



# CHILD PROTECTION AND FOOD SECURITY:

**AN EVIDENCE REVIEW  
OF THE LINKAGES  
IN HUMANITARIAN  
SETTINGS**



This evidence review is part of a global initiative led by the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility, in partnership with Plan International, to strengthen collaboration between child protection and food security actors in humanitarian settings. In collaboration with the Global Food Security Cluster, this initiative aims to provide humanitarian practitioners with strengthened knowledge and technical tools to integrate child protection and food security responses. The findings from the evidence review will inform the development of programmatic and advocacy tools as well as technical support and capacity-strengthening provided directly to child protection and food security cluster coordination mechanisms and their partners. For more information on the initiative, please see [Integrating Child Protection and Food Security in Humanitarian Action](#).

This evidence review is part of a broader effort by child protection and other global humanitarian actors to promote effective ways of collaborating across sectors, including education, health, camp coordination and camp management, and food security. For more information on this initiative and other evidence reviews, please see [Working Across Sectors for Children's Protection](#).



A Nepalese woman washes crops in front of land ready to be cultivated.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL



# CONTENTS

<b>01 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>02 CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF FOOD INSECURITY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>03 CHILD PROTECTION RISKS LINKED TO FOOD INSECURITY</b>	<b>10</b>
Mental health and psychosocial distress	12
Family separation	14
Neglect	15
Physical and emotional violence	16
Child labour	17
Recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups	19
Dangers and injuries	20
Child marriage	21
Intimate partner violence	22
Sexual exploitation	23
Sexual violence	24
Other issues	24
<b>04 HOW CHILD PROTECTION AND FOOD SECURITY ACTORS ARE WORKING TOGETHER</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>05 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>06 RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>40</b>

# ACRONYMS

<b>AAP</b>	Accountability to affected populations
<b>CFS</b>	Child-friendly space
<b>CHH</b>	Child-headed household
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CP</b>	Child protection
<b>CP AoR</b>	Child Protection Area of Responsibility
<b>CVA</b>	Cash and voucher assistance
<b>EFSA</b>	Emergency food security assessment
<b>FCS</b>	Food consumption score
<b>FEWSNET</b>	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
<b>FIES</b>	Food insecurity experience scale
<b>FS</b>	Food security
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>HFIAS</b>	Household food insecurity access scale
<b>ICCG</b>	Inter-cluster Coordination Group
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced people
<b>IGA</b>	Income generating activity
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate partner violence
<b>JAM</b>	Joint assessment mission
<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental health and psychosocial support
<b>PDM</b>	Post-distribution monitoring
<b>PSEAH</b>	Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
<b>PSS</b>	Psychosocial support
<b>RCT</b>	Randomized control trial
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied and separated child
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>VAM</b>	Vulnerability analysis mapping
<b>VSLA</b>	Village saving and loan association
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme



An 8-year-old collects water in Haiti.  
©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

01

INTRODUCTION



## KEY DEFINITIONS

**FOOD SECURITY** » all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

**CHILD PROTECTION** » all activities aimed at the prevention and response to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children.

## GLOBAL SNAPSHOT OF FOOD INSECURITY<sup>1</sup>

IN 2021 »

**±2.3 BILLION**

PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WERE MODERATELY OR SEVERELY FOOD INSECURE

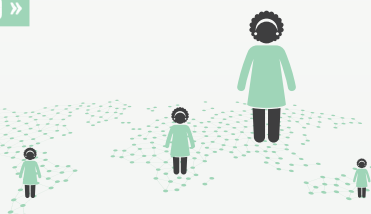


WOMEN CONTINUE TO BE »

MORE FOOD INSECURE THAN MEN BY MORE THAN **4% PERCENTAGE POINTS**

AROUND THE WORLD »

**31.9%** OF WOMEN WERE MODERATELY OR SEVERELY FOOD INSECURE



IN 2020, OF CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE »

**±45 MIL** SUFFERED FROM WASTING

**±149 MIL** WERE STUNTED

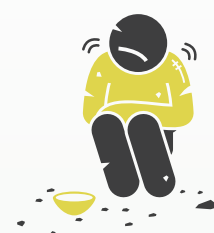
WASTING INCREASES CHILDREN'S RISK OF DEATH BY UP TO 12 TIMES

## GLOBAL SNAPSHOT OF CHILD PROTECTION RISKS<sup>2</sup>

DURING THE PAST YEAR »

**±1 BILLION**

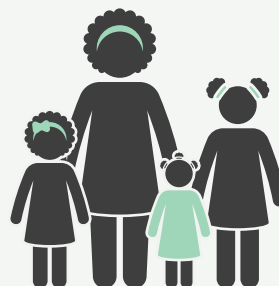
CHILDREN (ONE OUT OF EVERY TWO CHILDREN) EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL, SEXUAL OR EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE OR NEGLECT



**±120 MILLION**

girls have experienced some form of forced sexual contact before the age of 20 years

**1/3 CHILDREN** HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE



**1/4 CHILDREN** LIVES WITH A MOTHER WHO HAS EXPERIENCED INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

1. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2022. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome, FAO.

2. WHO, Global status report on preventing violence against children, Geneva, 2020. UNICEF, Hidden in plain sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children, New York: United Nations Children's Fund; 2014.

## Unmet basic needs, such as food, is recognized as a universal risk factor for harmful outcomes for children.

Research primarily from high-income countries has found that food insecurity is associated with violence against children. In one study, young children's exposure to violence at home was six times higher in households experiencing persistent food insecurity, compared to food secure households.<sup>3</sup> The impact of food insecurity on child protection risks is context-specific and influenced by cultural and gendered norms, government policies, social equity, availability and access to social safety mechanisms, and household resilience. In humanitarian settings, displacement and armed conflict also affect how food insecurity impacts children's protection.

There has been little documented analysis of the linkages between food insecurity and child protection risks in humanitarian settings.<sup>4</sup> As global food insecurity continues to rise and food security programs face funding shortfalls, child protection risks in humanitarian settings such as child marriage, child labour, physical and emotional violence, sexual violence, and sexual violence are likely to be exacerbated. Food insecurity will further harm children's nutrition, health, and education outcomes, which in turn also affect children's protection and well-being.

In many humanitarian settings, food security programming has a wide reach and privileged access to many families and communities. By working together and better understanding how food insecurity and child protection risks are linked, humanitarian actors will be able to:

- Make strategic decisions to prevent, mitigate, and respond to child protection risks;
- Leverage food security programming to enhance children's protection and well-being; and
- Minimize the risk of doing harm.

Working in joint and integrated ways with other sectors is recognized amongst child protection actors as a key strategy to address children's holistic needs.<sup>5</sup> As part of their mandate, food security actors have also committed to promoting protection outcomes for affected populations, including children.<sup>6</sup>

## OBJECTIVES

This evidence review aims to present an overview of the linkages between food insecurity and child protection and how child protection and food security actors collaborate in humanitarian settings. The evidence review identified two key questions:

- 1 How does food insecurity impact child protection risks?
- 2 How have child protection and food security actors worked together to achieve child protection outcomes, and what have been the results?

## METHODOLOGY

The evidence review was carried out from February to April 2022 and drew from academic and grey literature. Academic literature was identified through key words searches filtered using an inclusion and exclusion criteria. Identified sources were used as a reference to find additional sources. Grey literature was identified through a search of websites of child protection and food security-focused organizations, as well as requested via calls for documents sent through Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) and Food Security Cluster mailing lists. To complement the desk review findings and inform recommendations, 10 semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with child protection, protection, and food security actors working at global and country-level.

## LIMITATIONS

This evidence review was not systematic and does not capture all existing evidence. A number of child protection and food security organizations were unable to respond to the request for documentation, likely due to a lack of documentation or engagement in ongoing humanitarian responses. Only a limited number of academic sources looked at humanitarian and fragile contexts; as a result, the search was later broadened to include non-humanitarian low and middle-income contexts in order to expand the findings.

Terms like "hunger" are often idiomatic and may be used by individuals as a way to express distress or poverty rather than food insecurity. Not all sources used in the review measured food insecurity using quantitative tools such as a food consumption score (FSC), food insecurity experience scale (FIES), or household food insecurity access scale (HFIAS).<sup>7</sup> As a result, although the evidence pulls from primary research with participants living in food insecure locations, some of the findings may overlap with other drivers of child protection risks, such as poverty.

3. Jackson, Dylan B., et al, "Food Insecurity and Violence in the Home: Investigating Exposure to Violence and Victimization Among Preschool-Aged Children," *Health Education & Behavior*, vol. 45, no. 5, 2018, pp. 756–63.

4. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Understanding Risk and Protective Factors in Humanitarian Crises: Towards a Preventive Approach to Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*.

5. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*, 2019.

6. WFP, *Protection and Accountability Policy*, 2020.

7. Ndungu, Jane et al, *Afghan Women's Use of Violence Against Their Children and Associations with IPV, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Poverty; A Cross-Section and Structural Equation Modelling Analysis*, *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 2021-07-27, Vol.18 (15), p.7923.





# 02

## CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF FOOD INSECURITY

A 4-year-old shares a meal of rice with her family (Burkina Faso).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Children's experiences of food insecurity are inherently unique from adults due to their age, gender, needs, developmental vulnerability, agency, and status within families. Food security is supported by four pillars: availability, access, utilization, and stability. Children play a role in, and are affected by, all four of these pillars.

TABLE 1: CHILDREN AND THE FOUR PILLARS OF FOOD SECURITY

01

## AVAILABILITY

Food availability addresses the "supply side" of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels, trade, as well as food assistance.



Children play a role in the production of food. Globally, 60 percent of all child labourers aged 5-17 years work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry and livestock. Approximately 59 percent of all children aged 5-17 in hazardous work are in agriculture.<sup>8</sup>

In a large part of the world, women and girls are the primary farmers and producers of food. Women and girls often have less access to land ownership, production activities, technologies, and financial services.

02

## ACCESS

Food access refers to economic and physical ability to procure safe and nutritious food. Adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not guarantee household level food security.



Children can be responsible for purchasing food in markets for their families and may possess knowledge of food prices. Children may also be responsible for collecting food assistance on behalf of their families, such as in-kind distribution and school feeding programs.

Child-headed households, unaccompanied and separated children, and other groups of children may face barriers in accessing food and food assistance due to neglect, registration practices, and discrimination.

8. ILO, Child labour in agriculture, <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Agriculture/lang--en/index.htm>



03

## UTILIZATION

Food utilization refers to the metabolism of food once it reaches individuals, in other words how our body uses food energy intake. Utilization can be affected by preparing, processing, and cooking of food, including sanitation, clean water, and health care. Feeding practices and intrahousehold allocation of food are also factors of food utilization.



Younger children and children living with disabilities may be dependent on caregivers or older siblings for food preparation. Children, including girls, married girls, and unaccompanied and separated children, may have little say in how resources are distributed within the household.

Girls and adolescent girls are frequently responsible for food preparation, processing, and cooking. This includes collecting water and firewood.

Girls, particularly married girls, may eat last, after the rest of the family has eaten. In some contexts, girls face discrimination and are breastfed for shorter periods and given less and worse food than boys.<sup>9</sup>

04

## STABILITY

This refers to the stability of 'availability', 'access' and 'utilization' over time. In other words, these should be constant over time and not change due to cyclical events or sudden shocks like economic or climate crises.



In times of instability, children adopt coping mechanisms such as reducing meals, changing diets, eating with neighbours, or giving food to younger children. Children may take on increasing responsibilities, including that of food production and preparation, in order to support their family's food security.

Instability may force extreme coping mechanisms such as child labour, child marriage, sexual exploitation, and recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups.

9. Hathi, Payal et al, "When women eat last: Discrimination at home and women's mental health." PloS one vol. 16,3 e0247065. 2 Mar. 2021.





A 10-year-old and her 12-year-old brother pick green beans from their farm (Philippines).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Existing documentation finds that both younger children and adolescents view food security, in particular dietary diversity, as essential to their well-being and part of living a “good life” and “doing well.”

- In a qualitative study of food insecure and drought-affected areas of Ethiopia, children described other children who were living good lives by the types of food they ate, their dietary diversity, whether they ate a balanced diet, and their nutritional status.
- A mixed-method study in India with mostly rural children ages between 5 to 19 years similarly found that children’s conception of a good life was having enough food and a diverse diet.<sup>10</sup>
- Adolescents in Malawi reported that attaining a consistent and diverse diet was one of their key aspirations, alongside education.<sup>11</sup>

Children adopt a range of coping mechanisms in the face of food insecurity, such as eating smaller portions, skipping meals, and eating lower quality food. Younger children may be protected by older siblings and caregivers from the effects of household food insecurity, whereas older adolescents may be more at risk of experiencing hunger.

- Children in Venezuela reported strategies such as eating less, turning to relatives or acquaintances for help, or in some cases searching for food in trash.<sup>12</sup>
- Adult caregivers in Syria reported skipping meals to prioritize their children’s needs.<sup>13</sup>
- Older children in Venezuela reported protecting younger siblings from experiencing food scarcity by sacrificing their own food consumption.

**“ I EAT LESS. IF I AM GOING TO EAT WITH MY SISTER AND THERE ISN’T MUCH FOOD, I GIVE HER MORE. I SERVE A LITTLE MORE [FOOD] TO HER THAN TO ME. ”**

**GIRL, 15 YEARS OLD, VENEZUELA<sup>14</sup>**

- Adolescent girls in Nigeria reported coping with limited food by allowing younger children to eat first, with older adolescents and adults eating whatever is left.

**“ YOUNGER ONES EAT, OLDER ONES DRINK WATER AND GO TO BED. ”**

**ADOLESCENT GIRL, 18, NIGERIA<sup>15</sup>**

10. Aurino, Elisabeth et al, “Food prices were high, and the dal became watery”. Mixed-method evidence on household food insecurity and children’s diets in India, World Development, Volume 111, 2018, Pages 211-224.

11. Save the Children, CARE, USAID. Titukulane Youth Needs Assessment: Finding sources of connection, learning, and earning, May 2021.

12. Bernal, Jennifer et al, Children Live, Feel, and Respond to Experiences of Food Insecurity That Compromise Their Development and Weight Status in Peri-Urban Venezuela, The Journal of Nutrition, Volume 142, Issue 7, July 2012, Pages 1343–1349.

13. Nabulsi, Dana et al. “Voices of the Vulnerable: Exploring the Livelihood Strategies, Coping Mechanisms and Their Impact on Food Insecurity, Health and Access to Health Care Among Syrian Refugees in the Beqaa Region of Lebanon.” PloS one 15.12 (2020).

14. Bernal, Jennifer, et al, Children Live, Feel, and Respond to Experiences of Food Insecurity That Compromise Their Development and Weight Status in Peri-Urban Venezuela, The Journal of Nutrition.

15. Plan International. Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from the Lake Chad Basin, 2018.

16. Kuku, Oluyemisi, et al, Differences in food insecurity between adults and children in Zimbabwe, Food Policy, Volume 36, Issue 2, 2011, Pages 311-317.



Vulnerable children such as unaccompanied and separated children may not be afforded the same protection as other children living in the same household.

- A study in Zimbabwe found that children were less likely to report experiencing food insecurity compared to adults living in the same household, with a tendency for younger children to be more protected from food insecurity. However, children categorized as orphans did not report higher food security; in other words, it appeared orphans were not afforded the same protection from food insecurity as other children.<sup>16</sup>

Children and adolescents living in food insecure areas are aware of how food insecurity will impact their choices and opportunities. Older adolescents may experience pressure to provide for the family or meet their own needs themselves, in turn reducing their access to education and increasing their risk to practices such as child labour, child marriage or sexual exploitation (see Part 3).

- Children from drought-prone regions of Kenya were able to conceptualize how droughts would affect their well-being in the short and long-term, how their life choices might be constrained as a result, and how it would impact the safety and protection of both girls and boys. Children were able to describe how the unavailability of food would lead to their reliance on assistance and school feeding programs, what strategies boys and girls could use to try to find additional food or income, and the gendered protection risks associated with these strategies.<sup>17</sup>

Despite these challenges, children who contribute to their family's food security also report a sense of agency. Older adolescents' participation in their own and their family's food security was also found to lead to improved self-confidence, self-esteem, and work skills.<sup>18</sup>

- In the Lake Chad Basin, adolescent girls and boys reported pride and a sense of achievement in their small-scale livelihoods and contributions to their family's food security. Adolescents also displayed an aptitude and keen desire to be supported in entrepreneurial activities.<sup>19</sup>

This evidence review found that children's experiences of food insecurity in humanitarian settings are rarely captured by either food security or child protection assessments.

- Most data collection related to children's food insecurity is centred on anthropometric measures of malnutrition in children below 5 years. School-age children and adolescents have been labelled as the 'forgotten population' in food security literature.<sup>20</sup>
- Monitoring systems and tools, such as those which gather quantitative data on coping strategies, generally only enquire on child labour and are not able to identify other child protection risks. These tools are directed to heads of households and do not engage children or adolescent themselves.<sup>21</sup>
- Child protection assessments usually only enquire as to whether 'lack of food' is a source of stress for children and caregivers.<sup>22</sup>
- Consistent sex and age disaggregated data in food crises remains a gap.<sup>23</sup>



Mother and child participating in a nutrition program (Kenya).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

17. Polack E. Child rights and climate change adaptation: voices from Cambodia and Kenya. In: Children in a Changing Climate; 2010.

18. ILO, Child labour in agriculture, <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Agriculture/lang--en/index.htm>

19. Plan International. Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from the Lake Chad Basin. 2018.


20. Aurino et al, "Food prices were high, and the dal became watery". Mixed-method evidence on household food insecurity and children's diets in India, World Development.

21. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Monitoring Child Protection Within Humanitarian Cash Programmes. 2019

22. Global Protection Cluster, Child Protection Working Group, Child Protection Rapid Assessment Toolkit, 2012.

23. Spears found a Lack of widespread or consistent collection of sex and age disaggregated data in four recent threatened famines (South Sudan, 2013 to present), Yemen (2015 to present), Somalia (2010-2011, 2017), and Nigeria (2009 to present). Spears et al, "Gender, Famine, and Mortality," World Peace Foundation and Feinstein International Center, Occasional Paper #36, December 2021.





Girl taking part in the JANO project  
in Rangpur district (Bangladesh).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

03

**CHILD  
PROTECTION  
RISKS LINKED  
TO FOOD  
INSECURITY**



Children's protection is affected by food insecurity in several ways:



### FOOD INSECURITY IS LINKED WITH POOR MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISTRESS OF CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS.

Increased stress, anxiety, and aggression triggers various forms of child protection risks, including neglect, physical and emotional violence, peer violence, and exposure to intimate partner violence.



### WHEN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH FOOD TO EAT OR ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY FOOD, THEY MAY RESORT TO EXTREME COPING MECHANISMS IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE FOOD.

Coping mechanisms include family separation, child labour, child marriage, recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups, and sexual exploitation.



### WHEN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE PRODUCING, SEARCHING FOR, OR PREPARING FOOD IN ORDER TO MEET THEIR FOOD NEEDS, CHILDREN MAY ALSO BE EXPOSED TO CHILD PROTECTION RISKS.

Child protections risks include neglect, child labour, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, dangers and injuries, and recruitment and use by armed forced and armed groups.



### INTERVENTIONS USED TO ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY CAN EXPOSE CHILDREN TO PROTECTION RISKS.

Examples of these protection risks are dangers and injuries, psychosocial distress, sexual exploitation, as well as discrimination.



## MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISTRESS

Poor mental health outcomes and psychosocial distress refers to immediate and long-term social psychological and social suffering of children and their caregivers. Evidence shows that food insecurity can lead to children feeling stress, anxiety, sadness, and shame, while caregivers may feel stress, anxiety, and depression.

There is an increasing body of evidence that shows food insecurity affects mental health and psychosocial well-being around the world. Food insecurity may lead to poor mental health outcomes in several ways: insufficient food may affect cognitive functioning; the social impact of food insecurity, such as not being able to enjoy social rituals, share knowledge about food, or acquiring food in socially unacceptable ways, may cause feelings of powerlessness and shame. Other studies point to evidence that deprivation of basic needs such as food is inherently harmful.<sup>24</sup>

- A global review of nationally representative food insecurity and mental health data found that food insecurity was associated with poorer mental health indices for both women and men in every region of the world. As the degree of food insecurity worsened, so did mental health conditions such as sadness, worry, stress, and anger.<sup>25</sup>
- In urban Ethiopia and rural Brazil, food insecurity has been associated with three times greater odds of high symptoms of depression and anxiety.<sup>26</sup>

**The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened food security and mental health outcomes in many contexts.** For young people who are food insecure, the mental health and psychosocial effects of COVID-19 may be particularly harmful.

- A study of young people aged 19-26 years in Peru, Vietnam, and India found that young people's rates of anxiety and depression during the pandemic significantly improved as COVID-19 infection rates fell in their communities; however, food insecure young people did not see a similar improvement in their mental health. As COVID-19 infection rates fell towards the end 2020, 46 percent of food insecure young people in Peru were still reporting anxiety and depression symptoms; in Vietnam, the rates of anxiety and depression among food insecure young people were four times the average.<sup>27</sup>



A 13-year-old looks out at the mountains that can be seen from the displacement camp in Ethiopia.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

No quantitative studies on the impact of food insecurity on children's mental health and psychosocial well-being in humanitarian settings were identified by this review. Qualitative studies show that **lack of access to food is a source of psychosocial distress for children**, causing feelings of stress, anxiety, sadness, and shame.

- An inter-agency rapid assessment after Typhoon Bopha in the Philippines found that girls and boys most frequently reported that their causes of stress were lack of access to food and shelter. Children also worried about their family's loss of livelihoods and sources of income due to damaged farmland. Lack of access to food was also the main source of stress for caregivers in the community (29 percent), followed by lack of livelihoods (26 percent) and lack of shelter (21 percent).<sup>28</sup>
- Children ages 10-17 in peri-urban areas of Venezuela reported that food insecure children feel anguish, sadness and shame, with reactions that included crying; other children reported that food insecure children resign themselves to their situation.<sup>29</sup> Girls aged 13-17 were more likely to report feeling shame when they wanted to eat more but could not or had to eat the same food every day.<sup>30</sup>

**“ I SUFFERED A LOT IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS. I PACIFIED MYSELF BY SAYING THAT WE HAVE COME TO A NEW COUNTRY. MY PARENTS DO NOT HAVE ANY WORK. SO, WE DO NOT GET ANY FOOD. BUT MY YOUNGER SIBLINGS DO NOT TRY TO UNDERSTAND AND CRY PROFUSELY. ”**

**ADOLESCENT GIRL, 13, ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMP, BANGLADESH<sup>31</sup>**

24. Weaver et al, Unpacking the “black box” of global food insecurity and mental health, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 282, 2021.

25. Jones, Andrew D, Food Insecurity and Mental Health Status: A Global Analysis of 149 Countries, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Volume 53, Issue 2, 2017, Pages 264-273.

26. Weaver et al, Unpacking the “black box” of global food insecurity and mental health, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 282, 2021.

27. Porter, Catherine et al. “The Evolution of Young People's Mental Health During COVID-19 and the Role of Food Insecurity: Evidence from a Four Low-and-Middle-Income-Country Cohort Study.” *Public health in practice* (Oxford, England) 3 (2022).

28. UNICEF, Protection Risks for Children As A Result of Typhoon Bopha (Pablo): Inter-Agency Child Protection Rapid Assessment Report, Child Protection Sub-cluster, March 2013.

29. Bernal et al, Children Live, Feel, and Respond to Experiences of Food Insecurity That Compromise Their Development and Weight Status in Peri-Urban Venezuela, *The Journal of Nutrition*.

30. Bernal et al. “Food Insecurity of Children Increases Shame of Others Knowing They Are Without Food.” *The FASEB journal* 29.S1 (2015).

31. Plan International. Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices Rohingya, June 2018.



**Food security interventions themselves can cause psychosocial distress.**

- Following Typhoon Bopha in the Philippines, even after food assistance was being distributed by several actors, girls and boys continued to describe food distribution and delays or limitations to the food assistance provided a key source of stress.<sup>32</sup>

**Food insecurity is also linked to poor mental health and psychosocial well-being of caregivers,** including symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. A study in the United States found that maternal depression increased the odds of a mother experiencing food security 50 to 80 percent.<sup>33</sup> Caregivers know that their children go without food and express sadness over this, as well as concerns on how it will affect children's ability to concentrate in school.<sup>34</sup>

- In the Philippines, a study found that households who had experienced multiple disasters were more likely to report higher levels of parental stress, symptoms of depression, and food insecurity.<sup>35</sup>
- After the 2010 Haiti earthquake, children who experienced insufficient food were also more likely to be living in households with an adult who reported a higher level of post-traumatic stress, in comparison to children who were not experiencing food insufficiency.<sup>36</sup>

**Stress from food insecurity can also result worsened child-caregiver relationships.**

- In Uganda, reductions in rations for refugees was perceived as a significant source of household stress and irritability, which led to tense relationships between caregivers and adolescents. This was attributed to increased fighting within the home.<sup>37</sup>
- In the Lake Chad Basin, parents and caregivers described how a lack of economic opportunities caused stress and worsened family cohesion and relationships, causing children, including adolescent girls, to be mistreated or abused.<sup>38</sup>

32. UNICEF, Inter-Agency Child Protection Rapid Assessment Report, Child Protection Sub-cluster, March 2013

33. Laurenzi et al, "Food Insecurity, Maternal Mental Health, and Domestic Violence: A Call for a Syndemic Approach to Research and Interventions." *Maternal and child health journal* 24.4 (2020): 401–404.

34. Meyer et al, Protection and well-being of adolescent refugees in the context of a humanitarian crisis: Perceptions from South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 221, 2019, Pages 79–86.

35. Edwards et al, The influence of natural disasters on violence, mental health, food insecurity, and stunting in the Philippines: Findings from a nationally representative cohort, *SSM - Population Health*, Volume 15, 2021.

36. Food insufficiency as measured by the USDA Household Standard Food-Insecurity/Hunger Survey. Hutson et al. "Features of Child Food Insecurity after the 2010 Haiti Earthquake: Results from Longitudinal Random Survey of Households." *PloS one* 9.9 (2014).

37. Meyer et al, Protection and well-being of adolescent refugees in the context of a humanitarian crisis: Perceptions from South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 221, 2019, Pages 79–86.

38. Plan International. *Adolescents Girls in Crisis: Voices from the Lake Chad Basin*.



A 11-year-old washes dishes at her home in the resettlement centre (Mozambique).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL





A 22-year-old mother in Guatemala sometimes struggles to feed her children.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

## FAMILY SEPARATION

**Family separation refers to children being separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver. Separated children may still be with other adult family members. Unaccompanied children are those who are separated and not cared for by any adult who is responsible for them. Food insecurity can lead to family separation as either caregivers or children themselves search for food and livelihoods opportunities.**

When food insecurity leads to family separation, children face increased risks of neglect, sexual violence, and physical and emotional violence.

- In the Kenya drought of 2017, fathers were reported to be frequently gone for months at a time and only sporadically sent home remittances. Mothers were either forced to also leave home in search of work or take on a high workload, leaving children without adequate care and supervision or in the care of other adults. Mothers reported knowing that children left in the care of relatives or neighbours were at risk of being beaten or forced to work but felt this was a better option than leaving their children alone.<sup>39</sup>
- In food insecure areas of Zimbabwe, caregivers migrated to South Africa in search of livelihood opportunities. Adolescents reported being deprived of supervision and guidance as well as risks of sexual violence and exploitation against child-headed households.<sup>40</sup>
- In some cases, children themselves may leave their families and travel unaccompanied, putting them at risk of child trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence, dangers and injuries, and even death.
- In the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, reduced agricultural productivity and loss of crops were the second most-cited cause of emigration, with unemployment the most cited cause. Unaccompanied children travelling to the US were at risk of child trafficking, sexual exploitation, and forced labour.<sup>41</sup>
- During the North Korean famine from 1994-1998, thousands of unmarried North Korean female migrants were sent away by families to minimize burden on their families and went in search of food, shelter, and employment in other parts of the country or along the border with China; upwards of 80 percent of female North Korean migrants were believed to have been trafficked, sold into sexual slavery or into forced marriages.<sup>42</sup>

39. Plan International. Investing in Child Protection and GBV in Food Crisis: The Link between Food Security and Child Protection and GBV.

40. Plan International, Women's Refugee Commission, The Cynefin Co., Our Voices, Our Future: Understanding child marriage in food-insecure communities in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe, June 2022.

41. WFP, Inter-American Development Bank, IFAD, IOM, and Organization of American States, Food Security and Emigration: Why people flee and the impact on family members left behind in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

42. Spears et al, "Gender, Famine, and Mortality," World Peace Foundation and Feinstein International Center, Occasional Paper #36, December 2021.



## NEGLECT

**Neglect refers to the intentional or unintentional failure of a person, community, or institution with responsibility for the well-being of the child to protect a child from actual or potential harm. Lack of basic needs and appropriate supervision may increase a child's risk of psychosocial distress, danger and injuries, child marriage, child labour, sexual exploitation, sexual violence, and recruitment and use by armed forces and groups. Food insecurity has been linked to increased risk of neglect of children by caregivers.**

The link between food insecurity and neglect can be explained by caregivers spending increased time away from home in search of food or livelihood opportunities. It could also be explained by increased exhaustion and fatigue of caregivers as a direct result of insufficient food intake, or due to the mental health outcomes associated with food insecurity such as depression and anxiety.

- In Ban Mai Nai Soi refugee camp in Thailand, the most frequently discussed causes of stress amongst caregivers were insufficient food and income. Key informants reported children being left alone when parents went out to work or search of food.<sup>43</sup>
- In drought-affected Somalia, 68 percent of children reported that parents were less concerned about their whereabouts or safety, and 55 percent mentioned that parents were less likely to send their children to school.<sup>44</sup> In Papua New Guinea, severe food shortages in 2016 reportedly led to the abandonment of children.<sup>45</sup>
- In humanitarian settings, girls, unaccompanied and separated children, children living with disabilities, and children living with stepparents or extended families may be at particular risk of neglect. Children with disabilities or complex physical or mental health problems are over three times more likely to be neglected than other children.<sup>46</sup>

**Different forms of food security interventions could lead to child neglect or reduced supervision of children.**

- Adult caregivers who are participating in public works schemes, cash for work programmes, or trainings as part of program conditions may have trouble finding quality childcare, leading to reduced supervision of their children or leaving children unattended.<sup>47</sup>



A 7-year-old looks out from her family's tent in Burkina Faso.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

43. Meyer et al, The nature and impact of chronic stressors on refugee children in Ban Mai Nai Soi camp, Thailand, *Global Public Health*, 8:9, 1027-1047, 2013.

44. Save the Children, April 2017, "Child protection needs assessment Somalia".

45. Child Partnership Program Papua New Guinea, Food Security Assessment Report (Kandep-Pandugaga), 6 April 2016

46. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Child Neglect in Humanitarian Settings: Literature review and recommendations for strengthening prevention and response, 2018.

47. Save the Children, Child Safeguarding for Cash and Voucher Assistance Guidance, 2019.



## PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE

Physical and emotional violence refers to intentional forms of harm such as hitting, beating, torturing, threatening, ridiculing, or intimidating children. Evidence shows that food insecurity increases physical and emotional violence against children in homes, schools, and communities, as well as between children as a form of peer violence.

Food insecurity has also been linked to children's experience of **physical and emotional violence in the home**.

- In Burkina Faso, interviews with mothers found that during times of famine young children displayed increased signs of distress, such as crying, and mothers reported increased household anxiety and anger, including anger directed at children.<sup>48</sup> Another study from Burkina Faso of extremely poor rural children found that food insecurity, violence from family members, and exposure to hazardous labour were reported by mothers and adolescents to be the most prevalent adverse experiences and to be occurring simultaneously.<sup>49</sup>
- Studies have also found a link between natural disasters – which impact food security - and physical and emotional maltreatment. In the Philippines, a quantitative study showed that children who experienced multiple natural disasters faced an increased risk of being hurt by an adult or parent and witnessing violence.<sup>50</sup>
- A needs assessment in Somalia found that 41 percent of children reported an increase of physical abuse of children by parents following a drought.<sup>51</sup>

Food security is not the only driver of physical and emotional violence against children.

- In a quantitative study in Afghanistan, the use of physical violence by mothers as a form of discipline was associated with household food insecurity. The study found that food insecurity, mental health outcomes, gender inequitable attitudes, and mothers' experiences of intimate partner violence all appeared to influence the use of physical violence against children.<sup>52</sup>



A teacher with his primary school science class (South Sudan).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Food insecurity has also been linked to **bullying and peer violence in school settings**. Children might be bullied due to their low socio-economic status, which is strongly associated with food insecurity and poverty; in turn, food insecure children may also perpetrate violence as a way to seek social domination and peer acceptance.

- In a quantitative study of school-age children in Afghanistan, boys and girls who reported having both experienced and perpetrated physical or emotional violence against their peers scored significantly higher on a hunger scale, compared to girls and boys who did not report violence.<sup>53</sup>
- A study of school-age children in Pakistan found a strong association between perpetration of peer violence and scoring higher on a hunger measure.<sup>54</sup>

The link between food insecurity and peer violence could also be explained by the impact of food insecurity on mental health and the competition for limited resources. As food insecurity increases distress and aggression, fighting between peers is more likely.

48. Nanama et al, Altered social cohesion and adverse psychological experiences with chronic food insecurity in the non-market economy and complex households of Burkina Faso, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 74, Issue 3, 2012, Pages 444-451.

49. Ismayilova, Leyla et al. "Maltreatment and Mental Health Outcomes Among Ultra-Poor Children in Burkina Faso: A Latent Class Analysis." *PloS one* 11.10 (2016).

50. Edwards et al, The influence of natural disasters on violence, mental health, food insecurity, and stunting in the Philippines: Findings from a nationally representative cohort, *SSM - Population Health*, Volume 15, 2021.

51. Save the Children, April 2017, "Child protection needs assessment Somalia".

52. Ndungu et al, Afghan Women's Use of Violence Against Their Children and Associations with IPV, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Poverty: A Cross-Section and Structural Equation Modelling Analysis," *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 2021-07-27, Vol.18 (15), p.7923.

53. Corboz, Julienne et al. "Children's Peer Violence Perpetration and Victimization: Prevalence and Associated Factors Among School Children in Afghanistan." *PloS one* 13.2 (2018).

54. Karmaliani et al, Peer Violence perpetration and victimization: Prevalence, associated factors and pathways among 1752 sixth grade boys and girls in schools in Pakistan. *PLOS ONE*. 2017; 12(8).

55. Save the Children, April 2017, "Child protection needs assessment Somalia".



- In an assessment of drought-affected Somalia, 53 percent of respondents perceived children to exhibit from aggressive behaviour, 50 percent said children were unwilling to go to school, and 44 percent reporting unusual crying or screaming.<sup>55</sup>
- In refugee camps in Uganda, cuts in food rations were perceived drivers of conflict between siblings and amongst peers. Adolescents in Ugandan refugee camps also described increased fighting at food distribution centres due to overcrowding and tensions during long wait times and competition over scarce resources.<sup>56</sup>
- In South Sudan, where over half of women are married before the age of 18, conflicts over the distribution of resources such as food between co-wives in polygamous families were reported to be particularly frequent and intense.<sup>57</sup>

Food scarcity also creates risks of children experiencing **violence at the community level** and has the potential to worsen inter-communal tensions between new and existing refugee populations.

- Children in Kenya and Papua New Guinea report children resorting to stealing food from gardens and neighbours, getting caught and beaten.<sup>58</sup>
- In two refugee settlements in Uganda, a study asked adolescent and adult refugees who had arrived prior to 2015 how the arrival of new refugees in 2016 impacted the health and well-being of adolescent girls and boys. The most frequently discussed impact was the reduction in food rations as the result of the arrival of new refugees. Refugees who had arrived prior to 2015 experienced a 50 percent cut in food rations and both caregivers and adolescents reported adolescents regularly skipping meals and being unable to cover costs such as buying oil or paying for school fees as result of the lost income from the sale of rations.<sup>59</sup>

**Food security programming may also put children at risk of physical and emotional violence.**

- Children who collect food assistance may be exposed to physical attacks and harassment by vendors, traders, and community members. Children may also be exposed to attacks during theft, especially if they are carrying valuable good or large sums of money.<sup>60</sup>

## CHILD LABOUR

**Child labour refers to any work that deprives children of their education or which is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children. Not all child work is considered child labour. Hazardous work is a worst form of child labour and is defined as likely to harm the health, development, safety, and morals of children. Child labour is a commonly reported coping mechanism for food insecurity.**

In many countries, children's work is perceived as key to a family's survival. Children recognize they may be a crucial part of their household's coping strategies to manage food insecurity and may also feel the need to work and support their parents and siblings.<sup>61</sup> Children may also begin to work in order to cope with their own hunger.

- As one girl in Ethiopia explained, although picking beans was tiring, she could not refuse because "we will starve and I cannot get educational materials."<sup>62</sup> According to her mother, her daughter's labour was crucial for the family's ability to buy food, coffee, clothes, and school materials.
- In Venezuela, children reported balancing their education with temporary work such as polishing shoes, packing groceries, or running errands; however, in the longer run, they may be more likely to take on formal work which impedes their education.<sup>63</sup>
- In South Sudan, girls aged 9-12 years reported joining their parents or neighbours on farms or begging on the streets to cope with hunger, while boys reporting working in construction, mines, hotels and restaurants, brewing alcohol, or fishing. Boys also reported resorting to crimes, such as stealing vehicles or cattle as a way to make money. Girls aged 13-17 years reporting collecting firewood, brewing alcohol, working at a construction site, farms, or working in the local market, while boys aged 13-17 years also reported leaving school to beg or live on the streets due to lack of food at home.<sup>64</sup>

56. Meyer et al, Protection and well-being of adolescent refugees in the context of a humanitarian crisis: Perceptions from South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, Social Science & Medicine, Volume 221, 2019, Pages 79-86.

57. World Vision, "Child Marriage and Hunger Crisis: South Sudan Case Study", 2021. Ellsberg et al. "If You Are Born a Girl in This Crisis, You Are Born a Problem": Patterns and Drivers of Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict-Affected South Sudan. Violence Against Women. 2021;27(15-16):3030-3055.

58. Child Partnership Program Papua New Guinea, Food Security Assessment Report (Kandep-Panduaga), 6 April 2016.

59. Meyer et al, Protection and well-being of adolescent refugees in the context of a humanitarian crisis: Perceptions from South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, Social Science & Medicine, Volume 221, 2019, Pages 79-86.

60. Save the Children, Child Safeguarding for Cash and Voucher Assistance Guidance, 2019.

61. UNICEF, Inter-Agency Child Protection Rapid Assessment Report, Child Protection Sub-cluster, March 2013

62. Morrow et al, "I started working because I was hungry": The consequences of food insecurity for children's well-being in rural Ethiopia, Social Science & Medicine, Volume 182, 2017, Pages 1-9.

63. Bernal et al, Children Live, Feel, and Respond to Experiences of Food Insecurity That Compromise Their Development and Weight Status in Peri-Urban Venezuela, The Journal of Nutrition, Volume 142, Issue 7, July 2012.

64. Save the Children. Children's Recommendations for the hunger responses in South Sudan. 2021.



- A mixed methods study of registered and unregistered Syrian refugees in Beqaa Valley, Lebanon found for all registered refugees, food and or multi-purpose cash assistance was their main source of livelihoods; however, regardless of registration status, children as young as 11 were essential to the livelihoods of their families through child labour.<sup>65</sup>

**Adolescent girls and adolescent boys have access to different livelihood opportunities and their roles may be highly gendered.** This in turn affects their earning potential and their ability to access food and meet their other needs. Livelihoods programs often exclude anyone under the age of 18.

- In conflict-affected areas of Nigeria, the roles of adolescent boys were described as running errands, farming, and engaging in livelihood activities. Adolescent girls were typically responsible for taking care of younger siblings and household chores such as collecting water, cooking food, and cleaning and washing clothes. Adolescent boys' engagement in paid employment and livelihood activities was also significantly more valued than the role of adolescent girls.<sup>66</sup>
- In South Sudan, adolescent girls are more frequently reported to engage in informal, small-scale livelihood activities in the marketplace, as opposed to formal paid employment.<sup>67</sup>
- In the Lake Chad Basin, adolescent girls reported engaging in informal or unregulated labour in order to help meet their demands of the family, which further exposed them to insecurity. Adolescent boys' greater access to formal employment opportunities gave them greater earning potential and purchasing capacity for food. As a result, adolescent boys were able to supplement the food they received at home.<sup>68</sup>

To what extent child labour increases in situations of food insecurity is likely impacted by other contextual factors, such as the economic context, employment laws, and freedom of movement.

- In Somalia, 55 percent of respondents stated that the number of children engaged in child labour as a result of the drought increased due to the need to buy food and earn extra income; children

collected garbage, shone shoes, and casual labour such as being waiters or porters. In the same study, others reported a decrease in child labour due to poor nutrition and a general decline in economic activity.<sup>69</sup>

- In Bangladesh, lack of freedom of movement, restrictions on livelihoods initiatives created barriers to adolescent girls' incoming generating opportunities, which added to their overall vulnerability.<sup>70</sup>
- According to a 2019 survey of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 97 percent of refugees households needed to resort to a livelihood coping strategy: 30 percent reduced expenditures related to school; 12 percent withdrew children from school; 5 percent resorted to engaging school-age children in income generation, and 1 percent resorted to child marriage.<sup>71</sup>
- In Lebanon, key informants responded that since Syrian children below 15 years were not required to have legal papers, they were better able to cross checkpoints and access employment opportunities.<sup>72</sup>

**Some food security and livelihoods programs can inadvertently increase risks for child labour.**

- In cash for work programmes, cash transfers that boost family-based agricultural productivity can cause child labour, particularly if they create pull factors that result in children withdrawing from school. Children whose caregivers are participating in a scheme may withdraw from school to replace the caregiver at their previous place of employment, or children may participate directly in the scheme themselves.<sup>73</sup> Girls may be at particular risk of dropping out of school to take on domestic and care work.
- Programs may create new work opportunities, but these are unable to be fulfilled by adult labour, creating demand which is met by children.<sup>74</sup>
- When vulnerable groups are excluded from assistance or have no access to the formal labour market, families may be more likely to resort to child labour.<sup>75</sup>
- Food security programs may rely on supplies chains, industries or companies which use child labour.

65. Nabulsi, Dana et al. "Voices of the Vulnerable: Exploring the Livelihood Strategies, Coping Mechanisms and Their Impact on Food Insecurity, Health and Access to Health Care Among Syrian Refugees in the Beqaa Region of Lebanon." *PloS one* 15.12 (2020).

66. Plan International. *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from the Lake Chad Basin*, 2018.

67. Plan International. *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from the South Sudan Crisis*, 2018.

68. Plan International. *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from the Lake Chad Basin*, 2018.

69. Save the Children, April 2017, "Child protection needs assessment Somalia".

70. Plan International. *Adolescents Girls in Crisis: Rohingya*, 2018.

71. 10 percent resorted to selling productive assets, 54 percent reduced expenditures related to health. See Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian refugees (VASyR), 2019.

72. Nabulsi, Dana et al, "Voices of the Vulnerable: Exploring the Livelihood Strategies, Coping Mechanisms and Their Impact on Food Insecurity, Health and Access to Health Care Among Syrian Refugees in the Beqaa Region of Lebanon." *PloS one* 15.12 (2020).

73. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Cash Transfer Programming and Child Protection in Humanitarian Action: Review and Opportunities to Strengthen to Evidence*, 2019.

74. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Inter-Agency Toolkit: Preventing and Responding to Child Labour in Humanitarian Action*. 2020.

75. Ibid.



## RECRUITMENT AND USE BY ARMED FORCES AND ARMED GROUPS

Children may be enlisted into armed forces or armed groups using compulsory, forced, or unforced means. Children may be used in different ways, such as combatants, cooks, guards, spies, or for sexual purposes. Children may be forced to witness, experience, or commit violence and face immediate and long-term consequences to their physical and mental health. There is some evidence that food insecurity plays a role in children's risk of being recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups.

The association between food insecurity and recruitment into armed groups or armed forces depends on the nature of the conflict and the broader context.

- In Sierra Leone, it was found that individuals were more likely to join armed forces and armed groups if they offered money and food, whereas in politically motivated conflicts such as Burundi and Colombia, food was not mentioned as a motivation for joining.
- In a World Bank survey of seven countries, the most common motivation for joining rebel movements and street gangs was cited as lack of livelihoods or sustained income generating opportunities.<sup>76</sup> Although food security was not mentioned explicitly, sustained livelihoods opportunities tend to support household food security.

Access to resources, such as food, can also influence voluntary or forced recruitment and use of children into armed groups or armed forces.

- In northern Uganda, families encouraged daughters to become “temporary wives” or second or third wives of soldiers and militia members in order to gain additional protection and security, as well as access to food, money, and other resources.<sup>77</sup>
- In Liberia, children from IDP and refugee camps reported that armed forces or armed groups lured children away from parents through fake food distributions or were caught by armed groups while out searching for food. In some cases, boys and girls spoke of joining armed groups as a means to prevent the theft of property and food from armed groups and to gain access to a ready supply of food which was obtained through looting. It was also reported that food was given by villagers to armed groups as an incentive not to harass civilians or forcibly recruit children; when the village ran out of food, they were no longer able to prevent children's recruitment.<sup>78</sup>

**“ FINDING FOOD WAS A PROBLEM ... SO I TOLD MY MOTHER THAT I WILL GO ROUND TO SEE FIGHTERS. THEY HAD FOOD BECAUSE THEIR GIRLFRIENDS WERE COOKING FOR THEM EVERY DAY. ”**

**GIRL, 17 YEARS OLD, LIBERIA<sup>79</sup>**



Women selling milk and goods in the newly re-opened market area, Pibor (South Sudan).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

76. World Bank, World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development. Washington, DC: World Bank.

77. Spears et al. “Gender, Famine, and Mortality,” World Peace Foundation and Feinstein International Center, Occasional Paper #36, December 2021.

78. Save the Children, Fighting Back: Child and community-led strategies to avoid children's recruitment into armed forces and groups in West Africa.

79. Ibid.



Young girl tucks into bowlful of Doungouri Da mo (Niger).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL



## DANGERS AND INJURIES

**Dangers and injuries refer to unintentional harm that injure, impair or kill children. Food insecurity increases children's risk of danger and injuries in direct and indirect ways.**

Food insecurity increases children's risk of danger and injuries as children may need to spend increased time in accessing and preparing food. Children face significant risk of injury while cooking. Insufficient food intake can also impact children's basic functioning, leading to risk of accidents.

- Children in Papua New Guinea and Uganda reported feelings of fatigue, fainting in school, and increased risk of being hit by motorists on the way to school because of hunger.<sup>80</sup>

Decreased supervision by parents as a result of food insecurity could also increase children risk of injury and death from accidents. Children engaging in child labour as a result of food insecurity could also face increased risk of danger and injury while working.

- In Cambodia where children had to earn income working in other people's homes or farms, they reported not feeling safe and getting sick from the heat.<sup>81</sup>

**Food security interventions, namely food distributions, also pose risks for children.**

- In Malawi, children living in refugee camps reported fighting and risk of physical injury while queuing for food, as well as theft and violence when returning from distributions. Unaccompanied and separated children and child-headed households reported being targeted by thieves. In some cases, children missed school in order to spend subsequent days after a distribution to guard food in their homes.<sup>82</sup>

80. Meyer et al, Protection and well-being of adolescent refugees in the context of a humanitarian crisis: Perceptions from South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 221, 2019, Pages 79-86. Child Partnership Program Papua New Guinea, Food Security Assessment Report (Kandep-Panduaga), 6 April 2016.

81. Polack E, Child rights and climate change adaptation: voices from Cambodia and Kenya. In: *Children in a Changing Climate*; 2010.

82. Plan International Malawi. Integrated CP-SGBV and Food Security Case Study.



## CHILD MARRIAGE

**Child marriage refers to a formal or informal union where one or both parties are under the age of 18. Children are not able to give full consent to marriage, and so almost all child marriages are considered forced. Girls who marry before the age of 18 are more likely to experience intimate partner violence, dangerous complications in pregnancy, and are often expected to drop out of school. Child marriage is a negative coping mechanism used by families and girls who face food insecurity.**

Families use child marriage as a coping mechanism to lower financial burdens or have one less family member to feed.<sup>83</sup>

- In Ethiopia, child marriage cases were reported to increase by 51 percent in a drought-affected and food insecure zone. In other zones, child marriages were reported to increase by four-fold.<sup>84</sup>
- During the drought in Niger, mothers reported that they would choose to marry off their daughters to men of wealth in order to enable them to take care of their other children. Following the 2010 famine in Kenya and flooding in Pakistan, there were reports of increased child marriage. In Kenya, Plan International reported that girls between ages of 12 to 13 years were married to older men as second wives as way for their families to reduce the number of household members to feed and gain financial and material sources. In other cases, girls as young as 4-5 years were sent to live with other families and intended as future brides for sons within the family.<sup>85</sup>

**In contexts with recurring disasters, families may also use child marriage ahead of expected shocks and food insecurity.**

- In interviews with families in Bangladesh, some families reported marrying off their daughters in anticipation of losing their homes and livelihoods to natural disasters like river erosion.<sup>86</sup>

**Adolescent girls have limited decision-making power to choose when and whom to marry. In some cases, girls have been reported to initiate marriages as a way to increase their own access to food.**

- In Nepal, girls reported that getting married allowed them to have more to eat than if they had lived with their parents. In Zimbabwe, adolescent girls reported seeking marriage as a way to escape food insecurity in their parental homes.<sup>87</sup>
- In some cases in contexts of armed conflict, girls themselves “willingly” took a fighter who was a husband in order to secure their own family’s security and access to food and shelter.<sup>88</sup>

However, married girls may face increased food insecurity after marriage.

- In Bangladesh, husbands reported denied their brides food as a way to force families to increase dowry payments.<sup>89</sup> Married girls in Tanzania, Nepal and Bangladesh reported abuse from in-laws and being denied food.<sup>90</sup> Girls in polygamous unions have also reported fighting with other wives over food or being denied food by other wives.<sup>91</sup>
- Married girls, particularly those who are second wives, likely face challenges in advocating for access to food for themselves and possibly even their children, and may lack sufficient knowledge about their own health, nutrition, and food security. In Bangladesh, World Vision reported girls deliberately avoiding food while pregnant in order to ensure a less painful delivery.<sup>92</sup>

In limited instances, food insecurity may lead to a decrease child marriage, possibly due to other factors such as poverty and unemployment.

- In the Sahel, a decrease in child marriage was observed due the inability of families to provide dowries and the migration of young men to other areas in search of work.<sup>93</sup> In 2017 drought assessment in Somalia, 65 percent of respondents reported a decrease in marriages in their community due to the drought. However, the in same assessment, 59 percent of respondents also believed that girls are more likely to be married at an early age by parents due to the drought as result of the monetary incentives, lack of income to maintain family, and congestion in the camps.<sup>94</sup>

**Food insecurity is only one of the drivers of child marriage.** Other factors include gender inequity, security, religious, cultural norms, and psychosocial factors.

83. Glinski et al, The Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide Task Order, Banyan Global, 2015.

84. Davies Lizzie, “Ethiopian drought leading to ‘dramatic’ increase in child marriage, UNICEF warns,” The Guardian, 30 April 2022.

85. Plan International. Investing in Child Protection and GBV in Food Crisis: The Link between Food Security and Child Protection and GBV.

86. Human Rights Watch, “Marry Before Your House is Swept Away”; Child Marriage in Bangladesh, June 9, 2015.

87. Plan International, Women’s Refugee Commission, The Cynefin Co., Our Voices, Our Future: Understanding child marriage in food-insecure communities in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe. June 2022.

88. Mazurana et al, Child marriage in armed conflict, International Review of the Red Cross, 2019, 101(911), 575-601.

89. World Vision, Untying the Knot: Exploring Early Marriage in Fragile States March 2013.

90. Human Rights Watch, “Out Time to Sing and Play”: Child Marriage in Nepal, September 8, 2016.

91. Human Rights Watch, No way out: Child marriage and human rights abuses in Tanzania, October 29, 2014.

92. World Vision, Untying the Knot: Exploring Early Marriage in Fragile States March 2013.

93. Plan International. Investing in Child Protection and GBV in Food Crisis: The Link between Food Security and Child Protection and GBV.

94. Save the Children, April 2017, “Child protection needs assessment Somalia”.





A girl collects firewood for cooking at her home (Guatemala).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

- In a comparative research study on child marriage in humanitarian and development settings in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, and Yemen, factors that influence child marriage in humanitarian settings were found to include the ability of girls to contribute to livelihoods and ability to work. In settings where girls were unable to go to school and had limited freedom of movement and or were confined to camps, they were unable to contribute to households and were seen as a burden on the family. As a result, marrying girls was a way for families to free up resources and access additional resources.
- In Zimbabwe, a study by Plan International and the Women's Refugee Commission found that food insecurity in addition to other factors such as economic hardship, traditional gender norms, negative peer pressure impacted adolescent girls' marriage, with adolescent girls living in adolescent-headed households at particular risk.<sup>95</sup>

#### **Food security interventions can unintentionally enable child marriage.**

- In contexts where dowries are practiced, large unconditional cash transfers have been found to be saved or used to access credit to pay dowries. In India, payments were used towards the dowry and other marriage expenses.<sup>96</sup>

## **INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to any form of physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence that it used by someone over a romantic partner. Children who are exposed to IPV, such as living in a household with IPV or witnessing IPV, are more likely to also experience physical and emotional maltreatment, suffer from mental health and psychosocial distress, and maltreat their own children.<sup>97</sup> Food insecurity is linked with children being exposed to intimate partner violence or married girls experiencing intimate partner violence.

Several studies have found a link between food insecurity and intimate partner violence.

- In a quantitative study in two districts of Uganda with a high migrant population, food insecurity was associated with male perpetration of both physical and sexual violence; food insecurity was associated with almost three times the risk of men self-reporting to perpetrate both sexual and physical intimate partner violence.<sup>98</sup>
- In a study of peri-urban area of South Africa, food insecurity was found to double the odds of male perpetration of intimate partner violence.<sup>99</sup>
- In South Sudan, men's increase abuse of alcohol, which was exacerbated by their loss of property and lack of jobs and employment opportunity, was cited as a trigger for physical abuse of wives.<sup>100</sup>

Although women and girls tend to have less control over household budgets, women and girls are often responsible for feeding families and blamed if meals are insufficient.

- In rural Bangladesh, respondents stated that when inadequate food portions were offered to men, this could result in retaliatory violence against wives. Men may also deny access to resources to buy food as a form of gender-based violence.<sup>101</sup>
- Respondents in study amongst refugees ages 16-24 years in Uganda reported that lack of food and other forms of resource scarcity produced tensions and stress, which then led to intimate partner violence and was exacerbated in polygamous unions.<sup>102</sup>

95. Plan International, Women's Refugee Commission, The Cynefin Co., Our Voices, Our Future: Understanding child marriage in food-insecure communities in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe, June 2022.

96. Girls Not Brides. How cash transfers contribute to ending child marriage. Thematic Paper 1.

97. Wathen, Children's exposure to intimate partner violence: Impacts and interventions, *Paediatr Child Health*. 2013 Oct;18(8):419-22.

98. Awungafac, et al, Household food insecurity and its association with self-reported male perpetration of intimate partner violence: a survey of two districts in central and western Uganda *BMJ Open* 2021.

99. Hatcher, et al. Pathways from food insecurity to intimate partner violence Perpetration among Peri-Urbanmen in South Africa. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 2019; 56:765-72.

100. Ellsberg et al. "If You Are Born a Girl in This Crisis, You Are Born a Problem": Patterns and Drivers of Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict-Affected South Sudan. *Violence Against Women*.

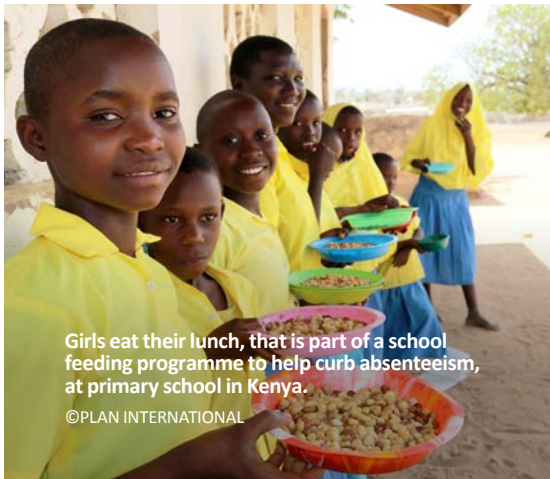
101. Lentz EC, Complicating narratives of women's food and nutrition insecurity: Domestic violence in rural Bangladesh. *World Development* 2018; 104:271-80.

102. Logie et al, "Exploring Resource Scarcity and Contextual Influences on Wellbeing Among Young Refugees in Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement, Uganda: Findings from a Qualitative Study," *Conflict and health* 15.1 (2021): 3-11.



Food insecurity is only one factor that may contribute to intimate partner violence. Other factors include poor mental health, inequitable gender attitudes, alcohol consumption, and multiple intimate partners.<sup>103</sup>

- In a qualitative study of post-conflict urban Cote D'Ivoire, participants cited housing instability, food insecurity, and lack of economic safety nets as contributing to intimate partner violence. Following the election-related violence, a spike in prices meant that many households faced food insecurity, housing instability, and were forced to take children out of school. Men who were frustrated with their ability to provide reportedly responded with physical or emotional abuse or sexual violence against their partner. Women who were facing extreme hunger and poverty were obliged to provide sexual services to men other than their husbands in order to access financial and material support, like the provision of clothing, food, and school fees; this in turn increased a women's risk of further exploitation and violence, including from her husband. The inability of men to fulfil their traditional or stereotypical gender role of providing for their households appeared to affect their perceptions of their masculinity and contributes to the use of violence to demonstrate their manhood.<sup>104</sup>



Girls eat their lunch, that is part of a school feeding programme to help curb absenteeism, at primary school in Kenya.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

**Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual and gender-based violence and refers to any actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes. Sexual exploitation can encompass terms such as 'transactional sex' or 'sex for food'. Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is a term used to refer to a humanitarian worker sexually exploiting or abusing a member of the local community.**

**Sexual exploitation of children, such as sex in exchange for access to food or money to buy food, is a key child protection risk that children, particularly girls, face in humanitarian contexts.**

- In Kenya, children cited hunger as making girls more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.<sup>105</sup> In Bidi Bidi refugee camp, Uganda, lack of household resources including food was commonly cited as a reason why adolescent girls and young women engage in transactional sex.<sup>106</sup>
- In Rwanda, respondents reported that adolescent girls engaged in transactional sex as a means to obtain material goods: "Your mother may not be capable of buying food except corns and then you look for someone who may give it to you" -female adolescent, Rwanda.<sup>107</sup>
- In 2016, a study of Protection of Civilian sites and in Rumbek, South Sudan, found sexual exploitation and abuse was believed to be a common occurrence, with women being asked for sex in return for food or services. Reports included humanitarian actors and community leaders demanding sex in exchange for food and other essential supplies.<sup>108</sup>
- In Malawi, girls and young women were reported to be subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse during food distributions, for example, exchanging sexual favours in exchange to be put on distribution lists or in order to bypass long queues.<sup>109</sup>
- In Nigeria, girls and women reported being forced in sexual exploitation by state security forces in order to obtain food for their families and access to limited livelihood opportunities, as well as out of fear of detainment and beatings. Women reported that their food were stolen and sold by soldiers.<sup>110</sup>

103. Laurenzi et al, "Food Insecurity, Maternal Mental Health, and Domestic Violence: A Call for a Syndemic Approach to Research and Interventions." *Maternal and child health journal* 24.4 (2020): 401–404.

104. Cardoso et al, What Factors Contribute to Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Urban, Conflict-Affected Settings? Qualitative Findings from Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, *Journal of Urban Health* 93, 364–378 (2016).

105. Polack, Child rights and climate change adaptation: voices from Cambodia and Kenya. In: *Children in a Changing Climate*; 2010.

106. Logie et al, "Exploring Resource Scarcity and Contextual Influences on Wellbeing Among Young Refugees in Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement, Uganda: Findings from a Qualitative Study," *Conflict and health* 15.1 (2021): 3–11.

107. Bermudez et al, "Safety, Trust, and Disclosure: A Qualitative Examination of Violence Against Refugee Adolescents in Kiziba Camp, Rwanda," *Social science & medicine* (1982) 200 (2018): 83–91.

108. Ellsberg et al, "If You Are Born a Girl in This Crisis, You Are Born a Problem": Patterns and Drivers of Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict-Affected South Sudan. *Violence Against Women*.

109. Plan International Malawi, Integrated CP-SGBV Food Security Assessment.

110. Amnesty International, 'They Betrayed Us': Women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved, and detained in Nigeria. 2018

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

**Sexual violence is a form of sexual and gender-based violence and refers to any sexual act committed against the will of another person. Sexual violence includes rape, which is any non-consensual vaginal, anal, or oral penetration of another person with any bodily part or object.**

Food insecurity is linked to increased risk of sexual violence for children. Food insecurity may require children to spend more time **collecting food, water, and firewood**, which in turn puts them at risk of sexual violence.

- In a qualitative study of Kibiza Refugee camp in Rwanda, adolescents and caregivers perceived resource constraints and economic insecurity as a root cause of violence against adolescents. Lack of firewood and travelling to collect firewood was often reported as exposing adolescents to physical and sexual abuse.<sup>111</sup>
- In Somalia, of respondents who reported that there was an increase of violence against children following the drought, 80 percent of respondents pointed to cases of sexual violence when collecting firewood, 71 percent to looking after livestock, and 66 percent when fetching water.<sup>112</sup> In Uganda, collecting water and firewood was cited as places where women and girls faced sexual assaults. Environmental degradation was seen to amplify the risk of sexual assault.<sup>113</sup>
- In a 2016 qualitative study in South Sudan, women reported being vulnerable to sexual violence from community members, security forces, and opposition forces if they ventured outside of UNMISS-protected Protection of Civilian sites to get food, farm, collect firewood, or engage in livelihoods.<sup>114</sup>
- During the Darfur Crisis, an estimated 200 women and girls were raped or killed per month when collecting firewood for cooking or generating income.<sup>115</sup>

## OTHER ISSUES

- Vulnerable groups of children may face **discrimination in receiving food assistance**. In Malawi, it was reported that scooping volunteers were under-scooping rations for unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable groups.<sup>116</sup>
- **Children living with disabilities** may face particular barriers in accessing food assistance. In the Central African Republic, 87 percent of persons with disabilities reported difficulties in access non-food item distributions, food, and cash. Households with at least one member with a disability were less likely to be food secure (20 percent compare to 24 percent) and twice as many were severely food insecure compared to households without a disability.<sup>117</sup>

## FOOD INSECURITY AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Adolescents' protection and well-being are strongly impacted by food insecurity, yet adolescents are often overlooked by both food security and child protection responses. Humanitarian responses chronically overlook adolescents' unique needs and capacities.<sup>118</sup>

Adolescent girls face multiple burdens during food crisis. They play a key role in their families' food production and preparation, sacrifice meals for younger children and other family members, and see their education cut short. Adolescent girls also have less access to livelihood opportunities or formal employment, earning less money and recognition for their work compared to their male peers. This, along with harmful gender norms and lack of available services and social safety nets, further puts adolescent girls at risk of negative coping mechanisms such as sexual exploitation, child marriage, recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups.

111. Bermudez et al. "Safety, Trust, and Disclosure: A Qualitative Examination of Violence Against Refugee Adolescents in Kiziba Camp, Rwanda," *Social science & medicine* (1982) 200 (2018): 83–91.

112. Save the Children, April 2017, "Child protection needs assessment Somalia".

113. Logie, et al. "Exploring Resource Scarcity and Contextual Influences on Wellbeing Among Young Refugees in Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement, Uganda: Findings from a Qualitative Study," *Conflict and health*.

114. Ellsberg et al. "If You Are Born a Girl in This Crisis, You Are Born a Problem": Patterns and Drivers of Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict-Affected South Sudan. *Violence Against Women*.


115. Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. *Finding Trees in the Desert: Fuelwood Collection and Alternatives in Darfur* 2006.

116. Plan International Malawi. *Integrated CP-SGBV and Food Security Case Study*.

117. WFP, *Disability and food security: Central African Republic – Findings from the 2020 ENSA disaggregated by disability*, August 2021.

118. Plan International, *Adolescent Programming Toolkit: Guidance and Tools for Adolescent Programming and Girls' Empowerment in Crisis Settings*, June 2020.



A 15-year-old girl is crouching on the ground, washing dishes in a large, dark metal pot. She is wearing a purple short-sleeved shirt, a colorful patterned headscarf, and a matching patterned skirt. She is also wearing yellow flip-flops. She is holding a bright pink plastic bowl and pouring water from it into the pot. The background shows a wooden structure, likely a shelter, made of sticks and branches. The ground is dirt.

# 04

## HOW CHILD PROTECTION AND FOOD SECURITY ACTORS ARE WORKING TOGETHER

A 15-year-old washes dishes outside the family's shelter in Mozambique.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL



A 15-year-old tends to plants in her family's fields in Burkina Faso.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL



**Key informants who work in child protection, protection, and food security were asked about their experience in collaboration between child protection and food security actors, what specific actions had been undertaken, and whether they could identify pre-requisites for strong collaboration as well as any promising practices.**

Overall, key informants did not report a strong degree of collaboration between child protection and food security actors.

- Key informants from child-focused organizations with both child protection and food security programming reported the strongest levels of systematic collaboration. This was attributed to the presence of child safeguarding policies, existing multi-sectoral program models or frameworks, technical expertise in both sectors, and regular training for staff on child protection.
- Several key informants raised that collaboration was dependent on individual relationships between child protection and food security focal points, as well as whether protection or food security staff had previous expertise or experience working in the child protection sector.
- One key informant pointed out that while other areas such as GBV risk mitigation and disability inclusion were considered to be mandatory areas of mainstreaming, child protection considerations were not.
- Several key informants shared that while this was an emerging area of interest in their organizations, they were not aware of any specific programs which integrated child protection and food security, nor of any which evaluated outcomes.<sup>119</sup>
- A couple of respondents were not aware of any current collaboration within their organization or between their organization and another agency or coordination mechanism, although they expressed interest in exploring this area.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Several key informants reported specific actions in which child protection and food security actors are currently collaborating:

- Training of food security staff by child protection actors on child protection risks, safeguarding, and identification of child protection cases
- Referrals by food security teams to child protection actors for child protection case management
- Awareness raising on child protection risks to caregivers and heads of households during food security activities
- Joint development of vulnerability criteria and selection of beneficiaries to receive food assistance (incorporation of child protection considerations into household criteria)
- Screening of food insecure households for potential child protection risks

119. When asked for examples of food security and child protection integrated programs, some key informants referred to examples of nutrition and child protection, specifically programs which worked with caregivers of children below 5 years. In one case, an organization had a program starting-up but had no findings yet.



- Conducting joint home visits
- Targeting of older adolescents in livelihoods interventions
- Mitigation of child protection risks in food distributions through child-friendly distributions

## BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

Key informants also identified barriers or obstacles to collaboration between child protection and food security actors.

- Child protection and food security programs may be planned in different geographic locations, limiting the ability to conduct referrals. For examples, food security targeting limited to geographic areas means children living outside those areas are not eligible for assistance.
- Even when targeting criteria includes child protection considerations, children and families may rarely meet thresholds to receive assistance.
- Child protection referral pathways may be extremely fragile. There may be no specialized child protection actors or specialized services in areas with food security programming, which discourages food security actors from identifying or documenting child protection risks.
- Programs which may include both child protection and food security interventions rarely measure joint outcomes or whether the program was able to mitigate specific child protection risks. For example, key informants were not aware of any school feeding programme that measured child protection indicators.
- Food security actors may perceive child protection to be a highly sensitive and complex sector. Food security actors may be hesitant to engage children in assessments or programming due to concerns about lack of capacity, doing harm, and an inability to respond to identified child protection risks.
- Donor concerns about double-counting of project participants, reach, and value for money was also cited as a barrier. One key informant flagged that their donor wanted to see programs in different locations in order to increase total reach numbers and value for money, thereby limiting child protection and food security programs overlapping in the same locations. Another key informant reported that a donor did not want to fund a program which would provide child protection services to communities who were already receiving food security programming, on the basis of 'double-counting', even though food security interventions were being provided by a different donor.

## EMERGING GOOD PRACTICE

Good practices for collaboration between child protection and food security sectors included:

- Regular meetings and information sharing between child protection and food security actors, including sharing the results of needs assessments and planned interventions.
- Conducting regular refresher trainings on child protection, which facilitate referrals to child protection case management.
- Using context-specific evidence to highlight food insecurity as a pull factor for child protection risks.
- Developing detailed mappings of child protection and food security interventions, so that partners were aware available services and supports of the other sector in order to refer vulnerable children and families.
- Agreements to reserve a certain number or percentage of food security program participants for child protection cases, in order to ensure that children and families with child protection risks receive food security support.
- When children and families are not eligible for existing food security programs, introducing interventions such as income generating activities and unconditional CVA in child protection programmes
- Identifying a range of individuals and forums to raise awareness on the centrality of child protection and linkage between child protection and food security, such as the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG)
- Child Protection AoR coordinators and Food Security Cluster coordinators working together to advocate for integrating programming. One key informant shared that through joint advocacy, they were able to influence a humanitarian fund to require applicants to demonstrate how proposed child protection and food security programs would coordinate with other actors in the area.
- Linking the integration of child protection and food security to other humanitarian policies and approaches such as the Centrality of Protection, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), and Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH).

## EXAMPLE

### INTEGRATING CHILD PROTECTION INTO FOOD SECURITY DATA COLLECTION

In **Mali**, the *Enquete Nationale sur la Securite Alimentaire et Nutrionelle* (ENSAN) is a food security and nutrition assessment conducted twice a year. In 2018, WFP's Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) team and child protection colleagues adjusted the existing data collection questionnaire to include questions exploring negative coping strategies associated with child protection risks. This included child marriage, child labour, and presence of separated children and orphans. This enabled complementary analysis between the links between food insecurity and child protection risks.<sup>120</sup>

In the **Central African Republic**, Plan International and WFP conducted a series of 24 focus group discussions and 12 participatory activities with younger adolescents (10-14 years) and older adolescents (15-17 years) to examine the drivers of various child protection issues and how food insecurity affected families' coping mechanisms. Adolescents reported that parents and caregivers played a key role in influencing adolescents to take on dangerous work in order to gain income to purchase food. Notably, adolescent girls reported that certain parents encouraged their daughters

to enter relationships in order to contribute to the family's access to food. Lack of sufficient resources, lack of employment and poverty was seen as drivers of child marriage, association with armed groups, and dangerous work.<sup>121</sup>

In **Malawi**, a multi-stakeholder Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) consisting of WFP, UNHCR, Government of Malawi, Jesuit Refugee Services, Famine Early warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) and Plan International was conducted in Dzaleka and Luwani Refugee camps in December 2016. In addition to the food security and nutrition data that is regularly collected as part of the JAM, additional questions related to child protection and GBV were included in the assessment. The JAM found several negative coping mechanisms which were exacerbated by food insecurity, including sexual exploitation, child marriage, begging, and hazardous work. Food distributions were also identified as sites where children were exposed to risks such as violence, sexual exploitation, and theft. The JAM allowed teams to develop a series of mitigation measures to address the effects of both food insecurity and how food assistance was being delivered to communities.<sup>122</sup>

## EXAMPLE

### PRIORITIZING AT-RISK HOUSEHOLDS FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE

In Syria, child marriage and child labour are key child protection concerns. In Mercy Corps' Syria food security response, food security colleagues worked with Mercy Corps' Syria Protection Advisor to develop a registration tool aimed at identifying child protection risks and associated warning indicators. Used during registration of families for food assistance, the tool collected information in indicators such as number of working children in

the home, the age at which they started working, whether children have recently dropped out of school, and whether any children are within the age range most at risk for child marriage. Based on the results, families were prioritized to receive cash assistance and the level of assistance of calculated. If any immediate child protection risks were identified, these were referred to other child protection actors for follow-up.

120. Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility and WFP VAM. Mali Case Study.

121. Plan International Central African Republic, Rapport: Consultation des adolescents sur la securite alimentaire et la nutrition dans les regions/provinces de Bangui, Zemio, Bria, Berberati, Kaga-Bandaro et Bossangoa, RCA, 2021.

122. Plan International Malawi, Integrated CP-SGBV and Food Security Case Study.



**EXAMPLE****IMPROVING CHILD WELL-BEING THROUGH FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMMING**

In Borno State, Northeast **Nigeria**, Street Child of Nigeria set up a food security and livelihood project. The six-month project supported 700 households from host communities, returnees, and informal IDPs with livelihoods grants, business training, and cash for food. To select participating households, community stakeholders were engaged in the development of a vulnerability criteria, which included households with out-of-school children. After each weekly village savings and loan association (VLSA) meeting, heads of household received awareness raising sessions on child protection. Messages including information on child protection risks, positive parenting skills, gender equality, as well as safeguarding and prevention against sexual exploitation and abuse. A community helpdesk and project management committee were also set up to identify and refer child protection concerns.

The project conducted a child well-being assessment at baseline and endline of the project. Key findings included:

- Children from host communities and IDP communities reported an improvement in getting “on well with their parents a lot of the time”: from 55 percent at baseline to 78 percent at endline for children in host communities, and from 63 percent to 80 percent for children in IDP communities.
- Across all households, children’s attendance in school increased. This was found for both biological children and other children being cared for by the household. Although this was not measured, increased school attendance likely lowered children’s participation in work, including begging and selling goods.
- Children from host communities and IDP communities both reported a significant reduction in “feeling ill a lot”. This is likely due to increased food availability and financial means to access health services.<sup>123</sup>



A Kenyan mother and her children have very little food to live on.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL

123. Street Child of Nigeria, Street Child 2019-2020 WFP Project Impact Assessment, May 2020.

## CAN FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMMING PROMOTE CHILDREN'S PROTECTION?

The evidence review attempted to identify examples of rigorously evaluated programs which measured child protection outcomes associated with food security programs or programs which targeted food insecure households. A limited number of studies were identified. Findings were linked to child protection outcomes such as physical and emotional violence, intimate partner violence, child labour, and child marriage. More evidence and systematic analysis are needed.

### PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE

Combinations of food assistance and family strengthening interventions may reduce physical and emotional violence against children.

- An impact evaluation of a Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Program by the Government of Zimbabwe found that the unconditional cash transfer to food-poor households, which was intended to reduce food insecurity and protect orphans and vulnerable children, led to an increase in purchase of food and reduction in physical abuse after four years of implementation. The cash assistance was combined with child protection services such as awareness raising at payment points, help desks to report CP concerns and refer cases to CP agencies. The study found that possibly improvements in household income and access to food also led to improvement in caregiver well-being and reduced child labour.
- A randomized control trial (RCT) of a program targeting farmer groups in Tanzania, children in villages who received agribusiness and parenting programs reported reduced overall maltreatment; children in villages which only received parenting interventions were also able to reduce child maltreatment, though with smaller effects.

### INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Food assistance may decrease IPV.

- A WFP-program in Northern Ecuador aimed to address the food security and nutrition needs of Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorians, and to improve the role of women in household decision making. A randomized control trial (RCT) found that transfers also decreased intimate partner violence by approximately 19 to 30 percent. There was no significant difference between type of transfer (cash, voucher, or food).<sup>124</sup>

### CHILD MARRIAGE

Food security programs may prevent or delay child marriage, depending on other factors.

- No rigorous studies were found looking at the role cash transfers can play in preventing or mitigating child marriage in humanitarian contexts. There is limited evidence that unconditional and conditional cash transfers (conditional on education) on household economic security can reduce child marriage, particularly where poverty is a driver of child marriage, when transfers are regular and predictable, and where social norms for child marriage are weaker.<sup>129</sup>
- Ethiopia's Public Safety Net Program which provided cash transfers was found to delay marriage, as cash transfers increased adult economic work which consequently required girls to engage more in work in the home.<sup>130</sup>
- School feeding programmes have been found to increase school enrolment by an average of 9 percent. There is a strong correlation between higher levels of education and a reduce in child marriage.<sup>131</sup>

124. Hidrobo et al, "The Effect of Cash, Vouchers, and Food Transfers on Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Northern Ecuador," American economic journal, Applied economics 8.3 (2016): 284–303.

125. Aurino, et al, "School Feeding or General Food Distribution? Quasi-Experimental Evidence on the Educational Impacts of Emergency Food Assistance during Conflict in Mali," UNICEF Office of Research, Innocenti Working Paper, June 2018.

126. Ravallion et al, "Does Child Labour Displace Schooling? Evidence on Behavioural Responses to an Enrollment Subsidy," The Economic journal (London) 110.462 (2000): 158–175.



## CHILD LABOUR

School feeding programmes may decrease children's participation in work. Programs which aim to increase agricultural productivity of households may increase children's participation in work.

- In a study in Mali, school feeding was found to decrease girls' participation in work related to farming and animal rearing by approximately 10 percentage points; this was also seen in girls' increased school attendance. On the other hand, school feeding did not decrease boys' participation in work, nor increase their school attendance. The same study found that general food distribution was found to increase both boys' and girls' probability of being involved in farm work, animal-rearing, or household-related work. The study found that this affected boys considerably more than girls: boys showing a 20-percentage point increase in being involved in work activities compared to their peers. The researchers concluded that given the importance of the role of boys in farm work and animal-rearing activities, particularly in a region affected by conflict and drought, the benefits of the food assistance were not sufficient to reduce their participation in work.<sup>127</sup>
- Bangladesh's Food Education program gave monthly take-home rations to primary school children who must attend at least 95 percent of all classes in a month. While the program

showed both positive effects on school attendance and reductions in child labour, researchers noted that the reduction in child labour only accounted for a small proportion of the increase in school enrolment, suggesting that parents were using their children's time in other activities.<sup>126</sup>

- In rural Burkina Faso, a study looked at whether child labour decreased for female students who received take-home rations and a group of students which received school meals. Girls who received take-home rations saw a decrease in 9 percentage points of farm and no-farm economic activities, while no difference was found for students who received school meals. The study did not look at the difference in value between take-home rations and school meals, so it is unclear whether this made a difference.<sup>127</sup>
- Ethiopia's Public Safety Net Program targeted household's from chronically food insecure areas and gave each working-age household member 30 days of work in labour-intensive work. Children aged 6-10 years experienced a reduction in labour both in terms of household chores and agricultural activities. When the public works program was combined with transfers aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, young girls (6-10 years) experienced increases in weekly hours worked, particularly in domestic chores.<sup>128</sup>

127. Kazianga et al, "Educational and Child Labour Impacts of Two Food-for-Education Schemes: Evidence from a Randomised Trial in Rural Burkina Faso," *Journal of African economies* 21.5 (2012): 723–760.

128. Hoddinott et al, "The Impact of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme and Related Transfers on Agricultural Productivity," *Journal of African economies* 21.5 (2012): 761–786.

129. Girls Not Brides, *How cash transfers contribute to ending child marriage: Review and synthesis of the evidence*. December 2021.

130. Ibid.

131. WFP, *The Impact of School Feeding Programmes*, November 2019.



# 05

## DISCUSSION

A young girl helps her mother prepare the field for planting (Guatemala).

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL



## Food security is essential to children's protection and well-being.

While food insecurity alone does not determine children's risk of experiencing violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation, this evidence review finds that food insecurity is linked to multiple child protection risks. Children themselves report that food insecurity, including consistent access to food and dietary diversity, directly impact their protection and well-being. Food insecurity causes psychosocial distress among children and caregivers, resulting in increased tension and violence within the home, school, and community. Caregivers' worsened mental health directly impacts their ability to care for their children and provide non-violent discipline and also negatively affects their children's own mental health outcomes. Caregivers may need to spend more time generating income or searching for food or moving to another location in search of employment and leaving their children behind. This reduced level of care and neglect is particularly problematic as children's relationship with a consistent, responsive caregiver is one of the most influential protective factors for children.

Food insecurity also increases children's risk of experiencing several forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, child marriage, sexual violence, and sexual exploitation. Children and families may also resort to negative coping mechanisms such as family separation, child labour, and child marriage in order to increase their access to food and livelihoods opportunities.

The effects of food insecurity on children's protection and well-being are also closely intertwined with poverty, gender and social norms, and available social support and services. Given their role in agricultural production, boys may be at high risk of child labour whereas girls are more likely to experience child marriage, sexual exploitation, and sexual violence due their perceived value, lack of livelihood opportunities, and traditional roles in food preparation. Children's age, gender, ability, socio-economic status, and family situation not only affect their food security but also affect their available coping strategies. Children themselves employ a range of coping strategies to deal with food insecurity over their life course, including employment, marriage, and migration.<sup>132</sup>

The effects of food insecurity on children's protection outcomes are cyclical. Children who experience one type of violence are at increased risk of experiencing other types of violence. Girls who are married as a result of coping with food insecurity are at higher risk of experiencing intimate partner violence and experience higher rates of malnutrition than those who marry later in life. Children who grow up in homes that experience intimate partner violence are likely to witness violence, experience violence themselves, and also more likely to have low birth weight, suffer poor nutritional status, and experience higher rates of stunting throughout childhood.<sup>133</sup>

Overall, the evidence of the effectiveness of various food security interventions on outcomes related to child protection is significantly limited.<sup>134</sup> Existing evidence does find that food security interventions can positively contribute to child protection outcomes, particularly when they are linked to child protection interventions. Programs which combine food security or livelihoods support with family strengthening were found to reduce children's experience of violence and abuse by caregivers. Programs that aim to reduce overall household vulnerability or improve technologies associated with agricultural activities have been shown to reduce child labour, while programs which aim to increase adult household member's participation in the labour market can unintentionally increase demand for children and adolescents' work.<sup>135</sup> For example, for female caregivers to participate in labour schemes, women may rely on their daughters to take on domestic chores. Other concerns include caregivers spending increased time in economic activities and a reduced level of involvement in caring for children.<sup>136</sup> Children may also be involved in queuing at food distribution points, selling rations for additional income, or performing additional chores while adult household members are collecting distributions.

Collaboration between child protection and food security actors remains limited for various reasons. Reasons include operational barriers, funding limitations, lack of technical resources and tools, and lack of evidence-based program models for integrated programming. Emerging good practice points to several ways in which child protection and food security actors can better collaborate to promote positive outcomes for children.

132. Morrow et al, "I started working because I was hungry": The consequences of food insecurity for children's well-being in rural Ethiopia, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 182, 2017, Pages 1-9.

133. Glinski et al, *The Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide Task Order*, Banyan Global, 2015.

134. Aurino et al, "School Feeding or General Food Distribution? Quasi-Experimental Evidence on the Educational Impacts of Emergency Food Assistance during Conflict in Mali," UNICEF Office of Research, Innocenti Working Paper, June 2018.

135. Dammert, Ana C et al. "Effects of Public Policy on Child Labor: Current Knowledge, Gaps, and Implications for Program Design." *World development* 110 (2018): 104–123.

136. International Rescue Committee, *Child Labor: What Works Towards addressing Child Labor in IRC Relevant Contexts: An Evidence Review*, April 2021.



A mother sorting through her harvest of dry beans that she uses to take care of the nutritional needs of her children after the death of her husband (Zambia).



06

RECOMMENDATIONS



The following recommendations are applicable to humanitarian actors, including governments, donors, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, and civil society actors working in the areas of child protection and/or food security.

PROGRAM CYCLE	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR DONORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR CP ACTORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FS ACTORS
PREPAREDNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support analysis and studies</b> to understand children's role in food security and potential negative coping mechanisms.</li> <li>• When food insecurity and famine-like conditions are predicted, ensure that <b>funding for CP services</b>, including CP prevention and mitigation, are prioritized alongside FS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Understand children's pre-crisis role in food security</b>, including availability, access, and utilization.</li> <li>• <b>Conduct mappings and studies</b> to understand social protection systems for food insecure children, cultural and social norms related to children's protection, and traditional coping mechanisms. <b>Involve children, families, and duty bearers</b> in these activities when possible and ensure their views are included.</li> <li>• Ensure <b>CP and FS actors, families and communities are aware of the linkages</b> between CP and food insecurity and <b>develop early warning systems</b> on potential CP risks.</li> </ul>	
ASSESSMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support use of participatory data collection tools that <b>include children and adolescent voices in FS assessments</b>.</li> <li>• Encourage consistent <b>disaggregation of CP and FS data</b> by age, gender and disability.</li> <li>• Support efforts to <b>conduct joint analysis</b> of FS and CP risks and needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Plan for joint assessments or coordinate assessments</b> to overlap in similar locations, in order to develop joint analysis and integrated programming.</li> <li>• <b>Strengthen existing assessment and data collection tools</b> to consider the impact of food insecurity on children and child protection risks, including during seasonal events or shocks.</li> <li>• Ensure all assessments and data collection is <b>disaggregated by age, sex, and disability</b>. Consider disaggregated data by key age groups: &lt;5, 6-9, 10-14, and 15-17.</li> <li>• Identify and understand risks by gender and age group, with <b>particular attention to adolescent girls and adolescent boys</b> given their particular vulnerability to CP risks associated with food insecurity.</li> <li>• <b>Consider involving children, particularly adolescent girls and adolescent boys, in assessments</b> if feasible and safe, and incorporate their views and priorities into findings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider including CP considerations into Joint Assessment Missions (JAM) and Emergency Food Security Assessments (EFSA).</li> <li>• Adapt existing experience-based coping strategies indices to better capture the linkages between food insecurity and CP, including CP risks such as psychosocial distress, child marriage, sexual exploitation, and physical and emotional violence against children.</li> <li>• Ensure <b>all FS staff are trained on basic concepts of child protection, child safeguarding, and PSEAH</b>.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider adapting existing CP assessment tools to capture the effect of food insecurity on CP risks.</li> <li>• Support FS actors to develop child and adolescent-friendly assessment tools.</li> <li>• Support FS actors to train staff on child-friendly tools, child protection, and child safeguarding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct <b>joint data analysis</b> of collection CP and FS data</li> <li>• <b>Share assessment findings</b> with each other and conduct joint analysis.</li> </ul>

PROGRAM CYCLE	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR DONORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR CP ACTORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FS ACTORS
ASSESSMENT (CONTINUED)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that key CP information and assessment findings are shared with FS coordination mechanisms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that key FS information and reports from early warning systems and food security monitoring systems is shared with CP coordination mechanisms.</li> </ul>
PLANNING AND DESIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize <b>funding for CP programs at the onset of food security crises</b>.</li> <li>Ensure <b>funding for CP and FS programs in overlapping geographic locations</b> to promote complementary of prevention, mitigation, and response efforts.</li> <li>Encourage CP and FS actors to demonstrate in proposals how CP and FS programs will be <b>coordinated and target at-risk and food insecure children and families</b>.</li> <li>Support the development of <b>program frameworks and evidence-based models</b> which integrate CP and FS to promote children's protection and well-being.</li> <li>Scale-up <b>funding for national social protection systems</b> to promote children and families' access to food and prevent CP risks.</li> <li>Scale-up <b>PSS programs for food insecure children and caregivers</b> within the framework of CP and FS responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize <b>children's protection and well-being</b> as the starting point for all humanitarian action.</li> <li>Use <b>information from CP assessment and FS assessments and monitoring systems</b> to plan CP and FS programs.</li> <li><b>Plan CP and FS programs in overlapping geographic areas</b> so that vulnerable and food insecure children and families can access CP and FS support services.</li> <li>Coordinate with CP and FS coordination mechanisms to <b>develop CP and FS referral pathways and SOPs</b>. Work with GBV and MHPSS actors to ensure GBV and MHPSS referral pathways are also in place.</li> <li><b>Develop strategies to address CP risks in food insecure contexts</b>, including how to address CP risks associated with increased production and preparation of food and negative coping mechanisms.</li> <li>Expand strategies to <b>reduce and mitigate children's risk of sexual exploitation and sexual violence associated with searching for food or collecting firewood and water</b>. Consider distribution of alternative energy sources, such as energy efficient cookstoves, solar lighting, and locally available water tanks and filters.</li> <li><b>Consider providing food security or livelihoods interventions as part of CP or empowerment programs</b>, which target children and adolescents, to address CP risks such as child labour and sexual exploitation. These interventions may target older adolescents or caregivers.</li> <li>Consider <b>cash plus programming</b>, which offers complementary approaches alongside CVA, such as child protection case management, life skills and psychosocial support, coaching and mentoring, and parenting support for parents and caregivers.</li> <li>Recognizing that harmful gender norms are drivers of CP risks, design <b>gender-transformative programs</b> to promote positive gender norms through both CP and FS programming.</li> <li>Establish child-friendly <a href="#">help desks</a> at food distribution sites to support identification and referral of child protection cases.</li> </ul>	



PROGRAM CYCLE	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR DONORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR CP ACTORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FS ACTORS
PLANNING AND DESIGN (CONTINUED)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement key actions for <b>child-friendly distributions</b> of food assistance, using existing guidance and good practices: <a href="#">CPMS Standard 21</a> on Food Security and Child Protection; <a href="#">IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action</a>; Food Security and Agriculture; Plan International <a href="#">CP Mainstreaming Briefing Paper for Distributions</a>.</li> <li>• Target <b>PSS interventions in food insecure areas</b>, with specific attention paid to caregivers in food insecure households.</li> <li>• <b>Work with community-level CP and FS structures to scale up PSS for children and caregivers.</b> Consider scaling up programs in areas which are experiencing acute food shortages, prior to and during the lean season, or areas seeing cuts in food assistance.</li> <li>• Extend <b>family strengthening interventions</b>, including positive parenting training to caregivers and heads of households from FS programs, and promote their access to food security interventions.</li> <li>• Identify <b>safe and appropriate types of work that are available and accessible to adolescents</b> above the minimum age of work.</li> <li>• Ensure that older adolescents at risk of CP risks, such as child marriage, have access to agricultural training, information, and resources to improve their own productivity and promote their own protection and well-being.</li> <li>• <b>Consider gender and age specific needs, risks, and social norms when including adolescents in FS programs.</b> Adolescent girls and boys are likely to require different provisions to participate safely and equitably in FS and livelihoods programs.</li> <li>• Link <b>livelihoods programs</b> targeting older adolescents with PSS, life skills, safe spaces, and referrals to CP case management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link <b>livelihoods opportunities</b> with adolescent and youth participation and civic engagement opportunities to expand their voice and agency.</li> <li>• Include girls at risk of child marriage and other CP risks into agricultural productivity programs or alternative earning opportunities to shift parents' views of girls from being financial burdens and couple with interventions that promote gender equality.<sup>137</sup></li> </ul>

137. Glinski et al, The Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide Task Order, Banyan Global, 2015.

PROGRAM CYCLE	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR DONORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR CP ACTORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FS ACTORS
IMPLEMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require all actors to demonstrate how <b>accountability mechanisms</b>, such as feedback and complains mechanisms, are <b>child and adolescent-friendly</b> and incorporate children and young people's views.</li> <li>Include requirements to ensure <b>PSEAH and child safeguarding</b> considerations are included in all humanitarian programs and throughout the program cycle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with CP and FS actors to ensure all vulnerable children and families can access CP and FS services.</li> <li><b>Develop joint targeting and vulnerability criteria</b> to ensure that both CP and FS considerations are included in CP and FS selection criteria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand or adjust targeting criteria when FS programmes exclude highly vulnerable children and families (for example, if FS target is based on geographic or demographic targeting)</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Involve families and community in setting targeting and selection criteria</b> for CP and FS programs.</li> <li>Ensure that targeting criteria does <b>not lead to stigma, discrimination, or additional safety concerns</b> for children.</li> <li><b>Ensure targeting do not become “pull factors” for CP risks.</b> For example, if child labour or CHH is the main eligibility criteria for assistance.</li> <li><b>Train all frontline CP and FS workers on identification and referral of food insecure children, child safeguarding, and PSEAH.</b></li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all CP staff are aware of available FS programs which are open to food insecure children and families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all FS staff are aware of available CP programs which are open to food insecure and at-risk children and families.</li> <li>Work with CP actors to adapt intake forms in order to identify potential CP risks.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure children and families <b>receive key messages on CP and FS</b> and that <b>information is tailored and appropriate for children and adolescents.</b></li> </ul>	



PROGRAM CYCLE	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR DONORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR CP ACTORS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FS ACTORS
IMPLEMENTATION (CONTINUED)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that information about FS programs and services is available to children and adolescents participating in CP interventions, such as CFS or life skills programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver information about CP risks and available services during FS activities</li> <li>Ensure that information about FS programs and available assistance is also accessible to children and adolescents, including married adolescent girls, CHH, and UASC</li> </ul>
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support growing the evidence base for understanding the linkages between CP and insecurity and <b>evidence-based integrated CP-FS program models</b></li> <li>Support the development of a <b>monitoring framework</b>, including piloting of key indicators and practical tools, to measure the impact of FS programming on children's protection and well-being.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor how food security programs, including distribution and livelihood programs, may be <b>unintentionally exacerbating CP risks</b>. Determine whether there are any barriers to accessing CP or FS services for referred children and families.</li> <li>Monitor <b>how food insecurity is impacting children's protection and well-being</b>.</li> <li>Work together to <b>measure CP outcomes and children's well-being</b> as a result of integrated CP-FS programs. Use existing guidance such as the <a href="#">Child Well-being Contextualization Guide</a>.</li> <li><b>Work with education actors to monitor and measure how school feeding programs</b> affect CP outcomes such as well-being, improved peer relationships, caregiver-child relationships, and reductions in child marriage, child labour, and other negative coping mechanisms.</li> <li>Ensure <b>all feedback and complaints mechanisms are child-friendly and accessible to diverse groups of girls and boys</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate child protection consideration into FS programme monitoring and tools, including post-distribution monitoring (PDM) tools.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all <b>data is disaggregated by sex, age, and disability</b>. Consider disaggregated data by key age groups: &lt;5, 6-9, 10-14, and 15-17.</li> </ul>

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Child Neglect in Humanitarian Settings: Literature review and recommendations for strengthening prevention and response. 2018.

- Inter-Agency Toolkit: Preventing and Responding to Child Labour in Humanitarian Action. 2020.
- Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019 Edition. 2019.
- Monitoring Child Protection Within Humanitarian Cash Programmes. 2019
- Understanding Risk and Protective Factors in Humanitarian Crises: Towards a Preventive Approach to Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. 2021

Amnesty International. 'They Betrayed Us': Women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved, and detained in Nigeria. 2018.

Aurino, Elisabetta, and Virginia Morrow. "Food prices were high, and the dal became watery". Mixed-method evidence on household food insecurity and children's diets in India, *World Development*, Volume 111, 2018, Pages 211-224.

Aurino, Elisabetta, Jean-Pierre Tranchant, Amadou Sekou Diallo, and Aulo Gelli. "School Feeding or General Food Distribution? Quasi-Experimental Evidence on the Educational Impacts of Emergency Food Assistance during Conflict in Mali." UNICEF Office of Research, Innocenti Working Paper, June 2018.

Awungafac G, Mugamba S, Nalugoda F, et al. Household food insecurity and its association with self-reported male perpetration of intimate partner violence: a survey of two districts in central and western Uganda *BMJ Open* 2021;11:e045427.

Bermudez, Laura Gauer et al. "Safety, Trust, and Disclosure: A Qualitative Examination of Violence Against Refugee Adolescents in Kiziba Camp, Rwanda." *Social science & medicine* (1982) 200 (2018): 83–91.

Bernal, Jennifer, Edward A. Frongillo, Héctor Herrera, Juan Rivera. Children Live, Feel, and Respond to Experiences of Food Insecurity That Compromise Their Development and Weight Status in Peri-Urban Venezuela, *The Journal of Nutrition*, Volume 142, Issue 7, July 2012, Pages 1343–1349.

Bernal, Jennifer, Edward Frongillo, and Klaus Jaffe. "Food Insecurity of Children Increases Shame of Others Knowing They Are Without Food." *The FASEB journal* 29.S1 (2015).

Cardoso, L.F., Gupta, J., Shuman, S. et al. What Factors Contribute to Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Urban, Conflict-Affected Settings? Qualitative Findings from Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. *J Urban Health* 93, 364–378 (2016).

Child Partnership Program Papua New Guinea, Food Security Assessment Report (Kandep-Panduaga), 6 April 2016.

Corboz, Julianne et al. "Children's Peer Violence Perpetration and Victimization: Prevalence and Associated Factors Among School Children in Afghanistan." *PloS one* 13.2 (2018).

Dammert, Ana C et al. "Effects of Public Policy on Child Labor: Current Knowledge, Gaps, and Implications for Program Design." *World development* 110 (2018): 104–123.

Davies Lizzie, "Ethiopian drought leading to 'dramatic' increase in child marriage, UNICEF warns," *The Guardian*, 30 April 2022.

Edwards, Ben, Matthew Gray, Judith Borja. The influence of natural disasters on violence, mental health, food insecurity, and stunting in the Philippines: Findings from a nationally representative cohort, *SSM - Population Health*, Volume 15, 2021.

Ellsberg M, Murphy M, Blackwell A, et al. "If You Are Born a Girl in This Crisis, You Are Born a Problem": Patterns and Drivers of Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict-Affected South Sudan. *Violence Against Women*. 2021;27(15-16):3030-3055.

FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022: Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome, FAO. 2022.

Girls Not Brides. How cash transfers contribute to ending child marriage. Thematic Paper 1. Review and synthesis of the evidence. December 2021.

Glinski, Allison M., Magnolia Sexton, and Lis Meyers. Washington, DC: The Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide Task Order, Banyan Global, 2015.

Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility and WFP VAM. Mali Case Study.

Global Protection Cluster, Child Protection Working Group. Child Protection Rapid Assessment Toolkit. 2012.

Hatcher AM, Stockl H, McBride R-S, et al. Pathways from food insecurity to intimate partner violence Perpetration among Peri-Urban men in South Africa. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 2019; 56:765–72.



Hathi, Payal et al. "When women eat last: Discrimination at home and women's mental health." *PloS one* vol. 16,3 e0247065. 2 Mar. 2021.

Hidrobo, Melissa, Amber Peterman, and Lori Heise. "The Effect of Cash, Vouchers, and Food Transfers on Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Northern Ecuador." *American economic journal. Applied economics* 8.3 (2016): 284–303.

Hoddinott, John et al. "The Impact of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme and Related Transfers on Agricultural Productivity." *Journal of African economies* 21.5 (2012): 761–786.

Human Rights Watch, *Marry Before Your House is Swept Away*; Child Marriage in Bangladesh, June 9, 2015.

- No way out: Child marriage and human rights abuses in Tanzania, October 29, 2014.
- "Out Time to Sing and Play": Child Marriage in Nepal, September 8, 2016.

Hutson, Royce A, Eileen Trzcinski, and Athena R Kolbe. "Features of Child Food Insecurity after the 2010 Haiti Earthquake: Results from Longitudinal Random Survey of Households." *PloS one* 9.9 (2014): e104497–e104497.

International Rescue Committee, *Child Labor: What Works Towards addressing Child Labor in IRC Relevant Contexts: An Evidence Review*, April 2021.

Ismayilova, Leyla et al. "Maltreatment and Mental Health Outcomes Among Ultra-Poor Children in Burkina Faso: A Latent Class Analysis." *PloS one* 11.10 (2016): e0164790–e0164790.

Jackson, Dylan B., Kellie R. Lynch, Jesse J. Helton, and Michael G. Vaughn. "Food Insecurity and Violence in the Home: Investigating Exposure to Violence and Victimization Among Preschool-Aged Children." *Health Education & Behavior* 45, no. 5 (2018): 756–63.

Jones, Andrew D. *Food Insecurity and Mental Health Status: A Global Analysis of 149 Countries*, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Volume 53, Issue 2, 2017, Pages 264–273.

Karmaliani R, McFarlane J, Somani R, Khuwaja H.M.A, Gulzar S, Saeed Ali T. et al. Peer Violence perpetration and victimization: Prevalence, associated factors and pathways among 1752 sixth grade boys and girls in schools in Pakistan. *PLOS ONE*. 2017; 12(8):e0180833.

Kazianga, Harounan, Damien de Walque, and Harold Alderman. "Educational and Child Labour Impacts of Two Food-for-Education Schemes: Evidence from a Randomised Trial in Rural Burkina Faso." *Journal of African economies* 21.5 (2012): 723–760.

Kuku, Oluyemisi, Craig Gundersen, Steven Garasky. Differences in food insecurity between adults and children in Zimbabwe, *Food Policy*, Volume 36, Issue 2, 2011, Pages 311–317.

Laurenzi, Christina, Sally Field, and Simone Honikman. "Food Insecurity, Maternal Mental Health, and Domestic Violence: A Call for a Syndemic Approach to Research and Interventions." *Maternal and child health journal* 24.4 (2020): 401–404.

Lentz EC, Complicating narratives of women's food and nutrition insecurity: Domestic violence in rural Bangladesh. *World Development* 2018; 104:271–80.

Logie et al. "Exploring Resource Scarcity and Contextual Influences on Wellbeing Among Young Refugees in Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement, Uganda: Findings from a Qualitative Study," *Conflict and health* 15.1 (2021): 3–11.

Mazurana, D., Marshak, A., & Spears, K. Child marriage in armed conflict. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 101(911), 2019: 575–601.

Meyer, Sarah, Elizabeth Meyer, Clare Bangirana, Patrick Onyango Mangan, Lindsay Stark. Protection and well-being of adolescent refugees in the context of a humanitarian crisis: Perceptions from South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 221, 2019, Pages 79–86,

Meyer, Sarah, Laura K. Murray, Eve S. Puffer, Jillian Larsen & Paul Bolton (2013) The nature and impact of chronic stressors on refugee children in Ban Mai Nai Soi camp, Thailand, *Global Public Health*, 8:9, 1027–1047.

Morrow, Virginia, Yisak Tafere, Nardos Chuta, Ina Zharkevich. "I started working because I was hungry": The consequences of food insecurity for children's well-being in rural Ethiopia, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 182, 2017, Pages 1–9.

Nabulsi, Dana et al. "Voices of the Vulnerable: Exploring the Livelihood Strategies, Coping Mechanisms and Their Impact on Food Insecurity, Health and Access to Health Care Among Syrian Refugees in the Beqaa Region of Lebanon." *PloS one* 15.12 (2020).

Nanama, Siméon, Edward A. Frongillo, Altered social cohesion and adverse psychological experiences with chronic food insecurity in the non-market economy and complex households of Burkina Faso, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 74, Issue 3, 2012, Pages 444–451.

Ndungu, Jane, Jewkes, Rachel, Ngcobo-Sithole, Magnolia, Chirwa, Esnat, Gibbs, Andrew. Afghan Women's Use of Violence Against Their Children and Associations with IPV, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Poverty; A Cross-Section and Structural Equation Modelling Analysis," *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 2021-07-27, Vol.18 (15), p.7923.

Polack E. Child rights and climate change adaptation: voices from Cambodia and Kenya. In: *Children in a Changing Climate*; 2010.

Porter, Catherine et al. "The Evolution of Young People's Mental Health During COVID-19 and the Role of Food Insecurity: Evidence from a Four Low-and-Middle-Income-Country Cohort Study." *Public health in practice* (Oxford, England) 3 (2022).

Plan International. *Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from the Lake Chad Basin*, 2018.

- Adolescent Programming Toolkit: Guidance and Tools for Adolescent Programming and Girls' Empowerment in Crisis Settings, June 2020.
- Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices Rohingya, June 2018.
- Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from the South Sudan Crisis, 2018.
- Integrated Child Protection and SGBV and Food Security Case Study.
- Investing in Child Protection and GBV in Food Crisis: The Link between Food Security and Child Protection and GBV.

Plan International, Women's Refugee Commission, The Cynefin Co., *Our Voices, Our Future: Understanding child marriage in food-insecure communities in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe*, June 2022.

Plan International Central African Republic, *Rapport: Consultation des adolescents sur la securite alimentaire et la nutrition dans les regions/provinces de Bangui, Zemio, Bria, Berberati, Kaga-Bandaro et Bossangoa, RCA*, 2021.

Ravallion, Martin, and Quentin Wodon. "Does Child Labour Displace Schooling? Evidence on Behavioural Responses to an Enrollment Subsidy." *The Economic Journal* (London) 110.462 (2000): 158–175.

Save the Children, CARE, USAID. *Titukulane Youth Needs Assessment: Finding sources of connection, learning, and earning*. May 2021.

Save the Children. *Child Safeguarding for Cash and Voucher Assistance Guidance*. 2019.

- "Child protection needs assessment Somalia", Harvard Dataverse, V1, April 2017.
- Children's Recommendations for the hunger responses in South Sudan. 2021.
- Fighting Back: Child and community-led strategies to avoid children's recruitment into armed forces and groups in West Africa.

Spears, Kinsey, Bridget Conley, and Dyan Mazurana. "Gender, Famine, and Mortality," *World Peace Foundation and Feinstein International Center, Occasional Paper #36*. December 2021.

Street Child of Nigeria. *Street Child 2019-2020 WFP Project Impact Assessment*. May 2020.

Wathen CN, Macmillan HL. Children's exposure to intimate partner violence: Impacts and interventions. *Paediatr Child Health*. 2013 Oct;18(8):419-22.

Weaver, Lesley Jo, Caroline Owens, Fasil Tessema, Ayantu Kebede, Craig Hadley, *Unpacking the "black box" of global food insecurity and mental health*, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 282, 2021.

WFP. *Disability and food security: Central African Republic – Findings from the 2020 ENSA disaggregated by disability*. August 2021.

- The Impact of School Feeding Programmes. November 2019.
- Protection and Accountability Policy 2020.

WFP, Inter-American Development Bank, IFAD, IOM, and Organization of American States. *Food Security and Emigration: Why people flee and the impact on family members left behind in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras*.

WHO. *Global status report on preventing violence against children*. Geneva, 2020.

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. *Finding Trees in the Desert: Fuelwood Collection and Alternatives in Darfur* 2006.

World Bank. *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Vision. "Child Marriage and Hunger Crisis: South Sudan Case Study", 2021.

- Untying the Knot: Exploring Early Marriage in Fragile States March 2013.

UNICEF. *Hidden in plain sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund; 2014

- Protection Risks for Children As A Result of Typhoon Bopha (Pablo): Inter-Agency Child Protection Rapid Assessment Report, Child Protection Sub-cluster, March 2013.





Youth group members tend to their vegetable garden in Bangladesh.

©PLAN INTERNATIONAL





---

**Cover photograph:** A mother and her children in front of their home in Ethiopia. ©Plan International

**Design & layout:** Out of the Blue Creative Communication Solutions – [www.outoftheblue.co.za](http://www.outoftheblue.co.za)

---

This review was written by Yang Fu, Child Protection in Emergencies Specialist (Food Security) of Plan International. Thanks to the following colleagues for speaking about their experience regarding collaboration between child protection and food security sectors: Crystal Stewart, Geoffrey Pinnock, Jeannette Poules, Joy Cheung, Kevin McCarthy, Marcello Viola, Mirette Baghat, Mohammed Ibrahim Diallo, Monica Matarazzo, Paul Kinuthia and Weihui Wang. Additional thanks to the following colleagues for their support and reviewing the report and providing feedback: Anita Queirazza, Clare Lofthouse, Jennifer Arlt, Joyce Mutiso, Laetitia Sanchez, Shannon Hayes and Sita Conklin.

---

### About the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility

The Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility leads the coordination of child protection efforts in humanitarian settings in order to ensure children in emergencies are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. To find more about the Global CP AoR, please visit our [website](https://www.unicef.org/childprotection). You can also contact us at [cp-aor@unicef.org](mailto:cp-aor@unicef.org).

---

### About Plan International

Plan International is an independent humanitarian and development organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion, and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected. Working together with children, young people, our supporters, and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood. And we enable children to prepare for – and respond to – crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national, and global levels using our reach, experience, and knowledge. We have been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years, and are active in more than 71 countries.

---

### Plan International

Global Hub

Dukes Court, Duke Street, Woking,  
Surrey GU21 5BH, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1483 755155

Fax: +44 (0) 1483 756505

E-mail: [info@plan-international.org](mailto:info@plan-international.org)

[plan-international.org](http://plan-international.org)

Published in 2022. Text © Plan International



[facebook.com/planinternational](https://facebook.com/planinternational)



[twitter.com/planglobal](https://twitter.com/planglobal)



[instagram.com/planinternational](https://instagram.com/planinternational)



[linkedin.com/company/plan-international](https://linkedin.com/company/plan-international)



[youtube.com/user/planinternationaltv](https://youtube.com/user/planinternationaltv)