

REGIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WORKING GROUP (RCPWG) DURING EMERGENCIES

TERMS OF REFERENCE

I. RATIONALE/BACKGROUND

Child protection is the prevention of and response to psychosocial distress and violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination of children with a specific focus on the most vulnerable. Child protection in emergency situations is crucial as disasters can both present new risks and threats for children and at the same time aggravate existing risks and threats situations. The utmost protection is most needed particularly as a result of the emergency, incidences, namely: unaccompanied and separated children, survivors of sexual violence children who have been displaced, out of school and boys/girls who are at risk of or already trafficked or recruited by force or armed group. In several instances, children are most that are traumatized and their conditions are not attended with the appropriate intervention and care.

The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action laid the starting point from which humanitarian workers can seek more information in the delivery of emergency responses according to certain standards. Humanitarian action for child protection involves preparedness, including the strengthening of child protection systems before, during and after an emergency, to increase state, community, family and child resilience and mitigate its effects.

The international humanitarian system recognizes child protection as life-saving, and as such child protection activities are included in the criteria of the UN's Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF). UNICEF is the lead agency for child protection within the cluster system, and child protection is embedded within the UNHCR-led global protection cluster.

In operationalizing to the Philippine context, it is also aligned to the four key principles set out by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and their relevance to the Humanitarian Action, namely:

- Survival and development: humanitarian workers must also consider the effects of the emergency and the response on the physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual development of children.
- Non-discrimination: emergencies often magnify existing differences and further marginalize those already at risk of discrimination. Therefore, the need to monitor existing and new patterns of discrimination and power, and tackle them in the response.
- Child Participation: Ensure that children are given space and time to meaningfully participate at all possible stages of an emergency preparedness and response.
- Best interests of the Child: This is a guide for humanitarian actors in the design, monitoring, and adjustment of programmes, interventions and agreed procedural safeguards should be implemented.

The Republic Act 10121, which is the "Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010", recognized as a policy the need to, "Institutionalize the policies, structures, coordination, mechanisms and programs with continuum budget appropriation on disaster risk reduction from national down to local levels towards building a disaster-resilient nation and communities".

The National Child Protection Working Group (NCPWG) is under the Child Protection Sub-Cluster of the Protection Cluster led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), to address the issue on child protection during emergencies (both human induced and natural disasters). It is chaired by the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) as an attached agency of DSWD and is co-chaired by United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF) Child Protection and is placed as structure under CWC's Sub-Committee on Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Displacement (SC-CAACD). Its objective is to address the impacts of emergencies (both human induced and natural disasters) in the Philippines on child protection.

Due to the geographical vulnerabilities of the Philippines to disasters and emergencies, there is a need to establish a similar structure at the regional levels. This regional structure, to be termed as the Regional Child Protection Working Group (RCPWG) will serve as central coordinating body of all child protection activities in their respective regions. Further, the RCPWG will provide strategic direction and leadership to ensure that child protection is regarded as priority concern in times of emergencies.

In order to streamline regional structures on children, the RCPWG will serve as one of the Technical Working Groups (TWG) under the Regional Committee / Sub-Committee for the Welfare of Children (RC/RSCWC).

II. OBJECTIVE IN ESTABLISHING THE RCPWG

General: The RCPWG aimed at coordinating activities to strengthen the protection of children within the affected areas and in other areas where the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) had sought refuge. The RCPWG will focus on protection issues that result from or have been exacerbated by major disasters in their respective regions.

Specific: The RCPWG is established in order to -

- Converge partners to respond to child protection issues in emergencies utilizing the cluster approach before, during and after emergencies;
- Gather in one forum child protection actors and partners operating in areas affected by both natural and human induced disasters to ensure timely and consolidated monitoring and reporting of child protection concerns;
- Facilitate the development and coordination of child protection strategies and responses;
- Advocate for support and assistance with authorities and humanitarian actors as necessary.

The Regional Committee for the Welfare of Children ensures complementation/integration of efforts of all stakeholders in addressing children's concern in ensuring their rights to Survival, Protection, Development and Participation at the Regional level. Hence, it shall also function as the RCPWG and shall automatically convene in the event or onset of emergencies.

III. LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP

The RCPWG will be co-chaired by the RC/RSCWC Chairperson and co-chaired by the I/NGO to be determined by the RSCWC. Its composition are as follows:

- The Regional Director of DSWD/RSCWC Chairperson as the RCPWG Chairperson
- Head of an NGO operating *with region wide coverage* duly licensed/accredited by DSWD with programs/services along child protection as Co-Chairperson
- All members of the RC/RSCWC (to ensure inclusion of NGO member)

- Representative from the Regional DSWD Protective Services Unit-Focal¹
- Office of the Civil Defense (OCD)
- Concerned regional government agencies and local government units as identified by the RC/RSCWC
- Registered/licensed and accredited child-focused social welfare and development agencies (SWDA) operating in the region
- International and local NGOs, working for children and during emergencies, as appropriate

IV. SECRETARIAT

The RC/RSCWC Focal Person or representative of an NGO RSCWC Co-Chairperson shall serve as the RCPWG Secretariat/Coordinator.

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RCPWG

Generally, the RCPWG shall be responsible for the following :

1. Child protection programming.

- Analyze trends and the principal risks faced by children in the context of the emergency, both in evacuation centers and in affected communities.
- Undertake and maintain a mapping of child protection actors and their programmatic and geographic reach and assess the adequacy of ongoing programmes and facilitate referral mechanism.
- Identify and develop strategies to meet gaps.
- Develop appropriate programme strategy, as necessary, to address protection and psychosocial needs of affected children.

2. Coordination of child protection response. Provide relevant inputs to the regional and local emergency plans and coordinate linkage with national and local Child Protection and disaster risk and management mechanisms.

3. Advocacy. Develop an advocacy strategy for issues related to child protection that require sensitization of local authorities and humanitarian actors. This will include, raising of relevant issues or concerns to Child Protection with other relevant Clusters.

4. Community-Based Programming. An approach that mobilizes people's own resources to protect their families and neighbors and to create a sense of community that helps children and their families recover and begin to rebuild their lives.

5. Coordination of humanitarian support funding mechanisms. Coordinate relevant inputs to the NCPWG Emergency/Response Action Plan and the mobilization of resources through humanitarian funding mechanisms.

6. Develop/Provide Child Protection IEC materials.

Specifically, the RCPWG shall undertake the following tasks:

¹With inputs based on the experience in organizing the RCPWG in Region VIII

- i. Conduct comprehensive mapping out of the **Who, What, When, Where, For Whom (5Ws)** of Child Protection Actors and Programmes, for programmatic and geographic complementation and convergence, and to facilitate referral mechanisms.
- ii. Monitor the Establishment/functionality of Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) in the Evacuation Center/Camp and the community.
- iii. Assist the Local Government Units (LGUs) in setting-up of Family Tracing and Reunification Desk in Entry and Exit points of the IDP instead of evacuees .
- iv. Provide technical assistance/capability building to LGUs in the area of child protection as well as preventive measures to ensure the safety of children in times of emergencies.
- v. Conduct of Inter-Agency Child Protection Assessments (including identification of key child protection issues and capacities).
- vi. Develop RCPWG Strategic Work Plans and Contingency Plans on key child protection issues identified and to fill gaps in programmatic and geographic coverage.
- vii. Develop, adapt and disseminate relevant locally appropriate guidelines for protection actions.
- viii. Linkage and networking with established committees/bodies of the Local Government Units (LGUs) on Child Protection.
- ix. Develop Referral and Reporting System for children in emergencies with corresponding duties and responsibilities of agency concerned.
- x. Document good practices in child protection during times of emergencies for possible replication in other regions.
- xi. Provide technical support to other Clusters as necessary.

The RCPWG shall undergo continuing capacity building and re-tooling in order to effectively and efficiently perform and carry out its role and responsibilities. The NCPWG will ensure provision of technical assistance and fund augmentation thru the DSWD.

VI. MEETINGS AND REPORTING

The RCPWG Chairperson and/or Co-Chairperson will be responsible for convening meetings. The RCPWG will meet at least twice a month at the onset of an emergency and to convene for a special meeting as deemed necessary by the consensus of the Working Group. **However, during "normal times" or pre-disaster time**, The RCPWG is expected to convene quarterly for child protection during all phases of humanitarian action including preparedness, risk management, response and early recovery and rehabilitation.

Members of the RCPWG will submit written report to the Secretariat for easy/fast reporting on the issues/problems or needs encountered, actions taken and its recommendations. The RCPWG will report to the NCPWG and other relevant cluster/s as necessary. Report will include issues discussed by the RCPWG, including analyses of trends, development of strategies and response actions. Accordingly, issues and concerns related to child protection shall be included in the agenda for discussion during RCWC meetings.

The RCPWG will submit report to the CWC within one week every after meeting/updating conducted. CWC will submit the same report to the Protection Cluster and the DSWD Secretary.

VII. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The RCPWG will utilize a standard monitoring and evaluation tool to be developed by the NCPWG to track implementation and assess responsiveness of CPIE activities at the sub-regional level.

VIII. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DOCUMENTATION

The RCPWG will observe utmost confidentiality of records and documentation so as not to serve as a forum for discussion on individual cases. Detailed documentation related to such cases shall only be shared with the authorities and concerned agencies following strict security and confidentiality protocols.

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