

Child Protection Sub-Sector Strategy

Cox's Bazar





Cox's Bazar Child Protection Sub-Sector Strategy



Content

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| ❑ Introduction | 3 |
| ❑ Humanitarian Context | 4 |
| ❑ Child Protection Overview | 5 |
| ❑ Principles | 7 |
| ❑ Strategy Milestones | 10 |
| ❑ Strategic Priorities And Approaches | 11 |
| ❑ Operational Risks And Constraints | 17 |
| ❑ Implementation | 18 |





INTRODUCTION

The Child Protection Sub-Sector (CPSS) in Cox's Bazar work towards preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence committed against all children in Bangladesh, of all ages, genders, abilities and disabilities – through the provision of effective and timely child protection coordination, contributing towards a more predictable, accountable, and dignified humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar.

The CPSS is composed of over 30 partner organisations, including the Government of Bangladesh, represented by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the Department of Social Services (DSS), as well as local organisations, UN agencies, and international NGOs. The CPSS is coordinated by Unicef, guided by the leadership of its Strategy Advisory Group, and supported by several Technical Working Groups. CPSS partners work across Cox's Bazar district, delivering services to both refugees and host communities. The CPSS works closely with the Gender-based Violence Sub-Sector and the Protection Working Group as part of the broader protection sector within the Rohingya humanitarian response.

This strategy will guide the CPSS in its actions and plans in the coming years. As a living document it will be re-visited annually and adapted as needed, while providing a platform for the longer-term planning and thinking that sustainable and impactful child protection programmes require. It will serve as the foundation for response and activity planning, as well as guide advocacy and fundraising activities with a variety of stakeholders. The strategy was developed through broad online consultations undertaken with CPSS partners and key stakeholders throughout 2021.



HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

The significant influx of over 700,000 Rohingya refugees in August 2017 triggered the humanitarian crisis in Cox's Bazar. Since then, the affected population in Cox's Bazar district has grown to over 1.43 million people, over a third of whom are Bangladeshi nationals¹. Over 50% of both the refugee and host community population are children, making them the largest single affected population group.

The Government of Bangladesh holds primary responsibility and leadership for the humanitarian response, supported by the humanitarian community in both Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. The humanitarian coordination structure in Cox's Bazar is led by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), under which the CPSS sits as part of the broader protection sector. These link to the humanitarian community in Dhaka, overseen by the Strategic Executive Group, under which sits the national cluster system, including the national child protection sub-cluster.

The humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar is delivered to refugees and host communities in camps and surrounding unions across Teknaf and Ukhiya upazilas. Each camp has a designated government Camp-in-Charge official to oversee the delivery of humanitarian aid and services, while host community services are administered through national systems and levels of government, with support from the humanitarian community. As the protracted nature of the response grows, both government and humanitarian actors are increasingly looking to bridge the nexus between the national system and the humanitarian response.

Beyond Teknaf and Ukhiya, relocations of refugees to Bhasan Char have commenced. As these relocations proceed, it is important to ensure that the safety and protection of children is paramount, and that children are consulted and their needs are considered. As the humanitarian community assesses needs on Bhasan Char, the CPSS will apply its child protection principles and tools, as it does in all places it works, to delivery services and strengthen the protective environment for children.

Host community and refugee populations experience a number of shared protection challenges and risks. Both are vulnerable to the growing impacts from climate change and the number of disasters the district experiences, including monsoons, flooding, landslides, and fires. Livelihoods and household financial strain are a primary issue for host community and refugee households alike, exacerbating many protection risks for children and families. Local systems are in need of strengthening, particularly around social service provision and social protection.

In addition, refugees face a significant and growing number of protection risks. These include: restrictions on movement, social cohesion and tensions between camp residents and with host communities,

¹ Projected 2022 JRP figures.



insecurity and safety concerns, and challenges related to registration and relocation, such as the relocation of refugees to Bhasan Char, which have reportedly resulted in increased protection risks to children, including family separation².

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the humanitarian response and service delivery. Lockdowns instituted by the Government to help save lives, also resulted in limited-to-no access to camps for many months during 2020-2021, affecting service delivery and protection outcomes. COVID-19 has also exacerbated existing economic strains felt by all affected populations, heightening many protection risks.

CHILD PROTECTION OVERVIEW

Children living in Cox's Bazar face a number of protection risks and challenges that reflect their different vulnerabilities, needs, strengths, and capacities depending on a number of intersecting factors, such as age, gender, disability, and other relevant diversity factors. Both Bangladeshi and Rohingya children experience violence, notably physical and emotional abuse, across a variety of settings including within the community and in the home. Younger children and children with disabilities are reportedly more likely to experience neglect; adolescent girls are at greater risk of sexual violence and child marriage, while boys are more exposed to child labour, including its most hazardous forms³. These diverse and intersecting needs must be factored into all prevention and response programmes and actions.

A number of child protection issues are linked to family separation and care arrangements, such as unaccompanied and separated children or children living on the streets, and require alternative care options including shelters. Social norms and practices also contribute to child protection concerns. These require longer-term efforts to impact change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased many of the specific risks that children and their caregivers face – both the nature of these risks and their prevalence. A third of households in the camps and half of host community households report children having unmet needs⁴. Prolonged school closures have disconnected children from the routines and protective environments that schools can provide. The majority of referrals to child protection actors relate to economic wellbeing, meeting basic needs, and health and psychosocial support needs⁵. The significant impact restrictions have had on household financial strain are considered a contributing factor to increases in child labour, child marriage, child trafficking, and engagement in activities that place children at heightened risk of coming into contact with the law⁶.

² IRC (2021). Protection Monitoring Report (January-March 2021).

³ COVID-19 Child Protection Situation Monitoring Survey July 2020 – March 2021

⁴ 2020 JMSNA (published May 2021): Host communities and Refugees [also preliminary 2021 JMSNA findings]

⁵ COVID-19 Child Protection Situation Monitoring Survey July 2020 – March 2021

⁶ Save the Children (2021). No Safe Haven.



Mental health and psychosocial distress have increased, heavily affecting both children and their caregivers⁷. Responses require increasing support from community-based, unstructured, and structured psychosocial support programmes, as well as specialised mental health services. This includes the urgent need to support caregivers and to help decrease intra-household violence and tensions, and reliance on coping strategies that negatively impact children's wellbeing, and mitigate the inter-generational consequences of profound stress.

Violence in the home is reported to have worsened in both host communities and camps. As psychosocial distress and household tensions rise, the ability of families to cope is under strain. Physical and emotional abuse, as well as **neglect**, are consistently reported as the most common child protection concerns facing children since the pandemic began⁸. Young children in particular are reportedly left alone for long hours without adequate care or supervision increasing their risk of harm.

Already a concern before the pandemic, **child marriage** is a social practice in both the host community and refugee population, despite being illegal for girls under age 18 and boys under age 21⁹. However, economic hardship due to COVID is reportedly contributing to an increase in marriages of adolescent girls, with service providers reporting limited opportunities to access girls and their families with preventative and support services due to school closures and restricted camp access¹⁰.

The risk of **trafficking** of children is reportedly increasing, linked to child labour, child marriage, and sexual exploitation and abuse. There are ad hoc reports of linkages to the drug trade, as well. Girls are reportedly taken to different locations within Bangladesh or trafficked across the border as part of marriage arrangements¹¹. Boys are more commonly reported to be trafficked into hazardous sectors of work.

Child labour is frequently cited as the primary child protection concern by both host and refugee communities¹². Bangladesh recognises 38 forms of activities or work considered hazardous for children¹³. While engagement in child labour pre-dates the pandemic, communities report high increases in labour since the pandemic, linked to household financial strain.

⁷ COVID-19 Child Protection Situation Monitoring Survey July 2020 – March 2021; Save the Children (2021). No Safe Haven.

⁸ COVID-19 Child Protection Situation Monitoring Survey July 2020 – March 2021; CPSS (2021). Findings from the Child Protection Assessment in Rohingya Refugee Camps in Cox's Bazar.

⁹ The Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 sets out the minimum age of marriage at 18 for girls and 21 for boys, although it allows special provisions that allow for marriage of children under age 18.

¹⁰ iMMAP (2021). COVID-19 Impact on Children: COVID-19 Situational Analysis Bangladesh.

¹¹ Save the Children (2021). No Safe Haven.

¹² CPSS (2021). Findings from the Child Protection Assessment in Rohingya Refugee Camps in Cox's Bazar; iMMAP (2021). COVID-19 Impact on Children: COVID-19 Situational Analysis Bangladesh

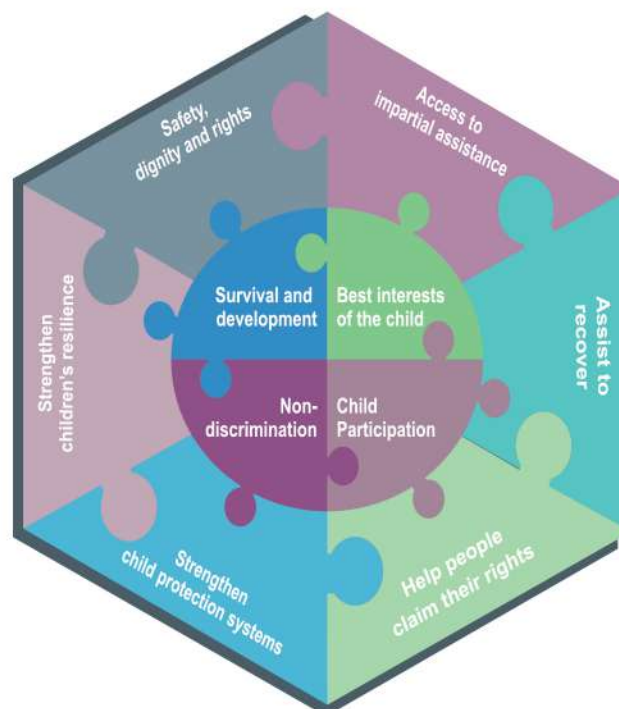
¹³ The Government of Bangladesh issued an order in 2013 identifying 38 activities or processes as hazardous for children.

Children in contact with the law – as victims of crime, witnesses to crime, accused of committing crimes, or having a parent detained – experience heightened risks, including family separation. Primarily affecting adolescents, children are reportedly detained for long periods, and may be sent to detention centres in faraway districts, without access to support or contact with their families. Additionally, there are reports of arbitrary detentions of adolescents, including of children trying to leave Bhasan Char¹⁴.

Finally, in addition to exacerbating child protection risks and concerns, the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions also significantly affected how the CPSS and its partners delivered services in the camps. Facilities and centres, such as the multi-purpose centres which serve as a one-stop model for accessing multiple protection and child-related services, could not be used. While each camp has a child protection sector focal point, many had limited access to camps during lockdown. Child protection actors had to rely increasingly on community volunteers and groups, like the community-based child protection committees (CBCPCs), to undertake life-saving activities like identifying and referring high-risk cases. Children's and adolescents' groups, too, were more engaged in protection activities. The shifts in the modes of service delivery as a result of the pandemic will feed into CPSS reflections on the sustainability of programmes, and how different and in-depth engagement from the community can increase community ownership overtime and strengthen accountability.

PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles



¹⁴ Consultations with CPSS partners.



The CPSS and its strategy are guided by the fundamental principles that guide both humanitarian action and child protection, notably: the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence; and the ten principles within the Child Protection Minimum Standards (CPMS), which guide all humanitarian child protection. The CPMS Principles include:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC)'s four core principles: survival and development, non-discrimination and inclusion, children's participation, and the best interests of the child;
- the four protection principles that are common to all protection work, including that of doing no harm; and
- two additional principles specific to child protection in humanitarian settings: the strengthening of child protection systems, and strengthening children's resilience.

In implementing this strategy, through its collaborations with other sectors and stakeholders, and through delivery of child protection activities and services, the CPSS and its partners will work to ensure these guiding principles are upheld, that they actively work to prevent harm, and that the best interests of the child are at the centre of all its actions.

Operational Principles

To support alignment with its guiding principles, the CPSS will additionally uphold four operational principles. Fundamental to delivering ethical and dignified humanitarian response, these operational principles are adapted to reflect a child protection lens within the broader policies and principles of humanitarian action.

Centrality of Protection

Protection is the purpose and intended outcome of humanitarian action, central to preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond. All humanitarian actors have the responsibility to contribute to protection outcomes by ensuring the protection needs of affected and at-risk populations inform decision-making and activities. These commitments include children, their specific child protection needs, and the unique protection risks they face. The CPSS will work with its protection counterparts to advocate and ensure that children and their protection are placed at the centre of the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar, and that child protection is recognised as life-saving and prioritised accordingly.



Localisation

The CPSS work on localisation is led by its Localisation Working Group¹⁵. Composed of half national and half international partners, the CPSS is actively strengthening its approach to localisation, including how its international and national partners contribute, influence decision-making, and share power within its structure.

Further, the CPSS believes in the essential nature of working with communities and empowered community groups, including with CBCPCs and child welfare boards. Commitment and dedication to working on localisation further includes recognising the strengths and capacities of children and adolescents, and actively working to empower them as leaders and contributors to their own protection.

Accountability to Affected Populations

The CPSS believes a strong culture of accountability requires that the humanitarian community in Cox's Bazar also strive to be accountable to children, ensuring that children and child participation are integrated into all aspects of the IASC's Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations within Humanitarian Action. The humanitarian community in Cox's Bazar has a duty to contribute to protecting children, to safeguarding them from harm, and protecting them from sexual abuse and exploitation. All accountability procedures, including complaints and feedback mechanisms, post-distribution monitoring, refugee protection procedures, and referral pathways must be child-friendly and accessible to children. The CPSS and its partners will work towards securing greater accountability to children, as a key group within the affected population.

Meaningful and Inclusive Participation and Engagement

Inclusive and meaningful engagement of children and adolescents – of all ages, genders, abilities, and backgrounds – throughout all stages of the programme cycle is necessary for children to realise their full rights, capacities, and potential. The CPSS and its partners will work to include meaningful child participation within the stages of the child protection programme cycle, and encourage its collaborators and other sector partners to do the same, strengthening capacity to support the safe and ethical consideration of child participation within humanitarian programming.

In particular, the CPSS will prioritise working with adolescents, and will look to support adolescent-led initiatives. It will further advocate, encourage, and guide other sectors and multi-sector initiatives, such as those working on youth, to do the same, in-line with the IASC Guidelines on Working For and With Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crisis and the five actions from the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action.

¹⁵ The CPSS follows the OECD definition of localisation, viewing it as “a process which recognizes, respects and strengthens the leadership of humanitarian action or development programme by national and local authorities and recognizes, respects and strengthens the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action and development programme, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian responses.”



STRATEGY MILESTONES

The CPSS and its partners aim to contribute to and strengthen a safe and healthy environment in Cox's Bazar, where all children, Bangladeshi and Rohingya, are able to thrive and realise their full potential. To achieve this, the CPSS will strive to achieve an overarching **goal**:

All children in Cox's Bazar benefit from a protective environment that prioritises children and their protection, empowers children to engage in their own protection, and is strengthened by a strong and durable child protection system that prevents and responds to all forms of violence, neglect, abuse, and exploitation.

Through this strategy, the CPSS will strive to achieve milestones in three areas:

1. Working in partnership with various levels of Government to strengthen the child protection system in Cox's Bazar.

The Government of Bangladesh holds the primary responsibility for the protection of all children within Bangladesh. The CPSS and its partners will work with the decentralised levels of government – and in collaboration with the cluster and national-level stakeholders in Dhaka – to support strengthening the protective environment for all children so that they are able to thrive and achieve their full potential.

2. Strengthening the protective and resilience factors that enable and empower children, their families, and their communities to engage in their own protection.

Children, their families, and communities have indigenous knowledge, capacities, and approaches to protecting children and preventing risks and harm. The CPSS will work in direct partnership with families and communities to strengthen these protective and resilience factors that empower robust communities to engage in their own protection in sustainable ways.

3. Advocating with the humanitarian community to recognise child protection as essential and life-saving, and prioritise children and their protection as central to all aspects of the humanitarian response.

Children and their protection are central to delivering an ethical, accountable, and dignified humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar – and to bridging the nexus with development programmes and systems across Bangladesh. Child protection prevention and response activities are life-saving and are urgently needed in both the refugee camps and host communities. Child protection provides entry points and effective pathways to achieve multi-sectoral outcomes. The CPSS will advocate with Government and senior policy-makers, with the ISCG and senior humanitarian decision-makers, and with all other sectors and stakeholders to recognise and prioritise the centrality of children and their protection.

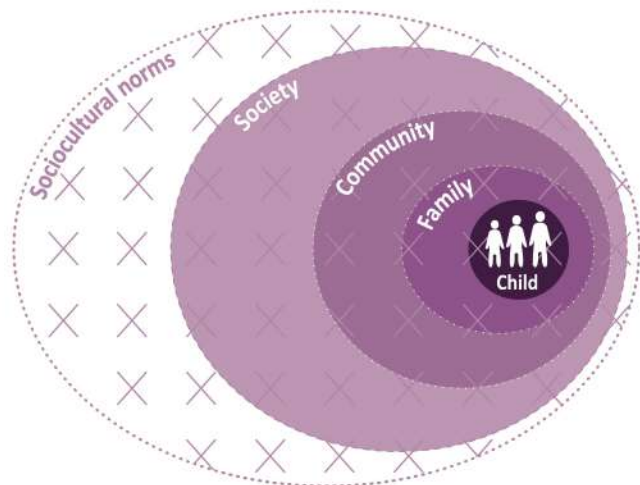
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND APPROACHES

The CPSS has identified five priority areas to guide it in the coming years:

- Community-level child protection
- Systems strengthening
- Justice for children
- Case management
- Working across sectors

These priorities are guided by the socio-ecological model which considers the interaction between personal and environmental factors across four nested levels – the individual (child), family, community, and society – and how these interact and influence risks and protective factors, which in turn influence child development and wellbeing. It is important to note that placing children at the centre is not to say that children should always be placed first; rather, that holistic approaches to meet needs and ensure protection for all can be built around children.

The priorities are further grounded in Pillar 3 and Pillar 4 of the Child Protection Minimum Standards, and serve as the overall approaches the CPSS and its partners will use and implement towards delivering in the short-term while working towards achieving its longer-term goal of sustainable and impactful child protection programmes that strengthen systems and empower communities.



Throughout, the CPSS will ensure an equal focus on preventing harm and risks to children, in addition to responding to existing protection needs. By taking a population-wide approach to prevention, child protection actors help reduce risks and harm across communities, minimising the impact on individual children and families, and their need for responsive actions and care.

Implementation of this strategy and engagement on these five priorities will require intersecting and overlapping approaches and activities. Progress in these areas, like all impact in child protection, cannot be achieved in silos. Action in one area will support the others, and the majority will require engagement from a diversity of stakeholders and sectors, working in collaboration on joint areas, such as addressing the impacts of climate change. The CPSS will use this strategy to advance its priority areas through multi-sectoral, integrated approaches that seek to holistically prevent harm and deliver services, while strengthening different elements of the child protection system and the capacity of the stakeholders contributing within it.



Community-level child protection

Families and communities are the first layer of protection for children. Recognising this fundamental truth, the CPSS and its partners work closely with refugee and host communities to strengthen the roles and capacities of community groups and mechanisms to contribute to their own protection. These include strengthening the linkages between community mechanisms in camps and host communities; supporting children's, adolescent's, and women's groups; and strengthening the interactions between children and adult community groups, as well as other existing mechanisms and non-formal supports that work to protect children and their families. Strengthening the supports and services available to families and communities, including the supports they provide to each other, enhances resilience, dignity, and overall mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.

Communities also play a vital role in identifying population-wide risks and working to prevent harm and strengthen the protective factors that lead to safer environments for all children, helping prevent individual protection needs.

Community engagement and leadership in child protection is essential for sustainable approaches, as is building on local knowledge and understandings of child protection to strengthen ownership and increase accountability to affected populations. To be most effective, this engagement must be broad and inclusive of community members of different genders, abilities, and backgrounds. Leadership and decision-making must also engage children and adolescents themselves.

The CPSS and its partners will work to strengthen community-level child protection by:

- Strengthening the accountability and the sustainability of community-level child protection programmes through increased community participation and ownership.
- Investing and prioritising community-led protection mechanisms that are rooted in community knowledge, capacities, and approaches to preventing risks and responding to harm.
- Recognising and strengthening the capacities and abilities of children to contribute to their own protection, and to the resilience of their communities, by supporting child- and adolescent-led protection initiatives.
- Strengthening understanding of existing community-level child protection mechanisms, through research and assessments, and supporting linkages between these and government services strengthening a holistic and comprehensive system.

Systems strengthening

In all settings and communities, there are elements of a child protection system in place, formal and informal. Holistic approaches to systems strengthening require strengthening all parts of the system. The Government of Bangladesh holds the primary responsibility for the protection of children and their families. The Children Act, 2013, provides the framework for various elements of the child protection system in Bangladesh. Its implementation is led by DSS – the key partner within the CPSS in all actions



that seek to strengthen the local child protection system within Cox's Bazar, as well as link to the broader child protection system in Bangladesh. Bridging the nexus between the development system and the humanitarian response is essential for the sustainability of all efforts to strengthen the child protection system in Cox's Bazar.

The child protection systems strengthening work undertaken by the CPSS and its partners focuses largely on strengthening the social service workforce. Working in close collaboration with DSS, the CPSS looks to strengthen the capacity of case workers and social workers, and help bridge the access and quality of services available in both host communities and refugee camps. This includes strengthening coordination of all the actors involved in service delivery in host communities and camps, and working towards a unified or harmonised system under government leadership.

Strengthening multi-sector referral pathways and clarifying entry points to specialised services for both Bangladeshi and Rohingya children and families is also essential. Child protection risks are multi-disciplinary and inter-connected. To prevent and respond to areas such as child labour, child marriage, or trafficking, the CPSS works with different ministries, levels of government, and with a variety of community groups – including Child Welfare Boards – as well as humanitarian actors across multiple sectors. In addition to strengthening individual elements of the child protection system, the CPSS further works to strengthen the connections and relationships between all stakeholders engaged in the formal system, as these are vital to having a robust, holistic system that can meet the needs of families and communities.

To further contribute to a stronger child protection system in Cox's Bazar, the CPSS will work to:

- Strengthen the capacity of the child protection social service workforce.
- Foster stronger linkages between the mechanisms and structures operating across the system, in the camps and host communities, to facilitate better access to services.
- Strengthen the coordination and relationships between the stakeholders engaged in the child protection system in the host communities and camps to help bridge the humanitarian-development nexus.

Justice for children

The Children Act, 2013, established multiple provisions to support and strengthen the justice system for children in contact with the law, including the establishment of child-friendly courts, child welfare boards, child affairs desks at police stations, and the use of diversionary measures for children under-age 18, amongst other areas.

While the Children Act, 2013, provides an important framework, many areas of its implementation require further development, strengthening, and resourcing to realise full implementation and operationalisation towards a child-friendly justice system. Stronger coordination of government services and providers, including strengthening linkages between the judiciary and courts, probation officers, police, and social service providers, is needed to provide children and their families a



continuity of care as they interact with different elements of the formal justice system. In addition, there is a need to ensure the applicability of national legislation and protections for Rohingya children. Further advocacy and policy changes are also needed, such as raising the minimum age for arrest and detention, currently set to age 9, to at least age 12, in-line with the UN CRC, which Bangladesh has ratified.

In Cox's Bazar, when children are detained – at times due to exposure to high-risk environments, to being victims of exploitation and abuse, or even arbitrarily – they may be sent to Child Development Centres far from their communities, separating them from their families. There is a lack of resources in Cox's Bazar to establish more appropriate, alternative facilities such as shelters. There is further need to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement and judicial stakeholders, and equip them with tools and skills needed to implement diversionary measures with a more restorative lens.

Additionally, there are data and knowledge gaps, including amongst the CPSS and its partners, that pose as barriers to better understanding and engaging with formal and informal justice systems. Amongst these gaps is a lack of clarity in the pathways available to Rohingya children to access services and supports within the justice system. More broadly, further clarity is needed on how the provisions of the Children's Act apply to Rohingya children. Greater understanding is also needed of the risks that bring children into contact with the law, such as living on the streets, trafficking or exploitation, in order to help prevent them.

To secure and strengthen justice for all children in Cox's Bazar, the CPSS will work to:

- Generate data and research on access to formal and informal justice systems for both Bangladeshi and Rohingya children – including on the knowledge, processes and supports needed by children in contact with the law, such as forms of alternative dispute resolutions – to inform stronger advocacy and programming.
- Support coordination between the different government ministries and departments, including judicial, law enforcement, and social service stakeholders, to establish and strengthen chains of services and a continuum of care for children interacting with the justice system.
- Strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to provide child-friendly services and approaches, including diversionary and restorative justice measures, such as rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.
- Advocate for greater access to the justice system and child-friendly services for all children.

Case management

Quality case management requires coordinated, holistic, and multi-sector support delivered in a timely, sustained, and reliable manner. It connects to several aspects of the child protection system, and requires consistency and stability of resources and services.



The provision of case management as an approach to address complex and individual needs of children at risk or already experiencing harm is a key area of work for the CPSS, led through its Case Management Technical Working Group. CPSS partners primarily provide case management in camps, with some engaged in host communities, while DSS oversees the case management system in the host communities. In both settings, referral pathways need to be strengthened to address challenges to accessing services and referrals to specialised services.

Joint approaches across the many sectors involved in service provision are needed to strengthen these systems, along with greater efforts to harmonise case management across host communities and camps. In Cox's Bazar, this includes the need to standardise forms and data collection across all camps and host communities, facilitated by the increasing joint use of the CPIMS+¹⁶ in both settings, to improve quality, data management, and eventual integration of the two systems.

Strengthening the capacity of the many actors associated with case management delivery is a key area of work for the CPSS and its partner. This begins with the need for a greater number of social workers overall, and advocating with DSS towards increasing the number of social workers supporting children and families in Cox's Bazar. It then includes strengthening the capacity of case workers, social workers, and others engaged in the social service workforce, linking to national efforts to institute child-specific social welfare qualifications within social welfare training. It further includes strengthening the capacity of community protection mechanisms and volunteers, as well as other humanitarian sector actors to support identification of child protection risks and referrals.

Community engagement is considered a priority for greater sustainability and to support integral components of the case management approach. Beyond identification and referrals, community leaders, volunteers, and groups are fundamental to helping prevent harm through the identification and assessment of risks and the strengthening of protective factors that exist within communities.

In continuing to prioritise case management the CPSS and its partners will:

- Support the harmonisation of case management within the camps and host communities.
- Strengthen child protection and multi-sector referral pathways, linking the pathways for host communities and camps.
- Strengthen all elements of the child protection system that support case management, including strengthening community-level mechanisms, access to justice for children, and alternative care.

¹⁶ For the humanitarian case management approach, additional harmonisation may be needed between the CPIMS+ and the case management module of proGres v4.



Working across sectors

Child protection cannot be worked on in a silo. The inter-disciplinary nature of child protection risks and concerns, such as child labour or child marriage, requires holistic, multi-sector approaches to identifying and assessing risks, strengthening protective factors, and addressing root causes in an integrated manner in order to prevent harm. Working across sectors to address the diverse protection needs of children not only strengthens protection outcomes for children, but helps to strengthen overall outcomes across sectors for their families and communities.

The CPSS has established working relationships with many sectors, undertaking initiatives to increase awareness and knowledge of child protection risks, and the mainstreaming of these into sectoral programming. Beyond mainstreaming, more integrated and joint programming is needed, with shared outcomes to strengthen the resilience and wellbeing of children, families, and communities. This includes the integration of the specific vulnerabilities and risks that children experience within multi-sector programmes, and the recognition and inclusion of adolescents as a key stakeholder group in many programmes that directly affect them.

To support working across sectors and on integrated approaches and outcomes, stronger data collection and sharing is needed, along with the undertaking of joint risk and needs assessments, child-sensitive monitoring, and child-friendly feedback mechanisms. Importantly, child protection requires individual-level data, disaggregated by age, sex, and disability, in order to identify, assess, mitigate, and respond to individual and population-wide child protection needs and concerns.

However, prioritisation of child protection within multi-sector programming and inter-sector groups is a challenge as often the focus remains on adults or at a household level, overlooking the specific needs, capacities, and potential contributions of children and adolescents.

In continuing to strengthen its work with other sectors, the CPSS will:

- Strengthen the capacity of other sectors to contribute to child protection prevention approaches and strategies.
- Advocate for the prioritisation of child protection within multi-sector and inter-sector groups and initiatives, including the generation of data and evidence specific to children and their protection needs.
- Work with other sectors on joint and integrated programming approaches that address needs more holistically and contribute to stronger overall outcomes.



OPERATIONAL RISKS AND CONSTRAINTS

Given the fluid and evolving operating environment of the Cox's Bazar humanitarian response, the CPSS may face a number of risks and operational constraints that may affect implementation of this strategy. These include:

- Political, administrative, and bureaucratic constraints: including inconsistent, layered approval processes and authorisations; inconsistent application of procedures across different camps by Camp-in-Charge officials; and challenges linked to information sharing.
- Restrictions on access and movement: including access to affected populations and policies that restrict implementation of activities and service delivery.
- Overall lack of understanding of child protection and the best of interests of the child resulting in a lack of prioritisation and recognition of child protection as essential and life saving by a variety of actors: different levels of government, including camp-in-charge officials; senior decision makers within the ISCG and humanitarian community, including across other sectors; and in some instances, service providers, and communities and families.
- Child protection data and information: the lack of quality data and evidence on child protection, including mandatory age-disaggregated reporting by other sectors.
- Funding levels and consistency: short-term humanitarian funding cycles and underfunding of child protection activities affecting longer-term planning and actions needed to implement the structural and systemic changes and approaches within this strategy leading to meaningful and sustainable impacts.
- Community attitudes and participation: the lack of engagement from communities and barriers to certain areas of child protection linked to cultural practices and norms.



IMPLEMENTATION

The CPSS will use this strategy as a guiding document to allow for the longer-term planning to achieve sustainable and impactful child protection outcomes.

The strategy will guide the CPSS in its response planning. The priorities will feed into JRP objectives and activities, with more specific activities and actions detailed within the CPSS workplan. An annual review of the strategy will be undertaken to reflect on achievements, challenges, and what new actions and initiatives to undertake in support of further progress towards its overall goal.

Implementation of the strategy, and progress on the priorities, will require the proactive engagement from CPSS partners across a variety of areas:

- Comprehensive and systematic monitoring and reporting on actions and activities contributing to implementation and supporting accountability. This can be supported through strengthened information and knowledge management functions.
- All the priorities involve on-going assessing and strengthening of capacity and knowledge of a multitude of stakeholders contributing to child protection prevention and response, including CPSS partners and staff, government actors and stakeholders, humanitarian partners and sectors, and community members and groups, including CBCPCs, child protection focal points and volunteers.
- Conducting quality data collection, research, measurement, and evidence generation will be essential to inform programming, capacity initiatives, and advocacy. This is particularly needed for research on justice for children, and on child protection issues that are hard to measure and subsequently hard to quantify and communicate to external stakeholders.
- Using evidence and research to inform advocacy with other sectors, within multi-sector and inter-sector forums, with the ISCG, with various government actors, and with donors on the life-saving nature of child protection activities, and the ability of child protection prevention and response actions to strengthen overall humanitarian outcomes, support longer-term sustainability, and foster linkages to development settings.
- Exploring how innovation and technology can support implementation by finding solutions to current challenges, helping expand reach, increasing opportunities to engage adolescents, facilitating opportunities to collaborate with other sectors or new partners, and facilitating integration with existing systems to support sustainable approaches.



Child Protection

Cox's Bazar Child Protection Sub-Sector