



Child Protection

Every child deserves a childhood free from violence, to grow up in an environment where they feel safe and protected and which respects and promotes their individuality. And yet for many children around the world this remains an elusive dream. Ending all violence against children is a core part of the sustainable development goals. IRC's child protection programs aim to make these goals a reality by working directly with the children themselves, their families and communities to support a nurturing environment for children to grow up in.

Globally, it is estimated that over a billion children have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect every year. Children in many parts of the world are at risk of exploitation, neglect, and other forms of violence due to negative social norms and the global context in relation to natural resources and governance. This has seen a rise in the incidences of conflict and violence resulting in displacement and lack of safety within the home and in the community which significantly increases a child's risk.

They are exposed to unsafe environments and are at risk of becoming victims of slavery and trafficking, being recruited by armed groups, losing their parents and family members, being subjected to sexual violence and other harmful practices. Their communities are destroyed and access to education, health and social services is disrupted. These children are denied their basic rights to survival, development, and participation.

IRC's approach to child protection is rooted in **three core** beliefs:

- *Girls and boys are entitled to grow in an environment that is free from violence, that upholds their rights and support achievement of their full potential.*

- *Girls and boys must be active participants in their own protection and development.*
- *Families, communities, and governments play a fundamental role in caring for, supporting, and protecting children.*

In the year ending in 2020, IRC supported 73,491 children with Lifeskills & group activities including SAFE, SHLS, MHPSS and an additional 9,151 children served with case management in over 27 countries through the CP programs. A total of 305,984 people were reached through the advocacy and awareness programs with the parenting intervention registering over 15,680 parents/caregivers as participants.

Child Protection Areas of Interventions:

The IRC has been implementing programs to support children and youth since its founding in 1933. These programs are spread across the continents of Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. These interventions are implemented and supported through collaboration with a range of actors and institutions including research institutions, with children and youth themselves, families, communities, social workers, governments, national and international organizations and other sectors.

Child Protection Programs (Continued)



To address change in the lives of children, IRC adopts the following core approaches:

Prevention and Response: family and community-based approaches to identify and reduce risks to children's safety and promote opportunities for children's development. Our priority is to partner with child-focused organizations, and where possible, with government and civil society thereby strengthening existing child protection systems.

Child Participation: creating an enabling environment that allows children to express their opinions, experiences and participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Evidence Generation: Through our research unit Airbel, we generate evidence to inform the sector and strengthen our approaches for better protection outcomes. As a result, we develop guidelines, toolkits and curricula that are evidence-based.

Child Protection Systems Strengthening: adopting a systems-based approach to address the full spectrum of risk factors and create a lasting impact. We support governments with legal reform, policy development and strategic planning for children and families. We establish integrated service delivery mechanisms to respond to protection concerns.

The IRC implements programs focusing on different levels of the socio-ecological framework.

Child and Adolescent Level Interventions: Directly with the children, the IRC uses a *case management approach* to identify and respond to violations such as violence, abuse, neglect and/or exploitation including exploitative labour and discrimination that children have experienced. Often children without appropriate care or children on the move experience such violence and abuse. However, abuse also happens within the home perpetrated by someone known to the child. Through case management approach, boys' and girls' individual needs are addressed. In addition, the IRC follows *the Caring for Child Survivors guidelines (CCS Guidelines)* as the model for supporting child survivors of sexual abuse. Together with our Economic Recovery and Development and Education unit, we want to ensure that older adolescents gain employment or business development skills and life skills, through the *Learn to Earn* approach.

Family Level Interventions: Within the family level, the IRC uses evidenced based approaches such as Parenting Interventions and approaches based on Social Norms Change to reduce child maltreatment in the home and promote positive child-parent relations. These programs include *the Families Make the Difference* proven to reduce child maltreatment, *Growing Strong Together* model designed to prevent child recruitment and promote reintegration following association with armed forces or armed groups and *Brighter Futures model* (designed to address protection through nutrition). Together with the Women's Protection team, we implement *Safe at Home*, a program designed to address the co-occurrence of violence in the home. We want to ensure that girls and boys have their Psychosocial needs addressed (e.g., through the *Now I am Stronger* model) and that we are Supporting Adolescents and their Families in Emergencies (*SAFE approach*). The IRC also uses *Cash* as a modality for Protection Outcomes.

Safety at Schools: For children to learn in a safe environment, free of abuse, intimidation or violence, the school environment should be safe and children free from violence and abuse perpetrated by school personnel, peers or any form of violence to/from school. We work closely with our education unit to promote safe learning environment.

Community Level Interventions: The IRC works with communities so they can actively address the protection and social needs of their children. We raise awareness on child protection and child rights, using information developed with the community and tailored to the specific community. We accompany the work of communities and to strengthen access to local and national child protection services.

National Level Interventions: At the national level, the IRC works in partnership with local and national government, in partnership with civil society to strengthen national systems. We support the development and implementation of legislative frameworks and structures that uphold children's rights.

For more information, have a look at our child protection website: <https://childprotectionpractitioners.org/>