



Guiding Document: *Theory of Change for Community-level Child Protection Programming in Humanitarian Action*

Date: May 2024

INTRODUCTION

Background and Purpose: This Theory of Change (ToC) has been developed by the Community-level Child Protection (CCP) Task Force¹ of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (the Alliance). It is designed to build a common understanding amongst humanitarian agencies on the core objective of CCP programming: 'Reaching higher levels of community ownership for the protection of children in their communities in crisis settings'.

Purpose according to target audience:

This ToC may be used by:

- Technical Advisors of humanitarian agencies: to plan for or implement CCP programming to reach higher levels of community ownership for the protection of children in prevention and response programmes.
- Humanitarian coordination groups led by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CPAoR), government or UNHCR: to inform strategies to engage communities in humanitarian action and facilitate discussions amongst members on higher levels of community ownership in child protection in humanitarian action (CPHA).
- Management and policy makers: to advocate for buy-in and funding for programmes which facilitate higher levels of community ownership in CPHA.

Definition and Scope:

- A ToC / pathway of change is a map that illustrates how a set of intermediate actions, conditions and outcomes may lead to a set of long-term outcomes and impact.

¹ The CCP Task Force, previously known as the Community Based CP in Emergencies Task Force, has been established since 2016 aiming to promote a coordinated interagency effort to strengthen engagement with communities in CPHA. For more details, please visit [Community Level Child Protection | Alliance CPHA \(alliancecpha.org\)](https://alliancecpha.org)



- The focus of this ToC is on implementing agencies / actors (local, national or international) implementing community-level programming in child protection. The ToC is not intended to map the pathway of change in a community where there is no external agency involvement.
- The focus is on CCP programming only. It is not the intention of this ToC to include outcomes on other child protection interventions, i.e., case management, child resilience programmes, system strengthening, etc., or community-level programming for other sector objectives, although this ToC may also be useful to other sectors.
- The development of this ToC is intended to generate awareness, reflection and further discussion on CCP programming in humanitarian settings. The TF will continue to refine the ToC and change it based on evidence / learning. We believe it is not an endpoint but a starting point for change.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES AT VARIOUS LEVELS

Terms	Definitions
<i>Impact level</i>	A higher-level impact statement(s) that we aim to contribute to through our community-level child protection work but that goes beyond our power to fully achieve. We don't hold ourselves responsible for this impact level and don't measure it under this ToC.
<i>Line of Accountability</i>	A line across the pathway of change that separates outcomes that agencies will monitor, evaluate and aim to directly achieve (all outcomes below the line of accountability) and the higher-level impact statement(s) that goes beyond an agency's power, or for standalone CCP programmes to achieve directly.
<i>Outcomes</i>	The building blocks of the change process. These are the conditions, or states of being, that must be in place in the early and intermediate stages of the change process in order for long-term outcomes to be reached.
<i>Assumptions</i>	Statements about how and why we expect a set of outcomes to come about, as mapped in the ToC. It may be a statement of something we accept as true or in place for certain outcomes to be reached.
<i>Indicators</i>	Measuring statement that will be used to assess the extent to which outcomes are achieved. Often, indicators are simple ideas that can be counted, but sometimes they reflect more complex ideas that must be observed qualitatively. A list of learning questions, indicators and ways of measuring will be developed alongside the ToC.



<i>Interventions / Activities</i>	These are implemented as part of a community-level child protection programme which result in the outcomes listed in the ToC. The interventions / activities differ per programme and are therefore not included in the ToC of the task force.
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LEVELS USED IN THE TOC

- **Local child protection system** (including government/UN/NGO/cluster) – a set of structures, functions, mechanisms or processes to prevent and respond to child protection concerns. This includes laws, policies, regulations, and services. Here, we refer to parts of the national system that are constructed and implemented by the government at the local level. In places where the government system is not functional or acts against children’s best interest, the structures or mechanisms that are facilitated or funded by UN agencies or NGOs (i.e., cluster) will be considered under this level.
- **Community level** (including child level) – refers to all actors present in a community, including children, caregivers, extended family members, community leaders including religious leaders, organised community groups (i.e., women’s groups, adolescent clubs), etc. We consider children’s participation and contribution to be an integral part of a community process, hence there is no separate child level in the ToC.
- **Agency level** (local, national and international organisations) – local, national or international actor, external to the community, facilitating a programme/process leading to higher levels of community ownership for the protection of children. Organised community groups or voluntary citizen’s groups are considered as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) under the Community level. We believe an internal shift in mindset within an organisation needs to happen first so as to bring about changes at the Local CP System and Community levels in this ToC; hence the Agency level is placed at a lower level to show the cause-and-effect relationship. The Agency level is added in this ToC for the following purposes:
 - To inform advocacy with donors and senior management of the role of agencies in the process, that is different than usual humanitarian action;
 - To highlight the types of investment and efforts required for humanitarian agencies to achieve higher levels of community ownerships in their CPHA programming;
 - To indicate the need for a supportive environment in agencies, including capacity building, resources, funding, etc.

Limitations: Please note that this ToC illustrates a somewhat simplified and sequential process of achieving higher levels of community ownership in CPHA. Community change is understood as a non-linear process. For instance, some changes may happen simultaneously within a community, and they may also be mutually reinforcing and interconnected. The ToC cannot fully capture such complex causal dynamics, systems and processes.



Clarifying Terminologies used in the ToC:

- **Higher levels of community ownership** - this term (as opposed to community-led or community-owned) is being used to recognise the different types of CCP programmes and the challenges associated with achieving community-led processes in some humanitarian settings.
- **Community actors** - are members of the community including children, caregivers, family members, peers, neighbours, local leaders, etc.
- **Deeply learn** - the implementing agency learns alongside the community to collaboratively analyse and understand the causes of risks to children, both intentional and unintentional harms associated with the community values, norms or actions. This is the opposite of the agency going into a community with assumptions about risks for children, or an agency using their own learning process to try to propose solutions.
- **Wellbeing** - the Alliance defines child well-being as a dynamic, subjective and objective state of physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social health in which children's optimal development is achieved through:
 - Safety from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence;
 - Basic needs met, including those promoting survival and development;
 - Connection to and care provided by consistent, responsive caregivers;
 - Supportive relationships with relatives, peers, teachers, community members and society at large; and
 - Opportunity for children to exercise agency based on their evolving capacities.

Principles and Considerations for CCP Programming:

Alongside the ToC, it is important that all CCP programming takes the following principles, approaches and practices into account:

- Work with humility
- Build trust, respect and relationship first
- Listen in an active, non-judgmental manner
- Build on existing community resources and strengths
- Learn more fully about the context and community power dynamics on an ongoing basis
- Encourage an inclusive community process at all stages, including diverse perspectives from boys, girls, men, women, members of minority groups, etc.
- Ensure integrating gender equality and social inclusion approaches in all actions
- Ensure 'Do No Harm' when engaging with the communities, families and children. Age and gender sensitive accountability mechanisms should be in place for child/adult members to report complaints and safeguarding issues
- Enable collective agency and action - support communities to make the key decisions
- Use a patient, flexible, dialogue-oriented approach
- Build community capacities for mobilising the community, making inclusive decisions, and taking effective action
- Enable children to be key actors in the community process
- Using child rights as a guide, support social change from within the community
- Be prepared to step outside the usual/traditional CPHA interventions



The ToC and the content of this Guiding Document are based on the following references:

Anderson, A. A. (2004). *The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change: A practical guide to theory development*. Aspen Institute. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-42617-8_67

Child Resilience Alliance (2018). *Supporting Community-Led Child Protection: an online guide and toolkit*. www.communityledcp.org

Ellermeijer, R.E.C. et al. (2023). A systematic review of the literature on community-level child protection in low- and middle-income countries, *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 18:3, 309-329, DOI: 10.1080/13548506.2023.2230889

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2019). *Community Based Child Protection in Humanitarian Action: Definitions and Terminology*

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021). *Defining and Measuring Child Well-Being in Humanitarian Action: A Contextualization Guide*

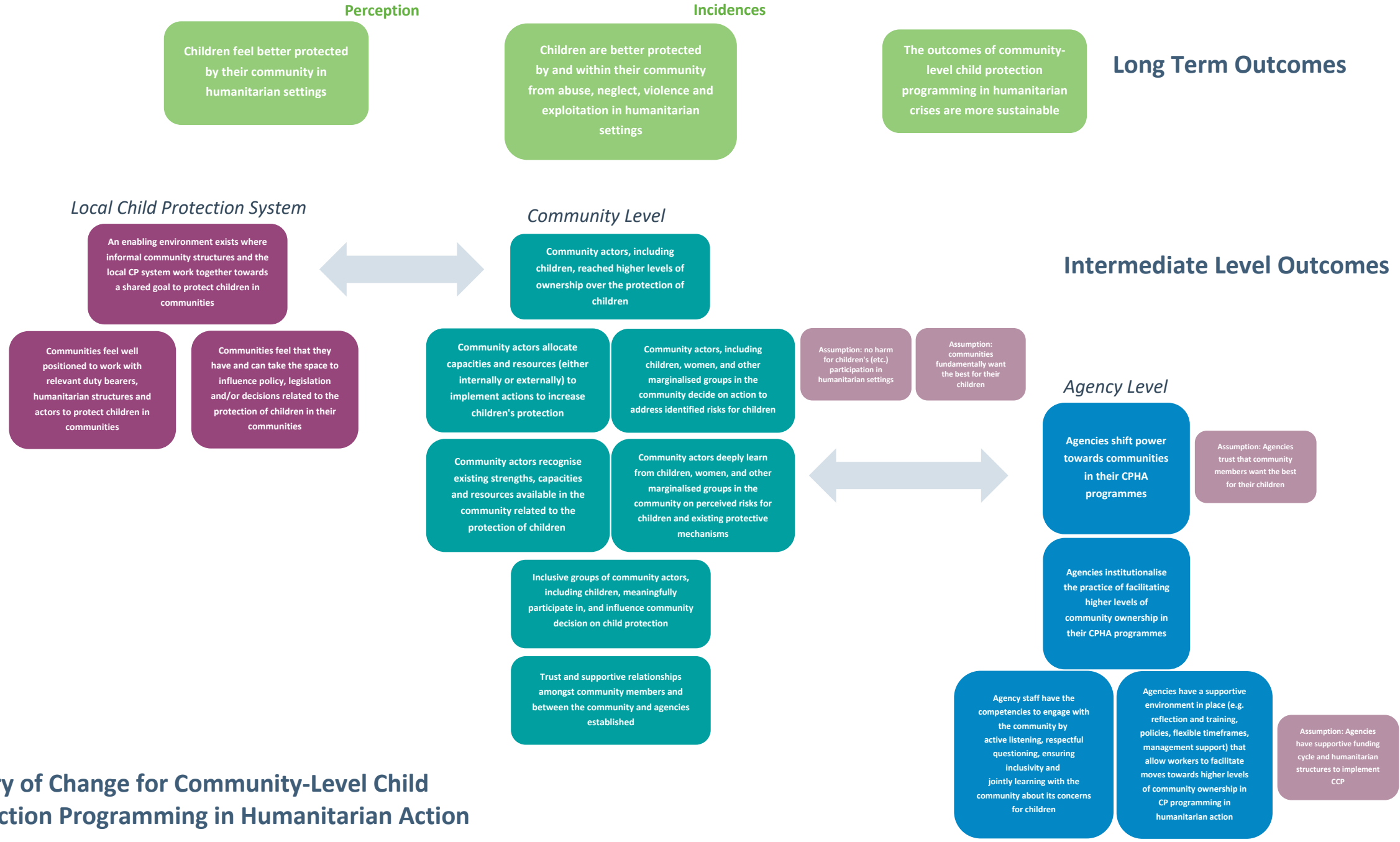
The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (accessed February 2024). *Glossary*. www.alliancecpha.org/en/glossary

Wessells (2009). *What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? An inter-agency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings*

Children in humanitarian settings are able to fully develop through improved wellbeing and their protection rights are fulfilled

Impact

Line of Accountability



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