and male, fully aware of the risks associated with the illicit trade, widespread availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

Children, adolescents and youth may be the focus of awareness-raising initiatives and, specifically, of risk education in relation to small arms and light weapons. In addition, children, adolescents and youth should also be involved in a meaningful way in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of awareness-raising campaigns, including in the development and testing of key messages, in the choice of media to be used, and in the delivery of key messages to identified target groups.

Awareness-raising campaigns should make special efforts to reach marginalised groups, which are often the most vulnerable to, and the most knowledgeable about, the misuse of small arms and light weapons, without compromising the safety, security, and right to confidentiality of such groups. Such marginalised groups include street children, out-of-school children, children associated with organized criminal groups (e.g. criminal gangs), children in conflict with the law, child survivors of armed violence and displaced children.

In areas facing widespread and protracted problems with small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse, risk education should be integrated into school curricula. In situations where the level of school enrolment is low, special efforts should be made to provide risk education to children, adolescents and youth who do not attend school.

In situations where gang violence is a concern, risk education initiatives should address the question of how to divert children, adolescents and youth away from gang involvement. This may include preventive work in schools, e.g. the teaching of conflict resolution; having former gang members communicate an anti-gang message and raising awareness of available methods of witness protection.

Risk education and awareness-raising among children, adolescents and youth should be integrated into and should support, where they exist, a) initiatives to build confidence in and promote constructive interaction with law enforcement officials (e.g. in the context of community-oriented policing); and b) peace and/or disarmament education programmes.

Where such initiatives and programmes do not exist, risk education and awareness-raising on the possession, proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons may be used as initial steps in establishing such broader programmes.
9.6 Peace and disarmament education

9.6.1 General

Peace and disarmament education is a process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, adolescents, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

9.6.2 Objectives

The overarching objective of peace and disarmament education is to impart knowledge and skills to people in order to empower them to make a contribution to achieving concrete peace and disarmament goals within their communities, their countries and the world. Specific objectives include empowering people to

a) learn how to think rather than what to think about issues;

b) develop critical thinking skills in an informed citizenry;

c) deepen understanding of the multiple factors at the local, national, regional and global levels that either foster or undermine peace;

d) encourage attitudes and actions that promote peace;

e) convey relevant information on and to foster a responsive attitude to current and future security challenges; and

f) bridge political, regional and technological divides by bringing together ideas, concepts, people, groups and institutions to promote concerted international efforts towards disarmament, non-proliferation and a peaceful and non-violent world.

The objective of peace and disarmament education initiatives that target children, adolescents and youth should be to create an environment of trust, build respect for human life and strengthen capacity for non-violent conflict resolution, meaningful participation and democratic thinking.

9.6.3 Elements of effective programmes

Elements of effective peace and disarmament education programmes include

a) conducting a situation analysis prior to designing the programme, and planning for monitoring and evaluation prior to beginning any intervention;

b) allowing ample time to train staff/teachers, so that they can both internalize concepts and skills of peace and disarmament education themselves, and be adequately prepared to convey those concepts and skills to others;

c) using cooperative and interactive methods that allow for active student participation and practice;

d) teaching generic problem-solving skills through the use of real-life situations;

e) consistent reinforcement in non-school contexts of conflict resolution skills learned at school, e.g. through educating parents and community groups in the same skills taught at school;

f) ensuring gender and cultural sensitivity in programme design and implementation, as well as appropriateness for the age group;
g) incorporating analysis of conflicts in the community and/or the wider society, as well as of interpersonal conflict, in the programme;

h) providing young people with the opportunity to engage in constructive, peace-building activities in their school and community; and

i) enlisting broad-based community support for the programme from the outset, e.g. among politicians, educators, community leaders, public health professionals, religious groups and business leaders.

9.6.4 Integrating peace education

Peace and disarmament education may be integrated into an existing school curriculum or may be developed into separate stand-alone lessons or extra-curricular activities.

The guidance provided by UNESCO in “Educating for Peace: Planning for Curriculum Reform” shall be followed when integrating an education for peace curriculum into education sector plans and policies.

When integrating peace education into an existing school curriculum, care shall be taken not to put additional pressure on already over-stretched or under-funded educational institutions and teachers. In such cases, it may be more appropriate to implement peace education as a stand-alone subject or through extra-curricular activities for a limited period of time.

Formal as well as informal education structures can be involved in peace education projects as there is potential overlap between schools and community based organisations.

9.6.5 Incorporating small arms and light weapons control

Peace and disarmament education initiatives that incorporate the issue of small arms and light weapons control, should

a) build on existing community norms, values and positive coping mechanisms, especially those that contribute to reducing violence and discouraging illegal small arms possession and misuse; and

b) be a vehicle for developing strategies and activities for children, adolescents and youth to practice non-violent conflict resolution, conflict prevention, communication, cooperation and collaboration.

9.6.6 Project framework

Community members and representatives of relevant programmes and institutions, as well as children adolescents and youth, shall be involved in the planning and design of peace and disarmament education programmes. Such an inclusive approach can help to identify and build on existing community-level coping mechanisms, foster local ownership, and reveal how the community relates to peace and how it views the challenges presented by violence and the misuse of small arms.

A coordinator and a working group may be appointed to assist in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of peace and disarmament education projects. The coordinator should have an education background, as well as sufficient time, interest and commitment. The working group should include female and male community representatives, including children, adolescents and youth, as well as teachers and individuals with training experience.

9.6.7 Institutional framework

A peace and disarmament education initiative can be implemented within the framework of an existing national, regional or international organisation and/or as part of a civil society effort. The institution hosting the peace and disarmament education programme should
a) be committed to peace and disarmament;

b) have access to an established network within the community, including children, adolescents and youth;

c) have a good working relationship with existing formal systems (e.g. government ministries responsible for Education, Youth, etc.); and

d) have the capacity to support the initiative with resources (people, office space, equipment, etc.).

9.6.8 Curriculum development

The peace and disarmament education curriculum should be developed in an inclusive manner with inputs from teachers, children, adolescents, youth and representatives of community-based organisations, especially youth and women’s groups. The curriculum should be adapted to age and gender considerations and should be compatible with and support existing positive community coping mechanisms, values and norms.

The curriculum may also include other related topics such as understanding the root causes of conflicts, facts about the arms trade, levels of violence, the rule of law, the problem of impunity, military spending, the impact of the media in glorifying small arms, small arms as a symbol of masculinity and other issues pertinent to children, adolescents and youth.

9.6.9 Materials

Resources on peace and disarmament education are available through a number of channels, including UN Agencies and NGOs. These may be used to assist in the development of peace and disarmament education initiatives. See Annex E for a suggested list of resources.

9.6.10 Monitoring and evaluation

Planning for monitoring and evaluation should precede implementation of a peace and disarmament education programme, i.e. it should be included in the initial process of planning and designing the programme. An effective monitoring and evaluation strategy should

a) develop a clear statement of aims for the peace and disarmament education programme;

b) for each aim, decide on the desired outcomes, and express these in behavioural terms;

c) for each outcome, develop several indicators, which should also be expressed in behavioural terms;

d) collect baseline data (prior to the intervention) on the group to be studied for each indicator.

NOTE Data may be collected through the use of focus groups, surveys, questionnaires, rating scales, interviews, observations, and reviews of school records. Baseline data should be disaggregated by sex and age. There should be balanced representation of girls and boys in focus groups and surveys.

e) at the same time, collect baseline data at a control group site (the programme may plan on including this group at a later time);

f) carry out the programme or intervention;

g) after programme implementation (and during it, if this is appropriate), collect data relative to each indicator. Compare this with the baseline data.

h) during and/or after programme implementation, collect information that could be used to write case studies on the project.
NOTE: Case studies are a way of bringing data to life and giving it a human face. Examples of material that might be the basis of a case study: an account of an action project to create greater inter-group understanding undertaken by youth in a peace education programme; a description from a classroom teacher of how involvement in a peace education programme changed other aspects of his/her teaching style; a story of a positive change in the relationship between two young people of different ethnic groups who were brought together during the programme. Focus group discussions are one way of collecting data for case studies.

i) collect data relative to the indicators a year later, to see whether the outcomes of the programme have been sustained over time; and

j) once the intervention is completed with the first group, repeat the collection of baseline data with the control group.

NOTE: For further guidance, see ISACS 04.40, Monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
Annex A  
(informative)

Strategies, approaches and sectors for preventing and responding to violence against children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>Cross-cutting activities</th>
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</table>
| Implementation and enforcement of laws| - Laws banning violent punishment of children by parents, teachers or other caregivers  
                                       |                          | Justice                                    | Multisectoral actions and coordination       |
|                                       | - Laws criminalizing sexual abuse and exploitation of children                            |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Laws that prevent alcohol misuse                                                        |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Laws limiting youth access to firearms and other weapons                                |                          |                                               |
| Norms and values                      | - Changing adherence to restrictive and harmful gender and social norms                    | Health, Education, Social |                                               |
|                                       | - Community mobilization programmes                                                       | Welfare                   | Planning                                      |
|                                       | - Bystander interventions                                                                 | Interior                  |                                               |
| Safe environments                     | - Reducing violence by addressing "hotspots"                                               | Social Welfare, Health    |                                               |
|                                       | - Interrupting the spread of violence                                                     |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Improving the built environment                                                        |                          |                                               |
| Parent and caregiver support          | - Delivered through home visits                                                            | Social Welfare, Health    |                                               |
|                                       | - Delivered in groups in community settings                                               |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Delivered through comprehensive programmes                                              |                          |                                               |
| Income and economic strengthening     | - Cash transfers                                                                            | Finance, Labour           |                                               |
|                                       | - Group saving and loans combined with gender equity training                             |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Microfinance combined with gender norm training                                          |                          |                                               |
| Response and support services         | - Counselling and therapeutic approaches                                                   | Health, Justice, Social   | Monitoring and evaluation                     |
|                                       | - Screening combined with interventions                                                   | Welfare                   |                                               |
|                                       | - Treatment programmes for juvenile offenders in the criminal justice system               |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Foster care interventions involving social welfare services                              |                          |                                               |
| Education and life skills             | - Increase enrolment in pre-school, primary and secondary schools                         | Education                 |                                               |
|                                       | - Establish a safe and enabling school environment                                         |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Improve children’s knowledge about sexual abuse and how to protect themselves against it |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Life and social skills training                                                         |                          |                                               |
|                                       | - Adolescent intimate partner violence prevention programmes                               |                          |                                               |

Annex B
(informative)

Example of a Child Protection Policy

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” and “children” encompass all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Scope of application

This policy applies to all staff working on behalf of [name of group/organisation]. This includes, but is not limited to, senior managers, members of the board of trustees, paid staff and volunteers, whether they work full- or part-time.

Policy purpose

- To protect children who receive [name of group/organisation]’s services. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- To familiarise staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

Child protection statement

[Name of group/organisation] believes that a child should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have a right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential to promoting young people’s welfare.

We will seek to keep children safe by
• valuing them, listening to and respecting them;
• adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers;
• providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training;
• recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made;
• sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers; and
• sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up based on law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

• [List other relevant laws and guidance, e.g. national laws related to children and to sexual offences, as well as relevant government guidance on safeguarding children]

Review

We are committed to reviewing our child protection policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: ............................................................(date)

Signed: ........................................................................................................

[To be signed by the most senior person in the organisation]
Annex C
(informative)

5-Point Action Plan to End Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict

**SHOW YOUR SUPPORT**
TELL THE WORLD THEY ARE

**ACTION PLAN**
HOW TO END THE RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT:

**ONE** Issue military command orders prohibiting the recruitment and use of children

**TWO** Release all children identified in the ranks of security forces

**THREE** Ensure children’s reintegration into civilian life

**FOUR** Criminalize the recruitment and use of children

**FIVE** Integrate age-verification mechanisms in recruitment procedures

CHILDRENANDARMEDCONFLICT.ORG

[Logos for United Nations and UNICEF]
Annex D
(informative)

10-Point Checklist: Preventing State Use of Child Soldiers

Child Soldiers International developed the following 10-Point Checklist to assist in assessing where and why children are at risk of use in hostilities in armed forces for which states are responsible and to identify what measures can be taken to reduce these risks.

The 10-Point Checklist is based around ten core questions covering three areas of responsibility covered by Child Soldiers International’s report, Louder Than Words: An agenda for action to end state use of child soldiers.

Child soldier use by state armed forces

1. Are children prohibited in law from participating in hostilities?
2. Has 18 years been established in law as the minimum age for compulsory and voluntary recruitment?
3. Does every child have independently verifiable proof of age?
4. Are there effective processes to verify the age of new recruits?
5. Are military recruitment processes subject to independent monitoring and oversight?
6. Is unlawful child recruitment and use criminalised in national law?
7. Does the criminal justice system have the capacity to effectively investigate and prosecute allegations of unlawful recruitment and use?

Child soldier use by state-allied armed groups

8. Are legal and practical safeguards in place to prevent recruitment and use of children by any armed groups allied to the state?

Arms transfers and security sector reform assistance

9. Are measures in place to ensure that international arms transfers and other forms of military assistance do not contribute to or facilitate the unlawful recruitment and use of children as soldiers in recipient states?
10. Are safeguards set out in this checklist reflected in national security sector reform (SSR) programs and in SSR assistance programs?
Annex E
(informative)

Resources to Help Develop a Peace Education Curriculum

E.1 Suggested materials

a) *Education for Peace: Planning for Curriculum Reform (Guidelines for integrating an Education for Peace curriculum into education sector plans and policies)* — UNESCO

b) Inter-Agency Peace Education Programme — UNHCR / UNESCO
   Teacher Training Manual: Level 1

c) “Dr. Joseph Hungwa Memorial Peace Education Program” — Teachers Without Borders

d) “Rationale for and Approaches to Peace Education” — Hague Appeal for Peace

   Book 1: *Learning to Abolish War: Teaching Toward a Culture of Peace*

   Book 2: *Sample Learning Units*

   Book 3: Sustaining the Global Campaign for Peace Education: Tools for Participation

   NOTE: Books 1-3 are available in Albanian, Arabic, English, French and Russian

E.2 Suggested websites

a) Disarmament Education — United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
   NOTE: Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

b) Global Campaign for Peace Education — Hague Appeal for Peace

c) Peace Education Initiatives — Teachers Without Borders
   [https://teacherswithoutborders.org/twb-peace](https://teacherswithoutborders.org/twb-peace)

d) Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education Partnership
   [https://www.dnpeducation.org](https://www.dnpeducation.org)

e) Peace Education Foundation
   [http://www.peace-ed.org](http://www.peace-ed.org)
Annex F  
(informative)

Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict

Guidelines developed by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, whose Steering Committee includes UNICEF, UNESCO and UNHCR (www.protectingeducation.org)

Parties to armed conflict are urged not to use schools and universities for any purpose in support of their military effort. While it is acknowledged that certain uses would not be contrary to the law of armed conflict, all parties should endeavour to avoid impinging on students’ safety and education, using the following as a guide to responsible practice:

Guideline 1: Functioning schools and universities should not be used by the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict in any way in support of the military effort.

(a) This principle extends to schools and universities that are temporarily closed outside normal class hours, during weekends and holidays, and during vacation periods.

(b) Parties to armed conflict should neither use force nor offer incentives to education administrators to evacuate schools and universities in order that they can be made available for use in support of the military effort.

Guideline 2: Schools and universities that have been abandoned or evacuated because of the dangers presented by armed conflict should not be used by the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict for any purpose in support of their military effort, except in extenuating circumstances when they are presented with no viable alternative, and only for as long as no choice is possible between such use of the school or university and another feasible method for obtaining a similar military advantage. Other buildings should be regarded as better options and used in preference to school and university buildings, even if they are not so conveniently placed or configured, except when such buildings are specially protected under International Humanitarian Law (e.g. hospitals), and keeping in mind that parties to armed conflict must always take all feasible precautions to protect all civilian objects from attack.

(a) Any such use of abandoned or evacuated schools and universities should be for the minimum time necessary.

(b) Abandoned or evacuated schools and universities that are used by the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict in support of the military effort should remain available to allow educational authorities to re-open them as soon as practicable after fighting forces have withdrawn from them, provided this would not risk endangering the security of students and staff.

(c) Any traces or indication of militarisation or fortification should be completely removed following the withdrawal of fighting forces, with every effort made to put right as soon as possible any damage caused to the infrastructure of the institution. In particular, all weapons, munitions and unexploded ordnance or remnants of war should be cleared from the site.
Guideline 3: Schools and universities must never be destroyed as a measure intended to deprive the opposing parties to the armed conflict of the ability to use them in the future. Schools and universities—be they in session, closed for the day or for holidays, evacuated or abandoned—are ordinarily civilian objects.

Guideline 4: While the use of a school or university by the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict in support of their military effort may, depending on the circumstances, have the effect of turning it into a military objective subject to attack, parties to armed conflict should consider all feasible alternative measures before attacking them, including, unless circumstances do not permit, warning the enemy in advance that an attack will be forthcoming unless it ceases its use.

(a) Prior to any attack on a school that has become a military objective, the parties to armed conflict should take into consideration the fact that children are entitled to special respect and protection. An additional important consideration is the potential long-term negative effect on a community’s access to education posed by damage to or the destruction of a school.

(b) The use of a school or university by the fighting forces of one party to a conflict in support of the military effort should not serve as justification for an opposing party that captures it to continue to use it in support of the military effort. As soon as feasible, any evidence or indication of militarisation or fortification should be removed and the facility returned to civilian authorities for the purpose of its educational function.

Guideline 5: The fighting forces of parties to armed conflict should not be employed to provide security for schools and universities, except when alternative means of providing essential security are not available. If possible, appropriately trained civilian personnel should be used to provide security for schools and universities. If necessary, consideration should also be given to evacuating children, students and staff to a safer location.

(a) If fighting forces are engaged in security tasks related to schools and universities, their presence within the grounds or buildings should be avoided if at all possible in order to avoid compromising the establishment’s civilian status and disrupting the learning environment.

Guideline 6: All parties to armed conflict should, as far as possible and as appropriate, incorporate these Guidelines into, for example, their doctrine, military manuals, rules of engagement, operational orders, and other means of dissemination, to encourage appropriate practice throughout the chain of command. Parties to armed conflict should determine the most appropriate method of doing this.

Additional Relevant Resources:

- Safe Schools Declaration
  www.protectingeducation.org/safe-schools-declaration-guidelines

- Implementing the Guidelines: A toolkit to guide understanding and implementation of the guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict
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**International and Regional Organizations**


**Other Sources**


