



What your audience needs to know in an emergency: Life-saving information

Topic-by-topic guide to core humanitarian issues

INTRODUCTION

These guides are for media professionals working to help audiences affected by humanitarian crises. They give a brief overview of common humanitarian issues in emergencies. They will help you:

- Understand what kinds of problems your audiences are likely to be facing in emergencies
- Work alongside relief experts to provide audiences with accurate, relevant and life-saving information

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDES

These guides contain information on core humanitarian topics. They are intended to serve as a starting point to help you identify the kinds of issues to address in your programmes and questions to ask relief experts. To help you identify which topics to prioritise, you should speak with local humanitarian specialists. If possible, speak with your audiences as well to find out what they need to know.

When using the guides remember to:

- Consider the local situation, culture and context to make sure the information is relevant
- Consider the specific needs of different audiences (for example, men, women, the most vulnerable people)
- Check for consistency with other sources of information being provided
- Consult qualified local specialists to check the validity and relevance of humanitarian information
- Use the guides in conjunction with BBC Media Action's Lifeline Production Manual, which contains guidelines on how to do effective programming in crises



GETTY

CHILD PROTECTION



What is child protection?

Child protection in emergencies (CPiE) refers to efforts to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children.¹ According to international standards² a child is anyone under the age of 18 years old.³

Why is it important?

The majority of people affected by humanitarian crises are often children⁴ because they are the weakest and most dependent people in the community.⁵ During a crisis, existing systems to protect children may be undermined or damaged, leaving children extremely vulnerable. They are at increased risk of all forms of violence and exploitation.

Protecting children from these risks saves lives and reduces the long-term negative impact of humanitarian crises on children and their future development.

How can media and communication help audiences?

In emergency situations children are at risk from mental and physical dangers. Some of these risks are specific to emergencies and some are part of existing issues. Often parents or caregivers are not aware of what the risks are. In addition, their ability to protect their children may have been further reduced due to other survival priorities (for example, collecting water/food, rebuilding, registering for aid). Media and communication can help raise awareness of issues among both adults and children and help people to take action to stay safe. You can share information to protect children from harm and how to help children suffering from abuse or exploitation and where they can get support.

¹ UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Child Protection Working Group (2012, p.13).

² United Nations (1990, Article 1).

³ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2016,p.3).

⁴ Ibid. p.5;UNHCR, Child Protection Working Group (2015,p.10).

⁵ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2016, p.5);UNHCR, Child Protection Working Group (2015, p.10).

Remember each emergency is different. Ask local humanitarian child protection experts to advise on what information to prioritise and the best advice to share with your audience in the context.

Child protection deals with sensitive issues that should be treated with confidentiality. Always obtain permission from a child's parent or guardian to interview a child. Never ask a child to recount a traumatic event, because it may traumatise them further. Seek advice if you are planning to interview children to avoid doing them further harm (see Useful Resources section). The best interests of the child should always be the primary consideration.





What information can I share with audiences?

Your audiences may need answers to the questions below to help them take practical steps to protect children. Get advice from local child protection specialists.

Decide if your programming will be aimed at children or parents/adults. If your programming is aimed at children be careful not to frighten them when identifying risks. Find out if there are any local cultural considerations when talking about child protection issues.



Remember that there are different groups of children with different needs. Find out which groups in are the most vulnerable (for example, girls/boys, separated children, children who work, child-headed households) and what advice to give them.

Pre-test your communication with audiences – misunderstood information can kill.

What are the priority child protection risks currently?

Common child protection risks in emergencies include:⁶

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence
- Neglect
- Injuries
- Harmful practices – including child, early and forced marriage
- Psychological distress and mental disorders
- Children associated with armed conflicts and armed groups
- Child labour
- Unaccompanied or separated children
- A lack of justice for children

How can children be protected from these risks?

- How can children stay safe from injuries? For example, by educating children that it is dangerous to play in, or around destroyed or damaged buildings
- How can adults keep children safe from neglect? For example, by suggesting that parents support each other by sharing the responsibility of childcare to allow other adults to go to register for aid and support
- How can parents and other adults help children to cope psychologically with the situation? For example, how can a parent recognise psychological distress in their children? You can share information about what to look for, such as difficulty sleeping, nightmares, screaming or shouting.⁷ How can parents help distressed children? For example, by providing [psychological first aid](#)⁸ (such as reassuring the child, explaining that they're not alone and it is normal to feel sad or scared)

⁶UNHCR, Child Protection Working Group (2012,p.10); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2016, p.5).

⁷UNICEF (2010, p.2).

⁸Australian Red Cross (2013, p.24).

What are the priority child protection risks currently?

How can children be protected from these risks?

- How can parents protect children from getting lost or abducted? For example, making sure there is always a responsible adult taking care of the children, ensuring that children know their name and where they live, and that parents know where their children are at all times⁹
- How can children protect themselves? For example, they can make sure they always tell responsible adults before they go anywhere, and avoid going out alone
- How can children learn about the risks? Who can they speak to about what is safe? For example, parents, teachers, community workers

Example information for children on safety

Do not walk alone, especially at night. Always go with someone you know and trust when collecting water or firewood and buying food. Try to use paths that are well lit. Always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back.

(Global Child Protection working group)

Who should people report child protection issues to?

- Who should people refer children to for help? For example, if they discover a separated or unaccompanied child what should they do?
- Who are the local people working to protect and help children (for example, community workers, aid agencies, local religious groups)? How can they be contacted? Do people have the means to contact them? For example, phones, credit etc.

Example information for adults on how they can help children cope with the situation

Provide opportunities for children to share their concerns and hopes, play with their friends and participate in daily life, such as helping with family tasks and either going to school or doing school work at home.

Danger of playing in rubble (for children)

Following an earthquake, buildings can be reduced to rubble. These are dangerous areas to play in. Play in an area marked as safe or you may hurt yourself.



Example information for children on where to find help

If you feel threatened or afraid, speak to someone you trust who can help you, or go to a school or medical clinic. These can be found at XXX. There you can get advice on services that have been set up for people and families affected by the emergency.

⁹Mental Health & Psychosocial Network (2011).

The information in this document is based on the following sources:

Resources

Child Protection Working Group (2012). Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – This is Samira. This is a short video giving an overview of child protection in emergencies from a child's point of view. Available from: <https://youtu.be/pEaNwDtQRwI>

International Federation of Journalists (2002). Child Rights and the Media. Overview of how media can support child rights, including case studies. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/magic/resources/childrights_and_media_coverage.pdf

Save the Children (2003). Interviewing Children: A Guide for Journalists and Others. This is a comprehensive guide to best practice when interviewing children. Available from: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/INTERVIEWING_CHILDREN.pdf

Save the Children (2000). Communicating with Children: Helping Children in Distress. This is a guide to communicating with children, including talking about sensitive issues, overcoming blocks in communication, and giving support and advice. Available from: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/communicating-children-helping-children-distress>

UNICEF (n.d.) Guidelines for interviewing children. Six guidelines to help ensure children are protected during interviews. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/esaro/5440_guidelines_interview.html

UNICEF (2010). Facts for Life. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Facts_for_Life_EN_010810.pdf

Further reading

Australian Red Cross (2013). Psychological First Aid. Available from: http://www.redcross.org.au/files/Psychological_First_Aid_An_Australian_Guide.pdf

International Committee of the Red Cross (2004). Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/protection/IAG_UASCs.pdf

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2016). Briefing: Child Protection in Emergencies. Available from: http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/principles/IFRC-CPiE-Briefing_EN.pdf

Mental Health & Psychosocial Network (2011). Key messages on child protection and psychosocial support for children in Libya. Available from: <https://mhps.net/?get=115/1333376197-KeymessagesonchildprotectionLibya2011English-I.docx>

UNHCR, Child Protection Working Group (2012). Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Available from: <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/03/CP-Minimum-Standards-English-2013.pdf>

UNHCR, Child Protection Working Group (2015). A Matter of Life and Death: Child Protection Programming's Role in Ensuring Child Wellbeing and Survival During and After Emergencies. Available from: http://cpwg.net/?get=010222|2015/10/A_Matter_of_life_and_death_LowRes.pdf

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) Global Protection Cluster (n.d.). Child Protection. Available from: <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/areas-of-responsibility/child-protection.html>

UNICEF (2010). Messages on child protection from the Pakistan floods. Available from: <http://www.hhri.org/ekstern/PakistanKeyprotectionmessages.pdf>

United Nations (1990). Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available from: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>