Technical Note BRIEF: Protection of Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic

VERSION 2

Photo courtesy of UNICEF/Leonardo Fernandez/India 2019
In Brief

Scroll through for an overview* – including key questions and considerations – of version 2 of the Alliance's Technical Note on Protection of Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

*Please visit The Alliance's COVID-19 Resource Hub to read the full Technical Note and access additional guidance on child protection during COVID-19.
Aim of the Technical Note

To support child protection practitioners and policy makers in putting the child’s safety and well-being at the center of their COVID-19 pandemic response
1. What are the stages of COVID-19 response?

The COVID-19 pandemic is a dynamic situation. For example, after entering the transition phase, the disease may begin to spread again, triggering renewed scale-up of containment measures.

Many contexts have already experienced these shifts between the different phases, proving the need for close and constant monitoring and agile and adaptive approaches.
What are the stages of COVID-19 response?

As the COVID-19 situation evolves from one stage to the next, so do the effects on children. From preparedness to recovery, the virus affects children via three primary pathways:

- Through infection with the virus itself
- Through social and economic impacts of the response and recovery
- Through longer term effects including economic downturn and delay in SDGs
What are the main child risk and protective factors emerging during COVID-19?

It is important to consider the broader socio-ecological environment of the child and the associated risks and response measures within and between each layer.

- **Risk factors** are generally defined as individual traits, experiences, or environmental factors that increase the probability of a negative outcome.

- **Protective factors** balance and buffer risk factors and reduce a child's vulnerability. They lower the probability of an undesirable outcome.
2. What are the main child risk and protective factors emerging during COVID-19?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Risk factors</th>
<th>Protective factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child</strong></td>
<td>Heightened risk of violence, neglect, exploitation &amp; psychosocial distress</td>
<td>Communication with friends &amp; family; knowledge of COVID-19 facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td>Separation, disrupted livelihoods, fear of disease, gender inequality</td>
<td>Family time &amp; activities; fathers more involved; new rituals / routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>Breakdown of trust; limited access for community supports, play spaces, etc.</td>
<td>Food banks, cash transfers, neighborhood check-ins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Society</strong></td>
<td>Erosion of social capital; disruption of civil society</td>
<td>Essential government services; supports from CSOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-cultural norms</strong></td>
<td>Heightened stigma &amp; discrimination against specific groups</td>
<td>Highlighting heroes (e.g. front-line workers), intergenerational respect &amp; care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. What are the guiding principles for child protection responses during a disease outbreak?

1. Prioritise the best interests of the child and children’s voices through all stages.
2. Apply the principle of non-discrimination and inclusion to all stages of COVID-19.
3. Build continuity of care and protection in all stages of the crisis.
4. Engage governments to develop innovative child-focused legal and policy frameworks to protect all children.
5. Engage communities to guide the child protection response.
6. Adapt and strengthen child protection systems – both formal and informal.
8. Build on protective factors while addressing risk factors.
Practitioners and policy makers must develop responses using a multi-sectoral lens that examines children’s, caregiver’s and communities’ needs. Critical sectors include:

- Education
- WASH
- Nutrition
- Health
- Shelter
- Livelihoods
- Food security
- Camp management
5. How do we put all of these things into practice?

Start with the series of basic questions below* to determine which stage you are in.

- Are governments and communities:
  - Aware of the disease, and,
  - Setting up policies and systems to guide response, transition, and recovery?

- Are targeted quarantine or social distancing measures in place WITHOUT wide-scale population-level measures?
  - Are there quarantine measures imposed on households (i.e. lockdown conditions)?
  - Are their restrictions to movement? Are there school closures?

- Has there been a lessening of some public health measures in your location? Are schools / other services re-opening?

  If yes, go to column C.

  Transition / Recovery Actions

- Does your location or community not fit any of the scenarios listed above?
  ➔ If yes, adapt actions from any of the columns below.

Create (and regularly review) an action plan(s) taking into account the local context and guided by the CPMS.

*The full Technical Note provides a series of additional probes under each question to help you think through appropriate response measures for your context.
6. Where can I find additional guidance on child protection during COVID-19?

Visit The Alliance's COVID-19 Resource Hub to access a variety of supporting materials and guidance, including supplemental annexes to the Technical Note on:

- Adaptation of Child Protection Case Management to the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Child Helplines and the Protection of Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Key Messages and Considerations for Programming for Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups
- Working with Communities to Keep Children Safe
- COVID-19 and Child Labour
- Protecting Children from Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the Home
- Social Service Workforce Safety and Wellness during the COVID-19 Response: Recommended Actions
- Children and Alternative Care
- COVID-19 and Children Deprived of their Liberty