

The Children in Armed Conflict Accountability Initiative

March 2018

The “Children in Armed Conflict Accountability Framework” is a milestone in the fight against impunity for violations against children in armed conflict.

- Minister Counselor, the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations

The ‘Accountability Gap’

Conflict Dynamics promotes timely and effective accountability for serious violations of international law committed against children in situations of armed conflict. In many situations, perpetrators of serious violations against children in armed conflict (CAC) remain unidentified and are rarely held to account. Serious violations include killing and maiming of children, use and recruitment of children as soldiers, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction and enforced disappearance among others. Even in cases where accountability programs exist, they often fail to achieve tangible outcomes that benefit children and their communities. As a result of this ‘accountability gap,’ violations against children continue and are carried out with impunity. Conflict Dynamics tackles this accountability gap by developing practical resources and activities that support the remedy and prevention of CAC violations, which contributes to the overall protection of children in armed conflict.

The Children in Armed Conflict Accountability Initiative

The CAC Accountability Initiative breaks new ground on a complex and highly sensitive issue by working constructively with key stakeholders to advance accountability, including affected children. Promoting both judicial and non-judicial accountability efforts, the program of work builds on the [Children in Armed Conflict Accountability Framework](#) (2015) comprehensive definition of CAC accountability as made up of four components:

- assigning responsibility
- enforcing laws and norms
- reforming systems
- empowering children



Program of work

The program of work supports practitioners and policymakers and children and youth affected by armed conflict – recognizing their agency and critical role – to advance CAC accountability. The program’s **two linked objectives** are:

1. To **empower children and youth affected by armed conflict to influence CAC accountability** processes and outcomes,
2. To **support practitioners and policymakers to influence and implement policies and practices** for CAC accountability.

The Initiative tackles the accountability gap and promotes the four components of CAC accountability through three inter-related activity areas: practical resources, trainings and technical advice, and outreach and partnerships.

Activity Area 1: Practical resources and tools

- **Practical resources and tools** increase the understanding and technical capacity of practitioners and policymakers to address CAC accountability issues. Conflict Dynamics resources and tools include:
 - The [Children in Armed Conflict Accountability Framework](#) (2015), a standard-setting resource that promotes CAC accountability.

- [Country case examples](#) that demonstrate the practical application of the “CAC Accountability Framework” in specific contexts.
- The [Anti-Impunity Tool: Guidance on Investigating and Prosecuting Violations against Children in Armed Conflict](#) (2015) that provides guidance for judicial and child protection actors to support judicial accountability processes.

Activity Area 2: Providing trainings and technical advice

- **Training workshops** offer face-to-face technical support for advancing CAC accountability and contribute to building linkages among policymakers and practitioners working on CAC accountability in the child protection and justice fields. The first training workshop was held in Colombia in October 2015.
- **Technical advice** responds to specific needs of international and national organizations and governments to assist developing and implementing CAC accountability strategies. Requests have come from the Ministry of Justice in Somalia, the International Criminal Court, and more.
- **Youth convening** are activities and consultations with children and youth affected by armed conflict to identify their accountability needs and provide them with key concepts on CAC accountability.
- The [CAC Accountability Resource Database](#) provides policymakers and practitioners with 175+ accountability resources and tools that are practically applicable and easily accessible in one database.

Activity Area 3: Outreach and partnerships

- **Partnering with like-minded national organizations** for CAC accountability activities supports the sustainability of such activities at a national level and technical capacity building of local partners. Partners have included the Coalition against the Involvement of Boys, Girls and Youth in Armed Conflict (COALICO), a Colombian NGO network, and Rebuild Hope for Africa, a Congolese humanitarian NGO.
- **Partnering with international organizations** advances CAC accountability prioritization and efforts at a global level. Partners have included the Paris Principles Steering Group and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.
- **Strategic outreach** on social media and in-person engages stakeholders to increase attention to CAC accountability, provide technical expertise, and share key CAC concepts and resources.

Examples of influence

- Conflict Dynamics helped shape The Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court’s *Policy on Children* (2016) that guides the Office’s work to address international crimes against and affecting children under the Rome Statute.
- The DRC Military High Court is working with Conflict Dynamics to apply guidance from the *Anti-Impunity Tool* to five national cases of child recruitment and use by armed forces and groups.
- The *Anti-Impunity Tool* was selected by No Peace Without Justice as a key tool on human rights documentation protocols and practices to present to 14 NGO and civil society organization representatives working in the Syrian context.

Conflict Dynamics International

Conflict Dynamics is an independent, not-for-profit organization with extensive experience and demonstrated success in humanitarian policy development and conflict resolution. The CAC Accountability Initiative builds on expertise in this area, including the publication of [Bridging the Accountability Gap: New Approaches to Addressing Violations against Children in Armed Conflict](#) (2011).

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