

Protecting Children Escaping Conflict and Crisis Situations

Workshop leads

Chair: Minister from Nigeria

Research practitioners: Maura Harty, President and CEO International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, Cornelius Williams, Associate Director Child Protection, Programmes Division, UNICEF and Carol Batchelor, Director of the Division of International Protection

CEO/CSO reporting back: Anne-Birgite Albrechtsen, CEO Plan International

CSO rapporteur: Rafael Hermoso, End Violence against Children Secretariat

Workshop objectives

The aim of the workshop is to discuss how countries can accelerate action to meet SDG target 16.2 and other violence related targets in humanitarian settings. Participants will:

- Review multi-sectoral interventions that can be adapted in crises situations to prevent and respond to violence.
- Explore how both humanitarian and development programmes can contribute to strengthening health, education, social and child protection systems to withstand and respond to crises and conflict;

Using participatory methods we will break into small working groups and collectively decide on key actions moving forward. Within your small group work and during the larger conversation, please consider the following questions:

- ✓ What can we do to ensure that health, education, social and protection systems are strengthened in humanitarian crises situations?
- ✓ How do we address the gaps in accelerating action to protect children from violence in humanitarian situations?
- ✓ What action is most urgent to fulfill children's right to protection in humanitarian situations and meet SDG 16.2 and other violence related targets?

Background

During humanitarian emergencies, lives are uprooted and the systems working to keep children safe – in their homes, schools and communities – are often undermined. Children face the risks of violence, exploitation and abuse, psychological distress, family separation, being used or recruited by armed forces or groups, and maiming and killing. Following the breakdown of formal and informal protection systems and family and social structures, children experience and witness violence, or are forced to commit acts of violence. Risks and threats are often gendered, with for example girls facing a greater risk of sexual violence whilst boys are more vulnerable to injuries caused by explosive weapons.

Key facts

- In 2016, 250 million children lived in countries/areas affected by armed conflict.¹ The number of armed conflicts have increased over the past decade with 402 conflicts in 2016, compared to 278 in 2006.² Today's conflicts are more intractable, more asymmetric and harder to resolve using traditional models of political settlement.
- The global population of forcibly displaced people has increased to 65.6 million in 2016, out of which 51 % are children.³
- The number of people affected by natural disasters doubled, from 102 million in 2015 to 204 million in 2016. Climate change, conflict and urbanization, among other forces, are increasing vulnerability and exacerbating the impact and intensity of natural disasters.⁴
- Available estimates suggest that in 2015, more than 30,000 adolescents aged 10 to 19 died due to war or civil insurrection, and police and military intervention.⁵
- In 2016 alone, close to 500 attacks or threats of attacks on schools (one of the six grave violations condemned by the United Nations Security Council) were documented or verified in 18 conflict-affected countries or areas.⁶

Gaps

- Obstruction of access to humanitarian assistance and security concerns are significant challenges in some of the most emergency-affected areas, making it difficult to reach the affected and vulnerable children.
- Capacity of authorities and humanitarian actors to address specific child protection concerns (e.g. psychological distress, unaccompanied and separated children, recruitment into armed forces and armed groups, trafficking, and violence including sexual and gender-based violence etc.) is strained in many contexts.
- Obtaining accurate and relevant data remains a challenge in many humanitarian situations.
- The level of attention and resources for violence prevention and response do not reflect the scale of the problem. Resources are often provided on a short-term basis, rather than for the sustained period needed to effectively support children. With an increase in the number of emergencies, there is a funding shortage to meet current humanitarian needs, limiting the geographical coverage of programmes, capacities of partners, and the number of children targeted. Limited resources are also invested in preparedness.

Action

The scale of response required in humanitarian situations is placing increased pressure on Governments and the humanitarian sector to find more efficient ways of meeting the needs of affected populations. Further, violence prevention and response is no longer viewed as a second phase response but must be an integral part of any emergency response from the onset. It is critical to invest in preparedness, along with information management to better understand impact of emergencies on children, longer term development and strengthening of children's and families' resilience to future crises. Based on the best available evidence, INSPIRE identifies seven strategies to end violence against children (VAC) that can be applied in all contexts, including humanitarian and emergency settings.

Notes

¹ United Nations Children's Fund, Annual Results Report 2016 Child Protection, UNICEF, New York, 2017.

² OCHA, Humanitarian Trends 2017, Geneva, 2017.

³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016. Geneva 2017.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ United Nations Children's Fund, A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents, UNICEF, New York, 2017.

⁶ Ibid. Derived from: United Nations Secretary-General, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/72/361-S/2017/821, United Nations General Assembly Security Council, 24 August 2017, open PDF from <www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/72/361&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC>.

