



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP
**Guiding Principles for Partnerships to End Violations Against
Children During Armed Conflict**

JULY 2006

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[The UN Security Council] underlines further that this [monitoring and reporting] mechanism must operate with the participation of and in cooperation with national Governments and relevant United Nations and civil society actors, including at the country level (para. 2b).

UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1612, JULY 2005

The development and strengthening of civil society networks for advocacy, protection, monitoring and rehabilitation, at the national and the subregional level, should become a particular priority. This is the best way to ensure local ownership and sustainability. It will require enhanced support and assistance from international partners (para. 81).

***REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL
(A/59/695-S/2005/72) February 9, 2005***

Partnerships today are an integral part of the work of many United Nations organizations and of particular relevance to those who have the on-the-ground capacities to deliver To succeed in this undertaking, Governments and United Nations organizations will need to continue to give encouragement and support to promising approaches and initiatives.

***REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
Enhanced Cooperation Between the United Nations and All Relevant Partners,
in Particular the Private Sector
(A/58/15) August 18, 2003***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Appalling abuses continue to be committed against children affected by armed conflict, despite the substantial strides made by the United Nations Security Council and the international community since the adoption of the Security Council's six resolutions establishing an architecture for monitoring, reporting and eventually holding perpetrators of violations against children accountable. With the adoption of the UN Security Council's Resolution 1612 in July 2005, and the creation of the groundbreaking Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict within the Security Council, implementation must focus more than ever on the field, on the local communities under attack and on the most effective ways to operate the nascent UN monitoring and reporting mechanisms (MRM) mandated by Resolution 1612.¹

Drawing on experiences working with field-based organizations around the world, the Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict (Watchlist) network concludes that a monitoring, reporting *and* response mechanism will only succeed in halting violations against children if it is built upon genuine, collaborative, operational partnerships among diverse organizations.²

Watchlist identifies “why” both UN agencies and national, local and community-based organizations can profit from operational partnership and outlines their different strengths, these include: local and national partners’ access to information on violations against children in their own communities, their ability in some situations to take immediate action to respond, and the need for local involvement to ensure sustainability. Similarly UN partnership is advantageous for partner organizations because of the UN’s ability to respond to reported violations at a higher level, its ability to provide capacity building support, and the ‘protection buffer’ which working in the UN provides in many situations.

Work in field-based working groups is recommended, and three building blocks for creating effective working groups are presented: proper management, careful selection of working group members and adequate support for the working group and all participating organizations to carry out monitoring, reporting and response activities.

Guiding Principles: The Crux of Authentic and Successful Partnerships

Strong operational partnerships in which all partners are respected and empowered to work together effectively and efficiently will ultimately increase protection of children in situations of armed conflict. In order to yield positive results, “operational partnerships” must depict a mutually respectful method of developing, overseeing and evaluating activities with

¹ UNSC Resolution 1612(2)(a) calls for a monitoring and reporting mechanism to “provide timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law.”

² The term “partnership” can be applied to a variety of different working relationships. The use of the term “operational partnerships” in this document refers to situations during which two independent organizations or agencies work actively and collaboratively together towards shared goals, including meeting regularly and potentially carrying out joint project activities and following the principles of transparency, equity, open communication and others specified in this document. The terms “partnership” and “partners” in this document refer to operational partnerships.

one or more organizations and should be applied to projects or activities simply because they are undertaken by more than one organization.

Although the activities and focus of partnerships will vary in different contexts, all operational partnerships should be established on a shared set of principles that will guide the tone and methodology of joint initiatives. Adherence to these guiding principles will lead to strong working relationships and will help to improve the security and protection of rights of children caught in armed conflicts.

These guiding principles are outlined below and described in greater detail in the second section of this paper.

Guiding Principles for Building Effective Partnerships:

- 1. Transparency**
- 2. Shared goals: halting violations and seeking remedies**
- 3. Guidance provided by local partners**
- 4. Open communication**
- 5. Equality and mutual respect in identifying problems and generating solutions**
- 6. Adequate training for all partners involved**

Overview of Recommendations

- Call for the development and sustainability of strong operational partnerships by encouraging the UN and civil society to work collaboratively together to prepare guidelines for conducting operational partnerships in accordance with the principles of transparency, open communication, equity, shared goals and others (the guiding principles) set out in this document.
- Mobilize funds to support the effective development and sustainability of operational partnerships and working groups on monitoring, reporting and response that abide by the guidelines to be developed collaboratively by the UN and civil society.
- Request an independent assessment of the quality of operational partnerships in the UN's monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM). This assessment should be conducted by outside reviewers at the end of a two-year time frame.
- As a priority, member states should activate embassies or other diplomatic offices in conflict-affected areas to include action towards successful and complete implementation of the UN-based MRM in accordance with UNSCR 1612, within their humanitarian work plans. This should include the regular review of progress on the development of operational partnerships and working groups in accordance with the guiding principles.
- Civil Society organizations should seek out effective operational partnerships with the UN in order to enhance M,R&R activities in remote areas where violations against children in armed conflict are occurring.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is little debate that the goal of any monitoring, reporting and response (M,R&R) system on violations against children and armed conflict (CAC) must be to diminish and ultimately end the violations being committed against children and to seek remedies for those already endured. In any context this is a challenging proposition, but in an armed conflict or post-conflict situation it becomes even more difficult due to instability, lack of infrastructure and the high level of mistrust among affected populations that often exists during or after a conflict. Further, the culture of impunity for perpetrators that often reigns in conflict and post-conflict settings requires significant time and political goodwill to eradicate. In many situations of armed conflict, this may also require capacity-building for stakeholders, on-the-ground advocacy, example-setting, provision of social services, strengthened judicial systems and overall persistence.

Despite these challenges, in armed conflict situations throughout the world, various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and community-based organizations have worked independently or in coalitions to gather information on violations against children. In some instances, these groups have also taken steps to seek remedies or halt violations. Yet, for a variety of reasons, these efforts have often been ad hoc, fragmented or incomplete, with little effective communication and collaboration between different agencies and organizations. The work achieved by these ad hoc coalitions would substantially benefit from the implementation of strong operational partnerships in which there is diminished overlap, increased efficiency and more information-sharing between organizations, ultimately leading to greater protection for children.

Developing and sustaining authentic operational partnerships requires genuine efforts to build on the strengths of each participating organization in order to utilize the most efficient, effective and safe means of gathering and documenting information about violations against children and, most importantly, of *responding* to reports of violations.

Experience of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (Watchlist) strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national and international NGOs, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, Watchlist strategically collects and disseminates information on violations against girls and boys in situations of armed conflict in order to influence key decision makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children.

As an international network, Watchlist has a unique ability to bring together field-based expertise and international policy analysis. For the past five years, Watchlist has pursued the strategic goal of building effective partnerships among organizations operating at community, local, national and international levels to develop and implement M,R&R projects. These projects include provision of logistical, technical and financial support for activities related to monitoring, reporting and response to violations against children in armed conflict.

Since 2001, Watchlist has worked in partnership with local civil society groups, including local child protection networks and grassroots and community-based organizations in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Nepal, to implement a series of M,R&R projects. Through these working relationships, Watchlist staff and member organizations have learned numerous lessons about creating productive partnerships and building strong networks of M,R&R activities. It is essential to recognize that different country contexts require different approaches and the local context within an individual country may change over time. With this in mind, this paper addresses the important fact that strong operational partnerships among local and international partners are likely to yield positive results for children and their communities.

Background on This Paper

This paper is the third in a series of policy briefs prepared over the past three years by Watchlist. These briefs have focused on implementing the UN Security Council's Children and Armed Conflict agenda in the field, beginning with the establishment of a strong and effective monitoring, reporting and response mechanism.

The first paper in the series³ outlined three essential areas requiring progress in order to close the gap between international commitments to protect children and the harsh reality of gross violations that children experience in conflict zones every day. These are monitoring and reporting, addressing the “children and armed conflict agenda” as a broad spectrum of violations against children and imposing graduated measures in order to achieve compliance with international child protection laws. The second paper in the series⁴ focused on the monitoring and reporting component by laying out an “Action Plan” for establishing a strong, effective and sustainable UN-based M,R&R mechanism for violations against children in armed conflicts.

This paper delves further into the UN-mandated effort to build a strong M,R&R mechanism by concentrating on a key element that must be at the foundation of the mechanism—authentic and sustainable operational partnerships among UN bodies and international, national and local civil society organizations.

This paper intends to illustrate why the success of the UN's effort to develop the mechanism rests on creating effective operational partnerships between the UN and civil society organizations. It also serves as a practical guide to the complex process of establishing operational partnerships and provides recommendations for action by all parties eager to ensure the success of this initiative. An annex at the end of the paper provides details on the realistic challenges of establishing operational partnerships and ideas for solutions to overcome these challenges.

Throughout the paper, Watchlist has included examples of its own work in the field in order to assist readers in visualizing the practical realities of day-to-day M,R&R activities in areas of active armed conflict. Partnerships between UN agencies and civil society have their unique

³ *Protecting Children in Armed Conflict: Blueprints for Compliance* (January 2004), available at www.watchlist.org

⁴ *Violations Against Children in Armed Conflicts: An Action Plan for Monitoring, Reporting and Response (M,R&R)* (October 2004), available at www.watchlist.org

assets and challenges and these examples illustrate the high points and difficulties that all organizations face when they work together in unstable environments.

II. WHY WORK IN PARTNERSHIPS FOR MONITORING, REPORTING AND RESPONSE?

The UN system and members of civil society each have great strengths and potential contributions to make towards the establishment and operation of an effective monitoring, reporting, and response system. While both groups are to be credited with independent monitoring and reporting achievements to date, closer and more equitable collaboration would yield more successful and longer-lasting results. The following section details the reasons why both civil society and UN agencies benefit from operational partnerships when conducting M,R&R activities aimed at improving protection for children in armed conflicts.

The reach of the UN's country teams and the UN's comparatively developed infrastructure position the UN well to contribute significantly to M,R&R efforts. For example, the UN has the capacity to develop and fund long-term CAC programming and to create global policies that can counter impunity and ultimately improve the lives of children living in conflict zones. At the same time, the UN's large size and sometimes cumbersome structure and procedures can, in certain instances, impede effective M,R&R activities in complex and rapidly changing conflict and post-conflict situations. Further, the UN often does not station staff in areas where grave violations are being perpetrated against children daily and therefore may not have access to consistent and timely information about violations. It is generally not economical or practical for the UN to carry out small-scale projects to respond to the immediate needs of children affected by conflict, thereby creating a gap in the response component of M,R&R activities.

Civil society organizations and groups, in contrast, often have direct access to the children and communities that suffer violations against their security and rights. Often these groups can both identify and respond to serious violations at the grassroots level. In certain situations, they may be better placed to speak out against violations without constraints or to disseminate public information. At the same time, these organizations may lack the funding or technical experience required to conduct large-scale or long-term programming. They may also face increased security risks for carrying out monitoring, reporting and response activities, due to their location inside communities that experience active armed conflict. Furthermore, these groups may be operating in remote, isolated locations suffering from broken-down infrastructure, and they may not have access to complete information about the general situation of their country or the broader regional context.

Five Reasons Why the UN Should Work with Local Civil Society Partners

1. Local partners have access to information about violations

Representatives of local partners are almost always citizens of the country being monitored and are often members of the communities in the areas where active conflict or the most grievous violations are taking place (areas to which international agencies often cannot gain access). As a result, they may have standing relationships with victims and in some cases with the perpetrators of violations and therefore may have an inherent advantage in gathering information from within their own communities. Because of their affiliation with the communities, local partners have access to specific information about violations and incidents. In addition, they can provide vital analysis about events as they occur. *This information is the essential building block of all M,R&R activities* (including monitoring trends and forecasting the direction of a conflict) and provides a clear picture of the situation on the ground in countries either experiencing or emerging from conflict.

It must also be noted that in some situations it may be extremely dangerous for local partners to gather detailed information on violations against children occurring in their communities. In these instances, it may be more practical for local organizations to inform the UN of violations requiring attention. As an international and “outside” entity, the UN may be able to more safely and effectively follow up on these cases and seek responses for children and their communities.

2. Local partners can respond immediately to reported violations

Local partners have the community connections, understanding and flexibility to provide or coordinate support for children who have been injured or otherwise harmed in armed conflicts. While members of the UN system may be limited by their reach and security constraints in responding to individual reports of violations, in many situations local partners are able to conduct activities, such as negotiations with perpetrators, in order to bring an immediate halt to violations against children and/or to provide immediate care and protection that can save children’s lives. With adequate training and financial and technical support, local partners can significantly augment these assets and also take the lead in implementing most in-country activities to address and diminish violations against children during conflict, including longer-term activities such as advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising.

3. Partnerships with local organizations lead to long-term sustainability

Local involvement is necessary to ensure that any monitoring, reporting and response system can flourish and continue even after the UN’s departure. Watchlist’s experience developing monitoring and reporting projects strongly suggests that, in situations where members of the local civil society feel ownership and a sense of achievement in working on a project, they are far more likely to remain committed and engaged in these activities over the long term. Conversely, discussion with Watchlist partners suggests that when local organizations are not engaged as partners, but rather simply as contractors or implementers conducting monitoring and reporting activities, they are less invested in the activities and less likely to achieve the results they strive for (an end to violations). As a result, over time the system is more likely to break down. Building genuine operational partnerships with local civil society ensures that a monitoring and reporting system is developed in an appropriate context for each individual conflict situation, that the system is effective while the UN is present and that it can continue after the UN departs or moves to other priority areas.

CASE STUDY IN SUSTAINABILITY: COMMUNITY STUDY AND WELFARE CENTER IN NEPAL

Strengthening locally based capacity is central to ensuring the long-term sustainability of M,R&R activities. Strengthening the activities of local partners' work provides valuable technical support for specific projects and also has the potential to broaden the scope of M,R&R work conducted at the local level. Capacity-strengthening activities may also assure local organizations that the risks they endure in order to collect, verify and document information about violations against children is valued by international actors and that documentation of this information will help to bring about positive results for children and their communities.

In 2004, Watchlist built a partnership with the Nepali organization, Community Study and Welfare Center (CSWC), and provided resources for a project to research Nepali language media sources for information about violations against children in the context of Nepal's armed conflict. Information gathered through this process was then verified and documented in Watchlist's 2005 report, *Caught in the Middle: Mounting Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict*.

While CSWC had past experience in the area of research, this was the agency's first foray into CAC issues. The success of this small-scale project prompted the organization to build CAC work into its future core activities. The following is the rationale for this decision, as described by CSWC:

"The research project widened the horizon of our research endeavor. While going deeper to the problem of armed conflict and its negative effects on children, we identified that some more topics and areas to conduct fresh study and research.... As a result of it [the project], we ourselves established a monitoring and recording system to record details of those children who lost their lives due to the ongoing conflict.... I feel happy to say that the credit for this intuition [sic] goes to Watchlist because in the absence of this project (with Watchlist) we wouldn't have initiated (our own) project."

Since completing the Watchlist project in 2004, CSWC has been an active member of Watchlist's Partnerships for Protecting Children in Armed Conflict (PPCC) network in Nepal and has independently published monthly reports on children killed and maimed during Nepal's conflict.

4. Empowering local communities can deter future violations

Working with local civil society partners to identify, record and report violations against children can immediately increase protection, since training local community members to identify and report violations raises their awareness of abuses and of international laws and norms. This may motivate communities actively to bring a halt to the violations against their children. Knowing that members of the community can and will report on violations can be a powerful deterrent to violators and is an important step towards ending a culture of impunity.

Community members that report violations, however, often face varying degrees of security risk. Their willingness to report violations can make them targets for retribution by accused perpetrators. The existence of strong partnerships with international agencies often decreases the security risk faced by local partners who speak out about violations. Thus international partners should anticipate that both financial and logistical support and protection may be required if local partners meet threats or other forms of harassment or danger.

5. Empowering local partners leads to effective peace-building and post-conflict recovery

Working in partnership with civil society invests in the future of the country by invigorating the work of local civil society in building peace and ending conflict. It also demonstrates the UN's commitment to supporting civil society in the development of peace-building structures. In particular, creating a monitoring and reporting system that identifies and responds to international human rights violations is an important step towards democratic institution-building and ending impunity.

Six Reasons Why Civil Society Should Work with the UN

1. The UN has global reach and can provide overview analysis

In situations of conflict, communications systems often break down and local organizations may have little or no information on the context outside their remote areas, even in neighboring or nearby areas. Without broad contextual information, it may be difficult to design effective long-term strategies to combat violations. The UN can play an important role in these situations by providing local and national partners with contextual perspective beyond local villages that leads to improved child protection practices.

2. The UN may negotiate with high-level leadership of parties to conflict

The UN may have access to leadership in the government or armed groups responsible for violations against children and, in some situations, may be able to enter into discussion with these high-level leaders to seek and end abuses. In particular, in all situations included on the lists annexed to the Secretary-General's reports on Children and Armed Conflict to the Security Council, the UN field teams are obliged to establish dialogue with the perpetrators of grave violations against children in order to develop time-bound action plans to end these violations of children's security and rights.

3. The UN system can achieve high-level policy response to violations

While local partners have the flexibility and connections to respond quickly to violations and the day-to-day impact of conflict on children's lives, it is within the UN's capacity to coordinate and/or carry out high-level policy responses to remedy and halt violations against children. These actions may include creating or changing international laws or policies, or altering public opinion to end tolerance of violations. For example, through its Resolution 1612, the UN Security Council has developed a mechanism to receive reports of violations against children during armed conflicts and to impose targeted measures to hold groups that continue to violate children accountable for their actions. This mechanism has the potential to

set an important precedent and to alert violators that their crimes will not be tolerated with impunity.

4. The UN provides a “protection buffer” for local partners

Working with the UN can provide local partners with an increased level of security and/or positive visibility within their communities. For example, partnerships between local or community-based organizations and the UN or other international organizations may deter parties to armed conflict from carrying out reprisals against local groups or individuals who report on the abuses being perpetrated against children, because it is less likely that such reprisals would go unnoticed by high-level authorities. To reinforce this, in all relevant instances the UN must act swiftly and effectively to respond to any threats against M,R&R partners through public denunciations and other actions.

5. The UN can provide capacity-building support

The UN can play a vital role by providing financial and technical support to assist civil society organizations in developing, in professionalizing their operations and in enhancing their activities to monitor, report and respond to violations against children in situations of armed conflict. The UN can also support local and national NGO partners in obtaining relevant technical training or providing general guidance in areas of international expertise such as demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR), security or the use of technology. Each instance of training or capacity-building activity should be developed in close collaboration with civil society organizations to ensure that it is properly matched with the particular context of the area or region where it will take place.

6. Civil society can inform and influence UN programming

Partnering with the UN opens channels for civil society to influence UN activities to respond to the actual needs of children in the context of particular armed conflict situations. These partnerships may allow the communities that are recipients of UN programming to obtain a voice inside the UN system, ultimately enhancing benefits to children and their families.

As the UN system continues to reform and develop, local partners can play an important role by advancing UN policies to systematically include the voice of civil society in UN decisions, and encouraging the growth of a UN system that is dynamic and responsive to local context and needs.

III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS TO CONDUCT M,R&R ACTIVITIES

This section outlines guiding principles for creating strong and effective operational partnerships. While this list is not exhaustive, it reflects important concepts identified through the experience of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (Watchlist) working on monitoring and reporting activities through partnerships during the past five years. These principles should act as the basic building blocks for creating effective operational partnerships and should be implemented at the outset of partnership work.

1. Transparency

Before embarking on an operational partnership, both parties must be willing to discuss candidly their respective goals and aspirations for working together, as well as their concerns and limitations. They must agree to be open to discussing issues, at the outset and as they arise, that have the potential to affect the course and outcome of their joint monitoring and reporting project. This is particularly important for members of UN agencies, whose organization's procedures and decision-making structures may be unfamiliar to many local partners. By being consistently transparent and forthcoming with local community groups with whom they work, UN officials can help dispel misperceptions and establish realistic expectations about what a "partnership" with a UN agency would entail.

Example: In 2004, the Coalition Against the Involvement of Boys, Girls and Youth in the Armed Conflict in Colombia (the Coalition) and Watchlist worked closely together on the development of Watchlist's report, Colombia's War on Children. Following the successful publication of this report, Watchlist and the Coalition partnered on a project to conduct a series of meetings within conflict-affected communities in order to disseminate the report and its findings and to gather feedback and recommendations for further actions to be taken.

During the project period, local communities raised a number of inquiries regarding the report methodology, authors and other details. In particular, several inquiries were raised as to why local communities had not been more actively engaged in the process of developing the report. This feedback enabled Watchlist and the Coalition to more effectively address issues of transparency with local communities in future work. Subsequent to this project, both Watchlist and the Coalition have incorporated improved methodologies for transparency with local communities in their work. For example, as a standard policy, Watchlist now translates drafts of country reports into local languages in order to share it with an appropriate array of local experts and community leaders to seek their input, guidance and contributions at the earliest stage possible. Transparency in partnerships will help to alleviate the potential for mistrust or other problematic situations to arise.

2. Halting violations and seeking remedies as shared project goals

Watchlist partners across the globe unanimously reiterate that the primary motivations for people who gather information on violations against children and report them to some higher authority are to halt the abuse, obtain treatment and remedies, where possible, and seek punishment for the person(s) responsible for the violations. To achieve these goals, people living in some of the most dangerous corners of the world take significant personal risks to recount and document the violations, and they will be discouraged from doing so if they lose confidence that their work can produce positive results. It is imperative, therefore, that any partner share the other's goal to make tangible improvements in the security and rights of children in armed conflict, and these goals lie at the heart of the operational partnership.

Example: Members of Watchlist's Partnerships for Protecting Children in Armed Conflict (PPCC) Working Group in Nepal (described in detail below) have explained to Watchlist that their active participation in the PPCC network depends on the PPCC's continued

success in linking the process of gathering information on violations against children with providing tangible and positive outcomes for children.

In November 2005, a member of the PPCC Working Group reported that a district-wide strike had been called by a Maoist group in Nepal, which resulted in the closure of 22 schools, affecting 11,402 students. A PPCC local team conducted a fact-finding visit to the area of the strike. During this mission, the team met with the local area commander of the Maoists to discuss the negative impact of the indefinite school closure on the students' education and requested that the schools be permitted to reopen. Shortly after this meeting, the strike was called off and the schools were allowed to reopen after nine days of interrupted education.

As a result of this success, members of the PPCC network increased their participation in the group's activities, such as providing increased in-kind contributions and more openly sharing sensitive information with other members of the network

3. Guidance provided by local partners

Local partners in a joint M,R&R system are by far the best informed about violations taking place in their own communities, and are generally the most capable of determining the most effective immediate response to a violation taking place at the grassroots level. They are also generally the most trusted party to work with children and families and allow them to safely share information about violations. As a result, local partners must guide the process of developing joint projects at the community level, based on their intimate understanding of the social and political context and needs of the communities where they live and work. In return, the UN should complement local knowledge with information about effective projects in other villages, regions or countries, and provide vital financial and technical support and training.

Example: In 2005, the Nepali human rights organization HimRights proposed a joint project with Watchlist to develop a children's "comic book" version of Watchlist's report, Caught in the Middle: Mounting Violations Against Children in Nepal's Armed Conflict. Having worked with children and adolescents affected by armed conflict in Nepal, HimRights had been eager to disseminate information on violations to young people in a format accessible to them. Watchlist and HimRights designed a project to bring 60 young people from conflict-affected districts together for two weeks to develop and design the comic book through a participatory process. This resulted in the development, publication and broad dissemination in several local languages of a vivid comic book that effectively illustrates the impact of conflict on children for both children and adults. Although this was not an area of work that Watchlist had previously engaged in, taking guidance from the local partner led to successful results.

4. Open channels of communication: creating a feedback loop

In order to create and maintain an effective M,R&R system, open channels of communication must be maintained between partners and a feedback loop for sharing information must be established. All partners should receive and share information, and must respond to the information they receive. For example, when a local partner shares

information about a violation against a child or group of children with the UN partner, there should be an agreed upon feedback loop in place so that the local partner who reported the case will receive information about actions taken (or not taken) to follow up at regional or international levels. Without this kind of back-and-forth communication, local partners may end up feeling exploited and may decide not to take the necessary risks in order to report cases in the future or enter into future operational partnerships with UN agencies.

Example: Members of Watchlist's PPCC Working Group in Nepal meet on a monthly basis to discuss information on violations gathered by all members of the group and to decide what actions will be taken to respond to violations they encounter. One of the primary reasons for the group's success has been the willingness to openly share information with each other and to maintain clear channels of communication with their village based partners who are conducting actual data collection. PPCC has been able to steadily increase its capacity to collect and report information on violations by keeping village-based partners actively engaged in the project. PPCC members are rigorous about reporting back to village-based partners on actions taken at the national level, and in other districts, in response to reported violations and including village-level partners in relevant aspects of project design.

5. Equality and mutual respect in identifying problems and generating solutions

Both partners should be aware of any problems that arise during a partnership and should have the authority to discuss or to raise these issues. It is also vital that both partners have a role in generating ideas on how to solve problems. Partnership should mean that all partners bear responsibility for problems in the course of a project and that all are willing to work to develop the most effective solutions. Partnerships often break down when one partner bears the sole responsibility for a project or for addressing difficult situations that may arise during the project, or when one partner pushes its solution to a problem without joint decision-making. Effective operational partnerships require compromise.

Example: In 2005, Watchlist initiated a project in partnership with Ajedi-Ka, a local NGO based in Uvira in eastern DRC. Through this partnership, Ajedi-Ka was able to equip its Village Committees for Child Protection (VCCPs) with cellular phones in order to enhance their monitoring and reporting activities. Previously, violations encountered by the VCCPs would be reported to Ajedi-Ka headquarters days after the incidents occurred, because VCCP members had to travel long distances on foot and bicycle to reach Ajedi-Ka's office in Uvira. This delay hampered efforts of timely verification and reporting to local authorities. The use of cellular phones has quickly and safely increased Ajedi-Ka's ability to receive reports, and to investigate and respond to violations.

However, due to the lack of access to electricity, the VCCPs found it difficult to charge their cellular phones and relied mainly on the use of church generators on Sundays to recharge them. In some instances, individuals would travel long distances to reach a generator. Watchlist and Ajedi-Ka worked jointly to design a solution to this situation and ultimately agreed to purchase small solar panels so that each phone could be charged independently. The use of solar panels has maximized the effectiveness of each cellular phone and the VCCPs overall monitoring and reporting capacity.

6. Adequate training for all partners involved

One of the cornerstones of a sustainable system to monitor and report is adequate training for *all* participants, including both UN and civil society participants. Training must cover a variety of areas such as methods and practices of monitoring and reporting, as well as building effective operational partnerships. Training needs and programs should be jointly assessed and developed by all relevant partners. The following is a list of examples of crucial areas of training:

- guiding principles for operational partnerships
- methods for building effective partnerships
- methods for gathering and verifying information
- official definitions of violations against children
- possible response activities—both long-term and short-term solutions should be addressed regularly
- security and risk minimization
- use of information gathered and how local initiatives fit into international processes
- international human rights law and child rights
- use of technology (when applicable)

Example: In 2004, Watchlist partnered with the Search for Common Ground's Golden Kids News program in Liberia to develop a series of radio programs based on violations against children documented in Watchlist's report, Nothing Left to Lose: The Legacy of Armed Conflict and Liberia's Children. The radio programs were conceived of and developed by Liberian children and adolescents, trained by Golden Kids as "cub reporters." The project aimed to use radio to raise awareness among local communities about violations against children during and after Liberia's armed conflict and to enhance the capacity of young people to conduct this work.

Through this project, eight new "cub reporters" received comprehensive training on children's rights, child rights advocacy and basic media skills, such as information gathering, interviewing and news writing, as well as technical skills. This training enabled the new reporters, together with 10 previously trained "cub reporters" to independently write and produce 10 radio programs for a total of 300 minutes of programming, covering issues including child soldiering, trafficking, sexual exploitation, reunification of separated children and education. Each program included interviews with young people experiencing these situations, as well as with experts such as government officials, UN representatives and others. This training enabled the young activists to carry out this complex project and has prepared them to carry out many other projects in the years ahead.

IV. USING OPERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS TO BUILD EFFECTIVE WORKING GROUPS⁵

The development of field-based working groups that utilize the different areas of expertise and combined strengths of the participating organizations has the potential to lead to child protection that is more comprehensive and effective than what any single organization or agency could achieve independently. Building and maintaining multi-operational working groups should be based on the guiding principles outlined above for operational partnerships and should also necessitate attention in areas unique to multi-organization coalitions. Equity, respect and reasonable expectations are particularly necessary for the creation of effective working groups.

WATCHLIST WORKING GROUP IN NEPAL: PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (first convened the Partnerships for Protecting Children in Armed Conflict (PPCC) Working Group in Nepal in February 2005, following more than one year of collaborative M,R&R work with independent national organizations in Nepal. Since that time, Watchlist has been actively sponsoring PPCC group activities to protect children in the context of Nepal's armed conflict.

PPCC brings together seven national and international NGOs (including both humanitarian and human rights organizations) based in Nepal in order to document cases and trends of violations of children's right to education during armed conflict, operating in seven conflict-affected districts in Nepal. PPCC members also use information gathered by the members to seek responses or remedies for the violations they encounter. Violations include threats and attacks on students and teachers, attacks on educational facilities, abductions and recruitment from school grounds and others.

The PPCC Working Group holds regular monthly meetings in Kathmandu with representatives of all PPCC member organizations. During the meetings, members discuss violations reported during the previous month, cross reference information for verification purposes and determine what kinds of responses will be undertaken by the group. In addition, since project activities are carried out by the field offices and affiliates of the PPCC Working Group organizations, twice a year all field-based affiliates of the Working Group come to Kathmandu for training and discussion. Working Group members jointly develop and update the overall project goals and structure, including membership, locations for work and activities geared at achieving practical outcomes for children.

⁵ For many years, and especially following the 2005 Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council that put forward an Action Plan for devising a UN-based monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM), there have been various discussions, within the UN and civil society community working on the children and armed conflict agenda, regarding the structure and status of groups brought together at the field level to work jointly on monitoring and reporting activities. The terminology used to refer to these groups and the concepts for structuring these groups has varied widely in different country contexts. In this document, Watchlist uses the term "working group" to refer to any group of three or more independent organizations coming together at the field level to work jointly on M,R&R activities. This includes child protection networks, 1612 task forces and other specialized groups.

To ensure proper coordination and support, PPCC activities are managed by two staff members, a Watchlist Program Manager based in New York and a full-time PPCC Coordinator based in Kathmandu. In addition, monitoring and documentation forms for each violation have been developed jointly by the PPCC membership. Orientations on the monitoring process are provided for relevant staff of all member organizations. A database system has been designed to guarantee secure organization of data.

The following are examples of successful response activities that have been carried out by PPCC members:

- *Follow-up research/investigations
- *Local-level negotiations
- *Press releases
- *Letters to violators or others as appropriate
- *Crisis support to protect children being threatened or to provide life-saving medical care

The Building Blocks of Effective Working Groups

The design of an effective working group relies on three fundamental “building blocks”: a management structure to support the working group; strategic decisions about working group membership; and adequate support from outside donors for developing and carrying out M,R&R activities.

1. Working Group Management

It is important not to underestimate the time and resources needed to manage a monitoring and reporting working group effectively. Poor coordination can result in chaotic and inefficient planning and activities. It can even contribute to insecurity in situations where confidential information is improperly handled.

Ensuring appropriate staffing and coordination is a key principle for building success for a working group. In many instances, it may be beneficial for a child protection working group to have a full-time coordinator managing working group membership, information and activities. This coordinator role is vital to providing a solid foundation for the work of the group and to tracking the different activities of the different organizations, as well as managing data collection and response activities. It can be especially helpful when this role is filled by a national staff member or someone familiar with the country context and local language.

In addition to a coordinator, each organizational member of a working group should clearly designate a working-level focal point who will manage the organization’s participation in the working group. This ensures consistency for working group discussions and planning and allows a group to build trust among individuals.

2. Working Group Membership

Working groups are built on positive working relationships and trust between members. Working groups may be constrained by size (either by being too small or too large) or by the members who are (or are not) included. Initial membership selection for a working group can be crucial, as it sets the tone for the groups' work going forward. Thus, it is important that membership decisions are made by individuals or organizations that are deeply familiar with the UN and NGO community in the working group's country of work, and that all partners are consulted on decisions to expand or reduce membership of the working group once it has been established. This is vital for establishing and maintaining trust amongst group members, without which members are unlikely to openly share information or freely collaborate on response activities.

Above all, it is essential that all groups affiliated with a child protection monitoring group maintain a high level of neutrality in carrying out monitoring and reporting activities related to violations against children. Once this standard has been achieved, it may be beneficial for working groups to seek membership of diverse organizations with diverse areas of expertise.⁶ For instance, human rights organizations may be able to contribute experience with monitoring rights violations and can assist with sensitive response activities, such as negotiations or public denunciation of violations, while humanitarian organizations may be able to provide direct and immediate responses to reported violations through their areas of programming. Child protection agencies that are not specifically monitoring should also be included in working groups based on their ability to carry out response and preventive activities or child protection programming.

While involving organizations with diverse areas of expertise is likely to benefit the overall efforts of the working group, it also makes the need for open communication and group-led decision-making even more vital. For example, different types of organizations may have very different tolerance levels for risk, or may have different desires for anonymity or public recognition. In order to balance these differences, open and consistent communication within the group is essential.

Finally, because it is often most effective to gather information at a community level, national or regional working groups may develop partnerships or affiliations with community-level working groups or committees. These committees should have gender diversity and include leaders in the community, such as chiefs or village elders, members of the clergy where appropriate, doctors or healers, teachers, business people and, in cases where it is secure, youth representatives. These committees may work with local or national working group members to alert them to violations and to help develop response activities tailored to their area. In some cases, the creation of the village committee will itself prove to be a significant protection mechanism.

⁶ When extremely remote "grassroot" organizations that have direct access to information about the most severe violations against children are involved in working groups, they may not have the same capacity to attend monthly meetings in capital cities or other urban areas where the UN and INGOs are based. It is important to furnish appropriate financial support or other creative modes for facilitating remote participation in such instances. Also, the status of remote local organizations within the working group must be clearly defined and shaped in accordance with the general principles for developing effective operational partnerships outlined above.

3. Outside Support for M,R&R Working Groups

In order for working groups to accomplish their goals, they need both financial and technical support and commitment by outside donors. It is also reasonable to expect that working group members will initially make in-kind contributions of time and expertise. However, outside funding is essential to establishing effective coordination, proper training and appropriate crisis management mechanisms.

It is important to note the distinction between the financial needs of the working group itself and the needs of the member organizations. Once a working group has been effectively established, individual member organizations will likely require additional funding to carry out M,R&R activities, as these responsibilities are added to the daily work in which the organization is independently involved.

SUPPORTING WORKING GROUPS: THE RAEN NETWORK IN EASTERN DRC

In 2003, Watchlist worked with local partner *Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture* (ACAT-Christians Acting for the Abolition of Torture) based in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, on a project to share information about violations against children in the context of the armed conflict and to disseminate Watchlist's 2003 report on the impact of conflict on children in DRC. Following the successful execution of this project, which included three regional workshops (attended by civil society, warring parties, local authorities and others), production of a series of radio programs and a meeting with UN and INGO reps, Watchlist and ACAT remained in contact via email and through a locally-based international NGO working with Watchlist.

In 2004, in response to Watchlist's request for further information on violations against children in DRC's conflict, ACAT joined together with two other child rights agencies based in Goma, *Aide et Action pour la Paix* and Centre Dorika to create the *Réseau d'Aide aux Enfants Nécessiteux* (RAEN-Network to Aid Needy Children). Members of the RAEN network have reported to Watchlist that their impetus for creating the network was twofold: 1) they believe that working in a group will make their monitoring and reporting efforts more effective; and 2) they were encouraged by evidence that Watchlist and other international organizations value their work.

Since 2004, the RAEN network has published regular reports on violations against children by parties to armed conflict in Goma and surrounding areas. Currently, Watchlist and the RAEN network are working in partnership to develop village-level committees for monitoring violations against children, to respond to violations reported by the committees and to train local officials, police and military officials on child rights.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

To the UN Security Council

Note: The UN Security Council may carry out these actions through the work of its newly established Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (CAC), in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1612.

1. Call for the development and sustainability of strong operational partnerships by encouraging the UN and civil society to work collaboratively together to prepare guidelines for conducting operational partnerships in accordance with the principles of transparency, open communication, equity, shared goals and others (the guiding principles) set out in this document.
2. Based on the information collected by all partners, carry out high-level policy activities in response to reported violations. This may be done through the tools available to the Security Council through its newly established Working Group on CAC, through its Resolution 1612. Among others, these tools include:
 - Threatening targeted and graduated measures with clear benchmarks for progress and specific deadlines;
 - Sending letters to relevant justice mechanisms, including national mechanisms and the International Criminal Court, in order to bring information to their attention and contribute to ending impunity; and
 - Inviting existing sanctions committees to impose targeted sanctions on parties to conflict or individuals violating the rights of children in armed conflict, or considering “un” listing parties or individuals initially sanctioned for violating children once they have revised and implemented new child protection policies.
3. Request an independent assessment of the quality of operational partnerships in the UN’s monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM). This assessment should be conducted by outside reviewers at the end of a two-year time frame.
4. As a priority, include meetings with organizations conducting M,R&R activities and/or M,R&R working groups during field visits to all relevant country sites to hold discussions on the development of operational partnerships and other aspects of their M,R&R work.
5. Request periodic guidance notes from the Secretariat to relevant country teams and peace-keeping operations to ensure that operational partnerships and working groups are employed and designed within the framework of the guiding principles described in this document.
6. Request regular updates, prepared jointly by the UN and civil society partners, on the status of operational partnerships and working groups within the UN’s MRM.

7. Schedule an Arria formula meeting with NGOs (including field representatives) to review the status of operational partnerships between the UN and civil society within the UN's MRM no later than December 2006.

To the UN

Note: These activities should be conducted by all UN bodies with roles within the UN's MRM.

UNICEF

UNICEF at the headquarters level:

1. In a joint initiative with civil society and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAC), prepare guidelines on developing and sustaining operational partnerships for M,R&R activities in accordance with the guiding principles identified in this paper. These guidelines should be used at the headquarters and field levels.
2. Immediately implement the guidelines for developing and sustaining operational partnerships within all UNICEF operational partnerships and working groups on M,R&R at field and headquarters levels.
3. Mobilize funds to support the effective development and sustainability of operational partnerships and working groups on M,R&R that abide by the guidelines to be developed collaboratively by the UN and civil society.
4. Provide input for regular updates, to be prepared jointly by the UN and civil society partners, on the status of operational partnerships and working groups within the UN's MRM, for submission to the UN Security Council Working Group on CAC.

UNICEF at the field level:

1. Provide training for all UNICEF field-level staff who will conduct M,R&R activities in relation to the UN-based MRM. Training should be provided on the guiding principles of operational partnerships, as well as on the methods of conducting successful M,R&R activities.
2. As the convener or co-convener of MRM task forces at the country level, ensure that each task force operates in accordance with the guidelines on principles of operational partnerships to be collaboratively developed by the UN and civil society organizations, and ensure that all members of the task force are familiar with these guidelines.
3. As the convener or co-convener of MRM task forces at the country level, coordinate UN field monitoring to gather sensitive information. This may include an increase in the UN presence at the local level to document severe violations and act as a deterrent for both violations and reprisals against UN partners.

4. Provide input for regular updates, to be prepared jointly by the UN and civil society partners, on the status of operational partnerships and working groups at the field level within the UN's MRM, for submission to the UN Security Council Working Group on CAC.

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAC)

1. In a joint initiative with civil society and UNICEF, prepare guidelines on developing and sustaining operational partnerships for M,R&R activities in accordance with the guiding principles outlined in this paper. These guidelines should be used at headquarters and field levels.
2. Immediately implement the guidelines for developing and sustaining operational partnership, within all partnerships with civil society organizations, in relation to the UN's MRM.
3. During all field visits, meet with civil society organizations working on M,R&R activities, especially those working in operational partnerships and/or working groups with UN agencies. These meetings should be used to review progress on developing and sustaining operational partnerships and working groups for the UN-based MRM that adhere to the guiding principles outlined in this document.
4. Provide input for regular updates, to be prepared jointly by the UN and civil society partners, on the status of operational partnerships and working groups at the field level within the UN's MRM, for submission to the UN Security Council Working Group on CAC. Information for these updates may be gathered during field visits of the OSRSG-CAC.
5. Mobilize funds to support the effective development and sustainability of operational partnerships and working groups on M,R&R that abide by the guidelines to be developed collaboratively by the UN and civil society.

Headquarters Task Force and Steering Committee of the UN's MRM

1. Include civil society organizations working at the headquarters level in a collaborative relationship with the headquarters' MRM Task Force. This should involve sharing and vetting of information about violations, formulating recommendations and other substantive activities.
2. Develop a guidance note to be distributed to all field-level task forces of the UN's MRM, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of all UN actors within the MRM at headquarters, and especially what types of policy actions may be expected from the headquarters level in response to reported violations.

3. Develop a clear and effective system for consistent, open communication with all field-level task forces of the UN's MRM. This may include a role for headquarters-based civil society and/or NGOs.
4. Mobilize funds to support the effective development and sustainability of operational partnerships and working groups on M,R&R that abide by the guidelines to be developed collaboratively by the UN and civil society.

To Member States

1. As a priority, activate embassies or other diplomatic offices in conflict-affected areas to include action towards successful and complete implementation of the UN-based MRM in accordance with UNSCR 1612, within their humanitarian work plans. This should include the regular review of progress on the development of operational partnerships and working groups in accordance with the guiding principles.
2. Maximize efforts by government representatives stationed in conflict-affected areas to work with all relevant diplomatic colleagues in order to mobilize international support for implementation of the UN-based MRM in accordance with the guiding principles for developing strong and effective operational partnerships among the UN and civil society. This may constitute the creation of an intergovernmental contact group on children and armed conflict and/or M,R&R.
3. Ensure that all relevant government representatives based in the field engage with their counterparts within their foreign ministries and permanent UN missions to endorse and support the development of the UN's MRM, based on the guiding principles of operational partnerships.
4. Maintain direct contact with working groups through local embassies and consulates in order to share information and discuss relevant action by member states.

To Civil Society Organizations

1. Seek out effective operational partnerships with the UN in order to enhance M,R&R activities in remote areas where violations against children in armed conflict are occurring.
2. Request that all partnership arrangements with UN agencies and/or other international organizations are guided by the guiding principles outlined in this paper. With partner agencies, develop memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and/or terms of reference (TORs) to guide all M,R&R partnerships and working groups.
3. Identify and communicate strengths and limitations of your organization with regard to monitoring and reporting activities, and actively share this information with the UN or other international partners.

4. Identify areas where additional training and support for M,R&R activities are required for your organization or individual staff, and present these recommendations at the earliest possible stage in the development of operational partnerships and working groups.
5. Provide in-kind contributions of staff time, expertise and other appropriate resources at the early stages of developing operational partnerships and working groups. In most situations, outside funding will ultimately be necessary to sustain these activities.
6. Ensure that response activities are at the core of all monitoring and reporting activities, including activities conducted through operational partnerships or working groups with UN or other international organizations. Guide the development of contextually appropriate recommendations for response activities.
7. Identify and communicate strengths and limitations of operational partnerships with the UN with regard to M,R&R activities, and actively share this information with the UN and other international partners.

To Donors

1. Make funds available for the development of a successful and sustainable UN monitoring and reporting mechanism, with a focus on supporting operational partnerships and working groups that abide by the guiding principles outlined in this paper. This includes providing funds to civil society organizations participating in M,R&R working groups.
2. Encourage all recipients of funding for M,R&R partnerships and working groups to adhere to the guiding principles outlined in this document, and request that all relevant partnerships and working groups develop MOUs and/or TORs to guide their work.
3. Provide funds to support the infrastructure and sustainability of M,R&R working groups, particularly through support for a full-time staff coordinator position (or other relevant staff positions), training for all participants, travel from remote villages and communication technology.
4. Provide funds to support response activities, including immediate, grassroots responses (such as direct-service provision) and long-term responses (such as development of international laws and norms). Ensure that response activities are at the core of all monitoring and reporting projects, to the greatest extent possible.

ANNEX I-CHALLENGES OF ESTABLISHING M,R&R WORKING GROUPS IN UNSTABLE AND DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENTS

1. Risks for people providing information and for those gathering it

Among the greatest challenges for carrying out monitoring and reporting in unstable environments are the risks posed to both victims and witnesses of violations and the monitors gathering information from them. Community members who report violations may be considered sympathetic to the opposing parties to conflict, and those who are being accused may take reprisal actions against them. In certain situations, informants can end up being targeted and harassed for reporting by all parties to conflict. Similarly, local human rights defenders and organizations are often harassed, and in more grave cases, abducted, injured or killed, for their role reporting violations against children.

Potential Solutions:

Operational partnerships between the UN and local organizations can be an important step in reducing the risks for both informants and monitors:

- ✓ Partnerships with the UN and other international agencies can, in themselves, serve as a protective factor for local human rights defenders and those who share information with them. Association with international organizations and bodies creates a higher level of accountability for threats against both informants and monitors, and enforces a sense that “the world is watching.”
- ✓ The UN must be willing to act on behalf of threatened monitors and informants by publicly denouncing threats against them, demanding their release if they are abducted and supporting their access to shelter or medical care if they are threatened or injured. A small portion of funding for any M,R&R should be available for these kinds of crisis situations.
- ✓ Training should be provided for local partners in appropriate monitoring techniques and the need to maintain confidentiality and protect the identity of informants, particularly children who share information about violations against them. Training should also include a more general background on developing security plans and taking necessary organizational precautions to protect staff. Certain NGOs, such as Peace Brigades International (PBI), specialize in providing this kind of training to local NGOs and human rights monitors.

2. Risks for the UN in its relationships with governments and others

The UN’s ability to operate freely depends on maintaining its relationships with host governments and, in some cases, working with non-state actors to gain humanitarian access. In certain conflict situations, the UN’s ability to operate and to restore and maintain peace may be threatened by the perception that UN agencies are monitoring certain violations and, in particular, that they may publicly denounce certain violators.

In addition, Resolution 1612 calls for the establishment of a M,R&R mechanism that operates “with the participation of and in cooperation with national Governments.” In some cases, this may create tensions or other challenges.

Potential Solutions:

- ✓ As a policy, the UN must maintain a zero tolerance attitude towards violations against children. The UN must be firm, to the greatest extent possible, in its commitment to uphold and enforce international law. Not recognizing this responsibility can be perceived as tacit support for the high level of impunity that exists for those who violate children's rights during conflict. In rare cases, it is understood that the UN must undertake certain negotiations to maintain its ability to carry out programmatic activities.
- ✓ The UN should ensure all Terms of Reference (TORs) for UN operation include provisions to allow UN agencies to monitor and enforce international law while carrying out UN activities. In situations where TORs already exist, the UN should review their terms to ensure that they reflect provisions to allow monitoring and reporting to take place.
- ✓ Where applicable, the UN should disseminate recent Secretary-General reports on CAC, as well as Resolution 1612, in order to clarify that the creation of an M,R&R mechanism is mandatory and that its goal is to improve protection of children.
- ✓ The UN should work with members of any UN task force to identify a method of receiving and sharing information with both national governments and members of civil society.

3. Limited resources for programmatic UN agencies

Producing tangible, positive changes in the lives of children by building an effective and sustainable monitoring and reporting system requires the allocation of additional funding. Currently, donors may have limited funds available for work in certain countries or around particular issues, and may choose to divert funds from existing programs for monitoring and reporting activities. This could have a detrimental effect on the many significant and effective programs that are being run by various agencies and organizations to protect children in conflict and post-conflict environments.

Potential Solutions:

- ✓ The creation of child protection working groups and support for their activities should be a distinct activity that is evaluated for funding separately from existing programming. Carrying out effective monitoring and reporting will require an initial, additional outlay of funds, but over time the information and infrastructure created should serve as both a preventative and protective measure, ultimately reducing costs for donors.
- ✓ Once working groups have achieved a certain level of independence, they should begin to carry out their own fundraising activities and build relationships with international government donors, as well as foundations and other sources of funding. This is an important step to ensure sustainability over time.

4. Difficulties identifying partners in an unstable environment

The process of finding partners and creating a working relationship based on mutual trust is always challenging, but can be particularly difficult in a conflict or post-conflict setting. In some cases, civil society has been suppressed during conflict or has not had access to funding and the necessary support to manage NGOs or other formal organizations. In many

situations, the arrival of the UN after a period of conflict creates an explosion of NGOs, and it can be difficult for UN personnel to identify who is an appropriate partner.

For local and national NGOs, there may be reasons to feel a sense of competition among organizations, despite broadly shared goals and objectives, which prevents a group from coming together “organically.” Supporting the presence of an independent facilitator from outside the local setting can assist the process of coalition-building enormously. In addition, local NGOs may not know how to approach the UN or initiate a partnership with UN agencies. To narrow this gap, it is essential for UN agency personnel to meet with members of the local NGO community and make themselves available, to the greatest extent possible.

Potential Solutions:

- ✓ When looking to identify an initial partner, the UN should talk to reputable colleagues including representatives of local, national and international NGOs and community-based groups, other UN agencies and potentially the government. Once initial partners are identified, they can also provide referrals.
- ✓ The UN should make an effort to include grassroots organizations and those led by marginalized populations, such as refugees and the displaced, minority groups, women and youth representatives.

5. Lack of financial infrastructure (banks, facilities to transfer and manage funds)

It is difficult to overstate the importance of this factor in the real world of armed conflict and post-conflict societies, where little or no financial infrastructure functions, and the secure transfer of funds is difficult or impossible. At the same time, in order to carry out activities, partners must have the capacity to receive and manage funds in a responsible way with a reasonable level of accountability.

Potential Solutions:

- ✓ In order to ensure that local partners based in more remote areas can participate effectively in project activities, the UN must be willing to exercise a certain amount of flexibility. In certain cases, funds may be needed to provide the necessary collateral to open an organizational account, or funds may need to be actively managed or overseen by a UN staff member or INGO liaison.
- ✓ Regardless of where funds are stored, local partners should be trained in the basic requirements for financial accountability, including creating accurate budgets and submitting complete and accurate receipts for all activities undertaken.
- ✓ The UN should be prepared to devote necessary staff time to ensure that funds are being used appropriately and to fight the pressures of corruption, which particularly surge in the conditions of hardship imposed by cycles of violence and disruption.

6. Difficulties in gaining access to remote areas to monitor and report on violations

In the landscapes scarred by armed conflict, one of the greatest challenges to reporting human rights violations of any kind is the sheer distance from reliable means of transportation. Violations often occur in areas far from the towns and cities where some portion of the police or national army may be functioning or where members of the

international community are working. Due to this remoteness, war may even continue de facto in such areas long after peace has been established in more central locations, further complicating efforts to monitor and respond to violations in a timely way.

Potential Solutions:

- ✓ One of the great advantages of working with local partners is that they are often already present and trusted by the communities in these more remote areas and are able to travel and work with some measure of success and safety. However, in order to help them reach their destinations and continue to function effectively, the UN should be prepared to support their travel and communications costs.
- ✓ Most local partners have a time-tested ability to identify the most practical solutions to challenges related to distance and travel. They are most likely to know what means of transport will be easiest and quickest and to know how long it will realistically take to communicate information.
- ✓ In certain cases, using a “tiered approach” for information-sharing can help ensure that information from the most remote areas is included when monitoring violations against children. This means that, at the most local level, there are committees or designated members of villages or communities who receive initial information about violations, and then communicate it to local partners during their regularly scheduled visits to these remote locations. The visiting partners in turn decide how best to communicate the corroborated reports to the UN or other authorities most equipped to respond to the violations.
- ✓ Geographical remoteness also poses challenges to achieving an effective response to verified violations, and the UN should work with local partners and communities to encourage community-based responses to end violations at their source. Successful approaches include campaigns to raise awareness about violations, which are often most effective when carried out informally by community leaders; direct negotiation by community leaders or elders with the perpetrators; and community support programs, such as encouraging and providing some initial financial support for the return of industry and schooling.

7. Communications (lack of access to phone and Internet)

Related to the challenges posed by distance is the limited—or absent—access to communication technology such as phones and the Internet among local partners. This makes it very difficult to receive or send verified information on violations against children and others, much less coordinate joint responses.

Potential Solutions:

- ✓ The UN should be prepared to support partners in developing innovative solutions to communication challenges. In certain areas where access to land-line phones is limited, cellular phones are readily available and Watchlist’s experience has shown that they are an effective tool in monitoring and reporting on violations.
- ✓ The UN should work with local partners to help identify and gain access to Internet services. In some cases, it may be possible for UN agencies or larger partners to offer Internet services to local organizational partners on a limited basis.