

Recruitment and use of children – the need for response in Jordan

Child Protection Sub-Working Group

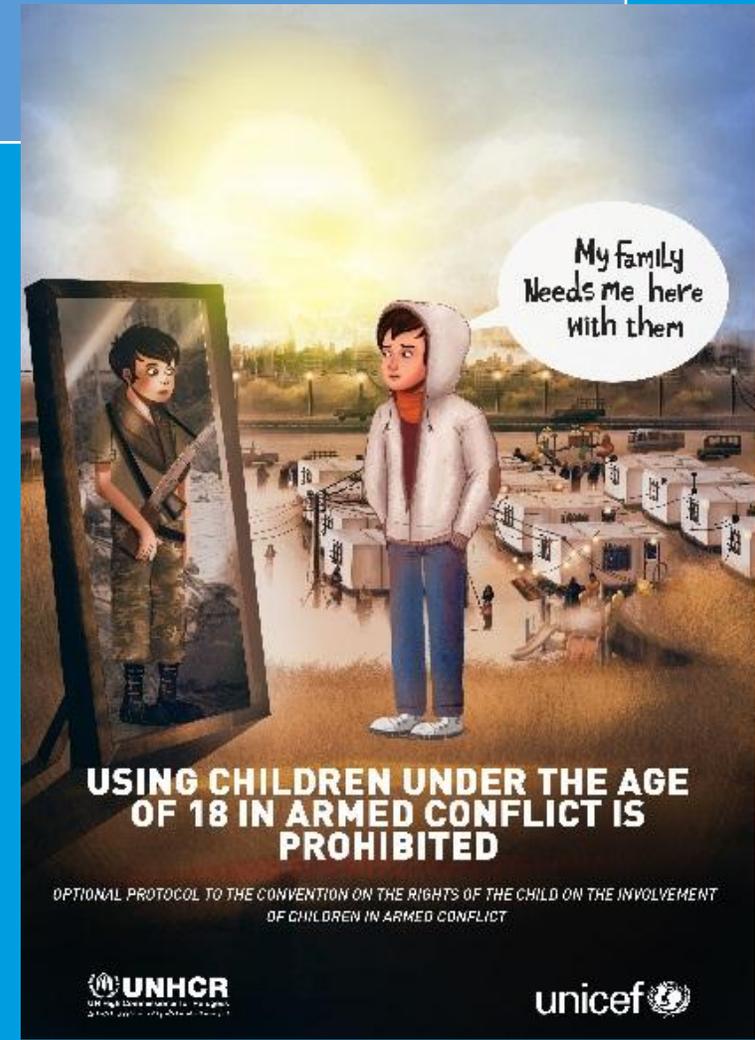


Background on recruitment & use in Syria

- Recruitment and use of children is key protection concern in Syria
- Secretary-General's reports on CAAC documented the active recruitment of children under-18 by numerous armed groups including the FSA, ISIS, Ahrar Al Sham, YPG and Jabhat al-Nusra for combat and non-combat roles.
- MRM for Syria in Jordan has documented cases of recruitment and use of children.

Background on campaign

- UNICEF and UNHCR developed posters were created to dissuade children to go back and fight in Syria.
- Two posters were assessed through 10 individual interviews and 3 FGDs to analyze the efficacy of the posters.



Findings from interviews

- 10 children/adolescents formerly associated with armed groups in Syria were interviewed.
- 9 out of 10 interviewees stated that they want to return to Syria to rejoin the FSA.
- 2 of the 10 interviewees had attempted to flee Zaatari and to return to Syria but were caught.

Findings from interviews

- Interviewees said that they wanted to return to Syria because of nationalistic reasons or because of their support for the FSA.
- However, when asked what might convince them to stay, children mentioned the following:
 - Better educational opportunities, including vocational education
 - More distractions in the camp, including more playgrounds and activities
 - Improved camp conditions
- Other reasons cited for wanting to rejoin the FSA included:
 - Lack of purpose in the camp
 - Inability to move freely
 - Feelings of isolation

Findings from FGDs

- FGDs were conducted with boys aged 14 to 17, mothers and fathers
- 20 out of 21 boys interviewed want to return to Syria (though not necessarily to engage with armed groups)
- Widespread cultural acceptance of the participation of 15 to 17 year olds in armed groups. Fathers agreed that boys 14 and above were at a suitable age to be “warriors.”

Findings from FGDs

- Some parents stated that they would support their children if they wanted to return to Syria to join armed groups. Nevertheless, further discussion with mothers suggests that mothers support the idea *in theory* but do not *actually* want their children to do so.
- Parents indicated that children and their families want to leave due to:
 - Feelings of humiliation and disenfranchisement
 - Lack of freedom of movement
 - Inability to work
 - Lack of educational opportunities

Gaps in response

- No existing assessments to understand scope of problem in Jordan
- Lack of vocational training opportunities to encourage former child soldiers and at-risk children to stay in Jordan
- Lack of other programming targeting former child and at-risk children
- Returns procedures make it easy for children to return to Syria without family members

Proposed response

- Conduct comprehensive assessment to understand risk of Syrian children being recruited from Jordan, the scope of the problem, and possible responses.
- Expand existing UNICEF-UNHCR public information campaign, including through development of video using same character as posters and other means of communication
- Develop social media campaign
- Develop and conduct a prevention activity based on results of assessment targeting at-risk youth
- Continue to support MRM on grave violations against children in Syria