THE ALLIANCE
FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

CPMS Video Series - Facilitator's Notes

Pillar 3 – The Socio-Ecological Approach to Developing Adequate Strategies

Background: This document aims to provide an in-depth analysis on how to prepare, prevent, and respond for country and regional level child protection workers, coordinators, humanitarian managers, or others who have watched the video on Pillar 3 (standards to develop adequate strategies). To recap, the socio-ecological model provides a concrete framework that supports systems thinking for child protection programming by looking at an entire situation to:
- Identify all the different elements and factors; and
- Understand how they relate to and interact with each other.

You can pick questions (or create your own) to determine the group's knowledge level on this topic; to prompt discussion; and to strengthen participants' understanding of key elements from a socio-ecological approach and its relevance for quality, accountable child protection programming in humanitarian contexts.

Discussion Points:

Overall message: The socio-ecological model is a concrete framework to strengthen systematic protection for crisis-affected children through analysing the risk and protective factors of their problems and providing solutions at all levels.

Message 1: In humanitarian contexts, the interconnections between a child and their family, community, and society enable a more holistic prevention and response approach.

1.1 **Prepare:** Are we clear on what the socio-ecological approach is? What are the four levels of child protection?

1.2 **Respond:** How can we apply a socio-ecological approach to child protection programming in response to humanitarian crises?

1.3 **Prevent:** What stressors might we foresee in the event of a humanitarian crisis/when responding to the current one?
- How could protective factors be strengthened to buffer those stressors?

1.4 **Respond:** [If you are implementing INSPIRE in your country] Given that we are now in a crisis context, how can we best adapt INSPIRE's strategies to reduce and prevent violence against children?

Things to stress:
- The socio-ecological model focuses on four levels of child protection: socio-cultural norms, society, community, and family to provide a concrete framework that supports systems thinking for child protection programming. It helps us to identify how factors at interconnected levels influence child development and well-being.
- We have a responsibility to analyse the entire situation rather than focus on a single protection issue or a specific service of its own to:
  o Identify all the different elements and factors.
  o Understand how they relate to and interact with each other.

- *In **preparation**, some key actions are to:*
  - Analyse child protection risk and resilience factors.
  - Map existing formal and traditional/customary laws, policies, procedures, and services for protecting children to identify and reform legislative and policy gaps concerning child protection in humanitarian crises.
  - Strengthen child, family, community, and social-level capacities to protect children before, during, and after humanitarian crises.
- Ensure that previous assessments of existing child protection interventions are being reviewed and adapted to ensure they are relevant to the crisis and are appropriate, inclusive, and non-discriminatory for all affected children.
- We should identify the parts of child protection systems that need to be strengthened and develop a plan to improve quality, scale up services in specific crisis-affected areas, and/or adapt services to the needs of all affected children.
- INSPIRE's strategies have a similar goal to the socio-ecological model: implementation and enforcement of laws; norms and values; safe environments; parent and caregiver support; income and economic strengthening; response and support services; education and life skills (See the joint CPMS-INSPIRE guidance note).

Message 2: Using a socio-ecological approach helps children physically and psychologically recover fully from humanitarian crises.

2.1 **Prevent:** How might children be affected physically and psychologically during humanitarian crises?

2.2 **Respond:** How can we reach out to children, families, and communities to understand their needs and perspectives during unprecedented times?

2.3 **Prepare**: Why is collaborating with other sectors and child protection coordination groups important?

2.4 **Prepare:** How can we integrate the services of other sectors into group activities and spaces?

Things to stress:
- Children of all ages are affected and vulnerable during crises (See Standard 10)
  - Younger children depend on their primary caregivers for basic needs and have difficulty understanding disruptions caused by a crisis.
  - Older children and adolescents can address some of their own basic needs but face a greater likelihood of being separated from their families, becoming associated with armed forces or groups, being forced into labour, exploited, etc.
- Case management is an important part of the process to understand the needs from the child's perspective, to develop tailored solutions that meet their needs.
- Participating in an inter-agency, participatory assessment involving children, caregivers, community members, service providers and government stakeholders is important to decide whether additional interventions are needed.
- Working across sectors enables us to be more holistic in identifying and meeting the needs of children at all levels of the socio-ecological approach (See introduction to Pillar 4).

Message 3: Parents and caregivers play a critical role in helping children to cope during humanitarian crises.

3.1 **Prepare:** What do we currently know about how parents and caregivers are doing?

3.2 **Respond:** What can we concretely do to help them strengthen their coping skills and parental attachment during this time of crisis?

3.3 **Prevent:** In what other ways, can we improve the family/ caregiving environments for all affected children?

Things to stress:
- Families, other close relations and peers are the closest protective layer around a child. They are sources of resilience and support for children.
- Parents and caregivers may also experience stress caused by economic hardship; social isolation; changes in family composition and roles; and the loss of protective community mechanisms.
- We can support families by training and strengthening actors to see families holistically and address all families' vulnerabilities and risks.
- Parenting programmes that target caregivers particularly of adolescents and young children can strengthen those relationships and reduce risks to those age groups.
- Home visiting programmes implemented by trained staff can reduce abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children.
- Households that are particularly at risk, including child-headed households and households that meet locally defined risk criteria, should be identified and prioritised for intensive, targeted responses. Family strengthening interventions should adapt their approach and content to address vulnerable households' changing risks and barriers
- See Standard 16

Message 4: Humanitarian actors can work as equals with communities to rebuild and strengthen protective networks.
4.1 **Respond:** How has this humanitarian crisis disrupted the community networks? What can we do to strengthen and quickly rebuild those networks?

4.2 **Prevent:** Who is responsible for violence against children? Who do children trust and seek support from?

4.3 **Prepare:** How can we use the community level approach to support community members to protect children and ensure their right to healthy development?

Things to stress:
- Provide for children to live in communities that promote their well-being and prevent abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children before, during and after humanitarian crises.
- Humanitarian actors should seek to understand existing community capacities that promote children's rights, safety, development, well-being and participation. These include initiatives, structures, processes and networks that are led and organised by community members, including children. Community-level approaches require:
    - A thorough understanding of the context;
    - An understanding and prioritisation of the needs; and
    - An understanding of existing practices
- Identify and support existing community capacities and initiatives that promote children's rights, safety, development, well-being and participation
- See Standard 17

Message 5: Even in humanitarian settings, we can strengthen the education, health and child-protection systems to effectively prevent and respond to children's protection needs.
5.1 **Prepare:** How can we strengthen the capacity of existing actors to fulfil their duties in humanitarian settings?

5.2 **Prevent:** What are the current, practical obstacles to collaborating amongst ourselves and with other humanitarian actors to better protect children? How can they be overcome?

5.3 **Respond:** How are we working at the systems level to prevent children's protection risks?
5.4 **Respond:** What steps should we take to advocate for adequate, stable funding to protect children during this time of crisis?
5.5 **Prevent:** How can we best identify and address harmful social norms and values?

Things to stress:
- Humanitarian child protection actors have opportunities to work with national and local actors to strengthen the legislative framework for children and its implementation.
- Work across sectors and ministries to build welfare, public health and education systems and safety nets that are robust enough to meet humanitarian challenges.
- Informal discussions are encouraged to raise awareness and get everyone involved working together to protect children. (See the CPMS Working Together communications toolkit)
- The process to identify harmful social norms and values should also include protective social norms and values at society level and identify how those can be further promoted.