

Child Protection Strategy Kakuma Refugee Camp Kenya

Introduction

As of 23 July 2017, there were a total of 109,672 refugee children (below 18 years) registered in the operation with a total of 2,611 (1,947 South Sudanese (SSD) unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and 11,873 (9,408 SSD) separated children. Violence towards children is a major concern in Kakuma refugee camp. Majority of reports on cases affecting children include physical and sexual abuse, early marriage and FGM, threats of abduction, tribal conflict and psychological and emotional abuse. The exact prevalence and incidence is difficult to capture accurately as the majority of cases remain unreported by both the refugee and host communities. 45% of the children below 18 years are girls and they face specific challenges related to traditional gender roles.

This strategy outlines key issues relating to the delivery of child protection services and takes into consideration these issues in formulating the most suitable direction for child protection programming in Kakuma refugee camp.

Guiding Principles

UNHCR action to protect children is guided by the following principles:

- **Systems approach.** Strengthening national child protection systems and services in line with UNHCR's Global Framework for the Protection of Children and designing holistic programming that address the full range of child protection risks.
- **Partnership.** Working in partnership with States, communities, children, and other child protection actors to develop a comprehensive interagency child protection response that maximizes resources and the complementary of all partners' contributions.
- **Urgency.** Ensure prioritization of and immediate response to protection risks for children including prioritizing the most at-risk children.
- **Best Interests of the Child.** The best interests of the child is a primary consideration in all decisions and actions undertaken for and with children including during all protection procedures.
- **Family and Community Based Approach.** Families and communities are central to the care and protection that children need. It is important to understand and support and build upon existing community mechanism that protects boys and girls, also act as an advocate for children to address harmful practices.
- **Participatory.** Promote the participation of children in their own protection and in all matters affecting them in accordance with their age, gender, maturity and capacity.
- **Equity.** Promote an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach to the protection of refugee children, irrespective of their nationality and place of residence.
- **Inclusivity.** Address the specific risks that boys and girls of specific ages face, as well as children with disabilities and children with other specific backgrounds.
- **Do No Harm.** Conduct actions, procedures and programmes in a way that does not place the child at further risk of harm, including as a result of unintended consequences.

Strategic Objectives

For 2017 through 2019, UNHCR will place emphasis on the following four strategic objectives that serve to protect refugee children in Kakuma refugee camp¹.

Objective 1: Every boy and girl identified with a specific protection risk receives quality specialized child protection services in line with their best interests

According to information captured by LWF partner agency in CPIMS, children in Kakuma are at high risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. These incidents largely remain unreported due to gaps including weak reporting and referral mechanisms, lack of child friendly spaces and shortage of Children Protection focal points, limited prevention activities and challenges in staff retention.

UNHCR programmes will continue to provide response services for children who are at risk of or victim of violence, neglect, abuse or exploitation or who have specific needs that require an urgent response. UNHCR will provide specialised programmes to ensure that at a minimum all refugee children who are identified as unaccompanied, experience or are at risk of domestic abuse, all forms of sexual abuse, child recruitment, and/or early marriage receive immediate quality services in line with their best interests.

The primary specialised approach to be used by UNHCR is integrated case management by UNHCR and partner staff including Best Interests Assessment and where relevant Best Interests Determination for children facing a range of child protection risks. Other specialised child protection services to be provided include: (1) community-based alternative care for unaccompanied children and others in need; (2) Coordinate the improvement of child protection systems (SOPs, IMS and inter-agency referral mechanisms especially from referrals from schools) (3) child sensitive protection interventions including registration, refugee status determination, resettlement, vol-rep, interventions to prevent *refoulement*; (4) mental and psychosocial services such as family, couple and individual counselling and anger management to prevent domestic violence (5) Coordinate the development and increase the availability of child-friendly spaces around the camp;

For specific child protection risks, UNHCR addresses each risk using a combination of specialized services, relevant national child protection systems, community-based protection and advocacy and knowledge generation as described below:

Protecting children from child abuse. UNHCR works to protect and respond to abuse of children in the family and school through the following approaches: (1) strengthening the capacity of children and parents to prevent and respond to child abuse; (2) supporting community-based child protection mechanisms to change community attitudes to child abuse and identify and refer children experiencing abuse; (3) establishing inter-agency plans to strengthen policies, procedures and capacity of education staff to make schools safer and more supportive (see education strategy); and (4) providing child-sensitive case management, protection, health and legal services for victims of child abuse that addresses the specific risks faced by girls and boys, especially adolescents.

Promoting family unity and protecting unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR focuses on (1) preserving family unity at different stages of the displacement including avoiding separation of families at the border or reception centers, preventing *refoulement* and supporting families to avoid secondary separation; (2) identifying unaccompanied or separated children at the earliest stage possible and undertaking best interests procedures including family tracing and reunification

¹ Child and Youth Protection: Kakuma and Kalobeyi Strategy, 2017-2019

wherever possible; and (3) promoting community-based alternative care. Unaccompanied children should be prioritized for case management services, while separated children may be referred to community-based child protection mechanism for monitoring and follow-up if no other protection risks are identified.

Preventing and responding to early marriage. UNHCR's approach encompasses prevention, identification and response. Prevention includes supporting the empowerment of girls through their access to education and life skills programmes, reducing the socio-economic vulnerability of families, engaging communities, especially men and boys in programmes increasing awareness, and advocating for a stronger legal and policy framework discouraging early marriage. Identification includes identification of the root cause of out of school which are at risk of experiencing early marriage. Response involves the provision of multi-sectorial case management services to children, especially girls who are survivors of early marriage including those who experience domestic violence and other forms of SGBV. These issues should be addressed in collaboration with relevant SGBV colleagues and programmes.

Protecting children at risk of detention. UNHCR response includes: (1) advocating that refugee children who are in conflict with the law are treated in line with international juvenile justice standards including that they are detained for the shortest period possible, not in same cell with adults and their best interest is a primary consideration and are protected from *refoulement*; and (2) promoting alternatives to detention such as diversion that are sensitive to the specific needs of refugee children in particular, unaccompanied children.

Recruitment by armed groups and forces. UNHCR's actions include: (1) engaging with children, families and communities to promote alternatives to recruitment; (2) increasing formal, non-formal, vocational and tertiary education opportunities for adolescents; (3) monitoring returns to the country of origin with governments; (4) facilitating reunification of children with families; (5) supporting refugee children to access documentation including birth registration providing proof of their age; and (6) advocating for child-sensitive procedures and specialized services for children who were associated with armed groups or forces.

Protection from exploitation. UNHCR's strategy is comprised of the following actions: (1) awareness-raising among communities on the risks of exploitation and how to access international protection and seek assistance; (2) establishing mechanisms to prevent and safely report sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA); (3) advocacy for unhindered access to asylum, prevention of detention; (4) identification and referral of survivors of exploitation to appropriate specialized procedures and services including asylum procedures and legal and psychosocial services. These issues should be addressed in collaboration with relevant SGBV colleagues and programmes.

Protection from survival sex. Based on the information on survival sex from the recent 2017 Participatory Assessment conducted in Kakuma refugee camp, the main cause is reported to be the levels of poverty linked to the lack of basic needs and services, particularly the levels in food rations and bamba chakula, and lack of other employment opportunities. Teenage girls are reported to mainly be interested in "luxury" goods (lotions, soaps, earrings). UNHCR strategy included (1) strengthen the SGBV referral pathways through Inter-Agency Task Force (2) Community-based awareness activities need to be undertaken to engage men in prevention of SGBV (3) advocacy for the active involvement of camp management and authorities for the prevention activities. (4) Supporting the empowerment of girls through their access to education and life skills programmes. These issues should be addressed in collaboration with relevant SGBV colleagues and programmes.

Civil Documentation and Registration. UNHCR strategy includes: 1) advocacy with the authorities to remove procedural barriers to birth and marriage registration, and to promote equal access by refugees to civil registration; and (2) activities to raise awareness of the importance of birth and marriage registration and the relevant procedures, and counselling on these procedures including legal aid as required.

Objective 2: Number of children who are actively participating in their own protection increases

Children are willing and keen on actively participating in their own protection however too often they are not engaged by involved agencies. As a large number of incidences of harm against children remain unreported, UNHCR recognizes the importance of engaging children through recreational and educational activities and other community structures to ensure early interventions.

The activities that UNHCR and partners undertake may include:

- Support child-led protection initiatives and wider networks, including child protection focal points in schools. Some activities to make schools safer for all, such as “buddy systems” to ensure girls’ and boys’ safe movement to and from schools, child protection guidelines, referral mechanisms should be explored and/or strengthened;
- Increase the participation of children in all stages particularly in schools through student councils, child rights clubs, identifying student champions and using sports, drama and music as ways children can express themselves;
- Raise awareness of children through advocacy strategies which will be aimed at reducing harmful practices such as FGM and substance abuse.

Objective 3: More refugee children benefit from quality national child protection systems

In order to provide more sustainable protection for refugee children, UNHCR will increase the investment in national child protection systems provided by the State and national civil society partners, based on country level analysis of the availability of these systems, access of refugee children to these systems and their acceptability, affordability and quality. This includes child-sensitive policy and legal procedures for custody, legal guardianship and child victims of violence, child-sensitive social welfare services such as shelters for child survivors of violence, national health services for child survivors of violence, birth registration services, and safe and supportive education.

UNHCR:

- **Advocates** with authorities like Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender, Ministry of Labour (Home Affairs).
- to increase the non-discriminatory access of refugee children to national child protection systems and remove barriers for refugee children to access these services including through policy, procedures and practices
- provides **financial support** to expand the capacity of governmental and national civil society child protection services to respond to the increased number of refugee children in specific regions in their territories
- provides **technical support** to improve the quality of these systems in line with international standards and ensure that they are able to respond appropriately to the age and gender specific risks faced by refugee children including through training and tool development
- **works in collaboration** with other key partners supporting national child protection systems, services and reforms to ensure that these efforts benefit refugee children
- **Advocates** for access to specialised national children’s services especially like for children with specific impairments’.

Objective 4: Improved data and information management inform responses

UNHCR will work in partnership with government actors, civil society and UN actors to advocate for policy and legal reforms, improved knowledge and data and greater resources needed to protect refugee children. Comprehensive assessments on refugee child protection needs and responses including the specific needs of boys, girls, adolescents and youth will be undertaken at least once a year through inter-agency process and regular updates will be provided on new developments. Through a multi-sectoral approach and with data sharing agreements, UNHCR seeks to harmonize existing information systems, including proGres, Education Management Information System (EMIS), Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) and Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) to capture categories of abuse and improve reporting mechanisms.

Strategic Approaches

Prevention and Response Services

UNHCR will focus primarily on child protection through reduction of cases of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of refugee children. The goal is to increase the number of child friendly spaces in schools, appoint child protection focal persons or counselors amongst teachers in schools, and enhance the capacity of children to become their own protection agents.

Coordination and Programming

UNHCR and partners will strengthen existing child protection management systems as this will improve access to services for children in the camp and in the host community. There will also be emphasis on child protection training for partners, staff and child development incentive workers to ensure that community networks are also involved in the decision-making process. UNHCR will also assist the Government with advocacy forums and strengthening child protection mechanisms to address the problem of high child labor amongst the host community.

Advocacy and Awareness

UNHCR and partners will enhance the capacity of children structure in order for them to be more involved in the decision making process. This will be done through sensitization campaigns, advocacy forums with government institutions, and dialogue sessions between children and adults on various child-protection related concerns. UNHCR will ensure that information on the asylum, registration, protection and assistance procedures are well understood by children and caregivers for informed decisions.

Linkages between Children Protection Framework and Education, SGBV and Livelihood Strategies

Child protection mainstreaming in the Education, SGBV and Livelihood thematic areas is essential and can only fully be effective, in tandem, in order to ensure protection and other service delivery to children in the camp.

31 August 2017
Kakuma

