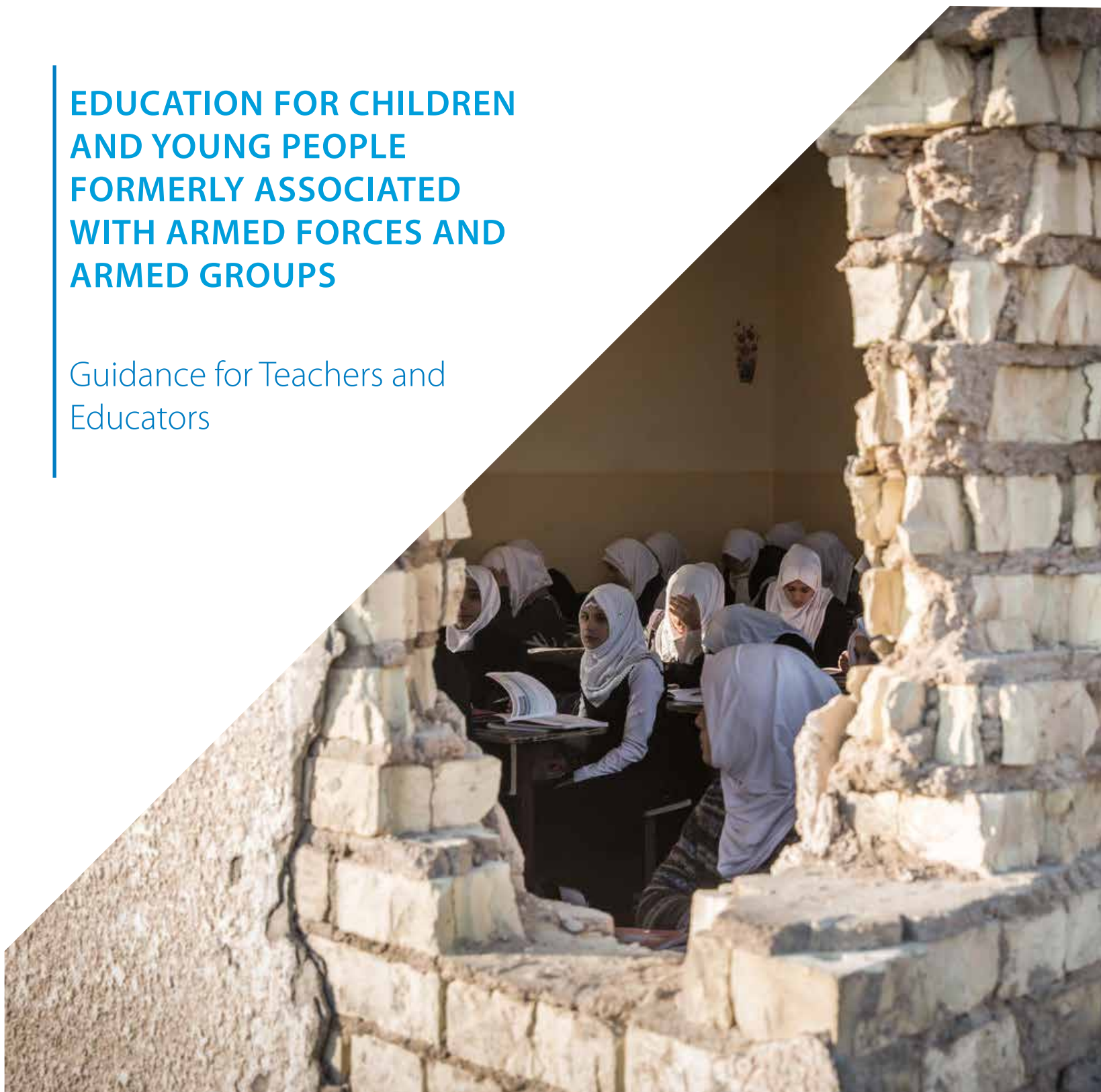


# EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FORMERLY ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES AND ARMED GROUPS

Guidance for Teachers and  
Educators





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

# EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FORMERLY ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES AND ARMED GROUPS

Guidance for Teachers and Educators

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# About this guidance

This guidance is primarily a self-learning tool for teachers and educators in formal, informal, or non-formal education who work with children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG). A secondary use is to support policymaking, programming, and training to support teachers and educators working in conflict and post-conflict settings. As it is very unlikely today to find education interventions targeting only CAAFAG, the guidance is provided in the broader context of educating children and young people affected by armed conflict.

The tool builds on a review of existing resources on the reintegration of CAAFAG mostly from the protection sector and practical resources for teachers from the field of Education in Emergencies (EiE). It also draws from 17 interviews with researchers and representatives from UN agencies and international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including two individuals who were associated with armed forces and armed groups as children who are now pursuing tertiary education and have started their own organisations to work with children and young people affected by conflict.

## Who is this guidance for?

This guidance has been developed as a self-learning tool for education stakeholders who want to learn more about CAAFAG and explore ideas for how to better respond to their educational needs and support their reintegration. This includes:

### Teachers

working in formal primary and secondary schools and their school leaders and other support staff

### Educators

working in informal and non-formal education, particularly for adolescents and young adults

### Policymakers, practitioners and teacher educators

who work on education interventions and/or with teachers and educators in conflict - and post-conflict settings

As some of this guidance is quite technical and requires knowledge of basic teaching practice, in its current form, it may be most suitable for teachers and educators who have participated in some form of teacher training and/or have completed upper secondary or participated in tertiary education. With the support of policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators and the participation of teachers and educators in conflict- and post-conflict settings, it is hoped that this resource can be modified as a training tool for teachers and educators who have had limited access to professional development opportunities.

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# INTRODUCTION

Hello there!

Thank you for your interest in this guidance for teachers and other educators on education for children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups! For many of these children and young people, exit from armed forces and groups – whether voluntary or involuntary – marks a time of increased uncertainty, as they face the challenge of reintegrating into society and building a new life for themselves. Without adequate support, these children and young people are exposed to a number of risks, including social and economic exclusion, trauma and other psychosocial problems, participation in criminal activities, and even re-recruitment.

However, as acknowledged by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in its 2010 Resolution on the Right to Education in Emergency Situations, access to quality education for all children and young people affected by conflict can be protective and life-sustaining: not only can it provide lifesaving knowledge and skills and psychosocial support, but it can also equip learners with skills needed for a sustainable future, to prevent disaster, conflict, and disease, and to build and maintain peaceful societies. Indeed, inclusion in protection and quality education programming is a potentially powerful tool for preventing recruitment and re-recruitment of children and young people into armed forces and armed groups.

So that's where you come in – whether you are working as a teacher in formal education or an educator in informal or non-formal education, you are a frontline responder in meeting the complex educational needs of children affected by armed conflict, including those formerly associated with armed forces and groups. Drawing from interviews and existing resources on the reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) from the protection sector and practical resources for teachers from the field of Education in Emergencies (EiE),<sup>1</sup> this guidance has been developed as a self-learning tool to help you with this important work.

If you are a policymaker, practitioner, or teacher educator, this guidance can be used as a starting point for the development of context-specific resources and support mechanisms for teachers and educators working with CAAFAG, as there is a significant gap in this area.

We hope you will find it helpful!

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the development of this guidance, please see the Annex.

## Why did we develop this guide?

As the backbone of every education system, teachers and educators like you have an important role to play in building and sustaining inclusive education systems and programmes that respond to the needs of all learners. However, in conflict and post-conflict settings, support for teachers and educators is often limited, making this work even more challenging, with potentially negative impacts on your wellbeing. In a promising development, the number of [research studies, interventions, and training and learning resources for teachers and educators working in crisis contexts](#) continues to grow, which will hopefully help you and other educators with your work and also drive your needs further up the international agenda.

While there is a [growing number of resources on protection of children associated with armed forces and groups](#) and an increasing interest in the [integration of child protection and education programming for CAAFAG](#), resources specifically meant for teachers and educators working with children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups are missing. This gap exists for a number of reasons, including:

- ▶ There are few education interventions solely targeting CAAFAG, so as a teacher or educator, you are more likely to be teaching mixed groups that may include CAAFAG rather than only teaching CAAFAG.
- ▶ The backgrounds, experiences, and needs of CAAFAG are diverse (based on factors such as age, development, gender, time spent and role with armed forces and armed groups, prior education access, nature of conflict, geographical location, family and support systems, etc.) and therefore it is difficult to develop practical teaching resources that are widely applicable.
- ▶ Just as the backgrounds, experiences, and needs of CAAFAG are diverse, so too are the backgrounds, experiences, and needs of teachers and educators working in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- ▶ The teaching of CAAFAG can be a politically sensitive issue, especially in situations of active conflict and where children and young people are perceived to be associated with violent extremism and terrorism.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG CAAC) have entered into a partnership to begin to address this gap, and to improve the support available to you and other teachers and educators working with children and young people who have been associated with armed forces and armed groups. The guidance builds on work on CAAFAG protection and practical resources for teachers in crisis contexts and aims to share with you engaging and contextualizable insights, ideas, and recommendations drawn from around the world that they can 'make their own' in order to better meet the needs of children affected by armed conflict and ultimately contribute to more equitable and inclusive education systems.

The significance of the guide lies in its strategic alignment with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), notably:



**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**



**Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

Taken together, these goals emphasise education as crucial for sustainable peace and development. By aligning with SDG 4, the guidance recognises the pivotal role of education in empowering individuals and communities to build peaceful and prosperous societies. Additionally, its alignment with SDG 16 underscores its commitment to promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions, thereby addressing issues related to conflict resolution and governance. Through its focus on promoting education, peace, and strong institutions, the guidance contributes significantly to advancing SDG objectives, fostering a harmonious society, and addressing global challenges for positive social change.

## What will you find in this guide?

This guidance for teachers and other educators is divided into three parts:

Part	Objective	Content
1. About children associated with armed forces and armed groups	To build technical knowledge on children associated with armed forces and armed groups and an understanding of their learning needs	1.1 How are children affected by conflict? 1.2 Who are children associated with armed forces and armed groups? 1.3 How do children become associated with armed forces and armed groups? 1.4 What are the needs of children associated with armed forces and armed groups?
2. Meeting the needs of children associated with armed forces and armed groups	To improve intra - and interpersonal competence and explore ideas for improving learner readiness and responding to the needs of children associated with armed forces and armed groups	2.1 Understanding your role, relationships and responsibilities 2.2 Enabling self-care, emotional regulation, collaboration and accountability 2.3 Supporting learning readiness and an enabling learning environment 2.4 Contextualizing, planning, differentiating and adapting learning
3. Key messages and further learning	To engage with insights and advice from around the world and access resources for further learning	3.1 Guiding principles for working with CAAFAG 3.2 Insights and advice from around the world 3.3 Key resources for further learning

This guide has been developed to provide educators from around the world with foundational technical knowledge about children associated with armed forces and armed groups, as well as some bigger picture concepts and ideas for better understanding their needs and how to improve your pedagogical practice to respond to those needs. It is important to note, however, that this guide is not intended to be prescriptive: in other words, you won't find any lists of what you should and should not do, nor will you find one-size-fits-all strategies for working with children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

Further, while the guide could be used as part of a teacher training programme or self-directed study module, it should not be seen as a teacher training programme or module in and of itself. This means that there are no curricular materials such as learning activities or handouts for educators associated with the guide. On a related note, while the guide includes advice on classroom management and working with learners, there are also no specific curricular materials such as learning activities provided for you to undertake with your learners. The [list of resources provided in the third part](#) of this guide can direct you to those types of resources, if you need them.

This guidance includes...	This guidance does not include...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ An introduction to the topic of CAAFAG</li> <li>✓ A discussion of the educational needs of CAAFAG</li> <li>✓ Concepts, ideas and links to resources to help you reflect on your role and improve your teaching practice in relation to CAAFAG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Prescriptive "how-to" guidelines</li> <li>✗ Lesson plans and detailed classroom activities</li> <li>✗ Links to practical teaching resources specifically dedicated to teaching CAAFAG</li> </ul>





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## **PART 1:** **ABOUT CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES AND ARMED GROUPS**

This part contains technical information on the topic of children associated with armed forces and armed groups. It opens with a discussion of the ways in which children can be affected by conflict, before exploring who children associated with armed forces and armed groups and how they became associated with these forces and groups. Finally, it highlights the educational needs of children associated with armed forces and armed groups that have been identified through a review of literature and in discussion with interviewees.

## Learning objective

To build technical knowledge on children associated with armed forces and armed groups and an understanding of their learning needs

## 1.1: How are children affected by conflict?

Conflict may have extremely negative and long-lasting impacts on children and young people whose normal support systems – family, schools, friends, community, and so on – are often weakened or damaged (International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2022).<sup>2</sup> The many risks children are exposed to because of conflict include:

- ▶ Loss of homes, families, communities
- ▶ Economic and food insecurity
- ▶ Destruction of schools and interruption of education and other social services
- ▶ Forced displacement and separation from parents
- ▶ Forced participation in the conflict
- ▶ Violence, including sexual and gender-based violence

Exposure to these risks, especially to violence or repeated violence, can lead to psychosocial problems, aggression, withdrawal, illness, injury, and sometimes even death (ibid.).

Since the 1990s, special efforts have been undertaken globally to strengthen international cooperation on the protection of children and young people affected by conflict. The mandate of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) was created by the UN General Assembly in 1996, and in 1999, the UN Security Council adopted [the first resolution on children and armed conflict \(51/77\)](#), which identified and condemned the following [six grave violations](#) affecting children in times of war:

1. Recruitment or use of children
2. Killing and maiming of children
3. Sexual violence against children
4. Abduction of children
5. Attacks against schools or hospitals
6. Denial of humanitarian access for children.

## 1.2: Who are children associated with armed forces and armed groups?

During the early 2000s, there was a growing interest in ending the recruitment and use of children as soldiers in a number of countries, including Sierra Leone (where it is estimated that around 12,000 children were recruited to serve during the Civil War between 1991 and 2002), Nepal (where estimates suggest that 9,000 individuals between 14 and 18 participated in the People's War between 1996 and 2006), and Uganda (where thousands of children were recruited by the Lord's Resistance Army since 1987 and there were reports that children had been recruited into Uganda's own army). These children have been released and reintegrated into society, but as research into the recruitment and use of child soldiers in these and other countries grew, it became clear that children were being recruited to serve other non-

<sup>2</sup> International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. (2022). Teacher Policy Development Guide: Module on crisis-sensitive teacher policy and planning. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: [https://teachertaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Crisis%20sensitive%20teacher%20policy\\_V5.pdf](https://teachertaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Crisis%20sensitive%20teacher%20policy_V5.pdf)



Global  
CAAFAG  
Advisor

“ For a long time, girls who didn’t carry weapons were not seen as CAAFAG and not considered for reintegration. Then we changed terminology to stop talking purely about child soldiers and talking about CAAFAG. We recognised the different roles children can play, especially girls. Some girls are recruited to be wives. ”

## DEFINITION OF ‘CHILD ASSOCIATED WITH AN ARMED FORCE OR ARMED GROUP’

Any person below 18 years of age who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to boys and girls used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.

Source: Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, 2007

combatant roles, including as messengers, spies, lookouts, cooks, etc., and that, importantly, girls were also being recruited.

In recognition of these multiple, often gendered roles, and the diversity of experiences these children have had in conflict situations, the terminology shifted from ‘child soldiers’ to ‘children associated with fighting forces’ to ‘children associated with armed forces and armed groups.’ In 2007, the [Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups](#) were adopted by the international community, which aim to improve cooperation between key stakeholders and promote good practice when working with these children.

## CHILD REINTEGRATION

The process through which children transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities in a context of local and national reconciliation. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic and social conditions needed for children to maintain life, livelihood and dignity have been secured. This process aims to ensure that children can access their rights, including formal and non-formal education, family unity, dignified livelihoods and safety from harm.

Source: [Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups](#), 2007, Article 2.8

The 2007 Paris Principles also cover “children who are solely dependents of adult fighters” and “children born to adults or children who are in armed forces or armed groups”.

One key aim of the 2007 Paris Principles is to support the reintegration of these children, which is defined as follows:

In addition to the Paris Principles, the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), which were developed through the joint efforts of 27 different bodies of the United Nations, provide important guidance on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, including the reintegration of children.

Besides the Paris Principles and the IDDRS, there is an extensive legal and normative framework prohibiting the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups, establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms, protecting education from attack, ensuring safe access to education, and promising support for reintegration, education, and livelihoods. For more information about this legal and normative framework and how it relates to education, please see page 8 of the technical note on Education Interventions for CAAFAG.

## WHO WORKS ON THE PROTECTION AND REINTEGRATION OF CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES and ARMED GROUPS?

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict plays a key role at the global level in advocacy for the protection of education in armed conflict. The Special Representative consistently calls for sustainable, age - and gender-sensitive and trauma-informed reintegration of children and her Office serves as the secretariat for the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers.

The international cooperation of key stakeholders working on the reintegration of CAAFAG at the global level has been significantly strengthened in recent years. The Paris Principles Steering Group (PPSG) is responsible for supporting actions to help prevent recruitment and ensure the prompt release and reintegration of children who have been recruited. In 2022, it released an [Operational Handbook](#) to provide guidance for government officials, child protection specialists, and others working to prevent and respond to the recruitment and use of children by armed actors. The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children are co-chairs of the PPSG. Members include France, Child Fund Alliance, Dallaire Institute, Geneva Call, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Rescue Committee (IRC), OSRSG CAAC, UN Department of Peace Operations DDR Section, and World Vision.

Also, the International Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (Alliance for CPHA) has formed a [CAAFAG Task Force](#), which is made up of a number of international organisations, including Plan International, International Rescue Committee, Terre des Hommes, War Child, World Vision, and the United Nations Development Programme. Its main objective is to:

coordinate and collaborate amongst humanitarian responders and development actors and to provide technical support and capacity building to field practitioners to strengthen quality programming in emergencies and protracted crisis that prevents recruitment, facilitates release and responds to the needs of children associated with armed forces or armed groups.

The Task Force has developed a number of technical notes, training materials, and other resources, including those which have been referred to throughout this guide. In addition to the Task Force members, other international organisations that play a particularly important role in the reintegration of CAAFAG include UNICEF and Save the Children.

However, despite this extensive legal framework and increasing level of global cooperation, the recruitment and use of CAAFAG and exclusion of former CAAFAG from education are a persistent problem. In 2023, a total of 8,655 children were recruited and used according to the 2024 annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/78/842-S/2024/384), with the highest numbers verified in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Nigeria.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that the numbers in the table are limited to where the UN is able to report and verify grave violations against children in conflict, so the actual numbers may be larger. Further, **conflict touches all children and all communities in conflict and post-conflict settings**, as there are complex relationships between armed groups and communities, with political factors and power struggles at play.

Further, it can be tempting to look only at **live or current recruitment**: in reality, there are many “**residue issues**” affecting former CAAFAG and their families as they transition into adolescence and adulthood with limited support,

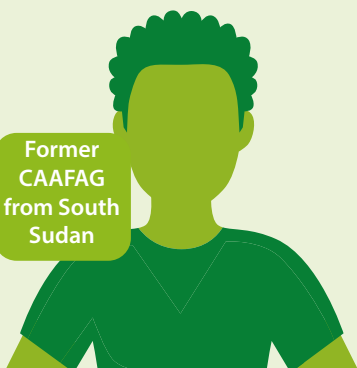
<sup>3</sup> Every year, the OSRSG CAAC prepares on behalf of the UN Secretary General a report on Children and Armed Conflict, which are available [here](#). The latest report from June 2024 is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish [here](#).

as noted by an international organisation representative working on youth participation. In other words, problems including stigmatisation, exclusion, withdrawal, aggression, normalisation of violence, and interruption of learning do not just stop because the child is no longer associated with armed forces or an armed group. Without help to address these issues, they can continue to affect the person, long into adulthood.



Former  
CAAFAG  
from Sierra  
Leone

“ So for me, the reintegration was not done properly. We weren’t able to get back to our parents, we went back to fight.”



Former  
CAAFAG  
from South  
Sudan

“ When I left, the government forces came to attack the barracks where we were staying. They were shooting everywhere. I escaped from there. It wasn’t really a formal process. Everyone was trying to hide and escape.”

It is also important to remember that the “process of disengagement and reintegration is not always linear or one-way” because there are many challenges for children transitioning back into civilian life who find themselves negotiating and renegotiating relationships with armed forces and groups (Alliance for CPHA, 2023, p. 25). One interviewee who had been abducted at age 9 by an armed group and forced to fight during the Sierra Leone conflict in the 1990s explained that just because he had been released from the armed group at one point didn’t mean that he was safe. He noted:

“ In fact, it was not until a couple of years after that that he was able to reintegrate back into school and society. ”

Another concern is that, with the changing nature of armed conflict and the groups involved, **formal processes for the identification and release of CAAFAG are less common**, so it can be difficult to understand the relationship between children and armed forces and armed groups, with escape, abandonment, and capture and release as increasingly common exit pathways. One interviewee who had become associated with an armed group in South Sudan as a teenager explained that there was nothing formal about his exit from the armed group:

### 1.3: How do children become associated with armed forces and armed groups?

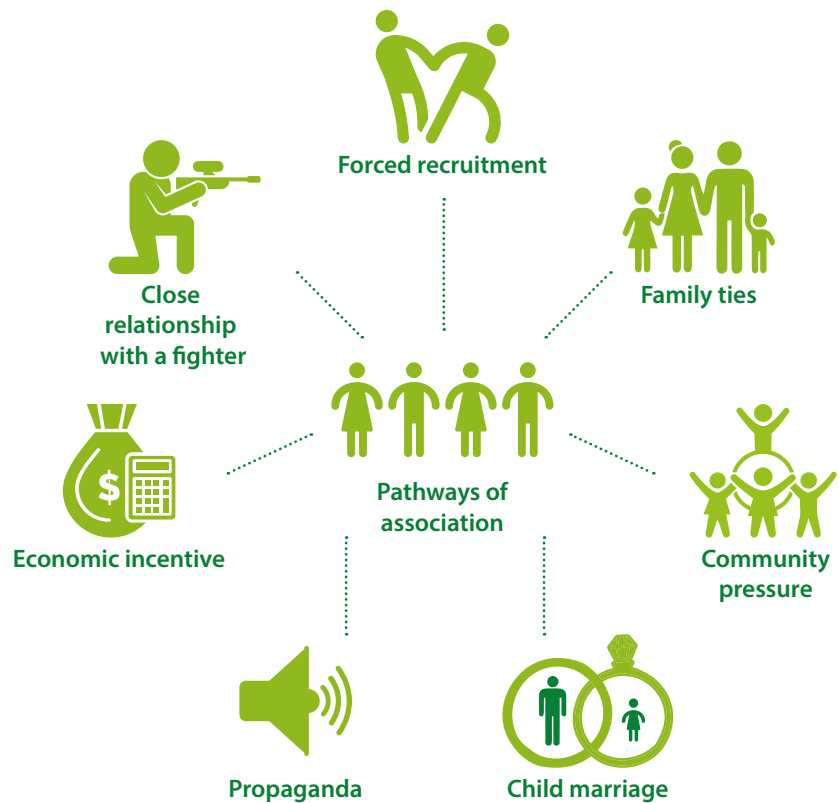
When asked about the current situation of CAAFAG, most interviewees consulted during the development of this guide were quick to point out that it is important to recognise that this is not a homogeneous experience, depending not only on the local context, but also on factors such as age and gender, pathways of association, nature of role in conflict, time spent in association, the risk of re-recruitment, etc. The figure below shows some of the pathways through which children become associated with armed forces and armed groups:

As can be seen from the figure, there are many different reasons children become associated with armed forces or groups, which are often related to gender (girls are more likely to become subject to forced marriage, for example, while boys may be attracted by economic incentives) and/or age

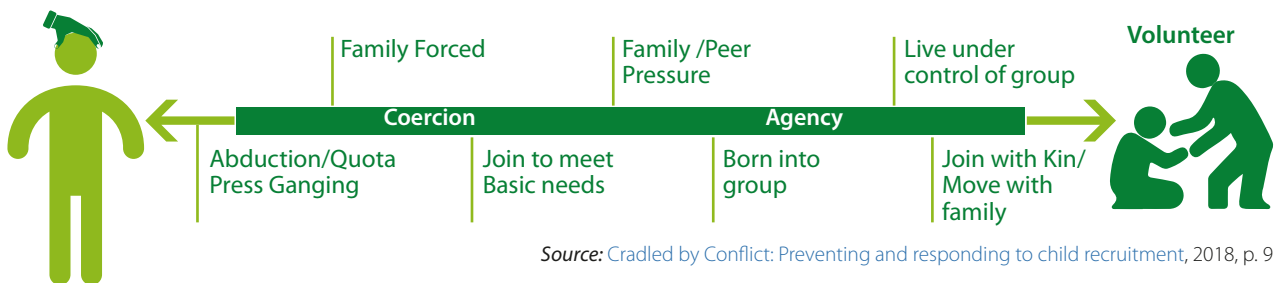
(adolescents are more likely to be targeted by recruiters to join voluntarily because they are more susceptible to the promise of immediate rewards and influence of peers).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> According to a research compendium published by UNICEF Innocenti, *The Adolescent Brain: A second window of opportunity* A Compendium not only are adolescents strongly influenced by peers and potential romantic partners, but they are strongly motivated by “their desire for acceptance, belonging, respect and admiration” and “highly driven by the promise of obtaining immediate rewards – a tendency associated with sensation-seeking and risk-taking” (p. 12).

These reasons are sometimes thought of as “push and pull factors”, though for one INGO representative working on youth participation in conflict situations, thinking only in terms of children being pushed or pulled is too simplistic because “children’s relationship with armed groups is much more fluid.” What is perhaps more helpful, according to this interviewee, is to consider **children’s agency** and the extent to which they are able to exercise that agency. In other words, it is important to think about if and how children are able to make their own decisions. For example, children may make an active decision to join an armed group to escape a negative situation at home, or to gain a sense of belonging. The technical note by the United Nations University (UNU), *Cradled by Conflict: Preventing and responding to child recruitment*, *Implications for programming and use in contemporary conflicts*, provides a useful conceptual tool for understanding the relationship between children’s agency and association called the **continuum of coercion**, which is presented in the figure below:



Source: Adapted from *Education Interventions for CAAFAG*, 2023, p. 8



Source: *Cradled by Conflict: Preventing and responding to child recruitment*, 2018, p. 9

While it is **not feasible or desirable to generalise based on geographical location**, there do seem to be some differences between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, for example, both when it comes to recruitment and how former CAAFAG are regarded. In fact, while there is a lot of explicit work undertaken in Sub-Saharan Africa to understand and support CAAFAG, in the **Middle East**, much of this work ends up under the **umbrella of violent extremism**, even when it comes to individuals under the age of 18. In the Middle East and a couple of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, children who have been associated with armed groups that have been designated as terrorist groups **face legal implications**, and it becomes difficult to ensure their rights as children, especially when it comes to reintegration, because they are seen as a national security threat. To illustrate this difference, a researcher provided the following example comparing Iraq and Nigeria:

This **issue of labelling** is also important to consider, as it has consequences for how children and young people are treated. In Colombia, which has a long history of child recruitment into armed groups, those who are officially referred to as CAAFAG are entitled to significant support from the government, which includes access to comprehensive, long-term care, while for children associated with paramilitary groups and gangs, the support is limited.

## 1.4: What are the needs of children associated with armed forces and armed groups?

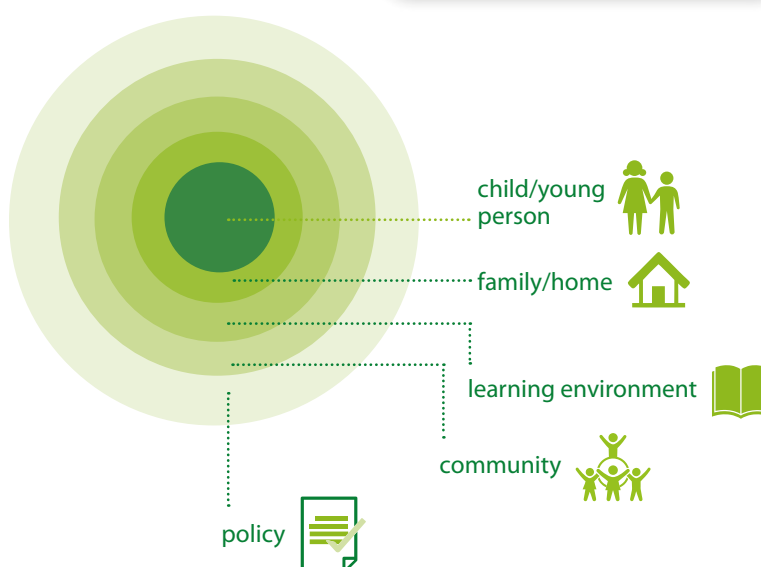
Many resources on and stakeholders working with CAAFAG and education in emergencies more broadly highlight the importance of taking a so-called **socioecological approach** when working with children affected by armed conflict. This approach draws on developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner's **ecological systems theory**,<sup>5</sup> which states that the development of every individual is influenced by a number of interconnected systems, ranging from an individual's immediate surroundings to wider societal structures. Within the education and protection in emergencies sector, the approach is typically depicted as per the figure on the left:

In addition to using the socioecological model to build a more nuanced understanding of the needs of children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, stakeholders have increasingly recognised the importance of a **non-targeted approach** when working on reintegration.



Global Researcher

“ And then once children get back to their communities, it's very context specific and there's a big difference between Iraq and Nigeria, for example. In Iraq, even having one remote family member who is associated with [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] ISIL is enough for you to be exiled. In Nigeria, that is not the case at all. We see pretty high levels of acceptance and pretty low levels of stigma – at the moment – that's not been the case in the past, but at the moment. ”



Source: Education Interventions for CAAFAG, 2023, p. 11

<sup>5</sup> For a helpful overview of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, please see [Guy-Evans, O. \(2024\) Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Simply Psychology.](#)

Such an approach involves ensuring that all interventions are designed to benefit the community as a whole, as programmes designed solely for CAAFAG may contribute to further isolation and stigmatisation of participants or, conversely, may act as an incentive for children to join armed groups.

Of course, the challenge with a non-targeted approach is that certain vulnerable individuals may not have their needs met, or may slip through the cracks entirely. In fact, one former CAAFAG interviewed during the development of this guide noted that children and young people often feel **lonely and stigmatised** when they re-enter a community and that they are often in **need of someone to reach out** to them to participate in relevant education and protection services. This point was underlined by a global researcher, who explained that former CAAFAG often do not understand what educational opportunities are available to them because information is only available in languages other than their own. Even if former CAAFAG do gain access to an education programme, it is important that the education they receive is **meaningful, appropriate, and relevant** and responsive to their needs, otherwise there is a risk that they will lose interest or, worse, it will set them up to fail.

So, what are the educational needs of children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups? While many needs are context-specific and individual, according to the review of resources and interviews conducted to support the development of this guidance, the following general needs have been identified:

- ▶ building learning readiness and motivation to learn
- ▶ access to trauma responsive, protective education and mental health and psychosocial support
- ▶ support for social-emotional learning, including how to negotiate identities, power, and control
- ▶ support with socialisation, acceptance and a sense of belonging
- ▶ flexible learning opportunities and support for other responsibilities
- ▶ development of basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills and opportunities for technical and vocational education and training (TVET), entrepreneurship, and livelihood education

In responding to these needs as an educator, the following guiding principles of the [IDDRS](#) are particularly relevant:

- ▶ **people-centred:** the response enhances the safety, dignity, and rights of people, and avoid exposing them to harm
- ▶ **gender-responsive and inclusive:** the response recognises the unique and specific needs of boys and girls, and is non-discriminatory
- ▶ **conflict sensitive:** the response is accessible for all CAAFAG and promotes peacebuilding and social cohesion
- ▶ **context-specific:** the response considers the unique social, political, cultural, economic, and gender dynamics, and that children and young people have different needs and capacities

While this all may sound overwhelming, it is of course important to remember that you are not the only person responsible for ensuring the protection and reintegration of these children and young people, but you can play an important supporting role in the process and help to pave the way for a more positive future, especially if you work together with learners, families, colleagues, and communities. In [Part 2](#) of this guidance, you will find advice and conceptual tools on how you as an educator can play this important supporting role, starting with role-related guidance and guidance on how you can improve your own intra - and interpersonal teaching competence, before moving to guidance on how to build and maintain more inclusive learning spaces and respond to learners' diverse socioemotional needs.



Photo credit: © UNICEF/UN0622591/Keita

## **PART 2:**

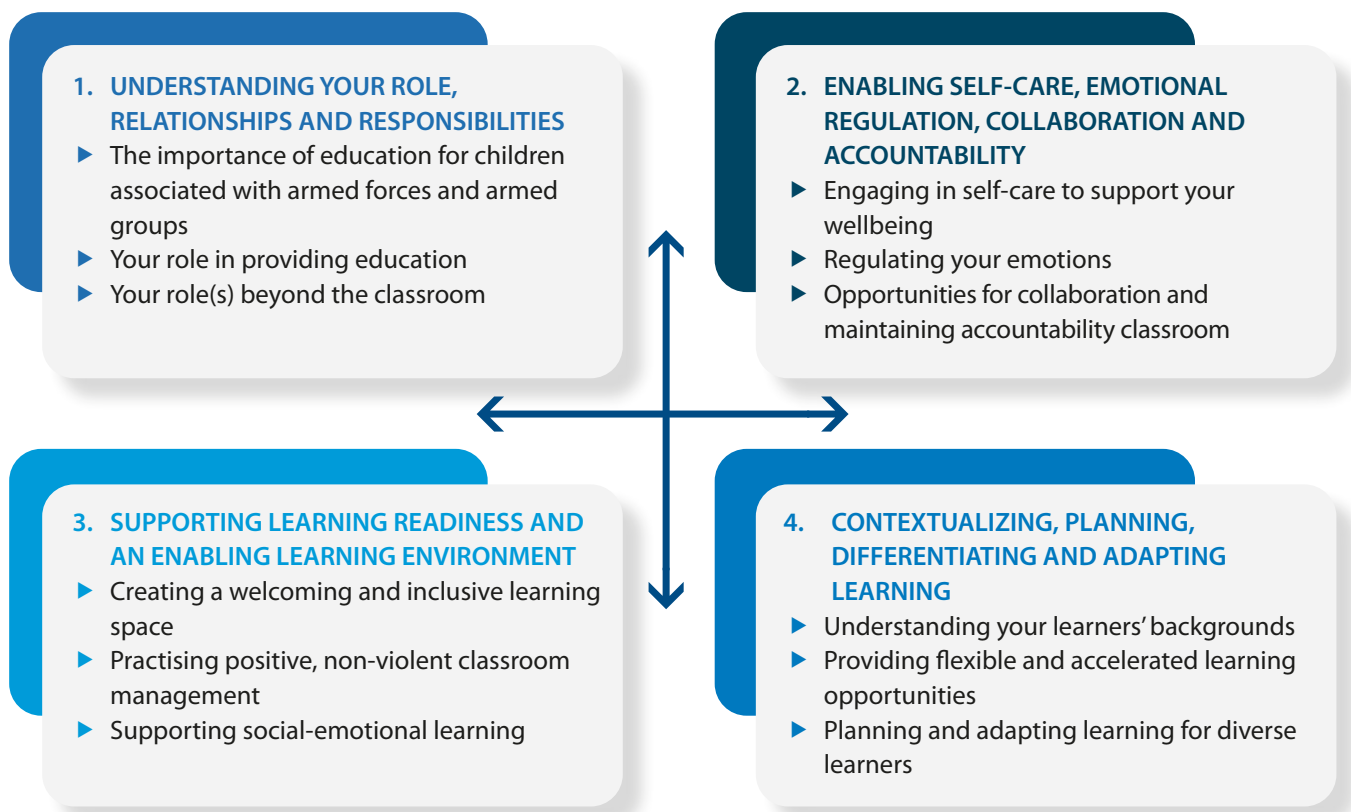
# **MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES AND ARMED GROUPS**

This part contains guidance on how you can start to better meet the needs of children and young people associated with armed forces and armed groups, drawing mostly from resources for teachers from the wider Education in Emergencies (EiE) sector, including teaching in crisis contexts, supporting refugee learners, providing accelerated education and other alternative learning opportunities, and countering violent extremism.

The guidance is divided into four sections as follows, with the first two relating to you understanding your role and responsibilities and building your intra- and interpersonal skills, and the second two relating to you understanding how to create an enabling educational environment and better respond to your learners' needs.

### Learning objective

To improve intra- and interpersonal competence and explore ideas for improving learner readiness and responding to the needs of children associated with armed forces and armed groups



## 2.1: Understanding your role, relationships and responsibilities

### OVERVIEW

- ▶ As an educator, you are in a position to have a significant and lasting impact on your learners' lives and on the wider community, particularly in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- ▶ To help you ensure that this impact is a positive one, this section provides insights, advice, and links to resources to help you critically reflect on:
  1. the importance of education for children and young people affected by conflict,
  2. the role you play in providing that education,
  3. the role(s) you do and/or could play beyond the classroom.

### 2.1.1: The role of education for children associated with armed forces and armed groups

Within the framework of the Agenda 2030, the [Education 2030 Framework for Action of the Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) indicates the urgent need to address education in emergencies and protracted crises, noting that conflicts can leave entire generations traumatised, uneducated and unprepared to contribute to the social and economic recovery of their countries or regions. Conflict is a major barrier to education, stalling and in some cases reversing progress towards sustainable development. This is especially true when it comes to children associated with armed forces and armed groups, whose education is typically interrupted while they are associated with the armed forces and armed groups, or who did not have access to education to begin with. Returning to their communities can be a challenge, as they negotiate their transition back to civilian life and experience uncertainty about their future. Without adequate support, these children and young people are exposed to a number of risks, including social and economic exclusion, re-recruitment, participation in criminal activities, and more.



While some might argue that the priority in reintegration efforts should be ensuring access to protection, psychosocial support, and trauma response, research suggests that quality, inclusive formal, informal, and non-formal education can act as an **enabling right** and thus a potentially powerful tool to support reintegration and inclusion. In other words:

- ▶ **in the short-term:** education is protective and can provide lifesaving knowledge and skills and psychosocial support
- ▶ **in the long-term:** education can equip learners with life and livelihood skills needed to build a sustainable future, to prevent disaster, conflict, and disease, and to build and maintain peaceful societies

However, as educators, we do need to question these assumptions about the lifesaving and life-sustaining properties of education and aim to understand how to maximise these properties, while minimising the negative effects of low quality education. After all, many of us have experienced learners losing interest and motivation because they have found lessons to be too difficult, too boring, or too irrelevant. When it comes to CAAFAG, the stakes are high – without access to meaningful, quality, and inclusive education, they are being set up to fail.

### 2.1.2: Your role in providing education for children affected by conflict

Since its adoption in 1966, [ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers](#) has been considered an important set of guidelines on the rights and responsibilities of teachers and international standards for their initial preparation and further education, recruitment, employment, teaching and learning conditions in the interest of quality education. To describe the work of teachers, it outlines the purpose of education as follows:

Competent and empowered educators therefore play an important role in building and sustaining inclusive education systems and programmes that respond to the specific needs of different groups. In conflict and post-conflict settings, the role of teachers is particularly significant, as they are often the only educational resource available to learners, and, in some cases, one of the only sources of protection and psychosocial support. Teachers are therefore frontline responders in meeting the complex needs of children affected by armed conflict, including those formerly associated with armed forces and groups. In the words of a UN representative based in Nigeria:

## THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

Education from the earliest school years should be directed to the all-round development of the human personality and to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and economic progress of the community, as well as to the inculcation of deep respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; within the framework of these values the utmost importance should be attached to the contribution to be made by education to peace and to understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and among racial or religious groups.

Source: ILO/UNESCO 1966 Recommendation, Guiding Principles, p. 22

Whether you work in formal, informal, or non-formal education, it can be helpful to reflect on three interconnected aspects of your role as an educator:

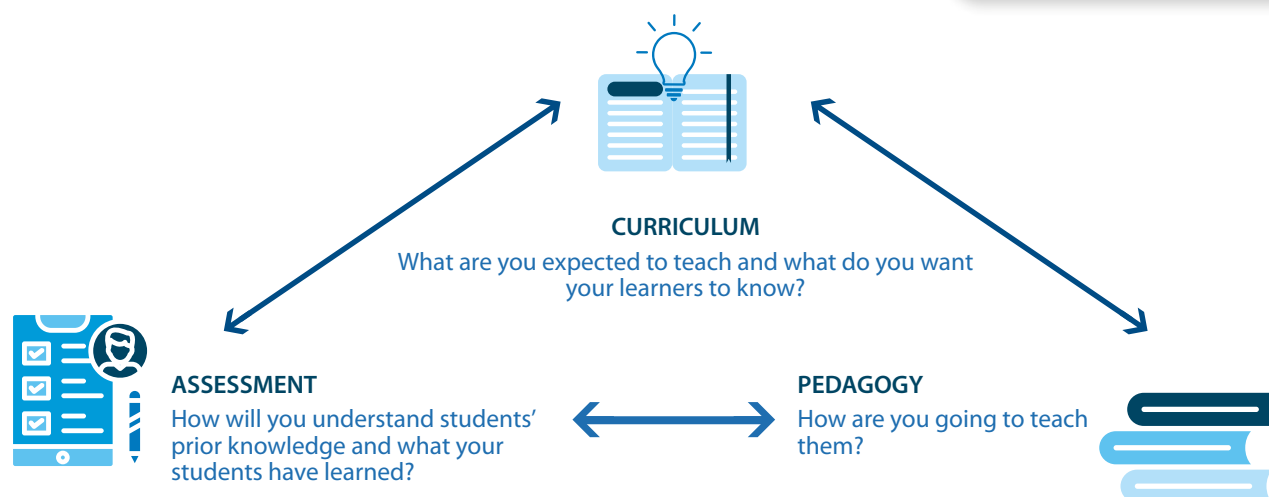
1. To educate/teach
2. To learn and adapt
3. To motivate and inspire

The first of these aspects – to educate/teach – is of course the most obvious and guidance will be provided in the following sections on teaching CAAFAG. While this may have been covered in any teacher training you may have participated in, as a reminder, it can be helpful for planning purposes to think about the relationship between pedagogy (how you are teaching), curriculum (what you are teaching) and assessment (how you determine what your students already know, what their needs are, and if they have learned what you set out to teach), as per the figure below.

Given your own relationship to conflict and the wider community, whatever that may be, you may find yourself wondering if and how you should teach about the conflict and indeed how you will know if your students have built their capacity to reflect and think critically about the conflict. The potential benefits of teaching about the conflict are captured by an academic researcher who has worked in Sub-Saharan Africa for many years, though she also points out that opinions are divided among teachers about this issue, which is, at its heart, very political.



“ Teachers are one of the key stakeholders in the community. They are the source of hope. Once they are there, working alongside families and communities. About 80-90% of school-aged children will say that they want to go back to school... if that is not there, they will risk being re-recruited, etc. The school is a beacon of hope. The teacher is the guardian. ”





Academic researcher working in Sub-Saharan Africa

“ Teachers can also share their own experiences of the conflict to help children make sense of the conflict. So, some guidance for how to create that space could have positive effects. However, some teachers won’t want to talk. I’ve asked teachers if they think it’s a good idea to talk about the conflict. They say they don’t get much guidance. Some use it as an opportunity to teach about global citizenship, some instead choose to show why they are ‘the good guys.’ Each teacher’s political commitment informs what they do. ”

While this is a question each educator will have to answer for themselves, it is worth keeping in mind one of the aims of education as outlined in the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation above “to contribute to peace and to understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and among racial or religious groups” and working to ensure that in teaching about conflict, you are not contributing to the deeper entrenchment of that conflict. Indeed, in their guide for teachers on *Transformative Pedagogy for Peace-Building*, UNESCO’s International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) highlight the important role of peace education in conflict and violence prevention and build peace at the individual, group, national, and international level, and how teachers can engage in transformative pedagogy to achieve this aim.

## WHAT IS TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY?

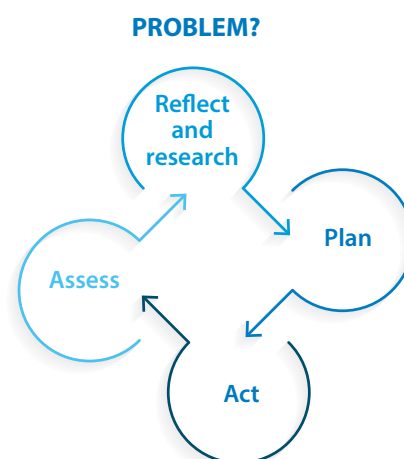
A transformative pedagogy is an innovative pedagogical approach that empowers learners to critically examine their contexts, beliefs, values, knowledge and attitudes with the goal of developing spaces for self-reflection, appreciation of diversity and critical thinking. A transformative pedagogy is realised when learning goes beyond the mind and connects hearts and actions, transforming knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Source: *Transformative Pedagogy for Peace-Building: A Guide for Teachers*, p. 22

The second of these aspects – **to learn and adapt** – is increasingly recognised as important in ensuring quality teaching and a commitment to lifelong learning seen as a hallmark of good and effective teachers. Even where professional development resources

and opportunities are scarce, you can utilise a **basic action research cycle** approach as a learning tool to improve the quality of your teaching or other aspects of your practice and environment.

As can be seen from the figure, action research involves identifying a **problem** you would like to solve or another kind of change you would like to make, **researching** that problem, **planning** a response or change, putting that plan into **action**, observing and **assessing** the process and the results of the change, **reflecting** on the process and the results, before starting the whole process again. So, for example, you might notice that the former CAAFAG students in your class have difficulty with basic literacy and numeracy because of interrupted education, but you have a large class and little time for providing individualised support during class time. You therefore plan to implement a peer tutoring programme, where you pair your high-achieving students with the former CAAFAG students, and then observe and reflect on the process and results, making changes as necessary. Note that you can work together with your peers to learn and adapt, for example by forming **Teacher Learning Circles**, which will be discussed in [Section 2.2.3](#).



Finally, the third of these aspects – to **motivate and inspire** – is particularly important for former CAAFAG, who are otherwise at risk of disengaging from education and/or dropping out completely. However, what CAAFAG education success stories seem to have in common is that the children and young people in question are themselves intrinsically motivated to succeed at education. Unfortunately, many former CAAFAG find it difficult to get and stay motivated, particularly those who have been very traumatised by their experiences. An INGO representative with experience in Syria and Iraq noted that this should be a priority for teachers:

In other words, it is particularly important for teachers to find ways to engage and inspire these learners – whether it is by demonstrating the relevance of education, acting as a positive role model, building on learners’ strengths and experiences, and/or connecting them with former CAAFAG mentors. UNESCO-IICBA’s guide for teachers on Transformative Pedagogies for Peace-Building provides guidance on how to act as a role model, which you might find helpful:

1. Demonstrate attitudes, behaviour and actions that are ethical
2. Show mutual understanding, respect and appreciation for others
3. Be welcoming of diversity
4. Demonstrate consistency between words, behaviours and actions
5. Be reflective and conscious of the impact that your behaviours and attitudes have on learners

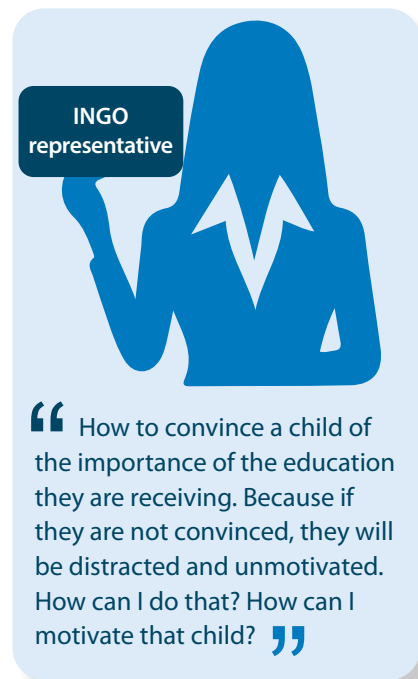
Source: Transformative Pedagogy for Peace-Building: A Guide for Teachers, p. 31

### 2.1.3: Your role(s) beyond the classroom

Outside of providing an education, you will likely often find yourself taking on additional roles when it comes to working with CAAFAG. For a Colombia-based researcher:

In addition to **socialisation**, or the process by which children and young people learn to be part of society, educators can play a supportive role in child protection and psychosocial support, particularly when it comes to the facilitation of **social-emotional learning** and the **referral** of individual learners for specialist support, which will be discussed in more depth later on in this guidance. In conflict settings, where social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals are in short supply, you and other educators are sometimes called upon to provide **mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS)** yourselves.

However, unless you have special training on child protection and MHPSS, it can feel overwhelming to be asked to support the mental health, protection, and psychosocial support needs of CAAFAG and other children affected by armed conflict. You may also be worried that you are providing the wrong type of advice and support or, indeed, making the situation worse. Here, the idea of **psychological first aid (PFA)** might help you to see that everyone can do something to help, and that you can build on some of the skills you have already acquired as a teacher or educator to provide PFA. Just as anyone can learn to provide regular first aid in the case of illness or injury, you can learn to provide PFA, which is described below:



## WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA)?

PFA is a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support. It involves:

- ▶ providing practical care and support, which does not intrude;
- ▶ assessing needs and concerns;
- ▶ helping people to address basic needs (like food, water, information)
- ▶ listening to people, but not pressuring them to talk;
- ▶ comforting people and helping them to feel calm;
- ▶ helping people connect to information, services and social supports;
- ▶ protecting people from further harm.

PFA is not professional counselling, but can help children and young people with:

- ▶ feeling safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful;
- ▶ having access to social, physical and emotional support; and
- ▶ feeling able to help themselves, as individuals and communities

Source: *Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers*, pp. 3-4

There are four stages of PFA, which are adapted for an educational setting and summarised in the table below:

Stage	Guidance
<b>Prepare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Learn about the conflict and how children may have been affected</li><li>▶ Learn about available services and supports available for children and young people, in addition to education</li><li>▶ Learn about safety and security concerns that may affect learners</li></ul>
<b>Look</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Check for risks to your own safety and the safety of others</li><li>▶ Check for learners with obvious urgent basic needs for mental health support</li><li>▶ Check for learners with serious distress reactions</li></ul>
<b>Listen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Approach learners who may need support</li><li>▶ Ask about learners' needs and concerns</li><li>▶ Listen to learners', and help them to feel calm</li></ul>
<b>Link</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Help learners address basic needs and access services</li><li>▶ Help learners cope with problems through supporting social-emotional learning</li><li>▶ Give learners useful information on available resources and services</li><li>▶ Connect learners with loved ones and social support</li></ul>

Source: Adapted from *Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers*, pp. 53-54

In this guidance, you will find some ideas about how to provide PFA alongside and within education through creating welcoming and inclusive learning environments ([Section 2.3.1](#)), supporting social-emotional learning (SEL) ([Section 2.3.3](#)), and building an understanding of your learners' backgrounds ([Section 2.4.1](#)).

While administering PFA, the Guide for Field Workers mentioned above recommends keeping the following key points in mind:

1. Respect safety, dignity and rights of your learners
2. Adapt your actions based on your learners' culture and backgrounds
3. Be aware of other responses/interventions involving your learners (e.g., child protection interventions)
4. Take care of yourself.

Further, the guide notes the importance of **knowing your limits** and **asking for help from others who are more qualified**, when you see that PFA alone is not enough. If one or more of your learners has a serious, life-threatening injury, or appear so upset that they cannot care for themselves (or their children, in the case of girls who got pregnant during their association), or you think they may hurt themselves or others, it is important that you try to refer them to advanced support immediately. If you are in a formal school setting, you can get in touch with the headteacher or counsellor who can then follow up with the necessary authorities. As an educator, you could contact your programme director or other senior staff member. If you are connected with the health sector and/or child protection services in your community, you can reach out to them directly.

In addition, educators can also play a key role in facilitating, coordinating, or supporting extra-curricular activities with known benefits for CAAFAG and other children affected by armed conflict, such as music, dance, art, sports, and peace and youth clubs, and in conducting advocacy and relationship-building with the community. As an example, the Uganda-based organisation, Similar Ground, which was founded by a former CAAFAG from South Sudan, engages a trained teacher to support its [School Peace Clubs](#).

## Key points and tips

### Role of education

- ▶ Education can act as an enabling right and is thus a potentially powerful tool to support reintegration and inclusion of former CAAFAG
- ▶ To learn more about the role education can play as a lifesaving and life-sustaining right in conflict and post-conflict settings, visit the [Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\)](#) website. In fact, you can [join INEE](#) for free to get the latest updates about new resources in EiE!
- ▶ Question your assumptions and ask yourself what you think constitutes quality, inclusive education, to ensure you maximise both the short - and long-term benefits of education

### Your role in education

- ▶ The [ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers](#) can be helpful for you and other educators by:
  1. providing a working definition of your responsibilities and rights as a teacher
  2. setting guidelines for social dialogue between educational authorities, teachers and their associations
  3. providing an international frame of reference with regard to key topics including accelerated pre-service training, class sizes, teaching aids, workload, merit rating systems, maternity leave, and social security
  4. providing the basis for the development of a code of ethics for your profession in your community, province, state, region, or country.
- ▶ For specific guidance relating to teaching and teachers in conflict settings, please consult [Domain 3](#) and [Domain 4](#) of the *INEE Minimum Standards: Preparedness, Response, Recovery*.
- ▶ Reflect on the relationship between teaching, curriculum, and assessment in order to determine how you will teach, what you will teach, and how you will know if learning has occurred. If you decide to teach about the conflict, keep the overall goal of peacebuilding in mind when planning your lessons.
- ▶ Use the action research cycle to improve your individual and collective teaching practice and plan interventions to support CAAFAG, including through the setting of short - and long-term goals.
- ▶ Keep in mind that some of your learners who were formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups may need additional support from you to stay motivated and engaged in their learning.

### Your role beyond the classroom

- ▶ Try to identify networks and support mechanisms in the community involved in providing MHPSS and where there are gaps in provision.
- ▶ Provide PFA to learners who might need your support.
- ▶ Know your limits when it comes to supporting learners' mental health and psychosocial support needs and ask for help from more qualified individuals when needed.
- ▶ Explore how you can contribute to extra-curricular activities, community life, and advocacy efforts for CAAFAG.

## 2.2: Enabling self-care, emotional regulation, collaboration and accountability

### OVERVIEW

- ▶ As an educator working with children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, it can be challenging to respond to their diverse needs, especially when resources and support mechanisms are limited.
- ▶ To help you build your own intra - and interpersonal competence so that you can take better care of yourself and better meet their needs and the needs of other learners, this section provides insights, advice, and links to resources directed at helping you to:
  1. engage in self-care to support your own wellbeing,
  2. understand and regulate your emotions,
  3. ask for help, recognise opportunities for collaboration, and hold yourself, your colleagues, and your community accountable for upholding your learners' right to education and protection.

### 2.2.1: Supporting your own wellbeing by engaging in self-care

As you may have experienced, working in conflict and post-conflict settings can take a huge toll on physical and mental wellbeing, particularly in jobs such as teaching, where you are entrusted with the academic, social, and emotional development of children and young people, as summarised by a UN representative working in South Sudan:

Of course, while research does suggest that learners' development and wellbeing is strongly linked to teacher wellbeing (INEE, 2021), it is important that you prioritise your own wellbeing not just because you want your learners to succeed but because you have a right to lead a full and fulfilling life as well (INEE, 2022).

Unfortunately, teacher and educator wellbeing is not always prioritised, and you may not have access to adequate support and services, so it is important to learn to practise self-care, which is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as follows:



UN Representative in South Sudan

“ Self-care is important. Teachers are also vulnerable to stress and burn-out. The danger is that if they don't control the seed of anger or the seeds of frustration within themselves, they might take it out on learners through aggression. ”

## WHAT IS WELLBEING?

A condition of holistic health and the process of achieving this condition. It refers to physical, emotional, social, and cognitive health. Wellbeing includes what is good for a person: participating in a meaningful social role; feeling happy and hopeful; living according to good values, as locally defined; having positive social relations and a supportive environment; coping with challenges through the use of positive life skills; and having security, protection and access to quality services.

Source: INEE TiCC (2016), *Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts*, Module 1, p. 10







## WHAT IS SELF-CARE?






Self-care is the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote their own health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker.

It recognizes individuals as active agents in managing their own health care in areas including health promotion; disease prevention and control; self-medication; providing care to dependent persons; and rehabilitation, including palliative care. It does not replace the health care system, but instead provides additional choices and options for healthcare.

Source: WHO (2022), *Self-care interventions for health*

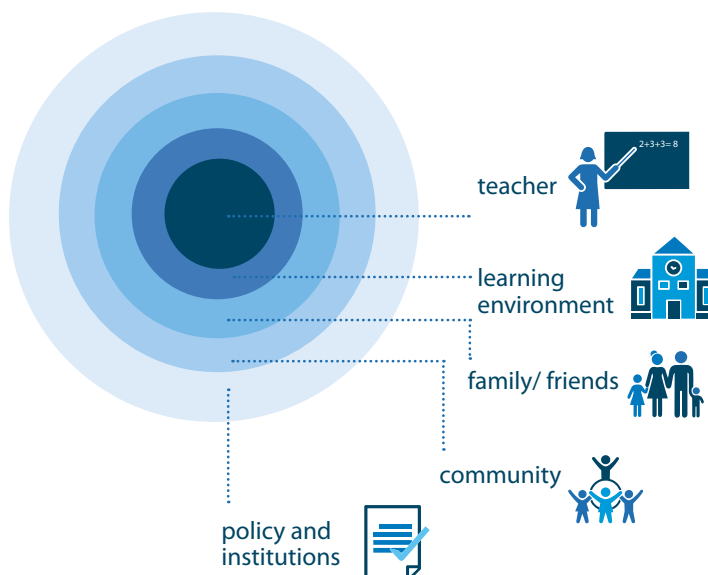
Taking a holistic view of health and applying this concept to an educational setting, self-care can be defined as steps taken by educators to take care of their mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. While each individual will have different ways of managing their work-related stress, some resources have been developed to try to provide some ideas of how to support teacher wellbeing. UNICEF, for example, drew from the experiences of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic to develop a list of tips that you might find helpful in learning to practise self-care, which UNICEF notes “is a necessity, not a luxury”:

	Make self-care a part of your daily routine, even if it's just setting aside 60 seconds for deep breathing to clear your head before lessons start
	Prioritise self-care activities if you want self-care to become a regular part of your life
	Eat well, get enough sleep and exercise regularly
	Do an activity you enjoy or find meaningful every day
	Take time out of your day to talk to a friend or family member about how you are feeling
	Talk to your colleagues about how you are feeling about teaching and see if you can find ways together to support everyone's wellbeing

	Create a routine for home and for work as much as possible
	Avoid the overuse of substances that temporarily change your mood or energy level (such as caffeine, alcohol or nicotine)
	At the end of each day, make a list of positive things that happened that day
	Remind yourself daily to let go of the things that are out of your control
	Take regular breaks throughout the day

The socio-ecological model we examined earlier in Section 1.4 to help us understand the needs and support systems of CAAFAG at different levels can also be helpful in thinking about how your wellbeing needs can be met (INEE, 2021). However, this time, instead of the child being at the centre, you consider yourself at the centre, and reflect on the protective and risk factors affecting your wellbeing at different levels:

For example, within the learning environment, are there colleagues you can reach out to for support when you are overburdened with work? Do you have a friend or family member who is keen to spend time with you who you enjoy meeting up with? Can you find mental health services in your community you can turn to? These are a few ideas for practising self-care as a first step towards improving your wellbeing.



Source: Adapted from UNICEF (n. d.), *Self-care tips for teachers*

## 2.2.2: Regulating your emotions

Closely related to exercising self-care is the process of learning to regulate your emotions. This is particularly important when it comes to the education of children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, as summarised by a global CAAFAG advisor:

The first step in learning to regulate your emotions when it comes to working with CAAFAG is to learn more about the different reasons that children and young people have for becoming associated with armed forces and armed groups, and to remember that these are children whose brains and identities are still developing, and who are negotiating complex transitions, including a transition back into civilian life. Also, some children and young people may be dealing with significant trauma and may not be receptive to education, sometimes responding aggressively, or withdrawing.

In addition to reading and accessing other resources about CAAFAG and their experiences, it is also important to practise **non-judgmental listening**, both when you are speaking one-on-one with CAAFAG and if discussions emerge around conflict. UNESCO's [Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism](#) provides some helpful advice on how to be a non-judgmental listener, which is presented below:

Especially if you have been affected by the wider conflict in some way, you may find it difficult to not react emotionally to what a learner has said or how they have acted. In addition to ideas for positive classroom management, which will be discussed in [Section 2.3.2](#), resources on **conflict resolution** in the classroom are helpful in learning to regulate your emotions, as these encourage thinking and reflecting before acting. For example, Module 1 of the INEE TiCC Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts uses a "Stop-Think-Act" model, as follows:



“ I think many of these teachers don't understand what CAAFAG have been through and the consequences. There is a lot of judgment. If teachers have been affected by war themselves, and are overburdened with work, they will communicate that, even subconsciously. Children I've interviewed have said that they know teachers don't like them by how they act. So the resentment and judgment teachers are feeling are perceived by the children. ”

### HOW TO BE A NON-JUDGMENTAL LISTENER?

Young people yearn for opportunities to discuss issues with a non-judgmental listener. They are brimming with ideas, some reasonable and some less so. They need someone to listen to their ideas, suggest other ways of thinking and help visualize reasonable decisions that take into account important longer-term consequences.




- ▶ Avoid condemning or prejudging learner's voices, concerns, actions or intentions during the discussion ("you can't say that"; "you can't think that").
- ▶ Avoid positioning yourself as the main authority on the subject. Rather, be a facilitator and make sure that pluralistic views and arguments are reflected in the discussion.
- ▶ Try not to interrupt students as they develop their arguments. On the contrary, help them find the words to express their thoughts.
- ▶ Provide sensible and respectful suggestions of issues to consider, including moral and ethical consequences of decisions.
- ▶ Take care not to over-interpret controversial or racist comments as signs of violent extremism.

Source: UNESCO (2016), [Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism](#), p. 28

### 2.2.3: Opportunities for collaboration and maintaining accountability

Despite the many challenges associated with providing education for children affected by conflict, there are positive examples of teachers attempting to go above and beyond in supporting their learners, though often they act in isolation, instead of reaching out for help. This was summed up by a former CAAFAG from South Sudan who noted:

Of course, reaching out can be difficult if you are the only educator in a given context, though it should be possible to identify other adults and organisations who are involved in providing support to CAAFAG and other children affected by conflict (or who have the potential to be) who you can collaborate with.

		
STOP	THINK	ACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Take a breath</li> <li>▶ Walk away if necessary</li> <li>▶ Calm down and put things into perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ How do I feel?</li> <li>▶ How do they feel? (Try to see the conflict from the other side)</li> <li>▶ What was I doing? Was it causing a problem?</li> <li>▶ What can I do to solve the problem?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Be respectful</li> <li>▶ Make the situation better, not worse</li> <li>▶ State the conflict without placing blame</li> </ul>

Source: INEE TiCC (2016), *Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts*, Module 1



Former CAAFAG from South Sudan

“ One of the positive things I can say, is in spite of the numbers of children who come to the class, the teachers are still able to do what they are supposed to do. They keep going and go on teaching, teaching, teaching. If students are missing, teachers follow up with the community. They follow up on each case. However, sometimes teachers try to handle them by themselves and don't ask for support. ”

One potentially powerful tool to improve collaboration and the quality of education as a whole is through setting up a **community of practice (CoP)**. One example of a CoP is the **teacher learning circle (TLC)**, which was briefly mentioned in [Section 2.1.2](#) above. The [INEE TiCC Peer Coaching Pack](#) defines a teacher learning circle (TLC) as follows:

#### INTRODUCTION TO TLCs

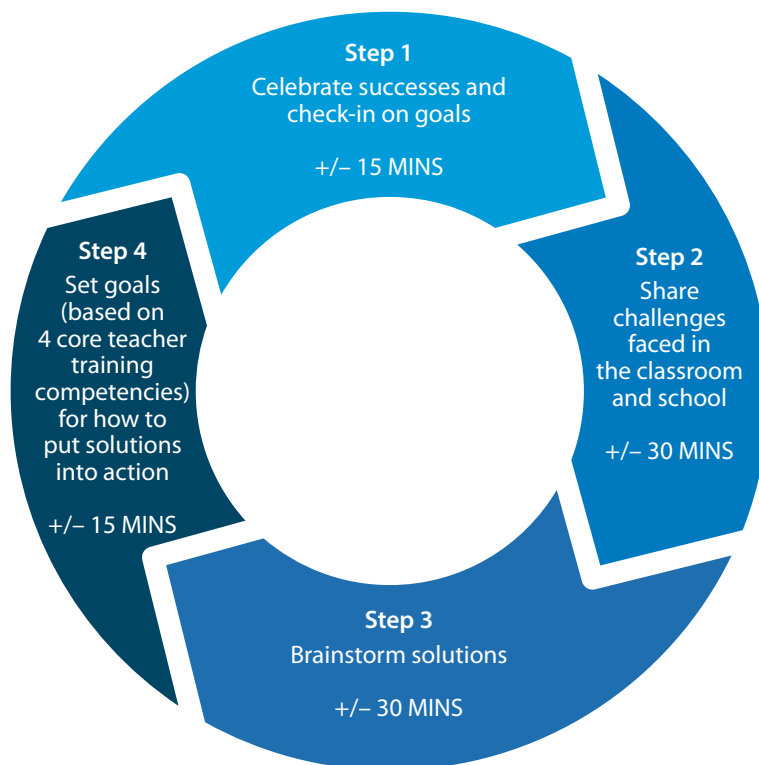
A Teacher Learning Circle (TLC) is a group sharing session to help create a professional community of teachers who support and encourage one another to meet their needs. TLCs are most effective when they meet regularly, and teachers can establish a routine learning loop where they reflect on their teaching practice and plan together how they can overcome challenges they may be facing in their classrooms and schools.

Source: INEE TiCC (2016), *Peer Coaching Pack*, Level 1 Peer Coaching Manual, p. 2

While ideally, TLCs and other CoPs would be established by school leaders, teacher educators, or policymakers, you and interested colleagues can try to set one up yourself, building on the basic action research cycle described above in [Section 2.1.2](#) as follows:

To be successful, TLCs should try to meet at least once a month, have a consistent schedule, and be held at a venue that is convenient for all members. For more information about establishing and maintaining successful TLCs in crisis contexts, please see the INEE TiCC [Peer Coaching Pack](#).

Another important tool for effective collaboration and ensuring accountability is a **well-drafted code of conduct**, according to Module 1 of the INEE TiCC [Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts](#), which outlines the objectives of a code of conduct as follows:



Source: INEE TiCC (2016), [Peer Coaching Pack](#), Level 1 Peer Coaching Manual, p. 2

## OBJECTIVES OF A CODE OF CONDUCT

### 1. Protect students and teachers by:

- ▶ protecting students from harm, discrimination, intimidation, harassment and/or humiliation
- ▶ maintaining with integrity the teacher's position of trust and authority with students without abusing that position of power
- ▶ making clear the consequences of bad conduct for the teachers
- ▶ making clear the rights of teachers

### 2. Guide and support teachers by:

- ▶ providing guidance on how to make ethical decisions based on ethical awareness and reasoning
- ▶ help teachers solve some of the ethical dilemmas they are confronted with
- ▶ listing rules that can guide teachers in their everyday behavior

### 3. Achieve and maintain a high degree of professionalism by:

- ▶ upholding the dignity and reputation of teachers
- ▶ promoting a professional identity

### 4. Promote community trust and support for teachers by:

- ▶ making teachers accountable and listing their responsibilities
- ▶ creating a positive image and conditions for teachers to work in

Source: INEE TiCC (2016), [Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts](#), Module 1

If your educational institution or programme has a code of conduct for its staff, you can work through it with colleagues to see the extent to which it fulfils the objectives outlined above. If a code of conduct does not exist, you can work with colleagues to develop one that meets the five objectives. Of course, the code of conduct will be most effective if everyone has had the opportunity to engage with it and take ownership, so it is recommended that TLCs and other collaboration mechanisms be utilised to support this process. Further, it is important to remember that not all teachers and educators act in the best interests of children and young people in their care, and **may not be particularly interested in improving** their practice, or, worse, may themselves be **perpetrators of violence**. In the DRC, for example, there have been reports of teachers recruiting children and young people themselves to join armed groups (Alliance for CPHA, 2023). In South Sudan, access to education is a problem for most children, but those who are able to enrol in school are typically taught by male teachers, and there are situations where learners have been sexually assaulted by their male teachers, with some cases resulting in pregnancy, according to practitioners familiar with this context. For this reason, it is important to reflect on how the code of conduct can be enforced in such cases.

Finally, it can also be helpful to think beyond your particular school or education programme for opportunities to collaborate together to ensure the protection and effective reintegration of children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups. The INEE and the Alliance for CPHA have developed a [Guidance Note on Supporting Integrated Programming in Humanitarian Action](#), which utilises the socio-ecological model to guide integrated approaches to support child development and wellbeing. We have already noted the importance of collaborating with different sectors, including health and protection, but this Guidance Note also emphasises the importance of ensuring that family members and caregivers are “active participants in children’s learning” (p. 28). Ideas for how to engage with family members are provided in [Section 2.3.1](#).

## Key points and tips

### Engaging in self-care

- ▶ Recognise the importance of prioritising self-care as a way to manage stress and avoid burnout and, ultimately, to improve your teaching
- ▶ Spend time thinking about how you can set and maintain boundaries at work and how to let go of things that are outside of your control
- ▶ Carve out time for self-care activities every day to help you develop healthy habits
- ▶ Consult UNICEF’s [Self-care tips for teachers](#) for more ideas for how to practise self-care

### Regulating your emotions

- ▶ Recognise that even when left unspoken, the feelings you have towards your learners, including resentment and judgment, can be picked up on by them
- ▶ Take time to learn about the experiences of CAAFAG, including by reviewing [Part 1](#) of this guide, and reading resources developed by the International Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (Alliance for CPHA), including the technical note on [Education Interventions for CAAFAG](#), the technical note on [Girls associated with armed forces and armed groups: Lessons learnt and good practices on prevention of recruitment and use, release and reintegration](#), and [CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit](#).
- ▶ Practise being a non-judgmental listener and discussion facilitator, as outlined in UNESCO’s [Teacher’s Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism](#)
- ▶ Use the “stop-think-act” model of conflict resolution to help you slow down and regulate your emotions
- ▶ Explore the resources on the [Iraqi School Project](#), which include valuable tools for reframing your perceptions of children associated with armed forces and armed groups and those suspected of participating in violent extremism

### Opportunities for collaboration and maintaining accountability

- ▶ If you are struggling, do not be afraid to ask for help, whether from a colleague or another community member or organisation representative
- ▶ Contribute to the building of a community of practice by instituting Teacher Learning Circles with colleagues or other community members/organisation representatives
- ▶ Review existing codes of conduct or co-construct new ones to help protect students and teachers and maintain accountability
- ▶ To get ideas about what to include in the code of conduct or how to improve your existing code of conduct, you can consult the [ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers](#) and [Domain 4](#) of the *INEE Minimum Standards: Preparedness, Response, Recovery* on Teachers and Other Education Personnel.

## 2.3: Supporting learning readiness and an enabling learning environment

### OVERVIEW

- ▶ Children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups often **struggle to adapt to a learning environment**, even in more informal educational settings, which can pose a challenge for you as an educator.
- ▶ To help you support **learning readiness and an enabling learning environment** for your learners, this section provides insights, advice, and links to resources on how to:
  1. create a welcoming and inclusive space for learning,
  2. practise positive, non-violent classroom management,
  3. support social-emotional learning.

### 2.3.1: Creating a welcoming, safe, and inclusive learning space

In order for you to fulfil your primary role of teaching, you first need to make sure that children and young people are in a place mentally and emotionally to learn. This was highlighted by an international EiE consultant, who noted:

An essential first step is to try to make learners feel welcome in the learning space, which could help address a significant need these children and young people have for belonging, a need that was described by a UN agency representative working in South Sudan as follows:



“ What’s important is getting them back to a place where they are able to learn. Resocialising them. Getting them to recognise the impact of violence, and that violence is not a way forward. [...] Teachers need to maintain an enabling environment by addressing classroom dynamics, prejudice from other children, and behavioural issues. ”

The IRC has developed [guidance for initial meet-ups with caregivers of refugee learners in the UK](#), which can provide some useful ideas for engaging with families of CAAFAG and other children affected by conflict and helping them to feel welcome in the learning environment. These ideas have been adapted and summarised below:

- ▶ Remember that families may have had negative experiences with education in the past and may feel uncomfortable, so do your best to **ensure that initial meetings are in a calm, relaxing space** and that you share any relevant information about the school or programme with them
- ▶ **Get to know your learner**, including how they pronounce their name, when they arrived (back) in the community, and if they have any form of support network
- ▶ **Get to know the family**, including their names and relationships to the learner, what languages they speak at home, if they have a support network, and if anyone is able to help with the learner's learning
- ▶ **Get to know your learner's educational background**, including if and when they attended school, what subjects they enjoy or think they'll enjoy, whether they are familiar with cell phones and computers, and what hobbies or interests they may have
- ▶ **Get to know your learner's religious/cultural/community links**, including whether or not they attend other educational programmes, religious classes, or participate in any religious, community, or cultural activities and/or access support services
- ▶ **Give the family space to speak**, including inviting them to share questions or comments or explain any challenges they may be facing

In a formal school setting, this information is best collected through the school leader, and then shared with teachers and other school staff, but if you are working in a non-formal setting, or are the only teacher, you may have to try to collect this information yourself. The [Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers](#) you learned about in [Section 2.1.3](#) provides some helpful tips for how to communicate ethically and effectively, which can be applied to your engagement with both learners and their families:



THINGS TO SAY AND DO ✓	THINGS NOT TO SAY AND DO ✗
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Try to find a quiet place to talk, and minimize outside distractions.</li> <li>✓ Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, if this is appropriate.</li> <li>✓ Stay near the person but keep an appropriate distance depending on their age, gender and culture.</li> <li>✓ Let them know you are listening, for example, nod your head or say "hmmmm...."</li> <li>✓ Be patient and calm.</li> <li>✓ Provide factual information, if you have it. Be honest about what you know and don't know. "I don't know, but I will try to find out about that for you."</li> <li>✓ Give information in a way the person can understand -- keep it simple.</li> <li>✓ Acknowledge how they are feeling and any losses or important events they tell you about, such as loss of their home or death of a loved one. "I'm so sorry. I can imagine this is very sad for you."</li> <li>✓ Acknowledge the person's strengths and how they have helped themselves.</li> <li>✓ Allow for silence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Don't pressure someone to tell their story.</li> <li>✗ Don't interrupt or rush someone's story (for example, don't look at your watch or speak too rapidly).</li> <li>✗ Don't touch the person if you're not sure it is appropriate to do so.</li> <li>✗ Don't judge what they have or haven't done, or how they are feeling. Don't say: "You shouldn't feel that way," or "You should feel lucky you survived."</li> <li>✗ Don't make up things you don't know.</li> <li>✗ Don't use terms that are too technical.</li> <li>✗ Don't tell them someone else's story.</li> <li>✗ Don't talk about your own troubles.</li> <li>✗ Don't give false promises or false reassurances.</li> <li>✗ Don't think and act as if you must solve all the person's problems for them.</li> <li>✗ Don't take away the person's strength and sense of being able to care for themselves.</li> <li>✗ Don't talk about people in negative terms (for example, don't call them "crazy" or "mad").</li> </ul>

Source: Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers, p. 15

One key aspect of creating welcoming and inclusive learning spaces is to ensure that the learning environment is safe. The following factors have been identified by UNESCO IICBA (2017, p. 29) as threatening the safety of learners:

- ▶ **Emotional safety:** Children's emotional safety is at risk from verbal abuse, isolation, stigmatisation, discrimination, bullying, exclusion, and manipulation.
- ▶ **Cognitive safety:** Children's cognitive and mental health is at risk if they are malnourished, have inadequate learning stimulation, are subjected to indoctrination, or lack opportunities to participate in art, sports, music, and other co-curricular activities.
- ▶ **Spiritual safety:** Where there is a lack of spaces for silence and reflection, limited self-expression and questioning, no focus on arts, nature, children's spiritual and emotional wellbeing is at risk.
- ▶ **Environmental safety:** Poorly constructed learning spaces, attacks, gun violence, conflicts, natural disasters and poverty put learners at risk. For children who have access to the internet, the online environment poses additional risks, especially when the space is unregulated and children lack the knowledge and skills to stay safe online.
- ▶ **Physical safety:** Child labour, gender-based violence, vulnerability to recruitment into gangs and armed groups, corporal punishment, forced marriage, and other threats put children's physical safety at risk.

The INEE and the Alliance for CPHA [Guidance Note on Supporting Integrated Programming in Humanitarian Action](#) emphasises the importance of ensuring that teachers and educators are able to assess and respond to specific protection issues and other risks (p. 74). With that in mind, and as the next two sections (2.3.2 and 2.3.3) are mostly focused on assessing and responding to threats to learners' emotional, cognitive, and spiritual safety, we will briefly have a look at what you can do to identify and respond to risks to yours and your learners' environmental and physical safety, specifically in terms of land mine awareness and online safety.

Typically, all armed conflicts today use **improvised explosive devices (IEDs), landmines and other types of explosive devices**, which pose a threat to schools and communities. Even after the conflict has ended, these types of devices continue to be a very big threat, as they are not always cleared away and/or safely destroyed. Whether you are in an active conflict or a post-conflict setting, it is important for you and your learners to be aware of these threats and to practice the following basic safety measures:

## KEEPING YOU AND YOUR LEARNERS SAFE FROM LANDMINES

### Basic safety messages to share with learners:

- ▶ All explosive devices are dangerous and designed to kill or injure over a great distance
- ▶ Explosion usually affects not only the person who handles the device but also bystanders
- ▶ Keeping an explosive device in the house can result in not only damage to the house but also a loss of life of family members

### Therefore, if you see an unknown or suspicious object or an explosive device:

- ▶ Do not approach it!
- ▶ Remember the exact place!
- ▶ Inform adults or the authorities immediately so that no one else is killed or injured.
- ▶ Only appropriately trained professionals such as military and law enforcement personnel have the capacity to deal with and dispose of the explosive devices safely.
- ▶ Do not forget to share these basic safety messages with your families, friends and neighbours.

Source: [Mine risk education](#), p. 14

In situations where you and your learners have access to digital devices, such as mobile phones, it is important to build the digital literacy of yourself and your learners to reduce vulnerability to online risks and make the most of access to resources, **keeping everyone informed, engaged and safe online**. In fact, according to UNICEF Innocenti (2023), children and young people are facing increasing risk of harm online, for example, in countries in East and Southern Africa where more than 1 in 10 internet-using children experienced some form of online sexual abuse in 2022. Education has a key role to play in providing children with the necessary skills to recognise danger and take action to stay safe. The following tips have been adapted from The State of the World's Children: Children in a Digital World report by UNICEF (2017):

## KEEPING YOU AND YOUR LEARNERS SAFE ONLINE

- ▶ Understand the risks of content creation and sharing: Everything that you and your learners post online, including social media comments and videos, can no longer be considered private, even when you are posting in a so-called private group. Also, any content that you or your learners produce and share can open you up to risk of extortion and/or could be exchanged by strangers online – this includes selfies and other photos and videos.
- ▶ Learn how to protect privacy and personal data online: When using social media and other online apps and websites, you and your learners should take care to protect yourselves and not share too much personal information, which, if made public could lead to someone pretending to be you or ‘mining’ your data.
- ▶ Strengthen the teaching of online tolerance and empathy: Online communication is quite different from traditional communication – not being able to see facial clues or hear tonal clues can lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding, and there is also the potential for being anonymous, which some people will use as an excuse to say anything, without considering the impact on others. Social emotional learning and teaching empathy can help to develop children’s online resilience, and reduce online abuse and hateful language.
- ▶ Be good digital role models for children: Remember that you can model responsible and respectful use of information and communication technology (ICT) for your learners, by, for example, encouraging them to critically reflect on how they engage online.

Source: Adapted from [The State of the World’s Children: Children in a Digital World](#), p. 33

On these last points about teaching online tolerance and empathy and being a good digital role model, you may find the following mini tool to prevent bullying online that is used by educators and others in some countries in the English-speaking world helpful in modelling good online behaviour to your learners:

## ANTI-BULLYING ACRONYM

### Before you engage online, THINK:

- ▶ T: is it true?
- ▶ H: is it helpful?
- ▶ I: is it inspiring?
- ▶ N: is it necessary?
- ▶ K: is it kind?

### Other questions to consider before engaging online:

- ▶ Who is reading what I share?
- ▶ Am I being respectful?
- ▶ Am I saying this from a place of anger or other strong emotion?
- ▶ Could someone misunderstand what I am trying to say?
- ▶ What do the words I use say about me?

With so much information out there, it can be difficult to know what to believe, especially for children and young people who have not fully developed their critical thinking skills, and they may find themselves swayed by propaganda and so-called 'fake news'. In addition to modelling anti-bullying behaviour, you could help learners to think about critical questions to ask when engaging with online sources. Historica Canada has developed a set of key questions for critical online engagement, which you might find helpful:

## QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL DIGITAL LITERACY

**When engaging with online media, take the following steps:**

1. Understand the system:
  - ▶ What are digital media?
  - ▶ What are the rules, regulations, and processes within the system?
2. Assess channels and bias:
  - ▶ Where are you consuming media?
  - ▶ How are different sources reaching you?
  - ▶ How do media and your individual choices and biases shape the content you see online?
3. Examine the sources and content:
  - ▶ Is it a reliable source?
  - ▶ Is the author trustworthy?
  - ▶ Is the information you are seeing accurate, or do you think the author might be trying to manipulate you emotionally or by making far-out claims?
4. Check the facts:
  - ▶ What are the facts?
  - ▶ Where do they come from?
  - ▶ Is there a way for you to check if the facts are true, for example, by asking a teacher or trusted community member?

Source: Adapted from [Critical Digital Literacy Education Guide](#)

### 2.3.2: Practising positive, non-violent classroom management

As you have perhaps experienced, it can be challenging to deal with learners who are unruly and aggressive, and exhibiting other problematic behaviours. For a former CAAFAG from South Sudan, learning to deal with these behaviours needs to be a priority:

The [Iraqi Schools Project](#) has distilled three key messages on why it is important to practise positive, non-violent classroom management and how it can in fact be more effective than attempting to control a class through fear and/or violence:



<b>Key Message 1:</b>	Strategically praising students is linked to improving a student's view of their own intelligence, motivation, and self-worth. Using this technique has also been proven to increase positive behaviours and boost academic achievement.
<b>Key Message 2:</b>	Rewarding good behaviour has more impact than punishing unruly behaviour. It sends the message that good behaviour is noticed and valued, and makes model examples out of students who do the right thing.
<b>Key Message 3:</b>	Proactive classroom management can help teachers and students regain a sense of control over learning. There are a wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers can use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive and on task during class that do not depend on fear.

Source: [Iraqi Schools Project](#), Classroom Management

The INEE TiCC [Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts](#) provides additional helpful guidance on classroom management, outlining the “Big 5” principles and their rationale, and providing tips on how to enact these principles. This information is presented below:

#### The Big 5 Principles of Classroom Management



Source: INEE TiCC (2016), [Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts](#), Module 2

Principle	Rationale	Tips
1. <b>Clear expectations</b>	Setting clear academic and behavioural expectations is a way to make sure students know what to do at all times and is a proactive way to limit unwanted behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Co-construct a list of class rules with your learners</li> <li>▶ Provide clear instructions for all activities</li> <li>▶ Explain purpose behind expectations</li> <li>▶ Check all learners have understood instructions before starting activities</li> </ul>
2. <b>Routines</b>	Children respond well to a structured and predictable environment. Clear routines give students a clear sense of what they will be doing in class every day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Establish routines and procedures around starting/ending class, passing out materials, grouping students, etc.</li> <li>▶ Consider assigning roles/jobs to students to create ownership</li> </ul>
3. <b>Engagement</b>	When students are actively engaged in your lessons they are less likely to misbehave. You need to know your students' abilities and interests in order to do this well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Learn student names</li> <li>▶ Create curriculum relevant to student backgrounds, abilities, and interest</li> <li>▶ Create lesson plans that allow for group work and practice</li> </ul>
4. <b>Positive reinforcement</b>	It is important to create a space where students feel safe and confident to share their thoughts. Acknowledge your students' positive behaviour, growth and creativity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Create a space where students feel safe to share thoughts and ideas</li> <li>▶ Help students build positive relationships with each other</li> <li>▶ Give students consistent and positive feedback and encourage students to display great work</li> <li>▶ Have a seating chart, making sure students are comfortable</li> </ul>
5. <b>Positive discipline</b>	Be consistent in enforcing your expectations. It is important to redirect unwanted behaviour and only use appropriate consequences when necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Be consistent in enforcing your expectations: acknowledge positive behaviour, redirect unwanted behaviour, and treat students equally</li> <li>▶ Move around the classroom to monitor student behaviour</li> </ul>

Source: INEE TiCC (2016), *Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts*, Module 1

Also related to classroom management, Terre des Hommes has compiled a list of eight desirable attitudes for educators or animators to possess, which may be helpful for you to reflect on:

## 8 DESIRABLE ATTITUDES FOR EDUCATORS/ANIMATORS

1. Be present (physically and mentally)
2. Give your full attention and positive feedback
3. Be respectful
4. See the positive quality in every learner
5. Listen and ask questions
6. Be enthusiastic
7. Be yourself
8. Fix achievable goals for yourself and participants

Source: Adapted from Terre des Hommes (2011), *Working with children and their environment. Manual of psychosocial skills*, p. 73

### 2.3.3: Supporting social-emotional learning

In recent years, the concept of social-emotional learning has become more prevalent in both crisis and non-crisis settings, in recognition of the need children and young people have to build social and emotional competences and skills. For children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, this need is particularly pressing, as summed up by a Colombia-based researcher:

In their resource on creating [Safe Healing Learning Spaces \(SHLS\)](#), the IRC defines social-emotional learning as follows:

#### SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING




The processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Source: IRC (2016), [Safe Healing and Learning Space Toolkit](#), Trainee Handbook, p. 8



They also provide definitions and example skills for each of the five components of social-emotional learning:

Colombia-based researcher

“Everyone responds differently, but there are some commonalities, including chronic depression, irreparable guilt, hostility, and the constitution of a ‘reactive identity’ (soldier ego) discordant with the subsequent demands of civilian life. [...] Some show tendencies towards inertia, passivity, the rejection of social ties, segregation. So they need to develop socioemotional skills.”

Component	Definition	Example Skills
<b>Brain building</b> 	The set of skills that help us focus our attention, remember instructions and concepts, successfully juggle multiple tasks and plan for the short and long term future. This set of skills helps us to filter distractions, set goals, and control impulses.	Listening skills, ability to focus attention and follow directions, organising steps and information in a logical manner, and using our working memory.
<b>Emotional regulation</b> 	The set of skills that allows us to understand our own emotions and manage our feelings a positive manner. It provides us with tools to predict and control our emotions.	Identifying feelings, predicting feelings, practising emotion management strategies such as belly-breathing and counting.
<b>Positive social skills</b> 	The skills which allow us to relate to one another in a positive way, through understanding others' feelings and behaviour and responding in a way that promotes positive social interaction and reduces conflict.	Recognising and accepting feelings of others, developing empathy, understanding group dynamics.

Contd...

Component	Definition	Example Skills
<b>Conflict resolution skills</b> 	The skills which help us address any problems and conflicts in a positive manner as they arise. These skills minimise the impact of conflict on the people involved, leading to a positive outcome.	Identifying problems, generating solutions to conflicts, implementing conflict resolution strategies.
<b>Perseverance</b> 	The set of skills that allow us to push through challenges and continue to work towards a realistic goal. These skills develop the recognition that all learning requires persistence by searching for alternative ways to reach a goal and a willingness to ask for support to overcome challenges.	Apply decision-making skills, developing goal-setting behaviour, developing a positive self-identity.

Source: IRC (2016), *Safe Healing and Learning Space Toolkit*, Trainee Handbook, p. 8

These definitions and explanations of the different components of SEL and the respective skills associated with each component can be a helpful tool for you as you work on setting social-emotional learning objectives alongside your regular learning objectives for your learners. The SHLS resource also has useful ideas and examples of age-appropriate objectives and learning activities, which you can use as a reference. The IRC has also developed *Mindfulness Moments Cards*, a set of simple exercises for building **mindfulness**, or getting learners to refocus on their minds and their learning, through breathing, listening, and refocusing.

One word of caution as you work to create a safe and welcoming learning environment and support social-emotional learning comes from a Colombia-based researcher, who notes:

In other words, not only is it important for you to continue to model healthy and appropriate relationships to your learners but also to recognise that you are not alone when it comes to ensuring the reintegration of former CAAFAG, but that you are working in partnership with families and communities. According to research from UNESCO's Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), children's prosocial learning improves when educators engage with parents and work closely with their families to promote children's social and emotional development on the basis of respect, trust, and open communication (UNESCO-MGIEP, 2020, pp. 168-169).

Also, learners themselves are an important resource for ensuring reintegration, and, according to UNESCO-IICBA (2017, p. 29), you can contribute to the building of key social skills and sustainable peace if you:

1. Actively encourage learners to collaborate with one another
2. Create opportunities to discuss different viewpoints
3. Encourage the development of respectful relationships
4. Encourage teamwork for problem solving, rather than promoting competition



Colombia-based researcher

“ Some of these children can also become excessively dependent on their teachers, demanding affection, preferential treatment. Teachers need to know how to deal with that. ”

## Key points and tips

### Creating a welcoming and inclusive learning environment

- ▶ Recognise that for you to be able to do your job of teaching, your learners first need to be ready for learning
- ▶ Just as with other children and young people, CAAFAG have a need for belonging, and this was a need that sometimes was met by an armed group
- ▶ Explore the microportraits in [Pedagogies of Belonging](#) for ideas on how to create a welcoming learning environment
- ▶ Access the IRC resource, [Creating Healing Classrooms](#) for ideas on how to ensure that education is provided in a protective and healing space

### Practising positive, non-violent classroom management

- ▶ Positive, non-violent classroom management is generally more effective than trying to establish authority through fear and/or violence
- ▶ Practice positive, non-violent classroom management by setting clear expectations, establishing routines, engaging learners, providing positive reinforcement, and using positive discipline
- ▶ Explore the [Iraqi Schools Project](#) website for ideas about positive, non-violent classroom management

### Supporting social-emotional learning

- ▶ Opportunities for social-emotional learning are particularly important for CAAFAG who may be suffering from depression, inertia, passivity, hostility and other socioemotional problems
- ▶ Explore the [IRC's Safe Healing and Learning Space Toolkit](#) for ideas on how to build skills in the five different components of SEL, namely brain building, emotional regulation, positive social skills, conflict resolution skills, and perseverance
- ▶ Recognise that there is a possibility that learners will become overly dependent on you, so try to continue to model healthy and appropriate relationships at all times

## 2.4: Contextualizing, planning, differentiating and adapting learning

### OVERVIEW

- ▶ Children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups are **not a homogeneous group** and therefore have a diverse range of learning needs, which can pose a challenge for you as an educator.
- ▶ To help you better **respond to these diverse needs** and provide quality and inclusive education for all your learners, this section provides insights, advice, and links to resources on how to:
  1. understand your learners' backgrounds,
  2. provide accelerated and flexible education opportunities,
  3. plan and adapt lessons based on age, gender, disability, and other factors.

### 2.4.1: Understanding your learners' backgrounds

In 2021, the Global Coalition for Reintegration published a helpful resource entitled [Reframing child reintegration: From humanitarian action to development, prevention, peacebuilding and beyond](#). A key point they made is that:

**“Child reintegration must be repositioned as responsive to the multi-causal ecology of why children are recruited and what their experiences are in armed groups.”**

(GCR, 2021, p. 6)

This was echoed by a Colombia-based researcher, who noted that:

Colombia-based researcher



“ The experiences in the armed groups are very dissimilar: the age at which they join the armed groups, the time they remain in them, the reasons why they end up incorporated there, how the violence has impacted and left consequences on them, the subjective resources they have to undertake a social change towards civil life, all this varies. To pretend they are a homogeneous population with similar pedagogical (and social) needs, and identical objectives for everyone is a mistake. So teachers need to be able to serve the individual and the group. ”

In other words, the challenge that you face as an educator is to ensure that you have an understanding of your learners' backgrounds, so that you can make sure that you respond to all your learners' needs as effectively as possible. The advice provided in [Section 2.2.2](#) on learning as much as you can about the different reasons that children and young people have for becoming associated with armed forces and armed groups and their experiences, as well as practising non-judgmental listening applies here as well.

It is also important to reflect on if and how a learner's gender, disability status, age, and other demographic and social factors

may need to be taken into consideration when responding to the educational needs of former CAAFAG. Pages 8-19 of the technical note on [Education Interventions for CAAFAG](#) provides a helpful discussion and links to resource on how gender (including conflict-related sexual violence), disability, and age can be taken into account in the design and implementation of education interventions that you might find enlightening. Some key points relating to gender, disability status, and age with regards to CAAFAG from this and other resources are highlighted below:

#### CHALLENGES FACED BY GIRLS DURING REINTEGRATION

- The level of stigma experienced by girls is typically more severe and lasts longer than for boys, and is also harder to address
- There is typically an assumption that girls have lost their virginity, and have thus “lost their value”
- The presence of one or more children conceived during association increases likelihood of discrimination and rejection, particularly if the father is considered the “enemy”
- “Militarised” behaviour or symptoms of distress may be misunderstood and lead to exclusion
- Social stigmatisation may have an impact on mental health and psychosocial wellbeing
- Girls who participated in hostilities and/or had leadership or management responsibilities may find it difficult to return to gender-stereotyped roles

Source: Adapted from Alliance for CPHA (2020), [Girls associated with armed forces and armed groups: Lessons learnt and good practices on prevention of recruitment and use, release and reintegration](#), p. 26

## CONFLICT AND DISABILITY

- ▶ Armed conflict increases the prevalence of disabilities among children and young people
- ▶ Children associated with armed forces or armed groups are exposed to combat injuries
- ▶ It may be difficult to recognise children living with disabilities during times of armed conflict, particularly when it comes to children whose disabilities result from sexual or psychological trauma
- ▶ Children whose disabilities existed before the conflict or whose disabilities are not directly caused by the conflict may be more challenging to address

### Helpful resources to better support learners with disabilities include:

- ▶ [Disability-inclusive Education in Emergencies: Key concepts, approaches, and principles for practice](#)
- ▶ [INEE Pocket Guide to Supporting Learners with Disabilities](#)
- ▶ [UNESCO, Embracing diversity: a toolkit for creating inclusive, learning-friendly environments](#)
- ▶ [Guidance Note | Qualitative Assessment Approaches for the Protection of Children with Disabilities within Humanitarian Contexts](#)

Source: Adapted from Alliance for CPHA (2023), [Education Interventions for CAAFAG](#), p. 13

## AGE AND ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

- ▶ A child's age and stage of development during association with armed forces and armed groups may have big implications on reintegration and education
- ▶ CAAFAG have an increased exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which refer to stressful or traumatic events experienced before the age of 18
- ▶ ACEs are linked to adverse physical and mental health outcomes later in life
- ▶ Many former CAAFAG have experienced multiple ACEs, whether as victim, perpetrator, and/or witness to violence and atrocities
- ▶ These children are more likely to experience stigma, shame, and exclusion
- ▶ Children recruited at a younger age and have experienced prolonged exposure to ACEs tend to find it more challenging to return to mainstream education

Source: Adapted from Alliance for CPHA (2023), [Education Interventions for CAAFAG](#), p. 16

Another key issue to address when it comes to age is how children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups see themselves in relation to the outside world. In other words, the question of identity has a very important age dimension: During their period of association, many former CAAFAG took on more “adult” roles and responsibilities, including leadership and motherhood roles, for example, and they are now back in a context that is more likely to treat them as a child. In the words of one INGO representative who works on issues related to youth participation:



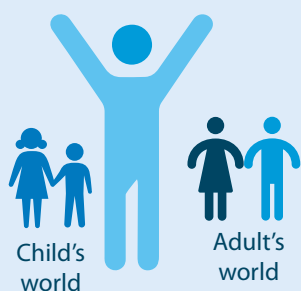
“ To come back to this issue of identity... they won't see themselves as a child anymore. So if they are treated as a child, this can be a problem. This is related to questions of empowerment, which can be tricky to talk about because often this isn't dealt with very well in most educational settings. Experiences with school rules can be challenging, because they represent an interplay between power and control. ”

The following figure adapted from a Manual of psychosocial skills developed by Terre des Hommes aims to highlight this challenge of being caught between two worlds and some of the needs children and young people have as a result.

## Adolescents: Caught between two worlds

### Adolescence:

A period of physical, mental and social development between childhood and adulthood, between 10-19



### NEEDS

- ▶ Recognition by peers and the adult world
- ▶ Belonging to a group of friends
- ▶ Guides/role models
- ▶ Trust from adults and being given responsibilities that lead to more autonomy
- ▶ Participation in community life, including culture and sports
- ▶ Meaning and goals
- ▶ Support in navigating physiological changes and gender roles


**Note:** Different cultures have different understandings about age and maturity, and consequently 'rites of passage' to adulthood vary according to context (e.g., marriage, voting, etc.)

Source: Adapted from Terre des Hommes (2011) *Working with children and their environment. Manual of psychosocial skills*, p. 131


## 2.4.2: Providing flexible and accelerated learning opportunities

Whether you are a teacher within the formal education system or an educator working within informal or non-formal education, it is important to remember that reintegration of former CAAFAG involves a 'transition of identity' as explained by a global CAAFAG advisor who had interviewed a number of former CAAFAG as part of her work:

What this means is that most of them will not be able to reintegrate back into formal education immediately (or enter formal education for the first time), without first being supported to make the shift 'from military to civilian identity' as the global CAAFAG advisor went on to explain:



“ Psychologically, it's too heavy [to transition to formal education]. It's still blurry in their head to do that transition. In addition to all these other transitions they have to make, they have this 'transition of identity', which is extremely challenging. And they all mentioned this: When they came back, they still felt like soldiers. They were bossing around their whole family and they were all extremely reactive and aggressive in violent ways, which was what was expected of them for many years before. ”






“ So, they first need to do that shift, that transition, from military to civilian identity. And then they can go back to formal education. But during that transition, it doesn't mean they cannot do any education activities, it's just not the formal one. It can be an informal, or accelerated programme, something with basic literacy and numeracy, learning how to sit still and learn and then gradually increase the number of hours. All of that needs to be taken into consideration because it's a huge transition that is extremely challenging. ”

With that in mind, you might want to consider what type of education support that would benefit your CAAFAG learners the most in the immediate term and responding in one of three ways:

- ▶ **INCLUDE** those learners in your own classroom or programme (if you are already providing that kind of education support)
- ▶ **REFER** those learners to a colleague or existing programme (if you do not provide that kind of education support but services exist in your community)
- ▶ **ESTABLISH** a new programme for CAAFAG and other marginalised learners (if you do not already provide that kind of education support and no services exist in your community)

The table below taken from a resource developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Accelerated Education Working Group (INEE AEWG) can help you to determine what type of learning programmes are most appropriate for your former CAAFAG learners depending on need.

EDUCATION PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT MARGINALISED LEARNERS				
	CATCH-UP PROGRAMMES	ACCELERATED PROGRAMMES	REMEDIAL PROGRAMMES	BRIDGING PROGRAMMES
 <p><b>LEARNERS</b> Learners are/ were...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Previously attending a formal or non-formal education programme at any stage/ grade/ level</li> <li>▶ Missed a couple of months to approximately one year of education due to an education disruption caused by crisis, conflict, or displacement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Over-age for their grade</li> <li>▶ Out-of-school (e.g., for 2 or more years) or never attended school</li> <li>▶ Did not complete primary school</li> <li>▶ Affected by poverty, crisis, conflict, or displacement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Currently enrolled/ attending an education programme</li> <li>▶ Require additional support in a specific subject area(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Displaced learners of any age/grade</li> <li>▶ Previously attending school in their home country where the curriculum was significantly different than the host country curriculum or was taught in a different language</li> </ul>
 <p><b>OBJECTIVES</b> The programme helps learners...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recover lost learning</li> <li>▶ Acquire skills they missed during the disruption</li> <li>▶ Resume education from the point they would be if the disruption had not occurred</li> <li>▶ Transition back into the same education programme they were in prior to the disruption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Gain basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills</li> <li>▶ Complete the primary curriculum and obtain a certificate</li> <li>▶ Transition into secondary school, vocational training, or livelihoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Acquire knowledge and skills in a subject area(s) through additional targeted support</li> <li>▶ Succeed in the education programme they are currently enrolled in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Gain skills in the language of instruction or gain other knowledge and skills for success in the host country education system</li> <li>▶ Transition into the formal education system of the host country</li> </ul>
 <p><b>COVERAGE</b> The programme covers...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Knowledge and skills learners already had but lost when they were out of school</li> <li>▶ New knowledge and skills they missed during the disruption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ All of lower primary, the entire primary cycle, or the entire basic education cycle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Subject areas that an individual learner or group of learners are having difficulty with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A new language of instruction or background knowledge learners need for success in the new education system</li> </ul>

Source: AEWG (2021) *Catch-up Programmes: 10 Principles for Helping Learners Catch Up and Return to Learning*, Table 1. Education Programmes to Support Marginalised Learners

Despite great variations in context, one common thread that can be drawn across the experiences of former CAAFAG when it comes to reintegration is the need and desire for life and livelihood skills, and any education experience that can help them prepare for their future. In other words, it is important not to juxtapose education and livelihoods, as the reality is that children need both to succeed. In the words of a global researcher with many years of experience working with CAAFAG around the world:

Even if you are not in a position to provide vocational and technical training yourself, it is worth exploring how children can gain exposure to the world of work in a safe and age-appropriate way, keeping in mind the interests of children and youth.

### 2.4.3: Planning and adapting learning for diverse learners

One final point to stress is the importance of planning and adapting individual lessons to meet the needs of diverse learners. While it is out of the scope of this guide to provide detailed resources and lesson plans, we felt it was worth highlighting one **differentiation** strategy, given the high likelihood that you will be working with mixed groups of learners. Again, we are drawing from the resource developed by INEE TiCC, the [Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts](#):



#### METHOD: SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE

**Importance:** When teachers make an effort to teach to each of the ability levels in the class, students are more likely to stay engaged and master new materials and skills. High ability students need a challenge so that they do not get bored and become disengaged. Lower ability students need extra support so they don't fall behind and become discouraged.

Ability Level	Adaptation
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide students with extension or challenge activities.</li> <li>▶ Use students as peer mentors.</li> <li>▶ Mini lessons by interest.</li> </ul>
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide students with an extension activity if they finish early.</li> </ul>
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide several examples.</li> <li>▶ Provide step-by-step instructions.</li> <li>▶ Vocabulary support in student's first language.</li> <li>▶ Use student as a mentor.</li> <li>▶ Mini lessons to catch students up with their peers.</li> </ul>

Source: INEE TiCC (2016), [Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts](#), Module 3

As can be seen from the description of the strategy, having students support each other can be an effective way of ensuring benefits for all learners. It is important to note that this also includes former CAAFAG. It can be tempting to assume that former CAAFAG will always be part of the low ability/high needs group, but this would be false. In fact, an academic researcher explained this as follows:

An illustration of a man with glasses, wearing a dark shirt, holding a book and gesturing with his right hand. A dark blue speech bubble with white text is positioned to his right.

Academic Researcher

“ Former CAAFAG who succeed in education are often those who are able to utilise and build on leadership skills and other skills they learned during association. ”

In other words, it is worth taking a **strength-based approach** to former CAAFAG in your classes – just as everyone has specific problems and needs, so too does everyone have particular strengths. As a former CAAFAG from Sierra Leone put it:

The more children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups feel valued and as though they have something to contribute, the more likely they are to want to give back.

An illustration of a woman with curly hair, wearing a dark top. A dark blue speech bubble with white text is positioned to her left.

Former CAAFAG from Sierra Leone

“ Teachers should know that some of these former child soldiers can be used as a resource. [...] Someday these people can be a role model for others. ”

## Key points and tips

### Understanding your learners' backgrounds

- ▶ Recognise that the reasons for joining armed groups and forces and the experiences children and young people have during association are very dissimilar
- ▶ Teachers need to build an understanding of learners' backgrounds so that they are better able to serve the individual and the group
- ▶ Read Pages 8-19 of the technical note on [Education Interventions for CAAFAG](#) to learn more about how gender (including conflict-related sexual violence), disability, and age can impact reintegration and learning
- ▶ CAAFAG are often struggling with their identity as they are caught between the two worlds of childhood and adulthood and have typically taken on more adult roles during association

### Providing flexible and accelerated learning opportunities

- ▶ Often the transition from a military to a civilian identity is challenging for CAAFAG, and many find it difficult to reintegrate into formal education as a result
- ▶ Think about what types of learning would be most beneficial in the medium term and either: (1) include those learners in your own class/programme, if you provide that type of support, (2) refer those learners to a colleague or existing programme if you don't, and (3) establish a new opportunity for CAAFAG and other marginalised learners if there are no existing programmes
- ▶ Explore the [resources developed by the INEE Accelerated Education Working Group \(INEE AEWG\)](#) for ideas about how to respond more flexibly to learner needs
- ▶ Recognise the importance of meaningfully linking education and livelihoods and facilitate opportunities for your learners to access meaningful vocational and technical training, apprenticeships, etc.

### Planning and adapting learning for diverse learners

- ▶ When it comes to differentiation, it can be helpful to divide your class into different ability levels and adapt accordingly
- ▶ Explore the [INEE TiCC Training Pack for Primary Teachers in Crisis Contexts](#), Module 3, for more ideas on how to adapt lessons
- ▶ Take a short, free course on [Differentiated Instruction for Quality Holistic Learning](#) provided by Childhood Education International
- ▶ Having students support each other can be an effective way of ensuring benefits for all learners
- ▶ Take a strength-based or asset-based approach to former CAAFAG, noting not only that they may be in the high ability group, but also that they may have as yet unrecognised skills that they could build on and could benefit the class as a whole
- ▶ Explore some [open educational resources](#) on asset-based pedagogies available through Childhood Education International
- ▶ The more former CAAFAG feel valued and as though they have something to contribute, the more likely they are to want to give back.



Photo credit: © UNESCO/Emily Pinna

## PART 3:

### KEY MESSAGES AND FURTHER LEARNING

Thank you for the work that you do and for taking an interest in better meeting the needs of children and young people who have been affected by armed conflict, particularly those who have been associated with armed forces and armed groups!

In this final part, we leave you with a set of guiding principles to support your work with children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups that build on our interviews and review of key resources.

Further, we asked interviewees for a key message that they would like to share with educators like you, so we present those messages to you here, in their own words!

Finally, we have created a short list of key resources to support your further learning, along with descriptions of the resources and where to find them.

Thank you again, and we wish you all the best in your work!

## Learning objective

To engage with insights and advice from around the world and access resources for further learning.

### 3.1: Guiding principles for working with CAAFAG

#### AGE AND ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

1. Recognise the importance of the work you and others are doing and look after yourself and each other
2. Strive to be non-judgmental and exercise non-discrimination
3. Approach your learners with patience, empathy and compassion
4. Respect the rights and perspectives of children and young people
5. Stay hopeful and give your learners a reason to hope for the future

### 3.2: Insights and advice from around the world

#### 3.2.1: Recognise the importance of the work you and others are doing and look after yourself and each other



Colombia-based researcher

“ Teachers need to understand that they play a critical role. I see them as a bridge between the armed groups and the community. Between who they were and who they can be. Teachers should be able to build a curriculum of hope. ”

Academic researcher with experience in Africa



“ You can really have an impact in these children's lives. They all have different needs. You can't save them all, but you can have formative relationships with them. ”



Global  
researcher  
currently  
working in  
DRC

“ One key message is that the biggest marker of success is if no one remembers who the former CAAFAG was. So, try to ensure that people forget. The indicator for success is if you have to ask a teacher who the former CAAFAG is.

The other is realising that the former CAAFAG might have immediate needs that need to be addressed now through education... but education is also the pathway to the future. ”



International  
EiE  
consultant

“ Teachers need to know that the work is difficult and that they can reach out for support. [...] We also need to let them know that they have tools already that they can build on. ”

### 3.2.3: Approach your learners with patience, empathy and compassion



International  
NGO  
representative  
working  
on youth  
participation

“ What probably rings true for multiple vulnerable groups. Be mindful of your own prejudice when you encounter these young people. ”



DRC-based  
director of  
an NGO

“ La formation des enfants est sans discrimination (appliquer l'impartialité) et basée sur les besoins de l'enfant »

Education for children should be without discrimination (applying impartiality) and based on the needs of the child. ”



UN agency  
representative  
in South  
Sudan

“ I'm not a very good messenger, but for me... something about no judgment. Because we discuss the path these children might take, the behavioural issues they might have. It may be very easy to dismiss these children out of fear. Just wanting to provide unconditional support to the children. ”

### 3.2.3: Approach your learners with patience, empathy and compassion

Former  
CAAFAG  
from Sierra  
Leone, now  
living in USA



“ I just want them to know that these children have been going through hell, and that they are not the cause. I want them to exercise patience, and to employ empathy and understanding. Someday these people can be a role model for others. We are all god’s children and we should not leave anyone behind. We should continue to love each other, and show our humanity. ”

UN agency  
representative  
in South  
Sudan



“ That’s a difficult one! To have a lot of patience. And that it will require a lot of energy, but in the end, it will be worth it. ”

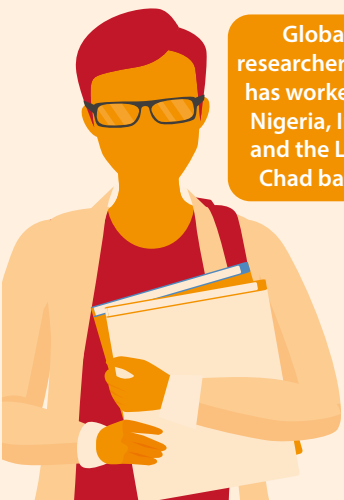
Former  
CAAFAG from  
South Sudan,  
now living in  
Uganda



“ It takes time for a child who has been impacted by armed conflict to change. Life has been so difficult. It takes time for them to change. So teachers need to take their time. With time, children will change. ”

### 3.2.4: Respect the rights and perspectives of children and young people

Global  
researcher who  
has worked in  
Nigeria, Iraq,  
and the Lake  
Chad basin



“ I guess maybe this may be a bit cliché but remembering that child soldiers are victims. To some extent, society has moved away from that idea towards seeing CAAFAG as complicit terrorists, especially in some contexts. We need to stress the child protection narrative and help teachers to understand that a 16-year old learner with two children who has participated in a conflict is still a child when it comes to protection and rights. ”



Global UN  
agency  
representative

“ I’m not really sure... I think it might be around trying to recognise the child in front of them as a child and to not make assumptions about them, and supporting them as an individual. Children are resilient and they can move on and a teacher can enable that. It starts with them recognising that. ”



International  
NGO  
representative  
who has  
worked in Syria  
and Iraq

“ A child is a child and even if they put on a show that they are an adult, there is a child. Find the child within child. ”

### 3.2.5: Stay hopeful and give your learners a reason to hope for the future



Global  
CAAFAG  
Advisor

“ Maybe something around not losing hope and perseverance. Let me phrase that nicely. There’s always light at the end of the tunnel. Even when things are dark, recognise that the children need you. If we don’t deal with the challenges children have, we will deal with the consequences later. We have a collective responsibility. ”



UN Agency  
Representative  
in Nigeria

“ One key message to the teacher is that the future starts now, and it begins with them. It is a matter of hope. It’s important to be aspirational and motivational. ”



Global UN  
agency  
representative

“ A kind of compassion, mixed with inexhaustible patience and hope. My experience working with troubled children (which is limited)... you have to prove to them that you really love and care about them. If you can do that, they will open up and give you trust. [ . . ] To realise that these children and young people are paying attention and that even

when they are hostile, you cannot abandon them. You have to have faith that it will pay off in the future.

When you focused on the word hope... it’s important to help these children conceptualise what an alternative path may be. [ . . ] You can’t dream to be something you can’t see yourself being able to do... That’s why you go to school. To learn! [ . . ] It’s about offering hope and concretizing in some way what their futures could be. ”

### 3.3: Key resources for further learning

#### 3.3.1: Technical resources

RESOURCE TITLE:	Education Interventions for CAAFAG. Technical Note
Who wrote it?	Alliance for CPHA (2023)
What is it?	The Technical Note is based upon an extensive desk study, key informant interviews with 23 practitioners from a range of roles, including in Child Protection and Education, as well as technical input from the CAAFAG Task Force and CAAFAG Education technical note reference group. The members of the reference group work with children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) globally. It complements the CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit, which provides detailed, step-by-step guidance on setting up programmes, alongside the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies and the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Spanish
Where is it?	<a href="https://alliancecpa.org/en/technical-materials/technical-note-education-interventions-children-associated-armed-forces-and-armed-groups">https://alliancecpa.org/en/technical-materials/technical-note-education-interventions-children-associated-armed-forces-and-armed-groups</a>

RESOURCE TITLE:	Girls associated with armed forces and armed groups: Lessons learnt and good practices on prevention of recruitment and use, release and reintegration. Technical Note.
Who wrote it?	Alliance for CPHA (2020)
What is it?	This Technical Note provides information on the challenges that girls associated with armed forces and armed groups (GAAFAG) face during their recruitment, their period of association, and their reintegration, as well as lessons learnt and promising practices to implement gender-sensitive and gender-informed prevention, release and reintegration programmes. Very little global guidance is available to support field practitioners in designing and implementing programmes for GAAFAG. This Technical Note aims to contribute to the understanding of the specific needs of GAAFAG and programming implications. The Technical Note is informed by a desk review including grey literature and academic research, the analysis of information collected from the study of 37 armed groups and armed forces and key informant interviews. Key informants included researchers, and representatives from government, UN agencies and national and international NGOs from 14 countries where recruitment of girls was ongoing in 2019.
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Spanish
Where is it?	<a href="https://alliancecpa.org/en/GAAFAG">https://alliancecpa.org/en/GAAFAG</a>

### 3.3.2: Role-related and pedagogical resources

RESOURCE TITLE:	<b>Cradled by Conflict: Preventing and responding to child recruitment. Implications for programming and use in contemporary conflicts. Technical Note</b>
Who wrote it?	United Nations University (2018)
What is it?	This Technical Note aims to help guide programming intended to prevent and address the recruitment and use of children by armed groups in today's conflicts. It is an output of the United Nations University's (UNU) Children and Extreme Violence Project, which sought to fill key knowledge gaps about how and why children become associated with, are used by, and leave armed groups in contemporary conflicts, particularly those groups deemed "terrorist" or "violent extremist". The project was a collaboration of UNU, UNICEF, DPKO, and the Governments of Luxembourg and Switzerland. This note is based on the research findings in UNU's Cradled by Conflict: Child Involvement with Armed Groups in Contemporary Conflict (2018) and extensive consultations with practitioners and children to determine how existing programming and practice might be strengthened to respond to the particular challenges facing child protection practitioners in contemporary conflicts.
What language(s)?	English
Where is it?	<a href="http://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:6575/CradledTechnicalNote.pdf">http://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:6575/CradledTechnicalNote.pdf</a>

RESOURCE TITLE:	<b>Teachers in Crisis Contexts Training for Primary School Teachers</b>
Who wrote it?	INEE TiCC Working Group (2016)
What is it?	These open source training materials have been developed for use with qualified teachers who require a refresher training, or training in critical areas relevant in crisis contexts, like child protection, and for those teachers who are new to teaching in crisis affected environments. It consists of an Introductory Training Pack and four core modules, developed around a set of 28 teacher competencies that underwent systematic review where it was field-tested in Iraq and Kenya and externally reviewed by a range of EiE specialists. The Training Pack includes a facilitator's guide, participant handbook and PowerPoint slides for each component of the training. This Training Pack has been contextualized in Bangladesh, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda. If you would like the materials from these contextualizations, please contact <a href="mailto:teachers@inee.org">teachers@inee.org</a> .
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Spanish
Where is it?	<a href="https://inee.org/resources/teachers-crisis-contexts-training-primary-school-teachers">https://inee.org/resources/teachers-crisis-contexts-training-primary-school-teachers</a>

RESOURCE TITLE:	<b>Teacher Wellbeing Collection</b>
Who wrote it?	Various authors (developed, curated, and hosted with the support of INEE)
What is it?	A collection of resources relating to teacher wellbeing, including how to define teacher wellbeing in crisis contexts, and tools, guidance notes, and other resources on supporting teacher wellbeing.
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Spanish (and some in Portuguese, Ukrainian)
Where is it?	<a href="https://inee.org/collections/teacher-wellbeing">https://inee.org/collections/teacher-wellbeing</a>

<b>RESOURCE TITLE:</b>	<b>Crisis-sensitive teacher policy and planning: Module on the Teacher Policy Development Guide</b>
Who wrote it?	International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2022)
What is it?	This module has been developed to promote the development and implementation of crisis-sensitive national teacher policies, in recognition of the important role played by teachers in preparing for and responding to crisis and emergency situations.
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Spanish
Where is it?	<a href="https://teachertaskforce.org/knowledge-hub/crisis-sensitive-teacher-policy-and-planning-module-teacher-policy-development-guide">https://teachertaskforce.org/knowledge-hub/crisis-sensitive-teacher-policy-and-planning-module-teacher-policy-development-guide</a>
<b>RESOURCE TITLE:</b>	<b>Guidance Note on Supporting Integrated Programming in Humanitarian Action</b>
Who wrote it?	INEE and Alliance for CPHA (2022)
What is it?	This guidance note aims to promote integration and collaboration across the two humanitarian sectors of education and child protection. It orients stakeholders in both sectors to principles, frameworks, opportunities, and resources for program integration in order to ensure efficient, targeted, and effective interventions that result in improved outcomes for children and young people. This tool aims to support practitioners who respond to the needs of children in humanitarian crises, including relevant government line ministries, national civil society organizations, community and faith-based organizations, NGOs, UN agencies, other implementing organizations, and donors.
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Spanish, Portuguese
Where is it?	<a href="https://inee.org/resources/supporting-integrated-child-protection-and-education-programming-humanitarian-action">https://inee.org/resources/supporting-integrated-child-protection-and-education-programming-humanitarian-action</a>
<b>RESOURCE TITLE:</b>	<b>Guidance Note on Supporting Integrated Programming in Humanitarian Action</b>
Who wrote it?	INEE Accelerated Education Working Group (2021)
What is it?	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which approximately 1.5 billion children and youth (nearly 85 percent of the world's learners) were affected by school closures, the AEWG anticipates that catch-up programmes will be deployed extensively to meet the needs of learners who missed out on several months to approximately one year of education due to the disruption. Therefore, building on the AEWG's programme definitions and our expertise in AE and other non-formal or alternative education options that accelerate the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the AEWG developed this set of principles and action points for catch-up programmes.
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Spanish
Where is it?	<a href="https://inee.org/resources/catch-programmes-10-principles-helping-learners-catch-and-return-learning">https://inee.org/resources/catch-programmes-10-principles-helping-learners-catch-and-return-learning</a>

<b>RESOURCE TITLE:</b>	<b>Condensing a Curriculum for Accelerated Education: An A to Z Guide</b>
Who wrote it?	INEE Accelerated Education Working Group (2022)
What is it?	The purpose of this guide is to help Ministries of Education (MoE), development partners, and implementing organisations develop a comprehensive AE curriculum—a curriculum that prioritises and condenses primary level knowledge and skills—to guide and support teaching and learning in AEPs. This guide presumes some familiarity with the basics of curriculum design and development. It is not a training guide. It is a reference and resource guide that outlines the ways in which standard curriculum design and development practices can be applied to developing a certified curriculum for AEPs that best meets the needs of AE learners and teachers, supports national policies and priorities, and aligns with other guidance on AEPs developed by the AEWG.
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Spanish
Where is it?	<a href="https://inee.org/resources/condensing-curriculum-accelerated-education-z-guide">https://inee.org/resources/condensing-curriculum-accelerated-education-z-guide</a>
<b>RESOURCE TITLE:</b>	<b>Pedagogies of Belonging: Educators Building Welcoming Communities in Settings of Conflict and Migration</b>
Who wrote it?	REACH Initiative, S. Dryden-Peterson and H. Mariën (editors) (2023)
What is it?	This book is about the practices educators have developed to create welcoming communities in settings of conflict and migration across a number of different contexts, Jordan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, South Africa, Australia, Uganda, India, and the United States. Each chapter is a “microportrait” of one educator who the authors have come to know by spending time in their classroom and school. Each microportrait is grounded in research about educator practices. Authors of the microportraits came to know the educators through research projects that included interviews, observations, and sometimes participatory methods. Each project was at least a few months and at times spanned many years. The microportraits include links to articles that can support deeper learning about the contexts and practices of the educators.
What language(s)?	English
Where is it?	<a href="https://www.reach.gse.harvard.edu/resources/pedagogies-of-belonging">https://www.reach.gse.harvard.edu/resources/pedagogies-of-belonging</a>
<b>RESOURCE TITLE:</b>	<b>Safe Healing and Learning Spaces Toolkit</b>
Who wrote it?	International Rescue Committee (2016)

What is it?	A Safe Healing and Learning Space (SHLS) is a secure, caring and predictable place where children and adolescents living in conflict and crisis settings can learn, develop and be protected. The SHLS Toolkit provides child protection and education practitioners with all of the content needed to initiate an SHLS program.
What language(s)?	English
Where is it?	<a href="https://www.rescue.org/resource/safe-healing-and-learning-spaces-toolkit">https://www.rescue.org/resource/safe-healing-and-learning-spaces-toolkit</a>
<b>RESOURCE TITLE:</b>	<b>A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism</b>
Who wrote it?	UNESCO (2016)
What is it?	This Guide was developed for teachers in upper primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education to learn about preventing violent extremism. It is also hoped that it can support the efforts of teachers working in both formal and non-formal educational settings. The resource consists of an introduction, a section describing violent extremism, a section on managing the classroom discussion, key messages to deliver, and FAQs.
What language(s)?	English, Arabic, French, Russian
Where is it?	<a href="https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244676">https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244676</a>
<b>RESOURCE TITLE:</b>	<b>The Iraqi School Project</b>
Who wrote it?	Ulster University, UNESCO Chair on Education for Peacebuilding and Human Rights (2024)
What is it?	The Iraqi School Project consists of a website, which aims to support, inform and inspire teachers throughout the country to provide quality education for students. It also aims to provide school tools that can aid in recovery from violence and support students in learning so that they can all achieve their full potential. The guide presents key ideas, techniques, and activities that assist teachers/educators and school administrators in creating a safe and supportive learning environment that promotes concepts of nonviolence, diversity and pluralism.
What language(s)?	Arabic, English
Where is it?	<a href="https://www.theiraqischoolproject.com/">https://www.theiraqischoolproject.com/</a>

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# ANNEX

## How did we develop this guide?

This guidance for teachers and educators was developed based on a review of key resources and semi-structured interviews with seventeen stakeholders<sup>6</sup> working with children affected by armed conflict from around the world, which sought to:

- 1) build an understanding of the diverse needs of children associated with armed forces and armed groups and the educators who work with them, and
- 2) explore promising approaches and strategies to respond to these needs.

Documents and resources for the review were identified using a combination of searches of academic and agency databases, internet searches, and discussions with stakeholders, and then collated and categorised according to relative centrality for the topic. Interviewees were identified using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling, with priority given to capturing a range of perspectives and contexts, as an attempt to maximise the relevance of the guide.

### MAXIMISING THE RELEVANCE OF THE GUIDE

In education, context matters, especially given the complex and dynamic nature of crisis, the diverse array of teachers and learners living in these settings, and the many social, economic, political, and historical factors. For this reason alone, it is clear that generalisability (developing ‘one-size-fits-all’ guidelines that can be easily followed to the letter by all educators using them) is not feasible or desirable. Instead, this guide aims to maximise relevance through maximising transferability, by providing potential users with engaging and contextualizable ideas and recommendations drawn from around the world that encourage teachers to ‘make them their own’.

The review and interviews were designed to gather information, guidance, and insights in three overlapping areas:

- ▶ What technical knowledge about CAAFAG do educators need?
- ▶ What role-related and pedagogical guidance do educators working with CAAFAG need?
- ▶ How can guidance be presented in engaging, motivating, and accessible ways to maximise uptake?

The biggest limitation encountered during the development of this guide was a lack of time and human resources. Ideally, this process would have included opportunities to co-create resources with teachers, teacher education providers, and teacher organisations and children and young people who have been impacted by armed conflict.

However, efforts were made to include former CAAFAG as interview participants, to speak with key stakeholders working with teacher issues within the Education in Emergencies (EiE) sector, and to draw from resources that have been developed through participatory processes. Further, as the guide is intended to be contextualizable, it is hoped that key education leaders and educators will be able to build on this resource in their different contexts.

Another limitation of this resource is to do with language. While one Francophone context and one Spanish-speaking context have been considered, resources reviewed for this assignment were predominantly in English. It is recommended that efforts are made to translate the resource, and to include helpful resources in different languages.

<sup>6</sup> Interviewees included representatives from UN agencies and international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), researchers, and two former CAAFAG, both of whom were now pursuing tertiary education and had started their own organisations to work with children and young people affected by conflict.

The Guidance for Teachers and Educators working with Children and Young People formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups is a self-learning tool tailored for use in formal and non-formal education settings. It aims to equip teachers and educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to support children affected by conflict in their reintegration journeys. It also serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators involved in programming and training in conflict-affected and post-conflict settings.

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