CHILD PROTECTION IN ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Briefing note

INTRODUCTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Save the Children defines Anticipatory Action (AA) as **acting ahead of a predicted hazard to prevent or reduce the impacts on communities before they fully unfold.** [1] Anticipatory Action guides us to act on the basis of risk as opposed to needs and in a way which is proactive, as opposed to reactive, to ensure child protection as a life-saving intervention. It reduces the impact of hazards on violence, exploitation, neglect and other forms of harm both in the immediate and longer-term.

WHY ANTICIPATORY ACTION FOR CHILD PROTECTION

✓ Anticipatory Actions will help us more efficiently address the increasing severity of risks and scale of needs:

Over 1 billion children live in countries facing extreme climate risks and many million are directly impacted by conflict and other complex crises. There is growing recognition that we must shift from reactive to proactive approaches if we are to address the scale of humanitarian needs globally, and in relation to children's protection, health, learning and well-being.

✓ Anticipatory Action contributes to Protection outcomes:

Crises of all kinds increases the incidence of negative coping strategies, including child marriage, child labour, family separation, violence and exploitation of children and youth. As a case in point, a recent study confirms the association between climate-related events and child marriage where historical data of unexpectedly high or low levels of rainfall, showed that a 10 per cent deviation in either direction is associated with a 1 per cent increase in levels of child marriage.[1] AA, whether stand alone or through integration with other sectors, such as through education or Cash & Voucher Assistance(CVA), have the potential to contribute towards positive outcomes for children, reducing violence and negative coping mechanisms.

[1] Save the Children's Framework for Anticipatory Action

✓ Anticipatory Actions contribute to child protection system strengthening:

By identifying child protection anticipatory actions during emergency preparedness and implementing them in advance of humanitarian crises, we can demonstrate the impact of mitigating child protection risks and build the approach into formal and informal child protection systems.

✓ Anticipatory Action can help drive our focus on the Centrality of Protection:

Centrality of Protection means that all humanitarian actors are accountable towards children's rights to protection and should consider the views, capacities, needs and vulnerabilities of girls and boys, with a strong gender and vulnerability focused lens in all aspects of humanitarian response, include Anticipatory Actions those enhances duty bearers' and humanitarian actors' accountability in adherence to the core humanitarian principles, international humanitarian policies and laws; thus upholds quality of humanitarian services and encourages integration within all sectoral interventions.

Many Child Protection AAs are best implemented through mainstreaming, joint programming and integration with other sectors, such as activities aimed at protection outcomes in coordination with education eg., Safe Schools programming, with shelter colleagues to ensure Child Friendly Spaces/Girl Friendly Spaces CFS/GFS are safe for girls and boys or with Cash Voucher Assistance (CVA)/Livelihoods colleagues to target those children most at vulnerable to protection risks.

✓ Links to our common approaches:

Although AA windows can be typically short; there may be opportunities to implement AA activities in association with Steps to Protect (S2P), Safe Families and through Community-Led Child Protection.

In humanitarian settings where community-level protection systems may already exist, these local systems can play a vital role in raising awareness and disseminating information on potential protection risks associated with hazards, providing basic Psychological First Aid (PFA) as necessary and even Safe Recognition and Referral (SRR) of particularly vulnerable children and their families. SRR is an important aspect of Steps2Protect and keeping families and children safe is a top line priority of Safe Families.

✓ Anticipatory Actions can and should be climate-informed and responsive:

Increasingly, humanitarian crises, including conflict and economic crises are induced and exacerbated by climate change. All Child Protection Anticipatory Actions should be climate informed and responsive, and to what is most effective in minimizing the impacts of climate-related shocks for children.[2]

WHAT DO CHILD PROTECTION ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS LOOK LIKE?

Child Protection activities within anticipatory action will **vary according to context, type of hazard, populations most at risk, and other factors**. Most activities are not different from what child protection actors may already be very familiar with in working with response strategies and approaches implemented in early phases of humanitarian interventions.

Mapping against the risks listed in the Child Protection in Humanitarian Minimum Standards (CPMS), here is a **non-exhaustive list of types of anticipatory action** to take to prevent and mitigate the impact of hazards on child protection:

[2] The Climate Crisis: A Child-Centred Framework for Action

Child Protection Risks	Examples of Child Protection Anticipatory Action Activities/Interventions
Dangers & Injuries	• Actions to prevent or mitigate children's exposure to physical dangers and injuries including information on safety measures in displacement contexts and collaboration across sectors to ensure children are taken into account during the design of projects (ex. water distribution points, shelter and construction) • Actions to identify or establish safe spaces for girls and boys and conduct outreach activities to those who may face access issues • Action to deliver key services to prevent or mitigate impact of a particular hazard on protection referral protocols and refresher trainings.
Physical & Emotional Maltreatment	• Actions to mitigate, prevent and respond to physical and emotional maltreatment, such as messaging on reactions of children in humanitarian contexts for parents and caregivers including foster parents and how they can support themselves and their children • Actions to provide Safe Identification and Referral in early action windows of opportunity
Sexual & Gender Based Violence (SGBV)	• Actions to prevent, mitigate and respond to SGBV, which may include providing information on how to keep oneself safe from harm, how to access services and in evacuation or displacement settings, ensuring the establishment of safe spaces for women and girls. • Actions to provide Safe Identification and Referral in early action windows of opportunity.
Mental Health & Psychosocial Distress (MHPSS)	• Actions to deliver key services to prevent or mitigate impact of a particular hazard, such as advance provision of mental health and psychosocial support information, child protection messages and update of referral protocols and refresher training.
Children associated with armed forces & groups (CAAFAG)	• Actions to prevent forced recruitment through key messages, putting safety plans in place and lessening exposure to physical harm and other risks in conflict settings.
Child Labour	• Actions to identify drivers, prevent and mitigate negative coping mechanisms, such as ensuring access to basic needs and timely information on available services, and community level awareness or risks, or working in coordination with CVA/Livelihoods and education colleagues.
Unaccompanied & Separated Children (UASC)	• Actions to prevent mitigate and respond to family separation, which may include: actions to maintain family unity during evacuations, family strengthening and potential referrals to CVA/Livelihoods programmes, messaging on how to keep children safe while on the move and information on available services; ensuring rapid identification of UASC and referral for alternative care and Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR). • Actions to map vulnerable UASC (ex. children in institutions, children living with vulnerable caregivers) and ensuring they have a case file, dedicated case worker and access to child-friendly information.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Child Protection in Anticipatory Action Matrix of Actions
- List of relevant resources that could be helpful for your work