

WE ARE CHILDREN NOT SOLDIERS

Somalia

The Government of Somalia signed an **Action Plan** with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of by the **Somali National Army** on **6 July 2012**.

On **6 August 2012**, the Government signed a second **Action Plan** with the United Nations to end **killing and maiming** of children by the **Somali National Army**.

The volatility of the security situation in Somalia continues to have a huge impact on children. In 2015, the UN received reports of widespread violations and witnessed an increase of almost 50% of cases of grave violations committed against boys and girls compared to the preceding year.

The insurgency led by Al Shabaab, which in 2015 saw increased attacks on Somali security forces, Government officials and AMISON, as well as inter-clan clashes, resulted in hundreds of children killed, maimed, abducted, the mass recruitment of children and other grave violations.

In July 2015, the Somali National Army resumed its offensive against Al Shabaab with the support of AMISOM and allied forces. The military operations created serious concerns for the protection of children. The UN has engaged with Somali authorities and AMISOM to urge them to take all necessary measures to protect children.

Other concerns in Somalia include the detention of children on security-related charges and attacks on schools and hospitals, which disrupt already weak education and health systems.

Progress in the implementation of the Action Plan

Somalia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in October 2015 and the Government is now strongly encouraged to follow up with the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Following the 2012 signature of the Action Plans, the Government created a child protection unit within the Ministry of Defence and adopted standard procedures for the handover to the UN of children found in the ranks of the national army, as well as those formerly associated with armed groups.

To accelerate the implementation of the Action Plans, Federal authorities have initiated the implementation of a joint roadmap with the UN, which prioritizes key activities such as: legal reforms, the issuance of command orders banning the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations, systematic screening and release of children from the Somalia National Army, provision of socio- economic reintegration to children and the establishment of child protection focal points in all Somali National Army deployments.

Despite the progress and measures adopted to move forward with the implementation of the Action Plan, the Somali National Forces continue to



WE ARE CHILDREN NOT SOLDIERS

commit grave violations against children. IN 2015, the UN documented the killing and maiming of close to 150 boys and girls, the recruitment and use of hundreds of children, the detention of almost 350 children for alleged association with armed groups and other violations such as sexual violence.

The Government is urged to honour the Action Plans signed with the UN and to comply with international juvenile justice standards regarding detention.

The way forward to protect the children of Somalia:

Release and Reintegration

In accordance with the Action Plan, all children in the ranks of the Somali National Army should be released without conditions. Resources are needed to continue to support and scale-up sustainable reintegration programmes.

Rule of law and accountability

Support is necessary to strengthen the rule of law and accountability for those who commit grave violations against children.

Screening and age assessment

Troop screenings remain a top priority and are conducted with the support of the UN. There are sustained efforts to mitigate security concerns and reach out to all Somali troops to identify and release children. Additional support from the international community is needed to screen all troops and help strengthen guidelines and procedures for age assessment in recruitment processes.

The UN continues to support the **Child Protection Unit (CPU)** established in the Somali National Army. In March 2015, six military focal points were appointed to support the work of the child protection unit. Additional focal points should be named to cover more regions and military sectors in South Central Somalia and ensure functioning child protection units in all army deployments.

Child protection training should be available for all members of the national security forces. In 2015, the UN supported an observation trip to Uganda to enable members of the Somali Army child protection unit to learn from best practices. Twenty-two members of the CPU, Military Focal points and representative from the MOD received a five-day child protection training. Additional support from the international community is welcomed to develop child protection training and provide training opportunities for the Somali National Army.

Birth registration

Access to birth registration services must be expanded throughout the country, with a specific focus on registering adolescent boys, the most vulnerable to recruitment. Efforts currently under way to build a civil registration system should be supported.

The UN in Somalia is using the campaign 'Children, Not Soldiers' to raise awareness about the minimum age for recruitment. Support for a wider **public information campaign** is needed.



WE ARE CHILDREN NOT SOLDIERS

Parties to conflict listed in the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict

- Al Shabaab (recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming)
 - Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (Recruitment and use)
 - Somali National Army (Recruitment and use, killing and maiming)
-

May 2016



Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for
CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

unicef 