

Key Messages on the Essential and Life-Saving nature of Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

"It's the youngest in our societies – the people that we are meant to be protecting and nurturing – who are among the worst hit." Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator¹

Key Message 1: In crises, children suffer first and most from violence, with devastating consequences for their immediate safety and long-term wellbeing.

- Humanitarian crises weaken and overwhelm children's protective environments, severely hampering the ability of families, communities and child protection systems to ensure children's safety.
- Conflict, forced displacement, and disasters expose children to harms such as exploitation, child marriage, and worst forms of child labour including trafficking, and recruitment and use into armed forces or groups.
- Violence can be fatal or cause life-altering consequences. For example, children may be killed or maimed from explosive remnants of war, or face life-threatening mental health conditions following sexual violence.
- Protecting children from physical, sexual and emotional harm and exploitation is crucial to save lives now, and to break the cycle of violence for a peaceful future.

Key Message 2: Child protection prevention and response interventions in humanitarian settings save lives and prevent long-term irreversible harm.

- The risks children face in crises are both predictable and preventable. Timely child protection interventions are essential to save their lives and prevent long term harm by reducing risks and strengthening protective factors.
- For example, actions to prevent family separation stabilises a child's environment and protects them from harm. If separation does occur, family tracing and reunification is critical to prevent further harm, such as trafficking and recruitment into armed groups.
- A well-funded and capacitated child protection workforce is crucial as the first line of response in addressing essential and life-saving protection needs.
- Recognising child protection as [life-saving](#), the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) prioritises it alongside food, water, and medical care.

Key Message 3: Addressing harm to children requires a coordinated, cross-sector approach that puts protection at the heart of humanitarian response.

- Children's risks are intrinsically connected to challenges across health, education, nutrition, and other sectoral areas of intervention.
- For example, food insecurity can increase household stress, heightening risks of neglect, domestic violence, child labour, and exploitation. As such, integrating child protection and food assistance interventions reduces the risk of harm to children while ensuring at-risk children receive urgent protection services, such as case management, alternative care, or psychosocial support.
- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) mandates protection central to humanitarian action—ensuring all sectors and actors are actively engaged in protecting children².

¹<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/mr-tom-fletcher-under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator-remarks-global-humanitarian-overview-2025-geneva-launch-event>

² <https://alliancecpha.org/en/centrality-of-children-introduction>

Key Statistics on the impact of escalating crises on children and their protection:

- More than one in six children globally live in conflict zones, nearly double the proportion in 1990³.
- Grave violations against children in conflict have reached unprecedented levels, with a 21% rise in grave violations against children from 2022 to 2023⁴.
- Children constitute 41% of all forcibly displaced people despite being only 30% of the world's population and due to the protracted nature of conflict, the majority of these children will spend their entire childhoods in displacement.
- One billion children are at risk of extreme weather events⁵, which exacerbate life threatening risks including displacement and exploitation.

Additional information can be found on the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's [website](#).

These messages have been developed by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. For more information please contact advocacywg@alliancecpha.org.

³ <https://data.stopwaronchildren.org/>

⁴ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/document/secretary-general-annual-report-on-children-and-armed-conflict-3/>

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/reports/climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis>