

Humanitarian Diplomacy for Child Protection Outcomes

Project Brief

CONTEXT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Across humanitarian contexts, child protection actors are operating in an environment of systemic deterioration—characterised by shrinking humanitarian space, rising violations against children, and sustained funding constraints and the deprioritisation of protection.

Humanitarian principles, frameworks, and programming are increasingly being questioned, and in many instances are becoming the target of narratives that are eroding the near-universal support they once commanded.

As a result, humanitarian actors are operating in an environment that is not only increasingly lethal for communities affected by conflict and violence, but also for humanitarian personnel themselves. It is also progressively stripped of the trust and shared understanding that have long underpinned principled humanitarian action.

In this context, service delivery alone is no longer sufficient to achieve sustainable child protection outcomes. Humanitarian actors must also actively contribute to restoring and renegotiating the conditions that enable humanitarian action to take place in accordance with its principles.

There is a growing need for child protection actors to engage more intentionally and strategically in humanitarian diplomacy, advocacy, and policy processes. By doing so, they can help shape the political, legal, and operational environment, reduce drivers of protection risks, and ultimately enable more effective and sustainable protection outcomes for children.

CURRENT PRACTICE AND CRITICAL GAPS IN ENGAGEMENT

Child protection actors are already engaging in forms of humanitarian diplomacy, for example negotiating access, advocating with state and non-state actors, or contributing to policy and normative frameworks. However, this engagement is often informal, uneven, and not explicitly recognised.

At the same time, many child protection actors lack the tools, competencies, and clarity needed to engage effectively and safely in these spaces.

A NEW GLOBAL INITIATIVE

In response, Plan International, on behalf of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, is leading a global initiative on:

Advancing the Protection of Children in Crisis and Conflict through Humanitarian Diplomacy, Strategic Dialogue, and Negotiation

This initiative will explore how child protection actors can more intentionally and strategically engage in humanitarian diplomacy—directly or through partnerships—to improve protection outcomes for children.

This initiative will generate practical, field-informed outputs to support humanitarian actors, including:

- **A background information paper** providing an overview of current practices, identifying priorities for technical improvement, and clearly mapping the skills and competencies required to strengthen the complementarity between child protection and humanitarian diplomacy, advocacy, and policy in humanitarian action
- **Pilot approaches** in two conflict-affected contexts
- **A Learning & Development (L&D) package** to strengthen capacity
- **Online clinics** to share learning and foster dialogue

WHY THIS MATTERS

Strengthening the role of child protection actors in humanitarian diplomacy has the potential to:

- Restore viable conditions for humanitarian assistance to happen if denied
- Ensure better and more consistent adherence to humanitarian principles
- Improve access to affected populations
- Influence policies and practices that impact children
- Strengthen accountability for violations
- Address root causes of protection risks

Ultimately, this initiative aims to ensure that child protection actors are better equipped to operate not only as service providers, but as strategic actors shaping the environments that affect children's safety and well-being, and allow humanitarian response to help save their lives and support their resilience.

Get Involved

We are engaging a wide range of stakeholders across research, consultation, and pilot phases. If you would like to contribute or learn more, please contact elspeth.chapman@alliancecpha.org and mariasole.fanuzzi@plansverige.org.



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs