



THE ALLIANCE
for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

SUMMARY

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR **CHILD PROTECTION** IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



2019 Edition

This is the summary version of the 2019 edition of the *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action* (CPMS) handbook. All of the principles and standards in the e-version of this summary are hyperlinked to the full handbook. If you would like to review each standard's key actions, measurements and guidance note, click on the relevant standard within this document.

For more information or support, please contact the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action at cpms.wg@aliancecpha.org.

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INTRODUCTION

Child protection is the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. Effective child protection builds on existing capacities and strengthens preparedness *before* a crisis occurs. During humanitarian crises, timely interventions support the physical and emotional health, dignity and well-being of children, families and communities. Child protection saves lives.

***ABOUT THE MINIMUM STANDARDS
FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN
HUMANITARIAN ACTION (CPMS)***

THE PURPOSE OF THE *CPMS*

The *CPMS* have been developed to support all humanitarian actors in strengthening child protection in their work by:

- Establishing common principles between those working in child protection;
- Strengthening coordination between humanitarian actors;
- Improving the quality and accountability of child protection programming and its impact on children;
- Defining the professional field of child protection in humanitarian action;
- Providing a synthesis of good practice and learning to date; and
- Strengthening advocacy and communication on child protection risks, needs and responses.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CPMS

Each standard follows the same structure:

- **Introduction:** General information on the topic.
- **The standard:** One sentence summarising how that area can protect children in humanitarian action.
- **Key actions:** Suggested preparedness, prevention and response activities to help meet each standard.
- **Measurement:** Indicators, targets and guidance notes for measuring progress against the standard.
- **Guidance notes:** Priority issues, ethical considerations or knowledge gaps related to the standard.
- **References:** Guidance documents and tools for implementing the key actions.
- **Icons:** Symbols highlighting key topics such as displacement and prevention.

THE 2019 EDITION OF THE *CPMS*

THE REVISION PROCESS



THIS EDITION STRENGTHENS:

- The key actions, guidance and indicators by using the latest evidence and best practices;
- The role of local actors and communities in child protection;
- Accountability to children;
- Refugee, displacement and migrant contexts;
- Infectious disease settings;
- The prevention of child protection harms;
- Cross-cutting issues like gender, adolescents and environmental considerations; and
- Integration and collaboration with other sectors;
- Comprehensive, measurable and realistic indicators.

THE *CPMS* AND OTHER GUIDANCE

The *CPMS* are grounded in an international legal framework that includes international human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the primary human rights instrument upon which the *CPMS* are based.

The *CPMS* is part of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership. This includes The Humanitarian Charter, the Sphere Standards, the Core Humanitarian Standard and other sector-specific inter-agency guidelines.

THE *CPMS* IN CONTEXT

These standards need to be adapted, or 'contextualised', to the relevant context. Some key actions may be prioritised or new key actions added. Guidance notes and indicators may be modified to reflect the context or to allow for a phased approach.

The *CPMS* can be used at agency and inter-agency levels to:

- Plan and cost humanitarian interventions;
- Establish common expectations for the quality of child protection services across sectors;
- Establish common principles between different actors, e.g. within a child protection coordination mechanism;
- Monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian interventions;
- Induct and train staff or partners;
- Develop preparedness plans; and
- Advocate for child protection issues and resources.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES FOR THE *CPMS*

Many cross-cutting issues were purposely integrated throughout the *CPMS* and should be considered in all child protection interventions in humanitarian action. These include:

- Children's traits and risk factors related to gender, early childhood, adolescence, disability, etc.;
- Interventions such as cash and voucher assistance, mobile programming and civil registration;
- Key protection risks related to trafficking, the environment and infectious disease outbreaks;
- Unique concerns for urban, refugee, internally displaced and migrant settings; and
- Preventative approaches to child protection.

PRINCIPLES

The ten principles presented in the *CPMS* are key to fully applying and achieving the standards.

- Survival and development
- Non-discrimination and inclusion
- Children's participation
- The best interests of the child
- Enhance people's safety, dignity and rights and avoid exposing them to further harm
- Ensure people's access to impartial assistance according to need and without discrimination
- Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation
- Help people to claim their rights
- Strengthen child protection systems
- Strengthen children's resilience in humanitarian action

PRINCIPLES FROM ‘THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)’

1. Survival and development:

Humanitarian actors must consider the effects of the humanitarian context and the response on (a) the fulfilment of children’s right to life and (b) on children’s physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual development.

2. Non-discrimination and inclusion:

Humanitarian actors must proactively identify and address the causes and patterns of discrimination and exclusion, and advocate for access to child protection systems for all children.

3. Children’s participation:

Humanitarian workers must provide children with the time and space to meaningfully participate in all decisions related to emergency preparedness and response.

4. The best interests of the child:

Children should have their best interests assessed and considered in all actions or decisions that concern them, both in the public and private spheres.

PRINCIPLES FROM THE SPHERE HANDBOOK

5. Enhance people's safety, dignity and rights and avoid exposing them to further harm:

Humanitarian assistance must be provided in ways that reduce the risks that children and their families may face while also meeting their needs with dignity.

6. Ensure people's access to impartial assistance according to need and without discrimination:

Humanitarian workers must use humanitarian principles and relevant laws to challenge any actions that deliberately deprive children and their families of their basic needs.

7. Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation:

All child protection responses (and actors) should seek to make children more secure, facilitate children's and families' own efforts to stay safe, and reduce children's exposure to risks.

8. Help people to claim their rights:

Humanitarian actors must advocate for the respect of children's rights and compliance with international law that supports a protective environment.

PRINCIPLES SPECIFIC TO THE CPMS

9. Strengthen child protection systems:

Laws, institutions, capacities and other elements of child protection systems should be strengthened to adapt to evolving political and crisis situations.

10. Strengthen children's resilience in humanitarian action:

Programming should build upon children's strengths, reduce risks and support positive relations amongst children, families and communities.

PILLAR 1: STANDARDS TO ENSURE A QUALITY CHILD PROTECTION RESPONSE

Standards one to six focus on key programming components, which are essential across all child protection interventions and applicable in all contexts. These six components –

- Coordination
- Human resources
- Communications and advocacy
- Programme cycle management
- Information management, and
- Child protection monitoring

– are directly related to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).

STANDARD 1: COORDINATION

Authorities, humanitarian agencies, civil society organisations and affected populations coordinate actions to protect all affected children in a timely, efficient manner.

Coordination improves the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian responses. Coordination systems have the same objectives in each situation, but the structure changes based on the specific crisis, the characteristics of the affected population and the government's ability to address protection concerns.

STANDARD 2: HUMAN RESOURCES

Child protection services are delivered by staff and associates who have proven competence in their areas of work and are guided by human resources processes and policies that promote equitable working arrangements and measures to protect children from maltreatment by humanitarian workers.

Humanitarian agencies should ensure that all people providing child protection services in humanitarian action develop the skills and expertise needed to do their work and that all children are safeguarded through compliance with policies and procedures.

STANDARD 3: COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

Child protection issues are advocated for and communicated with respect for children's dignity, best interests and safety.

Effective communications and advocacy – including text, images, audio, video and other channels – can support children's self-expression, protection and empowerment. Communications and advocacy in humanitarian contexts should seek to influence the full range of duty bearers and rights holders.

STANDARD 4: PROGRAMME CYCLE MANAGEMENT

All child protection programmes are designed, planned, managed, monitored and evaluated through structured processes and methodologies that build on existing capacities and resources, address evolving child protection risks and needs, and are continuously adapted based on learning and evidence generation.

Programme cycle management is the cyclical process of designing, planning, managing, monitoring and evaluating programmes. This standard brings a child protection focus to programme cycle management by including considerations related to child development and child rights in humanitarian action.

STANDARD 5: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Up-to-date information necessary for child protection action is collected, processed/analysed and shared according to international child protection principles and with full respect for confidentiality, data protection and information-sharing protocols.

Whenever appropriate, information should be shared with relevant actors to strengthen coordination, inform strategic decision-making and support advocacy. Information should only be collected and shared according to robust contextualised data protection and information-sharing protocols.

STANDARD 6: CHILD PROTECTION MONITORING

Objective and timely data and information on child protection risks are collected, managed, analysed and used in a principled, safe and collaborative manner to enable evidence-informed prevention and response actions.

Child protection monitoring refers to the regular and systematic examination (monitoring) of child protection risks, violations and capacities in a specific humanitarian context. The purpose is to produce evidence that shows how to improve existing interventions or which new ones may be needed.

PILLAR 2: STANDARDS ON CHILD PROTECTION RISKS

This pillar covers core areas of work related to the seven main child protection risks in humanitarian settings:

- Dangers and injuries
- Physical and emotional maltreatment
- Sexual and gender-based violence
- Mental health and psychosocial distress
- Children associated with armed forces or armed groups
- Child labour, and
- Unaccompanied and separated children.

These risks cannot be addressed in isolation, and so the seven standards are linked. Actions should be taken to prevent and respond to each of the risk areas discussed in this pillar, as relevant to the context.

STANDARD 7: DANGERS AND INJURIES

All children and caregivers are aware of and protected against injury, impairment and death from physical and environmental dangers, and children with injuries and/or impairments receive timely physical and psychosocial support.

Humanitarian crises can increase everyday hazards and risks and create new ones, particularly for children who are displaced in unfamiliar surroundings. This standard addresses unintentional physical and environmental dangers that injure, impair and kill children in humanitarian crises.

STANDARD 8: PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT

Children are protected from physical and emotional maltreatment and have access to contextually appropriate and gender-, age- and disability-specific response services.

Maltreatment is any action, including the failure to act, that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. This standard addresses both prevention of and response to physical and emotional abuse and neglect that occur in a range of settings.

STANDARD 9: SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV)

All children are informed about and protected from sexual and gender-based violence and have access to survivor-centred response services appropriate to their gender, age, disability, developmental stage and cultural/religious background.

Sexual and gender-based violence is widespread but often hidden and underreported. All humanitarian actors should assume that sexual and gender-based violence is taking place. Mitigating, preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence against children are life-saving interventions that require a multisectoral response.

STANDARD 10: MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISTRESS

Children and their caregivers experience improved mental health and psychosocial well-being.

Humanitarian crises can cause immediate and long-term psychological and social suffering to children and caregivers. Humanitarian actors must prioritise interventions that help reduce children and caregivers' distress, promote resilience, and where appropriate, link children to specialised supports.

STANDARD 11: CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES OR ARMED GROUPS

All children are protected from recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups, are released and are effectively reintegrated after recruitment and use in all contexts of armed conflict.

Children, including girls, who are used or recruited by armed forces or armed groups are often forced to witness, experience and commit abuse, exploitation or violence. Humanitarian actors must take action to prevent recruitment and use of children and to address the immediate and long-term negative consequences for children, families and communities through multi-sectoral community-based reintegration programmes, as well as advocacy for the release of all associated children.

STANDARD 12: CHILD LABOUR

All children are protected from child labour, especially the worst forms of child labour, which may relate to or be made worse by the humanitarian crisis.

Child labour is any work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity. It negatively affects children's education and/or their overall well-being. The humanitarian response should provide targeted prevention support to children at risk and prioritise the urgent removal of children from the worst forms of child labour.

STANDARD 13: UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN

Family separation is prevented, and unaccompanied and separated children receive care and protection in timely, safe, appropriate and accessible ways in accordance with their rights and best interests.

Children who are unaccompanied and separated have lost family-level protection when they need it most. In addition to causing emotional distress, separations may prevent them from accessing humanitarian assistance and compound other protection risks/concerns. The humanitarian response should work to reduce separation, to reunite children with family members and to provide quality, family-based interim care where necessary.

PILLAR 3: STANDARDS TO DEVELOP ADEQUATE STRATEGIES

This section lays out key strategies, approaches and interventions for preventing and responding to the child protection risks outlined in Pillar 2. Pillar 3 has been developed to reflect the socio-ecological model and child protection systems thinking (see Principle 9), promoting a holistic and integrated approach to protecting children. Where relevant, s in Pillar 3 are also aligned with the INSPIRE strategies.

- Applying a socio-ecological approach to child protection programming
- Group activities for child well-being
- Strengthen family and caregiving environments
- Community-level approaches
- Case management
- Alternative care
- Justice for children

STANDARD 14: APPLYING A SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMING

Children, families, communities and societies are supported to protect and care for children.

A 'socio-ecological' approach to child protection designs integrated approaches that work in partnership with the child, their family, community, and society, as well as with socio-cultural norms. This includes addressing laws and policies, funding, social welfare and birth registration services.

STANDARD 15: GROUP ACTIVITIES FOR CHILD WELL-BEING

Children are supported through access to group-based, planned activities that (a) promote protection, well-being and learning and (b) are delivered in safe, inclusive, contextually and age-appropriate approaches.

Children's regular and consistent engagement in group activities can positively impact their well-being, enhance their resilience and reduce their stress. Such activities promote protection by providing a safe space for children to learn and express themselves, identifying children who are vulnerable or are experiencing child protection harms, and supporting appropriate referrals.

STANDARD 16: STRENGTHENING FAMILY AND CAREGIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Family and caregiving environments are strengthened to promote children's healthy development and to protect them from maltreatment and other negative effects of adversity.

Caregiving includes both formal, legal arrangements and informal arrangements in which the caregiver does not have legal responsibility. Interventions often focus on increasing caregivers' mental health and psychosocial well-being and reinforcing caring and protective behaviours towards children.

STANDARD 17: COMMUNITY-LEVEL APPROACHES

Children live in communities that promote their well-being and prevent abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children before, during and after humanitarian crises.

Community-level approaches support community members to protect children and ensure and maximise their right to healthy development. Humanitarian actors should seek to understand existing community capacities that promote children's rights, safety, development, well-being and participation.

STANDARD 18: CASE MANAGEMENT

Children and families who face child protection concerns in humanitarian settings are identified and have their needs addressed through an individualised case management process, including direct one-on-one support and connections to relevant service providers.

Case management is an approach for addressing the needs of an individual child who is at risk of harm or who has been harmed. The child, their family and community are supported by a caseworker in a systematic and timely manner through direct support and referrals. It provides individualised, coordinated, holistic, multisectoral support for complex and often connected child protection concerns.

STANDARD 19: ALTERNATIVE CARE

All children without protective and suitable care receive alternative care according to their rights, specific needs, wishes and best interests, prioritising family-based care and stable care arrangements.

'Alternative care' is care provided to children by caregivers who are not biological parents or usual primary caregivers. Each context has different forms of alternative care that align with local cultural norms, practices, laws and policies. Alternative care options need to be as family-based as possible and monitored for quality.

STANDARD 20: JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

All children in contact with formal and informal justice systems during a humanitarian crisis are treated in a child-friendly, non-discriminatory manner in line with international norms and standards and receive services tailored to their needs and best interests.

A crisis may increase or change the ways that children come in contact with justice systems and may provide a unique opportunity to strengthen systems that may otherwise resist change. This standard includes efforts to protect children through improving the content and application of formal and customary laws even during a time of crisis, as well as interventions that seek to identify and overcome the risks that justice systems may present.

PILLAR 4: STANDARDS TO WORK ACROSS SECTORS

Child protection risks are closely linked with the work of other sectors because children have needs and capacities that are relevant across the breadth of humanitarian action. Pillar four places protection at the centre of the humanitarian response and provides sector-specific guidance on integrated approaches, joint programming, and child protection mainstreaming. Such approaches rely heavily on coordination, complementarity, and mutual respect.

- Food security and child protection
- Livelihoods and child protection
- Education and child protection
- Health and child protection
- Nutrition and child protection
- Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and child protection
- Shelter and settlement and child protection
- Camp management and child protection

STANDARD 21: FOOD SECURITY AND CHILD PROTECTION

All children affected by humanitarian crises live in food secure environments that mitigate and respond to child protection risks.

Food insecurity increases child protection risks, including negative coping strategies like neglect, child marriage and child labour. Child protection can be integrated within each of the four food security pillars – availability, accessibility, stability and utilisation – in order to support children’s well-being and protection.

STANDARD 22: LIVELIHOODS AND CHILD PROTECTION

Caregivers and working-age children have access to adequate support to strengthen their livelihoods.

When a family’s capacity to provide basic needs is reduced, children can be placed at risk of all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. Child protection must be integrated into economic empowerment and livelihoods programming to ensure that interventions have a protective impact and do not increase children’s risks of harm.

STANDARD 23: EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION

All children have access to quality education that is protective and inclusive and that promotes dignity and participation throughout all essential activities.

Child protection and education are closely linked. A lack of access to education negatively impacts children’s well-being and development. Child protection concerns can prevent children from accessing education or can decrease educational outcomes. This standard provides guidance to help education and child protection actors work together to support children’s well-being and education.

STANDARD 24: HEALTH AND CHILD PROTECTION

All children have access to quality protective health services that reflect their views, ages and developmental needs.

Health and child protection programming play critical and related roles in ensuring the safety and well-being of children in humanitarian action. Supporting children’s health increases children’s protective factors, while supporting children’s protection can improve their physical health and overall well-being.

STANDARD 25: NUTRITION AND CHILD PROTECTION

Children and their caregivers, especially pregnant and lactating women and girls, have access to safe, adequate and appropriate nutrition services.

Nutritional imbalances and rights violations often worsen in times of crisis when caregivers struggle to provide food, income and health care for their families. Nutrition and child protection actors can work together to improve overall outcomes for children, particularly during early childhood and adolescence.

STANDARD 26: WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) AND CHILD PROTECTION

All children have access to appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene services that support their dignity and minimise risks of physical and sexual violence and exploitation.

Child protection staff should work together with water, sanitation and hygiene staff to deliver safe and appropriate interventions that are adapted to the needs of children and that protect children and their caregivers.

STANDARD 27: SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT AND CHILD PROTECTION

All children and their caregivers have appropriate shelter that meets their basic needs, including safety, protection and accessibility.

Appropriate shelter and settlements are essential to healthy and safe families and communities. Child protection must be integrated into shelter and settlement interventions to safeguard families from child protection harms and forced eviction.

STANDARD 28: CAMP MANAGEMENT AND CHILD PROTECTION

Camp management activities address the needs and protection concerns of children affected by forced displacement.

Camp coordination and camp management aims to support equitable and dignified living conditions, as well as access to assistance and protection services for refugee, internally displaced and migrant populations. An integrated approach means that camp management and child protection workers work together to ensure that camp settings reduce child protection risks, provide opportunities for children's meaningful participation, and have functioning referral pathways for children and others to report relevant concerns.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Safety, dignity and rights

Access to impartial assistance

Assist to recover

STANDARDS TO ENSURE A QUALITY RESPONSE

1. Coordination
2. Human resources
3. Communications and advocacy
4. Programme cycle management
5. Information management
6. Child protection monitoring

STANDARDS ON CHILD PROTECTION RISKS

7. Dangers and injuries
8. Physical and emotional maltreatment
9. Sexual and gender-based violence
10. Mental health and psychosocial distress
11. Children associated with armed forces or armed groups
12. Child labour
13. Unaccompanied and separated children

STANDARDS TO DEVELOP ADEQUATE STRATEGIES

14. Socio-ecological approach to child protection programming
15. Group activities for child well-being
16. Strengthening family and caregiving environments
17. Community-level approaches
18. Case management
19. Alternative care
20. Justice for children

STANDARDS TO WORK ACROSS SECTORS

21. Food security & CP
22. Livelihoods & CP
23. Education & CP
24. Health & CP
25. Nutrition & CP
26. Water, sanitation and hygiene & CP
27. Shelter and settlement & CP
28. Camp management & CP

Survival and development

Best interests of the child

Child participation

Non-discrimination

Strengthen children's resilience

Strengthen child
protection systems

Help people claim their rights