

Box 3.2.1 Child Protection Advisers in UN Peacekeeping Operations

Efforts to protect children in conflict and postconflict societies, especially those hosting UN peace operations, have made remarkable progress since the mid-1990s. The Secretary-General's August 1996 note to the General Assembly, titled "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" (UN Doc. A/51/306), raised awareness about the issue and led to the appointment of a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in 1997. Between 1999 and 2004, the number of reports by the Secretary-General to the Security Council that mentioned child protection rose significantly. The adoption of Resolution 1261 (1999) was significant, as it called for "training on the protection, rights, and welfare of children" to be included in UN activities. This resulted in the creation of a new category of peacekeeping personnel known as child protection advisers (CPAs).

The first CPAs were deployed in the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) during 2000. Operating under the overall guidance of mission heads, the principal tasks of CPAs included advising the senior mission leadership and other mission components on a comprehensive approach to child protection, advocating child rights and protection with other relevant partners on the ground, collaborating with child protection personnel

both inside and outside the mission, and reporting on violations and other related issues. To date, CPAs have been deployed in seven missions, with a strength of sixty posts in six missions during 2007. Current large-scale CPA deployments include thirty-four posts in the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and seventeen in the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC).

In May 2007, the Peacekeeping Best Practices Section of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) commissioned a survey of the activities and impact of CPAs in field. The survey results were derived from responses by current and former CPAs, interviews held with stakeholders at UN headquarters, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and field visits to MONUC and UNMIS. Notably, the survey found the following:

- Monitoring and reporting activities of CPAs have brought attention to the needs of children affected by all stages of conflict, particularly in regard to the UN peace and security agenda.
- Collaboration with various partners has facilitated a general mainstreaming of child protection issues in other mission components.

- CPAs have been instrumental in implementing the UN's zero-tolerance policy toward sexual exploitation and abuse.

While the accomplishments of the CPAs have been significant, they have also been limited by several factors, including the inability of CPAs to advocate and identify resources for national child protection institutions and raise awareness among the whole spectrum of mission components. The survey found that, despite clearly defined terms of reference for CPAs, the inconsistency in child protection mandates provided to each mission and the varied deployment of CPAs per mission have led to confusion over their role in relation to other actors. Other obstacles include dissimilar profiles and selection processes of CPAs, a nonexistent DPKO operational support capacity, and an inability to fully and consistently collaborate with other child protection professionals on the ground. The survey indicated that all of these issues can be resolved through increased coordination and clarification from the DPKO, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).