

# CORE COMMITMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

How to engage with the  
Governments on the Core  
Commitments for Children?



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for every child

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## CONTENTS



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1 Introduction 02

2 What are the Commitments? 03



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3 Role of the States 06

4 Role of UNICEF 07



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5 How the Governments can  
use the CCCs? 08

6 Resources 09

# 1. Introduction

This Note is adapted from the [UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children](#) and designed to help strengthen Governments' response to the humanitarian needs of children and affected populations, in line with their international commitments.

This is the new edition of a version entitled "The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action – How the Governments can make them a reality?" first released in 2011 and now updated.

## The CCCs

The [Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action](#) are UNICEF core policy and framework for humanitarian action. Grounded in global humanitarian norms and standards, the CCCs set **commitments and benchmarks** against which UNICEF holds itself accountable for its humanitarian action.

The CCCs must be used by every UNICEF Country Office (CO) as a framework to monitor the situation of children and women and take appropriate preparedness and response measures.

### THE CCCs

- Apply in all countries and territories, in all contexts, and to all children affected by humanitarian crisis, based on rights and needs, regardless of their country's state of political, civil, economic and social development or the availability of UNICEF resources
- Provide a menu of minimum commitments, activities, benchmarks and standards that UNICEF commits to achieve in humanitarian crises, with its partners
- Are in line with the [Sphere standards](#), including the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#) (CHS), the [Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\) Minimum Standards](#), [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (CPMS); and reflect UNICEF's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) commitments
- Contribute to the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and include explicit strategies to link humanitarian and development action, strengthen local capacity and systems and build resilience at all stages of humanitarian action
- When relevant and feasible, without prejudice to the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, contribute to the [UN system-wide agenda for Sustaining Peace](#)<sup>1</sup>

In addition, they **guide every stakeholder, including governments and civil society organizations (CSOs), in designing their humanitarian action and in setting standards** for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of

children, and for addressing their humanitarian needs, with the aim to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity. They should be thus promoted by every UNICEF CO with host-government, and operational partners.



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<sup>1</sup> The [UN system-wide agenda for Sustaining Peace](#) focuses on the contribution the UN system can make to end some of the world's most devastating and protracted armed conflicts and support UN Member States in their efforts to prevent armed conflict and sustain peace. See General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/262 and Security Council resolution S/RES/2282 (2016).

# 2. What are the Commitments?

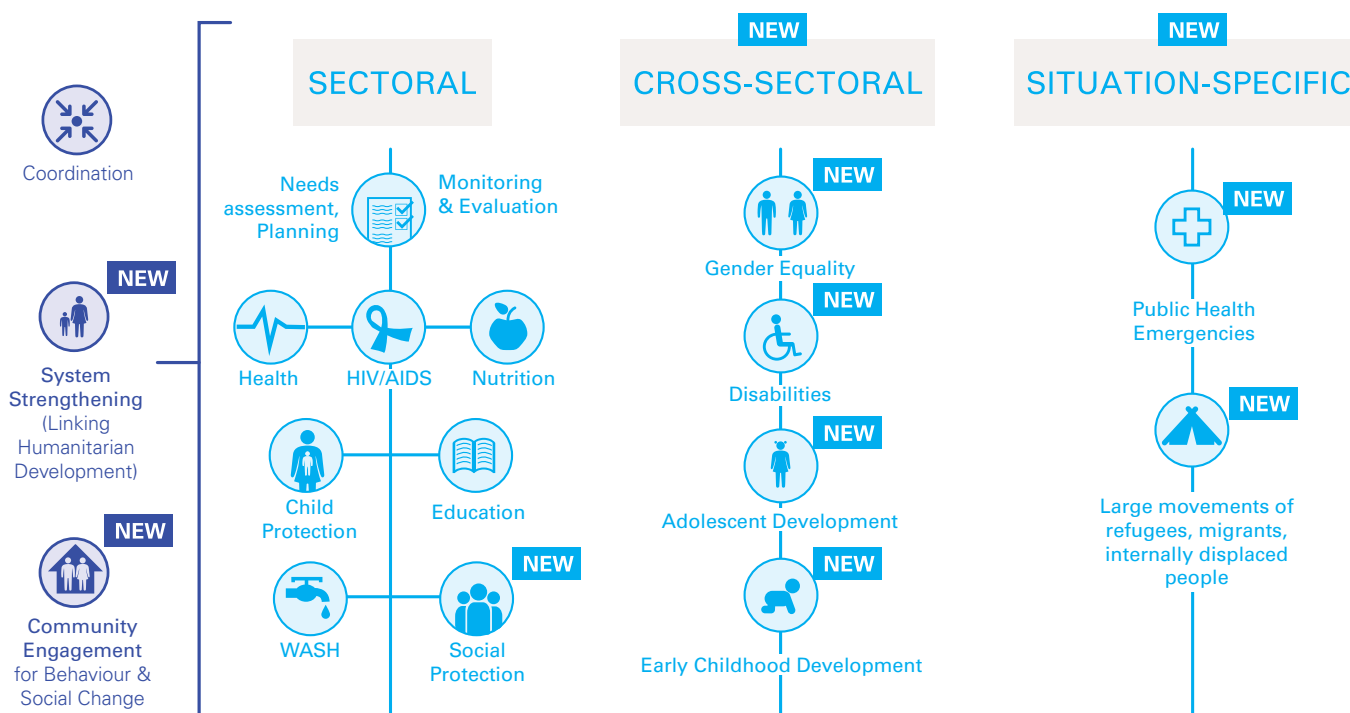
## 1. UNICEF commitments on humanitarian policies

- Include references to global humanitarian standards, norms and principles guiding humanitarian action, including for instance the Centrality of Protection, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Child Safeguarding, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Ethical Evidence Generation and Data Protection.
- UNICEF commitment to principled humanitarian action is also strengthened with guidance on how to apply humanitarian principles in UNICEF operations, how to seek and maintain humanitarian access, how to engage with Non-State Actors, how to engage in UN integrated settings.

## 2. Programme Commitments

- The programme commitments describe the scope of activities and advocacy undertaken by UNICEF and its partners in humanitarian settings. They set expected standards of programme coverage, quality and equity.
- They form UNICEF's contribution to a collective response and are designed to support the national and interagency coordination and response. They apply in all contexts at all times.
- They are based on evidence and best practice in humanitarian action. They are drawn from global humanitarian standards, including [Sphere standards](#), the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#) (CHS), the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies ([INEE](#)) [Minimum Standards](#) and the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (CPMS).
- They provide a menu of activities, indicators, and results frameworks that can be used by Governments and local actors to design a context specific and local response. See the full CCCs for the Commitments, Benchmarks, Standards. See the [CCC Toolkit](#) for the CCC Results framework and the CCC Indicator Guidance.

### PROGRAMME COMMITMENTS



**Overarching programme commitments** engage UNICEF and its partners, including Governments and the CSOs when they receive funds from UNICEF, to:

- Ensure that **affected children and families participate in the decisions** that affect their lives, are properly informed and consulted, and have their views acted upon
- Deliver on UNICEF's commitment to **protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**
- **Target and reach the most disadvantaged children** and their communities with humanitarian assistance, protection and services
- **Establish or facilitate and maintain humanitarian access**, so that all affected populations can safely and consistently reach assistance and services, including by seeking engagement with all parties to conflict, and other stakeholders, as necessary and feasible to earn and maintain access to and for the populations in need; and proactively pursuing acceptance among communities and stakeholders
- Invest in **preparedness** with a focus on enabling effective and timely response, reducing costs and reaching the most vulnerable
- Support the leadership and **coordination of humanitarian response**, along with national and local stakeholders, and in compliance with humanitarian principles
- Design and implement results-based humanitarian responses that are informed by humanitarian principles

and human rights, meet global norms and standards, and contribute to **strengthening local capacity and systems**

- Invest in **strengthening institutional and technical capacity of local actors** to deliver principled humanitarian response
- Implement **community engagement** for behaviour and social change in collaboration with national and local actors
- Design and **implement risk-informed and conflict-sensitive humanitarian programmes** that build and strengthen national and local capacities and systems from the start of humanitarian action to reduce needs, vulnerabilities of and risks to affected populations; and contribute to social cohesion and peace, where relevant and feasible
- Design humanitarian programmes that **integrate environmental and climate risk**, prioritise approaches that minimize harm to the environment and contribute to building resilience, whenever relevant and feasible
- Foster multisectoral/integrated programming and **geographic convergence at all phases** of the programme cycle
- Ensure that **life-saving supplies and essential household items are delivered** to affected populations, partners and/or point-of-use promptly
- Promote the use of unconditional and unrestricted **humanitarian cash transfers**, whenever relevant and feasible



### 3. Operational Commitments

They describe the actions and standards UNICEF commits to enable programme implementation through effective use of resources and adequate operational support. They are strengthened through the establishment of:

- One overarching commitment: “UNICEF offices are fit for purpose and personnel know and contribute to the application of the minimum preparedness standards and emergency procedures, to enable the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance by UNICEF and its partners”.
- Specific, measurable and time-bounded benchmarks aligned with Emergency Procedures and monitored in VISION. This allows to track performance in HR, Finance and Administration, Supply and Logistics... [See CCCs Monitoring Framework for Operational Commitments.](#)
- A new chapter describing UNICEF accountabilities to its operational partners. UNICEF operational partners may use the CCCs to discuss mutual accountabilities with UNICEF at country level.



# 3. Role of the States

States are the primary duty bearers for the respect, promotion and realization of children’s rights. They bear the primary responsibility for responding to a crisis, providing assistance to the victims and facilitating the work of

humanitarian actors, including through mobilization of domestic and international resources and use of national systems and capacities.

Governments are expected to respect and promote the international instruments and norms and standard that guide the CCCs, including:

- **International human rights law**, applicable both in armed conflict and in peace, and in particular the [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#) and its Optional Protocols
- **International Humanitarian Law**, including [the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols](#), which offer protection to civilians and combatants during armed conflict and include special protections for children
- **International refugee law**, including [the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol](#) and other international and regional laws and standards on refugees, statelessness and internal displacement
- **Humanitarian Principles**<sup>2</sup>: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence
- **Relevant General Assembly Resolutions and Security Council resolutions**

In complex emergency settings, and according to their obligations under IHL, states are expected to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian action, including by ensuring that populations in need can be **access by humanitarian assistance in an unimpeded, rapid and principled manner**. States are expected to allow humanitarian actors, including UNICEF and its partners to operate according to the following humanitarian principles:

- **Humanity:** Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to save lives, protect health and ensure respect for human beings. UNICEF upholds the principle that all girls, boys, women and men of every age shall be treated humanely and seeks to assist and protect any and every vulnerable child, treating them with dignity and respect.
- **Impartiality:** UNICEF allocates and delivers assistance based on needs and without discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, race, sex, language, disability, religious belief, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, political or other opinions.
- **Neutrality:** UNICEF refrains from engaging in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature, and does not take sides in hostilities.
- **Independence:** Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented. UNICEF is independent of political, economic, military, security or other objectives.

In addition, the primary responsibility for the security and protection of United Nations personnel, including UNICEF as members of the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS), and other individuals covered by the UNSMS, and the property of UNSMS organizations rests with the host Governments<sup>3</sup>. This responsibility flows from every Government’s normal and inherent function to maintain order and to protect persons and property within its jurisdiction. In the case of the United Nation, the host Government has a special responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations and relevant agreements that the host Government may have with individual United Nations organizations.

**When receiving funds from UNICEF for programme implementation**, Governments are accountable for results and use of funds and resources allocated in the frame of the partnership signed with UNICEF. Partnerships are expected to contribute to the fulfilment of the CCCs. UNICEF personnel is expected to refer to the CCCs Commitments, Benchmarks and Standards, the CCC Results Framework and the CCC Indicator Guidance to **design the activities, results and indicators of the Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA)** and associated Programme Documents signed at country level with partners.

It is important to note that **States’ obligations towards children are much broader than the CCCs**. The CCCs focus on selected programmatic sectors and operational activities within UNICEF mandate. They do not cover the entire spectrum of humanitarian action.

<sup>2</sup> All four were reaffirmed in [GA Resolution 58/114 \(2004\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> [See UNSMS Security Policy Manual – Chapter II – Section D – Relations with Host Countries on Security Issues.](#)

## 4. Role of UNICEF

The CCCs describe UNICEF and its partners' commitments to the most disadvantaged children and their families, **regardless of the kind of crisis** (sudden-onset or protracted emergencies, natural disasters, public health emergencies, complex emergencies such as international or internal armed conflicts, etc), **irrespective of the Gross National Income level of the country** (low, middle or high) or legal status of the affected populations.

UNICEF contributes to these efforts by mobilizing national and international resources through its technical expertise,

coordination and advocacy. While the CCCs apply in all contexts, UNICEF's **scope of action and programming will be adapted to the context**, based on the analysis of the situation, assessment of humanitarian needs and national capacities. UNICEF implementation modalities may include **systems strengthening**, through technical assistance, policy development and capacity-building; support for **service delivery**; **direct programme implementation**; intervention through **operational partners**; **remote programming**; **coordination**; and **advocacy**.

### How UNICEF can encourage the host governments to use the CCCs?

There are multiple ways to promote the CCCs and encourage their use by host governments and national or local counterparts:

- Refer to the CCCs when **explaining UNICEF mandate**
- Refer to the CCCs in your **dialogue and advocacy with national counterparts**
- **Promote the website [corecommitments.unicef.org](https://corecommitments.unicef.org)** with national and local counterparts
- Conduct briefings and **trainings on the CCCs with host-government, national and local authorities**
- Use the CCCs as a **framework to monitor the situation of women and children** and take preparedness and response with the national and local actors
- **Use the CCCs as a framework to monitor the government's response:** *how is the host-government doing against the CCCs? Are there any areas which require additional support?*
- **Include the CCCs in the trainings and capacity building** initiatives conducted or supported by UNICEF in the different sectors (health, WASH, Child protection, education, nutrition, social protection...)
- Create **specific advocacy opportunities:** *are there upcoming plans or moments or existing humanitarian advocacy priorities that the CCCs launch will advance progress towards?*

#### PARTNERSHIPS FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

- **Humanitarian action** for UNICEF encompasses interventions aimed at saving lives, alleviating suffering, maintaining human dignity and protecting rights of affected populations, wherever there are humanitarian needs, regardless of the kind of crisis (sudden-onset or protracted emergencies, natural disasters, public health emergencies, complex emergencies, international or internal armed conflicts, etc.) irrespective of the Gross National Income level of a country (low, middle or high), or legal status of the affected populations. Humanitarian action also encompasses interventions addressing underlying risks and causes of vulnerability to disasters, fragility and conflict, such as system strengthening and resilience-building, which contribute to reducing humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerabilities of affected populations.
- **Partnerships** are key to the fulfilment of the CCCs. UNICEF seeks to build an **alliance** around the CCCs with various stakeholders. The CCCs are realised through close collaboration with states; national and local authorities; affected populations; civil society organizations (CSOs), including international and national NGOs, community-based organizations, human rights institutions and faith-based organizations; the UN system, including its operational funds, agencies and programmes; donors; academic and research institutions; the private sector; and the media.
- **At country level**, UNICEF establishes partnerships with host governments, CSOs, communities and the private sector for programme implementation. The fulfilment of the CCCs is closely linked to UNICEF's operational partners' ability to deliver on the ground.

## 5. How the Governments can use the CCCs?

The CCCs describe the scope of humanitarian action undertaken by UNICEF and its partners in humanitarian settings. They form UNICEF's contribution to a collective response and are designed to support the national and interagency coordination and response. They provide an indicative list of standards, a menu of activities, and results frameworks that can be used by Governments and local actors to design a context specific and local response.

They also provide a one-stop shop on the most up-to-date humanitarian policies and guidance on programmes– through

hyperlinks that will be regularly updated, that can help inform the standards, plans and results frameworks defined by Governments and partners.

In all contexts, with or without UNICEF presence/ intervention, Governments, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders can use the CCCs as a reference to design their humanitarian action and guide their efforts in setting and meeting standards for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of children and affected populations.

The governments can use the CCCs as a reference to:

- **Understand UNICEF mandate** and how UNICEF and its partners can contribute to and support the relief efforts
- **Inform their own action** towards vulnerable children and populations
- **Build the capacity of their personnel** in the areas of child rights and humanitarian action
- Define activities and **standards of their humanitarian action**, design programmes and partnership agreements
- **Discuss mutual accountabilities with UNICEF** and its partners
- Inform the drafting of **social policies and adopt child friendly policies**

The governments can support the fulfilment of the CCCs by:

- **Actively mobilizing domestic and international resources**
- **Strengthening national and local systems**, especially health, water and sanitation, education, child protection and social protection systems
- Adopting **child friendly national policies, budgets, decisions and legislation**
- **Fostering rights-based and equitable development**
- Promoting an **equitable and inclusive delivery and effective management of social services** such as education, health, clean water and sanitation and child protection
- Ensuring the good management and delivery of essential services in **conflict-sensitive, equitable and accountable** ways
- Promoting the **participation of communities**, especially children, adolescents and young people
- **Building the capacity of their personnel** in the areas of child rights and humanitarian action
- **Using the CCCs** as a core reference framework for child-sensitive preparedness and humanitarian response
- Facilitating the **delivery of humanitarian assistance and the provision of unimpeded and principled humanitarian access** to populations in need
- Conducting an **active high-level advocacy** on child rights and humanitarian action
- Promoting adherence to international and regional **legal norms, standards and principles**
- **Promoting accountability** of perpetrators of child rights violations
- Holding themselves and UNICEF **accountable** on the CCCs



# Resources

UNICEF personnel can find translations of the CCCs in French, Spanish, Arabic and other resources including the CCCToolkit on the [E-resources on the CCCs](#). UNICEF personnel can also take the [E-learning interactive course](#) on AGORA.

## THE CCC TOOLKIT INCLUDES

- **Briefing tools:** Factsheet, Q&A, Guidance on the CCCs, recorded webinar, Power Point Presentation for UNICEF personnel, for Governments and for operational partners.
- **Training Tools:** Power Point Presentations and recorded webinars, Training of Trainers Toolkit
- **Guidance to engage with governments** and Presentations for Governments and partners
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Tools:** CCC Indicator Guidance for Programme Commitments, CCCs Monitoring Framework for Operational Commitments, Results Framework for Humanitarian Response Plans and PCAs
- **Management Tools:** What the Representatives and their deputies need to know on the CCCs? How to include the CCCs in teams 'workplans and PERs?

UNICEF partners (governments, CSOs, donors, media...) can visit [corecommitments.unicef.org](http://corecommitments.unicef.org) to find the CCCs, their translations, and learning resources. The website can be navigated from smartphones as a mobile application.

## Websites

- Visit [E-resources on the CCCs](#) accessible to all UNICEF personnel
- Visit [corecommitments.unicef.org](http://corecommitments.unicef.org) accessible to all partners



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