Virtual Summer School on Child Protection in Armed Conflict

After Action Report

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

Virtual Summer School on Children and Armed Conflict

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Acknowledgments

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Foreword by Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta

It gives me great pleasure to pen these introductory words to this After-Action Report on the Virtual Summer School on Child Protection in Armed Conflict held last Summer.

2022 marked the 25th anniversary of the mandate of the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), and, in its steadfast commitment to this most important dossier, the Government of Malta was eager to work on this concrete initiative to contribute in a tangible way towards safeguarding the wellbeing of children in armed conflict. This was rendered possible also thanks to the full cooperation of Ms. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and her teams in New York and in Brussels, whom I commend for their excellent collaboration.

As is evident from this report, the summer school fulfilled an important role in bringing together practitioners working in the field of child protection in armed conflict, and it filled a void that had existed thus far in this regard. The range of applicants and participants is testament to the shared concern for, and awareness of, the needs of children in armed conflict.

As an elected member of the Security Council, and as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for 2023-2024, Malta is steadfast in its commitment to take this dossier forward and to ensure that it remains at the top of the international agenda. To this effect, we look forward to work closely with fellow Council Members, UN Member States, the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, relevant UN agencies and Civil Society Organisations, and other stakeholders.

Preface by Virginia Gamba Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

The children and armed conflict (CAAC) mandate is about protecting conflict-affected children and preventing grave violations against them including through monitoring and reporting on those violations, engaging with parties to conflict, and informing about, and advocating for, these most vulnerable of children. As such, this multidimensional agenda is based on international human rights law and international humanitarian law and is linked to a broad range of peace and security issues as well as to the humanitarian, human rights, and development sectors. It touches upon all phases of the conflict cycle, from early warning systems to post-recovery.

Implementing the CAAC agenda cannot and should not, however, be done by my Office alone. It requires partnerships with a broad range of actors, and most importantly it requires professionals that are trained on child rights and child protection, such as United Nations child protection advisors, diplomats, government officials, mediators and facilitators of peaceful conflict resolution processes, staff of regional and non-governmental organizations, academics, and even communication experts.

This was the idea behind the Virtual Summer School on Child Protection in Armed Conflict, developed by my Office in collaboration, and with the financial support of, the Government of Malta. The Virtual Summer School brought together forty-two participants with diverse professional backgrounds contributing or likely to contribute in their various capacities to the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda. For two weeks, they were able to strengthen their knowledge, competencies, and skills through a holistic and collaborative learning approach. They have thus become important multipliers of the work of my Office as the Virtual Summer School allowed us to broaden the community of practice of children and armed conflict experts.

The feedback received from participants and trainers regarding this pilot project was overwhelmingly positive. I am thus hopeful that this Virtual Summer School was only the beginning of putting in place innovative learning solutions for the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda allowing us to inform the work of a broad range of professionals and provide them with the tools and knowledge to drive meaningful change for conflict-affected children.

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I. Introduction

The Virtual Summer School (VSS) on Child Protection in Armed Conflict was organised by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC), with the support of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta (MFET) and in collaboration with the University of Malta. It took place online from 29 August to 9 September 2022.

The VSS on Child Protection in Armed conflict was designed as a state-of-the-art training on this topic to strengthen the knowledge, competencies, and skills of participants through a holistic and collaborative approach. The target audience was professionals contributing or likely to contribute in their various capacities to child protection in armed conflict and related issues, such as United Nations entities, I/Non-Governmental Organisations (I/NGOs), government officials, regional and sub-regional organisations, legal professionals, communication officers, military as well as academics.

As the training was a pilot project, it was important to document and evaluate its implementation, assess lessons learned and determine its added value, including to decide on future training opportunities. This report has thus been commissioned by the OSRSG-CAAC to review and analyse feedback, document lessons learned and make recommendations for a potential continuation of the project. The report additionally proposes a template for change in core areas such as objectives, methods, structure, and human resources.

II. Method

The findings of this report are primarily based on detailed feedback from OSRSG-CAAC and MFET team members who worked on the project as well as from participants, lead trainers, guest speakers and exhibition booth hosts who participated in the VSS. Participant feedback was gathered through daily and final surveys, whilst feedback from trainers, guest speakers and exhibition booth hosts was collected through a survey at the end of the VSS.

The surveys were both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data was analysed through statistical interpretation. Comparative modelling was used in cases where the same question was presented to different groups. Qualitative data was thematically coded for each sample group and findings were analysed based on these themes. Comparative analysis was also conducted on themes across different group samples, such as participants and trainers.

The findings and analysis in the report additionally draw on the experiences of and lessons learned by OSRSG-CAAC team members who implemented the project. These reflections were recorded by the team during and after the VSS and were shared with the consultant who drafted this report. The lessons learned boxes under the sections are based on the views of those team members and aim to clarify findings and strengthen analysis, especially on the design and setting up of the programme.

The surveys were methodically conducted, providing a good level of detailed information. While the main areas of the programme were covered in the questionnaires, greater emphasis was given to some areas such as the platforms as compared to others such as the teaching and learning methods. Questions on the latter ones could have been further elaborated to allow a deeper analysis of participants' experiences.

The preliminary findings and recommendations made in this report, including the revised structure, were shared with participants, lead trainers and a few guest speakers in an online feedback session on 29 November 2022. Through additional discussion questions during this workshop, findings were tested and nuanced further, and participants were given the opportunity to share their impressions while a more in-depth discussion took place with the trainers, partly to ensure that future editions of this project are designed consultatively.

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Finally, the consultant's own experience and knowledge have fed into the analysis and interpretation of findings and the development of recommendations.

III. Overview

1. Background and rationale

According to the OSRSG-CAAC, the "child protection officer/advisor" is a technical and, at the same time also a political role, calling for specialised training. Furthermore, the children and armed conflict (CAAC) mandate is one of partnership and collaboration involving many professionals from different backgrounds, for whom dedicated training on CAAC is equally relevant. The VSS offered an introductory course on child protection in armed conflict to address these needs by providing a free state-of-the-art training on this topic. While several courses on peace and security, international humanitarian and human rights law, and child protection touch upon the issue of conflict-affected children, this training was unique in being specifically dedicated to the topic.

2. Objective

The VSS aimed at strengthening the knowledge, competencies and skills of actors contributing in various capacities to the protection of children in armed conflict through a holistic and collaborative approach.

3. Course details

3.1. Format

For budgetary and logistical reasons but also to allow a wider participant outreach, the VSS was designed to take place as an online programme. To access and develop an online course on a pre-existing educational platform, the

Government of Malta introduced the University of Malta as a collaborator. Two platforms were used to conduct the programme. The first one, provided by the University of Malta, was the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), the main learning platform where all course content was available to participants. It was also the platform on which the initial and final assessments as well as the daily and final surveys took place. The second one, provided by vFairs, was an event platform (see picture below of the landing page) that included an auditorium, exhibition hall and networking lounge (see pictures in Annex 1).

Trainers and guest speakers presented their sessions via ZOOM and used various online educational tools such as Kahoot, Slido, Miro and Jamboard for interactive exercises and learning.

3.2. Structure

The VSS was composed of 8 sessions that consisted of 23 modules and 13 interactive exercises (see full programme in Annex 2).

Week 1 – 'War-torn children: the multi-fold impact of armed conflict on children'

Participants were acquainted with relevant definitions, concepts, and frameworks related to conflict-affected children. They explored the place of the CAAC mandate in the protection architecture and gained a clear understanding of the six grave violations against children in conflict-affected settings while placing the topic in the broader context of related contemporary issues.

Week 2 – 'Acting together to protect: a comprehensive approach to CAAC protection'

Participants obtained essential skills and competencies through sessions on monitoring, analysing and reporting, ending, preventing and responding to grave violations against conflict-affected children, as well as on fostering accountability and combating impunity.

3.3. Schedule

Duration: 2 weeks (10 half-days · ~20h per week · ~23 modules/topics)

Dates: 29 August – 9 September 2022

Time: 1-5 pm CET (4 hours of live lessons, including coffee breaks)

3.4. Expected learning outcomes

1. Knowledge	2. Competencies and skills
By the end of the VSS, the participants will be able to: ▶ understand the CAAC mandate and how it relates to the broader protection architecture in international human rights and humanitarian law; ▶ identify key CAAC actors and mandates; ▶ list and describe the six grave violations against CAAC; ▶ understand links with other child rights violations; with children's specific needs, with the broader work of various international, regional and national actors, and with further topical issues.	By the end of the VSS, the participants will have gained skills towards: ▶ monitoring and reporting on violations against CAAC; ▶ engaging and negotiating with parties to conflict; ▶ mainstreaming and integrating the CAAC agenda into various fora and sectors; ▶ formulating a coordinated and holistic programmatic response, including on the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups; ▶ advocating on CAAC for and with children and communities in various settings; ▶ initiating measures to prevent CAAC violations and combat impunity.

3.5. Teaching methods

The VSS followed a policy-oriented approach to tutorials and sought participant engagement. Throughout the course, theoretical modules were complemented with applied, practice-oriented exercises. The VSS offered a dynamic learning environment, engaging participants through active, experiential, and collaborative techniques tailored to adult audiences and online teaching (live streaming presentations, interactive discussions, videos, and practical exercises, etc.).

Additionally, the VSS created and fostered networking opportunities for the participants to connect with each other, as well as with the organisers, trainers, and guest speakers via the vFairs online platform and a dedicated LinkedIn Group for the VSS Alumni.

3.6. Language

The VSS was conducted in English. Live translation in over 50 languages was provided by Wordly to enhance inclusivity and understanding.

3.7. Attendance, assessments and certificate

Attendance throughout the programme was generally good with approximately 33 participants attending each day. In spite of internet connection problems, participants attended an average of 30.7 hours out of a total of 35 hours.

Participants were asked to submit a pre-assessment prior to commencing the programme and a post-assessment at the end of the course. The same test, composed of 20 multiple choice questions, was administered both times with one attempt permitted for each assessment.

4. Participants and trainers

4.1. Participants application process

The VSS was advertised for three weeks on the OSRSG-CAAC webpage and social media, during which interested professionals were able to apply. The VSS targeted professionals contributing or likely to contribute in various capacities to child protection in armed conflict and related issues, such as personnel of UN entities, governments, regional organizations, I/NGOs, legal professionals, journalists and communication officers, military, as well as academics and students meeting the admission requirements. To be eligible, applicants had to meet the following criteria:

▶ have a basic understanding of, and a professional interest in, the CAAC mandate;
▶ hold at least a BA in Law, Political Science or International Relations, or bring equivalent professional experience in a relevant field;
▶ have an advanced English level (C1 CEFR);
▶ commit to participate actively in the training.

Applicants had to submit their curriculum vitae alongside a motivation letter demonstrating how they met the above requirements. A total of 299 applications were received: 51% female and 46% male (for 3% information was not made available). Most applicants were from and/or were based in Africa, followed by Western Europe. Most applicants worked for non-governmental organizations (NGOs - 36%) and the United Nations (UN - 23%).

4.2. Participants selection

Out of the 299 applications, 42 participants were selected. The majority (69%) were female and while participants' professional backgrounds were diverse, the majority were working for Member States or the United Nations.

For the purpose of the report, it is important to note that two of the selected participants dropped out just before the start of the VSS, bringing the final number of participants to 40.

Selected participants by professional background and gender
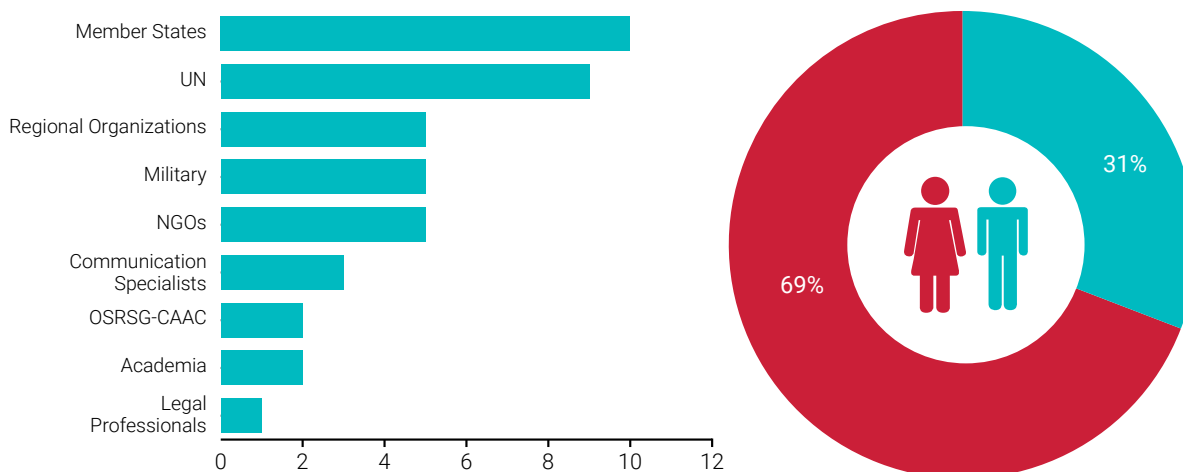
4.3. Lead trainers and guest speakers

Six lead trainers were selected and contracted to develop 23 modules and 16 interactive exercises. The lead trainers had previous experience in working with the UN, including in peace-keeping missions and/or UNICEF or other OSRSG-CAAC partners, as well as child protection and/or international human rights and international humanitarian law expertise. Their profiles were diverse, and they were selected based on their expertise, experience, and competencies in delivering specific modules.

A total of 14 guest speakers were invited to participate in some of the VSS modules. They were asked to speak about a specific aspect of the module, using their professional experience to complement the knowledge of the respective lead trainer. While lead trainers were recruited as independent consultants, guest speakers were not paid and were representing their organizations.

5. Feedback

As the VSS was a pilot project, it was important to evaluate its implementation, assess lessons learned and determine its added value. To that end participants provided anonymous feedback through daily surveys posted on the VLE platform. The daily survey was composed of 15 questions on the overall experience and the specific modules/interactive exercises. On average, 27.5 participants out of the 33 that typically attended the live sessions completed the daily survey.

Additionally, at the end of the VSS a comprehensive final survey was conducted with participants, lead trainers, guest speakers and exhibition booth hosts.

IV. Findings and recommendations

1. Overall

On average, participants graded the VSS 4,38 out of 5

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

▶ 97% of the respondents said that they would recommend the course to others
▶ 94.11% of the respondents said it met their expectations

> **"** This summer school was without a doubt the best course I have enrolled in. Hugely informative; experts of really high caliber; great engagement with other participants (which isn't easy to get right on a virtual course); excellent coordination; fun activities; continued reinforcement of learning throughout the session. Gold standard throughout. **"**
>
> - a VSS participant

> **"** This course is the standard-bearer; a tough act for any virtual course to follow. Thank you so much to everyone involved in developing and running it. I'll use the knowledge gained to keep fighting the good fight for children in conflict. **"**
>
> - a VSS participant

Lead trainers graded their experience an average of **3.8 out of 5**	**Guest speakers** graded their experience an average of **4.8 out of 5**

What participants liked most about the programme:

▶ Diverse experiences of lead trainers, guest speakers and other participants.
▶ References to real examples from the field.
▶ Interactive learning experience, including the range of quizzes and games available.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
" Generally, I think the program was fantastic and very well executed. Given the constraints, I don't think you all could have done a better job. **"** - a lead trainer	**"** It was a very impressive summer school and looked incredibly professional. **"** - a guest speaker

2. Planning and preparation

2.1. Objectives, theme, and genre

The VSS was clearly designed with the objective of training participants to put their knowledge gains into practice, as suggested by the reference to developing skills and competencies of participants who could contribute to the CAAC mandate. This could have been more explicitly stated in the framing of the objectives while also emphasising the contributory role that participants could have to the mandate.

There was also a lack of clarity on whether the summer school was anything more or different to a capacity-building training. In the internal documentation of the OSRSG-CAAC, including in the Terms of Reference (ToR) linked to recruitment, the VSS was described as a training. However, the structure and outcomes attempt to correspond with an academic programme. If it was essentially a training, it is unclear why it was termed a 'summer school.'

The summer school was themed on 'child protection in armed conflict', which is broader than the topic of 'children and armed conflict.' Considering the amount of time available, this broader focus was considered too ambitious by a trainer and a few participants.

2.2. Partnerships

The grant agreement with the Government of Malta to set up the VSS was signed in June 2021. The strong relationship between the OSRSG-CAAC and the Government of Malta was reflected in the smooth planning and running of this programme. The OSRSG-CAAC had a focal point within the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta. Through frequent communication, trust was built, which enabled the successful running of the programme.

The collaboration with the University of Malta consitented in the provision of the VLE platform and administrative support for the registration of participants. The University of Malta was, however, not involved in the development of the programme and the learning methods and outcomes.

2.3. Human resources

The initial allocation of human resources to the project, namely one Programme Management Officer, was underestimated as the Programme Manager had to be heavily supported by several other staff members. Recruiting and managing the contracts of 6 lead trainers, in addition to ensuring the quality of the teaching content, designing, and populating the online platforms and running the programme was above and beyond the allocated capacity. Ultimately, the project was only realised because of the time and effort provided by the OSRSG-CAAC staff, which was also noted in several individual comments by participants, lead trainers and guest speakers.

2.4. Development of the programme

The project started with a mapping exercise of existing trainings on children and armed conflict, including a gap analysis on needs and target groups for a new learning and training tool. This mapping revealed that whilst some courses on peace and security, international humanitarian and human rights law, and child protection touch upon the issue of conflict-affected children, there was no training specifically dedicated to the topic. The VSS was designed to fill this gap in line with the broad objectives of raising awareness about the CAAC mandate. The structure, methods, and details of the programme were developed by the OSRSG-CAAC reflecting its knowledge and expertise on the CAAC mandate and on child protection.

While the overall programme was generally effective and valued by participants, the lead trainers and some guest speakers regretted their lack of involvement in its development. Additionally, while the programme was shared with different external partners, there was insufficient time and scope to include all their suggestions and recommendations.

The VSS could have benefited from the knowledge and understanding of a range of pedagogical approaches for online adult learning and assessment methods, which would have resulted in a tighter, more appropriate structure.

2.5. Selection of participants, recruitment of lead trainers and selection of guest speakers

The VSS attracted high interest, with almost 300 applications for the programme. With regard to participants, all but two found the application procedure of providing a CV and cover letter straightforward.

The OSRSG-CAAC did not have written selection criteria and suitability was based on selecting a diverse pool of people who had previous knowledge about the CAAC agenda and could contribute to its implementation in their various professions. To that end, OSRSG-CAAC set the following selection target in terms of participants' professional backgrounds: 10 representatives from Member States, 10 from the UN, 5 each from NGOs, regional organisations, military, communication professionals and 2 academics. For some groups, such as for example the professionals working for NGOs, this meant that the selection was more competitive considering the high number of applications received from that group i.e. 10 people were selected out of 108 applications.

The different professional backgrounds of the selected participants brought to the table a diverse and rich range of experiences that contributed to the learning experience and strengthened the programme.

The recruitment of trainers posed numerous challenges. The deadline for applications for lead trainers closed on 12 June 2022, which was too close to the start date of the VSS and did not provide sufficient time for them to be constructively involved in developing and contributing to the programme. For the OSRSG-CAAC, the administrative burden of processing and managing 6 consultancies within a short period of time was significant. Trainer feedback suggested that the workload for the preparation of their modules was high, which may have been abated through earlier recruitment. It is noteworthy that 4 out of 6 felt well supported through the process, which means the OSRSG-CAAC remained responsive despite the recruitment challenges. While most participants had positive comments with regard to the trainers, one participant suggested a wider racial and geographical representation of lead trainers, which should be taken into account to ensure the diversity and inclusiveness of future programmes.

Finally, 14 guest speakers were selected to join the lead trainers' sessions. The guest speakers were mainly coming from different UN entities and offices, and some came from NGOs.

OSRSG-CAAC Lessons learned on planning and preparation

- ▶ The objective of the programme was not clear enough.
- ▶ Having an introduction course on a topic as broad as child protection in armed conflict over 35 teaching hours was too ambitious.
- ▶ The human resources allocated to the project were not sufficient.
- ▶ A more collaborative process between OSRSG-CAAC, lead trainers and external stakeholders in designing the programme would be beneficial.
- ▶ The time needed for the recruitment of trainers was underestimated.
- ▶ More flexibility in the programme structure would have been important to incorporate recommendations from outside stakeholders, including shifting around and shortening/extending modules, interactive exercises, etc. as needed.
- ▶ The selection process of participants based on a CV and cover letter was too time-consuming for the OSRSG-CAAC.
- ▶ The professional background of guest speakers was not diverse enough.

2. Recommendations on planning and preparation

2.1. Objectives, theme, and genre

2.1.1. The objectives need to explicitly mention the link between the knowledge and particular skills that participants will gain and the purpose for which participants are expected to apply these into their daily work. The aim of the programme is to:

a) increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CAAC legal framework and mandate; and
b) develop skills and competencies to empower and enable participants to translate knowledge into practice, in particular into their work, and contribute towards the protection of children in armed conflict and the implementation of the CAAC agenda, including by building partnerships and establishing inter-sectoral collaborations.

The objectives are to:
▶ Increase understanding and knowledge of the situation of children affected by armed conflict and the particular challenges faced in such contexts;
▶ Raise awareness and understanding of the international legal protection framework for children in armed conflict and the CAAC agenda;
▶ Develop knowledge and understanding of how the children and armed conflict mandate is implemented at national, regional and international levels;
▶ Increase understanding of how the mandate relates to participants' work and develop skills and competencies on how to contribute to the implementation of the mandate through their work;
▶ Strengthen partnerships and collaboration around the CAAC agenda.

2.1.2. Based on the expertise of the OSRSG-CAAC, the programme should run as a specific course focusing on the 'Children and Armed Conflict' agenda. A revision of the name of the programme is thus suggested and should also foresee dropping the reference to "summer school" to provide more time and flexibility in the planning and organization of the programme.

2.2. Partnerships

2.2.1. The commitment of the Government of Malta to the VSS has been crucial. This constructive relationship should be maintained for future editions to build on existing knowledge and trust.

2.2.2. The collaboration with the University of Malta should be reviewed.

2.2.3. New partnerships should be identified with other learning institutions/training providers that have expertise in developing and delivering online training to professionals in the areas of international humanitarian law, international human rights, peace and security, and development.

2.3. Human resources

2.3.1. The OSRSG-CAAC needs to be better resourced in terms of personnel and expertise to be able to run this programme effectively and sustainably. The programme requires a full-time staff member with experience in running similar online training and managing a group of trainers. Additionally, time allocations must be made for other staff members to contribute towards the project.

2.4. Development of the programme

2.4.1. The overall structure, methods and content of the programme must align with the dual goal of the objectives.

2.4.2. The structure, methods and content of the programme must take into consideration the feedback from the pilot project and be developed in consultation with lead trainers and other stakeholders.

2.4.3. To ensure high-quality state-of-the-art training, more rigorous teaching and learning methods with a focus on knowledge production, strengthening understanding and developing skills and competencies should be considered.

2.5. Selection of participants, recruitment of lead trainers and selection of guest speakers

2.5.1. Clearer written selection guidelines for participants should be developed. They should stipulate not only the eligibility criteria but also include strategies to diversify selection across geographic regions. Member States, UN, and NGOs should be equally represented among participants.

2.5.2. Participant selection must be simplified through the use of an online application form linked to the selection criteria with an easy scoring system to shortlist candidates and mandatory fields for the purpose of data analysis (i.e., mandatory nationality field to analyse the diversity of applications). The form should include screening questions such as a) why they want to attend the course; b) what their relevant experiences and expertise are; and c) in what ways can they foresee being able to use the knowledge gained from the programme in their respective professions. In this form, participants will also need to explain which measures they can take to ensure attendance and confirm they have sufficient internet connectivity, IT equipment and familiarity with online platforms, which can help respond to drops in attendance. Aligning the selection of participants more systematically with the programme objectives and having stricter selection criteria may resolve issues linked to the baseline CAAC knowledge level of the participants.

2.5.3. The overall selection of participants and recruitment of lead trainers must be based on equality, diversity, and inclusivity principles. To that end, disaggregated data on trainer and participant applications must be gathered. Existing UN guidelines, standard operating procedures, and tools for ensuring gender parity and geographical diversity should continue to be used during the selection of participants and the recruitment of lead trainers.

2.5.4. Specific Terms of Reference for lead trainers must be developed in line with the objective and the aim of the programme and should subsequently be advertised widely and for at least 3 weeks. Recruitment must take place in a timely manner to ensure that trainers are in post 3 months prior to the start of the programme.

2.5.5. A lead trainer should be allocated to support participants through at least 3 online forums of up to two hours each, where trainees can clarify and ask questions on pre-sessional content during semi-structured feedback sessions.*

2.5.6. Experience in adult pedagogical methods and the ability to meet learning outcomes must be considered in the recruitment of lead trainers together with their specific expertise.

2.5.7. Guest speakers need to be of diverse professional backgrounds and preferably bring field experience from varying contexts.
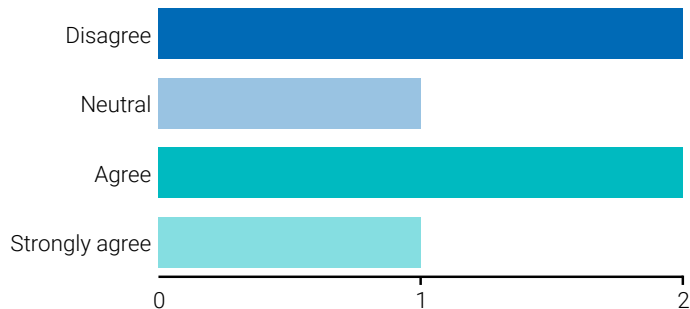
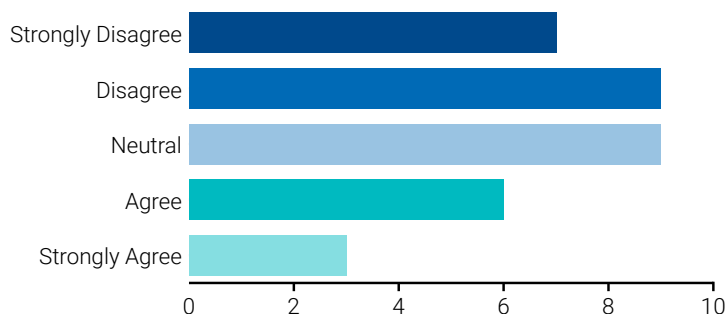* See next section for explanations on these sessions

3. VSS platforms and structure

3.1. Online format and platforms

"Compared to an in-person event, learning content was lost due to the virtual nature of the event" *(lead trainers feedback)*

"Compared to an in-person event, learning content was lost due to the virtual nature of the event" *(participants feedback)*

The decision to conduct the VSS online was justifiable, effective, and considered successful by both lead trainers and participants. Neither participants nor lead trainers felt strongly that the programme was adversely affected by the online setup.

Three lead trainers "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that compared to an in-person training, learning content was not lost due to the online format, two disagreed and one was neutral. Furthermore, one lead trainer disagreed that the virtual format was appropriate for their session, the other five agreed or strongly agreed.

In response to the same question on content being lost through the online format, nearly 50% of participants, "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed", with some 26% "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" with the rest being neutral. A large majority (29 out of 34 participants) also agreed that in spite of the online format there was opportunity for interaction. The online format was however considered to limit participants' interactions.

Content on both platforms was only in the English language. Wordly, the AI powered live translation, was not used by many participants and when used it did not provide accurate translation.

The VSS used two platforms:
- **Virtual Learning Platform (VLE):** the VLE was used to share reading materials, power points presentations, daily and final feedback surveys and have forum discussions with the participants.
- **vFairs Event Platform:** the platform provided various services. The external site consisted of a virtual representation of the University of Malta, while the Auditorium from where participants were connecting to the live sessions was based on the UN Security Council Chamber. There was also a dedicated networking lounge designed as the delegates' lounge at the UN headquarters as well as an exhibition hall. In the exhibition hall, seven partners (the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, the International Rescue Committee, Amnesty International, the UN Department of Peace Operations, World Vision International, Watchlist, and Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security), the OSRSG-CAAC and the Government of Malta had an exhibition booth where they showcased their work and publications.

The main comment participants had with regard to the online platforms was that the VLE was not user-friendly. Issues included difficulties registering, problems creating an account, and a lack of intuitiveness in its use. Comments related to the vFairs event platform were mixed; some found it technically challenging, but others welcomed that it facilitated engagement and were impressed by the design. Furthermore, working through two platforms created confusion amongst participants who had to learn how to use and navigate them effectively.

> *"*
> Particularly the Malta University platform was EXTREMELY cumbersome to get initially registered in *"*

> *"*
> The [UM] platform didn't work with my international phone number, so I had to register 6-7 times before the IT support *"*

> *"*
> Time was a bit limited to access the relevant resources [in the *"* exhibition hall]

> *"*
> Vfairs was my favourite platform since it was more engaging and gave the impression that we are taking classes in real institutions *"*

Content-wise, participants and lead trainers found that the two platforms complemented each other and were well-designed. OSRSG-CAAC found that the networking lounge and exhibition booths were hardly used by participants, which was not explained in participants' feedback but could be due to the overall time demands they faced in the programme since the networking activities were scheduled during the breaks.

Despite the technical support by the vFairs's team, the design of the event platform was very time-consuming. In addition, the OSRSG-CAAC had to populate and design the VLE with minimal support. The added value of having those two separate platforms was minimal compared to the work required to create and populate them and the varying tools, though carefully selected by the organisers, were not all necessary to meet the basic learning outcomes. Many online educational platforms are nowadays designed to provide a range of teaching and learning tools in one single platform, making learning experiences more cohesive and easily deliverable.

3.2. Overall structure and timing

The programme ran for a period of 2 weeks, with daily sessions amounting to 4 hours per day (including short breaks). Participants were divided in their responses to whether the programme was too time-consuming: some 26.5% remained neutral, 35% strongly agreed or agreed and 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

"I felt the time commitment associated with the event was too high" *(participants feedback)*

12%
21%
15%
26%
26%

● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree ● Strongly Disagree
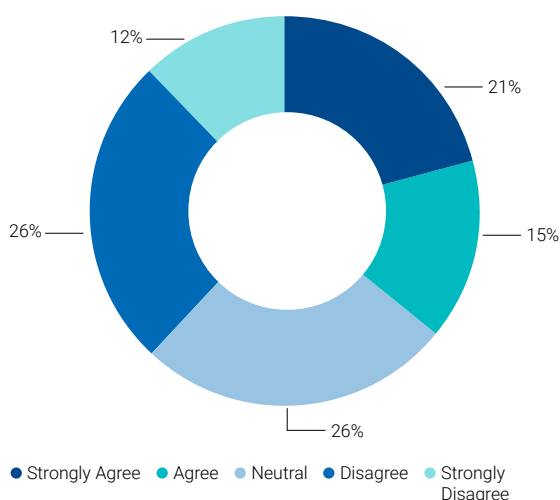
However, in the daily feedback surveys, attendance figures and through communication with the OSRSG-CAAC, it was clear that combined with their own ongoing work commitments, participants found the programme demanding. A poll taken at the online feedback session in November indicated that among that smaller group of participants there was less concern about the overall 2-week period but more so about the daily time commitment. Finding a suitable time across time zones to conduct the programme was also a challenge.

Feedback from participants also suggested that they would prefer shorter daily sessions. This is an important consideration as participants are professionals who combined the VSS with their jobs. Furthermore, there is now increasing understanding in the field of higher education that short, focused online-teaching sessions catered to develop students' understanding through discussions and exercises are more beneficial to learning in comparison to long presentations of content.

There was a clear division between lead trainers and participants on the length and scope of the programme and daily routine. Three out of six lead trainers thought the overall time allocated to the VSS was insufficient and only two held that it sufficed; additionally, 5 out of 6 lead trainers said the time allocated to their individual sessions was

inadequate. Whilst concerns regarding timing can also be attributed to teaching methods, the scope and content covered in the programme were also too ambitious.

A total of 23 modules and 16 interactive exercises resulted in a wide range of content covered, which most participants valued. On the other hand, sessions were often very packed leaving little time and space for learning through discussion and engagement. Lead trainers were divided on whether the overall programme structure (23 modules, 16 interactive exercises in 8 sessions) was too broad; two agreed or strongly agreed, three disagreed or strongly disagreed and one stayed neutral.

Both participants and lead trainers feedback indicated that more time was needed to go in-depth into topics, increase understanding of specific issues, allow exchanges, and learn through the experiences of trainers and participants. For more in-depth learning to take place, participants need to have time and space to think through what they have been taught, process it, and consider its application to their work.

3.3. Content covered

As participants initial knowledge level on CAAC varied, there was a divide in their feedback on whether the scope of the content covered was too broad; 12 strongly agreed or agreed, 16 disagreed or strongly disagreed and 6 stayed neutral. For those who were working in the area of child protection, some of the content was too rudimentary whilst others required this basic knowledge.

"The Virtual Summer School scope (amount of subject matters) was too broad" *(participants feedback)*
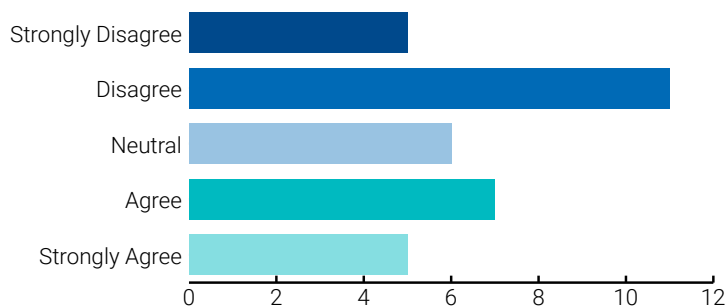
Half of the lead trainers agreed that the overall content and structure was appropriate. In the individual comments, it appeared that lead trainers had diverse views on the extent and nature of content that should have been covered. At least two of the trainers were critical of the content being overtly UN-focused instead of focusing more on child protection in general. As the following table illustrates, there are a range of different topics participants and lead trainers considered important to be included in the training.

As these differ based on the experience of the participant/ lead trainer and are wide-ranging, future changes need to premise these with the objectives of the programme.

Trainers	Participants
▶ How is the CAAC mandate implemented differently in non-peacekeeping contexts or contexts with UN peace operations and UN special political missions. ▶ The reasons behind the creation of the CAAC mandate (increased focus on Graça Machel's report). ▶ The impact of armed conflict on children, families, communities, and countries. ▶ How can child protection and non-child protection actors protect girls and boys during armed conflict.	▶ Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and handover protocols. ▶ Children in mediation and peace processes. ▶ Accountability. ▶ Investigating and verifying grave violations. ▶ Child Protection sub-cluster in emergencies/ conflict.

Suggestions from trainers and participants on missing topics or topics that could have been further elaborated on:
One critical point raised by a few trainers was that they were unaware of the content of other trainer's modules. There was, consequently, some lack of coordination, minimal repetition and less cohesion in terms of the overall programme, though very little of it was picked up by participants. Indeed, delays in the recruitment of trainers led to time pressure in the drafting of the modules and did not allow for a peer-to-peer review. It also led to time pressure for the OSRSG-CAAC to revise the content to ensure coherence between modules, avoid repetitions and factual accuracy.

OSRSG-CAAC - Lessons learned on the VSS platforms and structure

▶ Designing, populating and managing two platforms was too time consuming for the OSRSG-CAAC vis-a-vis the added value that these two brought to the learning.
▶ The registration process was too complicated.
▶ The use of two separate platforms was complicated for participants in terms of navigating them and finding the material.
▶ Participants should have an equal baseline knowledge of CAAC.
▶ Lead trainers were not provided with sufficient space and time to interact with each other to ensure coherence between modules.
▶ Specific time should have been factored in to ensure the cross-checking of the entire content of the course before the start of the VSS.

3. Recommendations on the VSS platforms and structure

3.1 Online format and platforms

3.1.1 The programme should remain online to maintain a wide reach.

3.1.2 The programme should be centralised on one main platform that can provide all the resources, teaching and learning content. This platform should have an easy registration process, facilitate presentations and discussions and have embedded functionalities for live meetings. The platform provider should provide IT support and online learning design capacity to compensate for a lack of such expertise within OSRSG-CAAC.

3.2. Overall structure and timing

3.2.1. The programme should be divided into two parts better tailored to the needs of professionals:

a) **Pre-sessions** consisting of self-paced independent studies to allow participants to acquire more technical knowledge and bring all participants to a similar baseline knowledge on CAAC. These sessions could consist of recorded and written modules as well as interactive activities. Modules would also have short tests to ensure the content has been understood. Though largely self-paced and independent, opportunities for participants to ask trainers questions and/or clarification will also need to be provided. At the end of the pre-session, there will be an assessment before participants move on to the in-sessions.

To capitalise on the initial investment of developing the pre-session modules and to reach a broader audience, the pre-sessions could additionally be used as a stand-alone course open throughout the year and in which people could enrol independently from the complete programme to receive a basic certificate.

b) **In-sessions** once a year consisting of a maximum of 10 days of online live sessions centred around interactions and exercise. These sessions will enable discussions with the trainers and among participants to develop their skills and learn how to apply the acquired knowledge in their daily work.

The proposed 2.5 hour daily sessions could be structured as follows:

- 20 minutes catch-up, ice-breakers and preparation for learning activities, i.e., addressing questions from previous sessions and identifying questions that could be raised with the guest speaker of that day.
- One-hour live seminar: 20 minutes of teacher-centred input followed by 40 minutes of cooperative learning activities (discussions, problem-solving, Q&A, etc.).
- 10/15-minute break.
- 30 minutes of student-led Q&A with a guest speaker.
- 30 minutes informal discussion forum on a subtopic.

3.2.2. A suitable time across all time zones for the in-sessions will need to be decided in advance to ensure the attendance of participants from different regions of the world.

3.3 Content covered

3.3.1. More technical, legal, background and introductory content should be covered in the pre-session modules. The in-session modules would allow diving deeper into some of those topics and will build around relevant topics highlighted in the participants' feedback. Both the pre- and in-session content needs to be clearly aligned with the identified objectives of the VSS.

The following topics could be covered in the pre-session modules:

- The CAAC mandate: legal and normative framework
- The Six Grave Violations
- Key CAAC actors and protection partners and their role
- CAAC toolbox
- Child protection in armed conflict and humanitarian situations
- CAAC and cross-cutting issues

The following topics could be covered in the in-session modules:

- The CAAC mandate: legal and normative framework
- The Six Grave Violations
- Action Plans
- CAAC and peace processes
- Engagement with parties to conflict (non-state actors)
- Engagement with parties to conflict (state actors)
- Release and Reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFAGs)
- Accountability and Justice for Children
- CAAC and gender

These suggestions need to be further discussed with relevant stakeholders and can be adjusted if deemed appropriate.

3.3.2. Lead trainers should be involved from early on in the content development to incorporate their ideas, ensure sufficient time for the development of modules and allow them to work collaboratively throughout the process. A session for lead trainers to go through the programme and discuss the learning outcomes should be foreseen before the development of the modules. In addition, lead trainers should be provided with regular opportunities to exchange with each other on the content of their modules to avoid duplication and ensure cohesion.

3.3.3. The entire content of the course should be reviewed before going live to ensure coherence between modules, avoid repetitions and ensure factual accuracy.

4. Teaching and learning methods

4.1. Combining theory and practice

The teaching and learning methods used for the VSS could have been clearer, stronger and better linked to each other and the programme as a whole, which is critical for such courses that aim at being more than a capacity-building training. The teaching methods were intended to be less academic (and more) 'policy-oriented, learning through diverse, interactive and engaging tools, with a combination of theory and practice.' Theory here refers to legal and technical knowledge, which needs to be made relatable to everyday practice and context. This was achieved through the varying methods and tools that were part of the programme. The practice element was certainly prioritised and well thought through in design, with each daily session having 2 practical exercises and a final simulation exercise incorporated into the programme. Ninety-four percent (94%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the balance between theory and practical exercises good. Trainers were less convinced, only two agreed the balance was good, three stayed neutral and one disagreed.

"The balance between theoretical modules and interactive exercises was good" *(participants feedback)*

3% — 3%
3%
44% — 50%

● Strongly Agree   ● Agree   ● Neutral   ● Disagree
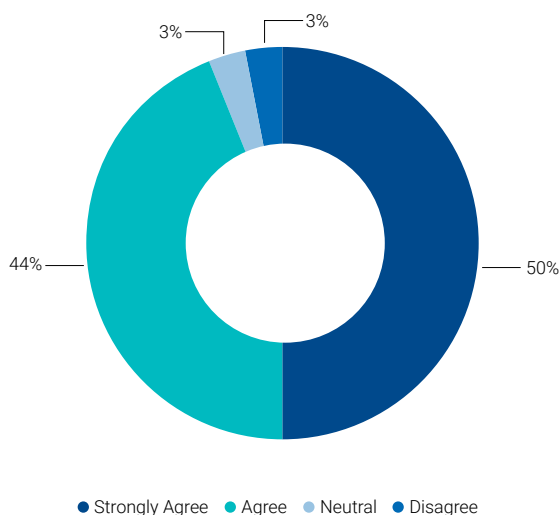
"The balance between theory and practice was good" *(lead trainers feedback)*

17%
50% — 33%

● Agree   ● Neutral   ● Disagree
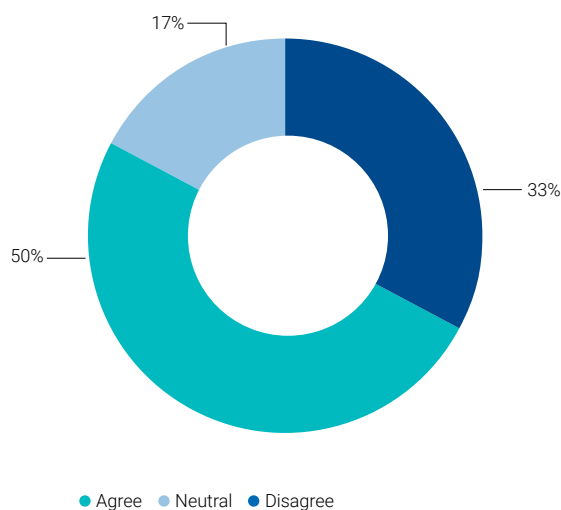
The interactive exercises were very strong components of the programme. They varied and were designed with impressive technical competencies, including responding to questions based on different scenarios in breakout rooms. In one instance, a power walk was conducted in a plenary to reflect on the specific needs of children and in another, participants had to conduct a community-based exercise to inform the design of a reintegration project. Close to 95% of participants said the digital tools used to facilitate these interactive components were useful and easy to use. In individual comments, there was a strong sense that the range of learning methods, including the interactive exercises and other learning tools (Kahoot, Slido, etc.) increased and enhanced learning through challenging and developing participants' knowledge construction in enjoyable and interactive ways. Four out of six trainers said they found the interactive tools useful, which is also a strong indicator of their success.

In spite of this, according to the participants and lead trainers, the programme did not allow for sufficient discussion and engagement, which meant that the interactive exercises did not yield their full potential. Participants and trainers clearly indicated that the lack of time for engagement with each other also affected practical learning. In the November online feedback session, when asked in retrospect what participants felt was missing in the programme, two responses pointed to the inadequacy of tools and strategies to put the knowledge gained into practice within

their specific context. Such skills and competencies can be gained through more interactive and engaging learning exercises. Insufficient feedback (partly due to time constraints) from lead trainers and other participants after the interactive exercises, limited the learning gained from the exercises. Two participants also suggested that their own experiences were insufficiently made use of due to time constraints.

4.2. Lead trainers and guest speakers sessions

Multiple teaching and learning methods were used as part of the programme, including sessions by lead trainers, guest speakers' presentations, interactive exercises, interaction with participants and trainers, assessments and live quizzes. Trainers' sessions were expected to provide the substantive component, while guest speakers and interactive exercises were meant to complement this with the practice element. This setup could have been strengthened to better cater towards adult learning and increase not just knowledge but understanding.

Overall, participants held the view that the trainers and guest speakers were of high quality. A vast majority (95%) found that the content was presented in such a way that interlinkages between topics were made clear and nearly 80% of participants felt that when there were ambiguities, trainers were able to help clarify them. Whilst in individual feedback it was evident that some trainers were rated higher than others, generally and based on the individual feedback of participants and the overall score for the programme, it is clear that the learning experience was a positive one and very few gaps were identified.

Participants felt that the number of trainers was adequate and, apart from two, all participants stressed that the variety of trainers provided a good dynamic and provided different perspectives. Amongst the lead trainers, four thought their total number was adequate but two strongly disagreed.

Other methods, such as presentations by guest speakers, were also well appreciated by participants. Only one participant stayed neutral, while 33 said they agreed or strongly agreed that the guest speakers added value. In individual comments, guest speakers acknowledged the 'ground experience' brought forth by them, 'providing interesting angles' and extending knowledge through their different experiences. Some participants highlighted their disappointment in not having sufficient time to engage with the guest speakers.

The lead trainers also saw the value of guest speakers, only one strongly disagreed that they added value. Because of their specialised roles in the field of child protection, guest speakers provided a specific learning experience to participants and should remain part of the programme in their own right, rather than as an add-on by the lead trainer.

The entire programme was moderated by a Political Affairs Officer from the OSRSG-CAAC, which lead trainers and participants agreed was instrumental in ensuring continuity.

4.3. Experience-based and peer-to-peer learning

Learning through experience sharing between participants and trainers was also considered an important and valuable aspect of the VSS. The diversity in experience among participants, trainers and guest speakers was purposeful and considered part of the learning experience. Participants appreciated the groups and the trainers' diversity but did not have sufficient time or opportunity to engage and benefit from peer-to-peer learning. Networking was considered a priority in the design of the programme and time was allocated during breaks for this. However, the networking lounge provided in the vFairs platform was underutilised despite attempts by the OSRSG-CAAC team to encourage its use.

Popular adult learning theories suggest that, unlike children, adult learning 'tends to be more self-directed,' building on their own experiences and are more 'problem centred' than 'subject centred' (Fry, Kettridge and Marshall, 2009). Teaching methods in a programme such as this need to cultivate and build on the experience of participants, some of whom are already working in the field of child protection.

4.4. Assessments

An assessment in such a programme aims to measure knowledge, skills and competencies gained and is, therefore, in part necessary to determine whether the programme meets its own objectives. The assessment method was a multiple-choice test at the beginning and the end of the VSS aimed at ascertaining the level of knowledge gained. The certification for the VSS was attached to participation and attainment of a score equal or above 75% in the assessment. Participants mentioned that the assessment could have been more challenging and their high scores both prior to and after the programme further amplify this observation. In the pre-assessment, participants scored on average 84.67%, while for the post-assessment, the average increased by eight percentage points to 92,84%, with multiple participants scoring 100%.

While such tests are a commonly used method in higher education to measure knowledge, there is debate on their effectiveness and utility. Critics argue that test memory rather than knowledge and are a poor indicator of the depth of understanding, including analytical capacity.

OSRSG-CAAC - Lessons learned on teaching and learning methods

▶ Incentives and encouragement for participants to actively engage are crucial to avoid having only a few taking the floor repeatedly.
▶ Moderation of discussions and exercises is important to guarantee the quality and accuracy of information shared and to ensure participants receive the correct answers to their questions and to exercises.
▶ Guest speaker's sessions were not interactive enough.
▶ Time constraints hampered interactivity during the sessions and the interactive exercises whilst not allowing for sufficient networking and peer-to-peer learning.
▶ Despite representing a challenge from a learning point of view, the diverse background of participants presented an added value for peer-to-peer learning.
▶ The assessment was not challenging enough.

4. Recommendations on teaching and learning methods

4.1 Combining theory and practice

4.1.1. The programme should clearly stipulate how the practice element can be achieved and be linked to learning outcomes through the following methods:

▶ **written content** which should be presented in both pre and in-sessions, in short, catchy, easy to understand and engaging ways to enable students to learn at their own pace. Supplementary reading, academic and policy work, can be made available to increase knowledge on the topics covered in both sessions.
▶ **presentations,** mainly by lead trainers, which should be kept to a minimum only to introduce and clarify written content and prompt discussion and analysis.
▶ the largest component of teaching should take place through **interactive exercises** and **engagement,** such as discussing case studies and scenarios, simulations, debating policies, strategizing advocacy and working together in groups, using each other's unique experiences to co-construct knowledge with the trainers. The emphasis here is on discussion, where legalities and concepts are understood through questions and clarifications and lessons learnt in interactive exercises are openly processed and applied to individual contexts.

4.1.2. Reflecting the changed objectives, a dual approach to learning should be developed with outcomes focusing both on strengthening knowledge and understanding firstly and secondly skills and competencies, with interactive exercises and engagement particularly catering to the latter two.

4.1.3. The interactive exercises can be maintained separately within the structure of the programme, but trainer time needs to be allocated to provide feedback to participants.

4.2. Lead trainers and guest speaker sessions

4.2.1. As the programme is adult-centred, trainers should see themselves as coaches, supporting participants with learning through varying methods, including task-based learning.

4.2.2. The distinction between lead trainers and guest speakers should be retained. The number of lead trainers should be revised based on the newly suggested programme.

4.2.3. Sufficient time should be allocated to guest speakers' sessions to ensure the sessions are more of a conversation with experts rather than a presentation.

4.3. Experience-based and peer-to-peer learning

4.3.1. Teaching methods need to cultivate and build on the existing experience of participants in the area of child protection.

4.3.2. The ice-breaker exercises should be retained and expanded if necessary to help participants and trainers get to know each other, enabling, in this way, networking opportunities.

4.3.3. The programme should actively promote peer-to-peer learning and encourage participants to draw on their own work experiences during sessions. Opportunities must be provided within the daily programme to enable such exchange.

4.3.4. Additional networking sessions, such as more informal virtual talks with experts or virtual coffee break moments, must be created outside of the main sessions.

4.4. Assessments

4.4.1. Assessments must be designed to ensure learning outcomes are achieved.

4.4.2. The assessment method needs to be reviewed and adapted to more effectively evaluate knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies. In addition to testing knowledge through multiple choice questions, a written or oral presentation based on scenarios or strategies is recommended to assess skills and competencies as part of the two-tiered learning outcomes.

4.4.3. During the pre-session, at the end of each module, there should be an automated multiple-choice test to make sure the content has been understood and to allow participants to move on to the next session. Participants should be given the option to retake this short test until they get all the correct answers. This will enable participants already having a certain level of understanding of the topic to move quicker through the modules. At the end of the pre-session, participants should take a refresher test encompassing all modules and would need to acquire a specific mark in order to join the in-sessions.

4.4.4. The skills and competencies-based outcomes need to be evaluated through more creative methods, such as requiring participants to document lessons learnt from the simulation exercise, including focusing on how they can adopt them in the field.

4.4.5. A pass mark of 70% on the average of both tests (pre-session and in-session) should be a requirement to receive certification for the programme.

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V. Proposed changes at a glance

1. Objectives

The aim of the programme is to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CAAC legal framework and mandate and develop skills and competencies to empower and enable participants to translate knowledge into practice, in particular into their work, and contribute towards the protection of children in armed conflict and the implementation of the CAAC agenda, including by building partnerships and establishing inter-sectoral collaborations. The objectives are to:

▶ Increase understanding and knowledge on the situation of children affected by armed conflict and the particular challenges they face in such contexts;
▶ Raise awareness and understanding of the international legal and normative framework for children in armed conflict and the CAAC agenda;
▶ Develop knowledge and understanding of how the children and armed conflict mandate is implemented at national, regional and international levels;
▶ Increase understanding of how the mandate relates to participants' work and develop their skills and competencies on how to contribute to the mandate through their daily work;
▶ Strengthen partnerships and collaboration around the CAAC agenda;
▶ Create an openly accessible self-paced tool.

2. Intended learning outcomes

On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

Knowledge-specific outcomes	
1.	Identify and analyse the six grave violations against children in armed conflict;
2.	Demonstrate a good understanding of the CAAC mandate and analyse how it relates to international human rights and humanitarian law within the broader protection architecture;
3.	Critically assess accountability mechanisms and ways to combat impunity;
4.	Identify and understand the interlinkages between the CAAC agenda and peace and security, humanitarian, development and human rights issues to better mainstream and integrate the CAAC agenda into various sectors and fora.
Skills and competencies	
1.	Identify strategies to mainstream CAAC and effectively communicate the CAAC agenda;
2.	Exercise skills to effectively engage and negotiate with parties to conflict to end violations against children and put in place preventative measures;
3.	Confidently identify and employ tools to advocate for the protection of conflict-affected children, the prevention of grave violations against children, include children in peace processes and ensure sustainable reintegration;
4.	Build and strengthen partnerships between relevant CAAC actors and other key national, regional and global actors.

3. Overall structure

Pre-sessional	In-sessional
▶ 6 Modules; ▶ Self-paced, independent study; ▶ Some recorded and written content; ▶ Interactive activities; ▶ Course reviews and short tests; ▶ Short group tutorial sessions with one trainer to clarify and answer questions on content; ▶ Assessment at the conclusion to ensure all participants are at the same level.	Live session running for 2,5h and composed of: ▶ 20 minutes catch up and support for learning; ▶ One-hour live seminar: 20 minutes of teacher-centred input followed by 40 minutes of cooperative learning activities (discussions, problem-solving, Q&A, etc.); ▶ 30 minutes of student-led Q&A with a guest speaker; ▶ 30 minutes informal discussion forum on a subtopic; ▶ Separate network sessions.

4. Teaching and learning methods

Three different types of learning methods are suggested:

a)   Written content:

▶ Pre-sessional: Independent self-paced study through readings on fundamentals;
▶ In-sessional: Some readings are to be provided in advance, leaving live sessions for explanations, clarifications and discussions.

b)   Presentations:

▶ Short presentations by trainers recorded for pre-sessional and live for in-sessional;
▶ Open discussions with guest speakers, including CAAC practitioners.

c)   Exercises:

▶ Enhanced learning through problem-solving, discussions and Q&A;
▶ Apply the learning in a practical manner relating to participants' daily work and by sharing lessons learned.

5. Suggested modules

PRE-SESSIONAL MODULES SUGGESTIONS		
E-LEARNING (e-M)		
Type	**Module #**	**Title & Description**
Independent self-paced study	e-M0	Welcoming address and overall course description
Independent self-paced study	e-M1	The CAAC mandate: legal and normative framework
Independent self-paced study	e-M2	The Six Grave Violations
Independent self-paced study	e-M3	Key CAAC actors and protection partners and their role
Independent self-paced study	e-M4	CAAC toolbox
Independent self-paced study	e-M5 (not mandatory)	Child protection in armed conflicts and humanitarian situations
Independent self-paced study	e-M6 (not mandatory)	CAAC and cross-cutting issues

IN-SESSIONAL MODULES (M)		
Type	**Module #**	**Title & Description**
Live	M0	Training introduction
Live	M1	The Six Grave Violations
Live	M2	Action Plans
Live	M3	CAAC and peace processes
Live	M4	Engagement with parties to conflict (non-state actors)
Live	M5	Engagement with parties to conflict (state actors)
Live	M6	Release and Reintegration of CAAFAGs
Live	M7	Accountability and Justice for Children
Live	M8	CAAC and gender

EXERCISES (E)		
Type	Module #	Title & Description
Live	E1	How to… mainstream CAAC
Live	E2	How to… negotiate with parties to conflict
Live	E3	How to… ensure sustainable reintegration
Live	E4	How to… include child protection considerations in peace process
Live	E5	How to… prevent grave violations against children affected by armed conflict
Live	E6	How to… ensure effective CAAC communication and advocacy
Live	E7	Final group exercise/simulation

GUEST SPEAKERS		
Type	Module #	Title & Description
Live	T1	Q&A with… a Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) member
Live	T2	Q&A with… an expert on reintegration of CAAFAG
Live	T3	Q&A with… the chair of the UN Security Council Working Group on CAAC
Live	T4	Q&A with… CAAC focal point in a regional organization
Live	T5	Q&A with… an NGO working on child protection programming
Live	T6	Q&A with… a former rebel
Live	T7	Q&A with… a former child soldier
Live	T8	Q&A with… the SRSG

VI. Implementation challenges

The proposed changes are ambitious but, if put in place, have the potential to make this programme pioneering, effective and fill the existing gap in professional learning on this subject.

However, the following challenges also need to be considered by the OSRSG-CAAC.

1. Human resources and partnerships

The proposed changes would require dedicated and enhanced capacity and expertise within the OSRSG-CAAC. A full-time person should be appointed as a project manager of the programme and support would need to be provided by other OSRSG-CAAC staff members, in particular for procurement and the recruitment of the lead trainers but also just prior to and during the implementation of the programme.

Increased capacity will be particularly required in the coming months to implement the recommendations of this report and set up the revised programme and the accompanying platform. Subsequently, once the revised programme is running and the online modules are in place, OSRSG-CAAC capacity can be reduced.

In addition, the OSRSG-CAAC needs to find a sustainable partner to provide the services that the Office does not have in-house, such as dedicated IT support, an online designer to translate the content of the live sessions in a self-paced online learning, and a platform that can host the content for the medium-/long-term.

2. Sustainability

The above-described dedicated human resource needs, the development of self-paced online learning, and the recruitment of lead trainers for the in-session modules will require a consistent financial effort. One possibility could be to recover part of the costs through charging a fee for the in-session modules while keeping the pre-session modules free of charge.

Partnering with an appropriate training institution, particularly one that runs similar programmes for professionals, could also ensure the sustainability of at least the pre-session content that could potentially keep running as a stand-alone basic course on CAAC, if funding for the in-session part would not be available.

3. Sensitivity

This programme brings together multiple and diverse actors, including Member States, UN entities and NGO partners working in the field of child protection. Some of the participating Member States might at the same time be on the CAAC agenda. Whilst engagement and raising awareness with all conflict parties is at the heart of the CAAC mandate, there are also a number of accompanying risk factors such as potential security risks for United Nations and NGO participants and trainers. One mitigation measure could be the regular monitoring of who is connected during the in-sessions, but the online format of the programme does not allow for full control of who else, in addition to the registered participants, can access the content or listen into the sessions. Other mitigation measures could include the consideration of such aspects in the selection of participants and trainers, prior security plans and the division of participants into different groups for some topics. Furthermore, considering the sensitivities surrounding some aspects of the CAAC mandate, it is important to have a disclaimer for the course content. Finally, to allow free and respectful exchanges and to create a safe space for participants and trainers, a code of conduct needs to be agreed upon before the in-sessions.

Annex 1 – vFairs Event Platform

The Exterior Lobby based on the University of Malta

The Lobby

The Auditorium based on the UN Security Council room

The Networking Lounge

The Exhibition Hall

Annex 2 - VSS Final Programme

WEEK 1			
Date	Time (CET)	Module #	Title
DAY 1 / **29-Aug**	12:00-13:00	Welcome & registration	
	PRE-OPENING SESSION		
	13:00-14:00	M0	Training introduction
	OPENING SESSION		
	14:00-15:00	M1	Inaugural ceremony
	15:00 - 15:15	Networking/break	
	SESSION 1: CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT (CAAC) IN THE PROTECTION ARCHITECTURE		
	15:15-16:00	M2	CAAC protection legal and normative framework
	16:00-16:30	M3	CAAC protection actors & mandates
	16:30-16:45	IE1	Interactive exercise
	16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day
DAY 2 / **30-Aug**	**SESSION 2: PROTECTION FROM THE SIX GRAVE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT**		
	13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 2	Recap & Task for next day
	13:15-14:00	M4	Recruitment and Use
	14:00-14:45	M5	Killing and Maiming
	14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
	15:15-16:00	M6	Rape and other forms of Sexual Violence
	16:00-16:45	IE2	Interactive exercise
	16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day
DAY 3 / **31-Aug**	**SESSION 2 (Continued): PROTECTION FROM THE SIX GRAVE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT**		
	13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 3	Recap & Task for next day
	13:15-14:00	M7	Abduction
	14:00-14:45	M8	Attacks on schools and hospitals
	14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
	15:15-16:00	M9	Denial of humanitarian access for children
	16:00-16:45	IE3	Interactive exercise
	16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day

Date		Time (CET)	Module #	Title
		SESSION 3: CAAC PROTECTION IN CONTEXT		
		13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 4	Recap & Task for next day
		13:15-14:00	M10	Consideration of children's specific needs and vulnerabilities
DAY 4	1-Sep	14:00-14:45	IE4	Interactive exercise (Virtual Power Walk)
		14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
		15:15-16:00	M11	Child protection in armed conflict and other challenging contexts
		16:00-16:45	IE5	Interactive exercises (Climate security and resilience)
		16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day
		SESSION 3 (Continued): CAAC PROTECTION IN CONTEXT		
		13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 5	Recap & Task for next day
		13:15 - 14:00	M12	Role of regional organizations on CAAC
DAY 5	2-Sep	14:00 - 14:45	M13	Role of State actors on CAAC (examples of good practice)
		14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
		15:15 - 16:00	IE6	Interactive exercise
		16:00 - 16:45	IE7	Presentation week 2's final group exercise
		16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day

WEEK 2				
Date		Time (CET)	Module #	Title
		SESSION 4: MONITORING, ANALYZING & REPORTING		
		13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 6	Recap & Task for next day
		13:15 - 14:00	M14	Monitoring and reporting
		14:00 - 14:45	IE8	Interactive exercise (Report study)
		14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
DAY 6	5-Sep	**SESSION 5: ENDING & PREVENTING**		
		15:15-16:00	M15	Mainstreaming and Integrating CAAC into prevention, stabilization and peacebuilding
		16:00 - 16:45	IE9	Interactive exercise (Advocacy skills, incl. resource mobilization, public advocacy and campaign)
		16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day

Date		Time (CET)	Module #	Title
DAY 7	**6-Sep**	**SESSION 5 (Continued): ENDING & PREVENTING**		
		13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 7	Recap & Task for next day
		13:15-14:00	IE10	Interactive exercise (Negotiation and engagement - Kilmann test: "What kind of negotiator are you?")
		14:00-14:45	M16	Engaging with parties to the conflict (state and non-state actors)
		14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
		15:15 - 16:00	M17	Releasing children
		16:00 - 16:45	IE11	Interactive exercise (Handover Protocols)
		16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day
DAY 8	**7-Sep**	**SESSION 6: RESPONDING**		
		13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 8	Recap & Task for next day
		13:15-14:00	M18	Protecting lives and providing relief
		14:00-14:45	IE12	Interactive exercise (Coordination skills)
		14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
		15:15 - 16:00	M19	Providing sustainable solutions: children's reintegration
		16:00 - 16:45	IE13	Interactive exercise (Child participation and community-based participation approaches)
		16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day
DAY 9	**8-Sep**	**SESSION 7: HOLDING PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE & COMBATTING IMPUNITY**		
		13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 9	Recap & Task for next day
		13:15-14:00	M20	UN Action for accountability
		14:00-14:45	M21	Justice mechanisms to combat impunity
		14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
		15:15 - 16:45	IE14	Final group exercise (Preparation)
		16:45-17:00	Closing session	Recap, Feedback & Task for next day
DAY 10	**9-Sep**	**SESSION 8: LEARNING BY DOING**		
		13:00 - 13:15	Welcome to Day 10	Recap & Task for next day
		13:15 - 14:15	IE15	Final group exercise
		14:15-14:45	IE16	Debriefing (plenary)
		14:45 - 15:15	Networking/break	
		15:15 - 16:00	M22	End of training
		16:00-17:00	M23	Closing ceremony

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

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