

Session 3 (19 Nov.): **Harm reduction and protection through data collection and sharing.**

“This session [Davos style stage] will focus on the collection and sharing of disaggregated data on the direct and indirect effects on civilians and civilian objects of operations involving the use of explosive weapons in populated areas [4.2 and 4.3]. It will look at practices to record and track civilian casualties [1.8] as well as at methods and tools to better anticipate and mitigate the long-lasting reverberating effects of explosive weapons that often stem from damage and destruction of critical infrastructure, disrupt the provision of basic needs and provision of essential services which are often interconnected [1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6]. *This segment of the agenda relates to operative commitments 4.2. and 4.3.*”

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Question 1 to UNICEF: What kinds of disaggregated data are most needed to understand how explosive weapons affect children - including patterns of injury, trauma, and displacement – what are the gaps, and why is this level of detail so important for shaping effective protection and assistance?

- Thank you to Lauren Persi (Chair/moderator), and to Costa Rica and the other organizers for inviting UNICEF to this panel.

I'll have two points:

- First, data must be age, gender, disability and diversity sensitive. Allow me to elaborate on the age dimension: as of 2025, most data sets on EWIPA casualties are blind to age, leaving children misrepresented, statistically invisible. And **when children are invisible in the data, they are left invisible in policy discussions.**
- There is one critical exception: the UN Security Council mandated Children and Armed Conflict agenda that documents grave violations against children [SLIDE 1]. When we look closely at this age-specific data, the message is unmistakable: **nothing kills or injures more children than explosive weapons.** The trend is worsening every year; nearly 30,000 children have been verified as K&M over the past 5 years in 26 situations of conflict, accounting for 61% of all children K&M. These are UN-verified violations.
- These numbers should shock us. They should shock parties to conflict, the disarmament community and the wider public.
- They tell us that every bomb dropped in a populated area is overwhelmingly likely to hit a child. They tell us that the harm is predictable, preventable, and growing.
- And they tell us something even more critical: **when parties to conflict stop using explosive weapons in populated areas, children stop dying in such numbers. It is as direct as that.**
- As this session also focuses on data sharing, I'm pleased to announce that UNICEF is releasing a new fact sheet today. It presents fresh analysis of UN-verified data on the direct physical impact of explosive weapons on children—both the fatal and the non-fatal injuries that far too often go unreported. You can pick up a copy behind the doors of the room or use the QR code.
- Second, Explosive weapons hurt children in four ways: the blast, the psychological trauma, the reverberating or indirect effects, and displacements that start from day one and continue on the long term [SLIDE 2].

- Direct physical effects are visible: killing and maiming, destruction of buildings, schools...
- But what we cannot immediately see is just as damaging:
- The impact on mental health and well-being is far less visible, but it is immense. **It represents a major public health crisis when EWIPA are used.** As of 2025, this impact is routinely overlooked, rarely documented and not measured.
- The third category is reverberating effects. **When explosive weapons damage water networks, hospitals, food systems, or schools, children pay the price for months or years. Their access to clean water stops. Their vaccinations stop. Their learning stops. Their safety stops.** Harm reaches children who were nowhere near the blast.
- **The direct impacts are only the tip of the iceberg**—and even that tip is blurred when data ignores age, gender, or disability. But the hidden part of the iceberg is far larger: epidemics, malnutrition, the medical conditions that cannot be treated because clinics and roads are destroyed.
- We must urgently shine a light on this less visible harm. **Without better data, thousands of children will continue to die from preventable, indirect consequences—diseases, untreated injuries, and the lifelong effects of trauma.**
- **If we are serious about protecting children, we must acknowledge every layer of harm.** The visible, the invisible, and the long-term displacement and psychological distress. Only then can we design protection and assistance that truly meets the scale of the crisis.

Question 2 to UNICEF: Drawing on the available data, what kinds of programmes and responses are most needed to support children affected by explosive weapons - particularly in addressing long-term impacts like displacement, trauma, and loss of key services children rely on?

Advocacy alone is not enough. Yes, we must keep pressing parties to conflict to stop using explosive weapons in populated areas, to end transfers of these weapons to warring parties, and to uphold the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. But **protecting children requires far more than policy commitments—it requires action on the ground, now.**

- Children need immediate access to food, shelter, healthcare, and social support. These services are lifesaving, and they collapse quickly when explosive weapons are used.
- Water and sanitation systems must be rebuilt urgently. When they fail, children die from disease long after the blast.
- Families displaced by conflict need cash assistance to survive the shock and instability caused by EWIPA.
- Children need education in emergencies, as well as mental health and psychosocial support. Nearly every child exposed to shelling or airstrikes carries psychological distress or wounds that can last a lifetime.
- Survivors of explosive weapons need sustained care: medical treatment, prosthetics, emotional support, and access to education—while governments and civil society must be equipped to protect and support children with disabilities.

**And we cannot wait for harm to happen.** We must invest far more in primary prevention. This means accelerating explosive ordnance clearance, expanding risk education, and scaling up Conflict

Preparedness and Protection (CPP) approaches pioneered by NPA. Child-friendly CPP gives children practical, lifesaving guidance on how to protect themselves during shelling or airstrikes.

Every child living through conflict deserves this knowledge. **It is not optional. It is a right—and it can mean the difference between life and death.**