# Child Protection in Somalia

# Combating Child Use and Recruitment at the National Level

### A Stakeholder Analysis for

### OCHA Somalia



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## Executive Summary

With widespread poverty, high numbers of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), little or no opportunities for education, ongoing conflict, risk of disease and drug abuse Somalia classifies as one of the least protective environments for children in the world (UNICEF Somalia, no date). As a result of terrorism and more than two decades of protracted insurgency, state institutions are fragile and unable to safeguard children's rights at both, national and community level. Children are extremely vulnerable to all kinds of violence and exploitation.

From September 2015 until January 2016 alone 746 grave violations against children during armed conflict, (ACAPS, 2016, p.37) which include the recruitment or use of children by armed forces and groups, killing, maiming, rape, or other sexual violence and abduction, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access for children, were reported. The main perpetrators of the recruitment and use of child soldiers are Al-Shabaab, the Somali Armed Forces and allied militia, Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama and clan militias (UNSC 2015, A/69/926–S/2015/409).

## Political Context: The Ongoing Conflict in Somalia

In 2006 most of southern Somalia was taken over by the militant Islamist group Al-Shabaab, in the attempt to discredit the Federal Government of Somalia and to create an Islamic state (ACAPS, 2016, p. 33). Joint operation by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somali Armed Forces (SAF) as well as local clan militias were successful in pushing the armed militia out of its urban strongholds in 2011 (UK Home Office, 2015). Up to date those forces continue to engage in armed confrontations causing the security situation to remain extremely volatile. During February 2016 Al-Shabaab continued and increased attacks on civilians, humanitarians, Somali government officials and perceived government allies, as well as AMISOM forces mainly in south-central Somalia (ACAPS, 2016, p. 32f.; UNSC, 2015, p. 25). Its resurgence reduces the effectiveness of efforts undertaken by the Federal Government, the international community and humanitarian actors like the Child Protection Working Group Somalia, to eradicate child use and recruitment during armed conflict. The following is an analysis of the stakeholders that are decisive in eliminating child use and recruitment, with a brief descrip-

tion of their goals, their salience in the issue, their capabilities and their importance for OCHA.


## The Stakeholders

### Child Protection Working Group Somalia (CPWG)

The CPWG Somalia was established in 2010 within the Global Protection Cluster, whose lead agencies OCHA works closely with. It is as a forum for coordination, consensus seeking, partnership creation and linkages for interventions in child protection and it reports to the Global Protection Cluster (OCHA, no date). CPWG Somalia is chaired by UNICEF and co-chaired by Save the Children and comprises a wide range of organisations, UN agencies, academics, donors and other partners. It is highly concerned with children associated with armed conflict and child protection violations, which is represented with the highest positive salience in the matrix (1). Although the CPWG is a strong unified effort in promoting the eradication of child recruitment within the scope of child protection, its capabilities are severely constrained not only by the ongoing violent conflict between Al-Shabaab, the Somali National Army, AMISOM and clan militias, but also by large funding gaps. Only 2 percent of the requirements for the Protection Cluster in Somalia are covered for 2016 (FTS 2016). Therefore it ranks quite low on the capabilities-scale in the matrix (1,5).


### Federal Government of Somalia

In September 2012 president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud took office, marking the end of eight years of rule by a transitional government. Despite an ambitious agenda, the government has not been able to strengthen the state's institutions and therefore to provide for security and to protect human rights (HRW *b*, 2015), resulting in a low capability in the matrix (1).

The government has shown salience in eliminating the recruitment and use of children in its armed forces by signing an action plan in 2012 and by ratifying the Convention of the Rights of the Child on 20 January 2015 (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 01.03.2016; UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, no date; HRW, 2015). Furthermore it formally established a child protection unit in its national army and installed mechanisms for handing over

children found within army ranks to the UN, however, the national army remains listed as a party that recruits, uses, kills and maims children (UNSC 2015, A/69/926–S/2015/409). As combating child recruitment is not the most relevant issue for the government, the salience is rated medium low (0,3).

**United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**

In 2005 the UNSC established a Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, with the mandate to report violations against children in situations of armed conflict, to review progress in the implementation of action plans and to make recommendations to the UNSC on how to further promote child protection. It has issued a number of resolutions establishing a strong mandate for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict as well as a UN Special Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). UNSOM's child protection cell encourages and supports the efforts of the Federal Government to eradicate child recruitment in Somalia and furthermore reports grave violations against children (UNSOM, no date). The UNSC's salience in eradicating child recruitment is high (0,5), although in the case of Somalia it has more pressing issues to deal with. As long as the ongoing conflict does not come to an end, the UNSC's capabilities to end child recruitment remain on a low level (1).

**African Union Mission (AMISOM)**

AMISOM is a regional peacekeeping mission by the AU with the approval of the UN. It is made up by 22,000 troops from Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia (ACAPS, 2016, p. 33; AMISOM 2016) that have been able to fight back Al-Shabaab. Created in 2007, its mandate has been extended until 30 May 2016 (UNSC, SC Resolution 2232, 2015). In addition the mission has a civil component in which its mandate is to assist the Federal Government in enforcing state institutions and establishing a bridge between humanitarian partners, including OCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP as well as Somali and international NGOs and the Federal Government (AMISOM 2016). Similarly to the agreement with the Federal Government a concord with AMISOM was reached that it would hand over children formally associated with armed forces and armed groups (GA 2014, A/HRC/28/54). However its salience in eradicating child recruitment remains quite low (0,1), as AMISOM's main priority is to fight Al-Shabaab. The strong support of AMISOM by the international community, financial resources and weaponry leads to a

high number in the capabilities ranking (4,5). Strengthening OCHA's coordination and cooperation with AMISOM in the child protection issue further, could lead to positive outcomes.

**Al-Shabaab**

Al-Shabaab recruits and uses, kills and maims children – the number reported for 2015 was 437 cases, however, this number is likely to be much higher (UNSC 2015, A/69/926–S/2015/409). The Al-Qaeda-aligned armed Islamist group developed from the Islamic Courts Union in 2006. It comprises about 7,000-9,000 militants, was successfully pushed back by Somali National Army and AMISOM forces in 2011, but is currently gaining new momentum (Aglionby, 2016; EISF 2016). Its main goal is to destabilize the Federal Government of Somalia and to install fear in the UN and other IOs "through hit and run attacks and asymmetrical warfare" in order to establish an Islamic state based on the Sharia law (Danish Immigration Service, 2015, p.9ff.). Al-Shabaab's main targets are Somali government officials and perceived government allies, AMISOM forces, civilians and humanitarian personnel (ACAPS 2016, p. 33). Therefore Al-Shabaab impedes humanitarian access and poses a major security threat to OCHA and its cooperating partners, making child protection and combating child recruitment very challenging. In the matrix this is described by the highest negative salience (-1) towards the issue and very high capability (5) in hindering the eradication of child recruitment.

To mitigate this threat further analysis has to be done in how to choke off the financing of Al-Shabaab in order to considerably weaken the group.

**Somali Armed Forces (SAF) and allied militia**

The SAF is reported to recruit, use, kill and maim children and is considered to be a persistent perpetrator (UNSC 2015, A/69/926–S/2015/409). In 2014 and in 2015 the UN reported 200 cases of child recruitment by the SAF and allied militias, affirming that this number is very likely to be much higher (HRW *b*, 2015; (UNSC 2015, A/69/926–S/2015/409). The number of child recruitment cases indicates a clear discrepancy between the SAF and the Federal Government (under whose leadership the SAF stands), which has formally committed to combating child recruitment and use. This illustrates the problems that SAF bears, with operations being restricted by clan loyalty and low pays impeding commitment and operational readiness (IRIN 2014). Therefore the SAF is

assigned a quite low capability number (2) in the matrix, though still ranking higher than the Federal Government. The medium negative salience (-0,4) in the matrix stems from the fact that formal mechanisms to combat child recruitment are in place, but at the same time the SAF represents a main perpetrator of child recruitment.

**Clan Militias**

Clan militias are continuously fighting each other to gain control over territories and are reported to recruit and use children (UNSC 2015, A/69/926–S/2015/409). There is no dialogue and no formal commitment to stopping these actions, which is expressed by a high negative salience (-0,8) in the matrix. Getting the clan militias to a negotiating table represents a huge challenge, however, without their commitment there is no end to child recruitment in sight, which gives it medium capabilities (2,5).

**Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama (ASWJ)**

ASWJ is a Sufi Islamist paramilitary group created in 1991 that occupies parts of the country and developed into a key player in fighting Al-Shabaab. It is listed as one of the parties that recruit and use children, with 109 reported cases (UNSC 2015, A/69/926–S/2015/409). However, the UN started a dialogue aimed at reaching a commitment by the group to halt and prevent the recruitment – so far not successful (ibid.) Therefore ASWJ's salience in combating child use and recruitment remains negative (-0,6), while its capabilities to affect the issues are quite low (1), as ASWJ is a minor party in Somalia.

The following matrix summarizes each stakeholder's position, salience, capabilities and effective power in eradicating child use and recruitment in Somalia. Actors coloured in dark red (Al-Shabaab, clan militias and Somali Armed Forces) are great opponents of OCHA's goals and pose a threat to its efforts, while light red (Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama) signifies that the actor currently opposes OCHA's interests, however, dialogue may be successful in reaching an agreement to stop the child recruitment practice.

Actors in a lighter green (AMISOM and Federal Government of Somalia) share OCHA's position, but stronger collaboration is advised, while actors in dark green (UNSC and Child Protection Working Group Somalia) are the strongest collaborating partners.

**Matrix: Eradicating Child Use and Recruitment in Armed Conflict**

| Actor | Position | Salience | Capabilities | Effective Power |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al-Shabaab | Child use, recruitment, killing and maiming | -1 | 5 | -5 |
| Clan Militias | Child use and recruitment | -0,8 | 2,5 | -2 |
| Somali Armed Forces | Child use and recruitment | -0,4 | 2 | -0,8 |
| Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama | Child use and recruitment | -0,6 | 1 | -0,6 |
| African Union Mission Somalia (AMISOM) | Some commitment to eradicate child use and recruitment | 0,1 | 4,5 | 0,45 |
| UNSC | Eradicating child use and recruitment | 0,5 | 1 | 0,5 |
| Federal Government of Somalia | Committed to eradicating child use and recruitment | 0,3 | 1 | 1,3 |
| Child Protection Working Group Somalia | Eradicating child use and recruitment | 1 | 1,5 | 1,5 |

\* *Salience* determines the interest of the respective actor to eradicate child use and recruitment, ranging from very low (-1) to very high interest (+1).

*Capabilities* determines how much power the respective actor has in eradicating child use and recruitment, compared to other players, ranging from very low (0) to very high capability (6).

*Effective Power* is the product of salience multiplied with capabilities.

The following graph visualizes the findings of the stakeholder analysis, with the x-axis showing the salience that the respective actors have in eradicating child use and recruitment and the y- axis illustrating their capabilities.

**Graph: Salience and capabilities of the respective stakeholders**
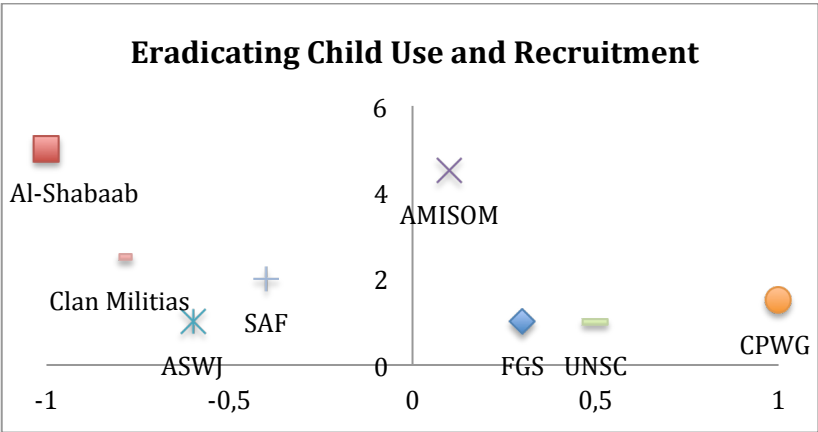
# Relationship Analysis

The following figure illustrates the relationship that OCHA Somalia has with the respective stakeholders in eradicating child recruitment, as identified in the stakeholder analysis. Green lines signal cooperation, whereas red lines indicate threat. The thickness of the line illustrates the degree of cooperation or threat.

**Figure: Relationship of OCHA with the respective stakeholders**



**Structural Holes and Possible Strategic Partnerships**

The **Somali Police Force (SPF)** started to implement training courses on Sexual, Gender-based Violence and Child Protection (AMISOM, no date) in October 2015 and has been receiving equipment donations by EU and UN, strengthening the SPF's capabilities. An approach by OCHA Somalia could possibly result in cooperation for promoting child protection.

## A Note on Validity and Reliability of the Sources used

The sources used are estimated to be highly reliable. No bias could be identified in the information provided. However, terrorism and the ongoing armed conflict in Somalia, create a highly insecure and complex environment and limit access of humanitarian organisations. Therefore the data collected may prove to be incomplete and not highly accurate.

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