

Guidance material for emergency and disaster response staff

Special needs of young people
in an emergency



Yaps
Raising
young people's
awareness on
preparedness and
self protection



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Imprint

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1 Background

The project was aimed at finding existing material of special needs of young people in case of emergencies and disasters. The findings of the report show nine main areas to cover within emergencies when dealing with young people:

- Protection/Security
- Information
- Health
- Water and Sanitation
- Food and nutrition
- Shelter
- Psychosocial support
- Education
- Recreation

The present report proposes guidance in the preparedness phase and emergency response phase.

Previous experiences with children's and young people (ChYP) in disaster had demonstrated that they are a population that need special care and assistance but as well they can provide support to emergency managers. For instance UNICEF [1] highlighted that during the Tsunami in 2004 in Indonesia, children and young people did important contributions.

They...

- rescued others, saved lives and provided first aid;
- concerned themselves with hygienic standards and keeping communal areas clean;
- collected food and coordinated and distributed relief aid;
- Provided care and psychosocial support for younger children, peers and adults;
- Taught other children in formal and non-formal classes;
- Learned about emergency issues and response and took on roles and responsibilities;
- Promoted resilience through their participation in community activities and by organizing children's and young people's groups, thus providing their own psychosocial support;
- Set up businesses and took a lead in community renewal.

Children usually make up more than half the population in vulnerable communities. They can interact with other children and adults, if they are well-informed and supported. They can be effective channels of information and role models [2].

2 Considered Sectors

The knowledge needed in order to be prepared, covers different areas. They will be listed in the following from recommendations of UNICEF and the United Nations.

2.1 Recommendation of UNICEF [1]

1. The skills of communication, facilitating groups and listening to and working with individuals would also enable staff to facilitate and initiate action with and by children. Basic values are crucial, such as belief in the worth of children and having real respect for their capabilities; knowledge and skills are useless without this attitude.
2. Training on protection, rights and standards: Training in protection must incorporate legal basis, local reporting rules and structures and what to do in a variety of different cases and circumstances.
3. Training on participation: Practical introduction courses on participation should include the development of facilitating skills, some understanding of diversity, children's rights and the skills of listening to, observing and interviewing children.
4. Approaches to work with children: Basic skills on work with children involve:
 - Group work – facilitating skills. These may make use of vehicles such as theatre and art;
 - Individual work with children – listening and supporting, games able to play without any material, drawing material, colour books,...
5. Individual work: Personal listening skills can be developed as part of basic person-centred counselling training. The approach of person-centred counselling, which is listening and reflecting, provides a basis for empathic responses to children. Counselling should not be a first resort but a method for possible adoption following participatory group work and other activities. Training for individual work would include taking account of diversity – particularly age and gender. Training for individual work also would include how to talk with and respond to troubled children. And it includes other more creative forms of communications, such as art, drama, role playing and storytelling.
6. Creative communication: During the recovery and rehabilitation phases, relief agencies may bring in individuals and groups with particular skills in facilitating drama and art workshops with children – as a vehicle for consultation, recovery and support. Theatre and art workshops can be means of engaging children and young people and initiating their broader participation. Methods such as theatre for development can also be used to discuss issues and support emotional rebuilding.

7. Ethics: Competence among staff is a key element in an ethical approach working with children, staff should be confident and able. Attitudes toward children and their participation are a fundamental element of competence. When staff does not believe children have views or capacity to make decisions or take action, they will act as a block and obstruct relief efforts.
8. Commitment: Staff needs to understand and be committed to participation work with children and young people – otherwise the work will not succeed. They may also have to deal with objections and obstacles others make regarding children’s participation. Staffs need to be confident in raising awareness of children’s competence in emergencies and how their participation benefits emergency work and communities.
9. Documentation: A fundamental part of participation work and particularly in responding to troubled children is developing skills and methods for documenting children’s viewpoints.

2.2 Recommendation of United Nations

Similarly is important to focus as well, in working with communities on the preparedness phase, to arrange emergency plans where they are important players and improve their resilience to disasters. United Nations [3] had stabilised a set of recommendations to protect ChYP of becoming victims of disaster and to strengthen the resilience of communities to natural disasters.

1. Community resilience to natural disasters would be strengthened by giving people relevant information about the best life-saving plans of action during (and after) natural disasters. The acquisition of such knowledge is very important, not only for improving the preparedness of those vulnerable for dealing with disasters, but to give them peace of mind so that they can manage their daily lives with a higher degree of confidence and certainty.
2. Policies designed as guiding principles in disaster management and child protection in disaster situations should include a clear set of technical and operational procedures for the implementation of programmes and activities following a disaster.
3. Equity in the provision of services in emergency situations must be established to avoid gaps and unmet needs based on communally-accepted perceptions of fairness. A standardized plan of action should apply to all the services provided by government agencies, aid organizations and NGOs in affected areas.
4. Cooperation among INGOs and government agencies should not be limited to psychosocial and livelihood support but should also include the transfer of relevant knowledge and technology to local NGOs in order to strengthen their capacity for handling future disasters.

5. A comprehensive database on children and youth, according to their respective conditions and needs, should be established so that programmes can be designed and responsibilities for the operation of each programme can be evenly shared among government agencies and civil service organizations. A reliable data collection format would help to develop this standardized evidence base for understanding community needs and developing and implementing effective response strategies.
6. Women, especially those who are caregivers of ChYP, should be given the opportunity to participate in the decision making processes of their communities so that the best interests of ChYP can be fully incorporated.
7. Participation in decision making should be promoted with all stakeholders including children, youth and community members. Youth should be involved at the community level so that the decisions will reflect their best interests.
8. A trauma centre with an adequate number of professional staff should be established to provide continuous services for children and adults.
9. An official information centre from which people can obtain trusted and reliable information regarding disasters should be established in disaster prone areas so as to avoid panic created by false information from unknown sources, as has frequently happened in the past.
10. Mechanisms to address gender inequalities and to protect children and youth from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation should be incorporated into support systems so that there is a strategy in place to deal with these issues following a disaster.
11. The media can play an important role in dissemination of information and advocate for the rights of children and youth during disasters.
12. The development of stronger and more dynamic partnerships, and synergy, collaboration and coordination among government agencies, NGOs and international organizations, as well as other stakeholders, will enhance resilience at all levels.

3 Proposed Guidelines

To support young people during a disaster in an adequate way there should be prepared a lot of procedures and actions beforehand. The inclusion of children in all preparedness measures is an essential factor for success. Children are a good resource to multiply the issues into their families.

Important is to involve all relevant organisations who are caring for children (schools, sports club, kinder garden...). Having contact details of all relevant players which are involved with children during a disaster is essential for emergency organisations.

To educate the emergency staff for being sensible for special needs of children during a disaster and give them special training how to deal and communicate with children and to prepare materials needed especially for children are basic requirements to ensure the adequate supply.

During a disaster children should be protected and supported by staff, which is trained and prepared supporting children. To revert to all the arranged methods, information and tools will help the children and the helpers to manage the situations as well as possible. To engage children and youth during a disaster brings not only support for themselves but also for the emergency organisations.

Only if there are personnel and material prepared and the structures are defined before a disaster together it can be worked at the children's wellbeing and safety.

3.1 Prevention and preparedness phase

Emergency management

- Establish community-based disaster-risk reduction and emergency response mechanisms that involve children (Scouts, Red Cross) [1]
- Involve children in participatory, community-level planning and action. This builds their skills and confidence and prepares them to contribute in disaster situations. [1]
- Maintain roster of staff experienced at working with groups of children. [1]
- Prepare updated lists of agencies who work with children (in emergencies). [1]
- Prepare methods of decision making that will include children. [1]
- Prepare methods for planning rehabilitation and reconstruction with young people [1]
- Work with children in preparing their roles during an emergency. [1]
- Emergency manager should base their assessments on lists and information collected from multiple relevant sources, such as schools, child care centres, hospitals, summer camps, juvenile detention facilities, child welfare facilities and homeless shelters. [8]
- Designate an individual as a lead coordinator of disaster planning for children [8]
- Simulate emergency drills
- Form and foster community partnerships that help to manage children's issues in disaster response and recovery [9]

- Provide families with guidance on home disaster preparedness and encourage families to develop family disaster plans [9]
- Assist child care facilities and schools in their efforts to develop on-site emergency operation plans [9]
- Conduct drills with emergency managers that include paediatric victims or a majority of paediatric victims in various circumstances (e.g., in schools, child care facilities, school buses) to adequately test the capacity of the system to handle paediatric patients [9]

Staff Skills and other training

- Train staff in methods of working with ChYP
- build capacity of staff to understand & recognize the potential and participation of children in emergency relief and recovery [1]
- Train staff to recognize & make use of ChYP's roles in providing psychosocial support
- Train staff in methods of assessment with children. [1]
- Train staff in a range of appropriate consultation methods with children. [1]
- Train & exercise Emergency operations and other base plans [8], Conduct disaster exercises & drills at facilities that care for ChYP [9]

Mental health and psychosocial support

- Develop messages targeted to parents and other caregivers to support ChYP [8]
- Provide specialized education and training in disaster mental health and/or psychological first aid to emergency responders and other professionals, including disaster relief personnel and volunteers, faith-based professionals, and school and child care personnel. [8]

Child physical health and trauma

- Develop local and regional disaster response plans that anticipate need and fully integrate trauma systems, children's hospitals, EMS, and other institutions with paediatric critical care and paediatric surgical sub-specialty care capabilities [8]
- Assess local and state paediatric transport capabilities, including recommended equipment and training to provide emergency care to children. [8]
- Include paediatric health care facilities (e.g. children's hospitals, paediatric emergency departments and paediatricians' offices) in all aspects of emergency planning and preparation [9]

Childcare

- Assist child care operators through guidance or direct assistance in the development of comprehensive disaster plans; plans must address the needs of children, staff and parents with access and functional needs [8]
- Work with child care facilities to designate site and evacuation routes in the event of a disaster [8]
- Work with child care facilities to develop reunification plans for children and families in the event they become separated during an emergency [8]

Education

- Develop training materials for children and young people. [1]
- Develop integrated plans for coordinated state and regional school closures in the event of a pandemic or other event [8]
- Enhance school personnel's abilities to support children who are traumatized, grieving, or otherwise recovering from a disaster [8]
- Train teachers, school administrators, and other school personnel to understand the impact of trauma and loss and to provide basic supportive services and basic bereavement services following a disaster [8]
- Develop a program to educate children about disaster response, including what to do if they are separated from their parents or guardians or if they require rescue [9]

Evacuation

- Develop plans to track and reunify families during and after a disaster. The system should take into account adults and children who are unaccompanied, injured, nonverbal, or have disabilities or chronic health needs, limited English proficiency, as well as potential legal issues regarding custody (in the case of children). [8]
- Ensure that evacuation plans, including those for schools, juvenile detention facilities, child care, Head Start and other child congregate care facilities, adequately accommodate children, staff and parents with access and functional needs and chronic health needs [8]
- Develop a system to collect data from evacuated children and to merge personal data of different sources for identification and family reunion.

Shelter

- Create caches of essential age appropriate shelter supplies for children [8]
- Children in the shelters come in all ages and with unique needs. Consider to have on stock age appropriate and nutritious food (including baby formula and baby food), Diapers and other non-food elements [8]
- Educate children in emergency preparedness, response and first aid. [1]
- Prepare boxes with playing and learning material, books and material to build up rituals for children groups of different age.
- Prepare a system of unambiguous assignment to keep track about children or/and caregivers.

3.2 Emergency response phase

Emergency management

- ensure effective child protection policies, procedures and mechanisms [1]
- Recruit staff with experience in working with children (wants to seek out, strengthen the capacity of and engage with children) [1]
- Have trained staff available with the following skills:
 - Communication staff who can talk and work with children
 - Staff should run information dissemination workshops and involve children in tracing, identifying and documenting work. [1]
- Develop information for children in appropriate forms, using language and pictures [1]
- Provide information to children on what the different agencies are doing. [1]
- Provide information about personal hygiene and health. [1]
- Provide information to children about their protection. [1]
- Involve children in tracing and documenting work, especially because they know about the lives of other children and young people. [1]
- Involve children in organising their stay in different environments
- Prepare structure during the day with defined leisure time.
- Provide training for children in disseminating & collecting information. [1]
- Learn from children about problems and issues they have identified. [1]
- Establish an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) & Children's Issues Coordinator [9]
- Develop a system and points of contact for sharing, collecting and disseminating information on children between the office of emergency management and facilities that care for children [9]
- Create & distribute situation reports on the status of children [9]
- Conduct a community-wide, child-focused damage and needs assessment [9]
- Ensure child appropriate equipment & materials on all emergency vehicles & teams [9]
- Assess emergency management needs relevant to children's issues at all facilities that care for children [9]

Information

Provide ChYP with understandable information they are concerned about.

- Where is my family?
- Where can I go to in an emergency? Where will I be safe?
- Where can I get first aid, health care, water, sanitation care and shelter?
- What emergency happened? How long will it last?

- How can I protect myself, my family and my friends?
- Where and when will assessments take place?
- How can I help?
- What are the emergency organisations, the authorities, the schools doing?

Mental health and psychological support

- Focus on family reunion
- Establish child friendly spaces.
- Organize structured, supportive, educational and protective activities for children. [10]
- Take care not to separate children, which want to stay together, create safe haven
- Enable community members to strengthen community self-help & social support [10].
- Ensure that there is at least one staff member at every health facility who manages diverse, several mental health problems of adults and children [10]

Child physical health and trauma

- Ensure all health care professionals who may treat children during an emergency have adequate paediatric disaster medicine training specific to their role [8]
- Ensure emergency care facilities and equipment's with medications and other medical items for children.
- Consider to assess and measure acute malnutrition [10]
- Ensure that children attending health services are screened for their nutritional status and referred to nutritional services. [10]

Childcare

- Improve capacity to provide child care services [8]
- Increase capacity providing support services to caregivers [8]
- Identify and separate clothing needs of ChYP and ensure access to required items in the correct sizes and appropriate to the culture, season and climate [10]
- Establish vector-control measures, particularly the provision of mosquito nets [10]

Education

- Providing and ensuring daily regular routines helps return a sense of normality. Education is promoted as a means of recovery so that classes can bring regular activity, plus social support and learning. Older children can teach younger children. [1]

Shelter

- Develop plans that mitigate risks unique to children in shelters including child abduction and sex offenders. Provide appropriate background checks for shelter workers and training to identify child predators/abuse [8]
- Leave space for family interaction. This space is free from outside news sources to reduce a child's repeated exposure to the disaster. Provide age-appropriate toys in this space, play should be supervised by parents, guardians or caregivers. [8]
- When children exhibit signs of illness or emotional stress, staff will refer children to on-site or local health services personnel for evaluation or disaster mental health personnel and will obtain consent from a parent, guardian or caretaker whenever possible. [8]
- Age appropriate and nutritious food (baby formula, baby food & snacks) are available. Diapers are available for infants and children. General guidelines suggest that infants and toddlers need up to 12 diapers a day. [8]

4 Conclusion – Do's & Don'ts when working with children

- Do not work with children if this may expose them to risk or danger – always work based on the children's best interests.
- Do not force children to participate – participation should be voluntary. Try to encourage children who are not participating to participate more.
- Be patient.
- Do not ask many questions at the same time.
- Allow children to speak their minds and then ask additional questions.
- Listen carefully to what they are saying.
- Do not interrupt children.
- If children are discussing a topic do not give them another topic to discuss at the same time.
- Identify children who are dominating the group in order to manage them appropriately.
- Do not direct children by giving hints, let them speak freely without imposing your views.
- When interviewing children use open ended questions: who, what, why, where, how.
- Use visual aids when interviewing children to attract more participation and dialogue.
- Assess children's answers: are they concrete facts, opinions or rumours?
- Give clear & understandable information.
- Provide safe haven (childfriendly).
- Do not underestimate young people.
- Restore families
- Establish a structure with leisure time.
- Do not separate any relationships.
- Provide assistance for ChYP when dealing with illness & stress.
- Have an overview of ChYP's eating habits.

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