

The Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security

**COLLABORATION TO IMPLEMENT
THE VANCOUVER PRINCIPLES:**
Challenges & Recommendations



UBC MPPGA Global Policy Project 2021-2022
Wilson Dargbeh, Moysal Sana, Kshitij Sharan & Will Shelling

Table of Contents

Land Acknowledgements.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
Acronyms.....	III
Client Description.....	01
Team Description.....	01
Executive Summary.....	03
Introduction.....	05
Children in Armed Conflict as a Wicked Problem.....	08
How we Collected our Information.....	09
Ineffective Actions.....	10
<i>1) Reinforcement of Patriarchal and Paternalistic Norms</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>2) Sustainable Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)</i>	<i>12</i>
Challenges to Operationalization of the VP (with recommendations).....	14
<i>a) Coordination and Collaboration:Analysis.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Coordination and Collaboration: Recommendations.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>b) Awareness of the VPs: Analysis.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Awareness of the VPs: Recommendations.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>c) Knowledge and Training:Analysis.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Knowledge and Training: Recommendations.....</i>	<i>27</i>
Conclusion.....	29
References.....	30

Land Acknowledgements

We acknowledge that the lands of the University of British Columbia Vancouver (UBC) are based on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the X^wməθk^wə́yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwu7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilil'wətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations.

Due to the virtual nature of this work, especially at the time of the SARS-COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize that this work has also taken place outside of the physical spaces at UBC. The research team wishes to acknowledge the following Indigenous lands where their research, interviews, and meetings have been conducted.

The traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and the lands of Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit, colonially known as Toronto, Ontario. The unceded and traditional homelands of the Lenape also called Lenni-Lenape or Delaware Indians, colonially known as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The unceded, traditional land of the Coast Salish Peoples, specifically the Duwamish People. The unceded and traditional territory of the Munsee Lenape, and Lenni-Lenape, colonially known as the Poconos Mountains, Pennsylvania.

Acknowledgements

The Global Policy Project Team would like to acknowledge the following people for their tireless support and care during the duration of our project and its research.

First, to our instructors, Dr. Julian Dierkes and Corrin Bulmer, we thank you for your care, flexibility, and support throughout the process. To our faculty lead, Michael Small, we cannot begin to thank you for the brilliance you showed us, the things that you taught us about navigating this space, and the many moments of joy you threw our way. For our client contacts, Dr. Alan Okros, Dr. Emily Pelley, and Colin Magee, we couldn't have done this project without your focus, drive, and insights into a field that we entered knowing little about, but left gaining deep insights. For our participants, your lived experience storytelling gave us immeasurable knowledge and ways to know where to focus, giving us the nuance associated to tell a complex story, and of course, where to look when we didn't know where to go forward.

Finally, we want to thank our classmates. Your joy, support, and knowledge through numerous rounds of workshopping and perspective giving truly made our project a more robust piece of work. We thank you deeply.



<i>Word/Phase</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>
Canadian Armed Forces	CAF
Child Protection Focal Point	CPFP
Civil Society Organizations	CSOs
Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security	DCOE
Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration	DDR
Economic Communities of West African States Monitoring Groups	ECOMOG
Global Affairs Canada	GAC
Human Rights Division	HRD
Joint Protection Team	JPT
United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	MONUSCO
Non-Governmental Organizations	NGOs
United Nation Children Fund	UNICEF
University of British Columbia	UBC
Vancouver Principles	VPs



The Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security (DCOE) is an extension of the Canadian Defence Academy with the core mandate to "develop concepts, support relevant research, sponsor doctrinal changes, and capture lessons learned and best practices in support of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) training, education, and related personnel readiness to enable peace and security." DCOE's primary focus is to support the implementation of the Vancouver Principles (VPs) on Peacekeeping and the Prevention and Recruitment and Use of Children in armed conflicts. This report builds on the previous working relationship the UBC School of Public Policy and Global Affairs (SPPGA) has established with DCOE to further advance policy work in the realm of peace and security.



Team Description

The UBC School of Public Policy and Global Affairs team is comprised of four unique members with a range of experiences and interests related to this Global Policy Project. The four members of the team are:

- Wilson Dargbeh (he/him) has over six years of work experience in the governmental and nonprofit sectors, specializing in financial and risk compliance management. He is also the co-founder of Educate Girls Liberia, a nonprofit organization that seeks to improve primary and lower education access for young girls. Wilson's lived experience with civil conflict in his country Liberia and watching firsthand the use and abuse of children in conflict have inspired him to work on the DCOE project with colleagues in recommending ways to prevent the use of children in armed conflict.



- Moysal Sana (she/her) has a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology from Simon Fraser University. She has spent the last five years assisting on litigation matters, and served a co-op term with Global Affairs Canada, where she worked as an analyst on the Gulf States Division Iran and Yemen Desk. She is honoured to join the Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security team and looks forward to collaborating alongside her academic colleagues to further advance the work on the prevention of recruitment of children in armed conflict.
- Kshitij_(KJ)_Sharan (he/him) has spent the past five years founding several nonprofits and social enterprises in India, specializing in strategy and management. His special interest in the DCOE is because of his training in humanitarian aid through the Canadian Consortium of Humanitarian Training, his work on child protection in India and his passion for creating impact at scale. He is a Fellow at the Asian Institute of Research at UBC.
- Will Shelling (he/him) has over five years of experience in consulting, specializing in strategic policy, social justice, and political consulting for clients ranging from governments to nonprofits and small grassroots organizations. His praxis is rooted in intersectional feminism and anti-oppression, borrowing from his special interest in human rights. His interest in DCOE lies in the cross-section of academics and practitioners to advance child protection and increase the stability of other regions through the protection of children.



Over the last few decades, the United Nations (UN) and its member states have been progressively working on a diverse set of strategies to curb the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. One of the strategies has been substantively incorporating declarations, protocols, and principles within the mandates of UN Peacekeeping missions. The Vancouver Principles (VPs) are the most recent amongst these voluntary commitments. Launched in 2017 and now endorsed by over 100 countries, the VPs provide a foundation for the diverse set of stakeholders on ground to expand, clarify and revise their role in preventing the recruitment of children in armed conflict.

As a team of graduate students from the Masters of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia, working with the Dallaire Centre for Peace and Security (DCOE), we embarked on a research project to identify and analyze the challenges that military components of these UN Missions are going to face in the operationalization and implementation of these principles. While expertise was overlapping, our research participants can broadly be categorized into civil society or non-governmental organization professionals, military personnel, UN Peacekeeping Mission staff and academics.

4 main thematic areas emerged from the analysis of the insights and learnings that emerged from our primary and secondary research. These were 1) Coordination and collaboration 2) Awareness of the VPs, 3) Training and Knowledge and lastly 4) Ineffective Actions.

The work of child protection in complex emergencies or conflict zones cannot be done in silos. The military components of UN missions might face multiple challenges in coordinating and collaborating with other stakeholders, either within the Mission or in the wider child protection ecosystem. These challenges include disincentives to the creation of relationships on ground given the difference in periods of deployments, different ways of framing and understanding the issue at hand, as well as the trust deficit caused by atrocities committed by UN troops in the past.

While the Canadian government has worked effectively to get countries to endorse or sign onto the VPs, challenges persist in the dissemination of this knowledge to the civil society and more specifically the child protection ecosystem including academics and intellectuals. There are also gaps that exist in the pre deployment training and knowledge of the VPs among troops and the cross-sectional or interdisciplinary knowledge between human rights, child protection and military expertise.

There is no one shot solution to the issue of recruitment of children in armed conflict. As no two missions are identical in size, capacity, geographical terrain, socio economic and political profile or mandate, the operationalization of the VP remains highly context specific. But there are a few lessons that can be used as suggestions or recommendations for DCOE and the partners that they work with including the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), UN and others. To improve the level of collaboration between military and non-military components we suggest that Joint Protection Teams from MONUSCO be explored for other contexts and missions. Swift trust theory needs to be used to create trust between teams in complex situations in short periods of time.

University partnerships can be formed for applied research and digital advocacy and presence can be reimagined as tools to strengthen the current dissemination of the VPs. When it comes to pre deployment trainings, the VPs implementation guidelines need to be incorporated into any existing training curriculums that are being updated. A holistic systems level approach needs to be taken to think through this wicked problem.

Introduction



According to UNICEF, in the period between 2005 and 2020, over 93,000 children were verified as recruited and used by parties to the conflict. The actual number of cases is believed to be much higher much higher (UNICEF, 2021). Children become part of an armed force or group for various reasons. For example, some are abducted, threatened, coerced, or manipulated by armed actors. Others are driven by poverty and compelled to generate income for their families. Additionally, some others associate themselves with survival or protecting their communities against other threats (UNICEF, 2021). No matter their involvement, the recruitment and use of children by armed forces is a grave violation of child rights and international humanitarian law. To mitigate this grave violation, UN Peacekeeping Missions have progressively played a role in attempting to reduce and prevent the recruitment of these children.

While there has been considerable research on the role of civil society components of UN peacekeeping missions in the prevention of recruitment, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children in armed conflict, the role of the military components has been relatively ignored or obscured. The Vancouver Principles (VP) provide a foundation for military components of UN missions to expand, clarify and revise their role in the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers.

In November 2017, Canada launched The VPs on Peacekeeping and the Prevention and Use of Children in armed conflict at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial conference in Vancouver, British Columbia. "The VPs are a set of political commitments focused on child protection in peacekeeping, including all stages of a conflict cycle." (Govt. of Canada, 2021). This document outlines 17 principles to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict by armed forces and armed groups. The VPs are critical to achieving the overall success of UN peacekeeping and setting the conditions for lasting peace and security. Over 100 countries have endorsed the VPs, acknowledging the "unique challenges posed by children in armed conflict". Moreover, any UN Member State can endorse the VP even if they do not contribute to UN missions (Govt. of Canada, 2021). However, political endorsement of the VP is not enough to ensure change: its true impact will be achieved when they are operationalized on the ground and incorporated substantively into UN peacekeeping missions and operations.

As graduate students at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia (UBC), our Global Policy Project team researched the challenges in operationalizing the VPs in practice through the lens of the military component.

Since the VPs were created in 2017 with the final implementation guidelines emerging in 2019, the pandemic has prevented an effective evaluation of the implementation and operationalization of these principles on the ground. This research does not attempt to attribute 'success' or 'failure' to the implementation of the principles but rather identifies and discusses challenges that the VPs might face with a focus on the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).

As of November 2021, there were 28 CAF personnel who were deployed to UN peacekeeping missions. However, only 5 of its 28 personnel identified as women (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2021). The low contribution of 'boots on the ground' is an issue that has been discussed in various fora and is a discussion that is beyond the scope of this research. Instead, this research assumes a more 'knowledge' based role of the CAF in these missions, especially regarding children's issues in armed conflict. The report will thus provide insights into the CAF's 'boots on the ground' and the more intellectual role that Canada plays in the sector of child protection. While conducting the research, broader themes about awareness and dissemination of the VPs in the child protection stakeholder ecosystem emerged, which we believe also deserve space in this report.





Children in Armed Conflict as a Wicked Problem

The recruitment of children in armed conflict and, more specifically, the challenges in the UN military component's role in preventing the recruitment of children cannot be ascribed to a singular root cause. Analysing the challenges in the context of the framework created by Rittel and Weber, we see that the issue of 'children in armed conflict' is highly context-specific and non-generalizable. Further, there is no fixed template to solve the challenge posed and thus does not have a one-shot solution. In the research conducted, it was evident that there are multiple explanations for this challenge. Each stakeholder (e.g., CSO, NGO, and military) thinks about the problem from their unique lens. Perhaps, the biggest point here is the interconnected nature of socio-economic-political systems and structural factors that are always at play and ever-changing when it comes to the issue of 'children in armed conflict' (Rittel & Webber, 1972). Thus, the challenge of 'recruitment of children in armed conflict' can be classified as wicked problem.

In the context of this analysis, a systems thinking lens has been applied to this research. The systems thinking approach includes elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose. Meadows notes that the function or purpose components are perhaps underestimated the most and are the most crucial determinant of the system's behaviour. We aim to see the relationships between structure and behaviour through these lenses to understand how the system works, what creates room for improvement, and how to change behaviour patterns (Meadows & Wright, 2009).



How we Collected our Information

We explored participants' expertise and their lived experience in understanding the role of the military component of the UN peacekeeping mission in preventing the recruitment of children in armed conflict. We collected data through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. There were 15 participants selected through the snowball method. The snowball sampling method was most appropriate for the study because the pool of experts with knowledge about the prevention of recruitment of children in armed conflict combined with knowledge about the military is very limited, meaning that they often referred to other experts as a tight-knit group. This issue has been discussed later in the report as an emerging challenge. While expertise was overlapping, our research participants can broadly be categorized into civil society or non-governmental organization professionals, military personnel, UN Peacekeeping Mission staff and academics.

Our interviews with participants were conducted in English via Zoom through the UBC secured server hosted in Canada. We compiled responses from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion into notes and used NVivo to code and categorize emerging themes based on participants' responses in the research study. The emerging themes formed the basis of our analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method widely used across various epistemologies and research questions (Nowell et al., 2017). We build on participants' insights to generate emerging themes. Importantly, we also immersed ourselves in the existing literature to understand the debates relevant to the military component of UN peacekeeping missions' role in preventing the recruitment of children in armed conflict.



Ineffective Actions

“The futures of millions of children living in countries affected by armed conflict are at risk, as warring parties continue to commit grave violations against children, and world leaders fail to hold perpetrators accountable.” (UNICEFPR, 2018).

An analysis conducted by Child Soldiers International in 2019 showed that the number of children used in armed conflict around the world more than doubled since 2012 with almost 30,000 verified cases of children being recruited translating to a 159% increase in cases. (CSI, 2019). Our primary and secondary research has confirmed that UN Missions are falling short of actualizing their potential to prevent the recruitment of children in armed conflict. Current efforts have not been as effective at preventing the recruitment of these children. Actors within UN Missions have fallen short in collaborating effectively to protect vulnerable children who are at extreme risk. While the impact of COVID on the recruitment of children in armed conflict is unknown, it can be said with certainty that communities are much more vulnerable than they were pre-pandemic. Thus the accelerated adoption and implementation of the Vancouver Principles is urgent and needs to be a priority for stakeholders in the relevant institutions. The reinforcement of patriarchal and paternalistic norms and the failure of sustainable DDR processes are two examples of these ineffective actions taken by UN Missions.

1) Reinforcement of Patriarchal and Paternalistic Norms



The prevention and recruitment of child soldiers is a fundamentally gendered issue. As a result, family structures are broken down or exploited, resulting in more children being pushed into this space. However, our analysis found an interesting sub-theme concerning the reinforcement of other systemic issues. Patriarchal norms and gendered divisions placed specific children (often boys) at higher risk of direct violence in armed conflict and some within the larger support structure of these armies.

Often recruitment is due to children seeking social needs that the family unit or structure is not providing at that time, and that education is often lacking. As one respondent noted, the COVID-19 pandemic and children being out of school are directly linked to increased recruitment. When education and/or school was offered, children were less likely to participate in gangs or armed forces, as their base social and physical needs were met. As these armed gangs are often seen as having significant power within a region, children often look to them for protection and their base needs (e.g. food or meals) being met, which leads to further exploitation of children, as key academics noted in our sessions. Similarly, gendered effects often prevalent in society are reinforced within these spaces. For instance, multiple respondents across stakeholder groups noted that boys are most likely pushed into front-line roles to face conflict, and girls are more often placed into support roles, such as spying, cooking, or supporting the larger structure of the armed forces.

Another respondent noted that targeted interventions might begin to remove children from these roles, but we also heard that the lack of these interventions makes this situation more complicated. Therefore, we notice that young boys are more likely to be placed in violent situations, making up soldiers on the front lines. When paired with the lack of training experienced pre-deployment by uniformed peacekeepers, stronger degrees of risk can occur. For instance, one respondent noted that when a boy is killed in the conflict, they are seen as soldiers, but they are distinguished as a rescue if they are “saved.” This issue reinforces stereotyping about boys in conflict, but rather it reinforces violence against these groups by not viewing them with compassion.



2) Sustainable Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)

Recruitment cannot be thought of in isolation but rather should be thought of as an interconnected problem. There is a cyclical link between unsustainable reintegration and the re-recruitment of children in armed conflict. DDR is a process through which members of armed forces and groups are supported to lay down their weapons and transition to civilian life (UN, 2018, p 1). DDR processes should be seen as integral parts of efforts to consolidate peace and promote stability, not merely as sequenced technical programs and activities (UN, 2018, p 1). A failed or un-sustained DDR strategy in complex emergencies results in re-recruitment of children in future complex emergencies.

A respondent who was one of the contributors to the VP informed us that an un-sustained DDR exercise is the loop that brings child recruitment into armed conflict back to the planning stage of the prevention process. According to them, a sustained DDR exercise is a preventive measure against the recruitment of children in armed conflict that is often overlooked when strategies and policies are designed to prevent the recruitment of the "next child" in armed conflict. They added that at the end of the first civil crisis in Liberia, 1997, there was a failed attempt by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to reintegrate children that participated in the armed conflict. These children were reenlisted two years later when another complex emergency erupted.

A second respondent provided another example where the un-sustained DDR process led to re-recruitment. According to the respondent, after the first South Sudan crisis ended in 2013, there was a joint effort by the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan, non-state actors, and state actors to reintegrate children who participated in the armed conflict. After three years, another complex emergency began, which interrupted those this process. Those children were among the first groups to be reenlisted by the non-state military actors in South Sudan.

Now that it is clear that the challenge of recruitment of children in armed conflict needs to be an urgent priority and how current practices and actions have been ineffective, the next section will try to analyse why UN Missions and particularly military components of these missions are failing to achieve their objectives. These are the challenges that military components are going to face as they try to implement and operationalize the VPs.

Challenges to Operationalization of the VP (with recommendations)



The insights from the research and analysis can be classified under three main themes:

a) Coordination and Collaboration

This theme delves into challenges that military components of UN Peacekeeping missions are facing and will continue to face in collaborating and coordination with non-military stakeholders in UN Missions to implement the Vancouver Principles.

b) Awareness of the VPs

This theme assesses the levels of awareness different stakeholders have about the VPs and discusses the dissemination of the principles to the stakeholders in the ecosystem both on ground and in the intellectual and academic sphere.

c) Knowledge and Training

This theme explores the prevalence of interdisciplinary knowledge on preventing the recruitment of children in armed conflict and also analyses challenges in pre-deployment trainings of UN troops.



a) Coordination and Collaboration: *Analysis*

The work of prevention of recruitment of children in armed conflict cannot be done in silos. Military and non-military components are highly interdependent to achieve their objectives of child protection. Thus, both components have to work collaboratively in close coordination to prevent the recruitment of each child at risk. One of our respondents helped us navigate through what effective coordination looks like. The respondent, who has worked extensively with civil society organizations and military personnel explained to us that as researchers, we need to understand that coordination is not a vague and ambiguous topic that can be used in macro terms. Instead, it is about the creation of human relationships on ground. Coordination happens at a human level and is a product of personal and professional relationships. There are multiple factors that impact the depth and effectiveness of these relationships on the field. Some of these factors are discussed below.

Perception about Military Components of UN Missions

It was striking to observe that all of our respondents from the civil society ecosystem and academia chose to discuss past atrocities and human rights abuses committed by UN troops in the past. These comments were mostly focussed on sexual crime and cases of corruption. This was interesting because we did not ask them a question or give them a prompt about this. It was clear that it was front and centre of their minds once we had sent them information on what the topic of our research is.

Even though the number of these incidents has decreased in the past 2 decades, this perception lingers in the minds of civil society actors. Any training on these aspects or work being done on changing the culture within UN troops has not been communicated effectively to the non-military components of the missions and external civil society partners. This perception barrier immediately creates problems in trust building and the formation of meaningful partnerships on ground. Subsequently, this trust deficit hinders the acceptance and exploration in the minds of civil society stakeholders that yes the military component of the mission can play a larger role in the prevention of recruitment of children in armed conflict.

Period of Deployment

A common thread that emerged repeatedly in our analysis of this trust deficit between the military and non-military components is the difference in the period of deployment. The deployment period for troops to be deployed to UN missions is anywhere between 6 months to 1 year. In the case of CAF, the period of deployment is 6 months. On the other hand, the period of deployment for a civil society professional can be 2 years or more. In addition, the civil society professionals have often been employed in similar roles in other contexts in the past and have developed significant expertise. In contrast, the military personnel usually do these UN missions for the first time. One of our respondents expressed their dilemma profoundly, "By the time we can start creating relationships with these people, their deployment period is over, and new people get deployed. Of course, we want to make relationships with them, but why should we if they are going to leave in 6 months."

Understanding of the Work of the ‘Other’

While speaking to the respondents, we found an alarming lack of understanding between the military components and the civilian units concerning their respective mandates. We use the word 'alarming' because it is clear that civic-military coordination requires an understanding and respect of the nature of each component's work. For example, respondents from civil society organizations emphasized the military's main role in securing routes and travel of the civil society actors. However, respondents from both components could not answer many questions on the details of the others work. In addition, we observed from their analysis that there is limited knowledge among stakeholders of each other's role, function, and operation regarding the prevention of recruitment of children in armed conflict.

Cultural Dynamics

Respondents from civil society organizations also claimed that there is often a sense of superiority in military personnel which creates a barrier in relationship building. One respondent gave an example that military components in UN missions feel very confident in their tactical superiority and massive resource capability, even while creating joint strategies to prevent the recruitment of children.

Cultural dynamics also became more pronounced while working with troops from troop contributing countries when it comes to gender relations. Our interviewees helped us understand this through an example. The example was that while troops from many troop contributing countries have never worked with women before, many of the staff in the civilian components working on child protection identify as women. They struggle to adapt to these cultural differences and even more when they have to work under the supervision of women.



Coordination and Collaboration: *Recommendations*

Joint Protection Teams (JPTs)

No two missions are identical in size, capacity, geographical terrain, socio economic and political profile or mandate. However, there have been examples and instances where integrated units have been formed to effectively achieve mandates of the mission. One of these good practices comes from the MONUSCO Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where Joint Protection Teams were created. JPTs are small teams of UN civilian, military, and police staff with diverse expertise. These teams are deployed to high-risk areas to generate recommendations for advancing the protection of civilians and building confidence between the UN and local communities. The model was used with great success in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It also had the unintended effect of enhancing gender awareness among the peacekeepers through their engagement with female staff and highlighting sexual violence and human rights abuses. In addition, JPTs bring multidisciplinary protection knowledge to military peacekeepers and increase situational awareness across the mission through timely, corroborated updates from otherwise inaccessible areas.

Communication of Trainings and Progress to Other Stakeholders

Our analysis has shown that a perception barrier lingers on in the minds of civil society professionals about human rights abuses and atrocities committed by UN troops. While there has been a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes on training troops from troop contributing countries and changing existing power dynamics and culture of work, this has not been communicated to civilians who work on these same missions. As a first step towards doing this, a short brief or infographic can be created that shows how the UN has been working towards decreasing human rights abuses and atrocities committed by UN troops on the field. This brief or infographic then needs to be circulated to all the civil society organizations that have long term partnerships with the UN and work closely with UN troops in missions to start off with. As a next step, a strategy needs to be created where mission headquarters can disseminate these messages of training and change to all the smaller nongovernmental and civil society organizations working both under the ambit of the mission and also those working with communities outside of the mission. This knowledge and information on the quest for change in the way troops operate on ground is important not only to build trust with civil society professionals but in the long term, with communities themselves.

Create 'Swift Trust'

Trust is an essential element in any collaborative effort, especially in a complex emergency terrain where lives are at stake and volatility is at its peak. The analysis of our findings show that the differences in periods of deployment, lingering perception barriers and contrasting framing of the issue creates a trust deficit between military and non-military components. Unfortunately, traditional forms of trust and trust building are a luxury that cannot be afforded by the actors in a complex emergency constrained by limited deployment tenure, uncertainty and constantly changing conditions on ground. For instance, the kind of trusting relationship that a newly deployed CAF team would need to develop with non-military components of the mission as well as with military personnel from other troop contributing countries cannot be achieved through conventional forms of trust building. That is where the Swift Trust Theory could come into play. Swift trust is a form of trust that occurs in temporary organizational structures, including quick starting groups or teams. In the application of this theory, a group or team assumes trust initially and later verifies and adjusts trust beliefs and values accordingly. There are several ways of doing this. One of them is integrated knowledge workshops in shared spaces that can be used to understand and gain respect for the work of the 'other' at a very early stage in deployment or even before that. Overall, there is a large vacuum of spaces for engagement and deliberation between military personnel and civil society professionals even outside of missions.

The second way swift trust theory can be used is in deciding the structures of teams. Newly deployed troops can have more of a supportive rather than leading approach while working with stakeholders on the prevention of recruitment of children in armed conflict. This will help reduce the trust deficit that exists even before their deployment as shown by our analysis.

One of the cornerstones of creating this swift trust is values or principles-based leadership. The extent to which leadership can articulate the values and principles their actions will be based on will influence the levels of trust between the teams. In addition to articulating the values, it is important that the actions of the teams are then consistently aligned with the values, even in the long term. They need to provide the space for other actors to take the lead in driving collaborative efforts and setting goals and targets, learn from the interactions, and build trust and personal relationships.



b) Awareness of the VPs: *Analysis*

Despite the VP's contemporary approach to peacekeeping and the prevention of recruitment of children in armed conflict, it is relatively unknown among stakeholders in the wider space of child protection and human rights in complex emergencies zones. While the Government of Canada have done an effective job of getting over 100 countries to politically endorse the VPs, a lot remains to be done to disseminate them in the broader civilian child protection ecosystem.

Over 75% of our respondents from the civil society and academic groups admitted to having little or no knowledge about the VPs. For instance, during our interview with research respondents, we asked questions like, "Are you aware of the Vancouver Principles?" and "How often do you use them in your work?" Most respondents had little knowledge of the VPs and had never used them in their work. On the other hand, most research respondents from academia informed us that they cite older frameworks in their writings about the subject. Others claimed that not many academic articles had been written about the VPs that could provoke or inspire further research. Furthermore, one of our respondents from the human rights and child protection sector rhetorically said, "he sat in over ten meetings a day with members of the UN troops and several CSOs representatives and not once the VPs were ever mentioned."

Awareness of the VPs: *Recommendations*



University Partnerships and Research Collective Creation

As incubators of knowledge, universities are a great starting point for facilitating theoretical and empirical-grounded scholarly research that could help raise awareness for the VPs in the academic space, inspiring further research on how effectively these principles can be operationalized in complex emergencies and then informing plans and strategies on ground.

The partnership between the UBC and DCOE did not only serve as a learning experience for the students but a valuable source for discovering new ideas, moving frontiers and contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

We believe there is an opportunity for DCOE to create impactful partnerships with universities with the objective being to creating research and academic support for the operationalization of the VPs. Organizations need empirical research and evidence to mobilize the right amount of resources, restructure teams, reform training procedures and to incorporate the VPs into their strategies and plans.

For instance, UBC has developed specific capacities to host human rights-focused collectives, such as the Scholars at Risk and Human Rights Collective, which works to develop advocacy for imprisoned and at-risk scholars worldwide. These initiatives are able to convene a diverse set of stakeholders to create interdisciplinary knowledge that then be used to create impact through advocacy. In addition, we see a potential 'academic focal point' that can be developed for university spaces. This focal point can work towards facilitating the access to offices of multilateral organizations including the UN, military offices, staff in UN missions and others for researchers and academics (with the appropriate ethical checks and balances). This would also ensure a more multidisciplinary approach to the research being conducted.

Strengthening Digital Advocacy of the VPs

Digital channels and mediums need to be integrated into the efforts behind the advocacy of the VP. Social media platforms and content sharing are no longer just channels of interaction but important facilitators of knowledge sharing. Communities like ‘Academic Twitter’ are active in sharing their research and knowledge and reaching out to each other to create partnerships and collaborations.

For instance, the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security maintains a strong social media presence online, with many organizations following and interacting with their tweets and Facebook posts. Due to the overlapping nature of social media platforms, a joint social media strategy across various groups such as GAC, UN Children, and the Dallaire Institute would amplify key messages and create conversations around the VPs. These online conversations can even provide new insights, as those who usually don’t find a voice in traditional consultations and high level meetings are able to share their work and their opinions. An integrated campaign with jointly decided messaging will help shape these online conversations and amplify them. We think policymakers, academics, civil society professionals, and child rights advocates need to take the VPs to their online discourse through Twitter, YouTube, Tik Tok, and Facebook to raise conscientiousness about the VPs in their network.



Silos of Knowledge

In the search for respondents for our research to help us fill knowledge gaps, we realized that there was a serious dearth of subject matter experts and professionals who understood the complexities of prevention of recruitment of children from both the lens of the military and the lens of the civil society actors. Currently, the knowledge exists in silos and fail to translate into action due to the lack of integration. We found only one person other than the respondents at the DCOE who had considerable and balanced knowledge of both child protection from a civil society perspective and a military component perspective. The other people we came across in our search for information and insights all were subject matter experts in extremely niche areas. This point is connected to the point in the preceding section about the understanding of the work of the ‘other’.

Issue Framing

The silos in which knowledge is created and absorbed influence the way these groups then frame the issue of children in armed conflict. At the same time, each group’s framing of the issues provides clues to researchers regarding the priorities and possible actions of that group. While respondents from CSOs framed the issue as a humanitarian or human rights challenge, those with a military background consistently framed it as a security issue which was part of a broader civilian mandate.

This is also an important aspect of the wicked problems framework discussed earlier in the report. Individuals and groups with different professional views and objectives will continue to frame the problem in different ways. The development of an integrated strategy becomes challenging when individuals do not consider how others are framing the problem.

Pre-deployment Training and Situational Knowledge

Although there is mandatory pre-deployment training conducted for all military and non-military personnel of the UN mission, there is still a huge gap in knowledge and awareness among UN troops on preventing the recruitment of children in armed conflict (UNICEF, 2018). A respondent from academia disclosed that pre-deployment training helps build a basic understanding of the core mandate surrounding the prevention of recruitment. Still, the challenge is that these are often noticeably short and incorporate so many other things that impede trainees' ability to retain the importance of the core philosophy surrounding the prevention of the recruitment of children in armed conflict. Shockingly, one of the child protection officers told us that the training on child protection was a small part of an hour-long training session. Furthermore, one respondent from a CSO mentioned the importance of situational knowledge to pre-deployment training. They stressed that geopolitical, social, demographic and historical understanding of the complex emergency zone is very crucial in tackling children recruitment.

The short period of deployment emerged again as a theme while analysing training and knowledge. This was in context of knowledge retention and knowledge transfer. According to the respondents, most deployment periods last six months, meaning that any staff capacity and capability created in that period is often immediately lost when individuals transfer.



Knowledge and Training: *Recommendations*

Incorporation of VPs in existing training curriculum for troops

The VPs need to be substantively incorporated into existing training curriculum. This includes pre deployment trainings carried out by the troop contributing countries and then training that happens in the initial days of being in the field. Respondents from civil society who had played a role in training troops on a mission mentioned that the training material they are using has not incorporated the VPs yet. The latest UN trainings for troops that could be found online also had no mention of the VPs. The VPs are not superficial checkboxes that are required to be ticked by different stakeholders. Instead, they need to be understood as a whole and this understanding needs to start right from the training phase. This training curriculum should also try to address the ‘issue framing’ challenge discussed above.

We want to point out here that the amount of time given to training of troops in the child protection mandate and the situational context in terms of children in armed conflict is also a cause for concern. As mentioned above, one of our respondents informed us that these trainings are a small part of a total training time of just one hour on the field before they start doing their tasks. As student researchers we were not able to find much information on the schedules of trainings or the day-to-day happenings on the field and thus we are unable to make a concrete recommendation on it.

Interdisciplinary Research

Through the university partnerships recommendation made in the awareness of VPs section above, DCOE could create future policy makers and thinkers who have a more cross cutting expertise in both security studies and human rights. The intersection of the two and what that looks like in the applied world in a complex emergency is something that is still a missing part of the puzzle. Interdisciplinary research can both draw from and integrate different backgrounds and perspectives of multiple disciplines, in addition to enhancing critical thinking skills to compare and contrast these differing perspectives.



Conclusion

To reiterate, the challenge of children being recruited into armed conflict is a wicked problem that has no one stop solution. Each context and case must be carefully diagnosed, and a well-thought-out systemic plan for effective implementation of the VPs must be charted. As shown in the analysis, existing challenges in child protection will continue to persist and perhaps be even more pronounced when military components implement the VPs. There will also be challenges that these systems have not faced before as the role of stakeholders in preventing recruitment of children is revised and expanded. Challenges include effective collaboration & coordination, the dissemination of the VPs and existing levels of training and knowledge. But these challenges cannot dilute the urgency and importance of implementing the VPs and collaborating effectively to prevent the recruitment of each child. While some of the recommendations such as creating joint protection teams and using swift trust theory can be implemented in the shorter term, others such as creating an empirical body of knowledge around the VPs and incorporating them into training materials might take a lot longer. It is integral that instead of trying to solve this problem in the silos that currently exist, a systems thinking approach is taken henceforth.



References

- Child Soldiers International (CSI). (2019). Child soldier levels doubled since 2012 and girls' exploitation is rising. [online]
- Govt. of Canada (2021), Vancouver Principles – Global Affairs Canada ([Link](#))
- Meadows, D. H., Wright, D. (2009). Thinking in systems: A primer. Earthscan. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781849773386>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Rittel, H. W. J., & Webber, M. M. (1972). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning: Vol. 194; no. 194.; Institute of Urban & Regional Development, University of California.
- UN. (2018). The role of DDR in peacebuilding and sustaining peace ([Link](#)).
- UNICEF Press Release (UNICEFPR). (2018). World has failed to protect children in conflict in 2018: UNICEF ([Link](#))

- United Nations Peacekeeping (2021), Troop and Police Contributors. Webpage
- United Nations Peacekeeping (2022), Child Protection. Webpage
- TatTatham P., & Kovács, G. (2010). The application of "swift trust" to humanitarian logistics. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 126(1), 35–45.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2009.10.006>