

The Children and Armed Conflict Accountability Framework

A Framework for Advancing Accountability for Serious Violations against Children in Armed Conflict

June 2015

Executive Summary

The *Children in Armed Conflict Accountability Framework* is a practical resource that promotes accountability for serious violations of international law committed against children in armed conflict (CAC accountability). Developed in response to the significant gap that exists in preventing and remedying these violations, the Framework presents:

1. **a comprehensive definition and structure** for understanding CAC accountability, which is underpinned by international as well as relevant national laws and norms, and builds on the roles and responsibilities of State, non-State, and other actors;
2. **practical guidance** in the form of a step-by-step methodology for developing well-informed, context-specific, and feasible options for advancing CAC accountability.

The Framework is global in its scope of application; it is not linked to any one context or region. It focuses on individuals who directly suffered serious violations of international law in the context of armed conflict when they were below the age of 18, and addresses all serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as crimes under other bodies of international law. The Framework is primarily designed to assist policymakers and practitioners engaged in variety of sectors (e.g., child protection, human rights, justice, transitional justice, peacebuilding) working at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

Definition and structure of CAC accountability: CAC accountability refers to the prevention and remedy of serious violations of international law committed against children in armed conflict. This includes both judicial and nonjudicial actions that may take place at any point in a conflict cycle – and at different levels of intervention. The definition and structure are underpinned by international as well as relevant national laws and norms, and builds on the roles and responsibilities of State, non-State, and other actors. CAC accountability consists of four interrelated components:

- **assigning responsibility** for violations through gathering, analyzing, and/or publicly releasing information about perpetrators;
- **enforcing laws and norms** through sanctions, prosecutions, and/or imposing other (legitimate) consequences on perpetrators;
- **reforming systems** by negotiating, developing, adapting, implementing, and/or raising awareness of relevant institutions, laws, policies, and/or standards;¹
- **empowering children** and their communities by involving those affected in accountability processes and decisions and ensuring that they benefit from tangible remedies and redress.

In addition, several features further characterize the four components of CAC accountability. These are: dual focus on prevention and remedy; interconnections among components; comprehensive action across components; timing of actions; and sequencing of actions.

Guidance for developing strategic approaches to CAC accountability: Drawing on the definition and structure, the practical guidance provides support for identifying opportunities and challenges related to CAC accountability and for developing and prioritizing options for implementation. It uses practical case examples from nine situations of armed conflict to illustrate the methodology. The methodology is presented in two parts:

Part 1: Understand the CAC accountability environment	Step 1: Examine influencing factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify factors that influence CAC accountability. Analyze the nature and level of influence of each factor.
	Step 2: Examine accountability mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify accountability mechanisms. Analyze functionality of mechanisms, linkages between them, and levels of activity (in each component and in the context as a whole).
Part 2: Develop strategic options	Step 3: Identify options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documentation gathered from analysis exercises. Identify emerging opportunities and challenges. Brainstorm strategies for seizing opportunities and mitigating challenges. Research precedents or lessons learned from the given context (and/or other contexts) to provide additional ideas or innovations. Identify potential options to advance accountability.
	Step 4: Prioritize options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine potential risks and mitigation strategies. Determine organizational capacity to implement options. Determine the potential influence of contextual factors on successful implementation of options. Identify highest priority option(s). Develop an implementation plan for priority option(s).

Overall, the Framework enables users to:

- **draw attention to the urgent need** to achieve accountability for CAC violations and engage key decision makers toward that goal;
- **develop innovative approaches** to advance CAC accountability based on a comprehensive analysis of the context, existing and potential mechanisms, and opportunities for linkages between accountability mechanisms;
- **make well-informed decisions to ensure the direction of limited resources** toward accountability actions that are feasible, realistic, and likely to lead to high-impact results for children and their communities;
- **increase cooperation** among actors working at various levels and in fields related to CAC accountability (e.g., child protection, justice, peacebuilding, or related fields), such as facilitating joint analysis or planning;
- **conduct impact assessments of CAC accountability efforts** and identify areas for targeted technical, financial, or other support.

End Notes

1. Reforms may relate to State and non-State institutions and/or policies.

Mission Statement

Conflict Dynamics International is an independent, not-for-profit organization founded to prevent and resolve violent conflict, and to alleviate human suffering resulting from conflicts and other crises around the world.

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