



Child protection

(Area of responsibility within protection)

Young people's interests are relevant to the Child Protection Area of Responsibility in two main ways: first, the subgroup that are adolescents under age 18 in need of Protection services are children themselves; and second, older adolescents and youth can be trained and supported as volunteers or paid staff in Child Protection activities. In addition to the Child Protection issues (GBV, child marriage, recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups, detention by authorities, and

child labour), younger adolescents in crisis settings are vulnerable to many dangers, including injuries, physical violence, neglect, and separation from their caregivers.

The best-interests principle must guide all actions and interventions that humanitarian actors take on behalf of internally displaced, refugee, returnee or stateless children (see **BOX 20** ▶).

Box 20: What is the principle of the best interests of the child?

Article 3, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) stipulates that:

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

The concept of the best interests of the child provides guidance for ensuring the well-being of a child, which is determined based on individual circumstances, including the child's age, gender, level of maturity, and personal experiences, as well as the presence or absence of parents, the quality of the child–parent relationships, the physical and psychosocial situation of the child, and their level of risk/need for protection.

The best interests principle applies to all children without discrimination, regardless of a child's guardianship or legal status, and it also applies to actions affecting children as a group and to all actions undertaken by institutions that affect individual children. The principle obliges states to establish concrete procedures and/or mechanisms that can be used to assess and determine the best interests of a child under their jurisdiction.

Source

UNHCR (2018).¹⁸⁴



Tip sheet

Key actions for Child Protection programming at each stage of the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC)

HPC phases	What to do	Tips for young people's participation
<p>Needs assessment and analysis</p> <p>1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Collect data on needs, priorities and capabilities and analyse these data disaggregated by sex, age and disability, to understand differing Child Protection needs of young people before and after the crisis. → Collect data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Child Protection services available for adolescents; → child-friendly spaces (CFS) that cater to young people (also establish if they can be accessed by disabled adolescents). → Analyse data to understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → the specific Child Protection concerns experienced by adolescent girls and boys; → the state of the juvenile justice system, and what efforts are under way to improve it; → care arrangements for separated and unaccompanied children, and how these young people are supported once they turn 18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Hold consultations – grouped by sex and age of participants – with a diverse cross-section of adolescents to identify needs and challenges related to Child Protection. → Ensure that mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and protection services have been mapped prior to consultations in case any referrals need to be made. → Ensure consultations with children and adolescents do no harm and are managed by actors with expertise in engaging and supporting adolescents. → Ensure a safe and accessible space for consultations.

"Empower youth to work with their governments in the development of immediate and durable responses for protection."



HPC phases	What to do	Tips for young people's participation
Strategic planning	<p data-bbox="92 439 185 533">2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure that the Child Protection response plan addresses the needs of young people identified during the needs assessment, and from any other data related to young people and the labour market. → Develop a coordination mechanism on Child Protection under the overall Protection cluster/ working group. Assess how to consult and engage adolescents within that mechanism. → Discuss with teams how programmes will reach: hard-to-reach adolescents in the community; children living and working on the streets; young people in detention; and adolescent heads-of-households. → Plan for CFS to cater to adolescents in an age-appropriate manner (e.g., opening hours, activities, facilitators) – consider a separate adolescent or youth space where they can build social networks, acquire skills, and access sexual and reproductive health (SHR) information and care. → Coordinate with Health (including SRH) and GBV partners on their planned interventions for adolescents, especially related to adolescent- and youth-friendly spaces and health points. → Plan to ensure adolescent girls, and particularly married adolescent girls, are reached with Child Protection services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Include adolescents and youth when strategizing methods to reach all demographics of young people, including hard-to-reach adolescents. → Plan for young people to inform the design of Child Protection programmes. → Engage young people to deliver Child Protection services (e.g., sensitizations, family tracing and reunification, referral to services).
Resource mobilization	<p data-bbox="92 1491 185 1585">3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Develop information and key messages on adolescents and youth, such as from assessment reports, to influence Child Protection funding priorities. → Report on gaps in funding for adolescents and youth in Child Protection to donors and other humanitarian stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Work with adolescents to develop advocacy messages for Child Protection funding.

HPC phases

What to do

Tips for young people's participation

Implementation and monitoring

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- Consider following the International Rescue Committee's (IRC's) guiding principles for working with adolescent GBV survivors in *Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse*.¹⁸⁵
- Consider outreach and mobile programme delivery approaches to ensure adolescents are reached, specifically those living in vulnerable situations.
- Monitor throughout implementation that Child Protection actors are running interventions in a gender- and age-appropriate manner, to cater to adolescents' needs and not just younger children.
- Ensure trained specialists are available to address adolescent needs within Child Protection interventions. Ensure they are aware of existing referral pathways.
- Continuously develop the skills and knowledge of caregivers to support the participation of adolescents.
- Ensure referral pathways are in place for unaccompanied children 'ageing out' of care to ensure continuity of support for those who need it.
- When dealing with unaccompanied and separated children in alternative care, give adolescents the opportunity to monitor the quality and safety of their own care arrangements and, if desirable, support supervised independent living arrangements.
- In family tracing, involve adolescents as active participants, rather than passive recipients.
- When delivering case management interventions, consider the growing role for adolescents in decision-making.

- Engage young people to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms.
- Work with young people to find the appropriate combination of art, music, sports, languages and vocational skills, and referrals to other services, including case management for Protection issues.
- Build the capacity of older youths to register, manage and refer relevant cases, or to act as facilitators and mentors to younger children in volunteer or staff roles, as context and safety allows.

Operational peer review and evaluation

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- Review projects in the Child Protection response plan to assess to what extent adolescents and youth were effectively reached through humanitarian programming.
- Document and share good practices on addressing the needs of young people in Child Protection.

- Facilitate the participation of young people in project reviews – ensure that vulnerable groups are able to voice their concerns during reviews and evaluations.