EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS FOR CAAFAG

TECHNICAL NOTE

THE ALLIANCE
FOR CHILD PROTECTION
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

AFAG Armed Forces and Armed Groups

CAAFAG Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

CAR Central African Republic

CBMHPSS Community-based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

CCCM Community Coordination and Camp Management

CFS Child-Friendly Spaces

CP Child Protection

CPMS Child Protection Minimum Standards

DDR Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

DRC Democratic Republic of Congo

ERW Explosive Remnants of War

GAAFAG Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee

IOM International Organization for Migration

ISIL Islamic State of Iraq and Levant

MHPSS Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

PFA Psychosocial First Aid

PTSD Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PSEA Prevention of sexual exploitation and Abuse

PTA Parents and Teachers Association

SGBV Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

SOGIE Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

SRGBV School Related Gender Based Violence

SRHE Sexual and Reproductive Health Education

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

WHO World Health Organization

Executive summary

The 'Education interventions for CAAFAG' 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.

The findings indicate that joint and integrated Child Protection and Education programming can address the immediate and systemic risks children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups face returning to learning, such as physical and psychological harm, sexual exploitation and abuse, and re-recruitment into armed forces and armed groups. Child Protection programmes can also help ensure that education programmes are protective and inclusive for all children, regardless of their background, gender, or experience. Education and Child Protection programmes can create a comprehensive and coordinated approach to education interventions for CAAFAG.

- **Education programmes for CAAFAG must involve other sectors**. The findings highlight that many children face issues related to community stigmatisation, health, nutrition, mental health, psychosocial support (MHPSS) and livelihood needs, which can hinder their ability to enrol and succeed in education interventions. Case studies illustrate why education for CAAFAG programmes must take a socio-ecological approach to address the complex interplay of factors affecting children's reintegration, development and well-being. This approach recognises the interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental factors that impact children's lives and therefore need to be considered when designing quality, gender-sensitive, participatory education intervention.

This technical note recommends holistic education programming with a multidisciplinary and socio-ecological approach involving government agencies, international non-government organisations (INGOs), civil society including community, local, national and international NGO, community leaders, etc. Key steps and resources are shared, as well as guidance on how to establish tailored learning and environments that accommodate and consider the needs of this group of children; integrating MHPSS into Education; engaging family and community support; considering child protection and legal aid; setting up intersectoral coordination; and research, monitoring and evaluation.

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Part 1: Introduction

The CAAFAG Task Force of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, co-led by Plan International Canada and UNICEF, aims to strengthen the capacities of practitioners to design and implement programmes for children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) across diverse contexts. In 2022, through an online consultation, 45 field practitioners across 22 countries selected the Education sector as a priority sector to promote collaboration. While there are various models for Education in Emergencies (EiE) and intersectoral programming more generally, little evidence exists on effectively supporting children and families through the multiple challenges associated with reintegration into educational systems, including transitioning to different educational stages along a child's educational journey.

This technical note documents the opportunities, barriers and best practices for supporting children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups in educational settings. It highlights key concepts, defines terms, presents the evidence review findings synthesised across methods, raises key contextual considerations for education stakeholders in CAAFAG programming and makes recommendations for developing operational and contextual guidance for both Education and Child Protection players. It includes examples of multi-level, mainstreaming, joint and integrated programme activities needed to ensure education programmes are responsive to children's diverse needs and capacities.

Part One includes the key definitions related to CAAFAG and an overview of the legal and normative frameworks. **Part Two** focuses on key considerations or cross-cutting issues that ground the foundation of effective educational intervention. **Part Three** underlines the importance of collaboration between child protection and education sectors to implement education interventions as part of CAAFAG programming and is illustrated with examples. **Part Four** outlines the key interventions and lessons learned from organisations and practitioners about the successes and challenges of supporting learning for children and youth formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups. The annexes provide a decision tree and a theory of change to support education interventions for CAAFAG.

This technical note benefits Education and Child Protection technical advisors, programme managers, and inter-agency Child Protection and Education coordinators by promoting the development and implementation of quality education interventions for CAAFAG.

It is relevant to support the development of a stand-alone education intervention or a broader CAAFAG programme with an education component. The technical note complements the [CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit](#), the [INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies](#) and the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), providing detailed, step-by-step guidance on setting up safe, inclusive, quality Education programmes for children at risk of recruitment or children formerly associated. Good education programming can mitigate many of, but not all, the root causes and push factors that lead to children joining armed forces and armed groups. This technical note highlights specific activities that can contribute to the prevention of child recruitment into armed forces and armed groups, as well as supporting release and reintegration processes.

Terminology

This technical note uses the terms "CAAFAG", "former CAAFAG" and "children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups" as descriptive phases. It is important to note that these terms are used solely for description and do not intend to suggest that a child's affiliation with armed forces and armed groups is the sole or defining aspect of their identity.

Education in Emergencies

Education in Emergencies (EiE) refers to the quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher and adult education. Education in Emergencies provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives. Common situations of crisis in which Education in Emergencies is essential include conflicts, protracted crises, situations of violence, forced displacement, disasters, and public health emergencies. Education in Emergencies is a wider concept than 'emergency education response' which is an essential part of it.[1] EiE recognises that access to education is critical for children and young people in crisis-affected contexts. It provides a sense of normalcy, safety, stability, well-being and learning and skill development opportunities. When it comes to protecting children who have been associated with armed forces and armed groups, the education sector can play an essential role in both preventing children's (re-)recruitment into armed forces and groups and in supporting their reintegration into families and communities by providing safe and inclusive learning environments and

promoting peace, tolerance and respect for human rights. The implementation of EiE programmes can be very challenging in conflict-affected settings. This can be due to factors such as lack of infrastructure, insecurity, cycles of displacement,[2] prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in schools,[3] economic barriers, lack of teaching staff and equipment and scarcity of funding[4] that makes education inaccessible for many children. Furthermore, education can be a weapon of cultural oppression, and curriculum can be manipulated and biased, exacerbating tensions between groups and reinforcing stereotypes.[5]

The absence of protective education in humanitarian crises has long-term consequences for children, communities and society. The lack of educational opportunities also contributes to children and youth being coerced into armed forces and groups. These issues will be explored further in this technical note.

Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPHA) focuses on the "prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children" in humanitarian contexts, including armed conflicts, disasters related to natural hazards, infectious disease outbreaks and others. CPHA includes specific activities conducted by local, national and international child protection players. It also contains non-child protection players' efforts to prevent and address children's protection concerns through mainstreamed, joint, or integrated programming.[6]

Education programmes require significant resources and coordination among various stakeholders, often collaborating with Child Protection (CP).

Methodology

This guidance note was developed through primary and secondary data collection. Qualitative data was collected through different methods, including a literature review of academic journal articles, policy reports and programmatic documents (reports, grant proposals). In addition, key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with 23 practitioners

from a variety of technical backgrounds, including representatives from government officials, research bodies and international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and international and national non-government organisations (I/NGOs). The KIIs worked on CAAFAG programming in the following locations.

South Sudan (3), Nigeria (2), Colombia (1), Cameroon (1), El Salvador (1), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (4), Central African Republic (CAR) (1), Liberia (2), Mozambique (1), Afghanistan (1), Yemen (1), Somalia (1), Iraq (1) and Syria (4).

Key informants were recruited through various methods, including the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) community of practice, the CAAFAG task force mailing list, LinkedIn, and personal referrals. However, due to the sensitivities involved in wor, the decision was made not to attribute facts or quotes to specific interviewees, short of non-identifiable descriptors about the persons making the statements.

Limitations of technical note

One of the limitations of this technical note has been the reliance on secondary data to consider the perspectives of children (formerly) associated with armed forces and armed groups.

- Children or youth were not consulted directly in developing this technical note. However, organisations provided programme documentation, including needs assessments and focus group discussions conducted with child participation. One of the recommendations of this technical note is the need for further participatory research with children associated with armed forces and groups.

- Most of the key informants worked as programme managers and technical advisors. Only two had direct experience teaching children associated with armed forces and groups. Further research with teachers and other educational personnel and structures would enrich our understanding of how best to support reintegration more broadly, particularly in educational settings.

1   INEE (nd) Education in Emergencies. Retrieved from https://inee.org/education-in-emergencies#event-universal-declaration-of-human-rights

2   Burde, D., Lahmann, H., & Thompson, N. (2019). Education in emergencies: 'What works' revisited. *Education and Conflict Review*, 2, 81-88.

3   War Child UK (2018). Voicemore: combating corruption and abuse in schools, Retrieved from https://www.warchild.org.uk/our-work/policies-and-reports/voice-more-corruption-and-abuse-in-schools, 21st February 2023

4   Nicolai, S., & Hine, S. (2015). Investment for education in emergencies Retrieved from.https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/9450.pdf 19th February, 2023.

5   Bush, K.D. and Saltarelli, D. (2000). *The two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children. Research Report*. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

6   The Alliance for CPHA. (2019). Minimum Standards for Child Protection. Retrieved from https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/cpms/#ch001, 10th January 2023

7   Principles Steering Group (2007). Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/media/113631/file/UNI-Paris-Principles-and-Commitments-FAQ-21.pdf

Who are Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG)?

In 2007, the Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups were adopted to challenge the unlawful recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups.[7] The Principles defined a child associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) as:

"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."

The Paris Principles adhere to the definition of a child as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). EiE provides learning opportunities to children and youth. As a result, this technical note includes examples of programmes that primarily target children under 18 and examples of education programmes for older adolescents and youth.

The legal and normative framework

The recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups (AFAG) is prohibited by International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Counter-Terrorism Law (ICTL) and International Criminal Law (ICL).[8] The 2007 Paris Commitments and the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups reinforce that children should not be conscripted.[9] These principles and guidelines also refer to reintegration, education, vocational and skills training and livelihoods. In addition, several UN Security Council Resolutions, specifically 1612 (2005), establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) to document and report on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.[10] The MRM in many countries has documented grave violations, including abduction and recruiting children and teachers from educational facilities.

In addition, several protective and legal normative frameworks and commitments are particularly relevant to the Education sector, which, as this technical note will highlight, can be a recruitment site for armed forces and armed groups. For example:

The Safe Schools Declaration is a political commitment by countries to protect education from attack and ensure safe access to education during armed conflict. Since 2015, it has been endorsed by 116 states committed to respecting the civilian nature of schools and developing and sharing good practices for protecting schools and universities during armed conflict.[11]

See the CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit (p.17- 22) and ICRC's Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups for a full protective legal and normative framework list.

Despite an extensive legal and normative framework, the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups remain a persistent problem globally. Children are recruited into and used by armed forces and armed groups for complex and interrelated reasons.

Pathways of association

As highlighted in the diagram below, children can be recruited into armed groups and armed forces through various pathways.

Forced recruitment can be through abduction from their homes, schools, or other locations, or they may be intimidated into joining through threats or acts of violence.

Propaganda is another commonly used tool to recruit girls and boys. Some armed groups and armed forces spread misleading ideas, information or rumours specifically targeting young people to recruit new members.

Economic needs. In contexts where families face extreme poverty, the prospect of access to a regular income, clothes, food or toiletries to cover basic needs can lead to child association.

Family ties with an armed group may serve as a motivating or facilitating factor for children's association. Some children's parents are already part of an armed group.

Community ties with an armed group or defence militia can pressure families to let their girls and boys participate in protecting the community.

A close relationship with an armed group fighter can lead to the recruitment of children, including girls. In armed conflict where communities are exposed to violence, girls may choose to be in a relationship with a combatant as a form of protection.

Child marriage is another form of recruitment of girls, with some girls forcibly married to fighters. Sometimes under the threat of releasing explicit pictures that will ruin the reputation of the girl and her family, after sexual abuse to protect the girl's honour (and family) or in exchange for protection for the family.

> The CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit (p.13-15) highlights the importance of understanding the root causes to forced recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups.

The impact of armed conflict on Education

The impact of armed conflict on education is extensive and multifaceted. This includes:

- The deliberate denial, occupation and targeting of educational institutions as tools of warfare contribute to school exclusions and closures, thereby depriving children of educational opportunities.[12]

- The recruitment of children in armed forces and armed groups affects children's education. The longer they are recruited, the harder their reintegration into the formal education system will be.

- The presence of armed forces and groups in or near schools, which creates a hostile environment. This can instil fear and trauma among students and teachers alike.

- The loss of qualified teachers exacerbates the difficulties in accessing quality education and adds to the trauma and psychological distress experienced by individuals.

The long-term consequences of forced child recruitment and attacks on schools are profound. The presence of armed forces and groups in schools can alter community perceptions, associating education with violence and insecurity instead of being places of learning.[13] The consequences of education disruptions extend beyond individual students and schools. Societally, such disruptions can increase school drop-out, poverty, unemployment, and social unrest. When children are denied access to education, their prospects and opportunities for socioeconomic advancement are severely compromised.[14]

Key challenges

The repercussions of armed conflict on education introduce many obstacles when implementing educational initiatives for children and youth previously associated with armed forces and armed groups.

Funding constraints: EiE, like CPHA, remains critically underfunded.[15] Education programmes frequently depend on short-term humanitarian funding cycles, significantly affecting educational initiatives. For instance, a compressed primary education cycle takes 3-4 years for a learner to complete. However, due to limited funding and inadequate investment from national governments, numerous programmes experience disruptions or closure before children can finish their primary.[16]

8   The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2022). *CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines*. New York, p .17.

9   Paris Principles Steering Group (2007). Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/media/113631/file/UNI-Paris-Principles-and-Commitments-FAQ-21.pdf

10   United Nations Security Council (2009). Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on Children and armed conflict. https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/document/security-council-resolution-1612-2005-on-children-and-armed-conflict/.Retrieved March 5th, 2023.

11   O'Neil, S. and Van Broeckhoven, K. (2018). *Cradled by Conflict: Child involvement with armed groups in contemporary conflict*, United Nations University. page 43.

12   Ibid.

13   UNICEF (2022). 25 years of children and armed conflict. 25 years of children and armed conflict: | UNICEF. Retrieved 3rd March 2023.

14   Bush, K. and Saltarelli, D. (Eds.). (2000). The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children. Florence, Italy: UNICEF Innocenti Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight4.pdf

15   Mastercard foundation (2019). *Secondary education in humanitarian contexts: background paper*. Retrieved from https://mastercardfdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Education-in-Emergencies-FINAL.pdf , 22nd February 2023.

16   Accelerated Education Working Group (2022). Accelerated Education: DRC, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Retrieved from https://inee.org/resources/accelerated-education-democratic-republic-congo-south-sudan-tanzania-and-uganda

Most CAAFAG reintegration programmes that include education limit their support to one year. In the Central African Republic, children formerly associated with armed forces and groups received only one year of school fees, leading to school drop-outs once financial support stops.[17]

Lack of education opportunities for older children and youth: In many countries, there are pathways back to the formal primary level for children, youth and adults who have not completed basic education.[18] However, few secondary, technical and vocational training options exist in humanitarian contexts due to national underinvestment in post-primary education opportunities and few civil society education organisations working with adolescents and youth in emergencies.[19] Even when there are examples of technical and vocational training programmes for young people, they are often expected to choose between attending formal education and these other opportunities, despite many wanting access to both.[20]

Lack of cross-sectoral coordination: Effective cross-sectoral collaboration is crucial in educational settings to ensure that children receive the necessary support for their overall well-being. This involves working with diverse sectors beyond education and establishing well-defined referral pathways. However, establishing cross-sectoral referral pathways is challenging, both internally within sectors and externally across different sectors and partners.

Poor understanding of the drivers of conflict and broader social dynamics: Education policies and programmes that only focus on technical solutions are not sufficient to address the challenges found in conflict-affected contexts. If attention to conflict and child protection concerns is not integrated into education policy and programming, there is a risk that education intervention will increase tensions.

Lack of participation and involvement of CAAFAG: In humanitarian contexts, children and youth have minimal involvement in decision-making processes concerning the services and programmes that directly impact them.[22] The lack of agency can be detrimental to their reintegration as many armed forces and armed groups have successfully tapped into children's need to express their individuality and autonomy.[23]

Lack of adequate evidence: There is a need for more research into the long-term impacts of education interventions on children's well-being, including their employment prospects and ability to integrate into society, as well as the factors contributing to successful and effective referrals. This could involve longitudinal studies that track children's progress in different education intervention to understand effective education models better.

17 Évaluation formative du Programme de « Prévention du recrutement et Réintégration socio-économique des Enfants Associés aux Forces et Groupes Armés (EAFGA) en République Centrafricaine (RCA) » 2014-2021

18 Accelerated Education Working Group (2022). Accelerated Education: DRC, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Retrieved from https://inee.org/resources/accelerated-education-democratic-republic-congo-south-sudan-tanzania-and-uganda

19 Key informant interview, CP & EiE manager, South Sudan.

20 CAAFAG Task Force (2023). CAAFAG Livelihoods Technical Note. Forthcoming.

21 Bush, K. and Saltarelli, D. (Eds.). (2000). The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children. Florence, Italy: UNICEF Innocenti Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight4.pdf

22 IASC (2021). *Guidelines Working with Youth People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises* https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-02/IASC%20Guidelines%20on%20Working%20with%20and%20for%20Young%20People%20in%20Humanitarian%20and%20Protracted%20Crises_0.pdf

23 Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers (2020). Gaps and Needs for the Successful Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Groups or Armed Forces. Retrieved from https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Gaps-and-needs-for-Successful-Reintegration-of-CAAFAG.pdf

24 Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). (2019). INEE Guidance Note on Gender. New York, NY. Retrieved from https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/INEE_GN_Gender_2019_0.pdf

25 Ibid.

26 Save the Children (2020). Gender, Age, and Conflict: Addressing the Different Needs of Children. Retrieved from https://www.savethechildren.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SC-Gender-Age-and-Conflict-report-final.pdf

27 Save the Children (2021). Gender, Age and Conflict report. Retrieved from https://www.savethechildren.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SC-Gender-Age-and-Conflict-report-final.pdf

28 Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). (2019). INEE Guidance Note on Gender. New York, NY. Retrieved from https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/INEE_GN_Gender_2019_0.pdf

29 Save the Children (2021). Gender, Age and Conflict report. Retrieved from https://www.savethechildren.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SC-Gender-Age-and-Conflict-report-final.pdf, p.22

Part 2: Key Considerations for education interventions for CAAFAG

The socio-ecological model

The Socio-Ecological Model places the child at the centre of response, creating an anchor for more holistic and integrated responses to meet the needs of all children. It enables practitioners to identify and understand the elements of a situation and how they interact. Instead of focussing on single issues, it considers the full range of problems, their root causes and solutions at all levels.

Diagram: *The Socio-ecological model*

Whilst there are multiple ways to depict the socio-ecological model, this depiction, jointly developed by Education and Child Protection practitioners for the INEE and CPHA: Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education Programming in Humanitarian Action, is helpful. It recognises that children's education experiences are shaped not only by individual factors, but also by family, learning environment, community and policy, which due to broader political decisions and funding streams, interact and influence children's educational opportunities and experiences.

> The CPMS, Standard 14, CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit (p.13-15), The Prevention Framework: Desk Review Synthesis all highlight the importance of using a socio-ecological model to develop adaptable CAAFAG programming that prioritises the child's needs for holistic responses.

In Part 4, the key recommendations for Child Protection and Education stakeholders consider the various socio-ecological levels to support holistic education interventions for CAFAAG.

Gender

Gender considerations play a crucial role in CAAFAG programming. Gender norms are deeply ingrained in sociocultural beliefs and expectations, and during armed conflicts, these norms can exacerbate existing gender inequalities. For example, girls face significant educational disparities in crises compared to their counterparts in more stable settings, often dropping out or being prevented from attending education.[24] These disparities are further exacerbated by the targeting of girls during violent conflicts simply for attempting to access education.[25] However, on a global scale, there is a notable disparity in the targeting of boys for recruitment and use in armed conflict, with data illustrating the overwhelming risk of recruitment and use faced by boys relative to girls.[26]

Whilst there is evidence of the gendered experiences of boys and girls in armed forces and armed groups, there is an almost complete absence of formal research, programming or documentation addressing the grave violations faced by children of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE).[27] However, there is ample evidence of gender-based discrimination in educational settings. It particularly impacts girls and gender-diverse students, manifesting through unequal treatment by teachers and peers, lower expectations for academic achievement or denial of educational opportunities based on gender. These experiences and the stress of displacement contribute to higher rates of absenteeism, drop-out and physical and mental health issues among children of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.[28]

Sociocultural gender norms and practices also impact boys. Specifically, pre-adolescent and adolescent boys often face scrutiny and are deemed security threats during ongoing conflicts. This perception makes them vulnerable to forced recruitment and use as combatants, assumed association and detention.[29]

> See the Save the Children Gender, Age, and Conflict report for in-depth explanations of gender terminology, such as SOGIE, and the gendered experiences of recruitment and use of children in conflict.

Roles filled by children associated with armed forces or armed groups

Some of the ways in which children are used by armed forces or groups

Combatant	Checkpoint or prison guard	Minelayer	Human Shield	Suicide bomber
For sexual purposes	Cook or domestic labourer	Spy	Porter	Other purposes

Diagram: Roles filled by children associated with armed forces or armed groups (taken from the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Emergencies, Standard 11)

As the diagram highlights, children's roles within armed forces and armed groups are diverse. Roles are often gendered, with girls more likely to be in support roles such as cooking, washing, and caregiving. These gendered roles reflect and reinforce societal expectations, perpetuating traditional gender norms and hierarchies within the context of armed conflicts. However, all children can have direct and indirect roles in hostilities.[30] Moreover, children's experiences during the period of association evolve and vary due to their gender, age, role and the group's short- and long-term goals.

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

Conflicts often see a disproportionate impact of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) on women and girls associated with armed forces and armed groups.[31] Girls may become associated with armed forces and armed groups through abduction, forced marriage or relationships. Upon returning home, they may also have caregiving responsibilities, hindering their ability to reintegrate into the formal education system. These girls, and their children, often face stigma and ostracisation due to their association with armed forces and armed groups, adding to the challenges they encounter.

Upon release, boys also risk rejection by their communities of origin. CRSV also impacts boys associated with armed forces and armed groups, but it is poorly documented due to sociocultural norms surrounding masculinity, shame and stigma.[32] [33]

Considering how children may have been exposed to CRSV and how shame, stigma and guilt intersect with their self-perception and well-being,[34] preventing school-related sexual and gender-based violence (SRGBV) in schools becomes crucial for education programmes. Key intervention incorporating gender-sensitive and gender-inclusive approaches into educational programming to mitigate SRGBV will be outlined in Part 4.

> **Key resources to support Gender-Responsive programming**
>
> Save the Children's Gender, Age and Conflict report for key terminology and the gender dimensions of the six grave violations committed against children in conflict-affected areas.
>
> INEE Guidance Note on Gender and LGBTQIA+ for guidance on key action to support gender transformative education in crises.
>
> The CAAFAG Programme, Development Toolkit Guidelines, has a suite of tools, including a gender analysis tool and a girls' empowerment participatory activity. See page 7 for details on accessing the tools, which are attached in the pdf.
>
> Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups: A technical note focusing on Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups: Lessons learnt and good practices on prevention of recruitment and use, release and reintegration.

Disabilities

> A disability is a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment and barrier of attitude and of the environment that prevents full and effective participation of individuals in society on an equal basis with others.
>
> INEE. (2010). Minimum Standard for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery.

Disasters and armed conflict increase the number of children and adolescents with disabilities.[35] Children recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups are exposed to combat injuries and may be particularly vulnerable to injuries

from landmines and other explosive remnants of war.[36] During armed conflict, children living with disabilities may be more challenging to recognise than other children and less visible to policymakers and service providers. This is particularly true for children whose disabilities result from sexual or psychological trauma experienced during the conflict. This would indicate that many children formerly associated with armed forces and groups may be living with disabilities that require additional support to access.[37] Additionally, children whose disabilities existed before the conflict or are not directly caused by the conflict may be even more challenging to address.[38]

Education and Child Protection players can jointly support the needs of children living with disabilities and provide appropriate accommodation to ensure they can participate fully in learning. This may include ensuring educational spaces are accessible, disability-sensitive approaches to case management and child safeguarding, referring children to specialised services, liaising with partners to provide children with disabilities with access to assisted devices and advocating for policy changes to enable inclusive educational spaces.

> ### Key resources to support disability-inclusive programming
>
> INEE Pocket Guide to Supporting Learners with Disabilities- This guidance note contains key strategies to support learners living with disabilities.
>
> UNESCO, Embracing diversity: a toolkit for creating inclusive, learning-friendly environments- this toolkit guides to create an inclusive, learning-friendly environment (ILFE) which welcomes, nurtures and educates all children regardless of their gender, physical, intellectual, social, economic, emotional, linguistic or other characteristics.
>
> Guidance Note | Qualitative Assessment Approaches for the Protection of Children with Disabilities Within Humanitarian Contexts- This guidance note explores using qualitative methods to create more robust assessment processes to ensure more effective programming and services for children with disabilities.

A socio-ecological approach recognises that multiple factors influence a child's education, including social norms, cultural beliefs and historical contexts. Unfortunately, millions of children face discrimination and exclusion from educational spaces globally. This can be due to obstacles related to gender, age, disability, health status (including HIV/AIDS), nationality, ethnicity, caste, religious/spiritual beliefs, language, culture, political affiliation, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, geographical location, international protection status or specific educational needs.[39] Education programmes must be designed, inclusive of different learning needs and children's unique and diverse circumstances.

Understanding individual differences is critical for effective reintegration strategies that address each child's needs, including psychosocial support, parenting activities for caregivers, and access to appropriate education and/or vocational training.

Case management, undertaken by child protection personnel, can help education players understand the individual trajectories and needs of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups. Education activities will be part of an action plan developed by a case worker and tailored to the needs of the child and his or her family. Education assessments undertaken by education personnel can ensure that educational support is personalised. More approaches to respond to learners' individual and diverse needs will be discussed in further detail in Part 4.

> Case management, led by CP actors, involves identifying and assessing the child's needs, developing a care plan, implementing intervention, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes. This approach, when supported through trained case workers, allows for effective identification of the needs of children and discreet provision of consistent, confidential follow-up support to that child and his or her family or care giver until the protection concerns are addressed. CM provides individualised, coordinated, holistic, multisectoral support for complex and often connected child protection concerns.
>
> See CPMS Standard 18: Case Management

30   The Alliance CP AoR (2022). CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit: Training Guide and Guidelines https://alliancecpha.org/sites/default/files/technical/attachments/caafag_toolkit_-_guidelines_en.pdf
31   All Survivors Project (nd) Responding to Conflict Related Sexual Violence against boys associated with armed forces and armed groups. Retrieved from https://allsurvivorsproject.org/responding-to-conflict-related-sexual-violence-against-boys-associated-with-armed-forces-and-armed-groups-in-reintegration-programmes/

33   Ibid.
34   UNICEF (2022). *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Children Associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces Programmes: Evidence Review*, UNICEF, New York.
35   Ibid.
36   Ibid, p. 12.
37   Ibid.
38   Ibid, p. 12.

Case management approach

As shown in the diagram below, different factors impact children's access and retention in educational settings.

Length of time, and role(s) whilst associated with AFAGs

Access to services (reintegration support, education, health, shelter, civic documentation)

Age at the time of recruitment

Identity markers such as Gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability

Community perceptions of engagement in AFAG

Socio-economic opportunities to make positive contributions in community

Familial structure and social support system(s)

Diagram: *Intersecting factors that shape the educational experiences of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups.*

From the findings captured in the diagram, there are strong links between the level of protection support children can access and its implications on educational access and retention. For example, the same risk factor may have a different impact based on a child's gender or age. Also, children of the same age and gender may face different risk factors based on their socioeconomic background, level of education and religious beliefs.[40] A child protection case management approach will identify risk factors through comprehensive individual assessment, and inform education programmes, particularly considering the areas outlined in the diagram.

Caregiving responsibilities: Children, particularly girls with caregiving responsibilities, may need flexible, hybrid and part-time education options alongside childcare provisions to enable their participation in education.

Community acceptance is pivotal in allowing or excluding children from educational spaces. Without community acceptance, children may be excluded from educational settings and experience bullying and humiliation from their peers and teachers.

Family support structures: Readjusting to civilian life, and reconnecting with social networks alongside additional pressures, such as assessments and exams, places children under immense pressure. Studies show that a supportive familial structure can be critical to successful reintegration, re-recruitment, and prevention.[41]

Access to socio-economic opportunities: Leaving armed forces or groups can mean income loss for children and their families. Education programmes should recognise the need for livelihood support for older children of working age or their care-givers. They should include collaboration with organisations providing income-generating activities and enable a flexible timetable for older children with income-generating responsibilities to promote children's retention and progression in education.

Identity markers: Due to different identity markers and societal norms, children will have different experiences in education settings, and may feel more or less included depending on whether the curriculum and teaching workforce perpetuates stereotypes and discriminatory practices. In some places, they are displaced and no longer living in their country or region of origin. Issues surrounding the language of instruction further impact their ability to return to school.

Access to wider services: Providing access to sufficient and secure shelter, food, protection and healthcare services is essential to addressing the basic needs of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups. Meeting these fundamental needs is necessary to create an environment conducive to children and youth engagement in education and ideally, facilitate their overall well-being and success.

Civic documentation: The absence of official documentation, such as birth certificates, poses a significant challenge for many children to access education and other essential services. Additionally, some children may possess the necessary documentation but feel unsafe returning to schools where they must present legal papers. Children formerly associated with armed forces and groups may fear that this could lead to their identification and potential arrest due to their previous affiliation with an armed player.

In summary, these factors emphasise the significance of Child Protection and Education stakeholders collaborating when designing CAAFAG programming to gain a comprehensive contextual understanding of their operations. This can be achieved through a **conflict-sensitive education approach**, which requires understanding the context in which the education programme occurs including the protection risks and acting to minimise negative and maximise positive impacts of education policies and programming on conflict.[42] This is key to ensuring (or advocating for) an inclusive education approach that enables all learners to access education regardless of their circumstances.

Key resources for contextual understanding of issues

INEE Conflict-Sensitive Education Pack The Conflict-Sensitive Education Pack includes a Guidance Note, Reflection Tool, and INEE Guiding Principles to support the integration of conflict sensitivity in education policies and programmes.

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021), Prevention Framework: Desk Review Synthesis

Global Coalition for the Reintegration of Child Soldiers (2020) Gaps and Needs for Successful Reintegration of Children associated with armed groups or armed forces p.11-16

CPMS Standard 11: Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

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39 UNICEF (2017). Children with Disabilities in Situations of Armed Conflict Discussion Paper. https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/Children_with_Disabilities_in_Situations_of_Armed_Conflict-Discussion_Paper.pdf.Retrieved from 5th May 2023.

40 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021). Prevention Framework: Desk Review Synthesis. https://alliancecpha.org/sites/default/files/technical/attachments/prevention_framework_desk_review_synthesis_final.pdf. Retrieved 5th May 2022, p. 7.

41 Ibid, p. 50.

42 INEE (2013). Conflict Sensitive Education. Retrieved from https://inee.org/collections/conflict-sensitive-education.

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Age

When designing education programmes for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, child and adolescent development theories can support the development of age-appropriate interventions. Child and adolescent development refer to the physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes from birth to young adulthood. It is a complex and dynamic process influenced by various factors, including genetics, environment and experience.

Age and Adverse Childhood Experiences

A child's age and stage of development during their period of association with armed forces and armed groups may have significant implications on reintegration and learning. One key reason for this is children's increased exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).[43]

ACEs refer to stressful or traumatic events experienced by children before age 18, such as war, abuse, neglect or household dysfunction[44]. These experiences have been linked to adverse physical and mental health outcomes later in life.[45] ACEs can trigger a survival-mode response, particularly impacting a children's developing brain, which causes high or constant stress levels. Often referred to as "toxic stress", this excessive activation of the stress response system has long-term health consequences on the body and the brain. It can significantly impact life trajectories and life expectancy.[46] In addition, toxic stress affects learning; for example, a child may struggle to concentrate, regulate emotions, and interact with others.[47]

It is well documented that many former CAAFAG have experienced multiple ACEs, from being a "*victim, perpetrator and witness to physical, psychological and sexual violence and atrocities*".[48] These experiences put them at "serious risk of physical, developmental, emotional, mental and spiritual harm",[49] as a consequence of being involved or in close contact with an armed struggle, often over a prolonged period.[50] Even when children leave armed forces and armed groups, stigma, shame, and exclusion by their families and broader community negatively impact their mental health, well-being, and ability to reintegrate.[51]

Children recruited at a younger age and those who have experienced prolonged exposure to ACEs are more likely to experience challenges when returning to mainstream educational environments.[52] ACEs, especially during the critical developmental periods of early childhood and adolescence, can have severe negative consequences on a person's overall health, ultimately impeding their ability to engage in educational activities. Therefore, addressing the impact of ACEs on children is crucial for ensuring their successful reintegration into education and improving their overall well-being. The table below outlines how education programmes, in collaboration with Child Protection actors, can help children who have experienced ACEs.[53] [54]

43   Ramírez, D., Haas, A. S.; The Long Arm of Conflict: How Timing Shapes the Impact of Childhood Exposure to War. Demography 1 June 2021; 58 (3): 951–974. doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/00703370-9114715

44   Center on the Developing Child- Harvard University (nd) Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development. Retrieved from https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/toxic-stress-derails-healthy-development/, 2nd February 2023.

45   Deputy, S. R., Khakoo, Y., & Gospe, S. M. (2022). Adverse Effects of War and Armed Conflict on Children. Paediatric Neurology, 130, 69-70.

46   Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, Edwards V, Koss MP, Marks JS. Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. Am J Prev Med. 1998 May;14(4):245-58. doi: 10.1016/s0749-3797(98)00017-8. PMID: 9635069.

47   Center on the Developing Child- Harvard University (nd) Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development. Retrieved from https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/toxic-stress-derails-healthy-development/, February 2nd 2023 48   MHPSS collaborative (2022). MHPSS in CAAFAG Program Operational Guidance, https://mhpsscollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/FINAL-MHPSS-in-CAAFAG-Programs-Operational-Guidance.pdf, p6

49   Ibid.

50   Ibid, p. 5.

51   UNICEF (2022). *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Children Associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces Programmes: Evidence Review*. Retrieved from https://mhpsscollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/FINAL-MHPSS-in-CAAFAG-Programs-Operational-Guidance.pdf

52   Center on the Developing Child- Harvard University (nd). Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development. Retrieved from https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/toxic-stress-derails-healthy-development/, 2nd February 2023.

53   Ibid

54   The findings in the table derive from a desk literature review, as well as key informant interviews with practitioners working on CAAFAG programming.

Age of Recruitment	Stage of child development and potential challenges	Examples of joint Child Protection and Education interventions
Born into an armed group Although children born into armed forces or groups are not, by default, considered CAAFAG, growing up in an armed group can impact healthy child development.	**Stages of development:** The period from pregnancy to age three is scientifically proven to be very sensitive for brain development, with nurturing care setting the foundations for healthy growth and development but also sowing the seeds for learning.[55] **Potential Challenges:** 1. Children have not had access to education. 2. Children have been raised in an environment, including the education system, with different ideological, cultural and religious beliefs from those in mainstream education, making integrating into schools and communities challenging. 3. They are more likely to be raised in a violent and unstable environment, where they may experience loss and separation from family members. These experiences can affect their cognitive, emotional, and physical development.	Set up Early childhood development programmes to support healthy childhood development. Integrate psychosocial support (Examples highlighted in Part 4) in ECD. Set up parenting programmes for parents/caregivers of former CAAFAG (Examples highlighted in Part 4).
Recruited during young childhood (below the age of 10).	**Stages of development:** During this time, children experience significant physical growth and development. They become more coordinated and can master more complex physical skills such as running, jumping, and throwing. They also experience growth spurts, which can change their body shape and size.[56] **Potential Challenges:** 1. Children who miss out on ECD may need help with foundational skills, making it challenging to keep up with their peers at school. 2. Stigmatisation from their peer due to their association with an armed group.	Set up child-friendly spaces or other group activities (see CPMS standard 15) to support non-formal learning and psychosocial support. Set up catch-up, bridging, and remedial programmes to help children reintegrate into the formal system. Integrated play-based learning opportunities alongside catch-up, bridging and remedial programmes. Consider income-generating activities for caregivers.
Younger adolescents/Early adolescents (10-14)	**Stages of development:** At this age, children are still developing their sense of self and their place in the world, and the experience during the period of association can significantly negatively impact their mental health and well-being. Toxic experiences in early adolescence (10-14) are more strongly associated with a decrease in total life span than stressors experienced at any other childhood age.[57] **Potential Challenges:** 1. Familial expectations to provide financially for the family, with limited opportunities to study.	Consider Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs). Set up peer support groups. Consider education as a core component within Community-based reintegration models. Ensure integrated Social and Emotional Learning/PSS opportunities within education programmes. Consider income-generating activities/Cash transfers for caregivers.

55 WHO, UNICEF &WBG (2018). *Nurturing care for early childhood development: a framework for helping children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential*. Retrieved from https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9635069/ on 21st February 2023.

56 Ibid.

57 Tsao, J., & Chen, H. (2018). Toxic stress in early adolescence and all-cause mortality: A prospective cohort study. JAMA PAediatrics, 172(1), 47-53. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2017.3405

Age of Recruitment	Stage of child development and potential challenges	Examples of joint Child Protection and Education interventions
Mid-adolescence (15-17)	**Stages of development:** Children undergo significant cognitive, emotional and social changes at this age.[58] Their experiences during the period of association can have long-lasting effects on their development and ability to reintegrate into society.[59] **Potential Challenges:** 1. Children may be used to being in positions of authority and find it challenging to return to hierarchical educational spaces. 2. Prolonged periods outside of learning 3. Fewer age-appropriate opportunities to continue learning. 4. Familial expectations to provide financially for the family, with limited opportunities to study.	Involve former CAAFAG in school governance structures (e.g., student councils, class representation roles). Ensure integrated Social Emotional Learning/ PSS opportunities. Consider Accelerated Education Programmes with an income-generating activity. Consider technical and vocational education with an income-generating activity. Set up of ECD, alongside education provision, to enable young caregivers to return to learning. Child Protection and Education stakeholders coordinate advocacy campaigns to increase educational opportunities for older children.
Older adolescents (17+)	**Stages of development:** At this age, children have developed a greater sense of self and may be more resistant to reintegration into civilian life due to their time spent in an armed group and the distress they might have experienced.[60] **Potential Challenges:** 1. Used to being in positions of authority, older adolescents may find it challenging to re-adjust to hierarchical educational spaces. 2. Long periods outside formal education, missing out on years of education and being older than their grade age. 3. Familial expectations to provide financially for the family, with limited opportunities to study.	Involve former CAAFAG in school governance structures (e.g., student councils, class representation roles). Establish Accelerated Education Programmes, technical and vocational training, and non-formal literacy and numeracy programmes with income-generating activities. Integrated social and emotional learning/PSS opportunities Develop programmes and events with former CAAFAG that enable them to contribute to their communities (e.g., to school rehabilitation and to organise sports events). Support former CAAFAG to set up peer mentoring groups.
Young adult (18+ years)	**Stages of development:** This period is marked by significant developmental changes, including cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. Physical development continues throughout young adulthood, including completing brain development until the mid-20s.[61] Similar to older adolescents, young adults may have: **Potential Challenges:** 1. Few, if any, opportunities to continue education due to lack of age-appropriate intervention. 2. Familial responsibilities 3. Fear of being stigmatised and discriminated against by their peers and education personnel.	Adult education Accelerated Education Programmes, technical and vocational education and non-formal literacy and numeracy programmes with income-generating activities and business skills development. Integrated social-emotional learning/PSS opportunities Develop programmes and events with former CAAFAG that enable them to contribute to their communities (e.g., to school rehabilitation and to organise sports events).

Key resources to support age-appropriate interventions

Moving Minds Alliance and United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organziation (UNESCO) [Early Childhood Development and Early Learning for Children in Crisis and Conflict](#)- This report presents the case for increased attention and investment in early childhood in conflict and crisis contexts, with focussed attention on early learning and family support.

[Save the Children EiE toolkit](#)- provides a comprehensive, step-to-step guide to setting up different education responses, including ECD, formal and non-formal education models.

[CAAFAG Livelihoods Technical Note](#) provides key guidance and resources towards developing Livelihoods, CASH and IGA that support CAAFAG.

[IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises](#) serve as the 'go-to' guide for working with and for young people in humanitarian settings and protracted crises.

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58   Wigfield, A., Byrnes, J. P. & Eccles, J. S. (2006). Development During Early and Middle Adolescence. In P. A. Alexander & P. H. Winne (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 87–113). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

59   Betancourt, T. S., Borisova, I., Williams, T. P., Meyers-Ohki, S. E., Rubin-Smith, J. E., Annan, J., & Kohrt, B. A. (2013). Research Review: Psychosocial adjustment and mental health in former child soldiers–a systematic review of the literature and recommendations for future research. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 54(1), 17-36.

60   Ibid.

61   Tanner, J. L. & Arnett, J. J. (2016). The emergence of emerging adulthood: The new life stage between adolescence and young adulthood. In *Routledge handbook of youth and young adulthood* (pp. 50-56). Routledge.

Part 3: Promoting collaboration between the Education and Child Protection sectors

Child Protection and Education cross-sectoral collaboration

Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Education in Emergencies are two pivotal sectors that have a crucial role in facilitating educational intervention for children previously associated with armed forces and armed groups. As the table below and diagram on page 21 demonstrates, the two sectors can work together in different ways.

Diagram: *Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2022).* Guidance Note: Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education in Humanitarian Action*, p.16*

Ways of working	Sector implications	Aim	Practical examples
Mainstreaming	Sector-specific: actions are taken within a specific sector.	To promote a safe, dignified and protective environment in education programmes and to improve the impact of all humanitarian actors by applying the do no harm principle and proactively reducing risks and harm.	Training of education staff in child safeguarding Training of child protection staff on education interventions Adaptation of education programmes to CAAFAG needs Joint workshop on protection risks in education programmes
Joint programming	Sectors maintain their sector objectives while jointly planning and implementing certain aspects of their programmes.	To achieve a protection outcome alongside education outcomes while optimising resources, access, operational capacity.	Developing joint standard operating procedures to identify and refer CAAFAG and vulnerable children for case management (CP actors) or for access to education (education actors) Education player provides non formal education activities to CAAFAG and vulnerable children in a youth centre managed by a CP actor. CP organisation provides case management and parenting skills session in schools for children at risk of recruitment and their caregivers.
Integration (integrated programming)	Favouring collective over sector-specific planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A holistic understanding of child well-being is the starting point for action, with sectoral specialities being used to meet that goal.	To achieve collective outcomes for children through deliberate, joint assessment, goal setting, planning, implementation and monitoring across sectors.	Co-create teacher training curricula, including Psychological First Aid, Psychosocial Support and Social Emotional Learning to mitigate the negative impacts of sustained traumatic events/exposures on child well-being and learning outcomes. A comprehensive education programme for CAAFAG is jointly designed and implemented, providing formal and non-formal education interventions, case management, MHPSS and parenting skills tailored to the needs of CAAFAG.

Education programmes must go beyond an academic focus, collaborating with other sectors to address children's interconnected needs. Child Protection and Education collaboration is essential for CAAFAG programming, policy development and advocacy. Integrated interventions that support cross-sectoral collaboration can address the complex range of needs of children, including education, protection, health and other types of needs. This requires integrating from the inception and throughout the implementation cycle. This will ensure projects are child-centred, well-coordinated and address both education and child protection concerns.[62] An integrated approach also allows for more effective monitoring and evaluation, as the different sectors can share information and data to assess the impact of the programme, policy or advocacy efforts on the children's overall well-being.

Fortunately, numerous examples of Collaboration Across Child Protection and Education in Emergencies exist. The activities in the diagram below are synthesised from the INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response and Recovery (INEE MS) and the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS).

The diagram illustrates how Child Protection and Education can mutually support children, families and communities to thrive.[63] All the activities in the diagram are **integral to Education for CAAFAG programming and can be applied to different education models, e.g., a non-formal or formal education programme**. Further activities will be explored further in Part 4.

Stronger collaboration between different sectors entails a mindset of cooperation and a mutual desire to work together to achieve greater outcomes. Each sector has its skills and expertise that could benefit the other sector. Coming from the perspective of learning from each other and sharing information is essential to break the silos. This culture of collaboration can be encouraged and role-modelled by cluster leads, organisations' senior leadership, and team management.

INEE MS

Safe learning environments & access routes

Supportive learning environments & positive discipline

Psychosocial well-being – PFA, PSS & SEL

Learning environments are free from armed occupation and attack

Disaster risk reduction and management activities

Safeguarding feedback and reporting mechanisms

Develop teacher training curricula that support protective, inclusive & gender sensitive learning environments

Multisectoral referral pathways

Accessibility, inclusion and non-discrimination – with specific reference to children with disabilities

Teacher well-being Children's participation

Community engagement

Support to parents and caregivers

CPMS

Diagram: *Convergence of* INEE MS and CHPA MS*, p.16*

> ### Key resources to promote cross-sectoral collaboration
>
> The CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit, PP. 96-98 for further examples of multi-sectoral educational interventions at different socio-ecological levels.
>
> Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education Programming in Humanitarian Action_English.pdf (alliancecpha.org)- This document focusses on collaboration between Child Protection and Education in humanitarian crises, including step-by-step guidance on setting up and implementing integrated programmes.
>
> CPMS, Standard 23: Child Protection and Education for key joint and integrated programming actions.

62   Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020). Position Paper: Collaboration Across Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Education in Emergencies. New York, NY. https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/CPHA%20-%20EiE%20Position%20 Paper%20ENG%20v01.pdf

63   Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020). Position Paper: Collaboration Across Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Education in Emergencies. New York, p. 12.

Child Protection and Education inter-agency coordination groups

In recent years, there has been increased multi-sectoral, inter-agency coordination between Education and Child Protection and other sectors such as health, livelihoods and nutrition. The Alliance for CPHA and the INEE jointly developed a Guidance Note on Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education in Humanitarian Action.[64] The diagram illustrates that coordination and collaboration between Child Protection and Education can occur at multiple points.

Diagram: *Overview of the CPHA-EIE Collaborative Framework*
Source: Global Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility. 2020

STEP (1). NEEDS ASSESSMENT, IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

1a Identify key questions needed to inform planning and decision-making — strategic and operational considerations

1b Establish common understanding of information needs

1c Conduct joint analysis of data/information

1d Conduct needs assessments if required

STEP (2). STRATEGIC RESPONSE PLANNING

2i Identify areas of collaboration (common and complementary activities)

2j Agree roles and responsibilities of each sector for common and complementary activities

2k Document differentiated roles and responsibilities in strategic plans

2l Formulate strategic objective, indicators and monitoring systems that meet collaboration needs

STEP (3). RESOURCE MOBILISATION

3f Define roles and responsibilities for joint resource mobilisation and advocacy efforts

3g Conduct joint costing exercise for common and complementary activities

3h Agree on complementary allocation of available resources

STEP (4). JOINT IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF COLLABORATION

4a Define modalities to deliver strategic response plan (How to work together)

4b Collaborate to enhance response quality

4c Identify and mobilise partners

4d Joint Monitoring: Agree roles and responsibilities of each sector to collect, analyse and share monitoring information.

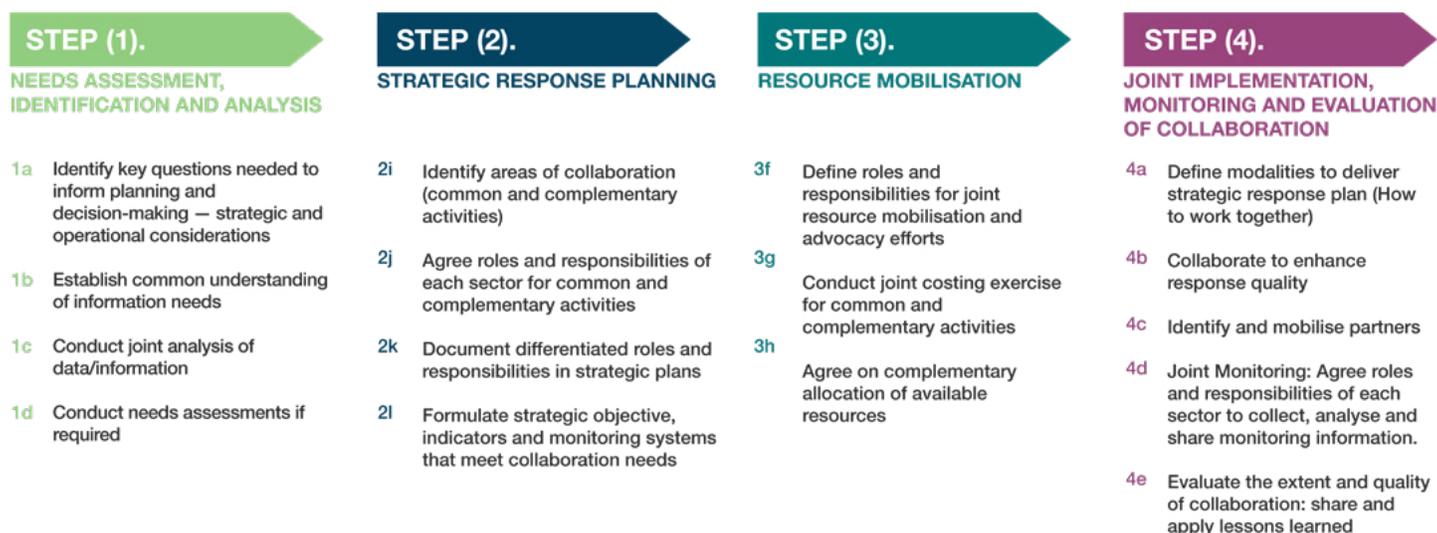4e Evaluate the extent and quality of collaboration: share and apply lessons learned

While collaboration remains the optimal approach, cross-sectoral coordination presents numerous obstacles. For example:

- **Working in hostile political environments** (particularly when children with perceived affiliation to armed forces and groups are perceived as 'criminals' instead of 'victims') makes it challenging for partners to develop targeted support and transparent referral pathways through inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

- CAAFAG intervention is not sustainable when funded only through **humanitarian pooled funding** or other short-term humanitarian grants. For example, local NGOs in Aleppo and Raqqa developed innovative approaches to supporting children's return to learning; however, when funding was not renewed, the local NGOs did not have the resources to continue implementing the programme.

- **The humanitarian sector remains very siloed**. There is no readily available data on the number of cross-sectoral, inter-agency country-level CAAFAG task teams. Without this data, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of current efforts or identify improvement opportunities.

Case study

A CAAFAG Task Force in North-east Syria was established under the Protection cluster. It ensured that non-child protection players could undertake dedicated activities to prevent and respond to girls and boys affected by recruitment through their sectoral interventions.

The CAAFAG Task Force developed sector-specific guidelines that centred the needs of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups. The task force provided a platform to support cross-sectoral collaboration, identifying complementary activities and referral pathways.

64   Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2022). Guidance Note: Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education in Humanitarian Action. New York, NY. https://inee. org/resources/supporting-integrated-child-protection-and-education-programminghumanitarian-action

Key considerations and recommendations

At national level, Child Protection and Education inter-agency coordination groups should:

- **Set up inter-agency, multisectoral CAAFAG task forces** at national level to ensure effective, collaborative coordination.

- **Develop joint/integrated assessments and analyses** to identify the context-specific needs, assets and risks.

> The CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines has a suite of tools, including sample needs assessments, risk assessments and stakeholder analysis guidance. See page 7 for details on accessing the tools, which are attached in the pdf.

- **Develop joint and integrated strategies and plans** that prioritise the needs of children and communities that also recognise their assets and strengths. This can be achieved by involving state, civil society and youth-led organisations in education interventions for CAAFAG. This strengthens collaboration between different civil society players, as well as sustainability, in addition to ensuring community buy-in.

- **Develop and implement transparent referral pathways through inter-agency coordination mechanisms.** Partners should work together to develop and implement clear referral mechanisms to ensure children receive the appropriate support and services.

- **Establish joint Child Protection and Education advocacy strategies with local authorities and education providers** to remove barriers (such as missing documentation, administrative issues and the absence of education provisions for children in contact with the justice system) that prevent educational access.

Key resources to support inter-agency coordination

INEE & The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Guidance Note: Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education in Humanitarian Action

INEE and The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Position Paper Collaboration Across Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Education in Emergencies

Child Protection Minimum standards Pillar 4: Standards to work across Sectors provides guidance and key actions for Education and CP to work collaboratively for situation analysis, programme design and implementation.

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Part 4: Education interventions for CAAFAG

Education and CPHA interventions for CAAFAG in prevention, release, and reintegration programmes

Programming for CAAFAG includes three programme components 1) Prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces and groups; 2) Release of children from armed forces and armed groups, whether formal or informal; 3) Reintegration of former CAAFAG into their families and communities.[65]

Prevention programmes aim to prevent the recruitment and use of children by addressing the pathways to association and risk factors, strengthening protective factors, and providing alternatives to association with armed forces and armed groups. Education can support prevention by:

- **Raising awareness about the risks and consequences** of joining armed forces and armed groups; fostering critical thinking skills, resilience and self-esteem, which can make children and youth less vulnerable to recruitment.

- **Access to quality, safe and inclusive education** for children and youth can prevent the recruitment and use of children. By ensuring schools remain open or are reopened in humanitarian contexts (including for adolescents and youth), education can be a protective factor that keeps children engaged in learning and away from some of the risks of recruitment and use by armed forces and groups.

Further examples of key considerations and interventions needed to provide children with a safe and supportive environment are outlined in the forthcoming sections.

See The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021), Prevention Framework: Desk Review Synthesis. P.17 for additional examples illustrating how education can prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups.

Release programmes include the formal and controlled disarmament and demobilisation of children from an armed force or armed group and the informal ways children leave by escaping, being captured or by any other means. It also includes identifying children who have informally exited armed forces and armed groups live in their communities. In this regard, education plays a vital role in supporting release programmes by:

- **Supporting the identification of children** once they are back in educational spaces and communities. Education personnel, when trained, can play a key role in connecting children to the relevant child protection services responsible for case management and reintegration.

Reintegration programme processes promote children's transition into civilian life, including meaningful roles and identities as civilians accepted by their families and communities. Reintegration support is addressed at individual and family levels through a case management approach and at community level through a community-level approach. It also includes a multi-sector approach involving other sectors as relevant and a non-targeted approach, inclusive of other children rather than only CAAFAG. Education can contribute to reintegration efforts by: **Collaborating with child protection agencies and stakeholders** to develop tailored educational interventions that address children's specific needs and challenges during their transition and reintegration process

- Creating a sense of belonging. Children may have experienced a sense of belonging and ideological purpose in armed forces and armed groups. Safe, inclusive, and quality education can support children in gaining an alternative sense of purpose and belonging.

- Involving communities in education decisions, engaging parents, caregivers, local organisations, faith leaders and government agencies, and providing education services for returning individuals that benefit the wider community. By involving the wider community, education interventions for CAAFAG can give children and their families a sense of belonging, reduce stigma and discrimination, and increase social cohesion.

In under-resourced communities, it is vital to prevent the perception of specialised treatment or privileged access to services for children associated with armed forces and armed groups. To achieve this, education services must be accessible to all community members, while also ensuring that the reintegration process is developed through a socio-ecological model that considers individual, family, community and societal levels.

These three programme components are helpful when considering education's role at different stages of CAAFAG programming. However, it is essential to note that the process of disengagement and reintegration is not always linear or one-way.

- Children may face challenges and complexities as they transition back into civilian life. Even after release, social dynamics, personal circumstances and community environments can influence children's connections or association with armed forces and armed groups.

- In some educational settings, within the same class, some children could be at risk of recruitment and use, whilst others could be formerly associated with armed forces and groups. Education, therefore, should be designed to include activities that are preventive as well as supporting reintegration.

Key resources to support community-based child protection and education models

Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection - This document provides a common understanding and step-by-step guidance on how to do case management. They put the child at the centre of the intervention, focussing on child friendly procedures and language.

Partnering with Religious Communities for Children - This document considers how to best engage with religious leaders as a part of community-based child protection approaches

Plan International Community Based Child Protection Model - this document provides a community based child protection model in Central African Republic

INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies- Community Participation Standard 1: Participation-This provides an overview of key tools and resources to support community-based approaches to education responses.

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65   The Alliance (2022). CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit: Training Guide and Guidelines https://alliancecpha.org/sites/default/files/technical/attachments/caafag_toolkit_-_guidelines_en.pdf

Types of education models

The key informant interviews that informed this technical note identified the following Education for CAAFAG programming models.

Diagram: *Different types of education programmes (table adapted from the* INEE *Accelerated Education Working Group Key Programme Definitions)*

Type of Education Programme	Targeted Group	Definition of Education intervention
Early Childhood Education (ECE)/Early Childhood Development (ECD)	Children of adolescent parents who were associated with armed forces and armed groups	ECE is an education intervention typically aimed at children under five. ECE contributes to broader ECD.
Catch-up programmes	Children and youth actively attending school before an educational disruption who have missed less than one year.	A short-term transitional education programme allows students to learn missed content. It supports their re-entry into the formal system.[66]
Bridging programme	Children and youth who actively attended school before an educational disruption and have missed less than one year.	A short-term, targeted preparation course that supports students' success taking various forms, such as language acquisition and other existing differences between home and host education curricula and systems for entry into a different type of certified education.[67]
Remedial programme	Children and youth who attended school before an educational disruption have missed less than one year.	Additional targeted support, concurrent with regular classes, for students who require short-term content or skill support to succeed in regular formal programming.[68]
Non-formal education (NFE)	Children and youth in contexts without formal education services or pathways.	NFE is typically non-accredited learning: examples include basic literacy and numeracy in transit centres during a child's demobilisation. NFE is often a mixture of literacy, numeracy and activities that promote psychosocial well-being.
Primary	Children below the age of 10	Transition back into the formal education system according to their appropriate age and level of education.
Accelerated Education Programme (AEP)/ Accelerated Basic Education (ABE)	Accelerated education programmes for children above ten who have missed 1+ years or never attended school.	AEP/ABE are common education models for former CAAFAG. It entails a condensed primary education. In recent years secondary AEP models have increased, offering a condensed lower secondary education.
Secondary	Students who have completed primary education	Access to secondary education often requires a primary school leaving certificate. This can pose a challenge for former CAAFAG, who may lack documentation like their birth or school leaving certificates. Post-primary education opportunities are also highly unfunded in many locations but high in demand.

Type of Education Programme	Targeted Group	Definition of Education intervention
Technical, Vocational and Educational training (TVET)	Older children aged 15 years +	TVET models vary from centres in urban areas to more individualised apprenticeships with master artisans.[70] Literacy, numeracy, and PSS are often integrated alongside technical training. TVET projects vary in length, from short 3–6-month training or longer term (12 month+), although these are rare in humanitarian contexts. TVET can be certified or non-certified.
Income Generating Activity (IGA) with an education component	Older children, 15 years + Single caregivers are linked to cash and livelihood training or IGA activities to cover the cost of education.	After a market assessment, former CAAFAG is supported to establish a small business. IGAs often include some numeracy and literacy, alongside basic accountant training, for example, in financial documentation such as bookkeeping. See the *CAAFAG Livelihoods Technical Note* for further details.
School infrastructure and teaching and learning support	These initiatives seek to strengthen social cohesion by benefiting all students within the school, benefiting non and former CAAFAG.	Education intervention may focus on school infrastructure (e.g., building new classrooms and school latrines), school repairs, providing school equipment (desks, stationary, textbooks) and teacher professional development opportunities.
Tertiary/Higher education	18 years +	Former CAAFAG can be supported to attend higher education through scholarships and other transitional support.

See the INEE EiE Glossary for more than 350 key education terms, their definitions, and sources.

See the INEE Accelerated Education Working Group's Accelerated Education: 10 Principles for Effective Practice for detailed guidance on the essential components of effective Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs).

66   Accelerated Education Working Group (2016). Key Programme Definitions. Retrieved from https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/AEWG_Key_Programme_Definitions-screen.pdf, 7th January 2023.

67   Ibid.

68   Ibid.

69   Accelerated Education Working Group (2017). Accelerated Education Definitions. Retrieved https://inee.org/resources/accelerated-education-definitions, 19th January 2023.

70   Arango-Fernández, María Paulina, and Stephanie Simmons Zuilkowski. 2022. "The Role of Technical and Vocational Education in Social Reintegration: Insights from Colombian ExCombatants." Journal on Education in Emergencies 8 (1): 110-37. https://doi.org/10.33682/tehb-tshy.

As the table illustrates, there are different types of education models. **All the approaches in the table can be adapted to different contexts**, for example:

- After release, children may be placed in interim care centres while they await reunification with their families or alternative care is found. Children in these centres often have access to non-formal education and psychosocial support.

- Children may be in contact with the justice system and held in detention centres. In some instances, non-government organisations (NGOs) have partnered with government authorities, gaining permission to provide education programmes in detention centres whilst advocating for improved detention conditions (this included introducing open juvenile detention centres, home detention, and minimal sentencing).

- Mainstream schools can offer tailored education programmes to address the unique needs of CAAFAG, including custom curricula, counselling services and language acquisition and socialisation support.

- As discussed in Part 2, having a case management approach to education support can help to inform the selection and design of Education in CAAFAG programmes. The Decision Tree (Annex 2) can also provide guidance.

It is important to emphasise that although the table outlines education modalities, collaboration with other sectors, particularly Child Protection, is key to supporting the needs of children, families and communities. As highlighted in the INEE Minimum standards and the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, collaboration enhances educational preparedness, response and recovery, increases access to safe and relevant learning opportunities and ensures accountability in providing these services.

> ### Key resources to consider when designing education models
>
> INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies contains 19 standards to enhance education interventions.
>
> Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.
>
> Cradle By Conflict Technical Note- Chapter 4 focuses on involving CAAFAG children and youth in programme design, including programmatic suggestions and resource links.

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71 McNatt, Z., Boothby, N., Wessells, M., Lo, R. (2018). INEE Guidance Note on Psychosocial Support/ https://inee.org/resources/inee-guidance-note-psychosocial-support

72 INEE (2018). INEE Background Paper on Psychosocial Support and Social & Emotional Learning for Children & Youth. Retrieved from https://inee.org/resources/inee-background-paper-psychosocial-support-and-social-emotional-learning-children-youth

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Mental Health, Psychosocial Support and well-being are significant precursors to learning and essential for academic attainment.[71] Many children formerly associated with armed forces and groups will have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACES).

> Children's experiences and needs will range from those who experience distress and may require essential services (e.g., related to food, water, shelter, and security) and family and community support; to those who are exposed to traumatic experiences and require clinical, specialised support to those who need multiple types of support. It is essential to note that not every child will experience trauma, and equally important not to assume that all who seem resilient do not require support.

Some children may be reluctant to disclose their association with armed forces and armed groups which may be a significant challenge in addressing children's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) needs. Educational settings have a crucial role in incorporating MHPSS effectively. A method to achieve this is integrating **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** within schools. SEL refers to teaching and helping learners to understand and manage their emotions, build positive relationships, make responsible decisions and constructively solve problems.[72]

Mainstreaming MHPSS in schools is a multi-layered, multi-pronged approach. The pyramid and case studies below, taken from the INEE Guidance Note on Psychosocial Support[73] and CPMS Standard 10: Mental Health and Psychosocial Distress (and adapted from the 2007 IASC intervention pyramid[74]), depict four levels of intervention that should be considered when addressing the psychosocial well-being of children and youth during crises.

Services provided by mental health clinicians and social service professionals to those with severe mental health conditions or distress beyond the scope of general social and health care services.

SPECIALISED SERVICES

Targeted, structured activities provided by trained and supervised workers (usually not mental health specialists) to individuals, families or groups with mental health conditions or continued distress.

FOCUSED NON-SPECIALISED SUPPORTS

Inclusive activities (usually provided by communities themselves) that support the recovery, resilience, mental health and psychosocial well-being of children, families and communities.

COMMUNITY-AND FAMILY-STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS

Participatory, safe and socially appropriate delivery of basic, multisectoral services and security that supports the dignity and well-being of all children and community members.

RESPECTFUL BASIC SERVICES AND SECURITY

Case management responds to mental health and psychosocial support needs across all four layers of the pyramid of services.
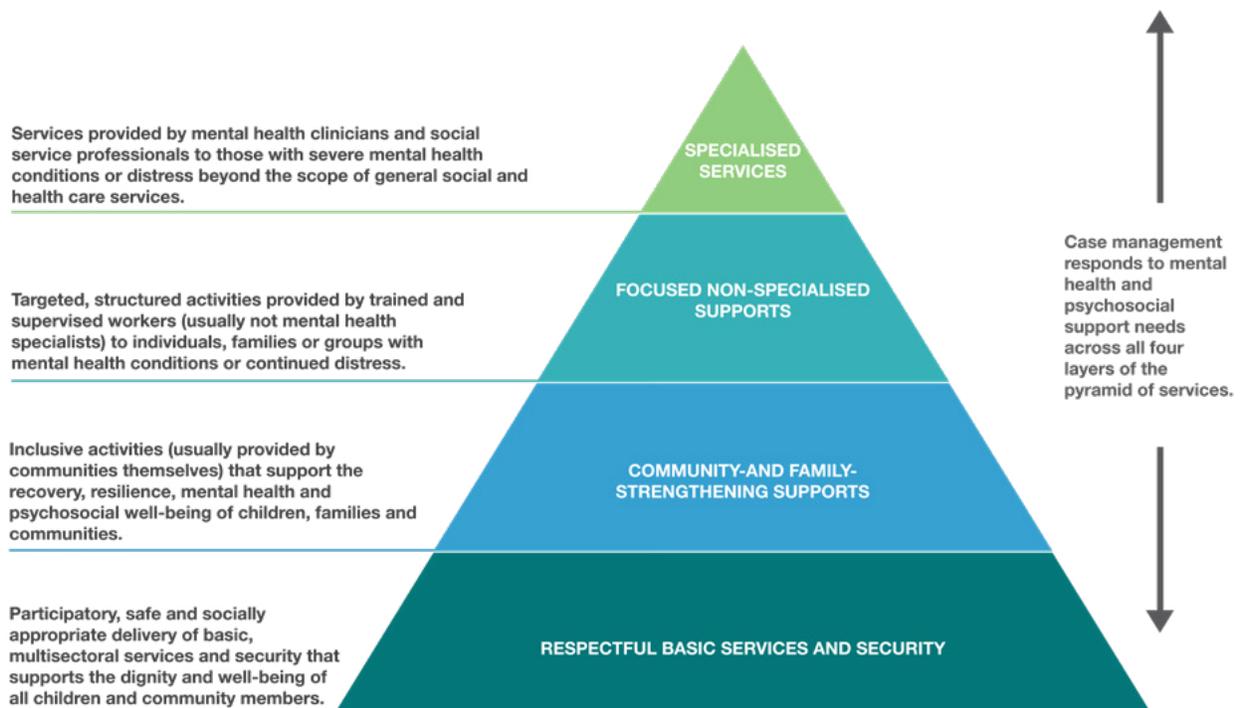
Diagram: *Mental Health and Psychosocial Distress*

Case studies

Social considerations in basic services and security: This generalised level of intervention seeks to support all children and young people in the education system by getting schools up and running as soon as possible and promoting equal access to quality learning.

- Many *organisations, like IRC, Save the Children and Plan International have a range of toolkits to integrate Social and Emotional Learning into their educational programmes in displacement settings. It is an educational practice and process relevant to formal and non-formal educational environments since it promotes the skills and abilities that help children, young people and adults learn.*[75]

Strong community and family support: Schools can bridge family and community support systems.

- *In the DRC, a school choir was established. This was collective therapy through singing and dancing, with children describing the experience as being "freed from ghosts." The choir was a space to reconnect with spiritual life, and through participating in the choir, children could meet new people and form a sense of belonging.*[76]

Culturally-responsive approaches to MHPSS for CAAFAG are critical for promoting effective and sustainable intervention tailored to their specific cultural and social contexts. By recognising cultural diversity, partnering with communities, fostering cultural safety, addressing stigma and discrimination, building on existing resources, providing multilingual support and prioritising community-led and sustainable approaches, culturally-responsive interventions can help promote positive mental health and psychosocial well-being for CAAFAG, co-creating spaces of healing and reconciliation.

See the CAAFAG Programme toolkit, p.105, for additional examples of community cleansing rituals.

Focused, non-specialised support: School counsellors, peer-to-peer learning approaches and self-help groups for parents and learners with particular needs all provide non-specialised support.

- *In South Sudan, Plan International works in schools where many children have undergone a formal reintegration programme while others have not had any assistance. Plan International set up **Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS)** and **Adolescent Friendly Spaces (AFS)** near the schools. These centres offer a space for all young people in the community. Children and youth accessed individual and group counselling at the centres and a safe space to express themselves. The CFS and AFS serve as valuable platforms for discussions that may not readily occur within classrooms. These spaces are crucial for effective **case management** as they enable children and youth to access information, resources, and referrals to other services.*

Specialist services: A functioning and well-communicated referral mechanism, alongside cooperation agreements with specialist organisations, are key to promptly provide appropriate care.

- *Education stakeholders in Syria, Yemen and CAR coordinated with child protection agencies to develop referral pathways to ensure CAAFAG had access to necessary support services. Schools developed and implemented child protection policies and procedures that address their specific risks and vulnerabilities, and learners were referred to specialist support in counselling, legal support and family tracing and reunification.*

For guidance on setting up referral mechanisms, see CPMS Standard 10: Mental Health and Psychosocial Distress and the CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines for a suite of tools, including a referral pathway sample, a service mapping template and data protection protocols.

Prevention   Release   Reintegration

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75   Ibid.
76   Key informant interview, Reintegration expert, DRC.

Key Recommendations

At child level
- Child Protection players support identified children through case management and referrals to MHPSS service providers that also adhere to data protection requirements to ensure the safety and confidentiality of children.

At school level
- MHPSS and Child Protection players support the professional development of Education personnel in gender-, disability- and mental health and psychosocial support. This could include training on psychological first aid (PFA) and other MHPSS approaches to enhance education.

- MHPSS support services are extended to teachers and Child Protection staff to support their well-being.

At school and community level
- Child Protection, MHPSS and Education players support co-designing structured PSS intervention for children, adolescents and caregivers in educational spaces. These activities complement community-based reintegration models and enhance integrated support and messaging.

- Child Protection and MHPSS and Education actors jointly develop referral pathways to specialist services.

- Child Protection and Education work jointly with PTAs and SMCs to identify community concerns, map out key stakeholders and create strategies to enable CAAFAG to return to education.

- Child Protection and Education players work together to set up children and adolescent-friendly spaces as a "one-stop-shop" where children can access information on sexual reproductive health education, participate in group therapeutic activities such as singing and sports and be referred to additional support services.

At community and national level
- CP and Education, inter-agency coordination groups, engage with national and local authorities to support the sustainability and systems-strengthening of MHPSS within schools. This could be establishing task teams at national level, contextualising and standardising SEL provision and teacher professional development in this area.

Key Resources

CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit, PP93-96 for further examples of MHPSS programmes, and PP 139-140 for guidance on staff care and well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Children Associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces Programmes: Evidence Review An evidence review of multiple MHPSS programmes for CAAFAG.

MHPSS and EIE Toolkit A comprehensive overview of multiple toolkits that strengthen MHPSS in educational settings

PSS and SEL Toolkit is designed for stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social-emotional learning (SEL) in global settings, focussing on EiE and humanitarian response to protracted crises.

CPMS standard 10: mental health and psychosocial distress include key actions to support children and their caregivers to experience improved mental health and psychosocial well-being.

Parent and Teacher Associations, School Management Committees

Teachers and wider Education stakeholders, like parents and teachers' associations (PTAs) and school management committees (SMCs) may have roles in preventing the recruitment of children into armed groups and supporting their reintegration.

> A PTA or SMC is a group of teachers, parents, community members and sometimes students that meet regularly, discuss key topics related to the operation, quality and environment of the school and to plan for ways to improve the quality of education and well-being of students and teachers.

PTAs and SMCs can mobilise communities to support these children and their families by creating awareness and advocating for the right of all children, including former CAAFAG, to access education. In addition, they can help create a safe and inclusive learning environment by promoting positive discipline practices in schools, facilitating positive parenting or caregivers' classes, combating stigmatisation and discrimination, and advocating for special education services and accommodations.

> See CPMS Standard 16 for more guidance on strengthening family and caregiving environments to promote children's healthy development and to protect them from maltreatment and other negative effects of adversity.

In some cases, PTAs and SMCs have been pivotal in organising income generation activities, such as agricultural production, small business management, and handicrafts, to reduce school-related expenses. These activities are pivotal and could help improve many families' economic security.

However, just as PTAs and SMCs can be vital to ensuring children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups can return to learning, they can also support their exclusion. At the same time, because school community members, such as parents, may have familial connections or be directly associated with an armed group, they may have some influence over the armed group operating in an area. Depending on their position, community members can leverage their links with an armed group to advocate for schools and children to remain outside the conflict.[78]

As a result, a social network analysis is essential to CAFAAG programming.[79] A social network analysis (SNA) is the process of connecting the dots between humanitarian programming, mapping relationships, and analysing the structure of the network and the influence of different players. SNAs can also deeply understand the social networks in the planned place of operation, documenting community expertise that could support educational programming and collaborating to enable change.

> See IRC's Social Network Analysis (SNA) for guidance on conducting a SNA between organisations, communities, and between conflicting parties.

> ## Case study
>
> In Central African Republic, in one area, the PTAs played a crucial role in asking local community-based organisations to partner with an NGO that wanted to support former CAAFAG with vocational training and income-generating activities. PTAs organised community meetings to discuss the needs of CAAFAG and how they can be supported. They identified local businesses that could partner with NGOs to offer apprenticeships. These meetings helped raise awareness about children's issues and encouraged community members to participate in their reintegration.[80] The PTAs' and SMCs' involvement in supporting former CAAFAGs illustrated how the school management structures were integral to the community-based reintegration model.

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78   Key informant interview, INGO representative working in Somalia.

79   The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2022). *CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines*. New York.

80   Key informant interview, INGO representative working in DRC and CAR.

Key recommendations

The involvement of parents and teachers' associations, school management committees and the wider community is essential for successful education intervention and a key component of community-based reintegration.

At family and community level

- Implementing Child Protection and Education joint and integrated caregiver support programmes (such as caregiver courses, PSS, Child Protection, and safeguarding training) further enhances the well-being of children and their families.

- Implementing joint and integrated Education and Livelihoods programming that extends income-generating activities and technical and vocational education programmes to caregivers could alleviate economic insecurity, a documented key driver to recruitment into armed forces and groups.

At school and community level

- The Education for CAAFAG programme development process includes a social network analysis to determine the significant stakeholders in children's social networks.

At community level

- Child Protection and Education actors conduct joint participatory risk and resource mapping in the first phase of the community-based child protection programme to identify priority issues and resources that could support education.

Education interventions are more likely to be effective and sustainable when building on existing strengths and resources within communities.

- **At community level**, joint Child Protection and Education assessments ensure community structures, skills and resources are leveraged to ensure sustainability and ownership of CAAFAG intervention.

- **At community level**, Child Protection and Education players collaborate to set up and support parenting support circles for parents of former CAAFAG and address cultural norms and beliefs that enable or impede their return to education. A parenting programme with children could also provide caregivers with the tools and knowledge to better understand the impact of these experiences on their children and to support their emotional and psychological well-being.

Key resources for parents and teachers associations and school management committees

IRC (2021) Growing Strong Together: A Parenting Program to Support the Reintegration of Children and Prevent Their Recruitment

IRC (2021) Perspectives of families in Central African Republic on adolescents' involvement in armed groups

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021), Prevention Framework: Desk Review Synthesis p.50 highlights children, parents and communities.

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020) Strengthening Community-Level Approaches to Child Protection in Humanitarian Action resources for implementing community-level child protection programming, building on CP Standard 17 –Community-Level Approaches.

The role of teachers

Teachers are crucial in helping children feel included and accepted in the classroom. Given the interconnected nature of armed conflict, personal beliefs, and drivers of recruitment, it is a reality that teachers in the community may be connected to armed forces and armed groups and support their cause. Additionally, many teachers come from the same communities as their students and are personally impacted by the conflict, armed forces and armed groups. Teachers come from diverse backgrounds, and their social position, influenced by factors such as ethnicity, gender, and perceived ties to armed groups, can impact classroom dynamics.[81] Reports of teachers recruiting children from schools indicate that teachers may have directly played a role in recruiting children into armed forces and armed groups.[82]

Accommodating the needs of CAAFAG and the diverse needs of boys and girls in conflict settings with limited resources can leave teachers overwhelmed and overburdened. Teacher professional development and drawing on other sectors' expertise to support teaching and learning is therefore key. Trauma-responsive education is an approach to education that considers the needs and experiences of children exposed to traumatic circumstances. Creating a trauma-responsive educational space involves a **whole-school approach**, integrating MHPSS and SEL alongside **targeted training** for all (including teachers and case workers) to support emotional and behavioural regulation. It plays a role in mitigating, minimising and reversing acculturative stress and exclusion by creating spaces of well-being, peer support and connections.

Teachers have a critical role in creating a trauma-responsive educational environment, which, as discussed in the MHPSS key intervention section of this technical note, is crucial in supporting children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences.

Practitioners in South Sudan, Iraq, Syria, and DRC noted that teachers could also hold grievances against CAAFAG, perceiving them as "difficult children, rapists, bandits", and females as "prostitutes."[83] In Iraq, some teachers reported finding it challenging to manage the behaviour of children, who were accustomed to being treated as adults and, in some instances, had held positions of authority.[84] In South Sudan, teachers, especially new teachers, struggled to work with children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups and sometimes felt disrespected and threatened.[85]

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Trauma-responsive teachers recognise problematic behaviours that might result from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)s or other traumatic experiences rather than as wilful and punishable actions.[86]

> ## Case study
>
> Summary of a case study taken from [INEE's Promising Practices of Teacher Professional Development](#), 2022, p.9-10
>
> *"Schools in South Kivu experience violent conflict in multiple forms: from physical attacks to the interference of armed groups in school governance and the blackmailing of teachers. In close collaboration, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique (ISP) in Bukavu are designing a module on EiE to be taught at the Congolese ISP teacher training institutes. The main objectives of the envisaged EiE module were to:*
>
> 1. *Equip teachers with a critical and reflective understanding of how conflict affects their educational experiences."*
> 3. *Equip teachers with skills related to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the classroom*
> 4. *Disseminate insights and best practices from existing studies and reports, such as the ones published by the [Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack](#); and*
> 5. *Improve their understanding of the EiE architecture."*

Training teachers in trauma-responsive teaching methods should be a key intervention, regardless of whether CAAFAG programmes target **prevention, release, and reintegration**. Benefits include:

- **Improved academic outcomes:** ACEs can significantly impact a child's ability to learn and succeed academically. Trauma-responsive teaching can help children feel safer, more secure, and more supported in the classroom, improving their ability to focus and learn.

- **Better emotional and behavioural regulation:** ACEs can make it challenging for children to regulate their emotions, making it difficult for them to engage in learning. Trauma-responsive teaching recognises this and includes strategies for supporting emotional regulation, such as mindfulness practices, breathing exercises and other culturally appropriate techniques.

- **Addresses learning challenges:** ACEs can impact the way children process information, and it can make it challenging to focus, retain information and recall information. Trauma-responsive teaching includes strategies for addressing these challenges, such as breaking down information into smaller chunks, incorporating movement and sensory-based activities and providing repeated exposure to concepts.

- **Increased sense of safety and security:** Trauma can leave children feeling unsafe, impacting their learning ability. Trauma-responsive teaching prioritises creating a safe and supportive learning environment where children feel comfortable participating and taking risks.

- **Enhanced social and emotional skills:** Trauma-responsive teaching, and curriculum, can help children develop social and emotional skills critical for success in school and life. These skills include self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and positive communication.

- **Improved relationships with teachers and peers:** ACEs can impact a child's ability to form healthy relationships with peers and adults. Trauma-responsive teaching, alongside conflict-sensitive education approaches, prioritises building positive relationships with students, including consistent routines, positive reinforcement and opportunities for collaboration.

Trauma-Responsive Teaching and Accelerated Education

Education programmes for adolescents should take a trauma-informed approach that considers child development theory. Interviews in the DRC, CAR, and South Sudan and existing literature show that many organisations implement Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP) as part of their education interventions for CAAFAG. AEP condenses the primary or secondary curriculum into three years to support over-age learners. However, high drop-out rates persist, indicating that AEP may not be the best fit for students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences without a comprehensive psychosocial support (PSS) component and trauma-responsive teaching methods. Children formerly associated with armed forces and groups may have difficulty focussing on their studies due to emotional or psychological issues such as anxiety, depression or trauma. Further research is needed to determine if AEP is the most appropriate response for former CAAFAG and if it is possible to integrate accelerated social and emotional learning (SEL) into AEP.

See the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) Guide to the Accelerated Education to Principles for guidance on enhancing the quality of Accelerated Education (AE) programming

81   Gupta, Sweta & Marchais, Gauthier & Brandt, Cyril & Matabishi, Samuel & Marion, Pierre & Falisse, Jean-Benoît & West, Deborah & Somora, Patrick & Justino, Patricia & Nyabagaza, Pacifique & Kanyerhera, Dieudonne & Kiemtoré, Issa & Bazuzi, Christian & Tahirou, Souleymane & Ibrahim, Weifane. (2022). Teacher Well-being and Teaching Quality in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts (BRiCE Project DRC and Niger: Midline Report). 10.19088/IDS.2022.034.

82   Key informant interview, CP staff member with an INGO in DRC.

83   Key informant interview, CP manager, INGO in DRC.

84   Key informant interview, Reintegration advisor, INGO.

85   Key informant interview, former teacher and now NGO director, South Sudan.

86   Centre for the Developing Child- Harvard (nd). ACES and Toxic Stress. Retrieved from https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/aces-and-toxic-stress-frequently-asked-questions/.15th February 2023

Key recommendations

At school level
- Complementary and jointly developed Child Protection, MHPSS and Education capacity-strengthening initiatives ensure that teacher professional development is holistic and comprehensive. Continuous training also ensures teachers feel supported and equipped to work on CAAFAG interventions.

At school and community level:
- Joint Child Protection and Education teacher professional development (TPD) ensures teachers are trained and know how to work alongside Child Protection personnel. Teachers should be clear on referral mechanisms to services that provide specialised support, such as child protection case management.

- MHPSS support services are provided to teachers, PTAs and SMCs. INEE's Guidance Note for Teacher Wellbeing in Emergency Settings outlines three guiding principles- 1) Promote teachers' access to MHPSS; 2) Create enabling work environments for teachers; and 3) Enhance teacher voice, agency and leadership with key recommendations that set forth a benchmark for teacher well-being in emergencies.

- MHPSS support services are provided to Child Protection personnel collaborating and working with teachers. For Child Protection players, the Case Management Supervision and Coaching Training Package recommend supervision and coaching support for caseworkers. Chapter 4 of the guidance also explores supervision strategies that support staff care and well-being for case management teams.

> MHPSS support is critical for Child Protection and Education personnel in conflict settings, as staff often work in challenging conditions, with "little or no support for their professional development, mental health and well-being."[87]

Key resources to support MHPSS

The MHPSS in CAAFAG Programmes Resource Package (field-test version) - An inter-agency package of resources. It offers evidence-based guidance on supporting the mental health and well-being of children, families and communities in emergency, humanitarian, and post-conflict settings through CAAFAG programming.

IRC Safe and Healing Learning programme: Open source to strengthen five SEL competencies –Brain Building, Emotion Regulation, Positive Social Skills, Conflict Resolution and Perseverance. Includes a parenting support guidance note

INEE Teacher Well-Being Guidance Note: Provides key guidance on supporting teachers in crises.

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87   Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (2022). A Guidance Note for Teacher Well-being in Emergency Settings. Retrieved from https://inee.org/resources/ guidance-note-teacher-wellbeing-emergency-settings. 3rd February 2023, p. 4.

Curriculum

Given the sensitivities around curriculum, teaching and learning, a conflict-sensitive education (CSE) analysis involving localised multidimensional risk analysis is key to embedding a conflict-sensitive approach to learning. The perpetuation of negative ethnic stereotypes or biased history texts, for example, has been well documented as being a driver of conflict. In addition, conflict-sensitive education can surface gender-, ethnic and other power dynamics pre-existing to and within the conflict, social norms and sexual and gender-based violence.

The curriculum often plays a critical role in child recruitment and exacerbates community tensions.[90]

Across the Sahel, Boko Haram has long targeted schools to eliminate the perceived influence of Western education and establish Sharia law.[91]

In parts of Syria and Iraq, it is estimated that at least 250,000 children living in ISIL-controlled areas attended school,[92] where recreational activities that encourage children to fight, training children physically and teaching them to use weapons were a core component of the curriculum. Teachers were trained to implement the reformed curriculum,[93] and failure to do so resulted in punishment, which could include being fined, flogged or even death by execution.[94]

These examples underline the importance of applying a conflict-sensitive lens to curriculum review, particularly when children are reintegrated back into divisive education systems; or when there has been a shift in authority due to the conflict.

As noted in the Guidance Note: Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education Programming in Humanitarian Action, p.44:

"Child Protection and Education players, using conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding principles, are well placed to (a) identify and monitor existing and new patterns of discrimination and exclusion, (b) address them in the design and implementation of the integrated or joint programming within communities and learning centres, and (c) expose and address more established systemic injustices (including historic or (neo)colonial ones for instance) that the education system and curriculum may contribute to or reinforcing."

Case study

In Somalia, central to the success of the development of the new Bar ama Baro[95] Accelerated Basic Education (ABE) curriculum was due to its participatory review process. The curriculum development and validation process included ministry-level staff, teachers, and curriculum writers. In addition, curriculum writers were invited to observe teachers using the curriculum. As a result, curriculum legitimacy was further strengthened as communities, teachers and children reviewed and provided feedback. Communities also felt a sense of ownership as they had been given a crucial role in collectively defining the values they wanted to be instilled in their children through the new curriculum.[96]

90   Bush, K. and Saltarelli, D. (Eds.). (2000). The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children. Florence, Italy: UNICEF Innocenti Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight4.pdf

91   Murugaiah, K. (2023). "We make do": Experiences and beliefs of teachers working in conflict-affected Niger. International Journal of Educational Development, 100, 102808. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102808

92   Arvisais, O. & Guidère, M. (2020). Education in conflict: how Islamic State established its curriculum, Journal of Curriculum Studies, DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2020.1759694

93   al-Jablawi, H.(2016). A Closer Look at the Educational System of ISIS. Atlantic Council. Retrieved from https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/a-closer-look-at-isis-s-educational-system/

94   Arvisais, O. & Guidère, M. (2020). Education in conflict: how Islamic State established its curriculum, Journal of Curriculum Studies, DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2020.1759694

95   Key informant interview.

96   Key informant interview with a private organisation, working in Somalia.

97   INEE (2013). INEE Guidance note on Conflict Sensitive Education. Retrieved from https://inee.org/resources/inee-guidance-note-conflict-sensitive-education

98   UNESCO (2009). Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for Teachers. Retrieved from https://inee.org/resources/stopping-violence-schools-guide-teachers

99   Ibid.

100   The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2022). CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit Guidelines. New York.

Key recommendations

Strategies can include but are not limited to

At school and community level:

- Child Protection and Education players work jointly to recognise the skills children and youth bring to the classroom. For example, children and youth are supported to engage in school governance structures, child rights clubs, mentoring and creative and sporting activities that foster cohesion and a sense of belonging to the school community.

At community level:

- Education players use the INEE Conflict Sensitive Education package (p.54-56) to analyse the two-way interaction between the conflict context, education system and policies. This analysis informs the development, planning and delivery of education.

- Education players facilitate processes that ensure government/authorities, students, caregivers, faith representatives and broader community stakeholders can meaningfully co-design any curriculum revisions to ensure cultural appropriateness and community acceptance.

At national/policy level

- Education players develop supplementary teaching and learning materials that incorporate conflict-sensitive education principles. This is further enhanced by teacher professional development that aligns and supports the revised curriculum.

- Child Protection and Education players participate in inter-agency coordination mechanisms (e.g. Education and Protection inter-agency coordination groups) to advocate for relevant authorities to uphold the Safe Schools Declaration and implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Attack and Military Use and Geneva Call's deeds of commitment.

Key resources to support curriculum development

USAID Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programmes is a user-friendly checklist considering conflict sensitivity to programme design, implementation, and monitoring.

INEE Conflict Sensitive Quick Reference Tool provides guidance and tools for conducting a CSE analysis, including reviewing and adjusting curriculum and teaching approaches.

UNESCO Safety, Resilience, and Social Cohesion: A Guide for Curriculum Developers provides key steps for curriculum enhancement to promote safety, resilience, and social cohesion.

Finnish Church Aid, Peace Education Manual, presents 34 lessons to enhance youth's understanding of peace & security issues and build their capacity to participate meaningfully and contribute to peace processes.

101   Save the Children (2019). Safe Schools Action Pack 1. Retrieved from https://re-sourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/ACTION-PACK-1_-FINAL-v.1.0.pdf/

102   Save the Children (2019). Safe Schools: All children learn and are protected by 2030. Retrieved from https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Safe+Schools+2+pager_0.pdf/

103   Save the Children (2018). Safe Schools Approach: Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance. Retrieved from https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Monitoring-Evaluation-and-Research-Guidance.pdf/, p.8

104   Save the Children (2022). Safe Schools Community Training Tool. Retrieved from https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/safe-schools-community-training-tool/

Safety at School
Prevention of violence in educational settings

In humanitarian contexts, where armed conflicts, displacement and other emergencies have disrupted normalcy, violence within educational settings or en route increases. Violence takes various forms and includes external and internal factors:

Corporal or physical punishment and the threat of it: corporal or physical punishment can take many forms, including hitting the child with the hand or with an object (such as a cane, belt, whip, or shoe): kicking, shaking, or throwing the child, pinching, or pulling their hair; forcing a child to stay in an uncomfortable or undignified position, or to take excessive physical exercise; burning or scarring the child.[98]

Humiliating or Degrading Punishment takes various forms, such as psychological punishment, verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation, or ignoring the child.[99]

During conflict, education facilities may be used for military purposes and deliberately attacked or threatened. Armed groups may use them to recruit or diffuse political or religious ideology.[100]

Violence in or en route to education facilities is a serious problem that can devastate students, staff and the community. Different stakeholders, including teachers and children, can perpetuate violence in and en route to educational settings. It leads to school drop-out, disengagement and, in some cases, could result in children joining or returning to armed forces and armed groups.

Preventing violence in or en route to educational settings is crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of students, teachers and the entire community. Addressing school violence's complex origins needs comprehensive measures involving engaging stakeholders across the socio-ecological model to promote safe schools.[101] Collaborative efforts between children, teachers, parents and teachers' associations, caregivers, child protection personnel, community leaders and government are essential in adopting a holistic approach towards preventing and combating violence in and en route to education settings. Preventing violence requires a multi-pronged approach, as highlighted in the INEE & CPHA Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education Programming Guidance Note :

"Child Protection and Education actors can support the implementation and strengthening of national policies (e.g. disciplinary codes, awareness raising and compliance with mandatory reporting systems), the development of protective guidelines (e.g. Teacher and Child-Friendly Space Code of Conduct) as well as robust orientation/training and monitoring systems for accountability [community-based child protection committees]."

Similarly, Save the Children, for example, has developed a common Safe Schools approach. Authorities develop and strengthen policies and systems; school safety management protects children in and around schools; school facilities create a safe and enabling environment, and teachers and children demonstrate self-protection knowledge, skills and behaviours for the safety and protection of children in and around schools.[102] Education in CAAFAG programmes can mitigate the immediate and long-term impacts of violence on children's education, well-being and prospects by prioritising violence prevention in schools within humanitarian contexts.

> ### Case study
> #### Safe Schools Advocacy
>
> Source: Save the Children Safe Schools Common Approach
>
> Safe Schools works with a range of different partners to protect children in and around schools. Government authorities are key partners for delivery and achieving sustainable results at scale.
>
> Depending on the context, advocacy efforts could include: any of the following Seeking Government endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration to support schools during times of conflict, Advocating to hold perpetrators of violence to account, Campaigning to end Physical and Humiliating Punishment in schools, Championing national commitment to implement Comprehensive School Safety.
>
> Safe Schools is a strong focus of Save the Children's Stop the War on Children campaign, which aims to help keep school children safe from the impact of conflict.

Key recommendations

At school level

- **Peer Support:** Education and Child Protection personnel support the development of peer support programmes and social, emotional learning (SEL) activities to promote positive relationships and conflict resolution strategies amongst learners.

- **Positive Classroom Management:** Education and Child Protection personnel collaborate to conduct teacher training on positive discipline techniques, promoting non-violent and respectful approaches to managing student behaviour and addressing the emotional and psychological needs of students who have experienced violence or trauma through trauma-responsive teaching methods.

- **School facilities meet standards of safety and protection.** This could include gender-safe segregated latrines, lighting and boundary walls.[103]

At community level

- **Awareness and Community Engagement:** Informed by conflict-sensitive education approaches, parents and teachers associations and Child Protection personnel conduct community awareness campaigns to strategise with parents, community members, and local leaders around preventing violence in schools.[104] Communities are actively involved in creating safe school environments, including en route to school.

- **Monitoring systems of accountability:** Facilitate the formation of community-based protection committees to monitor and respond to violent incidents en route to school, ensuring the active participation of parents, teachers and local authorities.

At national/policy level

- **Joint advocacy and training initiatives led by Child Protection and Education inter-agency coordination groups or a national-level CAAFAG Task Force** to identify and train stakeholders to minimise the risk of violence and abuse within and en route to education facilities.

- **Data Collection and Reporting:** Train Education and Child Protection personnel on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), ensuring their awareness of how to report attacks on education facilities. Regularly collect and analyse safety perceptions and incident data to notify evidence-based intervention.

- **Child Safeguarding:** Establish comprehensive child safeguarding policies and procedures within schools and education programmes. This includes clear guidelines on preventing and responding to violence, mechanisms for reporting incidents and training for staff on child protection protocols.

> ### Key resources to prevent violence in educational settings
>
> Safe School Common Approach is an all-hazards approach to keep children safe in and around school from violence, natural and everyday hazards and conflict.
>
> "Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for Teachers" examines various forms of violence that take place in schools, and offers practical suggestions as to what teachers can do to prevent them.
>
> https://inee.org/resources/youth-action-against-violence-schools Youth in Action Against Violence in Schools This manual is packed with exercises and activities to deal with school violence.
>
> See INEE and CPHA's Guidance Note: Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education Programming in Humanitarian Action p.70-84 for key activities, indicators and resources related to safe access and protective learning environments.

Prevention of School-related Gender-Based Violence

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) affects millions of children, families and communities. School-related gender-based violence can take various forms, including bullying, corporal punishment, verbal or sexual harassment, non-consensual touching, sexual coercion, sex for grades, assault, and rape. Women, girls, and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), particularly those with disabilities, are at a higher risk of SRGBV. However, male, female, and gender-diverse students and teachers can be both victims and perpetrators. Addressing sexual and gender-based violence in schools becomes even more critical when providing education

105   Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2022). Guidance Note: Supporting Integrated Child Protection and Education in Humanitarian Action. New York, NY. https://inee.org/resources/supporting-integrated-child-protection-and-education-programminghumanitarian-action,p.49

for children formerly associated with armed forces and groups. This is due to the increased likelihood of their previous exposure to forms of violence, including sexual exploitation, rape, forced marriages, and intersecting factors that exacerbate their vulnerability. Education providers must have Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policies to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including reporting mechanisms and trained staff to support survivors appropriately.

Other initiatives, such as providing access to sexual reproductive health education, developed in consultation with communities to ensure culturally appropriate messaging can help children understand their rights and risks. This diagram, taken from the INEE Guidance Note on Gender Equality in and through Education, p.59, illustrates an example of official and unofficial referral pathways for SRGBV, including the role of school principals, PTAs, traditional authority figures, as well as medical, social, and legal services.

Example of an official and unofficial referral pathway identified in an SRGBV study in Liberia
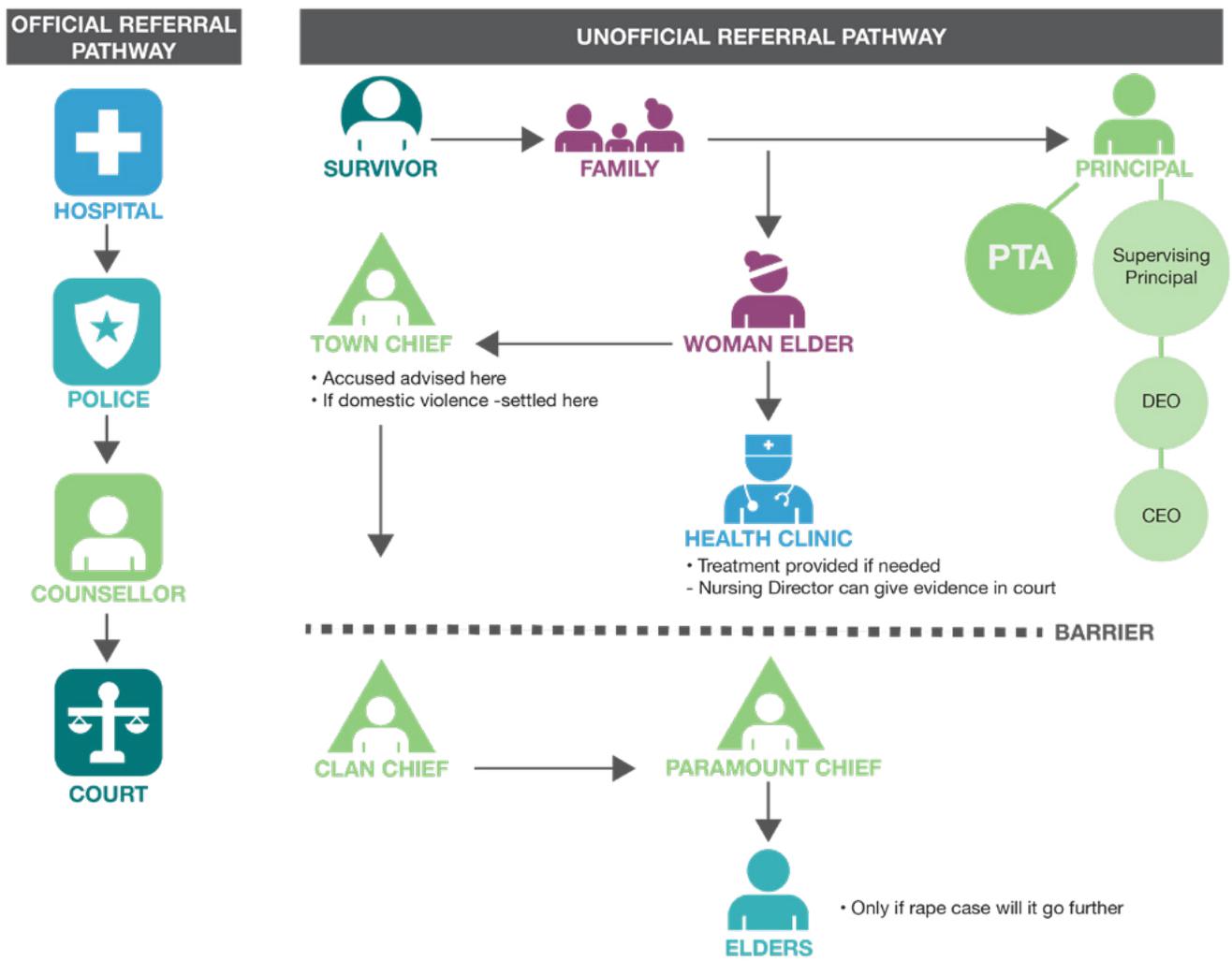
Case study

In South Sudan, Plan International conducts regular **SGBV safety audits** within schools. Through gender-responsive safety audits, parents and teacher associations and School Management Committees can map out concerns and develop a response plan. In the children and adolescents-friendly spaces, many peer-to-peer discussions have been to support boys and girls, including access to sexual reproductive health education (SRHE).

Key recommendations

At school and community level:

- Education players prioritise gender-transformative teaching. Teachers should be trained in gender-responsive teaching to promote positive gender-based behaviours. This will create a more supportive and equitable environment for children and young people.

- Child Protection actors support parents, teacher associations and school management committees, and children to conduct regular safety audits that map out risks and concerns in and around education facilities. Response plans are developed to ensure that educational settings remain safe for all students.

- Through a multi-pronged approach, Child Protection and Education players work with community stakeholders to address the stigma and ostracisation girls face.

- Child Protection players work alongside education providers to create safe spaces and support systems for girls to reintegrate into the formal education system. This could include providing dignity kits and supporting menstrual hygiene management.

- Child Protection, Education, and health players collaborate to provide access to sexual reproductive health education (SRHE). Access to SRHE will reduce the risks of SGBV by providing children and youth with access to information and resources they need to protect their sexual health and understand their rights to consent and bodily autonomy.

At school, community and national level

- Child Protection and Education players work together to create and support robust feedback and reporting mechanisms and strengthen the capacities of education personnel on child safeguarding, Codes of Conduct and safe identification and referral of child survivors. Training and policies should be connected to national, mandatory reporting and safeguarding systems, including Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) reporting procedures.[105]

Key resources to prevent SGBV

Prevention of SGBV in education: IASC Guidelines Integrating Gender-Based Violence Intervention in Humanitarian Action-Education provides guidance and key tips for setting up safety audits to gender-transformative teaching approaches.

CPMS: Standard 9 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence provides guidance and key actions to prevent SGBV.

What We Know (and Don't Know) about Violence against Girls and Boys in School examines school-related gender-based violence.

UNGEI (2021) A Whole School Approach to Prevent SRGBV Minimum standards and monitoring framework provides a framework to guide policymakers and practitioners in designing school violence prevention programmes and strengthening response actions.

Conclusion

This Technical Note has illustrated that if there are no deliberate steps taken to safeguard and promote inclusive and protective education, education settings can place children formerly associated with armed forces and groups at risk of being exposed to various forms of child protection risks, exploitation, and abuse, either on the educational premises, during the commute to class or within their communities. Former CAAFAG are also at risk of dropping out of school and being re-recruited if they do not feel integrated within their school and supported by their family and community. Fortunately, this Technical Note has highlighted many examples of how Education and Child Protection players, children, youth, parents, caregivers, communities and wider stakeholders can work together to design and implement effective education programmes, policies and advocacy.

By incorporating joint and integrated intervention and establishing effective coordination mechanisms, education intervention can be designed to meet the specific needs of children associated with armed forces and groups and support their physical, psycho-social, emotional and cognitive development. By leveraging their collective expertise, Education and Child Protection players, in partnership with children, youth, parents, caregivers, communities and wider stakeholders, have critical roles in designing education interventions that foster the development of children's potential, promote their reintegration into society, and contribute to sustainable peace and development.
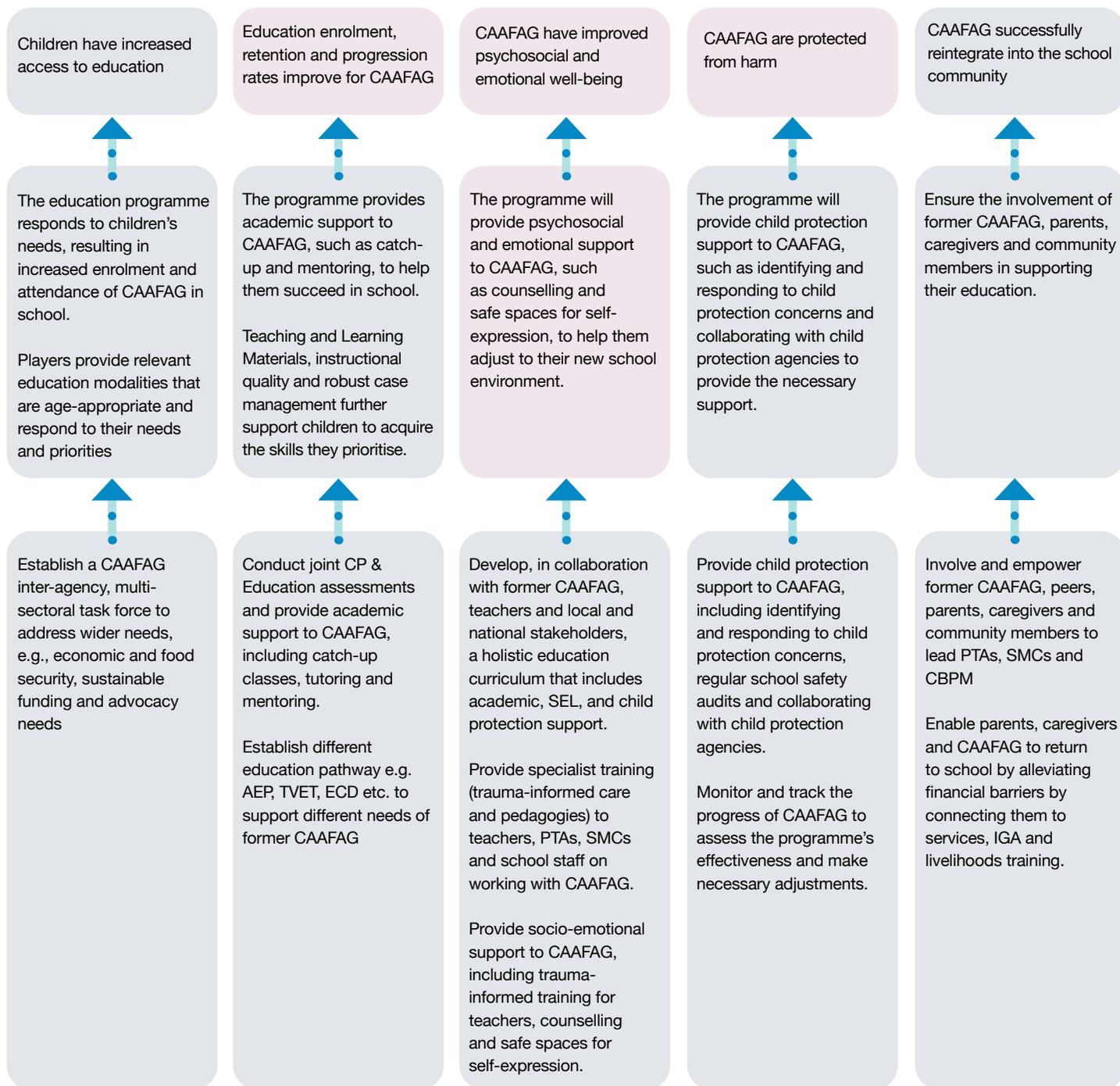

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Annex One: Theory of Change

This is a generic theory of change that needs to be adapted according to the education model, e.g. ECD, Catch-Up etc., as well as other relevant sector and inter-sector guidance.

Goal: Children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups will have access to a holistic education that supports their reintegration into education and promotes their mental health and psycho-socio-emotional well-being.

Children have increased access to education	Education enrolment, retention and progression rates improve for CAAFAG	CAAFAG have improved psychosocial and emotional well-being	CAAFAG are protected from harm	CAAFAG successfully reintegrate into the school community
The education programme responds to children's needs, resulting in increased enrolment and attendance of CAAFAG in school. Players provide relevant education modalities that are age-appropriate and respond to their needs and priorities	The programme provides academic support to CAAFAG, such as catch-up and mentoring, to help them succeed in school. Teaching and Learning Materials, instructional quality and robust case management further support children to acquire the skills they prioritise.	The programme will provide psychosocial and emotional support to CAAFAG, such as counselling and safe spaces for self-expression, to help them adjust to their new school environment.	The programme will provide child protection support to CAAFAG, such as identifying and responding to child protection concerns and collaborating with child protection agencies to provide the necessary support.	Ensure the involvement of former CAAFAG, parents, caregivers and community members in supporting their education.
Establish a CAAFAG inter-agency, multi-sectoral task force to address wider needs, e.g., economic and food security, sustainable funding and advocacy needs	Conduct joint CP & Education assessments and provide academic support to CAAFAG, including catch-up classes, tutoring and mentoring. Establish different education pathway e.g. AEP, TVET, ECD etc. to support different needs of former CAAFAG	Develop, in collaboration with former CAAFAG, teachers and local and national stakeholders, a holistic education curriculum that includes academic, SEL, and child protection support. Provide specialist training (trauma-informed care and pedagogies) to teachers, PTAs, SMCs and school staff on working with CAAFAG. Provide socio-emotional support to CAAFAG, including trauma-informed training for teachers, counselling and safe spaces for self-expression.	Provide child protection support to CAAFAG, including identifying and responding to child protection concerns, regular school safety audits and collaborating with child protection agencies. Monitor and track the progress of CAAFAG to assess the programme's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.	Involve and empower former CAAFAG, peers, parents, caregivers and community members to lead PTAs, SMCs and CBPM Enable parents, caregivers and CAAFAG to return to school by alleviating financial barriers by connecting them to services, IGA and livelihoods training.

Assumptions:
1. Children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups face significant educational barriers and require specialised support to reintegrate into the school community successfully.
2. A holistic education programme that includes academic, psychosocial, emotional and child protection support will effectively address children's and youth's needs.
3. The involvement of community members, parents and caregivers in the programme will increase its effectiveness and sustainability.

Annex Two: Decision Making
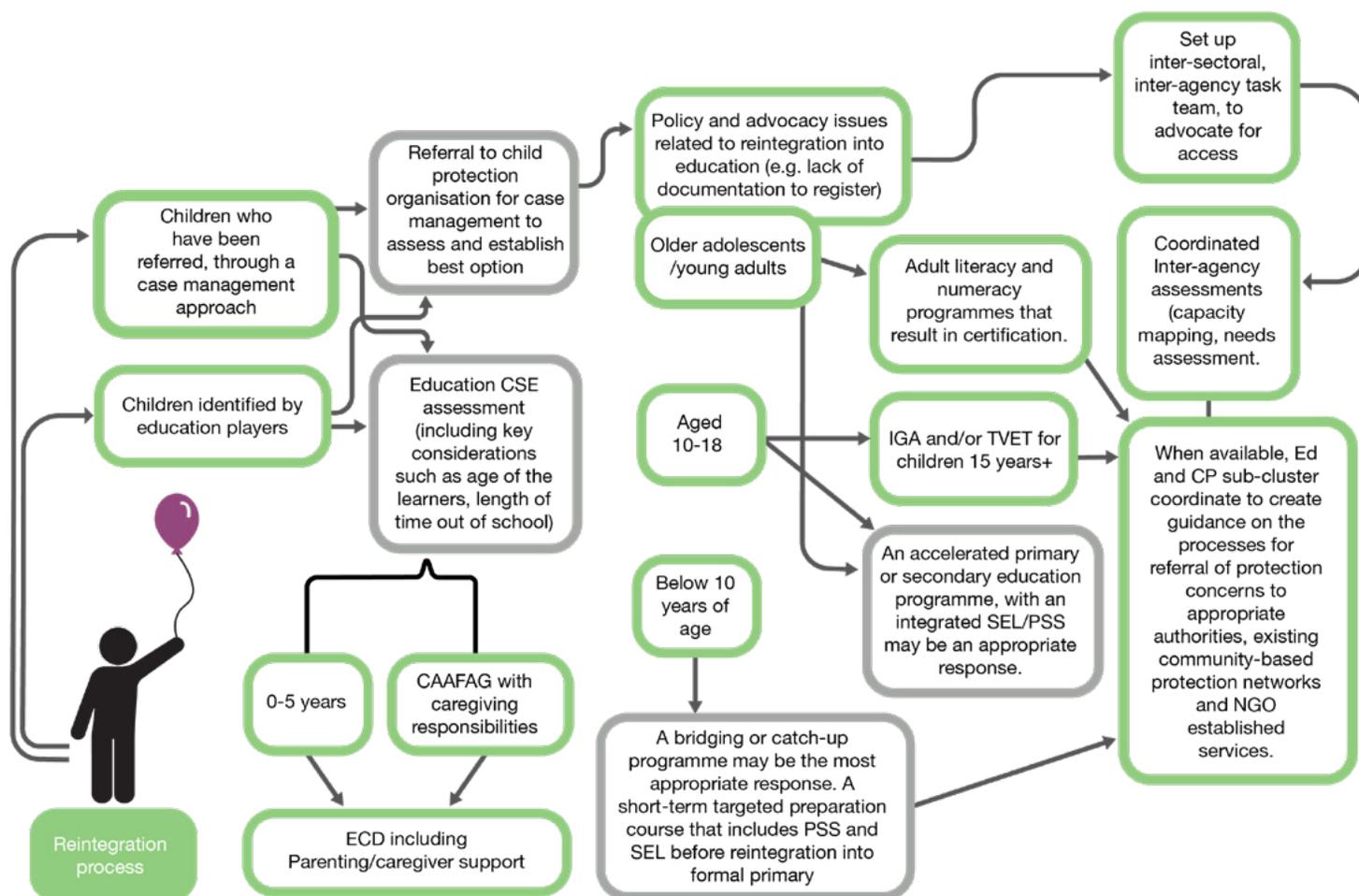
Key components to be mainstreamed across all programmes:

Refer to the CAAFAG Programme Development Toolkit at all stages of Education interventions for CAAFAG programme development, alongside the INEE EiE and Child Protection Minimum Standards. Refer to the IASC Guidelines on Integrating SGBV prevention in schools, and INEE Conflict Sensitive Education toolkit.

In setting up programmes, consult extensively with former CAAFAG. Be mindful many children and youth, particularly girls, may have caregiving responsibilities. In order for them to return to learning, ECD and parenting support programmes, alongside other education interventions, are key.