



## CHILD PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING CASE STUDIES SERIES

### Main Lessons Learnt

#### ***Child Protection Mainstreaming is a process of listening and mutual understanding***

Child Protection mainstreaming in any emergency is not about using a prescriptive approach, telling other sectors how to integrate child protection considerations into their responses. Mainstreaming starts with listening and taking the time to understand the work of colleagues in other sectors and the challenges they face. At the same time other sectors can be supported to understand the various risks children face in a given context and appropriate responses. From here, child protection staff and other sectors could take the time to jointly identify instances where humanitarian workers' actions or non-actions exacerbate risks or cause harm, as well as tailored ways in which child protection issues could be addressed.

#### ***Working physically together***

Building strong collaboration with actors from different sectors is key to successful mainstreaming. Rather than seeing child protection mainstreaming as something other sectors need to do, creating dialogue and joint ownership is crucial. But developing joint messages and tools is often not enough. Ideally staff are enabled to work physically together, creating opportunities to learn from each other while doing relief work and to build each other's capacities and mutual understand, moving gradually to the point where other sectors are able, willing, and empowered to consider child protection needs without the actual presence and support of child protection staff.

#### ***Flexibility and stepping out of comfort zones***

There's no doubt that a collaborative approach involving different sectors is time-consuming and resource-intensive. It requires a willingness of cross-sectoral actors to be open to work in a different way and to be flexible enough to adapt processes and activities accordingly. This includes non-child protection actors working closely together with families and communities. "And that's a challenge for us in the humanitarian community – to actually fully live up to what we say we stand up for – which is placing the community at the heart of what we do."

#### ***Enabling a deeper level of collaboration between sectors***

Using an integrated approach to responding to child protection issues ensures a deeper level of collaboration between child protection and other sector staff. Several examples of reciprocal capacity building between teams can bring a shared understanding of each other's work, which ensured the identification of opportunities to collaborate.



### ***Invest sufficient time in ongoing training and on-the-job coaching***

Cross-sectoral programming is often a new approach for staff. Colleagues from other sectors might have very little knowledge on child protection and no access to related education and communication (IEC) materials. It can take time to develop joint programming guidelines, training materials, key messages and other tools. With additional ongoing training, supervision and intensive support the capacity of key implementers can be strengthened and improved.

### ***Embedding Child Protection mainstreaming efforts within inter-agency mechanisms***

Mainstreaming and integration efforts often take place at the interagency Working Group level, ensuring a sense of ownership amongst all major multi-sectoral agencies. Moreover, linking integrated programming to the overall Humanitarian Response Plan can be crucial to its success. By embedding the interventions and concept within a planning mechanism that is both multi-sectoral and inter-agency, the programming is owned by all those involved.

### ***Building on existing collaboration and using concrete examples to inspire***

Integrated programming often doesn't happen in a vacuum. Child protection mainstreaming efforts led by interagency coordination structures can generate an appreciation for the value and importance of mainstreaming, creating an enabling environment for other sectors to embrace collaboration. Concrete examples of a cross-sectoral collaboration can help to explain what child protection mainstreaming or integration looks like and once this is grasped, it is easier for other sectors to see how they could be involved. "If we just go around in coordination meetings with a standard PowerPoint presentation on Child Protection mainstreaming, people will go away without a clear idea of what they can do in their programmes."

### ***Building on the in country contextualisation of the Child Protection Minimum Standards***

The in country contextualisation of the child protection mainstreaming standards involving child protection and other relevant sectors can provide an important base and a wealth of guidance in identifying important actions that ensure integration. Further mainstreaming and integration can build on those efforts. The Child Protection Minimum Standards (CPMS) are seen as critical in this regard.

### ***Complex child protection issues require multi-sectoral approaches***

Some complex child protection issues cannot be addressed by one sector alone. As the evolution of a programme can demonstrate, each stage can reveal emerging, highly complex challenges that require joint solutions to provide a comprehensive system of support for highly vulnerable children. This requires a strong willingness of all actors involved to work closely together to develop and adapt the programme, notwithstanding the significant obstacles that can arise along the way.



***Child protection mainstreaming ensures a holistic response meeting the needs of children and their families***

Humanitarian actors' work tends to be segmented according to sectors. However, children and their families have holistic needs, which require support by a range of humanitarian actors. Cross-sectoral interventions ensure that a variety of risks and needs of children and their families are addressed.

***Community Participation – an essential ingredient for child protection mainstreaming***

The Guiding Principle of child participation is the bedrock of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of child protection work. For participation to be meaningful, it requires ongoing consultation with communities, including children, to understand their contexts, issues and needs. Ensuring a community-based approach including thorough community consultation will allow for greater understanding of child protection issues, relevant to the design and implementation of integrated programming.

***Child protection integration through a youth-led approach***

Having integrated interventions being implemented by young people can be a key element to success. Youth bring energy and enthusiasm to the work, and a lot more. Firstly, their perspective on multi-sector issues can be very different from attitudes coming from older generations. Supporting young people to lead the implementation of an integrated project requires a degree of 'letting go' for those supporting the process. "You have to accept that it might not be what someone who's trained and highly experienced in these situations might do. Sometimes, once do no harm systems are in place, this means you need to stand back." Young people can be able to communicate and build rapport with children from affected communities in a unique way. As peers, they have a perceived credibility and can understand the experiences of children they are supporting.