

PILLAR 4: STANDARDS TO WORK ACROSS SECTORS

INTRODUCTION TO PILLAR 4: STANDARDS TO WORK ACROSS SECTORS

THE IMPORTANCE OF SECTORS WORKING TOGETHER TO PROMOTE CHILD PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING

Increasingly complex emergencies pose new risks to the well-being of affected children. These risks emphasise the need to place protection at the centre of all humanitarian response. Child protection risks are closely linked with the work of other sectors because children have needs that fall under all sectors. For example, a lack of education or family livelihood can increase risks of child marriage or [child labour](#). Multisectoral approaches reflect the interconnected needs of children and emphasise all humanitarian actors' collective responsibility to protect children and their families.

Focused, specialised child protection interventions are critical for protecting children. However, no single sector that operates in a crisis has the knowledge, skills and resources to fully prevent risks, respond to children's protection needs and promote children's rights and well-being. All humanitarian actors have the obligation to engage in multisectoral child protection activities. Such activities are important under the '*Centrality of Protection*', which recognises that protection is the purpose and intended outcome of humanitarian action and must be at the centre of all preparedness and response actions.

Sectoral programming that fails to account for child protection risks can lead to:

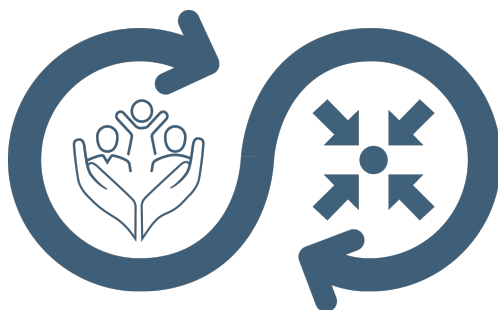
- Inefficient use of resources;
- Additional harm or increased risks; and
- Reduced results for children.

On the other hand, multisectoral programming that intentionally includes and addresses child protection considerations (such as children's particular risks, vulnerabilities, developmental stages, etc.) contributes to higher-quality impacts. This improves the outcomes of other sectors, promotes positive outcomes for children and ensures their well-being.

Protection mainstreaming and integrated approaches can take different shapes depending on the context, but key aspects of these approaches are outlined below.

'Protection mainstreaming' is the process of:

Integrating child protection into the work of all other sectors



- Incorporating core humanitarian protection principles by promoting safety, dignity and access for all affected persons; and
- Ensuring accountability to, and the participation and empowerment of, affected populations.

Protection mainstreaming that specifically uses child protection considerations to inform all aspects of humanitarian action helps to maximise the protective impact of all humanitarian assistance without contributing to or perpetuating risks to children. Protection mainstreaming is critical and is part of following the *do no harm* principle that applies to all humanitarian action.

An ‘integrated approach’ allows two or more sectors to work together to achieve a shared programme outcome(s). It is based on existing capacities and joint needs identification and analysis, so it promotes beneficial processes and outcomes for all sectors involved. When child protection is included in the integrated approach, it increases opportunities for better child protection outcomes. An integrated approach to child protection programming involves deliberately designing and implementing programmes with child protection and one or more other sectors to:

- Prevent abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children;
- Ensure quality services;
- Promote children’s development, rights and well-being; and
- Build on the cooperation, outcomes and impacts of other sectors.

This is different from protection mainstreaming, which is applicable and essential to all programmes regardless of the intended outcome.

In a sectoral approach to programme design, sectoral outcomes are the starting point for action. In an integrated approach, a holistic understanding of child well-being and healthy development is the starting point for action. This

builds on the unique capacities of each collaborating sector and uses sectoral specialties to meet that goal.

Joint programming and integrated programming take place on a continuum of varied levels of integration for situation analysis, programme design and implementation. Different opportunities for collaboration between child protection and other sectors are highlighted in the table below. The appropriate approach must be determined by organisations and inter-agency coordination mechanisms within each context. The approach must account for:

- The phase of an emergency (such as stability);
- Accessibility;
- Available capacity;
- Existing local systems;
- Funding mechanisms; and
- Other factors.

Examples of mainstreaming, joint programming and integrated programming are highlighted below, and these examples will be sharpened over time based on additional experiences.

Ways of working	Sector implications	Aim	Considerations	Examples
Child protection mainstreaming	Sector-specific actions taken within a specific sector.	To promote a safe, dignified and protective environment and to improve the impact of all humanitarian actors by applying the do no harm principle and proactively reducing risks and harm.	Application of extensive sector-specific child protection mainstreaming by contextualising and building on this CPMS guidance and guidelines produced by the Global Protection Cluster and other protection agencies.	WASH programmes consider age, gender and disability status of children when (a) designing water and sanitation facilities in schools and (b) promoting menstrual hygiene management. Mandatory health training modules include child protection considerations. Shelter responses support adolescent girls' safety and privacy, including separate spaces to sleep, change clothing, etc.
Joint programming	Sectors maintain their own sector's objectives while jointly planning and implementing certain aspects of their programmes.	To achieve a protection outcome alongside outcomes for other sectors while optimising resources, access, operational capacity, etc.	Need for moderate levels of joint planning (workplans, costing, resource requirements, etc.) along with predictable coordination between child protection and other sectors involved in joint programming. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) may need to be developed for interaction, referrals, use of space, etc. In some instances, joint programming may involve staff and volunteers from one sector supporting the other sector's objectives. This will require basic training on both sides.	In remote, conflict-affected areas, child protection, health and nutrition sectors plan and implement joint missions with (a) standard operating procedures (SOPs) for identification and referral of children at risk and (b) planned responses to such referrals, including family tracing and reunification services or parenting programmes. Child protection and education actors jointly establish a safe space and deliver mental health and psycho social support, case management and education interventions in a coordinated programme. Health, mental health and child protection personnel work together to create an SOP to include a child protection social worker or counselor in health centres to: (see next page)

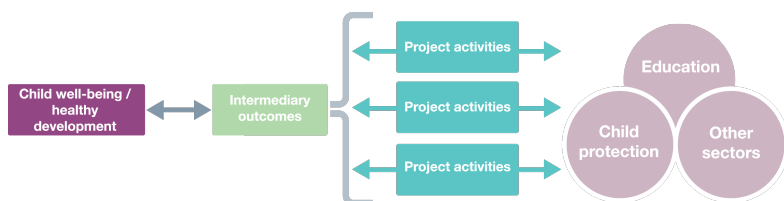
Ways of working	Sector implications	Aim	Considerations	Examples
<p>Integration (integrated programming)</p>	<p>Favouring collective over sector-specific planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A holistic understanding of child well-being is the starting point for action, with sectoral specialities being used to meet that goal.</p>	<p>To achieve collective outcomes for children through deliberate, joint assessment, goal setting, planning, implementation and monitoring across sectors.</p>	<p>Similar considerations as in joint programming but with greater levels of engagement and coordination, deliberately working together towards shared goals, outcomes and maximum use of resources. Must consider access constraints, continuum of care, stability, existing resources and capacity. Need for joint goal setting, needs identification and analysis, design, resource mobilisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation systems and continuous, context-specific situation and protection analysis.</p>	<p>(Continued from previous page)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline multisectoral linkages for more predictable and timely case coordination and referrals; Promote improved child-centred care (such as training on communicating with children); and Provide individualised, specialised care to address psychosocial distress among children accessing health services.
				<p>A programme brings together food security, child protection and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to reduce harmful coping mechanisms such as child marriage or family separation. A programme across child protection, cash and livelihoods addresses root causes of separation and recruitment of children through cash grants, livelihood support and family strengthening interventions. Programmes use case management, health and MHPS interventions and livelihood opportunities to holistically respond to child survivors of SGBV or children formerly associated with armed forces or groups.</p>

WHO SHOULD DO WHAT?

All humanitarian actors have a responsibility and role to play in contributing to the protection of affected children, caregivers and communities. Joint programming and integrated programming (two or more sectors working together to address children's needs and protection risks) can include (a) child protection experts implementing specialised protection activities and (b) non-child protection actors implementing specialised sectoral interventions while (c) both actively collaborate and work alongside one another for a holistic programme. In this situation, child protection and other-sector actors are equal partners in defining, developing and implementing programmes and interventions that achieve broader outcomes for children's well-being and development while still contributing to sectoral outcomes. (See chart from Plan International.)

Non-child protection actors can undertake dedicated activities to address protection risks that affect children and contribute to child protection outcomes through their own sectoral interventions. However, this does not mean child protection specialists are not essential. Child protection specialists are necessary to provide technical support and expertise to ensure quality and the alignment of interventions with the best interests of the child.

Plan International's integrated approach



WHAT DO THESE STANDARDS COVER?

These standards provide:

- Suggested key actions for child protection and other sectoral workers related to mainstreaming and integration;
- Key indicators; and
- Guidance notes.

They do not, however, provide sector-specific guidance for each humanitarian sector. This can be found in the relevant standards for each sector such as the *Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS)*, the *Minimum Standards for Education (INEE)* and the *Sphere Standards*. The two (or more) sets of standards should always be used in conjunction.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR SECTOR-INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution of life-saving items, including food and non-food items (NFIs), is one of the most urgent actions undertaken by multiple sectors in an emergency response. Any kind of distribution must be:

- Timely;
- Informed by consultations with affected groups;
- Well planned;
- Accessible; and
- Safe.

To do this, sectors must involve women, men, girls and boys in designing distribution systems and in determining which culturally appropriate items are needed for each target group. Sectors should enlist the expertise of child protection and gender-based violence workers in planning and implementation. Child protection staff should also brief registration and distribution teams on:

- Protection risks for children;
- Vulnerability criteria; and
- The appropriate actions to take when they come across children at risk (such as children in child-headed households, children whose primary caregivers are elderly or ill, or children with disabilities).

Affected communities must be aware that all aid and relief items are free. Confidential feedback and reporting mechanisms must be in place and accessible during distributions to address violations and abuses. For large registration processes or distributions, individuals in extremely vulnerable situations must be helped first. The timing of distributions must consider the daily activities of women and children, including school attendance. Provisions should be made for delivery to children or households who cannot access

distribution sites without risk (such as caregivers who would have to leave young children unattended).

Where polygamy is practised, all adult women in every household should be registered as main recipients. Child-headed households and children who are unaccompanied and separated should receive (a) ration cards in their own names and (b) distributions of food and non-food items in a way that does not cause further separation or harm. Targeted distribution to specific categories of children should be avoided. Instead, distribution staff should coordinate with child protection to ensure items reach the most vulnerable groups without causing unintended harm through limited or targeted distributions.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE AND OTHER HARM BY HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

All organisations have the responsibility to protect children. However, the extreme imbalance of power between humanitarian workers and the children whom they have been sent to protect makes it necessary to implement robust safeguarding policies. While national laws and practices may look different, all humanitarian actors are bound by the *IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2002*. Child safeguarding principles should be applied to all forms of assistance, including [cash](#) and [vouchers](#). See [Standard 2: Human Resources](#) and references below for more on safeguarding policies, codes of conduct and safe, confidential and effective feedback and reporting mechanisms.

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

All children have the right to be heard. Their voices bring relevance and urgency to humanitarian assessments, analyses and interventions for all sectors. The vulnerability of children often comes from a lack of power and status rather than a lack of capacity. Therefore, children's meaningful participation, their best interests and the do no harm principle should be considered together throughout the entire programme cycle. (See [Principles 3, 4 and 5](#).) It is important that the participation, opinions, concerns and suggestions of diverse groups of children inform programme design, implementation and monitoring.

Both child participation and child safeguarding contribute to meeting (a) the overarching principle or mandate of *accountability to affected populations* and (b) the commitments in the *Core Humanitarian Standard*.

CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE (CVA)

Cash and voucher assistance can be used to support families or communities to provide necessities for their children and to prevent exploitation or school dropout. However, the impact on children and their protection must be considered and included in the design. Lack of birth registration should never be a barrier to assistance. (See Introduction, *Cash and voucher assistance*.)

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