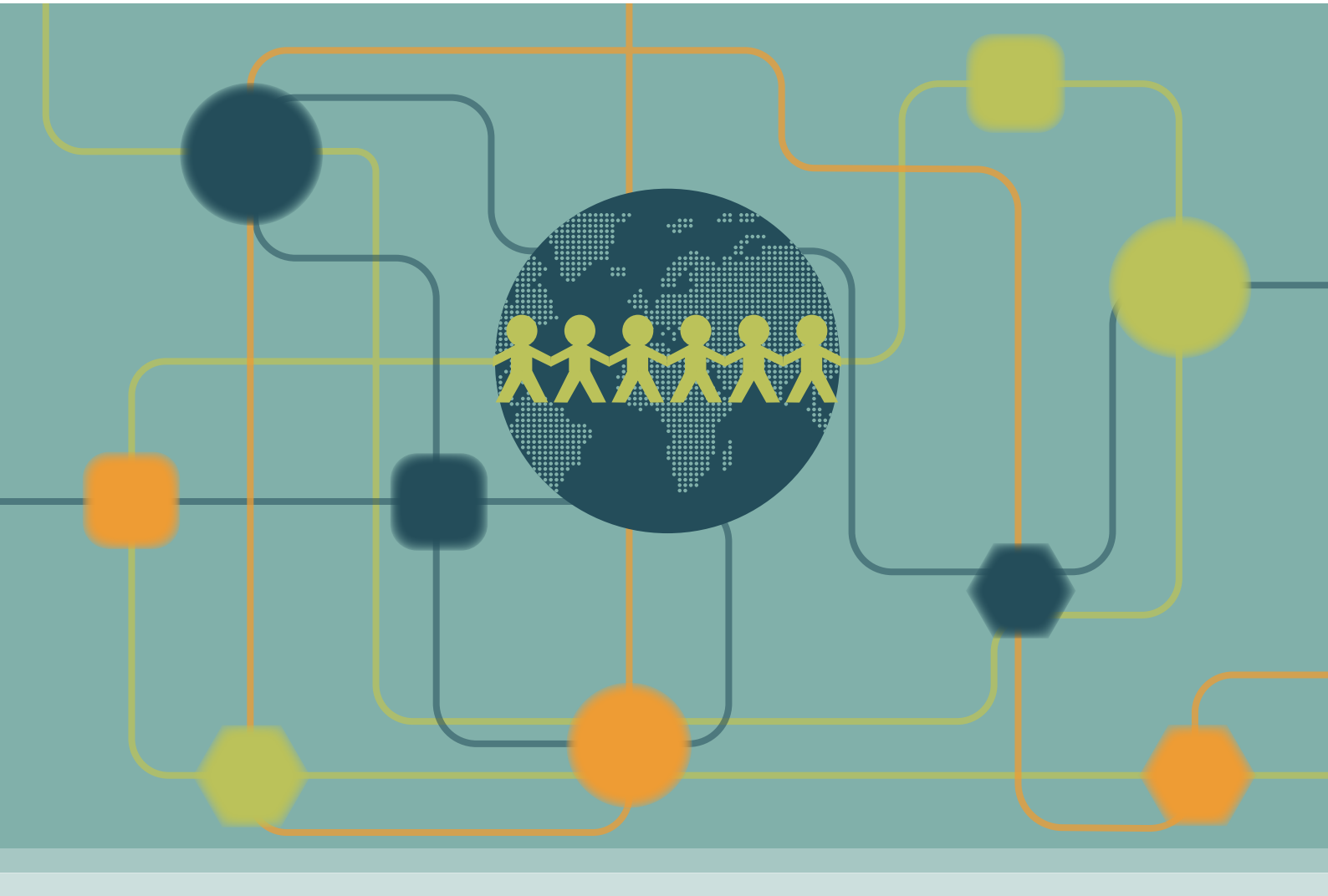
HPG report

# Collaborative advocacy on the protection of civilians

## Children and armed conflict and explosive weapons in populated areas

Gemma Davies and Alexandra Spencer

September 2022



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Funded by
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**How to cite:** Davies, G. and Spencer, A. (2022) *Collaborative advocacy on the protection of civilians: children and armed conflict and explosive weapons in populated areas.* HPG report. London: ODI (www.odi.org/en/publications/collaborative-advocacy-on-the-protection-of-civilians-children-and-armed-conflict-and-explosive-weapons-in-populated-areas).

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Graphic: Collaborative advocacy. Credit: HPG/ODI | Emma Carter.

# Acknowledgements

The authors thank Simon Bagshaw, who provided substantive inputs to the report. We also thank the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) and Watchlist Secretariats, who helped identify key stakeholders to interview, as well as partners at the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) Advocacy Task Team, Oxfam and the NEAR network for supporting the research. Thanks also to Amanda Brydon for making initial connections.

The authors are grateful for the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) programme management, production and communications expertise provided by Marta Lopes, Aimee Long, Sara Hussain, Emma Carter, Sorcha O'Callaghan, Sarah Redd, Thomas Harrisson and Nosheen Malik.

Most importantly, the authors thank all interview participants for sharing their experiences and perspectives. Their commitment to strengthening the protection of civilians in conflict is impressive, and more needed than ever.

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **AOAV** | Action on Armed Violence |
| **CAAC** | children and armed conflict |
| **CIVIC** | Center for Civilians in Conflict |
| **EPG** | Eminent Persons Group |
| **EWIPA** | explosive weapons in populated areas |
| **HI** | Humanity & Inclusion |
| **HRC** | (UN) Human Rights Council |
| **ICC** | International Criminal Court |
| **ICRC** | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| **IHL** | international humanitarian law |
| **INEW** | International Network on Explosive Weapons |
| **INGO** | international non-governmental organisation |
| **MRM** | monitoring and reporting mechanism |
| **OCHA** | (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| **SRSG/CAAC** | Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict |
| **UK** | United Kingdom |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **UNGA** | UN General Assembly |
| **UNICEF** | UN Children's Fund |
| **UNSC** | UN Security Council |
| **UNSG** | UN Secretary-General |
| **US** | United States |

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Existing norms and mechanisms to protect civilians are increasingly under threat, while others are not sufficient to protect civilians in contemporary conflict. Conflicts are increasingly conducted in towns, cities and other populated areas, and they include the use of explosive weapons. Violations against children in conflict are on the rise. Multilateral approaches involving a broad and diverse set of actors, strategies and tactics are required to develop and maintain protections and norms at the international, regional and national levels.

This report focuses on advocacy to promote the protection of civilians in relation to two protection concerns: the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), and children and armed conflict (CAAC). Both the EWIPA and CAAC agendas have been a focus of complementary efforts of national and international civil society actors, United Nations (UN) and international organisations as well as UN member states. These have involved efforts to either develop new norms to reduce a grave pattern of harm to civilians in relation to the use of EWIPA, or, in the case of CAAC, to respond to growing concerns over the politicisation and undermining of efforts to identify and respond to grave violations against children. By analysing these two themes, this report draws out factors for effective advocacy, dilemmas, challenges and gaps, resulting in learning to inform future multilateral advocacy initiatives (see Figures ES1 and ES2).

## Factors for effective advocacy

Collaboration between a diverse range of stakeholders is key in seeking to develop or uphold norms, and the role of civil society is critical in this regard (see Figure ES1). The civil society actors who formulated and initiated the development of norms on the use of EWIPA were a diverse group with expertise in evidence gathering, diplomacy and lobbying, humanitarian and victim assistance, and weapons technology. Together, as the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), they formed the INEW Call. This established the objective for the collaboration – to call on states and others to take immediate action to prevent suffering from the use of EWIPA. Reaching consensus on the problem, and the solutions sought, was a critical step for civil society, the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to work together towards a common goal.

For the CAAC agenda, the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict – a network of policy, humanitarian and human rights actors (referred to here as Watchlist) – provides information, analysis and advocacy to strengthen or maintain the established mechanisms to reduce grave violations against children in conflict. Since the growing politicisation of the listing mechanism, it has increasingly played the role of a watchdog, collectively advocating to maintain the credibility of the process.

**Figure ES1** Factors that have facilitated collective advocacy


It goes without saying that reaching out to and generating support among a diverse group of states is essential to bring visibility and leadership to the advocacy initiative. In particular, identifying states that have high interest and high alignment with the objectives of the networks and engaging these states early is key. For both EWIPA and CAAC, state champions have been critical. For the EWIPA agenda, engaging interested states such as Mozambique and Chile led to regional conferences in Maputo and Santiago that were instrumental for regional blocs to develop a common position and foster buy-in. For the CAAC agenda, member states have acted as guardians of the CAAC mandate. However, the need for more representative engagement, and lack of diversity of state champions – including from the Global South – has been described as one of the main weaknesses, but so pivotal, that commentators to the CAAC agenda believe the agenda 'won't progress without it'.

It is important to identify relevant departments and individuals within states that are supportive of, or sympathetic to, the agenda and that can work to bring other parts of government on board. But equally, dialogue with states and government departments that are opposed to or unsupportive of the advocacy objective, but are instrumental to success, is necessary.

## The importance of strategy and tactics

Common factors that have facilitated collective advocacy start with a clearly identified, collectively agreed objective. For EWIPA, the intentional use of language and careful framing of the issue allowed EWIPA agenda advocates to converge around a common position and terminology, and was critical to progress. Deliberately framing the issue in humanitarian terms, rather than as a legal issue, allowed for a more comprehensive approach that focused on the wider human, social, economic and environmental impacts.

Politically and militarily astute advocacy that understands and takes into account political and military perspectives has been key to progress for the EWIPA agenda. The framing of advocacy positions and tone must be based on an understanding of how to influence the positions of advocacy targets involved, in order to build constructive dialogue and trust. For both agendas, some organisations in the network were more critical, while others built constructive dialogue. Naturally across advocacy initiatives, a range of approaches to influence advocacy targets should be used, but when directly negotiating with states or militaries, constructive, solutions-oriented dialogue is necessary. However, commonly agreed red lines among a range of actors involved are necessary, and persuasive arguments should not compromise red lines.

The extent to which private and public advocacy should be used must also be considered when undertaking collaborative advocacy. The diverse stakeholders in both the CAAC and EWIPA agendas have allowed different organisations to take a range of private and public approaches according to their modus operandi and risk appetite. But, to be effective, organisations engaged in carrying out various approaches must coordinate, and ensure coherent and mutually reinforcing messaging. On the CAAC agenda, finding this balance has proved difficult at times. With the egregious politicisation of the listing process, and the knock-on damage it has done to the perceived effectiveness of the mechanism and ultimately Watchlist's own credibility, it would have been difficult for Watchlist to not denounce listing/delisting decisions. However, in doing so, it has hampered avenues for constructive dialogue with the Office of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Secretary-General, which must be re-established.

Persistence and taking the long view across the range of actors are necessary factors for success. This speaks to a broader enabling factor: the need to maintain and, ideally, build on momentum. Sometimes external factors can drive momentum – for example, the conflict in Ukraine drew attention to, and highlighted the urgency of, the issues relevant to EWIPA use and CAAC. Importantly, organisations should be willing to seek opportunities to drive momentum in the absence of external stimuli. This requires a well-resourced network with the time, capacity and flexibility to respond to opportunities.

Subject-matter experts – particularly when engaging state or military personnel – are also key. EWIPA agenda proponents developed an understanding of military language and thinking. This provided a solid basis for discussions with military actors and helped mitigate risks of political or military actors weakening policy positions. Deploying senior representatives, too, can lend credibility to the advocacy position, and can enable greater access to, and potentially influence on, decision-makers. This was the objective of Watchlist in convening the Eminent Persons Group.

## The importance of evidence

One of the key strengths of both thematic areas discussed has been the use of irrefutable, verified evidence to support engagement and advocacy efforts. For EWIPA, having concrete data and a statistical analysis of the appalling harm caused to civilians over the past decade has had significant impact in emphasising the need for action. As the statistic that around 90% of people killed and injured

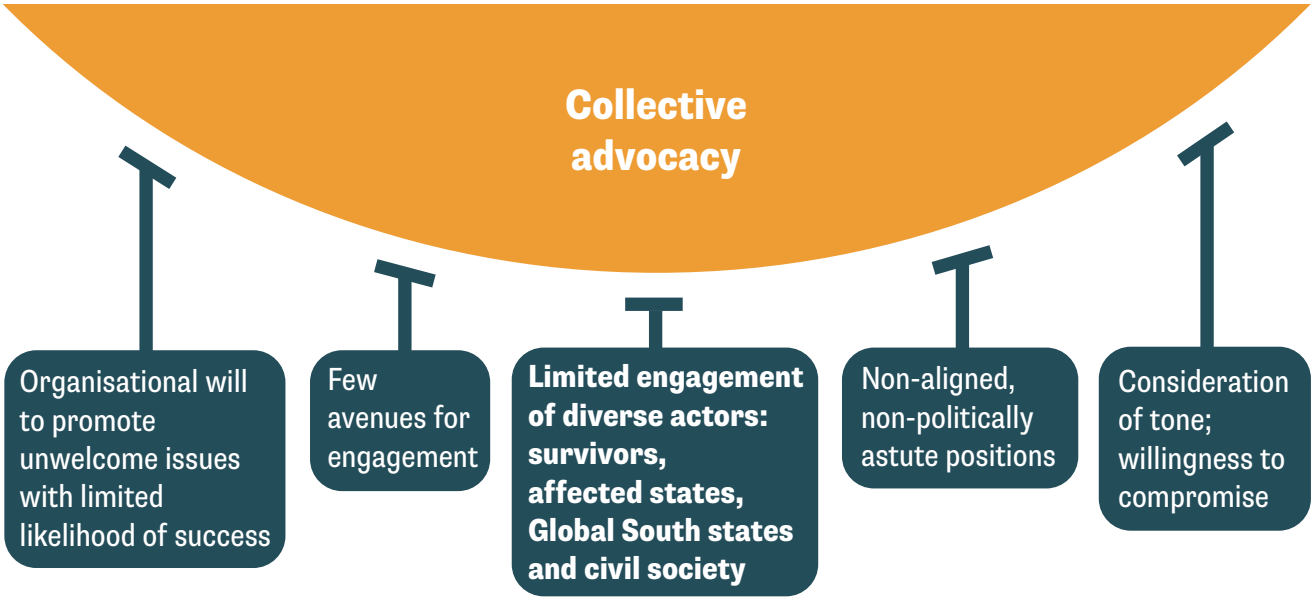
by the use of EWIPA are civilians is clear, and so blatantly unacceptable, it is widely cited (AOAV, 2021). Complementary data, such as patterns of civilian harm or the impact of particular weapon types, can support evidence-based arguments to political and military audiences.

For the CAAC agenda, the monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) provides strong credible evidence and therefore a solid foundation for advocacy. However, the level of verification required and reporting timeframes mean that there is a significant lag between the documentation of incidents, their presentation in the UN Secretary-General's report and the subsequent triggering of responses aimed at reducing violations. For example, the recent conflict in Ethiopia began in 2020, and only in 2022 has it been added as a country of concern. Evidence documented by other actors, such as international and national civil society actors, can complement MRM data with more timely analysis and provide a fuller picture of the levels of violations against children.

## Dilemmas, challenges and gaps

Diverse, non-aligned and sometimes competing positions can compromise the outcome sought, and can send mixed and confusing messages to advocacy targets (see Figure ES2). Without aligned and politically astute advocacy positions, there are also risks that advocacy positions can play into political interests. Humanitarian organisations often call for international humanitarian law (IHL) to be upheld during the conduct of hostilities, but states often use international law to their benefit. Regarding the use of EWIPA, some militarily active states took the position that the IHL is adequate and disagreed with the need for further norms. Organisations calling for IHL compliance in areas where EWIPA are used can risk undermining the coherence of EWIPA agenda advocates and can play into the hands of states opposed to the objective.

**Figure ES2** Factors that have hindered collective advocacy



Some tensions among actors are also linked to how willing organisations are to promote unpopular issues or those with low likelihood of success. For the EWIPA agenda, the founding INEW members knew that states would be reluctant to accept restrictions on the use of weapons. It was important not to accept this position or the apparent lack of state interest at the early stages, but to take the long view, work to get the issue recognised and proceed to policy development.

There are questions as to how to influence individuals or institutions that have low interest in the issue and are not aligned with the advocacy position. These can be a significant challenge to influence, but are key to ensuring that protections are upheld, as seems to be the case with the current UN Secretary-General for the CAAC agenda. There are no simple solutions with such politically charged considerations. It requires working around personalities and seeking to strike a language, tone and approach to which they will respond. It also involves seeking alternative avenues to correct the paralysis at the UN Security Council, for example through avenues such as the UN General Assembly or UN Human Rights Council.

## Limited engagement of Global South actors

One of the main weaknesses under both the CAAC and EWIPA agendas has been the limited engagement of survivors or civil society from affected states, representation of affected states and, to a lesser degree, engagement of Global South states and mobilisation of Global South civil society.

There have been some efforts to bring national actors and/or children who have been affected by armed conflict to the CAAC open debates. This has helped to situate debates in the realities of the impact of conflict on children. Having affected states speak to the consequences of EWIPA can also strengthen the credibility of the issue and reinforce the sense of urgency. However, only a limited number of national actors and governments have been involved in directly carrying out advocacy in international forums. Many national civil society actors from affected countries and the Global South experience barriers when directly engaging with international platforms such as the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly. International actors can and should strengthen support to overcome these barriers.

Other barriers – such as limited funds and capacity to mobilise sustained advocacy at the capital level, as well as difficulties related to keeping abreast of complex, technical agendas when working on multiple issues – also limit the proactive engagement of national governments in the Global South.

International organisations have a role to bring affected people to speak directly with their own military and government in conflict-affected countries. By empowering communities to raise their concerns with armed actors within conflict-affected areas, local level changes can be made that can have a profound impact on the protection of civilians.

## Conclusion

In an era of increased polarisation, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and increasing questioning of the legitimacy of Global North states and the people who are perceived to represent them, creative solutions should be sought in order to influence. Consideration should be given to optics, and which actors are perceived as the most credible in conveying advocacy positions. Building coalitions and constituencies is paramount, as is mobilising diverse sets of states and actors. The critical role of a range of national and international actors within coalitions, and the visibility of a diverse range of actors to support the advocacy objective, should be recognised and implemented. This requires international actors to support diverse sets of states, national actors and affected people to engage in advocacy initiatives. It may increasingly require action outside established mechanisms and approaches, and stronger linkages between national, regional and international forums. As global dynamics evolve, approaches to influence must too.

## Lessons learned

Both the EWIPA and CAAC agendas have important learning to inform future collaborative advocacy initiatives. Pages 41–43 of this report detail a number of recommended actions for future collaborative advocacy initiatives to maximise opportunities for success.

# 1 Introduction

From Afghanistan to Ethiopia, Myanmar to Ukraine, the number of conflicts around the world, and the way in which they are carried out, have devastating impacts on civilians.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is deadlocked, and in the past years has failed to take meaningful action. The standards embodied in international humanitarian and human rights law are increasingly under assault; states that created the international architecture to protect civilians are undermining or abusing it more blatantly than before, leading to failures towards the people they are intended to protect (Metcalfe-Hough, 2020; OCHA, 2019). Consequently, the influence of previously strong UN member states seeking to uphold the protection of civilians and the institutions established to defend such norms, such as the UNSC, is increasingly called into question. As such, existing norms, mechanisms and approaches relating to the protection of civilians are not always sufficient or sufficiently upheld for addressing existing or emerging concerns.

Conflicts are increasingly conducted in towns, cities and other populated areas. This has been witnessed in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and most recently Ukraine, resulting in tens of thousands of civilians killed and injured by weapons every year. When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, some 90% of casualties are civilians (AOAV, 2021). In 2021 alone, over 11,000 civilians were reportedly killed or injured by the use of explosive weapons (INEW, 2022a). The devastation of critical infrastructure and services such as electricity and water can have severe and long-lasting knock-on effects. Civilians face long-term psychological and health impacts, often in contexts where support services are inadequate (ibid.). This devastating pattern of harm has been consistently documented over the past decade (AOAV, 2021). More than 10 years ago, a group of experts from civil society, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some of whom had been working in disarmament and the protection of civilians for decades, began to raise concerns about the short- and long-term humanitarian impact of increasingly urban conflict on civilians and the adequacy of international humanitarian law (IHL) for protecting civilians in such contexts.

Violations against children in conflict, too, are on the rise. The number of grave violations of children's rights reported in armed conflict has increased from 15,500 in 2016 to almost 24,000 in 2021 (UNSC, 2022a). In 2021 alone, more than 19,000 children were reported to be victims or survivors of at least one of the following grave violations of children's rights: recruitment or use of children as soldiers; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; and abduction (ibid.). Additionally, children's access to education, health care and lifesaving humanitarian aid continues to be impacted by attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access by warring parties (ibid.). The establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG/CAAC) in 1996 (UNGA, 1996), and the regular focus on the protection of children in armed conflict on the agenda of the UNSC since 1999 (UNSC, 1999), has led to the evolution of a strong agenda aimed at reducing grave violations against children. However, since 2015 there has been growing concern about political influences undermining this agenda.

The nature of protection risks to civilians in conflict and the geopolitical challenges to upholding the protection of civilians are becoming increasingly complex. Therefore, multilateral approaches involving a broad and diverse set of actors, strategies and tactics are required to develop and maintain protections and norms at international, regional and national levels.

In this report, we focus on complementary advocacy to promote the protection of civilians. In particular, we explore this in relation to two pressing protection concerns: the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), and children and armed conflict (CAAC). Both EWIPA and CAAC are urgent protection-of-civilians issues in contemporary conflict and have involved multistakeholder collaborative advocacy. In relation to the EWIPA agenda, we analyse the complementary efforts of civil society actors, the UN, the ICRC and states to develop new norms to reduce and prevent a grave and established pattern of harm to civilians resulting from the use of EWIPA. For CAAC, our focus is on the complementary efforts of civil society actors, parts of the UN and some states to respond to growing concerns over the politicisation and undermining of efforts to identify and respond to grave violations against children.

In focusing on these two areas, we seek to understand enabling factors, tensions, challenges and trade-offs in carrying out effective advocacy. We also assess the advocacy efforts through processes led at the UN in Geneva and New York. We draw learning from the two agendas to inform future multilateral advocacy initiatives.

This paper build's on HPG's 2019–2022 programme of research on advocacy to strengthen protection for conflict-affected civilians.[1] The research is based on a desk review, a survey and bilateral semi-structured interviews with some 40 key informants from UN member states, the military, and international and national civil society organisations.

Findings of the research are also reflected in a separate, but linked, briefing note that discusses complementary advocacy between national and international actors.

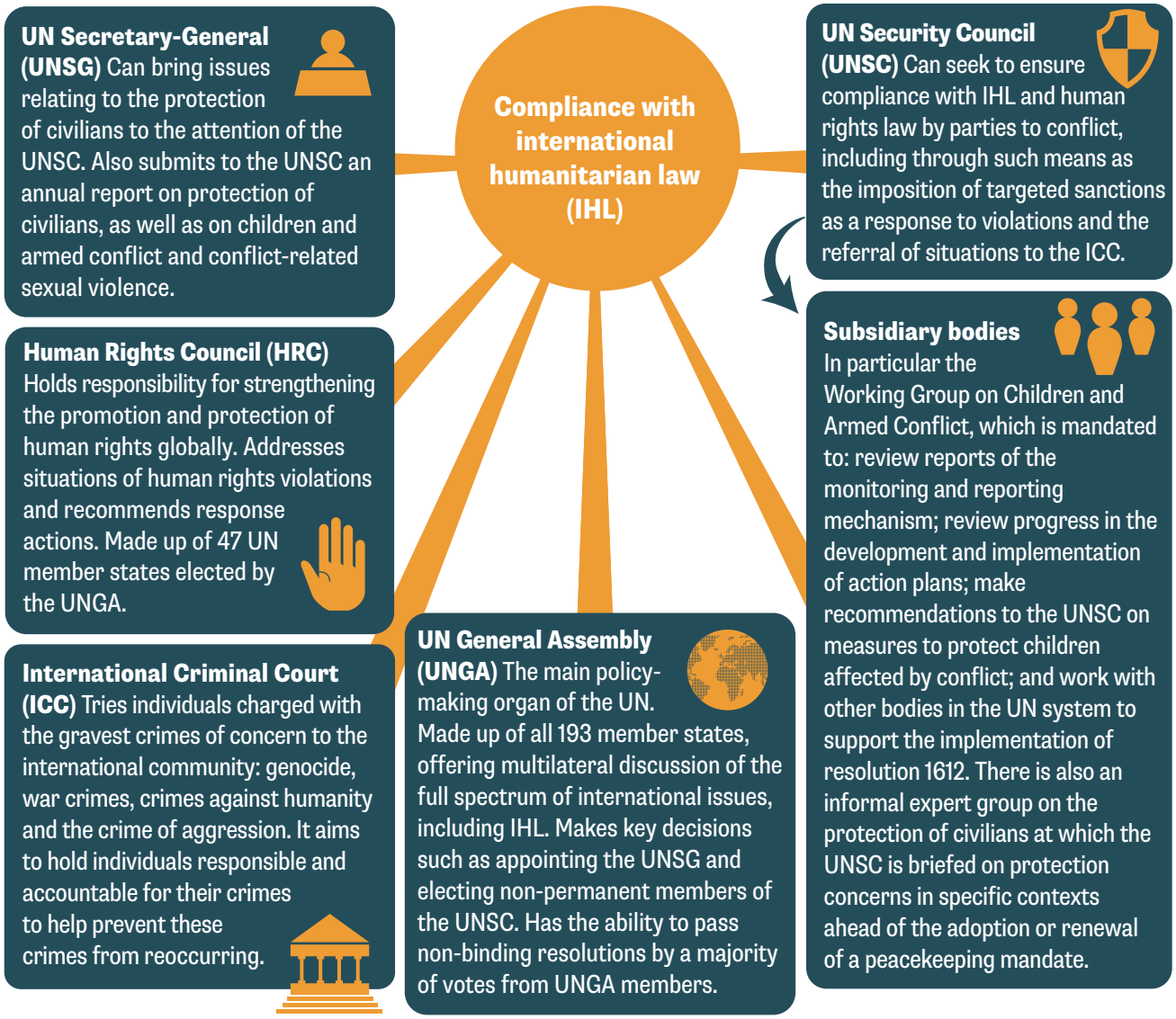
1 See https://odi.org/en/about/our-work/advocating-for-humanity-opportunities-for-improving-protection-outcomes-in-conflict/.

# 2 The state of play

## 2.1 UN mechanisms for the protection of civilians

There is well-established international architecture to prevent and respond to conflict, as well as to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. The main actors are the UNSC and its subsidiary bodies; the UN Secretary-General (UNSG); the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and its different committees; the UN Human Rights Council (HRC); and the International Criminal Court (ICC). Figure 1 briefly details the mandate held by these mechanisms and the entry point for advocates seeking to enhance monitoring and accountability for IHL compliance.

**Figure 1** International mechanisms to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law




Source: ICC, 2022; UN, n.d.; UNGA, 2022; HRC, 2022; UNSC, n.d.

## 2.2 The role of advocacy in developing norms: explosive weapons in populated areas

Advocacy on the EWIPA agenda has focused on the development of new international policy norms, aimed at driving changes in state practice to regulate and place limitations on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The collaboration across a range of actors set the agenda, and then socialised and advanced it with other stakeholders, especially states and armed forces.

Civil society organisations established a global coalition – the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW)[2] – which, in 2011, issued the 'INEW Call' (INEW, 2011). This called on states and other actors to take immediate action to prevent human suffering from the use of EWIPA by:

- acknowledging that such use causes severe harm and damages vital infrastructure;
- avoiding such harm, reviewing and strengthening national policies and practices on the use of explosive weapons, and gathering and making available relevant data;
- working for the full realisation of the rights of victims and survivors;
- developing stronger international standards, including certain prohibitions and restrictions on the use of EWIPA (ibid.).

Reaching consensus on the problem, and the solutions sought, was a critical step for civil society, the UN and the ICRC in order to come together to advocate towards a common goal.

INEW brought together a range of civil society organisations with complementary skill sets such as monitoring and data gathering, advocacy and lobbying, operational response, and technical weapons expertise. Many of the same international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and individuals were involved in disarmament and human security agendas, and were directly involved in the development of international legal instruments such as the Mine Ban Treaty (Ottawa Treaty), the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty. This meant that many individual and organisational relationships had already been established, facilitating a known way of working and a division of labour based on previously highlighted strengths.

Proponents of the EWIPA agenda recognised early on that developing new policy norms to place certain restrictions on the use of EWIPA would take time. Explosive weapons comprise a broad category of weapons and include those most commonly used in conflicts today. As such the issue is inextricably tied to military strategy and national security in a volatile global context. The use of such weaponry is therefore of considerable political and military interest. Interviewees report that it took five years to get states to understand the issue and begin to recognise the need for policy change to minimise civilian harm.

2 See www.inew.org/.

A central aim of the process in establishing new norms in this area has been the development of an international political declaration, with action-oriented commitments requiring changes in policy and practice by the states that sign it. A political declaration, rather than a legally binding treaty, was specifically chosen in recognition of the complexities and technicalities of the issue as well as the political environment. EWIPA is an intentionally broad policy agenda that lacks the specificity of other weapons-related agendas, and as a result has been perceived as less amenable to developing laws to promote change, as was done in relation to cluster munitions and landmines. An interviewee stated that 'starting with a legal challenge [as had been done previously] risked making little change or even doing damage to the agenda'.

The choice to pursue a political declaration also recognises the linkages between the EWIPA agenda and other declarations aimed at reducing civilian harm. In particular, the Safe Schools Declaration (2015) was developed in order to protect education from attack, prevent threats and violence against education infrastructure and personnel, and prevent the military occupation of these sites. These issues share a core problem, that 'violations of the law cause harm in this area, but the humanitarian problem extends much further than these violations' (Minor, 2019: 2) (see Box 1).

## Box 1 The Safe Schools Declaration

The Safe Schools Declaration was launched in 2015 following a two-year process developing and implementing the 'Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict'. The declaration is 'an inter-governmental political commitment to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities from the worst effects of armed conflict' (GCPEA, 2022a). It was conceived as an opportunity to support the guidelines and to further opportunities to create a wider range of commitments on protecting education from attack (Minor, 2019). The Safe Schools Declaration has been endorsed by 114 states and since the declaration has been open for endorsement, the GCPEA reports that 'good evidence has emerged across different regions that its implementation leads to tangible improvements in protecting education', including a decrease in the use of schools by the military in some countries that endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in 2015 and 2016 (GCPEA, 2022b;c).

The process has provided learning for future international political commitments on the protection of civilians, including EWIPA. The two processes have similar stakeholders and, crucially, adopted the same means of generating change: a political declaration. Other similarities include the focus on transforming a technical issue into a civilian imperative – in this case, the military use of schools – without the use of legal provisions (Minor, 2019). Last, the Safe Schools Declaration opened up a forum for states and international organisations to come together to advance the protection of education. It is expected that the political declaration on EWIPA would serve a similar function (ibid.).

The EWIPA agenda is a live policy issue. At the time of writing, the text of the political declaration had been finalised, awaiting signature by member states at the adoption conference in late 2022. Advocates for the EWIPA agenda seem optimistic about this process, noting a sea change in the positions of certain states in recent years where previously 'some states refused to recognise that explosive weapons present distinct humanitarian problems and resisted efforts to impose limitations on their uses... [to a point where] many of these states have [now] announced support for the text' (INEW, 2022b). Once an initial round of states has formally signed the declaration, advocacy efforts will turn to its universalisation to promote further signing of the declaration by those that do not join it immediately. It will also turn to implementation of the declaration's commitments, including supporting states and their militaries to move away from the practice of using EWIPA.

## 2.3 The role of advocacy in upholding an agenda: the protection of children and armed conflict

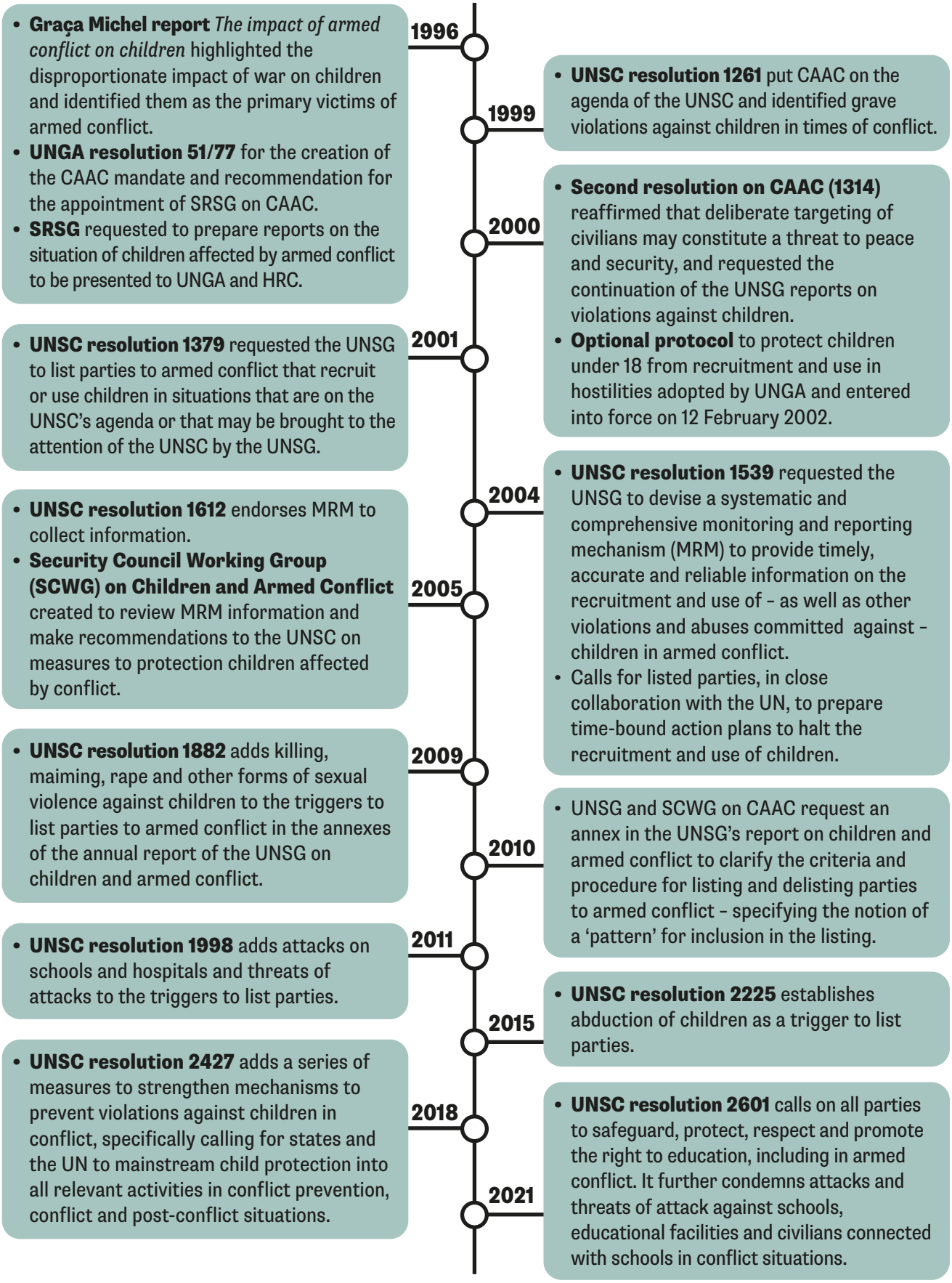
The protection of children and armed conflict has involved long-standing advocacy efforts by UN-mandated mechanisms, member states and civil society. The CAAC agenda receives widespread support from member states. As one interviewee says, 'it's hard to counter not wanting to harm children'. As such it is generally considered one of the less contentious agenda items at the UNSC. That said, geopolitical realities and the extent to which the mechanisms are upheld necessarily require consistent and sustained advocacy. Figure 2 details a number of key institutional moments over the timeline of the CAAC agenda.

In 1996, UNGA passed a resolution creating the mandate of the SRSG/CAAC. The resolution further requested the SRSG/CAAC to submit annual reports to UNGA and the UN Commission on Human Rights (now the aforementioned HRC). In 1999, UNSC resolution 1261 formally put CAAC on its agenda and identified the six 'grave violations' against children in armed conflict (OSRSG/CAAC, 2013: 9):

- killing and maiming of children
- recruitment or use of children as soldiers
- sexual violence against children
- abduction of children
- attacks against schools or hospitals
- denial of humanitarian access for children.

In 2001, UNSC resolution 1379 requested the UNSG to 'list' parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict. The listing process is intended to highlight perpetrators of grave violations against children in order to encourage – or shame – them into changing their behaviour. It receives a lot of interest from member states, civil society actors and the media, and it is generally considered a key part of the 'very practical toolkit that characterises [the CAAC] mandate', as one interviewee said.

**Figure 2** A timeline of key events for the children and armed conflict agenda




Source: OSRSG/CAAC, n.d.; OSRSG/CAAC, 2022

In 2004, the UNSC required listed parties to put in place time-bound action plans in cooperation with the UN to halt the use and recruitment of children (OSRSG/CAAC, 2022). Once these tasks have been completed and sustained for a period of one year, these parties can be delisted (UNSC, 2010). From 2009, the criteria for listing/delisting were expanded and clarified to include five of the six grave violations. The denial of humanitarian access for children is the only grave violation that is not a trigger for listing.

Experience shows that conflict parties are interested in ensuring they are not listed, and are amenable to establishing measures to support their delisting. This is demonstrated by the number of action plans signed and implemented by listed parties – a total of 37 action plans since 2005. UNSC members have both recognised and welcomed progress in signing and implementing action plans that result in the delisting of parties to conflict (UNICEF, 2022: 29). The listing and delisting process has been identified as an effective tool to support the reduction of grave violations against civilians (EPG, 2021).

In 2004, the UNSG was tasked to devise a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) to provide timely, accurate and reliable information on the grave violations and abuses committed in relation to CAAC (OSRSG/CAAC, n.d.). The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the lead UN agency for child protection, and so holds a specific responsibility for implementing the MRM at the country, regional and international levels (UNICEF, 2014). The UN Department of Peace Operations and the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, work closely with UNICEF and the SRSG/CAAC to effectively implement the MRM, including offering technical guidance and support (ibid.).

The MRM is targeted at fostering accountability and promoting compliance with international norms on child protection. The information collected is used by the SRSG/CAAC and others to advocate for and raise awareness of situations faced by children in conflict and to inform the listing/delisting process. The information is also regularly reviewed by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established in 2005 and composed of all permanent and elected members of the UNSC. The Working Group makes recommendations to the UNSC on measures to protect children affected by conflict. A New York-based Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, comprised of 49 members, which advocates in support of the CAAC mandate, also exists.

There is strong civil society support for the CAAC agenda. The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (hereafter referred to as Watchlist) is a membership network comprised of humanitarian, human rights and policy organisations that advocate to advance this agenda; partner with organisations to monitor, report and respond to local needs; and present a unified voice to report on children in war zones (Watchlist, n.d.a).

### 2.3.1 Politicisation of the CAAC agenda

The CAAC agenda generally receives widespread support from states, but the naming and shaming of parties through the listing mechanism has been politicised in recent years, which has undermined its credibility and that of the UN more broadly.

In 2016, the listing mechanism faced its first high-profile credibility test when Saudi Arabia threatened to withdraw funding to the UN if it was not removed from the list in the annex to the UNSG's annual report on CAAC, for violations committed by the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen (UN News, 2016). The UNSG at the time, Ban Ki-moon, described removing the Saudi-led coalition as one of the most 'painful and difficult decisions' he had to make. He stated that it is '"unacceptable" for Member States to exert undue pressure as scrutiny is [a] necessary part of the work of the UN' (ibid.). This set a precedent towards the increasing politicisation of the listing mechanism. Similarly, political dynamics within the UNSC and especially related to the five permanent members (China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US)) have prevented some conflict parties from being listed (e.g. Israel).

In seeking to withstand political pressures, and to try to find ways to reduce grave violations against children, difficult decisions have to be made. However, individual and political use of bureaucracy and process has tested the effectiveness of the listing mechanism as a means to reduce violations against children. Member states, civil society and some UN actors have collaborated and built constituencies to counter the politicisation of the process through a combination of diplomacy, private advocacy and an increasing use of public advocacy. Advocacy remains an important tool to maintain the CAAC agenda and the credibility of the listing mechanism.

# 3 Factors for effective advocacy

## 3.1 Collaboration between different stakeholders

Influencing the development of norms, or the use of advocacy in seeking to uphold norms, requires multilateral approaches leveraging the inputs and expertise of a broad range of actors.

### Explosive weapons in populated areas

#### The role of civil society in identifying and articulating problems and solutions

The civil society actors that formulated and initiated the development of norms on the use of EWIPA were a diverse, expert group. They had worked together for a number of years to influence the negotiation by states of laws and policies to regulate and restrict the use of certain weapons. They shared a concern regarding the humanitarian impact of such use of weapons on civilians. Given the number of years these actors had worked together, trust had been established, a key identified factor for effective collaboration in carrying out advocacy (Davies and Spencer, 2022).

Coming together under the INEW Call established the purpose of the network, forming the objective for the collaboration, and acting as a building block for the strategies and tactics to pursue in achieving this aim. The network intentionally brought together individuals and organisations with identified skills across weapons technology, law and policy development, evidence gathering, diplomacy, lobbying, and humanitarian and victim assistance, who worked towards a common goal. In order to effectively do this, one interviewee described the need for individual organisations to overcome identity boundaries, or mandates, to effectively work collectively.

Critically, the group used context-specific research to establish the existence of a defined, predictable pattern of harm associated with the use of EWIPA. This provided the basis for sustained engagement with states by disarmament, policy, humanitarian, human rights and peace-building actors.

While INEW is a civil society network, the group collaborated effectively with both the ICRC and UN at the outset – international organisations that shared the same concerns over the use of EWIPA – and in doing so broadened the scope and depth of advocacy efforts. Both the ICRC and the UN – in particular, OCHA – had been drawing attention to the humanitarian consequences of the use of EWIPA since 2009. The ICRC and OCHA were able to draw on their operational experience to convey the gravity of harm associated with the use of EWIPA. Additionally, the ICRC is mandated by the Geneva Conventions, and regularly conducts dialogue with states and armed actors on the conduct of hostilities, while OCHA is mandated by and has regular access to states, to a degree that is not always available to civil society actors. As such, proactive collaboration between these sets of actors was key in establishing credibility and dialogue with states.

As the UN Secretariat entity responsible for supporting the work of the UNSC on the protection of civilians, OCHA was effective in bringing the EWIPA issue into discussions in the UNSC, in part by ensuring its inclusion in the regular reports of the UNSG on the protection of civilians (UNSC, 2012; 2013). This helped raise the profile of the issue among states. Moreover, the UNSG's reports were able to provide a sense of forward momentum and direction, with the UNSG calling on parties to conflict to refrain from the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas and for states to engage in a process to develop a 'political commitment' on the use of EWIPA.

### Importance of state leadership and engagement

A key prerequisite for progressing dialogue on the use of EWIPA was the involvement of member states.

Actors involved in progressing this agenda noted the lack of engagement from member states in the initial stages of seeking to bring visibility to the use of EWIPA. They were also aware that humanitarian actors and INGOs are often seen as idealist, so it was important to establish measures to counter these perceptions.

Norway engaged with the issue at an early stage. It supported the first expert meeting on EWIPA in 2013. This was convened by OCHA and Chatham House with the attendance of states, the UN, the ICRC and civil society (OCHA, 2013). Norway subsequently hosted a second expert meeting the following year with OCHA. Twice the number of member states attended, an indicator of the benefits of having state leadership to engage additional member states (OCHA, 2014). Interviewees perceived Norway's strong support – including by providing vital financial support to civil society organisations leading this agenda – as having been critical to the success of this policy agenda's progress in the early stages.

Austria, too, had championed the protection of civilians and disarmament issues previously and so assumed more of a leadership role following the 2014 expert meeting. This included establishing a Geneva-based core group of states that met regularly with OCHA, the ICRC and civil society. It also hosted a third expert meeting in September 2015 as well as an international conference on urban warfare in October 2019 (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria for European and International Affairs, 2019).

Ireland took the baton from Austria in 2019, instigating and leading the process to develop the political declaration on EWIPA. Ireland was well placed to do this, having led 50 states to endorse a joint statement on the use of EWIPA at the UN General Assembly First Committee in 2018 (INEW, n.d.; Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations, 2018). Interviewees perceive Ireland as playing an important bridging role to engage militarily active states, including NATO member states as major users of explosive weapons.

While some of the most divergent positions lie between civil society and militarily active states – given state interests to retain autonomy in their use of weaponry – significant investments from civil society, the ICRC and OCHA to build a sustained dialogue with member states are perceived to have paid off. A number of militarily active and NATO member states have indicated a willingness to adopt the declaration. For some, this is a departure from their previous positions (INEW, 2022b).

Militarily active states will likely have strong influence on the implementation of the declaration's commitments where it concerns changes to military policy and practice. There have been mixed opinions as to the approach to bringing these states on board. Some think that there will be limited changes to policy and practice without having militarily active states on board at the outset. However, it has been a fine line to engage these states in dialogue, and to ensure they do not use their influence to weaken the policy objectives and text of the declaration and its commitments, and then potentially not join the weakened declaration.

### Bringing regional blocs on board

Engaging and bringing on board a regionally diverse group of states is essential, including to achieve universalisation of the future declaration – a key objective for INEW. To this end, Humanity & Inclusion (HI), with the support of INEW, convened regional conferences on EWIPA in Mozambique in 2017 and Chile in 2018.

The latter was attended by 23 states from the Latin America and Caribbean region. The outcome of the conference, the Santiago Communiqué, expressed support from the region for the development of an international political declaration on the use of EWIPA (INEW, 2018). Chile and Mexico, with their historical engagement and interest in disarmament, acted as state champions for the Latin America and Caribbean region, and the communiqué was key in enabling them to bring on board other states from the region.

Civil society sensitised the representatives on the use of EWIPA, and supported member states on actions they could take to develop policies and the roles their representatives could assume.

A similar approach was taken to engage African states. The Mozambique representative in Geneva at the time showed interest and was instrumental in convincing Mozambique to host an Africa regional conference in 2017 with the support of HI and INEW. The conference was attended by 19 African states and led to the adoption of the Maputo Communiqué (INEW, 2017) that, like that of Santiago, expressed support for the development of an international political declaration on the use of EWIPA.

While this was an important moment, efforts to keep African states engaged on the issue faltered. The Mozambique representative to Geneva moved on, and the replacement was less active on the issue. This reflects a challenge in seeking to engage state champions from states with limited capacity in their permanent missions to the UN in Geneva and New York. Progress is then highly contingent on the interest and capacity of individual representatives with no guarantee that this will be sustained when the individual moves on. Where there are larger missions, there is both greater capacity and

potential for policy interests to be adopted at the institutional level. INEW members have been proactively seeking ways to engage other African states to seek to renew interest, a key priority ahead of the conference to adopt the declaration, planned for November 2022 (INEW, 2022c).

Asian and Middle Eastern states had less policy coherence than in the African and Latin American and Caribbean regions and were unlikely to develop a common position. They therefore were not priority states to seek to influence at the outset.

One gap has been the limited engagement of conflict-affected states. Having such states speak, first hand, to the consequences of EWIPA can strengthen the credibility of the issue and reinforce the sense of urgency. Palestine's active engagement, for example, has been cited as a strong example of affected-state engagement. It provides an opportunity for states to have a peer-to-peer dialogue, and situates the issue within the reality of conflict.

Efforts were made by INEW and other actors for conflict-affected states to assume a more prominent role, but they were not entirely successful. In some cases, these states have not bought into the agenda because of their use of such weapons against their own populations, for example in Syria. In other cases, they may have been reluctant to become involved for risk of drawing attention to the actions of the armed forces of states that were supporting their military efforts, or due to a lack of resources to invest in less destructive weaponry. Some states' engagement was limited due to the capacity issues at permanent missions to the UN, as mentioned previously.

However, where this has been possible, it has been described as powerful. Examples include the intervention of the Afghanistan ambassador to the UN who spoke to the harms caused by explosive weapons with wide area effects at the UN General Assembly in 2014 (Tanin, 2014). Ukraine's ambassador to Geneva, too, gave a powerful statement during the April 2022 conference detailing the widespread death, injuries and destruction, outlining how military shelling had turned cities to ashes. This was widely cited as having given renewed relevance and urgency to the adoption of the declaration (INEW, 2022d).

## Children and armed conflict

### The role of civil society as a watchdog

Historically, the SRSG/CAAC has been perceived as a neutral mandate holder, reporting on evidence-based grave violations against children, and making recommendations on what should be included in the UNSG's annual CAAC report. The UNSG and the SRSG/CAAC hold great responsibility and power in interpreting and promoting the mandate.

Watchlist is the main civil society network that provides information, analysis and advocacy to strengthen – or at a minimum maintain – established mechanisms to reduce grave violations against children in conflict.[3] Since the growing politicisation of the listing mechanism, it has increasingly played the role of a watchdog, collectively advocating to maintain the credibility of the process. Watchlist

3 See https://watchlist.org/.

comprises a range of policy, humanitarian and human rights actors, which is widely perceived to give it credibility and is a strong example of long-term collaborative advocacy. A strength of the network has been the role of representatives to directly relay the experiences and impact of conflict on children, witnessed and documented directly by members of Watchlist, to representatives working on the agenda in international forums. It includes a range of actors that monitor and document violations, and provide direct support to children in armed conflict, as well as provide technical inputs to policy developments.

Watchlist is a key resource for member states, working with UNSC members through the Working Group on CAAC, and additional member states through the Group of Friends. Every chair of the Working Group and Group of Friends has been an ally and has had a common objective – that of promoting the agenda. Watchlist and member states work in close proximity through the chairs, and communicate regularly. Each state representative interviewed was highly supportive of the role played by Watchlist, recognising the technical, policy and legal expertise that its network brings, and the invaluable, often under-recognised, support it provides.

In 2020, Watchlist convened an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) in a further attempt to mitigate the increased politicisation of the listing and delisting process. It is composed of senior, internationally respected child rights experts with the potential to engage constructively with the UNSG and the SRSG/CAAC. While the group was received positively, engagement reportedly fell short of sustained, constructive dialogue.

### Member states as guardians of the mandate

With its mandate to review reports, adopt conclusions and make recommendations to the UNSC (UNSC, 2005), the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict operates as a member state guardian of the mandate. While the revolving chairs interpret their mandate and objectives upon taking up the position, they often play a bridging role between the UNSC, member states outside the UNSC, relevant UN agencies and civil society. Interviewees who have been a part of this group and/or the broader-based Group of Friends on CAAC see the role of civil society as key in providing information, analysis and background to the progression of the agenda at the UNSC, as well as the geopolitical context and individuals that have informed it.

The Group of Friends was established to provide an entry point for non-UNSC members who are supportive of or sympathetic to the agenda. It often serves as an information-sharing platform and also provides opportunities to brief state representatives on other relevant tools and mechanisms to support implementation, such as the Safe Schools Declaration and the Paris Principles. It also seeks to align state interventions at the UNSC debates on CAAC, develop endorsements and support implementation of UNSC resolutions.

National and regional 'groups of friends' have also been established. Some focus on countries where major violations take place – for example, groups have been established in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria and Yemen. Others have been established for their strategic presence – for example, for NATO, and in Brussels and Geneva. These groups have had mixed success,

dependent on how active are their chairs and memberships. Contact between the groups is often ad hoc in nature, and could be strengthened. However, they provide an important opportunity for more joined-up approaches across UN bodies – for example, between the UNSC, UNGA and the HRC – as well as allowing issues in affected countries to be relayed directly to the international level. Interviewees at the international level noted the benefit of engaging directly with actors in countries where there have been major violations.

## 3.2 The importance of strategy and tactics

### Explosive weapons in populated areas

#### Intentional use of language and careful framing

In seeking to develop norms to address the use of EWIPA, careful thought was given to the framing of the problem, and the language and terminology used.

The use of the term 'explosive weapons in populated areas' diverged from previous approaches focusing on the use of specific weapons, such as landmines and cluster bombs, to a wider category of weapons – weapons with wide area effects – that produce a specific pattern of harm to civilians.

Similarly, the term 'populated areas' was consistent with IHL and ensured a broader framing of the issue that went beyond 'urban conflict'. The actors initially involved worked collectively to establish an objective: to change policy on the use of weapons with wide area effects, rather than seek to regulate specific types of weapons.

The problem of EWIPA was deliberately framed in humanitarian terms, rather than as a legal compliance issue, particularly since the IHL was insufficient for addressing the use of EWIPA. It was also recognised that the adoption of legally binding standards does not necessarily provide greater protection or regulate the use of weapons – 30 years after a proposed ban on the use of cluster munitions, they were still in use by some parties to conflict (Moyes, 2022). The humanitarian angle allowed for a more comprehensive approach that focused on the wider human, social, economic and environmental impacts. A similar approach had been used in the framing of the use of nuclear weapons: 'Focusing on these issues forced people to question – is this right?' (ibid.). The intentional and strategic use of words and the framing of the issue was perceived as critical to progress by those involved.

#### Politically and militarily astute advocacy

Understanding and taking into account political and military perspectives has been key to progress. For example, a key policy ask has been to reduce the use of EWIPA, rather than seeking to ban their use in recognition that this was more amenable to many states and their militaries. The EWIPA agenda advocates the use of the terminology of 'refrain' and 'avoid', rather than 'stop'. This was a pragmatic approach and 'doesn't create a legal premise that states will balk at', as explained by one interviewee.

This terminology provided a common position for the UN, the ICRC and civil society organisations on which to base negotiations with states and militaries. While the 'avoid' language does not appear in the political declaration in the way EWIPA agenda advocates would have liked, there is a clear commitment for states to adopt and implement policies to restrict or refrain from the use of EWIPA.

The strategies of the EWIPA agenda advocates involved in seeking to influence state positions varied; in particular, human rights organisations were often more outspoken. Others undertook more direct engagement with states and/or militaries that focused on constructive, solutions-oriented dialogue. Many interviewees felt that it was imperative not to use denunciation, but to focus on persuasive arguments focusing on the humanitarian consequences of EWIPA, while others spoke to the need to ensure constructive dialogue but not to allow persuasive arguments to compromise red lines.

Interviewees cited the importance of accurate, verified, irrefutable data (on civilians killed and maimed by EWIPA) in seeking to engage states and militaries. Evidence-based positions, rather than positions based on moral or emotive factors, were central to progress.

The role of subject-matter experts to present the issues – particularly when engaging state or military personnel – was also key, as was developing an understanding of military language and thinking. Policies related to technical issues such as explosive weapons run the risk of being weakened by political or military actors with vested interests who do not want restrictions in their military conduct. Technical military language can be used to alienate stakeholders to prevent them from engaging effectively on the agenda, and risks compromising policy positions. Building an understanding of military language and deploying arguments based on technical knowledge helped mitigate these risks. Some organisations developed this expertise, others employed former military personnel, or leveraged organisations with an ongoing dialogue with military to do this.

### Ensuring state ownership and dialogue

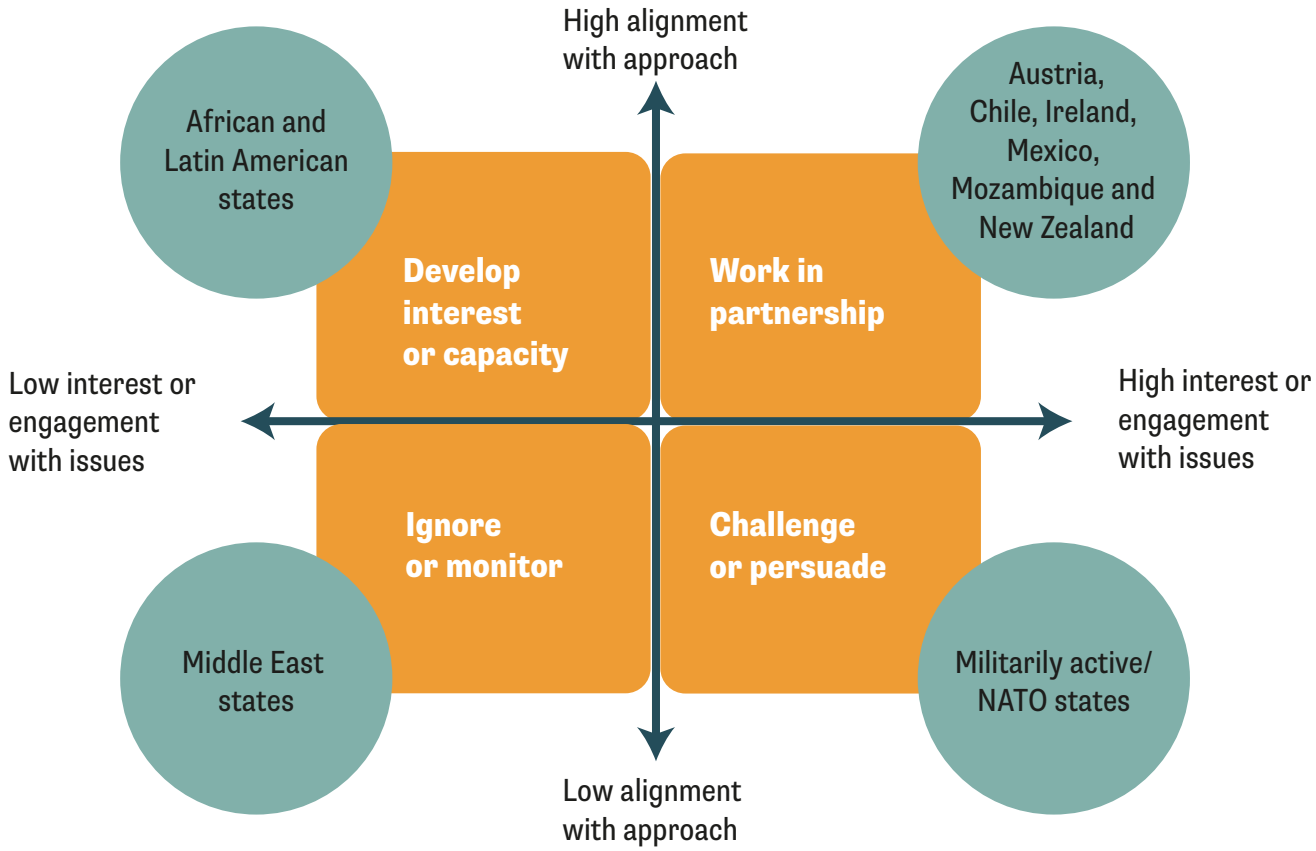
A key lesson from the Safe Schools Declaration was the need for state leadership. States may resist and reject a process that is perceived as being led by civil society or humanitarian actors. Engaging state champions in the early stages opened channels for state-to-state dialogue, which EWIPA agenda advocates supported at the technical, policy and information-sharing levels.

Engaging regional blocs, too, has been critical. The early engagement of Chile through the Santiago conference, and the endorsement of the Santiago Communiqué, including by powerful states in the region such as Argentina, provided an entry point to build a regional coalition. The process led to the identification of alliances that could be built on in Geneva, led by Chile and Mexico as state champions, with the active engagement of Peru and Uruguay. Chile and Mexico, with their progressive positions relevant to the EWIPA agenda, have since become global state champions.

For the network of actors involved, identifying states that had high interest and high alignment with the objectives of the network, and engaging these states early, was key (see Figure 3). This built on previous engagement or interest in disarmament for typically non-militarily active actors in Latin America and the Caribbean, and on issues related to urban movement and the risk for urban-related conflict in

Africa. This early identification allowed states and civil society to work together in bringing along states with high alignment and low interest (as has taken place in Latin America and the Caribbean). Or they were able to persuade low-interest actors, such as NATO and militarily active states. They then started engaging more proactively from 2019, when they could no longer ignore the issue and saw it as in their interest to engage (in order to refute or contest major policy points). Germany played a particular role in engaging NATO states when convening open meetings on EWIPA, focusing on military policy and practice. While geopolitical developments and personnel changes have ultimately impacted the level of success, the strategy was strong, reflecting the benefits of early investment in an analysis of alignment and interest to inform an influencing strategy.

**Figure 3** The influence and interest matrix




Source: Adapted from Young et al., 2014

Lobbying predominantly focused on states using explosive weapons, as well as more progressive states such as in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa. States are not monolithic entities – organisations sought to identify the positions of different ministries in individual member states. It was crucial to understand which parts of member state governments would be most sympathetic, and to use that as an entry point for dialogue.

Directly engaging the military has had mixed levels of success. Where there has been success, it has been due to pre-existing dialogue. For example, a coalition of civil society organisations based in the US had a pre-existing protection-of-civilians dialogue with the US Department of Defense, providing an entry

point for discussion directly with the military on EWIPA (see Metcalfe-Hough, 2022). Other organisations such as the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) had a pre-existing dialogue with NATO that could be leveraged, and the ICRC has ongoing dialogue with states and militaries that could be built on.

Where there was limited pre-existing dialogue, this had to be carefully built. For example, positions between the UK's Ministry of Defence, France's Ministry of Armed Forces and INEW members at times clashed, taking further time and investment to establish trust. While long-term investments have paid off, one interviewee identified a key gap: the lack of an identified military champion who could bring other militaries on board.

In other contexts, ministries of foreign affairs – particularly those that had a focus on disarmament – were perceived as more viable entry points than defence counterparts. Some organisations used and built on their networks to bring together both ministries in a joint dialogue. For others, humanitarian departments were a useful entry point for mobilising other government departments.

Parliamentarians, too, can play a powerful role. Belgium was originally opposed to the declaration. Civil society, in particular HI, activated national networks within Belgium and engaged the media, which helped mobilise parliamentarians. The impact of the use of EWIPA strongly resonated with one parliamentarian in particular. Following a series of briefings from INEW members, a resolution was tabled and almost unanimously passed by the Belgian National Defence Commission, declaring the Belgium government is 'unequivocally against the use of explosive weapons with large impact in populated areas' (INEW, 2021). A little over a week later, Belgium's Federal Parliament passed a resolution requesting the government to support the political declaration process and to propose the inclusion of commitments to avoid the use of EWIPA, recognise their reverberating effects, and ensure the provision of assistance to victims (ibid.). So far, however, it has failed to result in a policy change of the Belgium government.

Regardless, this demonstrates the need for strong linkages between national, regional and international advocacy. National advocacy, leveraging memberships, partnerships and associations have been critical, as has engaging states that do not agree with the desired policy position. Conversely, a low level of national civil society mobilisation, particularly in African countries, is perceived by interviewees as a weakness in bringing more states from regional blocs on board.

## Children and armed conflict

### Balancing private and public advocacy

There is regular contact between SRSG/CAAC's office and civil society working closely on CAAC – predominantly members of the Watchlist network – as there is with the chairs of the UNSC Working Group and Group of Friends. In the early years of the network, advocacy predominantly focused on private interventions and engagement with these actors, with public reporting focusing on monitoring, documentation and recommendations to relevant bodies of the UN (Watchlist, n.d.b).

Concerns about the growing political influence on the listing and delisting process, and the responses taken by the UNSG and SRSG/CAAC, led civil society to begin to conduct more public advocacy in an effort to exert greater influence.

For example, there were indications that the incoming UNSG, António Guterres, intended to freeze the listing and delisting process for a year upon taking up his position in 2017. This risked setting a dangerous precedent and undermining an otherwise effective established mechanism (Watchlist, 2017). A combination of public and private advocacy succeeded in ensuring the continuation of the listing/delisting process.

However, the UN subsequently decided to divide the list in 2017 and distinguish between the 'parties to conflict that have put in place measures to improve the protection of children [...] and parties that have not' (UNSC, 2017: 35). While this could potentially incentivise positive behaviour by conflict parties, the lack of clear criteria governing these designations and of reference to the criteria for delisting set out in the UNSG's 2010 report threatened to undermine the mandate. While there have been ongoing advocacy efforts seeking to clarify the criteria, and how the splitting of the list has led to measures to improve violations against children, these have had little impact (see EPG, 2021). The split list remains in use.

One public advocacy approach to counter growing political influence on the listing process has been annual shadow-reporting by Watchlist. This documents grave violations against children and the conflict parties carrying them out, and makes recommendations on parties that should be listed according to the 2010 criteria set out by the UNSG. Careful consideration was given to potential risks when deciding whether to issue regular reports, including to ensure the reports did not undermine the formal mandated process, balanced with the benefits of providing independent analysis to support and influence the listing/delisting process. The report, now known as the 'credible list', was first published in 2017. It provides an important basis for advocacy with member states and has contributed to greater awareness of political influence over the listing/delisting process. It is increasingly referred to during UNSC debates on CAAC and dialogue around the agenda (Security Council Report, 2018; 2022).

From 2016, following the delisting of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, a number of organisations jointly started carrying out public campaigns to urge for the Saudi-led coalition to be relisted. This campaigning was thought to have contributed to the relisting of the Saudi-led coalition in 2017 (Madden, 2017). With ongoing politicisation of the list, civil society increased its public advocacy in addition to leveraging diplomatic and private channels in attempts to safeguard the credibility of the listing process.

However, such attempts had limited success. Despite verified evidence documented in the UNSG's annual report, the Saudi-led coalition was delisted for attacks on schools and hospitals in Yemen in 2018; while in 2020, it was delisted for the killing and maiming of children. That same year, Myanmar's armed forces, the Tatmadaw, were delisted for the recruitment and use of children. Saudi Arabia had successfully exerted significant pressure as a major donor to the UN to delist the Saudi-led coalition. Yet the reason for delisting the Tatmadaw, despite verified evidence of continued grave violations, was less clear (EPG, 2021).

The delisting of the Tatmadaw and Saudi-led coalition was perceived as another egregious omission by a wide range of actors, triggering further condemnation and public advocacy. Member states took unprecedented action and collectively démarched the UNSG; members of the UNSC met with the offices of the UNSG and SRSG/CAAC; the Group of Friends sent a letter to the UNSG expressing

concerns that the approach to listing and delisting could undermine the credibility of the MRM and tools to address violations against children; and 25 NGOs sent an open letter to the UNSG (Security Council Report, 2020; Watchlist, 2020a). At the June 2020 UNSC open debate on CAAC, numerous delegations – representing 37 member states – called for a credible, accurate list based on objective criteria and one that would be consistently applied to conflict parties in their statements to the UNSC (EPG, 2021). The response by the UNSG and the SRSG/CAAC was reportedly muted.

Since then, avenues for constructive dialogue have become increasingly difficult. Multiple interviewees from civil society and state representatives reported that when they sought to engage directly with either the offices of the UNSG or the SRSG/CAAC, their queries were referred to the other office. This has been a significant barrier in efforts to constructively engage in the politicisation of the listing process. Dialogue with the SRSG/CAAC reportedly became more strained, including a deterioration in direct dialogue for some.

The negative repercussions of more critical and public advocacy have undermined constructive engagement, but there have also been positive outcomes, thought in part to be linked to the collective pressure of multiple actors. In 2021, the Tatmadaw were relisted. The listing of the Afghan National Army (for killing/maiming children), and the addition of the violation of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children to the listing of the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces, are thought to be in part related to sustained advocacy efforts (UNSC, 2021).

### Deploying senior representatives

The above-mentioned EPG was, in part, convened in an attempt to establish a more constructive dialogue. By establishing senior representation, there was a hope the group would have greater credibility and access to the UNSG and SRSG/CAAC and, therefore, impact in countering political influences to the listing process.

The EPG launched a report that took a longitudinal perspective, providing information and analysis of developments in relation to the CAAC agenda between 2010 and 2020 (EPG, 2021: 6). The report, launched in 2021, was positively received by member states and actors working on CAAC – as was its approach in providing long-term analysis. But, while its representatives were able to establish a dialogue with the office of the SRSG/CAAC, there are limited indications of actions taken in response to the report and its recommendations.

Engaging senior, respected individuals had limited impact for a number of reasons. First, they came up against the aforementioned barriers in effectively engaging either the UNSG or SRSG/CAAC – with each office referring them to the others; second, member states took an approach of waiting for the UNSG to respond through the listing decisions in the 2021 annual report (which was released approximately three months after the EPG report); last, the ad hoc nature of the EPG, having been established to engage in dialogue around the findings of the report, limited the potential for establishing longer-term dialogue and therefore sustained engagement on the issues.

## 3.3 The importance of evidence

One of the key strengths of both thematic areas discussed has been the use of irrefutable, verified evidence to support engagement and advocacy efforts.

For over a decade, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) has documented the use of EWIPA, providing evidence that some 90% of people killed or injured since 2011 are civilians (AOAV, 2021). Having concrete data and a statistical analysis of the appalling harm caused to civilians has had significant impact in emphasising the need for action. As the statistic is clear, and so blatantly unacceptable, it has been widely cited by the UNSG, member state representatives (including in debates of the UNSC on the protection of civilians), policy actors, the media and in academia.

Many EWIPA agenda advocates with an operational presence in conflicts where EWIPA are used have documented their impact on civilians. Some presented information targeted at a military audience. For example, PAX focuses on gathering data on the impact of particular weapon types (PAX and Article 36, 2016), while others have focused on patterns of civilian harm (Airwars, n.d.). All interviewees working on the EWIPA agenda cited the use of evidence as the central basis for all dialogue and negotiation towards norm development and the political declaration.

As regards CAAC, the formal mandate of monitoring and documenting grave violations against children requires that appropriate steps are taken to verify the information presented. Strong, credible evidence is central to the mandate and provides a strong foundation for advocacy.

However, the level of verification required, and the reporting timeframes for the information to be included in the UNSG's annual report, means that there is a significant time-lag between the documentation of incidents, their presentation in the report and the subsequent triggering of responses aimed at reducing violations.[4] For example, despite the rapid escalation of conflict in Ukraine in February 2022 and associated concerns over grave violations against children, there were risks that the situation would not be included in the UNSG's annual report until 2023 (Watchlist, 2022a;b). While this has not happened, it means that conflicts where egregious violations are taking place, such as Ukraine and Ethiopia, have featured as 'situations of concern' with no further detail as to violations documented (Watchlist, 2022c).

4 All violations must be documented and verified between 1 January and 31 December the previous year in order to be included in the UNSG's annual report, usually released mid-way through the following year.

This demonstrates a downside of a formally mandated mechanism – there is less flexibility to respond to emerging, previously unforeseen violations, therefore resulting in delays in initiating a response. The recent conflict in Ethiopia began in 2020, and only in 2022 has been listed as a country of concern. The time-lag can also be used to justify politically motivated inclusion or the omission of incidents, e.g. omitting Israel in relation to the escalation of violence in 2021. These shortcomings were cited by many interviewees.

Given the high standards for verification required for incidents to be documented by the MRM, reports such as the UNSG's annual CAAC report and regular country-specific reports to the Working Group on CAAC, are only available several months – or even years – after the violations occur. In addition, the MRM only reports on grave violations that the UN has been able to verify, so do not capture all violations against children. For these reasons, evidence documented by other actors, such as international and national civil society actors, and others, can further complement MRM data, with important, timely analysis providing a fuller picture of the levels of violations against children. Utilising the MRM, with broader complementary documented evidence, supports the development and implementation of efforts to respond to and prevent grave violations by the UN, civil society and other actors – leading to positive impacts for children in conflict (EPG, 2021).

## 3.4 Common factors for successful advocacy

Analysis of the EWIPA and CAAC agendas reflects a number of common factors that facilitated collective advocacy to maintain momentum and progress the agendas (Figure 4). A clearly defined, collectively agreed objective is the starting point. This is followed by building coalitions of allies and the long-term involvement of subject-matter experts, which have been central to both agendas.

**Figure 4** Factors that have facilitated collective advocacy

Additionally, there are certain aspects to engaging with states and other key stakeholders that increase the likelihood of success in advocating for civilian protection in conflict areas. First, reaching out to and generating support among a diverse group of states, either through bilateral efforts or by targeting regional groupings, is essential. For the EWIPA agenda, the regional conferences in Maputo and Santiago were instrumental in moving the EWIPA issue closer to home for the states in those regions and helped to foster buy-in at the capital level and not just Geneva. The focus on regional groupings provided greater room for regional champions to emerge. By contrast, the need for more representative engagement, and lack of diversity of state champions – including from the Global South[5] – has been described as one of the main weaknesses, but so pivotal that commentators to the CAAC agenda believe the agenda 'won't progress without it' (see section 'Limited engagement of Global South actors' in Chapter 4 for more detail). Some see this as a reason for limited traction and that, without it, the CAAC agenda may lose relevance. Second, it is essential to actively and constructively engage states that are clearly opposed to the issue but that are also instrumental to success. As one interviewee said: 'you need to sit around the table with those we don't necessarily agree with'.

Persistence and taking a long-term view are necessary factors for success. Change does not happen overnight. Some stakeholders to the CAAC agenda have described their efforts as a 'war of attrition' in which you need to 'put out the truth and [keep sharing] the mistakes in the listing'. While this has not necessarily led to the extent of change desired by CAAC agenda advocates, maintaining the pressure on the decision-makers and the listing mechanism has led to some wins that may not have happened without this level of pressure – such as with Afghanistan and Somalia.

Persistence, too, has helped to offset the normalisation of political posturing that is used to remove or keep certain states with more influence (or which have allies with influence) off the list, e.g. Israel and the Saudi-led coalition. That more ground has not been ceded to political influence is, in itself, a positive outcome. It also helps to counter the media and member state fatigue and loss of interest associated with longer-term advocacy agendas. Sustaining the attention and engagement of member states that have other, competing issues to focus on, rotate diplomats out of post every few years and operate in a complex geopolitical environment, requires the inputs of strong and active core members to keep promoting the agenda. This persistence must come from across the board: civil society actors, UN entities and member states.

This speaks to a broader enabling factor: the need to maintain and, ideally, build on momentum. Sometimes external factors can drive momentum. Interviewees across both the EWIPA and CAAC agendas speak of the role of egregious situations in driving forward progress. Specifically, the conflict in Ukraine drew attention to the widespread use of bombs and rockets against civilian infrastructure as well as the killing and maiming of children and other civilians while highlighting the importance and

5 'Global South' is an increasingly common term used to categorise many countries around the world. Often it is employed as a substitute for referring to nations that have been historically exploited through colonisation. The authors acknowledge current international debates on the usefulness of this term, which question whether another generalising and binary framework (Global North–Global South) is productive for reconstituting and challenging global power relations.

urgency of the issues (UNSC, 2022b; also expressed by interviewees). Multiple interviewees referenced how 'Ukraine – though awful – has given more momentum to the agenda'. Some interviewees believe this is a factor in having militarily active states previously opposed to the political declaration declare their intent to adopt it. But there are concerns that member states – particularly those who have recently voted against UNGA resolutions condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, such as South Africa – may perceive this as a pro-Western, or even anti-Russian instrument and not sign the declaration.

The conflict in Ukraine therefore re-emphasises optics in the face of such geopolitical polarisation – the need to be cognisant of such dynamics, considering perceptions of credibility in who relays the advocacy position.

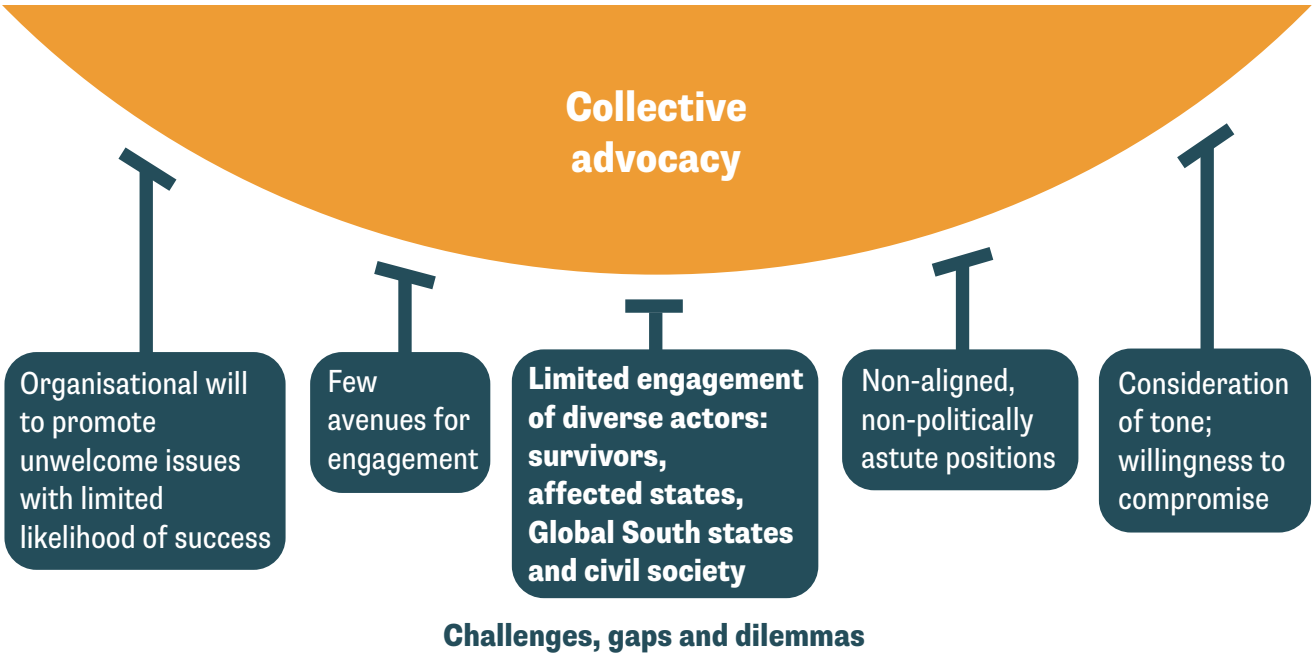
The ability to react to and leverage geopolitical events requires a well-resourced network with the time, capacity and flexibility to respond to opportunities. Importantly, organisations should also be willing and able to seek opportunities to drive momentum in the absence of external stimuli or when there is a lull in engagement by other stakeholders. For example, global lockdowns resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic offered opportunities for innovative ways to drive momentum. A 15-year-old girl from Mali addressed the UNSC at the 2020 open debate on CAAC (Watchlist, 2020b). It was the first time a child affected by armed conflict had participated in a UNSC open debate – made possible thanks to it being conducted virtually.

For the EWIPA agenda, lockdowns essentially paused progress on the political process for a year due to its reliance on convening in-person dialogue at this delicate and final stage of the negotiating process. Yet a degree of momentum was maintained through similar means – virtual meetings and panel events convened by INEW and some states that aimed to keep member states aware and engaged.

# 4 Dilemmas, challenges and gaps

Both the EWIPA and CAAC agendas are complex and sensitive topics, which interlink with political, military and security interests. With the wide range of organisations involved in advocating on these issues, inevitably there may be differences in approach, tensions and dilemmas that need to be managed (Figure 5).

**Figure 5** Factors that have hindered collective advocacy




As identified, coherence in messaging and advocacy objectives is critical. Diverse, non-aligned and sometimes competing positions can compromise the outcome sought and send mixed and confusing messages to advocacy targets. Without aligned and politically astute advocacy positions, there are also risks that advocacy positions can play into political interests. Humanitarian organisations often call for the IHL to be upheld during the conduct of hostilities, but states often use international law to their benefit. Regarding the use of EWIPA, some militarily strong states took the position that the IHL is adequate and disagreed with the need for further norms. Therefore, organisations calling for IHL compliance in areas where EWIPA are used can risk undermining the coherence of the position of EWIPA agenda advocates. It can allow states to play organisations off against each other, asserting that no action is required because the IHL is sufficient.

Some tensions among actors are linked to how willing organisations are to promote unpopular issues or those with low likelihood of success. For the EWIPA agenda, the group of organisations that initially identified the problem knew that states would be reluctant to accept restrictions on the use of weapons beyond those that already exist in the IHL, which – they would and did argue – were sufficient. It was important not to accept this position or the apparent lack of state interest at

the early stages but to take the long view: work to get the issue recognised and proceed to policy development. As one interviewee said: 'You need to be prepared to fail and keep strong principles. Don't fold your language demands into existing structures.'

The extent to which private and public advocacy should be used is also an issue that must be considered when undertaking collaborative advocacy. The diverse stakeholders in both the CAAC and EWIPA agendas have allowed different organisations to take a range of private and public approaches according to their modus operandi and risk appetite, making flexible use of visibility dependent on the context and risks. But to be effective, organisations engaged in carrying out various approaches must coordinate, and ensure coherent and mutually reinforcing messaging.

The use of tone must be based on an understanding of how to influence the positions of advocacy targets involved. This is so that constructive dialogue and trust can be built. For both the EWIPA and CAAC agendas, some organisations in the network were more critical, while others built constructive dialogue. However, in some circumstances there remain few avenues for such engagement. For example, with the CAAC agenda, the politicisation of the listing process was so egregious and did such enormous damage to the mechanism that there are risks it may no longer serve its purpose. It would have been difficult not to denounce it and, indeed, failure to do so could have undermined the credibility of Watchlist and other actors. Conversely, this has hampered avenues for constructive dialogue that need to be re-established.

This, too, represents a problem: how to influence individuals that have low interest in the issue and are not aligned with the advocacy position – and therefore are a significant challenge to influence – but are key to ensuring that protections are upheld. For example, this seems to be the case with the current UNSG, Guterres. There are no simple solutions with such politically charged considerations. It requires working around personalities and seeking to strike a language, tone and approach to which they will respond.

Consideration as to the extent to which organisations are willing to compromise can also affect the outcome. For the EWIPA agenda, this has been particularly important during the development of the political declaration. Throughout the process, EWIPA agenda advocates pushed for the strongest possible text, at the risk of low adoption by states, at the outset in the hope that state support would increase over time. This was in line with the approach taken for the Safe Schools Declaration process. The result is a declaration where key terminology has been included, such as the commitment to avoid civilian harm by restricting and refraining from the use of EWIPA. While the wording of the commitment was not as explicit as proponents would have liked, the final formulation has achieved the aims of EWIPA advocates. It has meant that militarily active states have signalled their intent to sign the declaration.

## Limited engagement of Global South actors

One of the main weaknesses under both the CAAC and EWIPA agendas has been the limited engagement of survivors, or civil society, from affected states, representation of affected states and, to a lesser degree, engagement of Global South states and mobilisation of Global South civil society.

There have been some efforts to bring local actors and/or children who have been affected by armed conflict to the CAAC open debates. Civil society and member state representatives to the UNSC in New York spoke to their appreciation of this and for grounding debates in the realities of the impact of conflict on children. One interviewee spoke to the benefit of leveraging virtual meetings during Covid lockdowns, enabling children from affected countries to directly brief delegates. Ensuring the voice of children is represented in some form is important. There is appetite among some member states to strengthen this.

There is also recognition that the MRM is strengthened when local actors, who are familiar with the conflict, are involved in its implementation. A number of national actors are involved in monitoring and reporting violations as well as in implementation of action plans. However, a limited number of national actors have been involved in directly carrying out advocacy in international forums. But, where it has taken place, all actors spoke of how powerful it is. In Yemen, for example, there has been growing involvement of national civil society voicing concerns about the UNSG's approach to the listing and delisting of members of the Saudi-led coalition over the years. This is an area that would benefit from significant strengthening.

There has also been limited mobilisation of civil society to engage national governments in the Global South, particularly in Africa and, to some extent, Latin America and the Caribbean. Much of this has been linked to limited funds and capacity to mobilise national civil society to carry out sustained advocacy at capital level, and due to the fact that this is a complex technical policy agenda that is often difficult for organisations to keep abreast of when they are working on multiple issues. Latin America and the Caribbean has seen greater civil society mobilisation in recent years through engaging the Human Security Network in Latin America and the Caribbean (SEHLAC network).[6] A SEHLAC representative sits on INEW's steering committee, which helps facilitate information sharing and coordinated advocacy positions. However, greater mobilisation of national civil society to influence state representatives at capital level has been recognised as a significant shortcoming. Markedly, there has been limited participation by people affected by the use of EWIPA. There have been attempts to bring survivors directly into debates, which ultimately failed due to visa restrictions. However, efforts have been made to include the participation of survivors in virtual expert meetings, panel events and the political process, either directly or through video messages. Survivor testimony is considered to be very powerful.

6 https://sehlac.org/.

National civil society from affected countries and the Global South experience limitations to directly engage with international platforms such as the UNSC and the UNGA, as navigating the politics and dynamics at play, and identifying opportunities to carry out advocacy, can be difficult. This is a role international actors can and should strengthen – to support national actors to navigate such dynamics and ensure that they are able to directly represent issues and carry out advocacy at the international level (Davies and Spencer, 2022; Spencer and Davies, 2022).

International organisations have a role to bring affected people to speak directly with their own military and government in conflict-affected countries. By empowering communities to raise their concerns with armed actors within conflict-affected areas, local level changes can be made that can have a profound impact on the protection of civilians. This has been happening to some extent, for example in Afghanistan and Nigeria, but this too could be strengthened.

# 5 Conclusion

We are living in an era where existing protections are increasingly under threat, while others are not sufficient to protect civilians in contemporary conflict. Complementary advocacy plays an important role to develop or maintain norms to strengthen the protection of civilians in conflict. This requires close collaboration between key actors including member states, the UN, international organisations, national and international civil society. Civil society plays an important role in holding states to account and pushing for change. INGOs, particularly those in coalitions, have been a driving force in the EWIPA agenda and as a shadow monitor to CAAC, working in close collaboration with UN actors and the ICRC. Member states recognise and appreciate the technical, policy and information-sharing support.

Maximising the likelihood of successful advocacy requires a willingness to take the long view: multi-year engagement that carefully builds the evidence base to support sustained dialogue with states and other key actors that can effect change. It requires persistence in the face of obstacles, a willingness to take calculated risks and, ultimately, a willingness to fail. Success requires clear, pragmatic agreement of the change sought, technical and policy expertise, and a granular understanding of avenues and entry points for dialogue to deliver change.

Naturally, a range of approaches to engage advocacy targets should be used, enabled by multistakeholder collaborations. While traditional approaches to advocacy – that of denunciation, persuasion and mobilisation – remain relevant, such approaches require in-depth analysis of the likelihood of success, the risk of failure and its potential consequences. Where negotiations are involved, constructive, informed and solutions-oriented dialogue is necessary.

Engaging states requires careful handling. Civil society actors need to identify relevant departments and individuals within states that are supportive of, or at least sympathetic to, the agenda and who can work to bring other parts of government on board. But equally, dialogue with states and government departments that are opposed to or unsupportive of the advocacy objective is necessary. Organisations should not be afraid of this.

In an era of increased polarisation, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and greater questioning of the legitimacy of Global North states and the people who are perceived to represent them, creative solutions should be sought in order to influence. International organisations should be humble and not assume they are best placed to lead, or disseminate, advocacy positions. Consideration should be given to optics, and which actors are perceived as the most credible in conveying advocacy positions. Building coalitions and constituencies is paramount, as is mobilising diverse sets of states and actors. The critical role of a range of national and international actors within coalitions, and the visibility of different actors at different times to achieve a range of goals supportive of the overall advocacy objective, should be recognised and implemented. This requires international actors to support diverse sets of states, national actors and affected people to engage in advocacy initiatives. This may increasingly require action outside established mechanisms and approaches, and stronger linkages between national, regional and international forums. As global dynamics evolve, so should approaches to influence.

# 6 Lessons learned

Both the EWIPA and CAAC agendas have important lessons to inform future collaborative advocacy initiatives, in order to maximise opportunities for success.

## International protection advocacy actors

### Mobilising stakeholders

- Consider establishing networks, coalitions or collaboration between international and national civil society organisations and international organisations to support advocacy initiatives specific to advocacy objectives, themes and countries. Help support the development and coordination of strategy, advocacy positions, research initiatives and engagement across relevant advocacy stakeholders with states and other key stakeholders.
- Mobilise and support national and local civil society groups to engage in networks and coalitions, as well as engage their governments at capital level.
- Facilitate consistent engagement across key actors, including national and international civil society with UN actors and the ICRC as appropriate, including through regular meetings, exchanges of information on state positions and discussion of strategy and tactics for engaging states.
- Mobilise a diversity of states from different regional groupings. Encourage and support a prominent role for the participation and leadership of Global South states, and affected states where possible and appropriate, including as state champions.

### Strategy

- Be strategic in how and by whom advocacy positions are disseminated. This includes how advocacy positions are framed, and who delivers the advocacy position. Be aware of optics, and maximise opportunities for credibility. Assess who is best placed to maximise influence with identified advocacy targets. Support diversity among those that deliver direct advocacy. Ensure the inclusion of civil society from affected countries and affected people to directly shape and carry out advocacy in diverse international forums using both private and public approaches as relevant and appropriate and through both in-person engagement and virtual platforms.
- Ensure coherence between advocacy positions and initiatives in different platforms and forums at the international, regional and national levels. Strengthen linkages between different forums where relevant, including with regional forums. Consider the provision of long-term partnerships and/or support to civil society groups at the regional and national levels to facilitate this.

## Approaches to advocacy and engagement

- Get the advocacy basics in place, including tailored strategies and framing of advocacy positions grounded in the interests and priorities of key targets. Use a targeted influencing strategy, grounded in an analysis of interest, alignment and potential to influence, to identify priority advocacy targets, potential allies and champions where relevant. Identify entry points to influence the position of advocacy targets to align with the advocacy objective. Sometimes this can be down to individuals, or moments. Continually review and, where relevant, adapt. Build in opportunities for flexible and reactive advocacy in order to facilitate this.
- Work with national partners and advocacy networks to identify possible government entry points (individuals and departments) that may be supportive or at least sympathetic to the advocacy objective. Work with these entry points to further understanding of relevant decision-making processes and key stakeholders or positions, bring other individuals and departments on board, including those opposed to the advocacy objective. Do not be afraid of raising unwelcome issues. Be prepared for setbacks, and be willing to fail.
- Ensure coherent and mutually reinforcing positions across advocacy networks and/or partners. Be politically savvy, and ensure mitigating measures are taken that positions and framing do not undermine the advocacy objective.
- Consider the impact of a range of advocacy approaches, including persuasion, mobilisation and denunciation. Ensure these are strategically and intentionally deployed, tailored to the advocacy target and complementary across advocacy networks. Consider behaviours, and the culture of the advocacy target. When negotiating, seek to build constructive, solutions-oriented dialogue, while having clear, agreed red lines.
- Provide technical, policy and information-sharing support to member state allies and international forums where relevant while building in feedback loops to ensure those contributing information and analysis, particularly local and national partners, understand how their inputs are being shared and used. Build on these feedback loops to inform longer-term, coherent approaches.
- Invest in multi-year strategies, including investments in research (to build the evidence base), developing subject-matter expertise, relationship building and sustained dialogue. Build coalitions and constituencies to facilitate this.

## Evidence and expertise

- Ensure advocacy positions and engagement with states is based on and supported by a solid and detailed evidence base, complemented by clear calls for action that are within a given target's sphere of influence.
- Bring in, or develop, technical expertise to support the development of advocacy positions and materials, including the appropriate use of language and terminology that resonates with advocacy targets. Speak their language. Use this expertise to anticipate and develop responses for counterarguments.

## Mobilising member-state leadership and support

- Encourage individual or coalitions of diverse states to provide leadership and act as state champions. Encourage diversity among states who are vocal in championing or leading progressive positions. Encourage regional bodies to form partnerships to promote uptake of norms and practice to strengthen protection of civilians.
- Encourage and support states to make strategic use of existing platforms at the global and regional levels and to ensure alignment and coordination of state positions across different platforms.
- Seek opportunities to utilise and leverage previously strong allies, even when their mandate has changed. For example, under CAAC, making greater use of previously active chairs in the Working Group where possible and feasible.

## Member states

- Utilise and support the technical expertise of international organisations, international and national civil society. Establish a collaborative partnership approach with such organisations in recognition of the significant policy and political expertise (and that such partnerships are often the hallmark to success). Where relevant and necessary, support such organisations to frame issues, objectives and positions in a politically astute way.
- Build diverse coalitions. Make strategic use of platforms, for example in New York, Geneva and Brussels, as well as with regional forums. Ensure greater alignment and coordination between different platforms. Consider making greater use of regional bodies to strengthen humanitarian diplomacy on protection of civilians. Find ways to course-correct through creative use of multiple platforms when there are barriers, for example as is the case with the UNSC. Consider creative ways to bring a diverse group of international organisations, international and national civil society to the conversation.
- Regional bodies should ensure that their member states review and strengthen national policies and practices on protection of civilians. This includes gathering and making publicly available relevant data, and building policies to reduce civilian harm resulting from explosive weapons, as well as policies to monitor, report and reduce grave violations against children where relevant.
- Ensure adequate handover and institutional memory when member states and their delegates rotate out of their role. Seek opportunities to utilise and leverage strong allies when their mandate has changed where feasible.
- Provide political and financial support to international and national civil society organisations who are critical to achieving the objective.

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