An Introduction to Child Protection in Emergencies

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Key Definitions

A Child is any human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier

An Emergency is a situation that threatens the lives and well-being of large numbers of a population and requires extraordinary action to ensure their survival, care, and protection

Humanitarian Protection encompasses all activities aimed at ensuring respect and fulfillment of human rights, as expressed in international human rights and humanitarian law

Child Protection in Emergencies is the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation of and violence against children in emergencies. Also includes addressing psychosocial wellbeing of children and caregivers.

Legal Framework

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - General principles

- **Art 2 –** all rights guaranteed by the UNCRC available to all children without discrimination;
- **Art 3 –** the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions;
- **Art 6 –** every child has the right to life, survival and development;
- **Art 12 –** children's view must be considered and taken into account;

Protection rights – ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including special care for refugee children; children in the criminal justice system; children in employment; and children who have suffered exploitation or abuse of any kind.

- **Art 22** – Refugee children
- **Art. 38** – Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict
- **Art. 39** – Rehabilitation of Children Affected by Armed Conflict

Legal & Normative Framework – Children and Armed Conflict

International Human Rights, Humanitarian and Refugee Law

OP - CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict:
- National armed forces: prohibition of compulsory recruitment and of the participation of children (under 18) in hostilities; specific provisions governing voluntary recruitment of those under 18;
- Armed Groups: prohibition on recruitment and use of those under 18.

Monitoring and Reporting on Gross Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict:
- Triggers: Killing and maiming; recruitment; sexual violence
- Monitored: Abduction; attacks on schools and Hospitals; denial of humanitarian access.

Key Humanitarian Principles

Humanity - save lives and alleviate suffering

Neutrality – no engagement in hostilities, political, racial, religious or ideological controversies

Impartiality – assistance based on need alone

Do no harm

Accountability

Participation of affected populations

Respect for culture and custom

Impacts of emergencies on the protection of children

✓ *New* risks and threats to children

✓ *Existing* risks and threats are exacerbated

✓ *Protection mechanisms* are undermined

Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) programming

In preventing and responding to neglect, violence, abuse, and exploitation against children in emergencies, CPiE programming includes:

✓Establishing programmes that **prevent and respond** to child protection issues in and as a result of emergencies;

✓**Reducing children's exposure** to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence in emergencies

✓**Helping children recover** if they are exposed.

Evolution of CPiE as a sector

Previous focus on risks and violations and programmes targeting categories of affected children
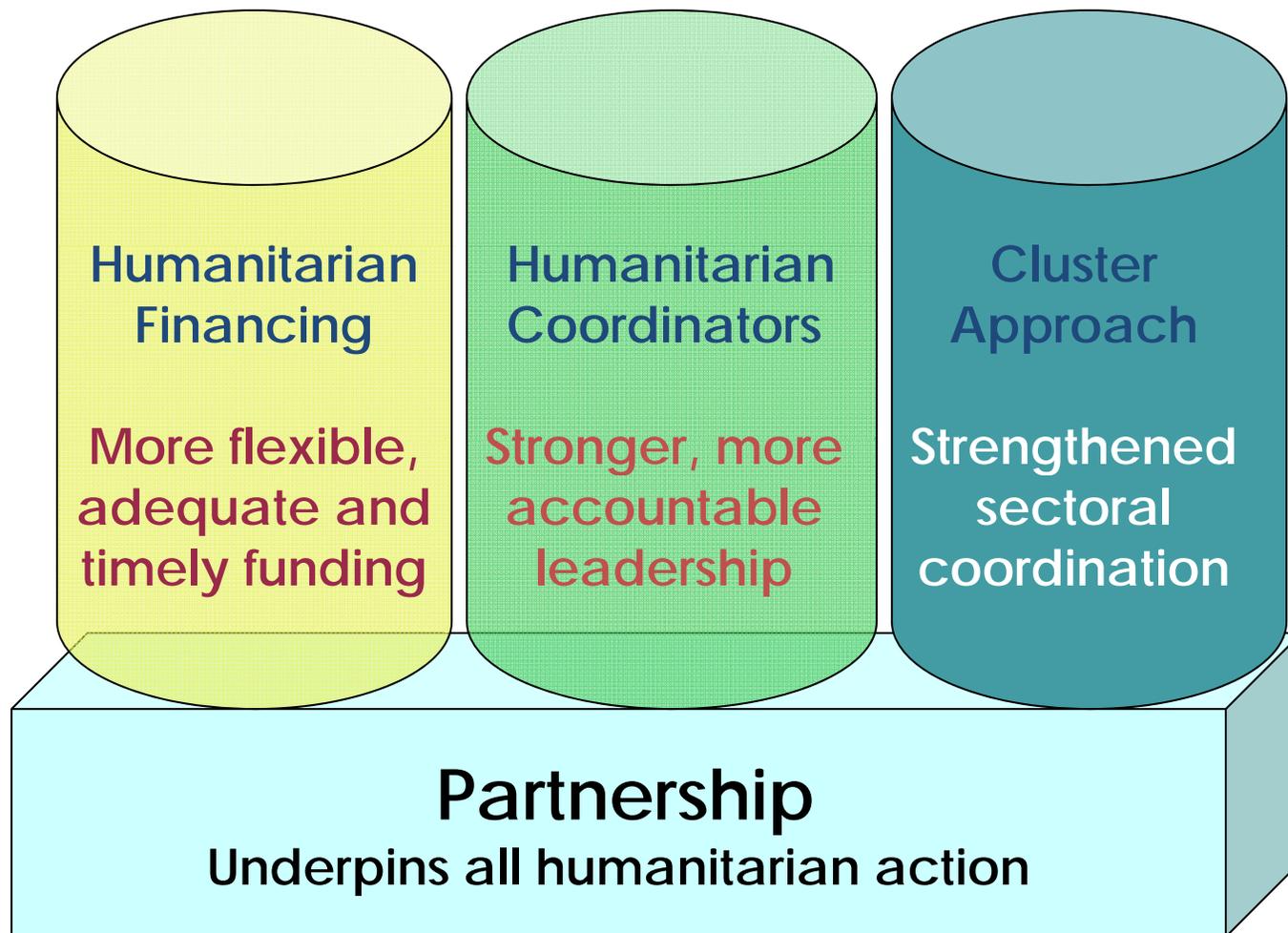
Now

✓ Recognition that **strengthening the protective environment** in emergencies is possible and important

✓**Violations can serve as 'entry points'** to working on elements of the protective environment

✓Emergency presents **opportunities** to build capacity & commitment of child protection stakeholders

CPiE Programme Strategies:

- ✓ Interagency **coordination** (Cluster approach)

- ✓ Child protection **assessment**

- ✓ Child protection **monitoring, reporting and advocacy**

- ✓ Strengthening of **child protection mechanisms**

Coordination: Humanitarian Reform and the Cluster Approach

Humanitarian Financing

More flexible, adequate and timely funding

Humanitarian Coordinators

Stronger, more accountable leadership

Cluster Approach

Strengthened sectoral coordination

Partnership
Underpins all humanitarian action

Child Protection Mechanisms - Informal

Community-based child protection
- ➤ Child Friendly Spaces
- ➤ Community-based awareness and messaging

Formal CP mechanisms and systems-strengthening
- ➤ Advocacy, legal reform & influencing national policy
- ➤ Child justice mechanisms
- ➤ Social welfare systems
- ➤ Mainstreaming child protection

Core areas of CPiE programming

➤ **Coordination** of child protection response in emergencies:

✓ Conducting Child Protection rapid assessments / situation analyses

✓ Inter-agency strategic planning

✓ Consensus building

✓ Mapping of Child Protection actors and programmes

✓ Mainstreaming CP issues into the work of other relevant Clusters and actors

Core areas of CPiE programming

➤ **Prevention and response to the** **separation of children:**

✓ Understanding causes of separation of children from their families

✓ Preventing separation

✓ Responding to separation of children from their families
  - o Identification and registration of SAUC
  - o Family tracing and reunification for SAUC
  - o Case management for SAUC
  - o Non-institutional alternative care for SAUC

Core areas of CPiE programming

➤ **Prevention of and response to exploitation and gender-based violence (GBV)**

✓ Understanding exploitation, violence and GBV within the context.

✓ Preventing exploitation and violence

✓ Responding:
  o Multi-sectoral services
  o Standard Operating Procedures
  o Referral
  o Monitoring and reporting on violations
  o Engaging with UN and other humanitarian actors

Core areas of CPiE programming

➢ **Prevention of and response to** **psychosocial distress and mental disorder**

✓ Understanding sources of stress for children and care givers, common reactions in the emergency, and capacities to address these;

✓ Responding – psychosocial support programming for children:
   o Identify and build on support mechanisms;
   o Activities for children
   o Provide basic messages on psychosocial issues to community members
   o Map resources and capacities and develop referral mechanism,
   o Works with other agencies to ensure required specialized services exist

Core areas of CPiE programming

Prevention of and response to **the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups (CAAFAG):**

- ✓ Understanding issues related to CAAFAG

- ✓ Preventing child recruitment:
  - ○ Community- based awareness and capacity building
  - ○ Strengthening legal framework
  - ○ Seek commitments from different parties

- ✓ Response and reintegration programming for CAAFAG
  - ○ Strengthen community-based approaches;
  - ○ Family tracing and reunification of CAAFAG;
  - ○ Support children in need of interim care
  - ○ Interventions to support the reintegration

Core areas of CPiE programming:

Prevention of and response to **physical harm, including landmines/explosive remnants of war (ERW):**

✓ **Understand risks and impacts**

✓ **Prevention and response**
   o Advocacy for the adoption and implementation of relevant legal instruments;
   o Capacity building & implementation of risk education;
   o Mainstreaming harm reduction;
   o Advocating for and supporting the provision of holistic victim assistance services (psychosocial support, physical rehabilitation, social reintegration, livelihood, etc)

Core areas of CPiE programming

Monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children and serious child protection concerns

- ✓ Monitor and report on grave violations perpetrated against children by armed groups and armed forces, as well as on other serious protection violations committed against children.

- ✓ Undertake awareness raising and prevention activities

- ✓ Advocacy with state and non-state actors

- ✓ Ensure linkages between the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism with programmatic response to grave violations against children's rights

In Conclusion

❖ Child protection in emergencies is a **complex sector** encompassing a variety of humanitarian interventions

❖ Interventions not only **address risks specific** to the emergency, but the **overall protective environment** for children

❖ Recognized as a **key life-saving sector** in humanitarian situations.