



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1



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ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHILDREN



GOAL: All humanitarian programmes are accountable to children and ensure their meaningful and equitable participation.

“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, para 1 on the right of the child to be heard

Everyone is accountable to children.

Accountability to affected populations within humanitarian action centres around [IASC commitments](#)²⁶ intended to strengthen the culture of accountability towards delivery of more ethical, principled, and dignified humanitarian response. This includes protecting populations from sexual exploitation and abuse. These commitments are rooted in a rights-based approach that puts people first, and are intended to reach all levels of the humanitarian system. True accountability to affected populations requires accountability to children. This begins with the equitable inclusion of all children across these commitments. Rights-based approaches must include *child rights*; people-centred responses must also be *child-centred*. The Participation Revolution called for by the Grand Bargain, cannot be achieved without having a *child participation* revolution. Protecting populations from and eradicating acts of sexual abuse and exploitation within humanitarian action requires protecting the most vulnerable, including girls and LGBTI children, refugee and displaced children, and children with other intersecting vulnerabilities.



Children have the right to be heard and have their views be given due weight; playing an active role in the decisions that will impact their lives, well-being, dignity, and protection



Children have the right to be heard and have their views be given due weight; playing an active role in the decisions that will impact their lives, well-being, dignity, and protection. Effective and meaningful participation is a process. Upholding this right for children requires that all processes in which children are heard and participate must be transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable²⁷. However, accountability to children goes beyond their meaningful participation. It includes promoting their psychosocial competencies that nurture their resilience and agency; shifting and reconfiguring social relationships and power dynamics to empower marginalised and disenfranchised groups; and facilitating the mechanisms and process that enable children to hold stakeholders and duty bearers in their lives accountable.

All humanitarian actors have a duty to children, to contributing to their protection, ensuring their safeguarding and protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, and including them within humanitarian accountability and refugee protection procedures. Children must be meaningfully engaged, consulted, and partnered with through age- and development stage- appropriate processes. They must be addressed in communications in child-friendly and accessible ways. Their rights, views, and protection needs and capacities must be incorporated throughout the humanitarian

programme cycle. Assessments and risk analyses must actively identify and seek to understand the risks and protective factors associated with stronger outcomes for children, and use these to inform humanitarian programmes, funding, and decisions. All accountability procedures, including post-distribution monitoring; complaints, feedback, and response mechanisms; and referral pathways, must be accessible to children. Ensuring child-friendly accountability procedures, including within protection procedures, is the responsibility of all, and not only those working directly with children.



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For children, there is an accountability gap, fed by a lack of awareness, capacity, and commitment at all levels: individual, institutional, sectoral, and system wide.

However, when it comes to children, many humanitarian actors, sectors, even leaders and decision-makers, are uncertain *how* to ensure accountability to children in practice. Too often, this uncertainty results in the exclusion of children, or in not recognising child-specific protection risks, for fear of doing them further harm. Alternatively, efforts to explicitly demonstrate inclusion and participation can all too often result in tokenism. For children, there is

an accountability gap, fed by a lack of awareness, capacity, and commitment at all levels: individual, institutional, sectoral, and system wide.

The Alliance and its members are accountable to children. The Alliance will work to ensure that it is actively and intentionally working towards addressing these gaps. The Alliance will work to promote standards, develop resources, and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and strengthening of capacity within the child protection sector, and across other sectors, around child-friendly and child-led accountability mechanisms and procedures, as well as on the meaningful and ethical participation of children of all ages, genders, abilities, and other diversity factors throughout the programme cycle. Through its advocacy, The Alliance will urge donors, decision-makers, and humanitarian leaders to appropriately resource child protection and require accountability procedures to include children. Through its representation, The Alliance will work in collaboration with existing inter-agency accountability to affected populations coordination mechanisms to ensure that *children and their protection* are put first.

Everyone is accountable to children. To help lead the way, in 2021-2025, The Alliance and its members will:

- **PROVIDE** leadership and promote meaningful action on accountability to children, including ensuring their meaningful participation within all humanitarian programmes.
- **STRENGTHEN** capacity and promote the sharing of learning and knowledge on designing and implementing child-friendly and child-led accountability procedures within the child protection sector and with other sectors.
- **SUPPORT** and **PROMOTE** child-led and community-driven prevention and response interventions.