

# CHILD SAFEGUARDING DURING COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

## What is Child Safeguarding?

Child safeguarding refers to the actions that a humanitarian agency takes in order to ensure all the children it serves, or comes into contact with, are safe from harm, including violence, abuse and exploitation. Child safeguarding is everybody's responsibility including in emergencies. It is unacceptable for any Red Cross or Red Crescent volunteers, staff, consultant, contractors, or anyone representing the Red Cross or Red Crescent to harm a child, in-person or online.

Like all humanitarian agencies, Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are expected to follow the **Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action** in order to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation in our operations.

## What impact does COVID-19 have on child safeguarding?

COVID-19 is quickly changing the reality in which children live, and the way children experience the world. Disruptions to routine and education, an inability to easily access social support, economic burdens and other stressors on parents and caregivers, stigma and discrimination related to COVID-19, and enhanced or ongoing gender and power inequalities make children more vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation and psychosocial distress now and into the foreseeable future.

Measures that do not consider the age, gender and ability specific needs of girls and boys also increase their protection risks. Children and families who are on the move, who are already vulnerable due to socio-economic marginalization, or those living in overcrowded settings are particularly at risk.



# What can National Societies do to be child safe?

National Societies should ensure their operations follow minimum standards, are child-friendly, and prioritize doing no harm.

If your National Society has a Child Safeguarding / Protection Policy, it should be applied throughout all COVID-19 operations, activities and programs. If your National Society does not have a child safeguarding / protection policy, you can work from the **IFRC policy**.



## Who can I contact if I have concerns about a child's safety?

- If you know or suspect any child is at immediate risk of violence, abuse or exploitation, please contact appropriate local authorities and follow local procedures.
- If you are concerned any personnel of the Red Cross or Red Crescent has harmed a child, contact **SafeCall**, an independent and confidential service used by the IFRC.  
Phone **+44 207 696 5952**  
Email **ifrc@safecall.co.uk**  
Online **www.safecall.co.uk**; OR
- Report concerns to the **IFRC Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI)**: **report.concerns@ifrc.org**. The OIAI internal investigation team manages investigations.



## What are key resources I can learn from?

### The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

- **Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)**
- **Technical Note: Protection of Children During the Coronavirus Pandemic**

### IFRC

- **Child Protection Policy (2013)**
- **COVID-19: Key Messages on Protection, Gender and Inclusion**
- **Area of Responsibility for Child Protection and IFRC Key Messages for Governments: Coordinating the Protection of Children during the COVID-19 Response.**