

Notes UNHCR Monthly online Consultations with NGOs

Date	8 June 2021
Session Title	Child Protection
Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grainne O’Hara, Director of the Division of International Protection, UNHCR • Alison Sutton, Global Director Child Protection, Save the Children • Amanda Melville, Senior Advisor, Child Protection, Child Protection Unit, UNHCR • Iman Al-Aqrabawi, Intervention Services Manager, Jordan River Foundation • Mercy Otieno, Outreach Case Manager, Awareness Against Human Trafficking
Moderator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jérôme Elie, Head – Forced Migration, ICVA
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75, mostly NGOs and UNHCR staff
Executive summary	
<p>The consultation focused on ways of improving child protection capacity, despite the numerous challenges caused by, <i>inter alia</i>, the lack of funding, national capacity and advocacy gaps, all of which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The consultation also drew upon the upcoming UNHCR data and analysis report based on inputs from all UNHCR operations on gaps in child protection over the past six years. Participants also exchanged on how to ensure child protection minimum standards and child participation in programming, advocate for a multisectoral approach and multi-year funding as well as to ensure UNHCR and NGOs in the field have access to guidance and expertise and to capacity building. Additionally, UNHCR and NGOs reflected on their community-based protection work, linked with localization.</p>	
Major points arising from speakers	
<p>UNHCR - Grainne O’Hara:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several child protection issues can be classified as highly vulnerable, particularly for separated, unaccompanied and stateless children. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that the voices of children both within their family settings but also as unaccompanied or temporarily separated children are listened to respond to their needs. • UNHCR and NGO partners are working tirelessly to deliver protection and education to 34 million forcibly displaced children, including 10 million refugee children. Children account for 30% of the world’s population, but 42% of all forcibly displaced. Child protection is obviously a core responsibility and concern for all of us. • COVID-19 has presented many challenges to child protection but also opportunities. While there are increased protection risks, economies are struggling, and education systems have been disrupted on an unprecedented scale; the pandemic also highlights certain needs of children and allows us to look at them holistically. <p>Save the Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR and NGOs need to prioritize protection in response planning and similarly, need to adapt thinking and operations to ensure that maximum support is given to community-level protection efforts. We are at a pivotal time for action and we must work together collectively. • The protection needs of children must be fully reflected in the Humanitarian Needs Overview as well as at the high-level meetings and through the Global Compacts on Refugees and on Migration. The specific needs of children and girls must be addressed at the global level. • A joint report by Save the Children, the Alliance for Child Protection, the Child Protection Area of Responsibility published in October 2020 on humanitarian funding for child protection showed that child protection funding appeals in 2019 were met at only 47%, whereas the portion of total funding received was 1,4% and the overall humanitarian responses were funded at 67%. • The need for predictable multi-year funding is clear for consistent, coherent and impactful support to children. • More can also be done across the Nexus of the development-humanitarian funding particularly in relation to promoting durable solutions not only for refugee children but also for internally displaced children. Local NGOs across the nexus have a critical role to play in this aspect. • Actions that could be taken by UNHCR and NGOs to improve child protection capacity include promoting a dialogue with donors on the prioritization but also having a critical reflection on how better to position responses by examining how to improve needs assessment and costings, how to promote the integration of child protection 	

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across other sectors in line with pillar four of the child protection minimum standards and how to ensure meaningful approaches to localization from a child protection perspective.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of working with and empowering communities to keep children safe and well, supporting communities' capacities to do what matters for children.
- A key priority going forward and much discussed in [The Alliance for Children Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) is how to leverage learning platforms, adapt materials to best reach and support communities and volunteers, promote mutual learning and exchange on child protection.
- In short, NGOs, UN Agencies and governments need to work collectively to ensure greater prioritization for child protection drawing on localized knowledge at network, and invest to accelerate shifting of capacities, resources and power to children and communities to meet their needs.

UNHCR - Amanda Melville

- UNHCR will publish soon a report on the analysis of UNHCR data on child protection, covering the period 2015-2021.
- Based on this upcoming report, 130 UNHCR operations reported that the main risks children face are becoming unaccompanied and separated, lack of access to birth registration, violence including sexual violence, abuse, exploitation, child labor, child marriage and a lack of child-friendly asylum procedures.
- One of the key issue that is most prevalent is sexual abuse and violence by caregivers, frequently underreported.
- The report also looked at key programmatic interventions from UNHCR and partners with a strong emphasis around three main areas: advocacy and local capacity building, best interests procedures in case management and community-based child protection, e.g. community outreach and communication with communities, the engagement of children and support to children peer-support and peer-network.
- While the numbers of forcibly displaced children are increasing, UNHCR and NGOs' ability to meet the scale of the needs is decreasing as shown by a 15% decrease in the number of Best Interest Procedures conducted between 2019 and 2020. This is a source of concern.
- The three key challenges identified in 2020 in child protection are COVID-19 – the most commonly identified challenge – followed by insufficient funding and a lack of national capacity.

Jordan River Foundation

- [Jordan River Foundation](#) (JRF) is an NGO working in the field in Jordan with an integrated approach on child protection and violence prevention. JRF provides awareness-raising and self-empowerment services targeting both adults (caregivers and parents) and children. Other JRF services are: case management, legal aid and psychological support. For those who cannot reach out to the locations, JRF makes its helpline available for children and their families across the country.
- JRF observed also a number of challenges that can be addressed, such as the need to expand safe spaces for children.
- In addition, children with disabilities deserve more attention and we also know that disability is one of the contributing factors to child abuse.
- We need qualitative group activities for children, based on awareness-raising regarding child protection issues along with activities based on behavior change approach. More structured activities related to self-empowerment are needed.
- Working with families and with perpetrators is completely missing; male engagement in child protection is a huge gap in Jordan.
- JRF found that training on the basics is still required, e.g. child assessment training by using child-friendly tools.
- At the coordination level, there are still some gaps.
- For JRF, there is an opportunity at the national level to strengthen the child protection system to work on capacity-building programs for other entities, specifically for the government and in including other needed capacity building such as Best Interests Assessment & Bests Interests Determination.

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- JRF also recommend to prioritize online children’s sexual exploitation prevention and protection.

HAART

- [HAART](#) (Awareness Against Human Trafficking) is an NGO in Kenya that provides prevention and protection services for children victims of trafficking and parents’ economic empowerment, and works through prosecution and partnership.
- When HAART staff identify children victim of trafficking, they move them to the next step in the process, which is rehabilitation. When a child is not victim of trafficking but does need protection, HAART refers the child to other partner organizations that work on other child protection issues.
- Once HAART has identified children victim of trafficking, they normally have a mandatory medical screening and mental health care. Then, HAART looks at reintegration in host community and the sustainability and economic empowerment plan for the parents. E.g. HAART trains the parents on how to grow, implement and run a business.
- HAART’s work also includes reintegration of children into families in host-communities and follow-up after 3-6 months. After all those services are provided, HAART ends their intervention.
- One achievement experienced by HAART is successful rehabilitation and integration of refugee children victims of human trafficking into their host community.
- In terms of expanding capacity building, HAART has been able to build the capacity of host communities to identify victims of trafficking. The host communities know how and where to report cases, the process and which services are available.
- In terms of opportunities, the Refugee Bill in Kenya is still in the Parliament. When the bill passes, refugees and children of refugees will have access to the various social protection services that will support the inclusion in the host communities and the participation in the social-economic development of the host communities. There is the Counter-Trafficking Act of 2012 which gives refugee that are victims of trafficking immunity when they were being charged due to unlawful presence. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework is also an opportunity with enhancing refugee self-reliance through education and livelihoods. All those law and policy frameworks are opportunities that will help to improve child protection in the country.
- The challenges observed are the need for more capacity-building; too limited resources for both civil society and the government; the lack of adequate social protection services.

Major points arising from discussions

- *Mentimeter* results to the question: ‘**What are some other challenges in delivering quality child protection programmes in refugee settings?**’ The results were the following:
 - predictable funding; inadequate funding; available local resources;
 - costing;
 - coordination;
 - access including access to national system; lack of MHPSS support; lack of access to education; malnutrition; health;
 - lack of qualified staff; professionalization; lack of accessible training;
 - lack of holistic programs;
 - limited socio-economic skills; capacity strengthening;
 - data;
 - children voices; child-friendly information; sustained contact.
 - traditional beliefs;
- Further results from the *Mentimeter* polls are shared separately as attachment to those notes.
- **Funding** came up frequently as one of the main current challenges, also highlighting issues around how UNHCR and NGOs prioritize child protection programs funding, in particular at country level. It is important to ensure children's issues are not deprioritized. We need to do more together to ensure integrated child protection programming continues to be a high priority and advocate with donors and partners around these issues.

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- With the **COVID-19 pandemic**, we are seeing a backslide and direct impacts on child protection. Among the households World Vision International surveyed, only 1% were vaccinated. Beside the lack of access to vaccines and health care, children and their families experienced considerable loss of income, xenophobia and hate speech, a poor diet, lack of psychosocial support and of continued access to education.
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- The rates of **child marriage** increased with the pandemic and Plan International emphasized the need for multi-sectoral and multi-level approaches when working with children who are at risk or who are married and the need to reflect together on the issue of economic empowerment, livelihoods and protection programming.
- We need to continue to adapt to this new context and evaluate our COVID-19 response.
- Missing Children Europe and participants highlighted the importance of listening to refugee children because they face many challenges during their journey. **Ensuring the right spaces exist so they can express their concerns and also their proposals. Children must be involved in co-designing responses.**
- It is fundamental to enhance capacities of refugee children, families and communities who are already doing a lot to protect children.
- UNHCR and NGOs need to work collaboratively and have a common vision and strategy, including integrated community models comprising case management, social protection, cash programming linked to getting children safely back to school.
- The Child Protection Minimum Standards Working Group worked to provide tailored tools to country and regional operations to ensure that despite the circumstances and challenges, UNHCR and NGOs are still driving forward to meet quality standards and **the minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action**, driving forward quality and accountability for refugee and asylum seeker children and their families. A range of tools for capacity strengthening is accessible online for country levels including an e-course and a child protection minimum standards implementation toolkit. The management of **data** can be improved and used to inform our interventions and programming so that we have evidence-based programming.
- *Mentimeter* results to the question: **‘What else do we need to prioritise in order to strengthen child protection programming?’** The results were the following:
 - Funding and listening to refugee children;
 - Age and gender approach according to different ages and needs;
 - Child participation, cross-border collaboration, use of digital tools for protection of children. Advocacy for policy change for child protection;
 - Support governments in developing comprehensive child protection systems through reinforced systems, additional funding and coordinated action (capacity development, advocacy and policies) by NGOs and UN agencies;
 - Access to schools for children;
 - Capacity building at regional, national and local levels to Institutions, Courts, the Police and Humanitarian staff;
 - Impress on governments and communities how fundamental investment in child protection and well being is at this time of increased risks. Platforms for dynamic decentralized capacity building and exchange of good practices.

Follow-up/Action points

To UNHCR & NGOs:

- Looking at the [High-Level Officials Meeting](#) of December 2021 to increase the attention on child protection.
- UNHCR and NGOs to think about how to galvanize attention on the existing 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledges and the need for further pledges on child protection.

Background documents/reports/guidance/websites

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- UNHCR, [Data visualization on the impacts of COVID 19 on displaced women and children](#), July 2021
- [UNHCR Best Interests Procedures Toolbox](#) – and online repository of tools (forms, checklists, field examples) – a companion to the 2021 BIP Guidelines
- UNHCR, [2021 UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines: Assessing and Determining the Best Interests of the Child](#), May 2021
- UNHCR, [Guidance on promoting child protection outcomes cash-based interventions](#), June 2021
- Save the Children, [Still Unprotected: Humanitarian funding for Child Protection](#), 27 October 2020
- Save the Children, [Adapt. Imagine. Innovate. Child Protection during COVID-19: A catalogue of innovations and adaptations](#), 25 February 2021
- Save the Children, [Child Marriage in Humanitarian Crises: Girls and parents speak out on risk and protective factors, decision-making, and solutions](#), 21 May 2021
- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, [2019 Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Pillar 4: Standards to work across sectors](#), 2019
- World Vision International, [Breaking the Chain: Empowering girls and communities to end child marriages during COVID-19 and beyond](#), 20 May 2021
- World Vision International, [Agile in adversity: How COVID-19 changed the way World Vision works](#), 10 March 2021.
- [Miniila app](#) developed by Missing Children Europe to inform children in migration about their rights and guide them to available child-friendly services in Europe and see also [Miniila app on Facebook](#)