



The Child Protection Area of Responsibility (AoR) Field Support Team

Coordination is central to ensuring the quality and coverage of every child protection response. The Child Protection AoR's Field Support Team (FST) deploys trained and experienced staff into vital coordination roles at short notice whether for a catastrophic new emergency, the deterioration of an existing crisis or in support of existing in-country teams. The FST includes coordination experts, information management officers, and child protection coordination and thematic specialists who have experience of a wide range of contexts and who can operate in a variety of languages. Having a strong, rapidly deployable team of experienced, skilled staff is key to delivering on the Child Protection AoRs strategic goal of strengthening field-level coordination, global accountability for all AoRs and Clusters.

How the FST addresses key challenges in Child Protection coordination

Rapid Response to Major Emergencies: Providing coordination and information management capacity is a key accountability of the cluster system. The FST allows the CP AoR to deploy experienced and highly skilled teams to major new emergencies within 72 hours.

Building Local Coordination Capacity: To strengthen preparedness and the child protection sector response it is essential for government staff to be brought into coordination leadership roles and for government systems to be more crisis ready. The FST deploys coordination and thematic specialists to support and build the capacity of government-led coordination mechanisms and to improve national child protection systems and processes.

Ensuring the Centrality of Protection: The CP AoR works with and through the Global Protection Cluster to ensure that protection is central to humanitarian action by supporting the identification of key

child protection outcomes, ensuring their clear articulation as priorities within humanitarian program cycle and providing the analysis and planning required for their realization. FST staff deploys to lead or assist key strategic activities within the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. Their support is critical to sometimes overwhelmed country teams, especially in the development of credible and evidence-based analyses of key child protection issues.

Providing Key Thematic Support: Thematic advisors provide specialised support to key cluster functions including needs assessments, the development of country-level CP AoR strategies, monitoring systems and the technical revision of prevention measures and responses in line with global standards. This ensures better quality and more appropriately targeted responses.

CASE STUDY: Rapid deployments to Mozambique to lead Child Protection Coordination after Cyclone Idai



On the 6th March 2019, Cyclone Idai made landfall in Mozambique in what has been called weather-related disasters in the southern hemisphere. Government and aid agencies were largely unprepared for the scale of crises with little contingency planning in place.

The CP AoR moved quickly to deploy Bilal Sougou (Coordination Specialist) and Anne Marie Turmine (information Management Officer) to support the initial coordination of the response.

The early deployment of experienced staff was crucial to the establishment of a response framework that ensured issues related to the protection of children were at the forefront of Protection Cluster planning and the larger humanitarian response; and most importantly, on the agenda of the Government. The team was able to capitalize on pre-existing collaboration between UNICEF and the Government, enabling the opening of communication channels not only for UNICEF and the CP AoR but for the whole Protection Cluster. This dialogue at all levels was instrumental in ensuring a well-coordinated and targeted response. The team also prioritised cooperation with other key groups including the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Group and those working on disability issues.

Significant efforts were made to build the capacity of the Ministry of Social Welfare, supporting and promoting the government's leadership in joint response planning and monitoring. Even in a rapid response, it is important to look further ahead to ensure a smooth transition to a government led coordination and the later shift to more development-focused interventions.

CASE STUDY: El Salvador, Strengthening Local Government Coordination of Child Protection Services

CP AoR Deputy Coordinator Petra Heusser deployed to San Salvador in February 2019 to work with government representatives to strengthen their coordination in child protection in humanitarian action. She was joined by Yesica Serrano another CP technical specialist who covers the Spanish language CP AoR help desk.

While the emergency response for natural disasters is well structured, the work and coordination to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploration and neglect of children in a situation of armed violence still needs much more strengthening.

The team worked with government and local actors to develop a plan of action to rectify these weaknesses. Outcomes included the recommendation to create a National Sub-Commission specifically for the coordination of child protection to be part of the existing structure that is activated in situations of national disasters and to include the specific recommendations regarding the prevention and response to sexual violence, forced displacement and the recruitment of children into the INSPIRE National Action Plan to End Violence against Children.



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CASE STUDY: Burkina Faso – Supporting Better Data Analysis to Identify the Needs and Inform the Response



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The identification and analysis of child protection issues can face significant challenges. Protection issues can be sensitive; taboos may prevent their discussion; political sensibilities may be a barrier to acknowledging and addressing protection concerns.

Yet protection is an intrinsic part of all humanitarian responses and reaches across all sectors. The centrality of protection is therefore a cornerstone of humanitarian response planning, and to be effective requires strong analysis of protection issues, root causes and the wider protection environment.

The global CP AoR provided the Burkina Faso response with specialised IM (information management) support in 2019. This included a two-week in-country mission as well as extensive remote support. The IM enabled the Protection, GBV and CP coordinators to lead a multi-sectoral analysis, providing overarching protection indicators (to be used as a common framework for a joint sectoral analysis. Additional indicators specific to each sub-sector were developed in collaboration with the coordination group, to highlight the impact of the crisis on the different groups of population as well as to provide severity ratings and thresholds that deal with access to basic services, safety and protection of affected populations, psychosocial support and issues around violence against children.

Such analysis is vital in developing an appropriate evidence-based child protection response strategy.

CASE STUDY: Cox's Bazar, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Coordination Specialist Mission

Answering a request from the CP coordination group at Cox's Bazar, the Global CP AoR deployed an MHPSS and Coordination specialist for 4 weeks. Whilst in-country the specialist conducted capacity development for 15 local staff in key thematic aspects of MHPSS. Support was also provided to local partners in the development of a baseline survey for PSS activities that were adapted in-line with international good practice. Stakeholder consultations were conducted to support the optimisation of various working groups and significant progress was made in harmonising all PSS materials used by implementing partners.

With continuing remote support, several strategic response documents were analysed for MHPSS components and recommendations for 2020 planning were put forward (including an MHPSS strategy for children). Inputs to PSS in teacher training and other education interventions were also provided. Providing senior-level thematic support to fundamental areas of the child protection response strategy helps ensure an appropriate and quality response; whilst at the same time building local capacity.



Displaced Rohingya children play in a child friendly space in a camp in Bangladesh

Whilst the primary role of the FST is to allow the CP AoR to rapidly deploy expert coordination and thematic capacity when required it has two other key benefits. Firstly, FST staff work with and in support of local systems and actors, leaving coordination groups and governments with increased capacity at the end of their missions. Secondly, FST members bring back many lessons learned and examples of good practice to the global level. This important information is fed into the development of guidance and tools and is made available to other coordination groups through the multi-language help desks.

All of this made possible through our vital partnerships with UNICEF, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Swiss Development Cooperation and Save the Children. If you are interested in the work of the FST, or your agency wishes to become involved in supporting this initiative, please contact the CP AoR Global Coordinator Michael Copland (mcopland@unicef.org).