



**THE ALLIANCE**  
FOR CHILD PROTECTION  
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

# A CLARION CALL



The **Centrality** of **Children**  
and their **Protection**  
within Humanitarian Action

2021-2025 Strategy



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# CHILDREN, in all their DIVERSITY



A

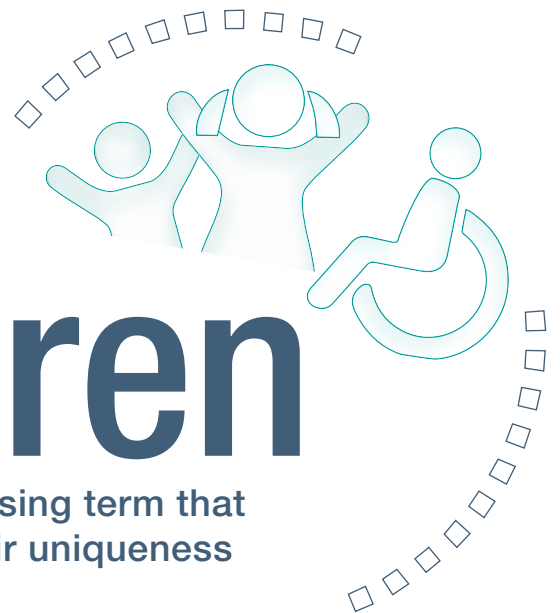
child

is any person under the age of 18, as defined in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

Within this Strategy,  
the term

# children

is used as an all-encompassing term that captures *all* children, in their uniqueness and diversity.



This includes:

- children of all **AGES**, including infants, early childhood (under age 5), middle childhood (ages 5-12, or 'school aged'), and all stages of adolescence;
- children of all **SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS, GENDER IDENTITIES AND EXPRESSIONS**;
- children with diverse **ABILITIES** and **DISABILITIES**; and
- children with **OTHER DIVERSITY FACTORS**, which include, but are not limited to, different racial and ethnic identities; different social, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds; and children of any minority group.



Children further includes all children who experience – directly or indirectly through their families and communities – different vulnerabilities that affect their protection needs and interfere with the full realisation of their rights. These factors require equal consideration, and include:

- children’s nationalities, citizenships, and **DISPLACEMENT AND RELATED LEGAL STATUS**, including children who are asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced, migrants, stateless, undocumented, and immigrants;
- children’s **FAMILY AND CAREGIVING ARRANGEMENTS**, including children with one, two, or no parents or caregivers; unaccompanied children; separated children; those who live in child-headed households, women-headed households, or households led by older persons or other vulnerable groups; children living on the streets; children living in institutions; or children living in other alternative care arrangements; and
- the different **EXPERIENCES AND VIOLATIONS THAT CHILDREN HAVE EXPERIENCED** that contribute to acute or unique vulnerabilities and needs, such as those who are survivors of or have witnessed sexual violence; or those who have been recruited and used by armed forces or armed groups in any capacity.

**i**  
For further information on these terms and breakdowns, please consult the full Glossary in [Annex I](#); as well as, the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) and its [Glossary](#).

References throughout the strategy to diverse [risks](#), vulnerabilities, needs, and capacities refer to giving due consideration and weight to all these factors – individually and in the many ways they intersect – and how they can affect children, as well as their families and communities, either by placing them at greater risk, or supporting their [resilience](#) and protection.



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# INTRODUCTION



The number of people and countries in need of humanitarian action continues to rise<sup>1</sup>.

Armed conflict and violence, political instability and unrest, severe weather events inducing climate-related disasters, and infectious disease outbreaks, are increasing in severity and duration, protracting needs, heightening risks, and weakening the [protective factors](#) and resilience that families, communities, and national systems rely on to ensure the protection and well-being of populations.

Forced displacement rose globally for the ninth straight year in 2020: there are now 82 million forcibly displaced people around the world; 42% of whom are children<sup>2</sup>. In that time, the number of refugees has doubled to more than 26 million refugees, with many in increasingly protracted and mixed movement contexts. Between 2018 and 2020, more than one million children were born as refugees – potentially exposing them to longer-term challenges linked to specific protection needs<sup>3</sup>.



**82 million** forcibly displaced people around the world; **42% of whom are children**



In addition, attacks on children are increasing as accountability decreases. Grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict have increased to “*alarmingly high*” rates<sup>4</sup>. Meanwhile, the frameworks and mechanisms used to promote accountability and justice for children, in compliance with international laws, are being increasingly politicised, weakening their use as tools to prevent rights violations and hold perpetrators accountable<sup>5</sup>.

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Khalid Alarabi/IRC



Beyond the significant health and public health implications, the global COVID-19 pandemic is also contributing to increased child protection risks and rights violations, particularly for children experiencing compounded humanitarian crises. The number of unaccompanied and separated children increased in 2020<sup>6</sup>. The instability and economic [vulnerability](#) of households caused by the pandemic is reportedly contributing to increases in child labour; household tensions and stressors are worsening, leading to increased violence in the home<sup>7</sup>. Caregivers report children to be more distressed, and children themselves report that they feel less safe, less happy, and less hopeful<sup>8</sup>.

The pandemic further underscored existing inequalities between children, such as those with access to resources and technology to continue their education remotely; or those in countries with stronger social protection systems that can help prevent child protection risks related to household financial strain<sup>9</sup>.

The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced patterns witnessed in too many crises before it; at the forefront, the neglect to prioritise children and their protection. As governments, decisions-makers, and leaders focused on how to buoy economies in the face of COVID-19 mitigation measures, the needs of children, and strategies to alleviate the full impact of COVID-19 on them, were noticeably lacking. School closures disrupted the education of over 1.6 billion children, taking seen and unseen tolls on their learning, as well as on their physical, emotional, and psychological health and well-being<sup>10</sup>. As supports and protective factors customarily available to children at home, school, and across their communities were worn down or stripped away, the need for additional measures to ensure their protection and well-being became even more evident.

However, as needs increased, the humanitarian financing gap in child protection continued: the child protection sector's COVID-19 appeal was largely underfunded, along with other child-focused and protection sectors<sup>11</sup>.

School closures disrupted the education of over **1.6 billion children**





This reflects recent trends showing that despite a recent uptick in overall funding for the child protection sector, it remains under-funded to meet the needs of children in line with the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), and under-funded compared to the overall funding levels of humanitarian appeals<sup>12</sup>.

The pandemic response made clear that children, and their unique protection needs, are routinely, and at times systematically, overlooked, forgotten, excluded, or relegated to the periphery of humanitarian response.



A focus on **children's protection, their rights and well-being**, is needed now more than ever.

The world is also grappling with another major ongoing crisis: the climate crisis. Doubling as a child rights crisis, its greatest consequences are and will be disproportionately felt by children, despite their having the least responsibility for it<sup>13</sup>. Climate-related emer-

gencies are and will continue to increase in intensity and frequency, affecting children in each part of the world deeply, but differently – in particular those already in fragile contexts. Yet, like in so many other humanitarian crises, children hold the least power to take direct action on the climate crisis. Addressing the climate crisis will be the ultimate test of accountability to the world's children. It will take the collective efforts, actions, and innovations of all actors centred on a common goal: to protect the future for all children and ensure their well-being.



Louis Leeson / Save The Children



# The Alliance's CLARION CALL



The world's humanitarian crises, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, are threatening to undo decades of progress – “a *grand reversal*” – towards achieving “a more sustainable future for all”, and meeting the [Sustainable Development Goals](#)<sup>14</sup>. These impacts will be felt most deeply by children, hindering their healthy development and well-being.

The humanitarian community is turning its attention to a new Grand Bargain, providing an opportunity to revisit progress made since 2016, and to identify opportunities and areas to strengthen, revise, and improve within its commitments. Amidst calls to incorporate positive learning and practices, are also calls for deeper, systemic change: re-thinking approaches to leadership, coordination, partnering, and delivering aid; re-structuring the system and how it is financed; and even re-purposing bureaucracies – much in the way local actors do in response to a crisis<sup>15</sup>.

Whether the next reform is major or minor, one thing is certain: A system-wide shift is indeed needed. To truly achieve a more sustainable future for all, meaningful reform must be centred around children and recognise:

## Child protection is **life-saving**

and it is imperative to prioritise and fund it accordingly.

There is a need for **greater accountability to children**, including greater recognition of their agency and their **capacities for self-protection**. Children have the right to be heard, to be **meaningfully engaged**, and to be **empowered** to contribute to the processes and decisions that affect them.



There is a need to actively work to **end violations of children's rights**; to uphold the protections children are entitled to under international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law; and to work more meaningfully to promote and achieve **accountability to and justice for children**.

There is a need to ensure that humanitarian action is **responsive to the needs of children**: That all stakeholders recognise their **unique and diverse protection needs**, how these vary by context, and how these interact with their individual diversity factors.

There is a need for all actors working along the nexus of humanitarian, development, and peace, to **transform how children, their families and communities, are engaged and empowered**; and how States and national systems are integrated and strengthened through humanitarian action that builds from – rather than on – their knowledge and expertise, integrating sectors and outcomes in a way that match lived realities.

Lastly, all humanitarian actors must recognise that alongside their duty to respond to humanitarian needs is an **ethical and moral imperative to prevent harm**.

The Alliance is issuing a clarion call to the humanitarian system:

# Children and their protection

must lie at the heart of each humanitarian action.

Everyone has a role to play in the protection of children.

**Join us.**





**OVERARCHING GOAL**  
The **CENTRALITY** of **CHILDREN** and their **PROTECTION** is recognised and prioritised as **ESSENTIAL** and **LIFE-SAVING** across the humanitarian system.

**LOOKING AHEAD:**  
The **Climate Crisis**, **Climate Justice**, and **Child Protection**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1**  
**ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHILDREN**

**Goal:** All humanitarian programmes are accountable to children and ensure their meaningful and equitable participation.

**OBJECTIVES**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2**  
**LOCALISATION - TRANSFORMING HOW CHILD PROTECTION WORKS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

**Goal:** The child protection sector transforms its way of working, rooted in the sharing of capacity, expertise, opportunity, and the intentional shift of power and resources to community, local, and national actors.

**OBJECTIVES**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3**  
**MULTI-SECTOR AND INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING AND COLLABORATION**

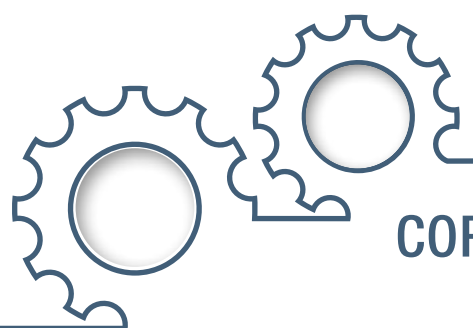
**Goal:** Children's protection and well-being are prioritised within cross-sector collaboration, including within multi-sector and integrated programmes, and across all humanitarian action.

**OBJECTIVES**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4**  
**PREVENTION**

**Goal:** Prevention is understood and prioritised as a critical element of child protection across humanitarian action.

**OBJECTIVES**



**CORE FUNCTIONS**

- Standard setting and guidance development
- Capacity strengthening, learning, and development
- Evidence and knowledge generation
- Advocacy
- Convening

# OVERVIEW



Established in 2016, The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (herein referred to as 'The Alliance') is a network of over 150 organisations from the humanitarian child protection sector<sup>16</sup>.

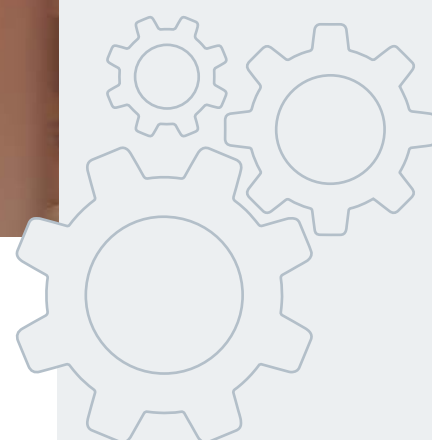
The Alliance and its members are committed to this fundamental **VISION: a world in which children are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence in all humanitarian settings.**

The Alliance carries out its **MISSION: to support the efforts of humanitarian actors to achieve high-quality and effective child protection interventions in humanitarian settings**, through the collaborative effort of its diverse membership participating in The Alliance's Working Groups, Task Forces, Initiatives, and Steering Committee<sup>17</sup>.

The Alliance serves as the leading global inter-agency network for the development of quality and evidence-informed standards, technical guidance, resources, and tools within the child protection sector. The Alliance is the primary sectoral convenor for child protection actors, and a leading advocate for children and child protection in humanitarian action. The Alliance leads development of and acts as custodian of the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (herein the 'Child Protection Minimum Standards'), which guide the sector and are part of the [Humanitarian Standards Partnership](#).

The Alliance adheres to the [Core Humanitarian Standards](#), and the **PRINCIPLES** outlined within the Child Protection Minimum Standards, which reflect the Guiding Principles from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the [Sphere Protection Principles](#). Additionally, The Alliance strives to be:

- **Child centred:** Based on the guiding principles outlined in the Child Protection Minimum Standards, all activities and products of The Alliance will place the child at the centre.
- **Family and community driven:** Following the socio-ecological model as a frame of reference, The Alliance's products will promote the involvement of families and communities in defining and implementing protection of children in all contexts.
- **Needs responsive:** This entails a clear orientation towards producing technical material that is needed and useful for child protection actors working in a variety of contexts, and those who support them.



The Alliance leads the child protection sector's normative work to strengthen the quality of child protection prevention and response programmes. The Alliance fulfils its mandate, and supports its members and the sector at-large, along five **CORE FUNCTIONS:**



**STANDARD SETTING AND GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT**

- **Standard setting and guidance development:** The Alliance leads the development, revision, and dissemination of the [Child Protection Minimum Standards](#). The Alliance facilitates their implementation and institutionalisation, as well as the development of accessible learning opportunities on the standards and their operationalisation. On behalf of the sector, The Alliance leads development of technical guidance and resources based on the standards, as well as good practice, learning, and evidence.



**CAPACITY STRENGTHENING, LEARNING, AND DEVELOPMENT**

- **Capacity strengthening, learning, and development:** The Alliance provides strategic leadership by coordinating needs and defining of priorities to strengthen the quality, diversity, and accessibility of [capacity strengthening](#) opportunities across the sector. This includes the sharing and exchange of learning and knowledge amongst community, local, national, and international actors. The Alliance



**EVIDENCE AND KNOWLEDGE GENERATION**

- develops, disseminates, and facilitates standard-adhering, competency-based learning and professional development opportunities, and related resources and tools.
- **Evidence and knowledge generation:** The Alliance is committed to helping grow the child protection sector by supporting its needs for increasingly rigorous evidence. The Alliance develops creative, flexible, and adaptable methods to measure child protection issues, including those that are 'hard-to-measure'. The Alliance further seeks to centre the perspectives of children, their families and communities, within the processes that generate evidence and knowledge. The Alliance links evidence to practice by encouraging critical reflection, and the dissemination and application of learning towards strengthening outcomes.

- **Advocacy:** The Alliance advocates for prioritisation of the protection and well-being of children across



**ADVOCACY**

- the humanitarian system. This includes addressing the humanitarian financing gap for the child protection sector, bringing a spotlight to the positive impacts and life-saving nature of child protection, and strengthening accountability to and justice for children by ensuring their rights, needs, and perspectives are meaningfully and equitably integrated into humanitarian action.
- **Convening:** The Alliance creates space and opportunities for its members to come together around specific issues, to promote the sharing of knowledge and capacity, and to encourage collaboration and coordination within its membership, with its partners, and with other sectors. The Alliance hosts the sector's Annual Meeting, child protection's premier gathering, bringing together practitioners from across the world to share, exchange, and grow.



**CONVENING**





## Introducing the 2021-2025 Strategy

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action’s 2021-2025 Strategy centres around one goal:



The **CENTRALITY** of **CHILDREN** and their **PROTECTION** is recognised and prioritised as **ESSENTIAL** and **LIFE-SAVING** across the humanitarian system.

All The Alliance’s technical work, advocacy, collaborations, and partnerships, will contribute to this goal through action and progress on four strategic priorities:



**ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHILDREN,**  
including ensuring their meaningful participation



**LOCALISATION**  
– Transforming how child protection works in humanitarian action



**MULTI-SECTOR AND INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING AND COLLABORATION**



**PREVENTION**

The four priorities, each with their own goal and objectives in line with the Child Protection Minimum Standards, were identified through a consultative process that began at the 2020 Annual Meeting, and included consultations with The Alliance membership and leadership, as well as with partners, collaborators, and donors.



**LOOKING AHEAD:**  
The Climate Crisis, Climate Justice, and Child Protection

Additionally, the consultations identified the climate crisis as an urgent area in which The Alliance could help lead the sector, in particular given the strong connections between The Alliance’s strategic priorities and work on climate action and climate justice. [Looking ahead](#), The Alliance will explore where and how it can meaningfully engage on climate action, and build sectoral capacity on responding to the climate crisis.

The Alliance will implement the new strategy through its [core functions](#) to achieve the goals and objectives to which it aspires. Implementation will be led by the Working Groups, Task Forces, and Initiatives, and their respective workplans. The Strategy framework will identify the linkages between the Strategy and workplans, as well as monitor and measure progress on strategy implementation<sup>18</sup>.





## Elevating Capacity Strengthening, Learning, and Development

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For the 2021-2025 Strategy, The Alliance will elevate its *capacity strengthening, learning, and development* function<sup>19</sup>.

This emphasis acknowledges the importance of capacity strengthening efforts in the delivery of high-quality and robust programmes and advocacy across the many contexts where child protection interventions are delivered. It further recognises the important role capacity strengthening, learning, and development will play in achieving the strategic objectives. Lastly, this emphasis builds on evidence from sectoral capacity gap analyses, and responds to requests from The Alliance membership and across the child protection sector, regarding the need for strategic leadership and coordination of child protection [learning and development](#) initiatives.

The Alliance plays a central role in the development and dissemination of technical child protection resources and guidance. The Alliance will pair the development of guidance and tools that meaningfully integrate the needs and perspectives of children, their families and communities, with the joint development, operationalisation, and provision of quality learning opportunities. Moreover, The Alliance will look to increase the accessibility and diversity of resources and learning opportunities, to better support child protection and other humanitarian actors, as well as communities, State actors, and other stakeholders, in the delivery of quality child protection, multi-sector, or integrated programmes, and related advocacy.

While continuing to grow professional development and learning opportunities for existing inter-agency resources, The Alliance will also invest greater effort to coordinate analysis of capacity strengths

and learning needs. These analyses will be used to identify strategic learning initiatives, recommend learning pathways, and enhance learning partnerships, in particular with tertiary level institutions.

Further, The Alliance will dedicate efforts and resources to support further professionalisation of the child protection sector and its workforce, in line with competencies identified in the [Child Protection for Humanitarian Action Competency Framework](#), and in keeping with the [Child Protection Minimum Standards](#). The Alliance will seek to strengthen members' institutional capacity; as well as facilitate the strengthening and sharing of knowledge and skills amongst child protection actors working at various levels and in different settings. In addition, The Alliance will work with other sectors to build cross-sector capacity. It will encourage learning and knowledge exchange between child protection and other sectors towards more effective mainstreaming and integration of child protection interventions and outcomes within humanitarian programmes.

This area of work will be led and guided by The Alliance's Learning and Development Working Group, through its own [strategy](#), and in collaboration with other actors, including the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the UNHCR. The Learning and Development Working Group will work with all bodies across The Alliance structure, and will support the use of adult learning theory and best practices in the selection and design of learning approaches to support implementation of The Alliance Strategy and delivery of its workplan.



# The Centrality of CHILDREN and their PROTECTION



All humanitarian actors have a role to play in the protection of children.



“Child protection remains one of the least funded and consistently most underfunded sectors in humanitarian action<sup>21</sup>.”

Children make up the majority of populations affected by humanitarian crises. They are also overwhelmingly affected by humanitarian response – dually impacted by those sectors and interventions that focus on children specifically, and those that focus on their families, communities, and broader societies. And while children are invoked in the imperative to meet humanitarian needs, and are commonly referenced in fundraising appeals, their specific protection needs are often relegated to a secondary status. Humanitarian and refugee response plans and strategies largely overlook them: children and their protection needs are given less physical space on the page, translating to less attention and fewer resources in practice and implementation<sup>20</sup>.

**It is time to recognise children for who they are: a unique, diverse, and significant group of rights holders, with the right to be treated with dignity, the right to be heard, and the right to exercise their agency and be actively involved in the programmes and decisions that affect their lives, including contributing to their own protection and well-being.**

Children are a substantial stakeholder group in humanitarian response, and **all humanitarian actors** have responsibilities for the protection of children and upholding their rights. It is time that the humanitarian system is accountable to children, and recognises and funds their protection and well-being accordingly.



The **CENTRALITY** of **CHILDREN** and their **PROTECTION** is recognised and prioritised as **ESSENTIAL** and **LIFE-SAVING** across the humanitarian system.



## Child Protection within the Centrality of Protection

### Protection and Child Protection in Humanitarian Action defined

**Protection** is defined as: *“all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law.”* This includes International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, International Refugee law<sup>22</sup>.

**Child protection in humanitarian action** is defined as: *“the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation of and violence against children in humanitarian action.”* It is rooted in many of the rights within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its three Optional Protocols<sup>23</sup>.

Humanitarian actors can ensure a comprehensive and effective humanitarian response, by placing protection at the centre and children at its core. Child protection interventions and approaches provide concrete routes to operationalise the Centrality of Protection, and can help all stakeholders to meet their protection obligations and responsibilities. Child protection risks and vulnerabilities are often directly linked to broader, even systemic, violations of human rights, signposting other protection needs. Interventions incorporate a do no harm approach and actively seek to safeguard children and mitigate [harm](#) through the [prevention](#) of risks and threats, and by strengthening the existing protective factors within communities and national systems intended to protect children and support their well-being. As many child protection risks are multi-faceted in nature, child protection can provide linkages and entry points that integrate and connect the activities of multiple sectors to strengthen protection outcomes.





## The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action

Save the Children partner organization

[The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) represents a system-wide commitment to placing protection at the centre of humanitarian action.

It recognises protection as the purpose and intended outcome of humanitarian action, and emphasises that it must be central to preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond.

The Centrality of Protection is a collective responsibility, not that of any one sector or agency. It requires that *all* humanitarian actors contribute to protection outcomes by ensuring that the protection needs of affected and at-risk populations inform humanitarian decision-making and response. This includes engaging with State actors, who hold the primary responsibility to protect populations, and non-State actors in situations of armed conflict.

Complemented by the [Inter-agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Protection Policy](#), the Centrality of Protection takes a people-centred approach to protection, identifying actions to ensure a comprehensive and effective protection-centred humanitarian response. These include mainstreaming and integrating protection into all humanitarian activities; contributing meaningfully to protection outcomes through risk-informed analysis that helps reduce risks, vulnerabilities, and threats, and enhances protection capacities and outcomes; and by undertaking advocacy and engagement of actors outside humanitarian action – such as development, peace, human rights, and security actors – who can help influence protection outcomes.

The Alliance and its members will work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including the Global Protection Cluster, the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, and UNHCR, to generate and share the knowledge, data, analyses, and tools needed to ensure that children and their protection are prioritised across all levels and actions of humanitarian response, in support of the Centrality of Protection and stronger protection and child protection outcomes. Child protection must be systematically included within risk analyses, and the monitoring of protection and rights violations; incorporated as a matter of priority within Humanitarian Country Team protection strategies, as well as within humanitarian and refugee response plans; and raised at and by the highest levels of humanitarian leadership.



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To elevate child protection issues across these fora, and more broadly across the humanitarian system, more information and data on child protection must be made available in a systematic and comprehensive manner, including through better child protection risk analyses and cross-sectoral integration. In turn, these analyses must be used to ensure better integration of child protection within broader protection analyses, taking into consideration that human rights violations have a differential impact on children, which must be clearly defined and addressed within the Centrality of Protection. Child protection data and risk analyses can further support other sectors to leverage their programmes to not only include children, but to *protect* children; and to strengthen systematic inclusion of child-friendly approaches across all sectors, and within refugee protection procedures, protection strategies, and other mechanisms that contribute to protection outcomes<sup>24</sup>.

It should be incumbent upon all humanitarian actors to work to protect children, to vocally and consistently call out grave violations committed against children, and to raise the urgent and unique protection needs of all children as well as commit sufficient resources to meet them. These are *collective responsibilities*, and essential for all stakeholders to uphold under the Centrality of Protection.



These are *collective responsibilities*, and essential for all stakeholders to uphold under the Centrality of Protection.



## Introducing the Centrality of Children and their Protection

The centrality of children and their protection reflects a greater need to prioritise children, broadly, and their protection and well-being, specifically, across the humanitarian system.

**The centrality of children and their protection begins with recognising children as a distinct group from adults, with unique and diverse needs and capacities that differ by age, gender, ability, and other diversity factors.** It equally involves acknowledging that these needs also differ across and within humanitarian contexts: the protection needs of refugee, displaced, migrant, stateless, or undocumented children; or of children affected by different types of climate disasters, may differ significantly from each other and from other children in the same setting.



Needs-based protection must treat children **equitably** to arrive at **equal** protections and stronger outcomes for children.



Jonathan Hyams / Save The Children

Recognising and prioritising the diversity of the needs and capacities of children is therefore essential to protecting *all* children, their families, communities, and all affected persons, by extension.

The centrality of children and their protection means emphasising the perspectives, needs, and agency of children, and advocating for stronger inclusion and prioritisation of these within humanitarian policies and decision-making. This includes placing children at the centre of system-wide efforts to systematically emphasise and prioritise protection throughout humanitarian action, including within the IASC policies on the Centrality of Protection, on Protection in Humanitarian Action, and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.





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The centrality of children and their protection further seeks to ensure that the humanitarian system is actively and consciously working to uphold children's rights and protection in support of their well-being, and strengthening accountability mechanisms and procedures for when those rights are violated. This extends to State actors, who hold the primary responsibility to protect children; to the leadership of humanitarian organisations; and to the entire UN system, including the UN Security Council, UN peacekeeping and civilian missions, and Humanitarian Country Teams.

Within humanitarian programmes and interventions, **the centrality of children and their protection goes beyond mainstreaming, working to ensure that children are actively and meaningfully engaged throughout the stages of the programme cycle, and that their voices are heard and given due consideration,**

**as is their right.** Regardless of whether a programme is a stand-alone sectoral intervention, or a multi-sector or integrated programme, its outcomes must consider the diverse protection needs and perspectives of children, as a part of upholding the Centrality of Protection.

...outcomes must consider the **diverse protection needs and perspectives** of children...



Enabling all these actions requires forceful commitments, and funding. It requires recognition of the life-saving nature of child protection interventions<sup>25</sup>, and prioritisation of these within humanitarian and refugee response plans, humanitarian financing mechanisms, and the broader humanitarian leadership structures that guide humanitarian action. It requires urgently addressing the humanitarian financing gap for child protection – and the protection sectors more broadly – all systematically under-funded. It involves committing the necessary and appropriate resources to integrate the diverse needs of children into the risk analyses, assessments, and programmes of all humanitarian sectors; to the mechanisms and processes that monitor and report on child rights, human rights, and protection violations; and to the programmes that seek to prevent and respond to these. It requires ensuring the specific capacity required to undertake the unique functions that protect children, in particular in situations of armed conflict and in refugee and displacement contexts.



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Finally, the centrality of children and their protection involves working across and leveraging the collective strengths and mandates of the humanitarian protection sectors – child protection, gender-based violence, and protection – to support all elements of protection being placed at the centre of the humanitarian system. In working together, stronger protection outcomes can be achieved - protecting children by protecting their families, their communities, and strengthening the resilience and protective factors that support their overall well-being.

The centrality of children and their protection serves as an umbrella for all of The Alliance's strategic priorities. The Alliance and its members will work to ensure that child protection is recognised and prioritised as essential and life-saving across the humanitarian system, and that humanitarian interventions ensure the protection and well-being of children, taking into account their diversity, specific needs, and capacities. To achieve this, The Alliance and its members will:

itised as essential and life-saving across the humanitarian system, and that humanitarian interventions ensure the protection and well-being of children, taking into account their diversity, specific needs, and capacities. To achieve this, The Alliance and its members will:

- Strengthen **accountability to children** across all humanitarian action, through promotion of responsible and meaningful engagement of children within existing accountability mechanisms and processes; and by advocating for greater prevention of and accountability for violations of children's rights;
- Forge a better way of working, led and informed by **community, local, and national actors**, that is rooted in the transferring of power and sharing of knowledge and skills, which emphasises local practices, protective factors, as well as the resilience and protection capacities of children themselves;
- Collaborate with other sectors to develop and implement **multi-sector and integrated programmes** that are designed to match the lived experiences and diverse realities of children and their families, holistically addressing needs, building on community strengths, and improving child protection outcomes; and
- Be guided in the principled belief that equally important to the collective imperative of responding to harm, is the duty to actively work to **prevent** harm.



## Centring Children and Child Protection within the Grand Bargain 2.0

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This strategy is being finalised as discussions on the future of the Grand Bargain – the Grand Bargain 2.0 – are taking place. Children and their protection must be a central feature within this renewed bargain. Throughout the implementation of this strategy, The Alliance will leverage the strength of its network and platform to advocate for equitable funding for child protection.

It will further work to strengthen the inclusion and prioritisation of children and their protection across the Grand Bargain 2.0 so that its commitments and workstreams reflect that the adoption of people-centred approaches must be equally child-centred, and that improving quality humanitarian funding must be paired with achieving equitable humanitarian funding for children and their specific protection needs. So too, The Alliance

will advocate that a more equitable way of working with local and national organisations to strengthen localisation goals must equally emphasise and integrate working with child-focused organisations and child- and youth-led organisations.

Moreover, prioritising sectors and streams of work like cash within coordination and financing mechanisms must be paired with the embedding of the diverse protection needs of all children within these areas of renewed focus. Finally, The Alliance will advocate that the re-visioning of funding mechanisms to make these more local, more efficient, and more effective must break from the current practice of under-prioritising the protection needs and vulnerabilities of children, and under-funding the organisations that address them.

It is time to recognise children for who they are:

# a unique, diverse, and significant group of rights holders,

with the right to be treated with dignity, the right to be heard, and the right to exercise their agency and be actively involved in the programmes and decisions that

# affect their lives,

including contributing to their own protection and well-being.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1



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1

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHILDREN



**GOAL:** All humanitarian programmes are accountable to children and ensure their meaningful and equitable participation.

*“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”*

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, para 1 on the right of the child to be heard

### Everyone is accountable to children.

Accountability to affected populations within humanitarian action centres around [IASC commitments](#)<sup>26</sup> intended to strengthen the culture of accountability towards delivery of more ethical, principled, and dignified humanitarian response. This includes protecting populations from sexual exploitation and abuse. These commitments are rooted in a rights-based approach that puts people first, and are intended to reach all levels of the humanitarian system. True accountability to affected populations requires accountability to children. This begins with the equitable inclusion of all children across these commitments. Rights-based approaches must include *child rights*; people-centred responses must also be *child-centred*. The Participation Revolution called for by the Grand Bargain, cannot be achieved without having a *child participation* revolution. Protecting populations from and eradicating acts of sexual abuse and exploitation within humanitarian action requires protecting the most vulnerable, including girls and LGBTI children, refugee and displaced children, and children with other intersecting vulnerabilities.





Children have the right to be heard and have their views be given due weight; playing an active role in the decisions that will impact their lives, well-being, dignity, and protection



Children have the right to be heard and have their views be given due weight; playing an active role in the decisions that will impact their lives, well-being, dignity, and protection. Effective and meaningful participation is a process. Upholding this right for children requires that all processes in which children are heard and participate must be transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable<sup>27</sup>. However, accountability to children goes beyond their meaningful participation. It includes promoting their psychosocial competencies that nurture their resilience and agency; shifting and reconfiguring social relationships and power dynamics to empower marginalised and disenfranchised groups; and facilitating the mechanisms and process that enable children to hold stakeholders and duty bearers in their lives accountable.

All humanitarian actors have a duty to children, to contributing to their protection, ensuring their safeguarding and protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, and including them within humanitarian accountability and refugee protection procedures. Children must be meaningfully engaged, consulted, and partnered with through age- and development stage- appropriate processes. They must be addressed in communications in child-friendly and accessible ways. Their rights, views, and protection needs and capacities must be incorporated throughout the humanitarian

programme cycle. Assessments and risk analyses must actively identify and seek to understand the risks and protective factors associated with stronger outcomes for children, and use these to inform humanitarian programmes, funding, and decisions. All accountability procedures, including post-distribution monitoring; complaints, feedback, and response mechanisms; and referral pathways, must be accessible to children. Ensuring child-friendly accountability procedures, including within protection procedures, is the responsibility of all, and not only those working directly with children.



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For children, there is an accountability gap, fed by a lack of awareness, capacity, and commitment at all levels: individual, institutional, sectoral, and system wide.

However, when it comes to children, many humanitarian actors, sectors, even leaders and decision-makers, are uncertain *how* to ensure accountability to children in practice. Too often, this uncertainty results in the exclusion of children, or in not recognising child-specific protection risks, for fear of doing them further harm. Alternatively, efforts to explicitly demonstrate inclusion and participation can all too often result in tokenism. For children, there is

an accountability gap, fed by a lack of awareness, capacity, and commitment at all levels: individual, institutional, sectoral, and system wide.

The Alliance and its members are accountable to children. The Alliance will work to ensure that it is actively and intentionally working towards addressing these gaps. The Alliance will work to promote standards, develop resources, and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and strengthening of capacity within the child protection sector, and across other sectors, around child-friendly and child-led accountability mechanisms and procedures, as well as on the meaningful and ethical participation of children of all ages, genders, abilities, and other diversity factors throughout the programme cycle. Through its advocacy, The Alliance will urge donors, decision-makers, and humanitarian leaders to appropriately resource child protection and require accountability procedures to include children. Through its representation, The Alliance will work in collaboration with existing inter-agency accountability to affected populations coordination mechanisms to ensure that *children and their protection* are put first.

Everyone is accountable to children. To help lead the way, in 2021-2025, The Alliance and its members will:

- **PROVIDE** leadership and promote meaningful action on accountability to children, including ensuring their meaningful participation within all humanitarian programmes.
- **STRENGTHEN** capacity and promote the sharing of learning and knowledge on designing and implementing child-friendly and child-led accountability procedures within the child protection sector and with other sectors.
- **SUPPORT** and **PROMOTE** child-led and community-driven prevention and response interventions.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2



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2

## LOCALISATION - TRANSFORMING HOW CHILD PROTECTION WORKS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



**GOAL:** The child protection sector transforms its way of working, rooted in the sharing of capacity, expertise, opportunity, and the intentional shift of power and resources to community, local, and national actors.

The Alliance believes an expanded understanding of localisation<sup>28</sup> – one that addresses existing privilege and power structures in humanitarian decision-making, financing, and programmatic interventions – ought to guide equitable, dignified, and principled humanitarian action. Therefore, The Alliance will lead by example. Making this important process of change a priority in the coming years, The Alliance will seek to forge a better way of working, through defined and intentional action. Rooted in the mutual sharing of knowledge, skills, and opportunities, and in an intentional shift of power, The Alliance will change how it undertakes its work and realises its mandate. The Alliance will focus on leveraging its comparative advantage as a body that leads normative work for child protection in fragile and humanitarian settings, to expand what localisation can mean and look like in practice for the child protection sector. This may include actions such as:

- Promoting a culture of principled partnership<sup>29</sup> between community, local, national, and international actors, including recognition that within displacement contexts, true partnership and integration includes community, local, and national organisations led by or meaningfully inclusive of displaced populations, in addition to those that contribute to their protection;
- Facilitating engagement in The Alliance for [community, local, and national actors](#), while actively breaking down the barriers that hinder meaningful participation and equal access to the opportunities for leadership, influence, growth, and resources that membership enables;





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- Providing opportunities for learning, exchange, and strengthening of both child protection technical knowledge and skills, as well as institutional support and growth;
- Re-conceptualising understandings of capacity and expertise that prioritise indigenous values and approaches to children's protection and well-being; that build on the wealth of knowledge from community, local, and national actors; and that use these as the basis for [capacity sharing](#) and learning initiatives;

- Generating learning, knowledge, and evidence that centres around the perspectives of children, their families and communities, and re-envisioning how these inform the development and contextualisation of standards, programmatic interventions, learning initiatives, and technical guidance and tools; and
- Advocating for the re-distribution of power, resources, and trust within humanitarian financing, notably through the provision of direct and flexible funding for community, local, and national actors. This should be accompanied by adaptive and responsive management models and opportunities for institutional support and growth. The Alliance and its members can reflect these actions in their own efforts to redistribute funding to national and local actors.

The Alliance views two paths for its work on localisation: one focused on its own internal governance and structures; and a second that looks to transform the child protection sector's ways of working in culture and practice, including its locus of power and influence. Building on The Alliance's work on community-level approaches to the protection and well-being of children, and recognising the diversity in local knowledge and approaches within and across communities, The Alliance's work on localisation can support progress across all its strategic priorities. Effective *prevention* must be rooted in local knowledge, understanding, and practices. Child protection outcomes within *multi-sector programmes* can be strengthened through integration of local perspectives, expertise, and initiatives. *Centring children, their views and protection*, as well as those of their families and communities, in the processes that generate learning, knowledge, and evidence can help to ensure their *meaningful participation* and contributes to greater *accountability* within child protection interventions.

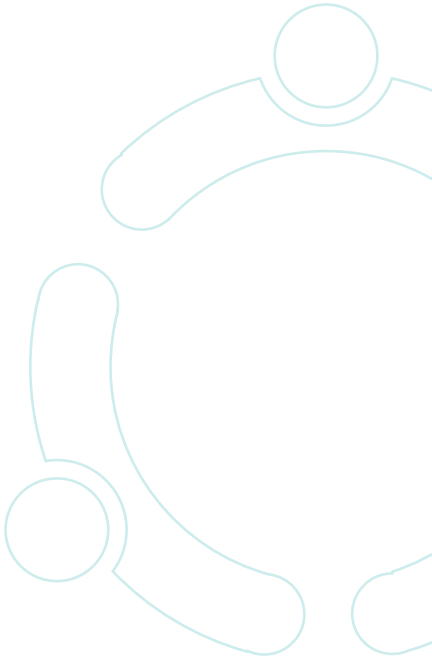


To achieve better protections for children globally, child protection must start locally.





Actions and changes such as the examples listed above will be identified and led by an empowered and resourced body to be established within The Alliance, led by its community, local, and national members, and supported by its international members through commitments to supporting sector-wide changes in practice, culture, and accountability. To affect meaningful and sustained change will require more time than the period covered within this strategy; however, progress is an evolving and ongoing process.



## Between 2021-2025, The Alliance will look to:

### Overall

- **FOSTER** and **PROMOTE** greater action on the sharing and shifting of power, influence, and leadership with community, local, and national child protection organisations across humanitarian action.
- **PROMOTE** the importance of and facilitate opportunities for direct and flexible funding for community, local, and national child protection organisations.

### On The Alliance's Governance and Structure

- **INCREASE** inclusion and diversity within The Alliance, by facilitating membership processes and expanding opportunities for leadership, influence, and engagement for community, local, and national actors.
- **IMPROVE** the accessibility and diversity of Alliance products, platforms, and events to reach broader and more diverse audiences.

### On the Child Protection Sector

- **ENCOURAGE** meaningful and principled engagement with community, local, and national actors, recognising them as equal partners in the development and contextualisation of child protection standards, guidance, tools, and interventions.
- **CREATE** and **EXPAND** equitable opportunities to share, exchange, and showcase learning, knowledge, and expertise amongst community, local, national, and international actors across the child protection sector.
- **IMPROVE** and **EXPAND** the accessibility and diversity of learning opportunities that strengthen child protection technical expertise and grow institutional capacity.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3



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## MULTI-SECTOR AND INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING AND COLLABORATION



**GOAL:** Children's protection and well-being are prioritised within cross-sector collaboration, including within multi-sector and integrated programmes, and across all humanitarian action.

Multi-sectoral collaboration and integrated programming is integral to holistically achieving child protection outcomes – and to supporting the centrality of children and their protection. The multi-faceted nature of child protection risks, and the adversity that children and their families can face as a result, often requires multi-sector approaches and cross-sectoral collaboration to prevent risks, respond to needs, strengthen protective factors, and contribute to well-being. Child protection alone cannot achieve this; neither can any other individual sector.

While collaborative approaches and multi-sector programmes are increasingly prioritised, there remains an important need for the child protection sector to prioritise working with other sectors to prevent harmful outcomes and secure greater accountability to children within humanitarian programmes. This includes working with other sectors to meaningfully consider and ensure that child protection risks, protective factors, and child safeguarding are being prioritised within stand-alone, multi-sector, and integrated programmes. It extends to ensuring the critical role and lens of child protection within multi-sectoral issues are recognised and prioritised by donors and operational actors alike: such as the key role of child protection within mental health and psychosocial support in reducing harm and promoting resilience, or working with child sexual- and gender-based violence survivors and ensuring that funding and interventions are age-appropriate and prioritise children, including girls, boys, and LGBTI children. It can extend further still to the need for child protection actors to work more deeply with communities, and to support and



Child protection alone cannot achieve this; neither can any other individual sector.



strengthen national systems, recognising that community-level protection and systems strengthening approaches are more integrated by nature and do not reflect humanitarian sectors or silos. Overall, multi-sector approaches and cross-sectoral collaboration means leveraging the many entry points to protecting children across sectors, contributing to stronger overall child protection outcomes through diverse pathways, and further supporting the centrality of (children and their) protection.

Successfully working across sectors to achieve stronger multi-sectoral outcomes, including those for children, requires a number of key actions:

- the recognition of the capacities and competencies each sector brings, and how these can support both individual sector and multi-sector outcomes, in complementarity to the overall response;
- an understanding of the inter-connected and correlated nature of child protection risks in order to mainstream these into assessments, analyses, and planning for all sectors;
- the necessity of having high-quality, individual-level data, disaggregated by age, sex, disability, and other relevant diversity factors to enable

needs-responsive programmes that can anticipate and prevent harm, in addition to responding to it;

- the generation of evidence on the efficacy of integrated interventions for achieving child protection outcomes to help identify entry points and facilitate joint programmes;
- the documentation of learning and good practice from multi-sector and integrated programmes, and effective dissemination of these to enable their application and use; and
- advocacy and communication to highlight the joint benefits of multi-sector and integrated programming to all sectors.

These actions, however, must be backed by resources from donors, support from decision-makers, and sufficient knowledge and capacity amongst practitioners.



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Child protection actors have been working for years to strengthen relationships with other sectors. Within the Child Protection Minimum Standards, [Pillar 4](#) is dedicated to working collaboratively with other sectors. There are ongoing initiatives with other sectors, in collaboration with the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the UNHCR, including between child protection and the food security and livelihoods cluster, and with health actors in particular around infectious disease outbreaks. The education and child protection sectors have a significant history of collaboration, including between the Global Education Cluster and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility – most recently around [localisation](#), [COVID-19](#), and developing a [collaboration in coordination framework](#). Further strengthening the linkages and efforts between the two sectors, The Alliance has developed a strong and fruitful partnership with the [Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies](#), initiating a [joint project](#) that has seen the two sectors work closely on a number of technical initiatives including the alignment of their respective competency frameworks, a [position paper](#) on collaboration across the two sectors, as well as a number of [papers](#) on the linkages and [co-related impacts](#) of COVID-19 on education and child protection. This work and partnership will continue throughout implementation of the strategy.

During the 2021-2025 Strategy period, The Alliance will partner and collaborate with other sectors to advocate and demonstrate how the needs of children are best responded to through data-informed, child-protection sensitive stand-alone, multi-sector or integrated interventions that look to holistically protect children and families, and support their overall well-being.

### Specifically, The Alliance will:

- **ENCOURAGE** and **PROMOTE** increased prioritisation of child protection risks, data needs, and interventions within other sectors, and as a part of multi-sector and integrated programmes.
- **DEVELOP** new or strengthen existing partnerships with 2-3 other sectors.
- **PROMOTE** and **EXPAND** the knowledge and capacity of other sectors to mainstream and integrate child protection within their programmes.
- **EXPAND** and **FACILITATE** access across the child protection sector to capacity strengthening, learning, and development opportunities focused on working with other sectors, in line with Pillar 4 of the CPMS.





# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4



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4

## PREVENTION



**GOAL:** Prevention is understood and prioritised as a critical element of child protection across humanitarian action.

Prevention is fundamental to the holistic and sustainable protection of children. Prevention is also necessary for The Alliance to achieve its vision of a world in which children are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. More broadly, it is key to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 that looks to end all forms of violence against children, and the full realisation of the rights within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for all children.

Prevention is rooted in a more dignified and ethical approach to humanitarian action, as humanitarians have an ethical duty to both *do no harm* and *prevent harm* where possible. It can support critical elements of justice and accountability for children, particularly around preventing grave violation of their rights, such as child recruitment. If principled humanitarian action has the imperative to respond to needs and save lives with dignity, then humanitarian actors also have a moral and ethical duty to work, where possible, to prevent harm.

The Alliance's work on prevention is rooted in a public health approach that looks to prevent risks and address harm at the population level (primary prevention), prevent the specific sources of threats or vulnerability to high-risk children (secondary prevention), and reduce the longer-term impacts of harm and its chances of recurring (tertiary prevention). More specifically, The Alliance looks to holistically reduce risks and promote protective factors that enable well-being and allow populations to thrive.



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Preventing harm to children requires measurement approaches to identify, understand, and address the risk and protective factors that drive harmful outcomes for children, along all levels of the socio-ecological model. Interventions must consider the specific risks to children of different ages and stages of development, genders, abilities, and other diversity factors; as well as, the capacities children, their families, and communities can contribute to reduce and prevent harm. As the roots of child protection risks are often complex and multi-sectoral in nature, preventing harm to children requires integrated approaches

that work across sectors and disciplines, and strategies to strengthen protective factors. Prevention provides opportunities to bridge evidence and learning from across operational contexts and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to strengthen child protection outcomes. Critical within all these actions, and in support of the sustainability of interventions, prevention must reflect and incorporate indigenous and community approaches to protecting children.

There is strong and growing evidence, predominantly from development and peace settings, on how prevention can be used to end violence against children, notably linked to the seven strategies identified within the [INSPIRE](#) package<sup>30</sup>. Programmes that integrate both preventative and responsive actions can ultimately support stronger sectoral and multi-sectoral outcomes, including for child protection in humanitarian action. For example, a school-feeding programme responding to early warnings indicating protection risks linked to food insecurity can help to mitigate school drop-out linked to child labour. A livelihoods intervention helping conflict-affected families weather economic shocks, can help prevent push factors of child recruitment or child marriage. To better leverage these opportunities across sectors and response stages, greater understanding is needed on how prevention strategies, actions, and policies can contribute to stronger sectoral and multi-sector outcomes that strengthen the protection and well-being of children, their families and communities.

Prevention is also increasingly viewed as a smart investment. Cost-benefit analyses, from disaster risk reduction repeatedly support the idea that prevention pays off<sup>31</sup>. Yet, despite evidence and learning suggesting the ripple in benefits from taking a preventative approach to humanitarian action, humanitarian funding continues to skew towards addressing what is visible and can (more easily) be counted and accounted for. It continues to be more difficult



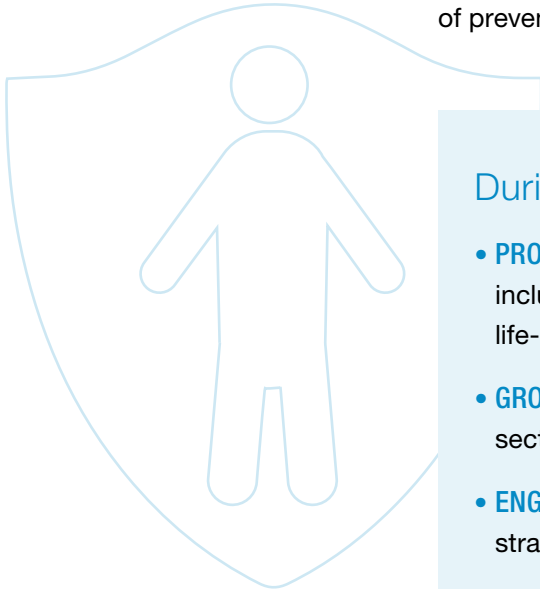
If principled humanitarian action has the imperative to respond to needs and save lives with dignity, then humanitarian actors also have a **moral and ethical duty** to work, where possible, to prevent harm.



to secure investment to *prevent* unseen harm – for example, to prevent child-family separation – than funding to respond to the consequences of harm that has already been done, such as reunifying families and providing care and support to address the distress and harm caused by the separation. A shift in thinking and approach is needed to better integrate and fund both preventative and responsive actions and strategies within humanitarian response.

Beyond the need for further investments in research and evidence, gaps exist within the child protection sector in understanding and awareness of prevention levels, approaches, and strategies; on how to apply these and integrate these throughout the programme cycle; and on identifying the entry points and pathways to support prevention through multi-sector and integrated programmes.

The Alliance is playing a leading role to help address this prevention gap<sup>32</sup> through generating evidence, developing standards and guidance, strengthening and sharing of capacities, and advocating for the importance of population-level, multi-sectoral approaches to prevention. A key step was the integration of prevention within the revised Child Protection Minimum Standards. Looking forward, there is a need for resources, tools, and guidance, particularly on primary prevention, accompanied with appropriate learning opportunities; as well as advocacy with decision-makers, donors, and practitioners across the sector on the cost-benefits and potentially life-saving nature of prevention approaches.



### During 2021-2025, The Alliance will:

- **PROMOTE** increased prioritisation of prevention funding and programming, including generating evidence on prevention as a cost-saving and life-saving intervention.
- **GROW** knowledge, capacity, and understanding within the child protection sector on child protection prevention strategies and approaches.
- **ENGAGE** other sectors on incorporating child protection prevention strategies and approaches within humanitarian programmes.



Looking Ahead:

# THE CLIMATE CRISIS,

Climate Justice, and  
CHILD PROTECTION



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The climate crisis is the defining crisis of our time. The costs and consequences of our collective action and inaction will be felt most deeply by children – impacting their rights, protection, and well-being.

Now and for decades to come, climate change will exacerbate child protection risks and threats to the safety and mental health of children, and further inequity through its intergenerational impacts<sup>33</sup>. It will contribute to increased conflict, displacement, food insecurity, financial hardship, structural violence; as well as more frequent and intense drought, heat waves, floods, fires, and other climate-related disasters. The climate crisis will strain the capacity of local systems, exacerbate stressors on families and communities, and contribute to increasing conflict and public health emergencies<sup>34</sup>. The greatest impacts will primarily be on low-income countries, impeding their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>35</sup>. Although the climate crisis affects all children, it affects them differently. These differences, linked to inequity, varying types of vulnerability, and other diversity factors, must be addressed to achieve equitable climate justice for all children.

The Alliance recognises that achieving a future for children free of violence, and where their rights, protection, and well-being are assured, is **inextricable from the climate crisis**.



The climate crisis links to, and motivates action on, all four priorities within this strategy: centring children and their protection within climate action can contribute to achieving climate justice for children, helping to promote children's voices, prioritise their needs, and encourage their leadership. Further, mitigating and responding to climate impacts requires *multi-sectoral* and collaborative approaches at all levels. Child protection actors can build on approaches used to *prevent* child protection risks, adapting protective factors to help children, their families and communities, better prepare for, strengthen their resilience to, and mitigate the negative impacts of the climate crisis. As climate impacts affect all people, communities, and countries, albeit differently, work to address climate must include a focus on climate justice and equity, and be led locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally, the embodiment of *localisation's* "as local as possible, as international as necessary".



Jonathan Hyams / Save The Children

Children and child- and youth-led movements are already leading the way in many local and global initiatives. Global actions in response will be the ultimate test of *accountability* to the world's children<sup>36</sup>.

However, like many other humanitarian sectors and actors, child protection has many questions when it comes to climate action:

### Overarching questions:

- What does the climate crisis mean for child protection and the future of humanitarian action?

- How can humanitarian and climate actors and donors work to ensure that climate financing supports child-, youth-, and community-led initiatives, on whom the impacts and burden of the climate crisis are disproportionately felt, and avoid reinforcing existing inequities in humanitarian financing and leadership?

### Climate action for children's rights, protection, and well-being:

- How can child protection actors best ensure the centrality of children and their protection within the climate action agenda – and that children's participation and agency is placed at the centre of climate-related decisions that affect them?
- How will child protection interventions need to change and adapt to better respond to climate-related disasters, and how can the child protection sector prepare for this change?
- How can the strength of child protection prevention strategies and approaches to working with and contributing to stronger, more resilient communities and equitable national systems be leveraged to support action for climate justice?

### Actions on social responsibility and reducing the child protection sector's impact on the environment:

- As humanitarian actors look to understand and define what 'greening humanitarian aid' will look like, what will greening child protection mean? How can The Alliance and its members adopt greener practices?
- A post-COVID-19 world provides the opportunity to not only build forward better, but to build forward *greener*. What does this mean for child protection?



The need to act on the climate crisis is urgent and increasing daily. With its focus on the centrality of children and their protection, The Alliance will play an important leadership role within the child protection sector on the climate crisis, and contribute a child protection and child rights lens to climate action and climate justice. The Alliance can emerge as a thought leader for the child protection sector, and invest in the exploration and reflection required to answer questions around the climate crisis, including linkages to programming, child rights and participation, and social responsibility. Through its advocacy and actions, The Alliance can work to increase understanding, visibility, and prioritisation of the impacts of the climate crisis on children within humanitarian action, and the need to ensure equity for all children in climate justice. The Alliance will invest in and establish a Child Protection, Climate Crisis, and Climate Justice Initiative to lead its work, and to identify actions The Alliance, and the child protection sector more broadly, can take to meet their obligations on the climate crisis and hold themselves accountable to children. These actions may include activities such as:

- **INTEGRATING** and **ELEVATING** the voices and engagement of children and youth – of all genders, abilities, and backgrounds – through its platforms;
- **INVESTING** in research and generating evidence, smart practices, and learning to feed into advocacy and policy around child protection, the climate crisis, and achieving equitable climate justice for children;
- **IDENTIFYING** innovative approaches to working jointly with other sectors on climate adaptation, resilience, preparedness, and responding to climate impacts; and
- **EXPLORING** other activities and opportunities for collaboration that seek to ensure the centrality of children, their protection and their voices, within climate action.

Addressing the  
**climate crisis** will be the  
**ultimate test of accountability**  
to the world's children.





# ANNEX I:

## Glossary

### Capacity sharing

The transfer of knowledge, skills and competence, peer-to-peer, between people and organisations, through formal and informal channels.

### Capacity strengthening

The means by which skills, competence, and abilities are created and developed. In learning and development these terms are used to refer to developing the capacity of people, but in other contexts they can also refer to the capacity of an organisation (i.e., material or financial capacity).

### Child

A child is any person under the age of 18, as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

The prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children in humanitarian action.

### Community and local actors

References to community and local actors within the strategy are broad and inclusive. They refer to any group working on child protection or humanitarian issues (as cited in text), be they formal or informal groups, State actors or civil society, those working on development, humanitarian, peacebuilding, or their nexus.

Of particular importance, it includes those groups working in refugee and other displacement contexts, including those led by or comprising refugees or other displaced populations; and other groups in countries of asylum that contribute to the protection and well-being of displaced populations, especially children.

### Harm

Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being that impacts healthy child development. It may be caused by physical or emotional abuse, neglect, and/or sexual abuse or exploitation.

### Learning and development

Refers to the process of identifying and meeting the learning needs of individuals, in order to develop their performance in their role(s).

### Prevention

*Primary Prevention* addresses the root causes of child protection risks among the population (or a subset of it) to reduce the likelihood of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence against children.

*Secondary Prevention* addresses a specific source of threat and/or vulnerabilities of a child who is identified as being at particularly high risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence, due to characteristics of the child, family, and/or environment.

*Tertiary Prevention* reduces the longer-term impact of harm and reduces the chance of recurring harm to a child who has already suffered abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence.

### Protective factors

Factors that balance and buffer risk factors and reduce a child's vulnerability. They lower the probability of an undesirable outcome.



## Resilience

In child protection in humanitarian action, resilience is the ability to deal with adversity and crisis. It refers to the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to challenges that threaten its function, survival, or development and is influenced by a combination of protective factors that exist across a child's social ecologies, which must be promoted to outweigh risks. These include individual characteristics and external factors that have come together for it to materialize in culturally meaningful ways, such as: diversity of livelihoods, coping mechanisms, life skills such as problem-solving, the ability to seek support, motivation, optimism, faith, perseverance, and resourcefulness. While resilience has been viewed as a trait or an outcome, it most likely is a process that exists on a continuum that may be present to differing degrees across multiple domains of life, and may change as a result of the child's interaction with their environment.

## Risk

In humanitarian action, risk is the likelihood of harm occurring from a hazard and the potential losses to lives, livelihoods, assets, and services. It is the probability of external and internal threats occurring in combination with the existence of individual vulnerabilities. Risk is mitigated by protection against physical hazards, reduction of structural and non-structural risks, resources and skills for disaster-preparedness, and resilience and coping skills.

For child protection, risk refers to the likelihood that violations of and threats to children's rights will manifest and cause harm to children in the short- or long-term. It takes into account the type of violations and threats, as well as children's vulnerability and resilience. Risk can be defined as a combination of hazard, threat, and vulnerability and must be considered within the socio-ecological framework.

## Risk factors

Environmental factors, experiences, or individual traits that increase the probability of a negative outcome.

## Vulnerability

The extent to which some people may be disproportionately affected by the disruption of their physical environment and social support mechanisms following disaster or conflict. Vulnerability is specific to each person and each situation.

For child protection, vulnerability refers to individual, family, community, and societal characteristics that reduce children's ability to withstand adverse impact from violations of and threats to their rights. It is often specific to each person and to each situation as well as to geographic location and timing.



For more information on the terminology used within the strategy and by child protection actors more broadly, please consult the [Child Protection Minimum Standards](#) and its [Glossary](#).

For learning and development related terminology, please see [The Alliance's Learning and Development Glossary](#).



## Endnotes

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- 15 Roche, C., Flint, J., & Tarpey, F. (2020, 27 November). [Is Covid a window of opportunity for localizing aid? Learning from a natural experiment in the Pacific](#). Oxfam, From Poverty to Power; Poole, L. (2020, 29 October). [Crises have changed. Can the aid industry? The New Humanitarian](#); Slim, H. (2020, 10 December). [It’s time to invest for the 21st century and repurpose humanitarian bureaucracies](#). *Humanitarian Practice Network*.
- 16 All subsequent references to ‘the sector’ or ‘the child protection sector’ refer to child protection in humanitarian action sector, unless otherwise specified. References to ‘other sectors’ refer to humanitarian sectors other than child protection.





- 17 The [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) has four permanent Working Groups directly linked to its work functions, and a varying number of time-bound Task Forces that are initiated based on identified needs across the sector. Initiatives are established to grow and develop major areas of work within the sector, to support in-depth partnerships, or to rapidly respond to major shifts in operations. The Steering Committee, which comprises 18 members, serves as The Alliance's decision-making body. The Alliance is currently undertaking a review of its governance, which may result in changes to the current structure.
- 18 The Framework for the Strategy will be developed shortly after the Strategy is published, and will be available [here](#).
- 19 For more details on the learning and development terminology used by The Alliance and throughout the strategy, including capacity strengthening and capacity sharing, please consult the [Learning and Development Glossary](#).
- 20 Alliance, UNHCR, Child Protection AoR, and Save the Children. (2020). [Still Unprotected: Humanitarian Funding for Child Protection](#).
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 IASC. (2016). [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#).
- 23 Alliance. (2019). [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#).
- 24 For further information on child-friendly protection procedures, please see [here](#).
- 25 While certain child protection activities are designated as life-saving within [Central Emergency Response Fund criteria](#), there remains a strong need to have this more broadly recognised, prioritised, and acted on across the humanitarian system.
- 26 The four [IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation](#) are leadership; participation and partnership; information, feedback, and action; and results.
- 27 For further guidance on children's right to be heard, and the basic requirements for their meaningful, ethical, and effective participation, please see: the Committee on the Rights of the Child's [General Comment No. 12](#) and Save the Children's [The Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation](#).
- 28 The Alliance and its members acknowledge that the term localisation is problematic, and limiting in that it predominantly references commitments around humanitarian financing within the UN system linked to the Grand Bargain. It is being used within the strategy for its familiarity and as a placeholder. The child protection sector means to explore and expand the scope of this work to all areas of child protection, including to its culture and ways of working. As part of its focus on this area, The Alliance will work to identify language that better captures the important changes of how this work will be defined and realised.
- 29 For more information, please see the [Principles of Partnership](#) and the [Charter for Change](#).
- 30 The seven INSPIRE strategies identify actions to be taken by States and duty bearers to contribute to preventing violence against children, and encourage multi-sector integration and collaboration by all stakeholders. For guidance on how the INSPIRE strategies can complement and be used with the Child Protection Minimum Standards, please see [here](#).
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- 34 Save the Children. (2021, 19 April). [Climate Crisis - 710 million Children Live in Countries at High Risk](#); UNICEF. (2020). [Reimagining our Future: Building Back Better from COVID-19](#); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2020). [We Need to do Better: Policy Brief for Enhancing Laws and Regulations to Protection Children in Disasters](#).
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- 36 See: Gibbons, E.D. (2014). [Climate Change, Children's Rights, and the Pursuit of Intergenerational Climate Justice](#). *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 16(1), 19-31.

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The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (the Alliance) supports the efforts of humanitarian actors to achieve high-quality and effective child protection interventions in humanitarian settings. Through its technical Working Groups and Task Forces, the Alliance develops inter-agency operational standards and provides technical guidance to support protection of children in humanitarian settings.

For more information on the Alliance's work and joining the network, please visit <https://www.alliancecpha.org> or contact us directly: [info@alliancecpha.org](mailto:info@alliancecpha.org).

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**THE ALLIANCE**  
FOR CHILD PROTECTION  
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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