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CHILD PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING BRIEFING PAPER FOR DISTRIBUTIONS



CHILD PROTECTION MINIMUM STANDARD #26

“Children access humanitarian assistance through efficient and well-planned distribution systems that safeguard boys and girls from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.”¹

How to Use This Briefing paper: This is a quick reference for Plan International Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) staff on how to engage with sectors operating distributions in the emergency so that children and adolescent protection needs and concerns are taken into account in their programmes. It can also usefully inform Plan International’s own distributions of NFIs, when this activity is a part of a planned CPiE intervention. This briefing paper gives CPiE staff guidance on which child protection mainstreaming messages should be conveyed to all sectors engaged in distributions. This briefing is aligned with the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the Sphere Standards, as well as Plan International staff feedback on what actions are the most vital for child protection mainstreaming in other sectors.

Symbols Key:

→ See Tool Annex

INTRODUCTION: WHY MAINSTREAM CHILD PROTECTION IN DISTRIBUTIONS?

Distribution of immediate, life-saving assistance is one of the most urgent actions to be taken in an emergency response, and one that can significantly improve the safety and well-being of children. However, if done without proper considerations for the specific needs and risks that children face during distributions, they could have a significant effect on the threats experienced by children. Common protection issues for girls and boys during food and NFI distributions include lack of access to distribution, such as distributions being scheduled during school hours. Protection risks during distribution, for example, overcrowding leading to injury. And lack of identification or response to vulnerable children during distributions, such as children who arrive alone or with other children.

If child protection concerns are not carefully reflected in the assessment, design, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of distribution programs, children can be exposed to risks of abuse while being denied access the vital humanitarian assistance. It is therefore important that all Distribution workers are aware of the specific needs and risks of children and carry out their activities in a way that protects children and does not put them at risk of any further harm. This briefing sheet is divided into four parts:

- 1) Common risks for girls and boys during Distribution
- 2) Designing a child-friendly and safe Distribution
- 3) Implementing a Child Friendly and Safe Distribution
- 4) Monitoring and Evaluating a Child Friendly and Safe Distribution

¹ CHILD PROTECTION WORKING GROUP (2012), MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION, STANDARD 26.

COMMON RISKS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS IN DURING DISTRIBUTIONS

Common reasons that children lack access to distribution include:

- Distribution times and sites are not informed by consultations with children: Children may have to leave school to take part in distributions and adolescent girls might not be able to take part in distributions due to home chores. Distribution points may be too far away for children to walk to and may require them to sleep overnight at distribution points. Children may get hurt or face protection threats on their way to and from distribution points because routes are unsafe.
- Lack of shelter or water at distribution points: Children may suffer physical exhaustion or become sick when there is no shade or shelter or safe drinking water is provided.
- Exclusion of the most vulnerable children: Unaccompanied children or children living in child-headed households can be left out during registration if only adult-led-households are registered for distributions. Children living in polygamous households can be left out if only first wives and their children are registered. Children with disabilities may not be able to reach distribution points or wait in line as able-bodied persons can. Unaccompanied or separated children may have difficulty obtaining or renewing registration mechanisms (e.g. SIM cards, registration cards, etc.).
- Lack of consideration for adolescent girls' roles in caring for families and dependents, decisions regarding size of rations, appropriateness of rations, monitoring of distribution, collection and use, can all result in the exclusion of adolescent girls.
- Lack of age and gender appropriate information about distributions: Children may not know how to behave, what to do or where to go at distribution points in order to receive their items because they were given information that only targeted adults. For example, written signs that they cannot read. Children may not know the distribution ratios, or that aid is free and they do not need to give anything in return for the items.
- Inappropriate items: Distributed items may not be child-friendly or appropriate for children (e.g. size of clothes, shoes). Children may not be able to carry heavy or large items home. Distribution packages may not include essential protection items for girls, which could mitigate GBV risks, such as flashlights and whistles, as well as culturally-appropriate clothing and hygiene items, which will help them to interact comfortably in public.
- Absence of processes to monitor the distribution pipeline of food and NFIs to ensure that food and NFIs reach those for whom they are intended.

Common reasons that children may be at risk during distributions include:

- *Risk of family separation*: During crowded distributions, children may become separated from their parents or caregivers.
- *Abuse and exploitation*: There is the risk that when children lack access to distributions, adults may use their power, goods or services to abuse children in exchange for access to distributed items. Children may consent to sexual activity in return for goods if they do not know that goods are free.
- *Risk of injury*: Children are smaller than adults. If distributions are overcrowded or poorly managed and become chaotic or rowdy, children can be at risk to injury. In addition, distribution items are often heavy, leaving children to manage loads that are not appropriate for their age and ability.

DESIGNING A CHILD FRIENDLY AND SAFE DISTRIBUTION

As Child Protection team members, find time to meet Plan's colleagues who will be responsible for distribution, discuss with them planning and preparedness actions that need to be undertaken to ensure that children, adolescents and youth are protected from harm during distributions and have equal access to vital distribution services.

Some of the below actions only target child protection or distribution actors. Other actions target both child protection and distribution actors. Note that not all the below actions will be feasible, it is important that you check with your colleagues which actions will be feasible and not. Boys and girls, especially those most vulnerable, must be consulted during needs assessments and throughout distribution program design/delivery/monitoring/evaluation.

Planning and preparedness actions can include:

- *Be informed* about the particular protection risks children are exposed to in your context. Pay particular attention to the needs of adolescents, especially girls, and the risks they may face during distributions.
- *Map all services engaged in distribution activities* so that you know which partners to coordinate with.
- *Ensure registration cards* are available to unaccompanied children, children with special needs, children of polygamous households and any other vulnerable or at risk children to access any distribution services.
- *Ensure safe and orderly distribution sites and identify ways to avoid unnecessary family separation* during crowded queuing (e.g. creating safe spaces with supervised play for children while parents wait in distribution line, separate queues for mothers with children, etc.).
- *Plan distribution locations to avoid overcrowding and accommodate access for children.* For example, central distribution locations spread across several hundred metres between different distribution points can avoid overcrowding. If the local infrastructure does not allow for this, ensure that distributed items reach vulnerable children in a different way (e.g. consider arranging transportation to deliver goods to children's homes).
- *Plan distribution points to include shelter.* This may require moving distribution points to the shade, where possible, or provide shade to avoid the risk that children may collapse from the sun's heat. Note: cold can be just as dangerous as heat - your context will determine the safety measures you should put in place to avoid harm or injury from extreme weather conditions.
- *Plan distribution times around school schedules and daily activities and chores of children.* Ensure the day and time of distributions do not interfere with children's education and times when children should be in the home.
- *Collect input from boys and girls on distribution items needed, preferred distribution times and sites, and share this with distribution colleagues when establishing selection criteria for targeted distribution. Ensure adolescents are also consulted as their NFI needs vary greatly from younger children.*

- *Coordinate with distribution colleagues to ensure that targeting for the most vulnerable children and households links with Plan International's wider response programmes* (e.g. that a family targeted for distribution is also linked with child protection interventions).
- *Advocate for distribution teams to provide specific and culturally-appropriate distribution items for children*, e.g. child-sized clothing and shoes, enough bedding and blankets to allow for girls and boys to sleep separately and mosquito nets that can also be used as privacy screens if necessary, and culturally appropriate NFI hygiene items for girls.

Staff capacity building can include:

- *Arrange regular meetings between Child Protection and Distribution staff* to ensure that crucial issues, such as priority risks areas and vulnerability criteria are communicated and understood.
- *Advocate for adequate numbers of female distribution staff.*
- *Budget for the instalment of a Help Desk at distribution sites.* Help Desks are crucial for providing girls, boys and adult community members with relevant and life-saving messages, immediate referral for urgent protection issues and to collect feedback from the community. Ensure presence of a trained child protection worker at each location.
- *Budget for child protection trainings for all distribution staff.* To ensure that child protection risks and child abuse are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner, it is crucial that distribution staff is educated on the following issues in trainings:
 - o Plan International's and, if relevant, other service provider's child protection policy.
 - o How to sensitively communicate with children to avoid further distress.
 - o Context-specific child protection issues and vulnerability criteria.
 - o Types of child protection incidents could happen at or because of distributions, how to handle these incidents if they occur and how the child protection referral mechanism works so that they feel confident reporting cases of abuse to the child protection team.
 - o How to ensure children's access to distribution services, particularly for excluded children, such as children living or working on the streets, children with special needs, children living in child-headed households, etc.
 - o How to include child abuse prevention and response messages in distributions' community outreach (e.g. broadcasting radio messages on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse during distribution activities).

IMPLEMENTING A CHILD FRIENDLY AND SAFE DISTRIBUTION

During programme implementation, ensure that child protection field staff are equipped to take the following key programme implementation actions in partnership with distribution colleagues to ensure children are protected from harm during distributions and have equal access to vital services. Coordinate with the FI and NFI clusters, Child Protection sub-cluster, and other clusters, where relevant, to ensure you have all the information needed to plan distributions that keep children safe and with access to life-saving distribution items.

Distribution staff awareness & allocation

- *Train distribution staff on the specific child protection issues in your context* and ensure they are able to suggest distributions items that are specific to children's needs (e.g. sufficient blankets to allow for girls and boys to sleep separately, culturally appropriate NFI hygiene items for girls, etc.).
- *Ensure distribution staff are trained on, understand and sign Plan International's and service providers' Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy.*
- *Ensure distribution staff are trained on:*
 - o Type of child protection incidents could happen at or because of distributions
 - o How to handle these incidents if they occur
 - o How the child protection referral mechanisms works so that they feel confident reporting cases of abuse.
- *Ensure both male and female staff are assigned to distribution points.*
- *Ensure distribution staff regularly communicate with child protection colleagues* to ensure the referral mechanisms are working.

→ To monitor these actions, see: Indicators I, IV and VI.

Registration process & information sharing prior to distribution

- *Check whether distribution registration processes reach all children*, especially children living without adult care and children with special needs.
- *If polygamy is practiced in your context, register all adult women in all households* as main recipients of items to ensure that second wives and their children are not excluded.
- *Ensure that unaccompanied children receive their own ration cards during registration* to ensure that:
 - o If a child is moved between caregivers, re-registration issues do not slow down access to essential services
 - o Children are treated equally within foster family
 - o Child-headed households are not left out if distributions are based on a family unit.
- *Make specific considerations for adolescent girls roles in caring for families and dependents* (e.g. size of rations; appropriateness of rations)
- *Ensure that children and families are provided with accurate information about location and schedules (day, time, duration) of distributions.* Why?
 - o Accurate information increases the likelihood that parents/caregivers will not spend a long time away from their children while waiting for distribution.
 - o Informing children how long distributions are planned to last and how often they will be held can help children plan the use of their resources to help them avoid situations in which they could be at risk to exploitation when distributions end or resources deplete e.g. exchanging goods for sex.
 - o Schedule distributions outside of school hours and ending early enough to allow sufficient time for children to walk home during daylight. This can increase school attendance and safety.

→ To monitor these actions, see: Indicators II.

- *Ensure children are given adequate information about what items will be distributed, how much will be distributed and how to use the items.*
- *Ensure children understand that they are not expected to give distributors anything in return for the items.* This can help protect children from potential exploitation and abuse.
 - o Display illustrated posters at distribution points that clearly show acts of abuse will not be tolerated.
 - o Rotate distribution teams as regularly as possible to discourage staff/volunteers from establishing improper relationships with children.

Distribution points

- *Clearly display food and NFI entitlements at distribution points in visual form* so that non-literate and young children are aware of what they will receive, when and how.

→ To monitor these actions, see: Indicators V.
- *Clearly display Plan International's Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy* at distribution points, including in visual form.
- *Ensure distribution points are at most 1 day's return walk for children from their homes* (including time for going, receiving distribution, and returning home) to avoid children being exposed at night or early mornings when abuse could occur.
- *Ensure distribution points are central and accessible* to improve access for children with disabilities or with disabled parents.
- *Consider installing a lost children help zone at each distribution point.*
- *Ensure adequate and sufficient shelter/shade is available* at distribution points for breastfeeding women and children.
- *Ensure drinking water is available* at distribution points.
- *Establish an Information and Help Desk* at distribution points.
- *Ensure* there is an accessible and confidential reporting mechanism for violations and abuses.

Distribution Process

- *Ensure that food and NFIs are first distributed to children with specific needs and pregnant and breastfeeding women,* then other community members.

→ To monitor these actions, see: Indicators III and V.
- *Ensure crowding is avoided.* Create separate lines or direct children to safe places where they are supervised as long as parents wait in line.
- *Explore the possibility of conducting recreational activities during distributions* to keep children safely engaged while parents/caregivers receive distribution items. These can be small-scale and very basic (e.g. providing a football, marked area and adult supervision).
- *Ensure distributed items are appropriate size and weight for children to carry.* Consult with child protection sub-cluster for advice on appropriate quantity or transport options.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING A CHILD FRIENDLY AND SAFE DISTRIBUTION

It is crucial that you monitor whether distribution processes have safeguarded children and not exposed them to further harm while taking their special needs and vulnerabilities into consideration.

At the same time, monitoring should give answers to whether and in how far children have effectively accessed distribution services. The below action indicators are suggested but be sure to select from these indicators only those that apply to or can be adapted for your specific context and distribution programme. You may come up with different indicators based on your specific intervention. These results can be documented and shared as ways to improve your programming and as lessons learnt on child protection mainstreaming. Be sure to disaggregate all data by sex and age.

In addition, you can use → [MEAL Tool – Mainstreaming Quality Scorecard](#) from the MEAL Toolkit to self-assess your mainstreaming work into other sectors. Adjust the scorecard to your context by working in partnership with other sectors to identify benchmarks for successful mainstreaming.

Action Indicators	Monitoring Tools
I. Percentage of surveyed distribution staff who have signed and been trained on a basic child safeguarding policy (e.g. Plan International's Child Protection Policy)	Consultation with distribution staff, evaluation of surveys.
II. Percentage of surveyed child-headed households and unaccompanied and separated children registered for distribution	Registration lists; beneficiary feedback surveys
III. Percentage of surveyed unaccompanied children, street children and child-headed households that have effective access to distributed items	Post-distribution surveys with households and/or children
IV. Distribution of NFI items specific to boys and girls of different ages within NFI distribution plans	Review of distribution plans; consultation with distribution staff and children who have received distributed items.
V. Percentage of surveyed distribution activities that took specific measures to deal with any possible risks to girls and boys of all ages, particularly those with special needs	Surveys, consultation with distribution staff and with children.
VI. Number of cases referred to the Child Protection case management programme through staff involved in distribution	Consultation with distribution and case-management staff; case management reports

Further Resources

- Child Protection Working Group, *Minimum Standards on Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*, Standard 26 - <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/03/CP-Minimum-Standards-English-2013.pdf>
- The Sphere Project, *Sphere Handbook*, p 268-287 - http://www.spherehandbook.org/~sh_resources/resources/Sphere_Core_Standards_and_CHS.pdf
- ChildFund International, World Vision, IRC, and Save the Children, *Inter-Agency Facilitator's Guide: Applying Basic Child Protection Mainstreaming in Training for Field Staff in Non-Protection Sectors* - <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/5340.pdf>
- Global Protection Cluster, *Protection Mainstreaming Training Package*, 2014 - http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/aors/protection_mainstreaming/PM_training/1_GPC_Protection_Mainstreaming_Training_Package_FULL_November_2014.pdf
- Save the Children, *Ethical Guidelines – For ethical, meaningful and inclusive children's participation practice*, 2008 - <http://childethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Feinstein-OKane-2008.pdf>
- Save the Children, *Practice Standards in Children's Participation*, 2005 - <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/3017.pdf>
- ARC Resource Pack, *Foundation Module 4: Participation and Inclusion*, 2009 - <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4b55d8d22.pdf>



About Plan International:

Plan International is an independent child rights and humanitarian organisation committed to children living a life free of poverty, violence and injustice. We actively unite children, communities and other people who share our mission to make positive lasting changes in children's and young people's lives. We support children to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to claim their rights to a fulfilling life, today and in the future.

We place a specific focus on girls and women, who are most often left behind. We have been building powerful partnerships for children for more than 75 years, and are now active in more than 70 countries.