

Scenario 2: Colombia — Negotiations for Child Release and Reunification

Background: During ongoing armed conflict in Colombia, multiple armed groups have recruited children. After years of negotiation, the government has initiated discussions with these groups to release and reunite child soldiers with their families, despite mistrust on both sides.

Mediation Focus: The mediation seeks to establish terms for the safe release of child soldiers, including security guarantees, transitional support, and protection for families.

Roles:

- **Mediator:** Facilitates a secure and neutral space for dialogue.
- **Government Negotiator:** Works on behalf of the government to ensure the release terms align with state policies and protect children's rights.
- **Armed Group Representative:** Represents the group's interests, seeking guarantees for their members and expressing skepticism about government promises.
- **Family Advocate:** Represents the families of child soldiers, pushing for assurances that children will receive psychological and reintegration support upon release.
- **Child Welfare Agency Representative:** Focuses on providing transitional care, schooling, and psychological support to children after their release.

Goal: To secure an agreement where children are safely released, families are supported in reunification, and all parties agree on terms for ongoing protection and social reintegration.

Process Overview

1. **Establishing Ground Rules:** The mediator ensures both sides agree on basic rules to promote a respectful, safe dialogue. This is particularly important given the armed group's distrust of the government.
2. **Discussing Security and Support:** Each side discusses terms for safe passage, protection for released children, and support for families, with special emphasis on psychological support for children.
3. **Reassurances and Compromises:** The mediator encourages the armed group and government to consider compromise positions, such as community-led protection programs and third-party monitoring of the reintegration process.

4. **Formalizing Commitments:** Parties draft an agreement detailing the phased release of children, support systems for families, and transitional services offered by child welfare agencies.

Final Outcome

- **Agreement:** A commitment to a phased release plan, with conditions for regular reporting to a neutral body (e.g., an NGO) on children's well-being, is reached. The armed group agrees, provided that certain security guarantees are in place.
- **Success Indicators:** Children are gradually released, families participate in reintegration workshops, and regular follow-up by welfare agencies ensures continuity of care.

Feedback Focus:

- **Trust-Building:** Evaluate the effectiveness of techniques used to bridge distrust between the armed group and government.
- **Safety Concerns:** Assess the students' understanding of protective measures and trauma-sensitive approaches for former child soldiers.
- **Clear Communication:** Did the mediator effectively clarify and manage each party's expectations?