



Inter-agency Guidance on Child Protection Case Management Data Categorisation

Executive Summary

Background

Child Protection Case Management (CPCM) is a cornerstone of child protection in humanitarian settings. While numerous tools and guidelines exist, there is an opportunity to utilise CPCM data more effectively. This data can enhance programme quality, inform humanitarian response planning, and drive global advocacy for child protection needs and resources.

The need for standardised categories for child protection risks, vulnerabilities, and services was identified in 2019. This lack of a “common language” hindered effective data aggregation, analysis, and interoperability across and between information management systems. Aggregated data offers valuable insights into child protection needs and allows for targeted programme development. Additionally, a common language enables cross-contextual data analysis, generating valuable learning and insight about how different crises impact children in need of case management.

Recognising the need for a common language, in 2022 UNICEF and UNHCR spearheaded a collaborative effort within the Alliance of Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (Alliance for CPHA)¹ to address this gap. This initiative focused on defining data categories for CPCM. These categories look at overall **risk**, which is defined by **Safety Threat x Vulnerability** describing how threats exacerbate vulnerabilities to expose children to risks that affect their well-being. To improve a child’s well-being and address their vulnerabilities, child protection workers analyse **services requested and provided** in case management. This helps identify any additional support the child might need, thereby addressing the threats and vulnerabilities they face. To ensure integration across various CPCM tools, the data categorisation framework is being incorporated into the revisions of *Inter-agency Case Management guidelines and tools*. This will promote consistent data collection practices.

This collaborative effort culminated in the creation of the “Inter-agency Guidance on Child Protection Case Management Data Categorisation” (Data Categorisation) in 2024.

¹ <https://alliancecpa.org/en>



Purpose of the Child Protection Case Management Data Categorisation

The purpose of CPCM data categorisation is to establish a standardised framework for organising the information collected in CPCM, defining data categories and subcategories, and linking each data element to consistent unified terminology.

This categorisation aims to achieve several goals at both local/country and global levels:

- Unify terminology across the sector for CPCM.
- Facilitate data compilation, comparison, and analysis, as well as to simplify and standardise agency and inter-agency reporting structures.
- Provide a flexible framework for connecting information management systems, whether paper-based, Excel-based, or using a digital platform.

Methodology

A Management Group was established with representatives from the Alliance for CPHA, including co-leads of the child protection Case Management Task Force (CMTF) as well as representatives of the International Rescue Committee, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF, and UNHCR. This group supervised and reviewed the categorisation process at different stages.

The process used a qualitative methodology employing three research methods:

1. **Desk Review:** This involved reviewing key children's rights documents (e.g., General Comment No. 13 (2011) on Article 19 and General Comment No. 6 (2005) on Unaccompanied and Separated Children) to select terms and define meanings within the categorisation framework. Academic articles were also consulted to understand opportunities, limitations, and challenges related to CPCM data categorisation. Additionally, global child protection documents relevant to humanitarian action were reviewed.
2. **Interviews with Key Informants:** Open-ended interviews based on the preliminary draft of the categorisation were conducted with 19 key informants from the child protection sector as well as Gender Based Violence specialist, Information Management specialists, etc. These interviews helped define the scope, main objectives, and taxonomy used in the categorisation.
3. **Country-Level Consultations:** Workshops were conducted in five countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Romania, South Sudan, and Uganda) based on criteria endorsed by the Management Group, considering geographical coverage, diversity in displaced populations, and engagement of government actors in humanitarian case management. The workshops involved around 30 participants, mainly CPCM task

force lead agencies, along with UNHCR and UNICEF focal points. These consultations tested the draft categorisation and included presentations, discussions, and feedback on categories, attributes, and values.

The process involved a comprehensive approach with inputs from key stakeholders and rigorous review at multiple stages to develop and refine the CPCM data categorisation framework.

Opportunities, Limitations, and Key Factors of Child Protection Case Management Data Categories

While a global CPCM data categorisation offers advantages, it is important to consider its limitations as well.

Advantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standardising the units of measurement and reporting formats.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring comparability and avoiding overlapping of data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organising and facilitating accessibility of information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting production of accurate reporting and comparability between different contexts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitating the understanding, communication, and analysis of case management programming.
Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relying solely on data categorisation risks overlooking the complexities of a child's situation. Therefore, continued reflective practice and comprehensive assessments are essential for effective case work as key components of the case management process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case Management data does not reveal the prevalence of risk, safety threats, or vulnerabilities in specific communities. Children receiving these services are just a fraction of those facing protection risks. Therefore, analysing collected data can assist in identifying trends rather than providing absolute numbers of children affected by specific risks.

In addition, if inappropriately used, the categorisation of CPCM data can lead to potential negative consequences. The table on page 4 explores potential challenges in categorising CPCM data and how to mitigate potential limitations.

Potential negative consequences in categorising CPCM data and how to mitigate them

Limitations	Mitigation Measures
Poses a risk to the child case file by potentially containing stereotypical information only, overlooking the nuances and specificities of individual children.	To ensure a comprehensive assessment of the child's situation to be able to make decisions in their best interest, close-ended questions based on data categorisation should be complemented with narrative sections.
Creates a risk of oversimplification (forcing situations into limited categories), which could lead to stigmatisation and discrimination against certain groups.	Analysis should be done in a manner that respects child protection principles and avoids reinforcing judgement against certain groups or communities.
Unintended consequences as case management teams might not understand its purpose, limiting social work practice.	Ongoing staff capacity building efforts on overall case management with specific training module to be integrated across to ensure clear instructions on the use of data categorisation.

Training, Rollout, and Next Steps

To ensure successful adoption of the data categories, a rollout and socialisation process is crucial. This will involve aligning the new categories with existing in-country practices. Through the CMTF, a Data Categorisation Workshop and Training package will be developed. This training package will serve a two-fold purpose:

- **Review and Alignment:** Existing data categories will be reviewed and aligned with the new standardised framework.
- **Contextualisation:** The categories will be further adapted to meet the specific needs of each response context.

Following the workshop, caseworkers will receive training on the definitions and application of the updated data categories.

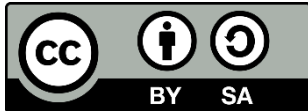
To further strengthen advocacy efforts, a data visualisation software will be developed specifically for use at the response level in line with existing information management tools. This software will transform data collected through the new case management categories into clear visuals.

By presenting this information visually, we can create insights that will support programme development and guide targeted advocacy efforts within each humanitarian response. These insights will also inform country, regional, and global work on child protection and guide child protection advocacy efforts across various contexts.

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For more information on the Alliance's work and joining the network, please visit www.alliancecpha.org or contact us directly: info@alliancecpha.org.

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