



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# GUIDANCE ON PROMOTING CHILD PROTECTION OUTCOMES THROUGH CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS

## A Summary



This a summary of the **Guidance on promoting Child Protection outcomes through Cash-Based Interventions**. It targets primarily protection and cash staff and multifunctional teams engaged in the design, delivery, and monitoring of cash assistance. It outlines the key programmatic considerations and priority actions required for the cash assistance to contribute to child protection outcomes. This Guidance is one of the many efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to implement its **Policy on Cash-Based Interventions**.

Children make up about 40 per cent of the people that are forcibly displaced (UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019). The question of how cash-based interventions impact and involve children is fundamental within the context of an increasing reliance on cash as the preferred transfer modality. Issues related to how such assistance offers new opportunities or poses challenges in relation to protection outcomes for children, as well as how cash-based interventions can be used to support child protection interventions, are more relevant than ever as cash interventions increase in number and complexity.

#### Child protection

Child protection is the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. UNHCR delivers protection to children of concern by addressing their specific needs and the risks they face. This includes protecting and advocating against all forms of discrimination; preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation; ensuring immediate access to appropriate services; and ensuring durable solutions in the child's best interests.

### Contribution of cash assistance to child protection outcomes

The contribution of cash assistance to child protection outcomes depends on a number of factors, including the design and objectives of the cash programme, the protection environment, the nature and causes of various child protection issues, family composition and situation, and the availability of complementary programmes and services. Cash assistance is more likely to positively contribute to child protection outcomes when economic vulnerability is a key direct or indirect cause of the child protection issue, where child protection considerations are integrated in the design and monitoring of the cash assistance, where the value of the cash assistance is sufficient to address the basic needs of children/their household, and where the cash assistance is complemented by child protection and other basic services.

#### Cash assistance can contribute to child protection outcomes by:

- responding to basic needs that, if not addressed, can place children at risk and increase households' reliance on harmful coping strategies that involve children;

- facilitating children's access to services to cover one-off or specific and immediate needs, such as transportation, health services, legal support, or other interventions identified as part of the case management process;

- contributing to a greater sense of dignity and empowerment for children by ensuring their participation in cash assistance programmes; and

- improving family dynamics and well-being by alleviating financial pressure and increasing choice and participation for adults, thereby positively influencing the household environment for children by providing better care, increasing resilience and reducing family tensions.

#### Cash-based interventions

Cash-based interventions are used to describe the provision of cash or vouchers – alone or in combination with in-kind assistance and services – to meet the needs of persons of concern to UNHCR. Cash-based interventions are used across different sectors of intervention, including child protection. Most UNHCR cash-based interventions are provided as multipurpose grants that cover basic needs, allowing households to prioritize spending based on their individual needs, resources and capacities.

### Key programmatic considerations

#### Complementary programmes

To effectively promote child protection outcomes, cash assistance should be implemented in conjunction with the provision of other relevant child protection services and livelihood interventions. When cash is provided without these complementary interventions, it will not be able to properly address the often complex risks to children and is unlikely to have a lasting impact.

#### Key recommendations:

- Link cash assistance with child protection services to address risks comprehensively.

- Link cash assistance with core interventions in other sectors, such as health or education, based on the needs of the child, to enhance sustainability.

- Couple cash assistance with livelihood initiatives to ensure long-term sustainability.

### Conditionality and restrictions

Unconditional and unrestricted cash is increasingly considered good practice and should be implemented whenever possible in line with the UNHCR Policy on Cash-Based Interventions<sup>1</sup> and based on analysis of social norms in relation to violence against children. Restrictions can, however, be useful in instances where programmes seek to encourage spending on specific services or commodities – such as education – that are not necessarily considered a priority by the household.<sup>2</sup>

#### Key recommendations:

- Choose unrestricted and unconditional cash whenever possible.
- When necessary, link the child protection case management process with sensitization and awareness-raising to encourage caregivers/families to use cash assistance to address their children's basic needs and specific protection risks.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of applying conditionality or restrictions.
- If conditionality or restrictions are used, consider the comparable impact of different options.

### Setting transfer values

The amounts of the transfer provided under a cash-based intervention will, in large part, determine the degree to which the objectives of the programme can be expected to be achieved.

If the cash assistance has the potential to reduce a child protection risk such as child labour by helping households meet basic needs, but the transfer value covers only 50 per cent of the gap that households experience, these households are likely to continue to rely on income generated by children.

#### Key recommendations:

- Determine whether transfer values are sufficient to meet basic needs.
- Consider whether remaining gaps can be met through other interventions.

### Participation of children

In line with the UNHCR [Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability](#) of 2018, girls and boys of different ages should be encouraged to participate in the design and monitoring of cash assistance even when they are not direct recipients of cash assistance. As with other members of the household, their experiences may differ from those of the head of household or the recipient.

Moreover, involving children throughout the programme cycle helps ensure their needs and perspectives are considered. This also makes programmes more effective, more accountable and inclusive, and helps avoid creating unintentional additional risks.

#### Key recommendations:

- Conduct participatory assessments with children and consult them as part of the monitoring of cash assistance interventions.
- Ensure close collaboration between child protection focal points and cash focal points so that cash assistance interventions allow for children's meaningful participation.
- Ensure that key information of relevance to children is provided in a child-friendly manner and through sources that children trust and can access.
- Ensure that feedback mechanisms are child-friendly and accessible to children.

### Establishing referral pathways

To ensure better integration between cash and child protection interventions, it is recommended that a referral pathway to be established for cases of children at risk identified during the implementation of cash interventions. A pathway should also be established to receive referrals of individual cases of children at risk that are identified by child protection focal points for inclusion in cash assistance.

#### Key recommendations:

- Train cash focal points to identify cases of children at risk.
- Agree on procedures for referral of cases between child protection and cash focal points.
- Ensure that privacy and data protection principles are respected in all exchanges of personal data

<sup>1</sup>“Policy on cash-based interventions (CBIs)” (UNHCR, 2016)

<sup>2</sup>“Child protection and cash-based interventions tip-sheet” (Global Protection Cluster)

### Optimising resources to enhance child protection outcomes

Cash assistance may be provided as part of multipurpose cash or as part of protection/child protection interventions, including emergency protection cash assistance or cash for protection. However, as child protection programmes in many situations face severe funding shortfalls that limit the ability of operations to meet the needs of children at heightened risk, it is necessary to ensure that resources are optimised and that there is complementarity between interventions. Hence, cash assistance must be designed and implemented by multifunctional teams, including child protection/protection staff, be part of the operation’s overall protection strategy and be monitored.

#### Key recommendations:

- Consider the impact on children, and on child protection outcomes, in the design of cash assistance.
- Consider child protection outcomes in the cash assistance plans to mitigate the effects of limited funding.

Key actions for cash focal points	Key actions for child protection focal points
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with child protection focal points to identify i) child protection risks and ii) opportunities to contribute to child protection outcomes through cash-based interventions.</li> <li>2. Train child protection staff on cash-based interventions and provide technical support as needed.</li> <li>3. Adjust data-collection tools for assessment and monitoring to capture the pre-existing and new child protection risks and benefits of the cash-based interventions for the protection of children of concern to UNHCR.</li> <li>4. Include linkages between economic vulnerability and child protection risks in assessments and monitoring.</li> <li>5. Consider households or individual children at risk when choosing the targeting approach and formulating eligibility criteria.</li> <li>6. Work with the child protection focal points to i) establish referral pathways for cases of children at risk identified during programme implementation and ii) receive referrals of individual cases identified by child protection for inclusion in cash-based interventions.</li> <li>7. Plan for exit strategies that include measures to mitigate the adverse effects on child protection when scaling down or ending cash-based interventions and/or when the child becomes an adult.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adjust child protection situation monitoring questions/tools (e.g. assessment, protection monitoring) to include a determination of the feasibility and appropriateness of including cash assistance within the child protection response.</li> <li>2. Work with cash focal points to define the modalities of cash assistance for child protection cases, whether as part of a multipurpose grants or as a stand-alone specific child protection intervention.</li> <li>3. Train cash focal points on child protection considerations relevant to cash assistance to enable them to integrate these considerations into cash-based interventions and identify cases of children at risk for referral to the child protection. Provide technical support as needed.</li> <li>4. Work with child protection partners to establish criteria to identify children at risk.</li> <li>5. Adjust Best Interests Procedure / case management tools to examine the use of cash assistance for child protection cases and monitor its impact.</li> <li>6. In collaboration with cash focal points, establish referral pathways for individual cases identified through the Best Interests Procedure to benefit from cash assistance and to receive referrals of children at risk that are identified by cash focal points in the course of implementing cash-based interventions.</li> <li>7. Plan for exit strategies that include measures to mitigate all adverse effects on child protection when scaling down or ending cash-based interventions, and/or when the child becomes an adult.</li> </ol>