

SUMMARY

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



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

For more information or support, please contact the Global Child Protection Working Group via <http://www.cpwg.net>

INTRODUCTION

The Child Protection Working Group defines child protection as “the prevention and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children”. As there are threats to children’s safety and wellbeing in every emergency, child protection is an important consideration in all humanitarian action and can be a life-saving measure.

Overall, the *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)* are intended to:

- Set common principles;
- Strengthen coordination;
- Improve the quality of programming and its impact;
- Improve accountability;
- Define child protection work;
- Provide good practices; and
- Enable better advocacy and communication on child protection.

As a companion to the Sphere Handbook, the CPMS are structured in the same manner with each standard accompanied by key actions, measurement and guidance notes.

PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

STANDARDS TO ENSURE A QUALITY
CHILD PROTECTION RESPONSE

STANDARDS TO ADDRESS
CHILD PROTECTION NEEDS

STANDARDS TO DEVELOP ADEQUATE
CHILD PROTECTION STRATEGIES

STANDARDS TO MAINSTREAM CHILD
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FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

CRC PRINCIPLE 1:

Survival and Development

As well as children's right to life, humanitarian workers must also consider the effects of the emergency and response on the physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual development of children.

CRC PRINCIPLE 2:

Non-discrimination

Emergencies often magnify existing differences and further marginalize those already at risk of discrimination. Humanitarian workers must identify and monitor existing and new patterns of discrimination and power, and address them in their response.

CRC PRINCIPLE 3:

Child Participation

Humanitarian workers must ensure that girls and boys are given space and time to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect them during all stages of an emergency. Children should be supported to express their views in safety and these views should be taken seriously.

CRC PRINCIPLE 4:

Best Interests of the Child

In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. This principle should guide all stages of the programme cycle.

FOUR PROTECTION PRINCIPLES OF THE SPHERE HANDBOOK ON HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

CPMS PRINCIPLE 1 (SPHERE PROTECTION PRINCIPLE 1):

Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions

Those involved in humanitarian response must do all they reasonably can to avoid exposing people affected by disaster or armed conflict, particularly children, to further harm, danger or violations of their rights.

CPMS PRINCIPLE 2 (SPHERE PROTECTION PRINCIPLE 2):

Ensure people's access to impartial assistance

“Ensure that humanitarian assistance is available to all those in need, particularly those who are most vulnerable or who face exclusion on political or other grounds.” Assistance is provided without discrimination and is not withheld from children in need or from their families and caregivers, and access for humanitarian agencies is provided as necessary to meet the standards.

CPMS PRINCIPLE 3 (SPHERE PROTECTION PRINCIPLE 3):

Protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion

Children are protected from “violence, from being forced or induced to act against their will,” and from fear of such abuse.

CPMS PRINCIPLE 4 (SPHERE PROTECTION PRINCIPLE 4):

Assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse

Children are assisted to claim their rights, through information, documentation and assistance in seeking remedies. Children are supported appropriately in recovering from the physical, psychological and social effects of violence and other abuses.

TWO PRINCIPLES SPECIFICALLY FOCUSED ON CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

CPMS PRINCIPLE 5:

Strengthen child protection systems

In humanitarian settings, the child protection system or the people, processes, laws, institutions and behaviours that normally protect children in a holistic and integrated manner may have become weakened or ineffective. However, the response phase may provide an opportunity to develop and strengthen national child protection systems, including community-based systems.

CPMS PRINCIPLE 6:

Strengthen children's resilience in humanitarian action

How successful children are in addressing and coping with their situation depends on the pattern of risk and protective factors in their social environments and their internal strengths and capacities. The task of child protection programming in emergencies is to strengthen protective factors that reinforce children's resilience, and to deal with those that expose children to risk.

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STANDARD 1: COORDINATION

Relevant and responsible authorities, humanitarian agencies, civil society organizations and representatives of affected populations coordinate their child protection efforts in order to ensure a full, efficient and timely response.

Coordination allows everyone involved in child protection to agree on a shared set of objectives and division of labour. It can help create an inter-agency or multi-sectoral response that strengthens child protection systems in the long run.

STANDARD 2: HUMAN RESOURCES

Child protection services are delivered by staff with proven competence in their areas of work. Recruitment processes and human resource policies include measures to protect girls and boys from exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers.

This standard does not aim to replace standards developed by humanitarian agencies elsewhere, but rather provides a focus for human resources when mobilising child protection staff and implementing safeguarding requirements.

STANDARD 3: COMMUNICATION, ADVOCACY AND MEDIA

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

Humanitarian organisations communicate and advocate on child protection issues, thereby bringing children's images and stories to the general public. When used in a careful and strategic manner, communication concerning children can lead to advances in child protection. However, if used wrongly, communication and advocacy can negatively affect the way children are perceived, and may cause further danger to children and their families.

STANDARD 4: PROGRAMME CYCLE MANAGEMENT

All child protection programmes build on existing capacities, resources and structures and address the evolving child protection risks and needs identified by girls, boys and adults affected by the emergency.

Child protection programmes must build on pre-existing information together with assessments (if needed). Children and their communities should be engaged in the situation analysis, programme design and monitoring and evaluation. Analysis and considerations of existing child protection systems, and how these can be strengthened, should always be integrated into the programme.

STANDARD 5: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Up-to-date information necessary for effective child protection programming is collected, used, stored and shared, with full respect for confidentiality, and in accordance with the “do no harm” principle and the best interests of the child.

Information about a specific child for case management purposes may need to be stored and shared if and when necessary. Information about the overall situation of children and of the response should be consolidated, analysed, summarized and used to inform programmatic decisions for the protection of children.

STANDARD 6: CHILD PROTECTION MONITORING

Objective and timely information on child protection concerns is collected in an ethical manner and systematically triggers or informs prevention and response activities.

Systematic monitoring of child protection concerns should be carried out from the first stages of an emergency. Monitoring refers to the on-going collection of information indicating levels and patterns of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. Monitoring should always be combined with response.

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STANDARD 7: DANGERS AND INJURIES

Girls and boys are protected from harm, injury and disability caused by physical dangers in their environment and the physical and psychosocial needs of injured children are responded to in a timely and efficient way.

After the age of one, unintentional injuries are a leading cause of death among children and adolescents. Children with existing disabilities can be at particular risk. This risk is heightened in an emergency. Displacement can also put children closer to previously unfamiliar risks, such as road traffic, rivers and floodwaters, unstable debris and explosive remnants of war. Injuries should be treated quickly and appropriately to avoid a greater chance of long-term or permanent injury.

STANDARD 8: PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AND OTHER HARMFUL PRACTICES

Girls and boys are protected from physical violence and other harmful practices, and survivors have access to age-specific and culturally appropriate responses.

Patterns of violence are heightened in humanitarian settings and children are more at risk of domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse and corporal punishment. Families and other sources of protection are often put under immense strain and the weakened protective environment around the child may result in family or community members abusing children. Families may also resort to harmful practices as a coping mechanism in the aftermath of an emergency.

STANDARD 9: SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Girls and boys are protected from sexual violence and survivors of sexual violence have access to age-appropriate information as well as a safe, responsive and holistic response.

In the chaos that can follow an emergency, children of all ages are at a heightened risk of sexual violence, and are more easily exploited and coerced than adults. Sexual violence is present in all emergencies, but is often hidden. Prevention and response to sexual violence against children should be addressed in all emergencies.

STANDARD 10: PSYCHOSOCIAL DISTRESS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Girls' and boys' coping mechanisms and resilience are strengthened and severely affected children are receiving appropriate support.

Most children who have experienced stressful situations will initially show changes in social relations, behaviour, physical reactions, emotions and spirituality. Mental health and psychosocial support brings together diverse, complementary approaches to providing appropriate care.

STANDARD 11: CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH ARMED FORCES OR ARMED GROUPS

Girls and boys are protected from recruitment and use in hostilities by armed forces or armed groups, and are released and provided with effective reintegration services.

Children continue to be recruited and used by armed forces or armed groups across the world. Boys and girls are used in a number of ways, including as combatants, spies, porters and informants, or for sexual purposes.

STANDARD 12: CHILD LABOUR

Girls and boys are protected from the worst forms of child labour, in particular those related to or made worse by the emergency.

In emergency contexts, with the possible loss of livelihoods, breadwinners and access to education, children become particularly vulnerable to child labour. While the child protection response in an emergency should be as thorough as possible, the response should prioritise the worst forms, starting with those related to or made worse by the emergency.

STANDARD 13: UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN

Family separation is prevented and responded to, and unaccompanied and separated children are cared for and protected according to their specific needs and their best interests.

Children separated from their parents and families are at increased risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect in an emergency. The prevention and response need to include actions to address the separation itself (prevention of separation, family tracing and reunification) as well as interim or alternative care.

STANDARD 14: JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

All girls and boys who come into contact with the justice systems as victims, witnesses or alleged offenders are treated in line with international standards.

Emergency situations often increase the exposure of children to the justice system as alleged offenders, victims or witnesses, or in a combination of these roles. For children in conflict with the law, detention should be a last resort, and where possible, diversion and alternative measures involving families and communities should be used.

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STANDARD 15: CASE MANAGEMENT

Girls and boys with urgent child protection needs are identified and they receive age and culturally appropriate information as well as an effective, multi-sectoral and child-friendly response from relevant providers working in a coordinated and accountable manner.

Case management is the process of helping individual children and families through social services. Children should be appropriately involved throughout the process, and their best interests should be considered.

STANDARD 16: COMMUNITY-BASED MECHANISMS

Girls and boys are protected from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect through community-based mechanisms and processes.

A community-based child protection mechanism is a network of individuals at community level who work toward child protection goals. Effective mechanisms include local structures and processes that promote or support the wellbeing of children.

STANDARD 17: CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES

All children and young people can go to community-supported child-friendly spaces that provide structured activities that are carried out in a safe, child-friendly, inclusive and stimulating environment.

Child-friendly spaces are nurturing environments in which children can access free and structured play, recreation, and learning activities, to regain sense of normality and continuity. They require collaboration among sectors and should be designed and operated in a participatory manner.

STANDARD 18: PROTECTING EXCLUDED CHILDREN

All girls and boys in humanitarian settings have access to basic services and protection, and the causes and means of exclusion are identified and addressed.

Exclusion is commonly associated with stigmatized social status such as disability, belonging to an ethnic or religious minority, gender, or economic standing. Humanitarian crises can make exclusion worse, but may also offer opportunities for change.

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STANDARD 19: ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection concerns are reflected in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of economic recovery programmes. Working-aged boys and girls and their caregivers will have access to adequate support to strengthen their livelihoods.

Economic recovery interventions should reach those households where child protection concerns are most pressing and should maximize children's chances to remain with their families, access education, and avoid hazardous labour or other forms of exploitation.

STANDARD 20: EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection concerns are reflected in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of education programmes. Boys and girls of all ages can access safe, high-quality, child-friendly, flexible, relevant and protective learning opportunities in a protective environment.

Quality education contributes to the safety and wellbeing of children before, during and after emergencies. It requires close collaboration between education and child protection actors on a range of issues including child-friendly spaces and child protection prevention measures.

STANDARD 21: HEALTH AND CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection concerns are reflected in the in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of health programmes. Girls and boys have access to quality health services delivered in a protective way that takes into account their age and developmental needs.

Health intervention is a central part of an overall approach to support services in response to major child protection risks in emergencies. Health activities must reduce child protection risks, and generally be carried out in a protective way.

STANDARD 22: NUTRITION AND CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection concerns are reflected in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of nutrition programmes. Girls and boys of all ages and their caregivers, especially pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, have access to safe, adequate and appropriate nutrition services and food.

Children are particularly vulnerable to all forms of under-nutrition in times of instability and crisis. Risk-prevention measures should be included within nutrition activities.

STANDARD 23: WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) AND CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection concerns are reflected in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of WASH programmes. All girls and boys have access to appropriate WASH services that minimize risks of physical and sexual violence.

Child protection workers have an important role to play in making sure that child protection activities contribute to and maintain safe and appropriate WASH practices for and by children. Similarly, WASH workers should make sure that their interventions are carried out in a way that protects children and their caregivers.

STANDARD 24: SHELTER AND CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection concerns are reflected in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of shelter programmes. All girls and boys and their caregivers have appropriate shelter provided that meets basic needs, including protection and disability access, and which facilitate longer-term solutions.

Shelter is a complex sector with many implications for child protection. Vulnerability for children can increase during and after disasters, when children may be living with new, reduced or altered family units, or alone.

STANDARD 25: CAMP MANAGEMENT AND CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection concerns are reflected in the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of camp management programmes. The safety and wellbeing of girls and boys of all ages living in camps is safeguarded through camp management structures.

The aim of managing camps is to create the space needed to deliver protection and help effectively. This affects child protection in several ways – for example, through the way the camp is physically planned, the way support is distributed, or the way decisions are made that affect children’s lives. Camp managers need to make sure children are not exposed to risks in the camps, and respond when these are identified.

STANDARD 26: DISTRIBUTION AND CHILD PROTECTION

Children access humanitarian assistance through efficient and well-planned distribution systems that safeguard girls and boys from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.

Distribution of immediate, life-saving assistance is one of the most urgent actions to be taken in an emergency response, and one that can significantly improve the safety and wellbeing of children. The way in which food and other relief items are distributed has a significant effect on the threats experienced by women and children. Any kind of distribution needs to incorporate a child protection approach. It should be timely, comprehensive and extremely well-planned.

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