



**THE ALLIANCE**  
FOR CHILD PROTECTION  
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



# **A Review of Child Protection Caseworkers Recruitment and Capacity-building in Humanitarian Settings**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

Alliance	The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
CAAFAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
CBCPM	Community-based Child Protection Mechanism
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CHS Alliance	The Core Humanitarian Standards Alliance
CMTF	Case Management Task Force
CP	Child Protection
CP AoR	Child Protection Area of Responsibility
CPCM	Child Protection Case Management
CPMS	Child Protection Minimum Standards
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
DoSA	Directorate of Social Affairs (Iraq)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GSSW Alliance	The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Iraq)
MOOC	Massive Online Open Courses
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PSEA	Preventing sexual exploitation and abuse
QAF	Case Management Quality Assessment Framework
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SWO	Social Welfare Officer (Tanzania)
Tdh	Terre des hommes
TGH	Triangle Génération Humanitaire
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Child
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (Syria Response)

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# SUMMARY

Child protection case management in humanitarian settings requires caseworkers with the knowledge and skills to support vulnerable children and families during distressing events and in environments with limited services. In acknowledgement of those challenges, this review was conducted to provide an overview of key considerations and opportunities for strengthening caseworker recruitment and capacity-building practices. The methodology includes several components:

- a desk review of relevant global standards and guidelines about what constitutes a best practice
- key informant interviews to triangulate and expand upon the desk review
- case studies developed from 15 humanitarian settings, based on documentation provided by Case Management Task Force (CMTF) member agencies

The findings include an overview of inter-agency tools and guidance,<sup>4</sup> supplemented by the country case studies, which illustrate the different approaches available. The findings also include recommendations about how to go about strengthening recruitment and capacity-building practices.

This document is structured into three main sections. The first section is designed for readers looking to develop a strategy for recruitment and capacity-building. Readers with limited time and resources can select priority areas from the second and third sections. A supplementary tip sheet is available with this report, which includes a summary table with hyperlinks to key resources in order to further support readers with limited time and resources.

SECTION	CONTENT
<b>1. Reviewing and planning</b>	An overview of how to review and plan a strategic approach to caseworker recruitment and capacity-building using methods such as quality assessment frameworks; caseworker mapping; competency frameworks; and individual capacity assessments and capacity-building plans.
<b>2. Recruitment</b>	Key recruitment considerations are outlined, such as safeguarding; how recruitment criteria impact on diversity; specific considerations related to community-based approaches; and government systems strengthening approaches.
<b>3. Capacity-building</b>	Key elements of capacity-building are presented, including basic training; supervision and coaching; peer-to-peer; self-care; continuing professional development; and education and certification.

A key finding was that there is a lack of evidence about what constitutes a best practice when recruiting and building the capacity of caseworkers as very few case management programmes have been evaluated. Instead, the review utilised findings and case studies that aligned with key inter-agency

guidelines, which are indicative of best practice. In addition to ensuring that case management approaches are evaluated, over-arching findings and recommendations from the review include

- the need for an inter-agency caseworker mapping tool that is quick and easy to use in the early stages of a humanitarian response;
- the need for inter-agency tools and guidance to support both community-based approaches and government systems-strengthening approaches to caseworker recruitment and capacity-building in humanitarian settings;
- the need to further institutionalise capacity-building practices that move beyond one-off face-to-face trainings, such as technical supervision and coaching, peer-to-peer support, continuing professional development, and, where feasible, examinations and certification.

# INTRODUCTION

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Child protection case management (case management) is a life-saving service for children who have experienced or who are at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect. This includes children who have experienced systematic violence and children who are at risk of significant harm, including death and permanent injury. During a humanitarian crisis, the nature and scale of child protection needs tend to overwhelm existing child protection resources and capacity. Case management is an approach used by humanitarian child protection agencies to supplement the national social service workforce and support community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) to address the individual needs of particularly vulnerable children and families. As a result, case management requires skilled workers who are able to support vulnerable children and families during what are often stressful and distressing circumstances within the context of the wider humanitarian response.

## Rationale

Extra measures, specific to case management, are required when recruiting and building the capacity of caseworkers. The Inter-agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection (the Inter-Agency Guidelines) state that

*“Good case management practice is underpinned by well supervised, experienced, trained, and where possible, certified staff who have the time and resources to carry out their work”.<sup>5</sup>*

However, this is challenging, particularly in the early stages of an emergency and in settings with limited human and financial resources. Case management has the potential to cause harm, including by well-meaning staff and volunteers who have not received sufficient support to deal with complex child protection needs.

In 2017, during an exercise to prioritise learning needs in the field of child protection in humanitarian settings,<sup>6</sup> the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (the Alliance) prioritised the need to strengthen understanding of best practices for engaging the local social service workforce in humanitarian settings. As a result, this review was conducted with several objectives in mind:

- documenting examples of best practice for recruitment and capacity-building of caseworkers in humanitarian contexts
- developing recommendations that can be applied across a range of humanitarian contexts

The primary audience for this review is child protection practitioners who are coordinating, managing, and advising on case management programmes in humanitarian settings. This review has also been designed for use by other groups:

- individual case management authorities or agencies working in humanitarian settings
- case management coordination mechanisms working together to strengthen recruitment and capacity-building
- multi-national humanitarian agencies looking to develop a global organisational approach (or similar) to recruitment and capacity-building of caseworkers

## **How do I navigate this document?**

This document is divided into three sections: reviewing and planning; recruitment; and capacity-building. Acknowledging the tension between the strengthening of rapid response systems and that of longer-term systems, the document is designed so that readers aiming to develop a recruitment and capacity-building strategy can use the first section to review the existing approaches and then plan a strengthened approach; readers with limited time and/or resources can choose priority areas from the subsequent recruitment and capacity-building sections. To make the document quick and easy to read, each of the three sections starts with a summary table which gives important overviews:

- each topic and its purpose
- relevant inter-agency tools
- country case studies
- key recommendations

To make external resources accessible, where available, hyperlinks have been included as well as footnoted references. The hyperlinks and footnotes are mainly to inter-agency tools and guidance because most of the case studies are undocumented or not publicly available. Instead, the case studies were developed through email correspondence and interviews. Although footnoted references and hyperlinks are included for the case studies where possible, a key learning from this review was that there is a need for additional endorsed inter-agency tools to support caseworker recruitment and capacity-building.

## **Who is a ‘caseworker’?**

For the purpose of this review, a caseworker is any volunteer or member of staff who interacts directly with children and families whilst providing case management services.

TYPES	DESCRIPTION
<b>Government authority or non-governmental agency</b>	A caseworker might be employed by a government authority or by a local, national, or international non-governmental organisation (NGO). In humanitarian settings where there are qualified government social workers, external agencies should ensure that the government takes the lead and provides support in the form of resources and capacity-building to the existing social workforce. <sup>7</sup> Direct case management provision by external agencies should be a last resort, conducted with a clear timeframe for transition and exit strategy.
<b>Professional or para-professional</b>	Sometimes caseworkers are ‘professionals’, meaning they are legally certified or licenced to practice as social workers. Professional status usually requires a specific qualifying degree, accreditation, and adherence to standardised procedures and codes of conduct. <sup>8</sup> More commonly in humanitarian settings, caseworkers tend to be ‘para-professionals’ trained to perform certain functions, but not always legally certified or licensed to practice as full professionals.
<b>Staff or volunteer</b>	Caseworkers include paid staff, unpaid volunteers, and volunteers who receive a stipend or other incentive. Community-based volunteers often play a critical role in case management. Child protection authorities and agencies working with volunteers must ensure that they are adequately supported, have the required competencies and skills, and adhere to agreed procedures and ethical principles.

## What is ‘best practice’?

For something to be a best practice, there must be evidence that it has achieved its stated aims. Currently, however, there are very few research studies or evaluations of case management programming in humanitarian settings. For example, during this review, only one evaluation was submitted by the 16 CMTF agencies and that evaluation focused on programming rather than on recruitment and capacity-building. Hence, there is a significant lack of evidence about what constitutes a best practice when recruiting and building the capacity of caseworkers. As a result, this review utilises key inter-agency guidelines that *indicate* what constitutes a best practice but are not comprehensive when it comes to *setting the standard* of what constitutes a best practice when recruiting and building the capacity of caseworkers in humanitarian settings. The case studies featured in this review align with the following inter-agency guidelines that are indicative of best practice:

- [The Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection](#);<sup>9</sup>
- [The second edition of the Child Protection Minimum Standards \(CPMS\)](#);<sup>10</sup>
- [Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies](#);<sup>11</sup> and
- [Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection](#).<sup>12</sup>



## What tools are available?

In recent years, the global CMTF has increased the number of inter-agency tools<sup>13</sup> available, including tools aimed at strengthening recruitment and capacity-building, such as:

- [The Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers](#)<sup>14</sup>;
- [The Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package](#)<sup>15</sup>;
- [The Case Management Quality Assessment Framework \(QAF\)](#)<sup>16</sup>; and
- [The Case Management Online Resource Hub](#).

In addition, the Learning and Development Working Group is in the process of updating [the Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework](#)<sup>17</sup>, which is currently being field-tested and is expected to be finalised later in 2020.

## METHODOLOGY

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The review was designed to generate detailed, qualitative data from which key findings, case studies, and recommendations could be developed. First, a desk review was conducted to identify relevant global standards and guidelines that indicate what constitutes a best practice when it comes to recruiting and building the capacity of caseworkers. Secondly, best practice examples were requested from sixteen global CMTF member agencies. Thirdly, a handful of interviews were conducted to triangulate and supplement the previous steps.

In order to make the review useful for as many colleagues as possible, CMTF member agencies were requested to submit examples from a range of settings, including different types of responses, stages of responses, geographic areas, different financial resources, and different levels of human resources and capacity. Examples were selected that were the most relevant to the topic and the most useful to colleagues working in different contexts. The review features selected case studies from:

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh (refugee response)
- Burkina Faso (displacement)
- Central African Republic
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Iraq
- Kenya (refugee response)
- Lebanon
- Mozambique
- Occupied Palestinian Territories
- Rwanda
- Somalia/Somaliland
- Syria
- Tanzania (refugee response)
- Uganda

Region-wide examples were also received and case studies covering the Middle East, South Asia, and West and Central Africa are included.

The review has limitations. It was not designed to provide an exhaustive overview of the available literature and was conducted in a short timeframe in both English and French, meaning that some valuable documents, including those written in other languages, might have been missed. The included case studies are for illustrative purposes only. Given the practitioner-oriented nature of the review and the need for

practical recommendations, the review was purposeful in selecting the most relevant and useful examples and was not designed to generate measurable, reliable, statistically replicable findings. Instead, experiential data and detailed case studies are provided to illustrate key considerations. In addition, due to timeframes, reliance was placed on global CMTF member agencies, which are large international organisations international NGOs, rather than national authorities, national NGOs and local civil society organisations. If additional time and resources were available, this would have enabled increased inclusion of local and national experiences.

# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The key findings and recommendations from the review are divided into the following three sections: reviewing and planning; recruitment; and capacity-building. At the start of each section is a summary table, which gives an overview of each topic, its purpose, relevant inter-agency tools, featured case studies, and key recommendations.

## 1. Reviewing and planning

The rationale for case management is that there are context-specific child protection risks and vulnerabilities that require an individualised response. Likewise, recruitment and capacity-building should be founded upon an assessment of existing needs. Therefore, it is important to review existing practices to assess what is working well and what needs improving when developing strategies to improve recruitment and capacity-building practices.

This section outlines four elements that can be conducted together to develop a comprehensive recruitment and capacity-building strategy; alternatively, the four elements can be conducted separately according to needs:

- a. quality assessment framework
- b. caseworker mapping
- c. competency framework
- d. individual capacity assessments

This section is of particular use to readers who are working in longer-running humanitarian settings or who are working in multi-national agencies aiming to develop a global organisational approach. As mentioned above, readers with less time and resources available may wish to skip forward to either the most relevant considerations or to the subsequent recruitment and capacity-building sections.

CONSIDERATION	CASE STUDY IN MAIN REPORT	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p><b>a. <a href="#">Quality assessment framework</a>:</b> a practical inter-agency tool to assess what is working well and what needs improving, which can be used at different stages of a response, including early onset</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Democratic Republic of the Congo</li> </ul>	<p>As recommended in the <a href="#">second edition of the Child Protection Minimum Standards</a>, use the QAF to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the child protection system to inform a recruitment and capacity-building strategy.</p>
<p><b>b. <a href="#">Caseworker mapping</a>:</b> an approach to better understand the existing social workforce, which is useful in longer-running responses or when prioritising systems-strengthening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">South Asia</a> regional</li> </ul>	<p>There is a list of essential considerations when analysing the case management workforce on page 34 of <a href="#">the Inter-agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection</a>. However, using that list is an interim solution and, as a priority, an inter-agency tool for mapping the case management workforce that is quick and easy to use in the early stages of a humanitarian response should be developed based on the GSSW Alliance-UNICEF approach used in development settings, which is mentioned in the main report.</p>
<p><b>c. <a href="#">Competency framework</a>:</b> the foundation for a standardised approach to recruitment and capacity-building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Afghanistan</li> <li>West and Central Africa regional</li> </ul>	<p>Use the ‘Case Management Competency and Skills Framework’, which is annexed to <a href="#">the Inter-agency Guidelines</a>, to determine the standards expected of caseworkers. However, that framework needs to be updated to align with other inter-agency competency frameworks.</p>
<p><b>d. <a href="#">Assessing individual capacity</a>:</b> to develop capacity-building plans based on identified needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lebanon</li> </ul>	<p>Adapt the <a href="#">Child Protection Caseworker Capacity Assessment Tool</a> as needed for the context or organization in order to tailor capacity-building to the learning needs of individual caseworkers.</p>

## a. Quality assessment framework

The Inter-Agency Guidelines<sup>18</sup> recommend assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the child protection system in order to inform planning and decision-making.

“A critical part of a [case management] system is monitoring and evaluation to constantly review, assess and adjust the process and delivery methods according to lessons learned.”<sup>19</sup>

As per the CPMS, the recommended method is twofold: first, use the [Case Management Quality Assessment Framework](#) (QAF), which provides guidance, an assessment framework and supporting tools<sup>20</sup> to assess how a case management system is currently functioning and operating; second, identify areas for improvement and key actions necessary to make those changes. The following quote is from a Development context, but demonstrates feedback from colleagues who have used the QAF:

After completing the QAF process, Save the Children colleagues in Bhutan reported that: *“The project team and the government partners felt that the exercise to assess the case management system using QAF was a rich experience which made them aware of the standard requirements, the strengths, gaps and the opportunities for improvement.”*

The QAF can be used within an authority or agency or as a way for an inter-agency group to reflect on the quality of the case management response and the system in which it operates. Section 5 of the QAF<sup>21</sup> is about ‘appropriate staffing and capacity-building’ and includes indicators of whether current practices are good practice, meeting minimum levels, in need of improvement, or critical to address in relation to:

- safeguarding and harm prevention
- caseworker competency, skills and experience
- capacity-building
- supervision and coaching

After assessing current practices against those indicators, the QAF includes an action plan tool and a ‘change grid’ that presents suggested actions to strengthen areas assessed as needing improvement. The following case study demonstrates how a ‘light touch’ approach to the QAF is feasible and beneficial:

## ADAPTING THE QAF IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (SOUTH KIVU)

The territories of Uvira and Fizi, South Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been affected by conflict and the Ebola Virus. Currently, there is no agreed inter-agency approach to case management in those locations. As a result, elements of the QAF were used in a workshop to support a shortened assessment of current case management practice in order to enable the strengthening of the case management system.

In June 2019, a three-day inter-agency workshop was organised that included an introduction to the different dimensions of the case management system addressed in the QAF. Participants were then split in to three groups, provided with a printed version of the QAF, and asked to

- read each row of the QAF in light of each of the above three focus areas
- discuss what that looks like in their context (taking notes on key points)
- rate current practice

This flexible approach to using the QAF enabled the inter-agency group to assess a case management system that is not yet functional and to discuss current practices amongst colleagues with varying capacity and approaches to case management. By the end of the workshop, the inter-agency group had:

- a common understanding of case management, and the six steps in the case management process
- mapped key case management actors in their context as well as their roles and responsibilities
- defined the key components of a case management system
- identified strengths and weakness of the Uvira and Fizi case management practices
- developed an action plan for the development of an interagency approach for child protection case management in Uvira and Fizi

Once a QAF has been completed and an action plan created, different steps may be necessary. For instance, if the quality assessment identifies a need for more caseworkers or caseworkers with different skills, that may lead to a recruitment drive to increase the number of caseworkers and potentially broaden the profile of caseworkers by adapting job profiles and considering different recruitment techniques. Likewise, if the quality assessment identifies gaps in competencies against the QAF, that should lead to planning for capacity-building.

If developing a capacity-building plan for an organisation or for a case management coordination mechanism, then using a template based on a results framework methodology may be helpful. A clear timeframe and clear indicators of what constitutes successfully completing an action increases the

likelihood of positive change being made in a timely manner. The following case study does not include the QAF, but it illustrates an action-oriented approach to implementing, monitoring, and evaluating progress on a capacity-building strategy:



## ACTION PLANNING IN LEBANON

In Lebanon, a multi-layered capacity-building plan was developed, which included monitoring and evaluation measures. The capacity-building plan template consists of 6 elements, which can be six tabs within an Excel spreadsheet:

1. 28 case management capacity-building initiatives are listed. These are a mixture of global and contextualised face-to-face training courses, supervision and coaching tools, and peer-to-peer sessions. The list includes the suggested duration of each initiative and leaves a space to specify the date when the initiative is planned to take place and the date when it has been completed.
2. an annual workplan template (divided by weeks) for programme managers to plan all capacity-building initiatives and related monitoring and evaluation tasks such as training reports, database reviews and casefile audits, etc.
3. a more detailed weekly planner for supervisors to record a top line diary of their capacity-building work
4. a detailed session log for supervisors to record the goal of each capacity-building session, tools used, a description of the session, feedback to participant/s, and action points
5. a calendar
6. a quarterly results framework featuring measurable indicators, means of verification, comments, and next steps.

The results framework provides the opportunity to monitor whether the capacity-building plan is being followed and achieving its stated aims. For instance, Lebanon's quarterly results framework is for individual caseworkers and includes indicators such as

1. % of clients who report the following were maintained by the caseworker: professional boundaries and expectations, non-discrimination, involvement in case planning and service delivery, and respect (determined using a child questionnaire and family questionnaire)
2. the caseworker's completion of the Child Protection Case Management National SOP Training (verified from training certificate)
3. the caseworker's scores on all training post-tests (verified using pre- and post-tests)
4. the caseworker's completion of reflective supervision with his/her supervisor at least once per month by the end of Q2 (verified using reflective practice record)
5. % of monthly peer-to-peer sessions in which a caseworker participates (verified using attendance sheet, reflective diary, peer-to-peer certificate)

**Recommendation:**

As recommended in the CPMS, use the QAF to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the child protection system to inform a recruitment and capacity-building strategy.

## b. Caseworker mapping

Whilst the QAF can be used to assess the wider case management approach, including recruitment and capacity-building, a helpful supplement is the specific mapping of the existing case management workforce. This is because developing a recruitment and capacity-building strategy requires a detailed understanding of who is doing what and to what extent. Mapping is especially relevant in settings where systems-strengthening and exit strategies are more of a priority. Mapping is also a crucial tool for gathering evidence to justify requests for additional human and financial resources.

At the moment, there are limited inter-agency tools and guidance tailored to caseworker mapping in humanitarian settings. The QAF includes some elements of mapping such as considering caseworker-to-child ratios and the extent of supervision and coaching for caseworkers, but the QAF is designed for assessing the overall case management approach, rather than the specifics of recruitment and capacity-building. The Inter-Agency Guidelines<sup>22</sup> specify the importance of gathering information on caseworker-to-child ratios, caseworker competency, and available human and financial resources. However, a comprehensive, simple-to-use mapping tool for humanitarian settings does not currently exist.

If a response does not have access to (or isn't able to quickly gather) the necessary data, then focusing on caseworker-to-child ratios and the caseworker perceptions of challenges and opportunities is a good alternative. Consultation provides the opportunity to gather feedback via a survey or other format to try to ensure that efforts to strengthen recruitment and capacity-building reflect the reality of frontline caseworkers' experiences and suggestions. Mapping exercises should endeavour to include CPMSs and volunteers in recognition of the vital role those actors play in filling the gaps and bridging to the formal child protection system. After mapping, decisions should be made about how many caseworkers are needed and the profile required of caseworkers, etc.

In contexts with additional time and resources, an interim solution is to adapt techniques for social service workforce mapping in development settings. UNICEF Guidelines<sup>23</sup> recommend reviewing:

1. relevant law, policy, and regulations
2. financial and other resources for recruitment and capacity-building
3. the number of caseworkers per 100,000 children,<sup>24</sup> disaggregated by caseworker role (e.g. government social worker, NGO caseworker, community volunteer etc.)
4. current standards of education, training, and practice
5. certification, registration, and/or licencing requirements and practices
6. the presence, role, and effectiveness of professional associations and networks

7. caseworker perceptions of challenges and opportunities related to work environment, job satisfaction, professional development, and supervision, etc and their recommendations for improvement

Together with the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSW Alliance), UNICEF has been conducting region-wide mappings in development settings. Some of those are on-going or being finalised, but the following example from South Asia is available online:

## WORKFORCE MAPPING IN SOUTH ASIA

In 2018, the GSSW Alliance and UNICEF's regional office for South Asia conducted a mapping of the social service workforce in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.<sup>25</sup> Although a geographically-broad mapping focused on national systems in predominantly development rather than humanitarian settings, the methodology is adaptable to smaller and more emergency-oriented settings. For instance, the methodology could be adapted by selecting some of the following primary and secondary data collection methods from page 6 of the report:

- questionnaires sent to government ministries, NGOs, civil society organisations, universities, and professional associations
- key informant interviews with staff from the abovementioned bodies
- existing NGO literature such as mapping reports, technical standards and guidance, programme documents, evaluations, and situation analyses
- peer-reviewed academic journal articles that focused on historical accounts and regional trends
- websites with information on associations and population statistics, etc.

The report on this regional initiative also highlights the benefits of child participation in caseworker mapping. The report references a study conducted by World Vision with 100 children in Bangladesh and 230 children in India.<sup>26</sup> World Vision's approach was to conduct focus group discussions on the following topics:

- children's awareness and knowledge of child protection issues
- availability of social services for child protection
- availability of response and reporting mechanisms
- capacity of the social service provider
- the accessibility of services and the service provider

The focus group discussions provided a variety of information, such as concerns that there are insufficient caseworkers in villages in Bangladesh but that a 24/7 free telephone helpline is widely known and children reported feeling comfortable using it if needed. Similarly, in India, children reported that a telephone helpline is the most frequently-used service by children and that it is regarded as prompt and meeting the children's needs. However, the children reported that the government social workers are not always compassionate, dependable, or child-friendly. The World Vision study also generated recommendations from children on how to improve the social service workforce. Evidently, focus group discussions with children, if conducted well, can provide a valuable insight into the current state of caseworker capacity and generate practical recommendations for improvement.

**Recommendation:**

There is a list of essential considerations when analysing the case management workforce on Page 34 of the Inter-agency Guidelines. However, using that list is an interim solution and, as a priority, an inter-agency tool for mapping the case management workforce that is quick and easy-to-use in the early stages of a humanitarian response should be developed based on the GSSW Alliance-UNICEF approach used in development settings.

### c. A competency framework

Within organisations and ideally across each humanitarian response, caseworkers should share a set of core competencies that align with the identified needs of children and families in that location. Competency frameworks are important to ensure that services meet minimum standards and that caseworkers are supported to learn and develop in their role and to progress on to other roles.

*“A competency is a set of skills a person needs to effectively perform in their job, role, or situation. These skills can include technical knowledge/ability, interpersonal skills, and personal attitudes/values. A person can inherently possess some competencies or intentionally develop them. For example, some people naturally build relationships with colleagues. Others can learn to build relationships through practice and training.”<sup>27</sup>*

A good competency framework is a really useful tool which can be used to determine the content of job descriptions, recruitment tests and interview questions, performance appraisals, and learning and development plans, etc. The below case study explains how ‘skills standards’ (the equivalent of a competency framework) were developed and went on to inform NGO practice and a university curriculum:

## DEVELOPING NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS STANDARDS (NOSS) IN AFGHANISTAN

In Afghanistan, an advisory committee consisting of government ministries,<sup>28</sup> national NGOs, and International NGOs coordinated the development of national standards for three levels of caseworkers.<sup>29</sup> The skills standards were developed using the DaCUM ('developing a curriculum') methodology, which is a participatory process for identifying, describing, and analysing the competencies necessary to succeed in an occupation in a specific setting. More information about the DaCUM methodology can be read online at [dacum.org](http://dacum.org).

The DaCUM methodology was used to develop national skills standards for all occupations in Afghanistan. One of the benefits of the DaCUM methodology is that it acknowledges that the competencies required of a caseworker are context-specific and enables tools and guidance to be developed that are contextually- and culturally-relevant. At the same time as enabling that flexibility, it has been used in Afghanistan to define roles, develop university curricula, and establish an accreditation system for social workers.

In relation to case management, the process in Afghanistan involved caseworkers and service users determining what knowledge, skills, and personal qualities as well as what tools and capacity-building were required for case management work.<sup>30</sup> The participatory elements of the Afghan initiative included identifying participant caseworkers from three levels of the national case management system: community workers, social workers, and supervisors. In addition, participants were recruited who worked with those three types of caseworkers, such as administrative staff, lawyers, and religious leaders. Furthermore, grass roots service users participated in the process of developing national occupational skills standards for caseworkers.

The end result was a set of National Occupational Skills Standards at three levels:

- Community Social Work Associate
- Social Worker
- Social Work Manager/Administrator (Supervisor)

Afghanistan's NOSS has four main components:

- 'Occupational Profile', which describes the nature of work, working conditions, etc.
- 'Job Profile', which outlines the competencies required at each of the three levels as well as corresponding duties (major job functions) and tasks (detailed, observable work)
- 'Task Profile', which sets detailed performance standards for tasks and sub-tasks including knowledge requirements, attitudes, safety measures, and inputs required for each task
- 'Accumulative Assessment Record', which is a record of training completed, feedback on performance, and progress towards achieving a competency

A corresponding competency-based evaluation system was also developed, with the aim that it could be used for University accreditation, which is discussed below in the sub-section about Examinations and Certification.

In the above case study, the DaCUM methodology was used to develop competency frameworks in collaboration with government authorities and other key stakeholders. Since then, inter-agency competency frameworks have been adapted or developed collaboratively. Currently, there are three main inter-agency tools that could either be adapted or used to inform a contextualised competency framework:

1. [The Case Management Competencies and Skills Framework](#);<sup>31</sup>
2. [The Core Humanitarian Competency Framework](#);<sup>32</sup> and
3. [The Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework](#).<sup>33</sup>

In the absence of guidance to the contrary, the Case Management Competencies and Skills Framework, which is annexed to the Inter-Agency Guidelines, appears to be the most relevant tool for caseworker recruitment and capacity-building. Nonetheless, here is some more information on the other two frameworks:

Notably, the [Core Humanitarian Competency Framework](#) outlines the professional competencies that are relevant for anyone engaged in humanitarian action. It is supplemented by a guide<sup>34</sup> to help human resource staff and managers to adapt or develop a competency framework that aligns with the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS). In addition, the guide contains 11 tools that, although not child protection or case management-specific, may be useful, including competency-based job descriptions, competency-based interview questions, and a competency-based learning and development plan.

The [Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework](#) was first developed in 2010 and, at the time of writing, a revised version is currently being field tested and will be finalised to align with the second edition of the CPMS. This framework describes the level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that determine which of three performance levels<sup>35</sup> a person is exhibiting, and it consists of:

- 5 Technical competency<sup>36</sup> domains that describe groups of related competencies
- 28 Individual technical competencies that are grouped under each domain
- 5 Behavioural competency<sup>37</sup> domains that describe groups of related competencies
- 9 Individual behavioural competencies that are grouped under each domain
- Corresponding indicators, which are a non-exhaustive list of observable, measurable behaviours that indicate what would constitute proficiency for each competency at each of the performance levels

This review did not receive examples of any of the inter-agency competency frameworks being used in practice, but a very similar approach to the Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework was used in the below case study.

## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK<sup>38</sup>

In 2017, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) endorsed two competency frameworks,<sup>39</sup> which were created with stakeholders in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo. The stakeholders represented government ministries, universities, social work schools, UN agencies, NGOs, and civil society organisations.

The multi-country, inter-agency group developed frameworks made of two parts. The first part consisted of key competencies for case management actors working on three main areas of intervention:

1. effectively and appropriately assisting the child and his/her family
2. effectively and appropriately assisting groups of children and youth
3. effectively providing contextualised support and prevention activities to communities

The second part consisted of four cross-cutting competencies:

1. developing and promoting inter-sectoral partnerships, collaborations, and networks
2. monitoring and evaluating one's own practice
3. understanding the normative framework for child rights and interventions that target children
4. contributing to one's own professional development

Each of those competency domains were then split in to three types of competency:

1. savoir (knowledge)
2. savoir-faire (skills or know how)
3. savoir être / attitude (attitude or knowing how to be)

### Recommendation:

Use the 'Case Management Competency and Skills Framework', which is annexed to the Inter-agency Guidelines, to determine the standards expected of caseworkers. However, that framework needs to be updated to align with other inter-agency competency frameworks.



#### d. Assessing individual capacity

When seeking to build the capacity of an individual, team, or wider case management workforce, it is important to assess attitudes, skills, and knowledge in order to appropriately design a tailored capacity-building initiative. Ideally, newly-recruited caseworkers should have their capacity assessed to design an individual learning and development plan and to prioritise their learning needs.

*“Before starting capacity-building activities, you must conduct an assessment of the staff’s attitudes, skills and knowledge to appropriately target capacity-building initiatives”.<sup>40</sup>*

The [Child Protection Caseworker Capacity Assessment Tool](#), which is part of the inter-agency Supervision and Coaching Package,<sup>41</sup> is a simple template to enable supervisors to assess a caseworker’s attitudes, knowledge, and skills. This practical tool involves the caseworker ticking whether they ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘disagree’, or ‘strongly disagree’ with a series of statements. There are three parts:

1. child protection attitudes, which includes ten statements
2. child protection knowledge, which includes ten statements
3. case management skills, which includes eight statements

The Capacity Assessment Tool is adapted from the Survivor-centred Attitude Scale, which is a tool from the Inter-agency Gender-based Violence Case Management Guidelines.<sup>42</sup> In turn, the tool can be adapted to meet the needs of the context by contextualising the 28 statements as needed. The aim of using the tool is to determine what capacity-building and other support the caseworker needs. The case study below used a tool adapted from the Survivor-centred Attitude Scale:

## TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN LEBANON

In Lebanon, IRC uses a mixed methods survey in English and Arabic to determine the training needs of individual caseworkers by assessing technical knowledge, skills, and attitudes. First, questions were asked to assess technical knowledge, such as *"How would you define case management? Please describe confidentiality and some best practices in keeping confidentiality"*, etc.

Secondly, skills-related questions include *"When should you safety plan with a child?"*, *"What are the elements of a safety plan?"*, *"How would you respond if a child expressed suicidal thoughts?"* and *"Describe how to use your body language to help a child feel safe and comfortable"*, etc.

Thirdly, the survey includes questions to assess caseworkers' attitudes using statements to which caseworkers could indicate how much they agree on a four-point scale. Examples of statements include: *"Sexual abuse can be the child survivor's fault"*, *"Sexual abuse causes homosexuality"*; and *"I am responsible for believing and supporting children who are sexually abused, no matter what the community thinks"*, etc.

It may be more time-efficient to assess the capacity of a group of caseworkers at a certain point in time, such as six months into a response, to ensure that the overall approach to capacity-building is on track or to review and revise upcoming training initiatives. It is important to couple such assessments with on-going supervision and coaching to be sure that the knowledge, attitudes, and skills reported in the assessment are being reflected in practice.

### Recommendation:

Adapt the Child Protection Caseworker Capacity Assessment Tool as needed for the context or organization in order to tailor capacity-building to the learning needs of individual caseworkers.

## 2. Recruitment

This section outlines key considerations related to recruiting caseworkers:

- a. Child safeguarding
- b. Diversity
- c. Community-based approaches
- d. Government systems strengthening approaches

CONSIDERATION	CASE STUDY IN MAIN REPORT	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p><b>a. Child safeguarding:</b> risks specific to any programming (including case management) that includes unsupervised, one-on-one access to vulnerable children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Italy (refugee response)</li> </ul>	<p>As per the <a href="#">Safer Recruitment Guidelines</a>, additional recruitment measures such as behaviour and attitude tests, extra references, and supervised probation periods, are necessary to mitigate the safeguarding risks associated with child protection case management.</p>
<p><b>b. Diversity:</b> requires a flexible approach to caseworker recruitment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mozambique</li> </ul>	<p>Although strong recruitment criteria are necessary, those criteria should also be flexible (e.g. reducing educational requirements) and adapted (e.g. alternative modes of assessment) to the context to avoid excluding caseworkers with certain profiles and to promote diversity.</p>
<p><b>c. Community-based approaches:</b> particularly useful when localisation is a priority, but require a considered approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar)</li> <li>Rwanda</li> <li>Middle East regional</li> </ul>	<p>Inter-agency tools and guidance are currently being developed to support the safe and ethical recruitment of community-based caseworkers. In the meantime, approaches to recruiting community-based caseworkers must be context-appropriate and may require adaptations such as conducting community reference checks through the established structures of the local community, rather than the formal criminal justice system. In some contexts, it may be appropriate to engage the community in defining the profile of caseworkers and identifying and vetting candidates.</p>
<p><b>d. Government systems strengthening:</b> requires a considered approach to engaging the existing social service workforce, if available and appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kenya (refugee response)</li> <li>Burkina Faso (displacement)</li> <li><a href="#">Tanzania</a></li> <li>Iraq</li> </ul>	<p>Until there is clearer inter-agency guidance, try as much as possible to include government social workers in capacity-building initiatives, including secondment programmes and supervision and coaching.</p>

## a. Child safeguarding

For the purposes of this review, child safeguarding refers to the responsibility of organisations to ensure that their staff, volunteers, programmes, and operations do not cause harm to children, whether that harm is a deliberate act of violence or a failure in duty of care. This includes preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). As with other interventions that involve unsupervised, one-on-one access to vulnerable children, case management services carry additional safeguarding risks and necessitate additional measures during recruitment that are part of a wider strategy to prevent child safeguarding incidents.

*“Safer practice in recruitment means that every stage of the process should be considered carefully, in order to deter unsuitable candidates from applying or being appointed into an organisation.”<sup>43</sup>*

In general, more information on child safeguarding during recruitment and more broadly can be found from the Keeping Children Safe network. That is a network of humanitarian and development organisations that was established in 2001 in response to reports of violence against children by members of staff. The Keeping Children Safe website can be accessed [here](#).

The CHS Alliance has developed ‘Safer Recruitment Guidelines’, which can be viewed online by opening [this link](#) and clicking ‘download’. Those guidelines recognise that:

- Especially in the early stages of a large response, there is significant pressure to recruit a lot of staff as quickly as possible, but that comes with a responsibility to ensure that only people with the right competencies, skills, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs are recruited.
- As stated in the Core Humanitarian Standard, humanitarian actors have a legal and moral duty to protect children, families, communities, staff and other stakeholders from individuals who might misuse their position to their own benefit, whether financial, sexual, or otherwise.

The ‘Safer Recruitment Guidelines’ recommend that the following should be considered when planning recruitment:

1. **Job descriptions** should specify the position holder’s responsibilities for safeguarding and compliance with the employer’s code of conduct and organisational values.
2. **Advertisements** should make the organisation’s commitment to child safeguarding clear.
3. **Shortlisting** should include scrutiny of the application and CV including querying any gaps, discrepancies, or anomalies in employment history.
4. **Interviews** should include questions on safeguarding, code of conduct, and working with vulnerable people.
5. **Checks** should be made to verify the successful applicant’s identity, employment history and qualifications and confirmed **before** an employment offer is made.

6. **Professional references** from independent, unrelated referees should be obtained.
7. **External checks** are done in accordance with the organisations policy, which would usually include a police clearance check, anti-terrorism check etc<sup>44</sup>.
8. **Inductions** should include a briefing on child safeguarding and the organisation's code of conduct.

The CHS Alliance's 'Safe Recruitment Guidelines' also include useful tools, such as an example of a self-declaration form to be submitted by job applicants to confirm whether or not they have a criminal conviction or whether or not they have ever received a warning or left employment following allegations of misconduct. Those guidelines also include example interview questions, including safeguarding-focused scenario questions, as well as example questions to ask referees.<sup>45</sup> The case study below outlines child safeguarding measures that could be included when interviewing potential caseworkers:

### SAFEGUARDING-FOCUSED INTERVIEWING

Save the Children Italy provides case management services to unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children arriving in Europe. As part of that programme, the organisation has implemented a 'safe recruitment' initiative that is focused on child safeguarding. Part of that initiative includes an interview guide that is part of a wider selection process during recruitment. The interview is in two parts: semi-structured interview questions; and scenario questions. The guide includes two settings of wording: one for volunteers (with and without experience) and one for professionals (with and without experience). Guidance on how to conduct a child safeguarding-focused interview or part of a broader interview is then provided in six stages:

1. **preparing for the interview:** This includes guidance on who is best placed to sit on the interview panel and the importance of ensuring that interviewers agree on evaluation criteria to define what constitutes a score of 'satisfactory', 'quite satisfactory', or 'unsatisfactory.'
2. **explaining the interview:** This includes information to provide to candidates on why the interview/part of the interview is focused on child safeguarding and information to give to candidates (especially para-professional volunteers) about different types of child safeguarding violations, child protection, and signs of maltreatment etc.
3. **the interview itself:** The guide includes sample interview questions for: professionals with experience; professionals without experience; volunteers with experience; and volunteers without experience. In addition to the interview questions, bullet-point examples are provided of positive indicators and negative indicators when scoring the candidates' response.

4. **introduction to the scenario:** The guide then suggests reminding the candidate of the definitions of violence against children provided earlier, including providing a handout with those definitions. Candidates are told that they will be presented with scenarios and will be asked both how they would respond and to decide what level of risk (from 1-4) the child in the scenario is exposed to. Save the Children Italy uses a four-point scale from 'no,' to 'slight', to 'moderate', to 'marked' abuse and maltreatment, which is similar to a 'no', 'low', 'medium', and 'high' risk criteria categorisation.
5. **scenarios:** The guide then includes contextualised scenarios featuring a range of types and severity of violence against children. Instructions are included to ask the candidate the risk level and to ask what they would do, with a list of possible options if necessary. Information is also provided on how to give a numerical score to different answers.
6. **end of 'Safe Recruitment' section:** The guidance ends with instructions for interview panel members to calculate the candidate's overall score. This includes a reminder that any unexplored areas or areas for concern such as gaps in the candidates' application should be included in the 'comments' section of the interview sheet.

**Recommendation:**

Additional recruitment measures such as behaviour and attitude tests, extra references, and supervised probation periods, are necessary to mitigate the safeguarding risks associated with caseworkers having unsupervised, one-on-one access to vulnerable children and adults.

## b. Diversity

*Diversity implies diverse experiences of “the ways that attitudinal, physical and communication barriers impede their participation and inclusion in humanitarian action, and in their identity, including their age, gender, ethnicity, location and race. Due to the intersectionality of these factors, persons with disabilities face greater marginalization and discrimination. During humanitarian crises, for example, children with disabilities are at higher risk of abuse and neglect, and women with disabilities are at higher risk of sexual violence”.<sup>46</sup>*

Although inclusion should be mainstreamed throughout practice and is not specific to recruitment, diversity during the recruitment of caseworkers is important so that the demographic of caseworkers interacting with children and families reflects the needs and characteristics of children and families.

Recruitment of caseworkers should be conducted in accordance with clear guidelines and procedures on equal opportunity employment. Consideration should be given to: gender balance and equity in the workforce; inclusion and accommodation of caseworkers with disabilities; accommodation of caseworker caregiving responsibilities; measures to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination in the workplace; equitable pay; and opportunities for upward mobility. Gender norms, stereotypes, and roles should be actively challenged<sup>47</sup>.

In humanitarian settings, recruitment criteria should be flexible to align with the needs of children. For instance, if there is a larger number of boys or girls, it may be necessary to have more male or female caseworkers. Similarly, if there are large numbers of children with certain disabilities, especially related to communication, then caseworkers able to communicate with those children are essential.

Likewise, recruitment criteria may need to be adapted to align with the needs of the context. For instance, in a humanitarian setting with lower literacy rates, it may be necessary to lower the education recruitment criteria or to pair caseworkers who are literate with those who are not. The following case study demonstrates how to overcome reliance on formal interview processes to provide a recruitment process that is adapted to a population with fewer educational or professional opportunities:

#### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ACTORS DURING RECRUITMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE

In Beira, Mozambique, Save the Children developed a recruitment day for community-based caseworkers. To start with, local community leaders mobilised potential candidates to come to an assessment day. Interested community members were split into gender-segregated groups of 20 and invited to come for testing at a specific date and time. Upon arrival, all candidates were given a 30-minute orientation on case management. Then they were given a written test to assess:

1. the candidates' awareness of child protection issues in their community
2. the extent to which the candidate had understood what case management is
3. how the candidate would react to certain situations



The written tests were graded, and the top scoring candidates proceeded to an interview round. The interview questions focused on motivations and behaviours, attitudes, and practices when responding to child protection scenarios or other sensitive situations. Although a secondary school certification was preferred, the education levels of people in the area were quite low. Therefore, the education requirement was treated as flexible if a candidate scored highly in the test and interview.

In many humanitarian settings, recruiting female caseworkers is a challenge. Socio-cultural norms, barriers to education, and childcare responsibilities are some of the factors that can impact on the availability of female caseworkers. Affirmative action for women is one solution, which also has benefits for girls in the community because barriers to female employment may be indicative of wider female vulnerability and potential challenges for girls to access case management without the presence of women. The following example demonstrates how extra efforts when advertising jobs and interviewing demonstrates can be used to attract and accommodate female candidates and other harder-to-reach candidates:

#### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR WOMEN DURING RECRUITMENT IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

In the Central African Republic, Plan International has taken steps to encourage flexibility in recruitment, particularly the recruitment of women, which was especially challenging. Some of the measures to recruit more female caseworkers include:

- reviewing job descriptions to ensure that criteria related to social and human qualities stand out in addition to more formal criteria
- advertising job openings using standard methods such as radio and news, but also explaining the position and how to apply to women's organisations, local authorities, and local religious centres such as churches and mosques

If an applicant shows potential and goodwill, but does not have sufficient experience or knowledge, that applicant should be provided with a 3-day case management training after which they should be given a post-test and be recruited if they pass the test.

#### Recommendation:

Although strong recruitment criteria are necessary, those criteria should also be flexible (e.g. reducing educational requirements) and adapted (e.g. alternative modes of assessment) to the context to avoid excluding caseworkers with certain profiles and to promote diversity.

### c. Community-based caseworkers

*“Communities play an important role in identifying children who are at risk of harm and are in need of services in support. It is necessary to understand the existing services, support, and child protection actors within the community, to include these in referral mechanisms, and to engage them in the identification process. In some contexts, it may also be important to work with community members, such as traditional leaders, to develop or carry out the child’s care plan.”<sup>48</sup>*

Local community members play an integral role in identifying and supporting children at risk of harm or who have experienced harm. In many contexts, customary law prevails over statutory legal practices, with formal child protection services hard for many children and families to access. Recruiting competent and trained caseworkers at the community level can ensure effective services where they are most needed, i.e. in the communities in which children and families live. The following case study demonstrates how community-based caseworkers are essential in some humanitarian settings:

#### ACCESSIBILITY IN COX’S BAZAR, BANGLADESH

In Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, NGO staff access to camps and informal settlements for Rohingya refugees is not allowed after dark. In that context, Relief International found that Rohingya case management volunteers were essential in providing out-of-hours case management support.<sup>49</sup> The volunteers were able to identify cases and make emergency referrals to interim care centres, health NGOs and government services when the camps were closed to child protection actors.

In some contexts, community-based caseworkers are tasked with identifying potential cases and referring the child for services, and in some contexts, community-based caseworkers manage low-risk cases. However, there is currently no guidance on how to recruit community-based caseworkers and on appropriate roles and responsibilities for community-based caseworkers. That being said, at the time of writing, Plan International (acting on behalf of the global CMTF and the Community-based Child Protection Task Force) is due to launch an initiative to explore:

- the roles that community volunteers play within the case management process
- the capacities and limitations of community volunteers to respond to child protection risks

That initiative aims to develop new tools and resources, including practical guidance, to answer the question of how best to recruit community-based caseworkers. In the meantime, there are examples of models of recruitment of community-based caseworkers.

### INSHUTI Z'UMURYANGO ('FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY') COMMUNITY-BASED VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE IN RWANDA

In response to the influx of Burundian refugees in 2015, two types of community-based caseworkers were introduced in Mahama Refugee Camp to support case management: Para-social Workers and Child Protection Community Mobilisers.<sup>50</sup> These were volunteers from the refugee community in Mahama, and they received a stipend for their work:

1. Para-social Workers were trained to provide intensive practical support to a caseload of approximately 10 unaccompanied children in independent living arrangements near to their own households. The Para-social workers focused on trying to ensure that the children had access to services and were safe during the day and night as well as cooking for the children and trying to ensure the children maintained their personal hygiene, went to school, did their homework, etc.
2. Child Protection Community Mobilisers were trained to conduct weekly home visits to a caseload of approximately 20-30 other vulnerable children. The aim of the visits was to monitor the children's and escalate any protection concerns or changes in the situation to a Para-social worker.

The two types of community-based caseworkers had clear terms of reference and job descriptions. Different tools and guidance were also developed for both groups, including forms, monitoring checklists, and child-friendly communication materials. Plan International provided a range of trainings, including sessions related to code of conduct and safeguarding issues as well as thematic trainings on positive parenting and child-friendly communication. In addition, regular coaching was provided, which was aimed at reinforcing the skills and knowledge of the community-based caseworkers and enhancing collaboration.

#### Positive changes reported:

1. a gradual increase in reporting child protection concerns as the community-based caseworkers became more used to counselling
2. an improvement in community perceptions about and support for unaccompanied children

#### Challenges reported:

1. insufficient number of community-based caseworkers for a high caseload
2. insufficient supervision of the community-based caseworkers because the staff providing supervision had other work to do
3. financial cost of supported independent living compared to alternatives such as foster care

Despite the benefits of community-based caseworkers in terms of accessibility and local knowledge etc., recruiting community-based caseworkers also presents issues related to confidentiality and professional

boundaries. Ensuring that community-based actors have a clear role and the capacity to conduct case management activities safely and ethically requires a specific approach to recruitment. The following regional case study included efforts to screen and verify the suitability of community-based caseworkers:

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT VOLUNTEER MENTORS FOR UASC TOOLKIT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In response to the large number of unaccompanied and separated Syrian refugee children, an inter-agency toolkit was created to provide guidance, tools, and capacity-building materials for community-based case management volunteers. The training package covers identification, training, and deployment of community volunteers to support more qualified caseworkers.

To identify suitable members of the community to take on the role of community support volunteers, the toolkit includes an identification checklist, profiling tool, and a reference check tool. The identification checklist sets out the qualities and background required of potential volunteer mentors. The profiling tool or screening tool is used to document the background of potential volunteers. References are collected from community leaders and other sources in the community. Assignment of trained volunteer mentors to unaccompanied children or families caring for separated children is based on an assignment tool, which is used together with the profiling tool to ensure the volunteer mentor being assigned is a suitable match for the task.

**Recommendation:**

Inter-agency tools and guidance are currently being developed to support the safe and ethical recruitment of community-based caseworkers. In the meantime, approaches to recruiting community-based caseworkers must be context-appropriate and may require adaptations such as conducting community reference checks through the established structures of the local community, rather than the formal criminal justice system. In some contexts, it may be appropriate to engage the community in defining the profile of caseworkers and identifying and vetting candidates.

### d. Government systems strengthening

In humanitarian settings, governments should be supported to directly provide case management services and external agencies should try to limit their assistance to indirect support as much as possible. The exception to this is when there is a tension between building national capacity and protecting children, particularly if the government is a party to conflict.<sup>51</sup>

*“Both humanitarian and development actors are mandated to support governments in fulfilling their obligations, not to replace them. Agencies should respect the government’s lead responsibility in child protection and explore ways to strengthen existing systems, even where the services available may not be ideal.”<sup>52</sup>*

Coordination efforts should promote the government’s lead responsibility for child protection. In the early stages of an emergency, if services have had to be outsourced to external agencies, as a bare minimum the government must be represented in coordination mechanisms. The following case studies highlight how coordination can encourage the exchange of skills and knowledge and promote acceptance of humanitarian approaches to case management:

#### GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP OF COORDINATION MECHANISMS IN KENYA

In Kenya, the Government leads case management coordination mechanisms in Turkana and Garissa counties, where Kakuma and Dadaab Refugee Camps are located. The Government works with UNHCR to bring together existing in-country skills and experience with humanitarian best practices for refugee child protection through the coordination mechanism.<sup>53</sup> The joint approach to coordination enables capacity-building of both government social workers and NGO caseworkers in relation to refugee rights and best interest processes, etc., so that those staff can apply their existing skills in refugee settings.

#### GOVERNMENT-LED COORDINATION IN BURKINA FASO

In Burkina Faso, approximately 500,000 people are displaced due to armed conflict and difficulties accessing food, water, and medical services. Burkina Faso’s Ministry of Social Affairs coordinates all international and national NGOs engaged in child protection, and there are sub-working groups for specific initiatives such as updating case management tools and advocacy. Terre des hommes (Tdh) reports the following benefits stemming from government-led case management coordination:

- validation of national case management tools combined with more widespread usage across the country
- guidelines for child protection networks being used widely across country
- case management included in the curriculum of the National Institute for Social Workers (l’Institut National de Formation en Travail Social)

Another way to collaborate and fill gaps in an existing social workforce is to consider a secondment model. Secondments of government social workers into NGOs and vice-versa can be supplemented with capacity-building and technical advice to help the member of staff to adapt and share learning between peers, as demonstrated in the following case studies:

### TANZANIA'S SECONDMENT MODEL

In response to the influx of Burundian refugees between May 2015 and January 2017, Tanzania's Department of Social Welfare initially seconded 100 Social Welfare Officers (SWOs) to work in three refugee camps in Northwest Tanzania and provide case management services to refugee children.<sup>54</sup> The SWOs were provided with a refugee induction and were embedded within existing case management systems in the three refugee camps (Nduta, Nyaragusu, and Mtendeli).

Tanzania's secondment model benefited from government SWOs with comprehensive training and professional knowledge of Tanzania's legal, policy, and practice frameworks for child protection and gender-based violence. In addition, civil servant status and a statutory mandate gave the SWOs the authority necessary to conduct case management, including making alternative care placements and referrals to other government services. UNCHR and UNICEF report that seconded SWOs demonstrated a higher capacity and knowledge to handle caseloads compared to CP workers employed by humanitarian agencies as a result of this additional capacity-building. The secondment model was also judged to be more cost-effective than hiring NGO workers.

This secondment model was possible because Tanzania had an existing cadre of trained social welfare officers.<sup>55</sup> A practical limitation of the secondment model was that secondments were limited to three months to minimise disruption to other service, and the number of Government Social Welfare Officers was only sufficient to meet 28% of child protection needs.

## ON-THE JOB COACHING OF GOVERNMENT SOCIAL WORKERS IN IRAQ

Triangle Génération Humanaire (TGH) and UNHCR have implemented a capacity-development programme in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Federal Iraq. The initiative aims to strengthen the child protection systems in both areas by providing consistent, high quality, supportive coaching during the daily work of DoSA caseworkers aimed at:

- increasing technical knowledge on key concepts such as the best interests of the child
- improving soft skills, such as communicating with children
- increasing understanding and implementation of case management and information management procedures

At the government level, the initiative requires:

- one TGH staff member for every 6-7 government social workers
- one TGH staff member for every 2-3 government supervisors

The TGH staff provide the following support:

- field visits to accompany government social workers and supervisors to meet children and families, discuss referral pathways with other service providers, and check on the available services
- shadowing for new or inexperienced government social workers to observe how to engage children and families and conduct child case management activities, including debriefings at the end of the day
- weekly observation of caseworkers, including feedback, coaching, and support after the observation session
- technical support sessions as needed, either to review knowledge or to discuss specific technical topics, often in small groups
- monthly case file reviews to provide technical support, focused on information management
- monthly sessions for supervisors to discuss supervision practices, focused on building confidence and capacity
- peer-to-peer discussions as needed and facilitated by capacity-building staff on specific technical topics or types of cases etc.

As time has passed, the initiative has evolved. For instance, tools from the inter-agency technical coaching and supervision package have been contextualised and included. Additionally, representatives of the Kurdish authorities now co-facilitate some of the trainings and, in some districts, government supervisors have begun replacing TGH staff in providing supervision.

As with other models of partnerships, collaborations such as the above secondment and peer-to-peer learning exchange case studies involve some elements of tension when it comes to political and financial

power imbalance. For instance, NGOs may offer higher salaries for caseworkers than governments can offer for social workers, which undermines system-strengthening. Similar to the aforementioned initiative of exploring the role of community-based caseworkers, there is value in developing clearer models for collaborating with government social workers.

**Recommendation:**

Until there is clearer inter-agency guidance, as much as possible try to include government social workers in capacity-building initiatives, including secondment programmes and supervision and coaching.

### **3. Capacity-building**

This section outlines five key considerations related to building the capacity of caseworkers, including:

- a. core case management training
- b. supervision and coaching
- c. peer-to-peer capacity-building
- d. self-care
- e. continuing professional development
- f. examinations and certification



Consideration	Case study in main report	Recommendations
<b>a. Core case management training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n/a</li> </ul>	Contextualise the <a href="#">Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers</a> , but remember that it should be complemented by consistent opportunities for learning.
<b>b. Supervision and coaching: an essential step in moving beyond intermittent face-to-face trainings to a more consistent, field-based approach to caseworker capacity-building.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Idlib, Northwest Syria</li> </ul>	Contextualising the <a href="#">Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package</a>
<b>c. Peer-to-peer capacity-building: a low-cost option which promotes team-building and psychosocial support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lebanon</li> </ul>	Facilitate regular peer-to-peer support sessions in which caseworkers share their experiences, learning, challenges, and practical solutions.
<b>d. Self-care: Tools and guidance are essential parts of ensuring that caseworkers have the skills to maintain their well-being.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh</li> </ul>	The <a href="#">Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers</a> and the <a href="#">Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package</a> contain self-care tools and guidance that should be contextualised and rolled-out for all caseworkers, as part of a wider strategy for promoting self-care and well-being among staff and volunteers.
<b>e. Continuing professional development: currently mostly available online.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Massive Online Open Courses</a></li> </ul>	Use available online capacity-building resources, such as <a href="#">The Alliance Case Management Resource Hub</a> and <a href="#">The Alliance Online Learning Platform</a> . Although there is a need to expand what is available online, particularly in low connectivity settings and in different languages, offline alternatives should be considered.
<b>f. Examinations and certification: most relevant in prolonged crises with a focus on systems-strengthening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uganda</li> <li>Afghanistan</li> <li>Somaliland</li> <li>Bangladesh</li> </ul>	Seek opportunities to collaborate with agencies, authorities, and education institutions to develop or adapt existing approaches to assessing and certifying social workers to apply to caseworkers in humanitarian settings.

## a. Core case management training

Alongside other orientations and basic training for all new child protection staff<sup>56</sup>, caseworkers should receive core training to introduce them to case management. In 2014, alongside the Inter-Agency Guidelines, the global CMTF published the associated [Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers](#).<sup>57</sup> That training is a core inter-agency package, which has been contextualised, adapted and used in a wide variety of humanitarian settings. The package includes an eight-day training for caseworkers and three additional sessions for supervisors and managers.

*“Capacity-building is more than just initial training; staff also need to have the opportunity for on-going/refresher training and mentoring. Practice and mentoring are recognised as important ways to learn and apply teaching and to develop skills and competencies.”<sup>58</sup>*

The inter-agency case management training is a widely-accepted and utilised resource. With sufficient technical expertise in case management and capacity-building, it can be adapted and rolled-out during the first phase of an emergency and provided to new caseworkers and supervisors/managers after that. Whilst the inter-agency training package is a good starting point, especially in the early stages of an emergency, case management capacity-building requires more than an initial training course.

### Recommendation:

Contextualise the Child Protection Case Management Training for caseworkers, supervisors, and managers. It is the foundation of caseworker capacity-building but should be complemented by consistent opportunities for learning.

## b. Supervision and coaching

Caseworkers need continuous development of their practical and technical skills, including thorough on-the-job supervision and coaching. Supervision and coaching provide an additional opportunity to support personal well-being and to increase job satisfaction and retention rates. Supervision is also a great way to build links between humanitarian para-professionals with social workers in the formal child protection system. In accordance with the aforementioned Inter-Agency Guidelines, all caseworkers should be provided with both informal and more structured supervision.

*“Supervision supports technical competence and practice, encourages reflection, promotes well-being and enables effective and supportive monitoring of casework.”<sup>59</sup>*

Often, child protection managers<sup>60</sup> are required to provide supervision to caseworkers without necessarily having full technical knowledge of case management. It may be challenging for line managers with other programme responsibilities to provide supervision and coaching to caseworkers. Similarly, it may be challenging for caseworkers to engage in supervision from their line managers because they might be reluctant to be honest about their concerns and experiences to the person who has authority over their performance review and future job prospects. Therefore, supervision and coaching does not necessarily have to be provided by someone more senior in the organisational hierarchy, it just needs to be provided by someone with sufficient case management experience in humanitarian settings.<sup>61</sup>

The new edition of the CPMS confirms the staffing ratios specified in the Inter-agency guidelines, i.e. that the recommended ratio of caseworkers-to-cases is 1:25, and the recommended ratio of supervisors-to-caseworkers is 1:5 or 6.<sup>62</sup> However, particularly in the early phases of an emergency or in a setting with limited human and financial resources, those ratios are difficult to achieve. Finding candidates with sufficient skills and experience to provide supervision and coaching can be challenging.

Someone from an external organisation can provide supervision, but they must have substantial, substantive case management experience in humanitarian settings. When starting a case management programme, it is suggested to consider whether your authority or agency has the skills and capacity to supervise case management work, and, if not, whether an external agency is able and willing to provide supervision.<sup>63</sup>

In 2018, the global CMTF launched the inter-agency [Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package](#)<sup>64</sup>, which is aimed at helping inter-agency groups and individual authorities and agencies to start implementing tools and techniques for on-going supervision and coaching of caseworkers. The package includes

- a facilitator guide with advice on how to prepare and deliver the training modules, which includes sample agendas, pre- and post- tests, and evaluation template, and a training report template
- six training modules including an introduction, definitions, practices and tools, skills, staff care and well-being, and a training module, which all come with annotated PowerPoint slides and accompanying handouts
- seven supervision tools for contextualization, including individual supervision record, case management meeting record, caseworker capacity assessment, shadowing tool, observation tool, case file checklist, and case discussion tool

## FEEDBACK ON THE INTER-AGENCY SUPERVISION AND COACHING PACKAGE

In 2017 and 2018, the global CMTF piloted the abovementioned inter-agency supervision and coaching package with three groups of colleagues working in the following settings:

1. Iraq, Turkey, and Syria
2. Niger and Burundi
3. South Sudan, Nigeria, and Myanmar

Feedback from caseworkers, supervisors, and global CMTF members working with them was gathered in a lessons learned report.<sup>65</sup> The feedback highlighted the following benefits seen during the process of rolling-out the inter-agency package:

- increased coordination and collaboration amongst case management actors
- meaningful contextualization and adaptation of tools and training modules
- prioritisation of participation of local authorities, agencies, and staff
- supervisors' increased knowledge of and confidence about providing supervision and coaching (assessed via pre-and post-tests)
- improved caseworker capacity as a result of supervision and coaching support

## COACHING OF CASEWORKERS IN IDLIB, NORTHWEST SYRIA

In June 2018, an independent evaluation was conducted of a supervision and coaching initiative run by IRC with 10 local partners providing child protection and gender-based violence case management services in 20 sites across Idlib Governorate, in northwest Syria.<sup>66</sup>

The evaluation generated strong quantitative evidence that supervision and coaching sessions improved case management skills and quality. For instance, taking a sample of 24 caseworkers, during the first individual session using the Observation Tool, 58% of the 24 caseworkers met the case management quality criteria (a score of 23 or above). This increased to 25 in the second session and 27 in the third observation session. By the final observation session, only one of the 24 caseworkers did not fully meet the quality criteria. Similar improvements in scores were seen over time with the other supervision and

coaching tools, such as the Case File Checklist, which increased from an average score of 1.4 at the first session, to 1.64 at the second, to 1.66 at the third session.

This evaluation provides rare evidence of the positive impact of supervision and coaching on the quality of case management services. This was also demonstrated through qualitative case studies collected during the evaluation. For example, one case story highlighted the ability of supervisors to observe caseworkers' body language and the improvements seen after the caseworkers corrected their body language and mannerisms when interacting with children. Other case studies highlighted the positive impact of supervision and coaching on the handling of high-risk cases and specific protocols for working with unaccompanied children and a child who had attempted suicide.

**Recommendation:**

Contextualising the Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package is an essential step in moving beyond intermittent face-to-face trainings to a more consistent, field-based approach to caseworker capacity-building.

### **c. Peer-to-peer capacity-building**

Peer-to-peer capacity-building approaches have many benefits including offering psychosocial support, team building, and being a good option for contexts with limited resources including locations where providing consistent technical supervision and coaching is a challenge. The following case study outlines one approach to peer-to-peer sessions:

## NETWORK OF INTER-AGENCY PEER-TO-PEER GROUPS IN LEBANON

In response to requests for additional coaching and mentoring support and a need to improve coordination among case management agencies, caseworkers and supervisors from different authorities and agencies meet together for a half or full day. Caseworkers and supervisors send their requested agenda points in advance of the sessions. The International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Case Management Child Protection Manager facilitates the sessions and provides technical advice.

The terms of reference for the inter-agency group sessions state that the following topics may be included on the agenda:<sup>67</sup>

- trends in types of child protection concerns and sharing of experiences about how best to respond
- presentation and discussion of anonymised challenging cases
- sharing new tools and guidance and feedback on existing tools and guidance
- discussion of on-going challenges with the case management system and proposed solutions
- short trainings on specific, previously identified topics

Inter-agency peer-to-peer learning and support groups do not replace the supervision of caseworkers and case management meetings, etc. that take place within individual authorities and agencies. Instead, the groups provide an additional layer of support and provide a forum to address wider issues with the case management system and to increase adherence to best practice.

The review did not receive many examples of peer-to-peer sessions, despite it being acknowledged that this is a relatively common practice. It is important to consider what approach to peer-to-peer sessions and what topics are most relevant in different humanitarian settings, but caseworkers may be able to engage in peer-to-peer sessions with limited facilitation needed.

### Recommendation:

Facilitate regular peer-to-peer support sessions in which caseworkers share their experiences, learning, challenges, and practical solutions.

## d. Self-care

A key element of capacity-building that is sometimes overlooked is providing caseworkers with skills and tools to maintain their mental health and well-being. Although the humanitarian sector is placing greater focus on the mental health and well-being of staff, there is more work to be done to acknowledge and mitigate the risks associated with caseworkers dealing directly with violence, vulnerable children and distressing and stressful events. UNICEF's Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child

Protection recognise that it is “common knowledge”<sup>68</sup> that caseworkers in development settings experience high stress levels for a variety of reasons including low pay, lack of recognition, low job satisfaction, and lack of job security.

Building the capacity of caseworkers to maintain mental health and well-being practices in settings with limited resources and services is essential and part of an organisation’s duty of care to staff and to children and families. In particular, caseworkers who come from communities affected by the crisis are likely to both work and live in difficult conditions that affect their physical, emotional, financial, and social well-being. Combined with other mental health and well-being support and benefits, capacity-building in this area can lead to improved job satisfaction, better quality services, and increased retention rates. Tools and guidance for self-care capacity-building specifically for caseworkers can be found in:

- Module F of the [Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers](#)<sup>69</sup>
- Module 4 of the [Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package](#)<sup>70</sup>

During the review, no case studies were received relating to self-care during recruitment and capacity-building, which may be indicative of a trend within organisations. However, there are additional global tools available for self-care capacity-building, which complement the above case management self-care training materials.

### Stress Management for Staff Training<sup>71</sup>

This [one-day training from Save the Children](#) is about providing staff with the skills to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and to explore ways of reducing stress and providing peer support. This complements case management capacity-building approaches such as peer-to-peer learning sessions and supervision and coaching.

### Psychosocial Support for Volunteers Toolkit<sup>72</sup>

This [toolkit](#) from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is aimed at providing psychosocial support to volunteers before, during, and after an emergency. Different aspects of psychosocial well-being are discussed and can be adapted to fit particular needs. The toolkit is particularly useful for case management programmes that include volunteers or community-based caseworkers.

Although no examples were submitted to this review of in-country self-care capacity-building, examples were received of mental health support services being provided to caseworkers by psychologists or psychosocial support provided during supervision. Considering mental health during recruitment and building the capacity of caseworkers to maintain their mental health should be part of a wider mental health and well-being strategy within organisations. It is important to consider the human and financial resources required to implement an effective mental health and well-being strategy, which might require advocating with senior management within organisations and with donors to secure the needed resources.

#### QUARTERLY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, Tdh caseworkers have access to quarterly support from an external mental health professional. The aim is to provide neutral, private, external mental health support to caseworkers and their supervisors, should they need it.

#### RESPONDING TO DIFFERENT NEEDS

War Child report a flexible approach to mental health report, including

- In Lebanon, where caseworkers are dealing with a lot of high-risk cases and work stress, external monthly face-to-face counselling for 60-90 minutes is provided, complementing psychosocial support through regular supervision and coaching.
- In the occupied Palestinian Territories, where caseworkers are dealing with low to medium risk cases, there is reportedly less demand for support and psychosocial support during supervision and coaching is deemed to be sufficient.
- In Syria, a Staff Care Specialist provides remote individual counselling sessions to caseworkers at partner agencies working inside Syria.

#### Recommendation:

The [Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers](#) and the [Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package](#) contain self-care tools and guidance that should be contextualised and rolled-out for all caseworkers, as part of a wider strategy for promoting self-care and well-being among staff, including psychosocial support through supervision and coaching and professional counselling services as needed.

### e. Continuing professional development



Opportunities for continuing professional development can help caseworkers to remain motivated and to consistently increase their skills and knowledge and can help organisations to retain a well-trained, more content workforce. Some countries, particularly in non-humanitarian settings, require a minimum number of hours or days per caseworker per year spent on continuing professional development. Often that is a condition of a caseworker retaining their certification or licence.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the supervision, peer-to-peer, and well-being resources mentioned above, a range of face-to-face and online continuing professional development opportunities for child protection workers are also available. Technological advances and increased access to the internet, even in volatile humanitarian settings, has contributed to making continuing professional development more accessible. The following case studies outline some of those online professional development opportunities for caseworkers:

## THE ALLIANCE WEBSITE

The Alliance website contains a Case Management Resource Hub, which can be accessed [here](#). Five modules are available on the following topics:

- case management guidelines
- case management capacity-building
- coordination of case management
- monitoring and evaluating for quality case management
- information management for case management

The Alliance also has its own online learning platform, which can be accessed [here](#). The Alliance E-Learning Hub includes courses that would benefit caseworkers in humanitarian settings, including

- CM Guidelines 101: Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child protection
- Introduction to Child Protection Case Management Coaching and Supervision
- Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS) e-Course<sup>74</sup>
- The Basics of Psychological First Aid

A number of webinars and podcasts are also available on the Alliance website, including ones relevant to case management such as

- Caring for LGBTQ Youth – An Introduction for Foster Parents
- Case Management Forms and CPIMS+
- Child Neglect in Humanitarian Settings
- Strengthening Referral Pathways for Children and Adolescents Affected by Sexual Violence<sup>75</sup>

Additional online resources can be found on [the website of the GSSW Alliance](#). Although the GSSW Alliance has more of a focus on developed and developing context, the website includes a compendium of

case management tools and resources and it features a toolkit for strengthening the social service workforce.



## MASSIVE ONLINE OPEN COURSES (MOOC)

The website <http://mooc.org/> contains thousands of free online courses, which are on a platform called EdX. Courses are available in 23 languages including Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish, and Bahasa Indonesian, amongst others.

EdX was created by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US and is now used by over 20 million learners. It includes full Master's degrees and professional certificates for free. It also includes shorter courses that may be useful for caseworkers in humanitarian settings, such as

- Protecting Children in Humanitarian Settings
- Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work
- Social Work Practice with Individuals, Families and Small Groups
- Empathy and Emotional Intelligence at Work
- Caring for Children Moving Alone: Protecting Unaccompanied and Separated Children

Although this platform requires a reliable internet connection, it provides a rare opportunity to study university-level online courses for free and in a range of languages.

As participation in online courses requires computer literacy, a computer, and a stable internet connection, there are limits to which caseworkers are able to benefit. In settings where caseworkers are not computer literate, it is advisable for them to pair-up with colleagues who can help them to work through the online course. It is possible to do these courses as a group using a projector, for instance.

The Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CPAoR) offers remote technical support through decentralised, language-specific Help Desks, in collaboration with the Rapid Response Team Coordinators who provide both in-person and remote support. The Help Desks provide tailored individual responses to requests, facilitate peer-to-peer learning and linkages with other global experts, and regularly share country examples, global resources, and regional updates. More details about CP AoR Help Desk services can be found [here](#).

### Recommendation:

Although there is a need to expand what is available online, particularly in low connectivity settings and in different languages, use the online capacity-building resources that are available as well as consider offline alternatives.

## f. Examinations and certification

Standardising and harmonising caseworker competencies is an important part of accountability to children, families, and communities affected by an emergency. Standardisation helps caseworkers and organisations to understand and to meet minimum standards, even during times of crisis or staff turnover. Harmonisation brings together organisations to take a shared approach to case management and promoting equity of services.

Efforts to standardise and harmonise services might include things like minimum recruitment criteria agreed across authorities and agencies working in a specific humanitarian setting. Inter-agency guidance is also available on [how to develop inter-agency standard operating procedures](#)<sup>76</sup>, which is one way to try to standardise and harmonise case management practice. The preceding discussion of competency frameworks is another tool for harmonisation and standardisation.

Another method is a contextually appropriate examination and certification process. Although this may not be feasible or a priority in the early stages of an emergency, examinations and certification are an important step in recognising the hard work and competence of caseworkers, particularly when attention has turned to strengthening and scaling-up child protection services. The following case study occurred in such a situation:

### ACCREDITATION IN AFGHANISTAN

The abovementioned development of the National Occupational Skills Standards in Afghanistan enabled the development of a national curriculum and certification for case management. The national curriculum required<sup>77</sup>

- four semesters of generalist practice courses
- four semesters of supervised field practice
- four semesters of coursework
- a semester course on child protection in humanitarian action, followed by children associated with armed forces and armed groups

The latter courses were to try to meet the needs of caseworkers in areas affected by conflict and other emergencies. Elective specialisations are also available in working with persons with disabilities and children deprived of parental care etc. The entire course ends with examination and certification.

The Inter-Agency Guidelines<sup>78</sup> recommend that in a context where the existing child protection system has standards for social work examinations and certification in place, agencies should try and ensure that caseworkers are qualified to at least that level. In non-humanitarian contexts, an authority such as a

professional social work association or an educational accreditation body usually conducts those actions. During an emergency, one option is to open up the statutory certifying examination and accreditation process to non-statutory caseworkers. However, in a humanitarian setting there may not be a system of social work accreditation and licencing, or the existing system might have been impacted by the crisis. The authority responsible for accreditation might not exist or might not be functioning.

In addition, very good caseworkers might not meet the criteria for the statutory social work accreditation and licencing system. For instance, the Inter-Agency Guidelines<sup>79</sup> acknowledge that in many contexts a caseworker with decades of experience working with children and families but no degree or other certification might well be more useful than a recent graduate with a degree in social work but little practical experience. A possible solution is for the case management coordination mechanism to develop an inter-agency certifying examination that reflects the capacity needed for case management in the context of the humanitarian response. The following case study demonstrates that approach:

#### THE 'PRACTICE-ORIENTED PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE COURSE IN CHILD PROTECTION' IN UGANDA

In Uganda the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, academic institutions, and civil society organisations developed a practice-oriented training programme in response to the limits of the existing social service workforce. The course is competency-based and uses participatory learning methods to maximise the existing practical experience of participants. The course provides foundational skills and knowledge for working professionals.

Rather than targeting professional social workers, the one-month programme targets community-based caregivers, community development workers, and other para-professional caseworkers who may not have received previous child protection training but who have relevant practical experience. The course can be studied as a stand-alone programme or as an elective in the final year of the social work degree programme at Makerere University. The Government has now adopted the course as the national standard for child protection training.

To decide what an examination and certification process might look like, borrowing a practice from development settings could be helpful. For instance, UNICEF's 2019 guidelines<sup>80</sup> recommend establishing a governing body to facilitate and regulate the education and training of social service workers. The guidelines go on to suggest that a good starting point is to define minimum standards of practice; establish a shared code of ethics; and agree to a set of educational or training standards.

Many humanitarian settings are almost at that point. For instance, to fulfil the first criteria of minimum standards of practice, many responses have up-to-date, relevant, contextualised inter-agency standard operating procedures. Although an inter-agency code of ethics would be ideal, elements of a code of

ethics within an inter-agency standard operating procedure and organisation-specific codes of conduct may be sufficient. What requires more work is agreeing what educational and training standards are required of a qualified caseworker. This might involve a mixture of recruitment criteria (even if the educational requirement is primary or secondary school) and training criteria, such as completing certain case management-related courses and a certain amount of on-the-job supervision. The child protection coordination mechanism for the response may be well-placed to coordinate case management qualifications, even if that is providing a certificate once certain courses or a certain level of supervision has been completed.

As with professional social workers, a requirement of practical on-the-job training is a sign of a developing a strong social service workforce. Supervised field experience combined with theoretical learning is necessary for caseworkers to master relevant skills under the supervision of a more experienced case management professional. Insufficient capacity to provide supervised field placements may be one of the biggest challenges in establishing a standardised approach to caseworker certification. Here, collaborations between educational institutions and organisations implementing case management are key. The following case study demonstrates how a collaborative approach can provide both formal education and practical experience:

#### PRACTICAL FIELD PLACEMENTS FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN SOMALILAND

In a context with limited child protection caseworkers or social workers, the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family, Save the Children, and UNICEF partnered with the University of Hargeisa's relatively new Social Work Department to strengthen the capacity of caseworkers. Work to review the curriculum, standardise practice, and to link with other nearby universities and facilitate entry to the International Association of Schools of Social Work has begun.

Building on existing child protection programming with community volunteers, an initiative was begun to offer internship placements to Social Work students so that they can gain practical field experience. The student interns work with community-based child protection committees called Child Welfare Committees who identify, refer, and follow-up on cases and with existing caseworkers from local NGO partners. The student interns receive additional case management, child protection training, mentoring and coaching from Save the Children. During the initiative, it was challenging to secure sufficient human and financial resources. Currently, three camps for internally displaced people and four host communities are covered by three staff from local partners and ten student interns from the university. Plans are in place to increase support to the student interns and to implement additional supervision and monitoring practices.

**Recommendation:**

Seek opportunities to collaborate with agencies, authorities, and education institutions to develop or adapt existing approaches to assessing and certifying social workers to apply to caseworkers in humanitarian settings.

## CONCLUSION

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The Child Protection in Humanitarian Action field has made significant improvements in ensuring that inter-agency recruitment and capacity-building tools and guidance are available for adaptation and contextualisation. For instance, the inter-agency supervision and coaching package and the quality assessment framework demonstrate concerted efforts to assist response-level practitioners to strengthen and professionalise practice. The above case studies also document the considerable efforts being made by response-level colleagues to strengthen caseworker recruitment and capacity-building practices. In particular, the benefits of flexible approaches to recruitment criteria and recruitment assessments have been noted. Low-cost approaches to strengthening capacity-building, such as peer-to-peer sessions and online trainings, are also being more frequently used.

What remains to be seen is how to develop the above elements of recruitment and capacity-building into comprehensive approaches and models that response-level authorities and agencies can adapt and contextualise. That change requires:

- an inter-agency caseworker mapping tool that is quick and easy to use in the early stages of a humanitarian response
- inter-agency tools and guidance to support both community-based approaches and government systems-strengthening approaches to caseworker recruitment and capacity-building in humanitarian settings
- further institutionalisation of capacity-building practices that move beyond one-off face-to-face trainings, such as technical supervision and coaching, peer-to-peer support, continuing professional development, and, where feasible, examinations and certification



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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> More information about the work of the Alliance can be found [online](#) in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish.
- <sup>2</sup> The four working groups within the Alliance are the Advocacy Working Group; the Assessment, Measurement and Evidence Working Group; the Child Protection Minimum Standards Working Group; and the Learning and Development Working Group.
- <sup>3</sup> The six task forces within the Alliance are the Case Management Task Force; the Cash Transfer and Child Protection Task Force; the Child Labour Task Force; the Community-based Child Protection Task Force; the Family Strengthening Task Force; and the Unaccompanied and Separated Children Task Force.
- <sup>4</sup> Although this study is not a guidance document, links to key inter-agency documents are provided to assist the reader to access relevant tools and guidance.
- <sup>5</sup> Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*, p.41. [Available online](#).
- <sup>6</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2017). *Setting the Global Research Agenda for Child Protection in Humanitarian Contexts*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>7</sup> Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*, p.30. [Available online](#).
- <sup>8</sup> Global Social Service Workforce (GSSW) Alliance. (2017). *Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, p.47. [Available online](#).
- <sup>9</sup> Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>10</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019e). *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*, 2019 Edition. [Available online](#).
- <sup>11</sup> Global Social Service Workforce (GSSW) Alliance. (2017). *Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>12</sup> UNICEF. (2019). *Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>13</sup> Although this is not a guidance document or toolkit, links to key resources are included throughout to facilitate quick access for the reader.
- <sup>14</sup> CPWG. (2014a). *Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>15</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019d). *Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>16</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019b). *Case Management Quality Assessment Framework*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>17</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019c). *Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework: Testing Version*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29
- <sup>19</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019e). *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*, 2019 Edition. [Available online](#).
- <sup>20</sup> The supporting tools include tools for data collection, which can be contextualized to enable assessment of different elements of the QAF as well as a summary report template, action plan template and guidance, and a change grid.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.13-17.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34
- <sup>23</sup> UNICEF. (2019). *Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>24</sup> This figure is written with an overall population in mind.
- <sup>25</sup> Global Social Service Workforce (GSSW) Alliance and UNICEF. (2019). *State of the Social Service Workforce in South Asia*. [Available online](#).
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.
- <sup>27</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019c). *Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework: Testing Version*, p.5. [Available online](#).

- 28 The following ministries participated: Ministry of the Interior; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports; Ministry of Public Health, and the lead ministry for the project was the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled Persons.
- 29 City University of New York. (2012). *Final Project Report: Development of National Occupational Skills Standards for Social Work with a Focus on Child Protection*, [internal].
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 CPWG. (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*, pp.73-75. [Available online](#).
- 32 CHS Alliance. (2016). *Core Humanitarian Competency Framework*. [Available online](#).
- 33 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019c). *Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework: Testing Version*. [Available online](#).
- 34 CHS Alliance. (2017). *Guide to the Core Humanitarian Competency Framework: Supporting Humanitarians to Work Effectively*. [Available online](#).
- 35 The three 'performance' levels are 1) basic skills, 2) basic skills and additional higher-competency behaviours, and 3) basic skills, higher-competency behaviours and even higher-competency behaviours, indicating the highest level of competency.
- 36 Technical competencies include child protection technical knowledge, experience, and skills and might be different in different contexts, authorities, and agencies depending on the case management approach being taken.
- 37 Ibid. Behavioural competencies include working with children and adults, communicating effectively, building trust, and delivering results. They apply to all child protection authorities and agencies.
- 38 Economic Community of West African States, (2017), *Cadre de Compétences-clés des Acteurs Sociaux pour la Protection de l'Enfance en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre*. [internal]
- 39 One competency framework is for professional and para-professional social workers and the other competency framework is for informal/local community actors.
- 40 Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*, p.42. [Available online](#).
- 41 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019d). *Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package*. [Available online](#).
- 42 O'Connor, M. (2017). *Inter-Agency Gender-based Violence Case Management Guidelines: Providing Care and Case Management Services to Gender-based Violence Survivors in Humanitarian Settings*. [Available online](#).
- 43 Tordoff, J. (2017). *Safer Recruitment Guidelines*, p.2. [Available online](#).
- 44 In contexts where police checks are not feasible due to limitations of the criminal justice system or because the checks take disproportionate amount of time, alternative checks such as community reference checks may be advisable.
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp.8-9
- 46 Inter-Agency Standing Committee. (2019). *Guidelines: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*, p.2. [Available online](#).
- 47 UNICEF. (2019). *Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection*, p.27. [Available online](#).
- 48 Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*, p.31. [Available online](#).
- 49 Relief International. (2019). *Case Management Approach: Working with Rohingya Volunteers*, [internal].
- 50 UNHCR and UNICEF. (2018). *Bridging the Humanitarian-Development Divide for Refugee Children in Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes Region: Mapping existing national child protection practice*. [Available online](#).
- 51 *Ibid.*, pp.30-31
- 52 Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*, p.30. [Available online](#).
- 53 UNHCR and UNICEF. (2018). *Bridging the Humanitarian-Development Divide for Refugee Children in Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes Region: Mapping existing national child protection practice*, p.31. [Available online](#).
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 *Ibid.*

- 56 Consult the Alliance website for a menu of inter-agency training packages, including the Child Protection in Emergencies face-to-face training and short sessions, which are [available online](#).
- 57 CPWG. (2014a). *Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers*. Available online.
- 58 Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*, p.41. Available online.
- 59 Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). (2014b). *Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers*, p.41. Available online.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p.43. It is important to distinguish between supervision and line management. The Inter-agency Guidelines explain that it might be preferable if supervision is provided by someone who is not the caseworker's line manager so that the caseworker is not concerned that being open during supervision will affect his/her performance appraisals.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019e). *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019 Edition*, p.129. Available online.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019d). *Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package*. Available online.
- 65 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019b). *Case Management Quality Assessment Framework*. Available online.
- 66 Robinette, K. (2018). *Case Management Capacity-building in Northwest Syria: External Project Evaluation*. [internal].
- 67 International Rescue Committee (IRC), (2014), *Child Protection Case Management Peer-to-Peer Group Terms of Reference, Lebanon*. [internal].
- 68 *Ibid.*, p.29
- 69 CPWG. (2014a). *Child Protection Case Management Training for Caseworkers, Supervisors, and Managers*, pp.173-179. Available online.
- 70 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019d). *Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package*. Available online.
- 71 Save the Children. (2015). *Stress Management for Staff: One day training programme*. Available online.
- 72 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2009). *Caring for Volunteers: A Psychosocial Support Toolkit*. Available online.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p.27.
- 74 At the time of writing (October 2019), this course is due to be update to reflect the newly released second edition of the CPMS.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p.27.
- 76 The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019f). *Standard Operating Procedures*. Available online.
- 77 Bragin, M. Tosone, C. Ihrig, E. Mollere, V. Niazi, A. Mayel, E. (2014). 'Building culturally relevant social work for children in the midst of armed conflict: Applying the DACUM method in Afghanistan'. *International Social Work*, pp.1-15.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p.42
- 79 *Ibid.*, p.41
- 80 *Ibid.*, p.22