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*Note. Tools are included in separate files and as links in this document.*

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CM - Case management

CMTF - Case Management Task Force, a task force of the Global Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

CP - Child protection

FGD - Focus Group Discussions

GBV - Gender-based violence

IM4CM - Information management for case management

MEAL - Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning

QAF - The Child Protection Case Management Quality Assessment Framework

SOP - Standard Operating Procedures

UASC - Unaccompanied and separated children

# INTRODUCTION TO THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Case management is defined in the [Guidelines on Case Management and Child Protection (2014)](http://cpaor.net/resources/inter-agency-case-management-guidelines-and-training-manuals-2014-available-arabic-english) as:

 *‘a way of organising and carrying out work to address an individual child’s (and their family’s) needs in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, through direct support and/or referrals, and in accordance with a project or programme’s objectives.’*

The prevalent use of case management in humanitarian settings as an approach to respond to the child protection needs of individual children has led to an increased emphasis on the importance of being able to assess the quality of the response and the system in which it operates.

The Case Management Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) was developed under the [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](https://alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-hub/unaccompanied-and-separated-children-task-force) by the [Global Case Management Task Force](https://alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-hub/case-management-task-force). The purpose of the QAF is to provide a framework and tool for assessing how a particular case management system (either within an organisation or as an inter-agency / national case management system) operates and functions, and by extension how it can be improved. This includes the practice of case management – that is *how* case management is implemented in the field and the quality with which this is done. It thereby takes into account that a case management response and system may still be in its earliest stages of development, e.g. during the early phases of an emergency response. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses within the case management response and system, the QAF provides a basis for supporting the ongoing development of case management in a particular context.

The basis for the QAF are the Inter-agency [Case Management Guidelines](http://www.cpcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CM_guidelines_ENG_.pdf) and the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](http://cpwg.net/?get=006914%7C2014/03/CP-Minimum-Standards-English-2013.pdf). Reference is also made to other important guidance documents such as the Inter-agency [Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/case-management-supervision-and-coaching-package), the Inter-agency Template SOPs for Child Protection Case Management in Humanitarian Settings, the Inter-agency Standard Child Protection Case Management Forms in Humanitarian Settings, and the Inter-agency Child Protection Case Management Standard Minimum Indicators. In refugee settings, child protection case management may also include formal procedural safeguarding mechanisms in assessing and determining the best interests of the child in decisions that significantly affect the child. Reference is therefore also made to UNHCR’s [Guidelines on Assessing and Determining the Best Interests of the Child](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/guidelines-assessing-and-determining-best-interests-child-2018-provisional-release).

It should be noted that the QAF does not seek to replace or remove the need for programme evaluations.It is envisaged as a framework and tool to compliment and give added value to such evaluations by considering the quality of the case management response and the system in which it operates.

## Who is the Quality Assessment Framework Intended For

While the QAF provides an overall framework and tool for assessment,a degree of professional judgement is needed in its use. The QAF has been developed to support those directly (and technically) responsible for assessing the case management response and system in which it operates, as well as how these can be improved. This may include child protection (case management) specialists, managers, coordinators and advisors, but should at a minimum be staff with:

* Technical understanding of case management and child protection;
* Experience in child protection case management practice, supervision, coaching and capacity building;
* The responsibility and capacity to design, manage and oversee data collection for the QAF;
* The position to be able to make decisions on changes to the case management response / system.

## When to Use the Quality Assessment Framework

The QAF has been developed for use in humanitarian settings (including protracted crises), although it could also be adapted for use in development settings. It can be used as a tool to assess the quality of a case management response and system (either within an organisation or at the inter-agency / national level) and/or as a framework of thought to be used as a basis for planning / designing a case management response and system[[1]](#footnote-1). In both instances, it can be used to its full extent or specific dimensions of the framework and tool can be chosen for assessment and planning.

Examples of how the QAF can be used include:

* To assess the quality and functioning of the case management response and system – either as part of a project evaluation, programme review or donor report;
* To identify areas within the case management response and system that need strengthening and the key actions necessary to facilitate change – e.g. as part of strengthening case management practice, developing policy, or building capacity;
* To gain a more in-depth understanding of how a particular dimension of the case management response and system functions before introducing a new tool or policy – e.g. when rolling out a new information management database such as the [CPIMS+](https://www.cpims.org/).

# OVERVIEW OF THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The Quality Assessment Framework is comprised of a number of linked tools and resources:

1. **Introduction and Guidance:** Introduces the QAF and provides guidance on its use.
2. **The** **Case Management Quality Assessment Framework (QAF):** The framework and tool for assessment / planning of the case management response and the case management system in which it operates. The format of the QAF is further explained below.
3. **Action Plan Template:** Template designed to facilitate the planning of key actions to be taken in order to strengthen the case management response and system (based on findings from the QAF and by using the Change Grid as a reference).

1. **Change Grid:** Provides a reference for suggested actions to be taken in order to strengthen the case management response and system. The actions in the Change Grid are suggestions only. Their use will depend on the particular context and nature of the case management system.
2. **Data Collection Tools:** A resource collection of tools which can be used to assess the different dimensions in the QAF. These tools are to be used as a resource only and should be amended/contextualized for use. They can also be added to/replaced by other tools used in-context. An overview of the different data collection tools and their use is also included.
3. **Summary Report Template:** A template for a summary report on the quality assessment (if required).

## Dimensions of the Quality Assessment Framework

The QAF comprises of 8 main dimensions across which case management in a particular context is assessed. The 8 main dimensions of the QAF are defined below with the components they include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1. CASE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE** | * How case management as an approach to respond to the child protection needs of children in humanitarian settings has been adopted.
* How the target group has been defined.
* Whether the target group has access to and can participate in the response.
* Whether key elements for the response are put in place (e.g. SOPs, service mapping, multi-sectoral referral pathways).
 |
| **2. CASE MANAGEMENT PROCESS** | The process which is followed by caseworkers in the case management response and whether cases are handled in a systematic, appropriate and timely manner. The case management process is further divided into 6 sub-dimensions which are aligned with the steps in the case management process: * Identification and registration
* Assessment
* Case planning
* Case plan implementation
* Follow-up and review
* Case closure
 |
| **3. STRENGTHENING THE CP SYSTEM** | * The extent in which the case management response is aligned with, complimentary to and integrated in the national child protection case management system[[2]](#footnote-2).
* Whether a sustainability plan and exit strategy for the response is defined.
 |
| **4. COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION** | * Whether stakeholders within the case management system work together and coordinate their activities both at the systems level and at the individual case level (where appropriate).
* Whether informal mechanism for protection and community-based protection mechanisms are linked to or integrated in the formal child protection case management system.
 |
| **5. APPROPRIATE STAFFING & CAPACITY** | The Human Resources within the case management response. More specifically, the extent in which caseworkers and supervisors have the necessary competencies, skills and experience to conduct casework in a competent and appropriate manner and whether they are sufficiently supported to do so. This dimension is further divided into 4 sub-dimensions: * Safeguarding and do no harm
* Competencies, skills and experience
* Capacity building
* Supervision and coaching.
 |
| **6. SUFFICIENT RESOURCES** | Looks at whether there are sufficient financial, material and logistical resources to enable the system to function and the caseworkers and supervisors to perform their duties in a competent and accountable manner. |
| **7. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT** | The extent to which the necessary information management for case management components are present, such as: * Case management forms
* Data protection protocols
* Information sharing protocols
* Information management database
 |
| **8. MEAL** | The monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning within the case management response and system, including elements such as:* Performance indicators
* Production of data to inform programming and policy
* Feedback, complaints and response mechanisms and procedures
 |

## Levels of Quality

The QAF considers each dimension of the assessment in relation to four levels of quality. These are the main outcome of completing the QAF.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CRITICAL TO ADDRESS** | * The quality of case management is a cause for concern. There are significant ‘red flags’ which compromise the case management response and system to be able to function in an ethical and accountable manner and to adhere to the core principle of ‘Do No Harm’.
* Case management may need to be suspended until significant critical issues are addressed.
 |
| **REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT** | * The quality of case management is inconsistent and certain weaknesses and gaps prevent the system from operating in an effective manner. This is the equivalent to a case management response and system in its early stages of development.
* Requires further changes / development in order to move towards the minimum levels of quality needed.
 |
| **MEETS MINIMUM LEVELS** | * The quality of case management is consistent with the guiding principles and minimum standards as set out in the Inter-agency [Case Management Guidelines](http://www.cpcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CM_guidelines_ENG_.pdf) and the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](http://cpwg.net/?get=006914%7C2014/03/CP-Minimum-Standards-English-2013.pdf). This is indicative of a functioning, effective, ethical and accountable case management response and system.
* The case management response and system are in position to progress to a more advanced practice, although actions may need to be taken to ensure the quality remains at this level.
 |
| **GOOD PRACTICE** | * The quality of case management exceeds what is considered minimum in the Inter-agency [Case Management Guidelines](http://www.cpcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CM_guidelines_ENG_.pdf) and the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](http://cpwg.net/?get=006914%7C2014/03/CP-Minimum-Standards-English-2013.pdf).
* Actions may need to be taken to ensure the quality remains at this level and/or to further build up from what is considered minimum.
* Best practices may be recorded and shared for wider use.
 |

# HOW TO USE THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Although each assessment will need to be organized according to the possibilities and constraints in-context, it is recommended to use the QAF following the steps outlined below:



1. **Decide on the Purpose and Scope of using the QAF**

The purpose and scope of the QAF should be determined through consultation within the child protection / case management team (at the agency level) and/or through consultation with the members of the case management coordination group in-context (at the inter-agency level and ideally with the involvement of the government authorities responsible for child protection case management).

Consideration should at least be given to:

* Why the QAF should be:
	1. To assess the quality of a case management response and system.
	2. To be used as a basis for designing / strengthening a case management response and system.
* Who will be involved in completing the QAF:
	1. A single agency
	2. Multiple agencies (e.g. through the case management coordination group in-context)
	3. The government authority responsible for child protection
* Where the QAF will be used:
	1. At the national level
	2. At the sub-national level (define geographic areas)
* How the QAF will be used:
	1. To its full extent
	2. Choosing only specific dimensions of the framework for use
* When the QAF will be used:

The time needed to complete the assessment will be largely dependent upon the purpose and scope of using the QAF and this will need to be carefully considered, taking into account available resources. A single agency assessment of a case management response in one or two locations may require only a couple of days of fieldwork, whereas a more extensive assessment considering a national case management system across several agencies and geographical areas may take several weeks.

1. **Assessment Design and Data Collection**

In order to inform the quality assessment, data on the case management response and system will need to be collected. A collection of tools (see folder 5. Data Collection Tools) can be used to assess the different dimensions of the QAF. These tools are to be used as a resource only and should be amended/contextualized for use. They can also be added to/replaced by other tools used in-context.

The tools included help to collect information on multiple dimensions of the QAF simultaneously (see Data Collection Matrix). This may facilitate the triangulation / verification of findings. This is important to be able to ensure that the findings can be considered valid. For example, if considering caseworkers’ competencies, it would be necessary to both understand how caseworkers perceive their strengths and weaknesses and to compare this with what children / families report based on their experiences with caseworkers. This could be further supplemented by supervisors’ direct observation of casework practice in the field. In general, single sources of information should be avoided where possible.

In addition to the use of the data collection tools, it is also suggested to conduct a desk review through existing (child protection / case management) assessments and reports, data available in information management systems (e.g. CPIMS+), and other key documents such as SOPs and case management tools in use. In addition, the QAF could be disseminated to agencies providing case management services with the request to complete the QAF based on their own case management response and internal system.

Whatever sources and data collection tools will be used, it is recommended to design an assessment plan based on the purpose and scope of using the QAF. Such a plan should at least include:

* A desk review of existing information;
* Defining the sampling methodology and sampling frame (including site selection and selecting key informants);
* Selecting, contextualising and adapting/ developing data collection tools and a data management tool;
* Defining a process for collecting, cleaning and compiling data;
* Developing urgent action procedures for the event that assessment teams come across children in need of protection;
* Recruiting and training assessment teams.
1. **Analyse the Data and Complete the QAF**

Based on analysis of the data collected, the component within each row and under each dimension in the QAF should be checked that most closely represents the situation in-context. The component checked will align with a level of quality (i.e. critical to address, requires improvement, meets minimum levels, and good practice) assigned to that component.

After the components most closely representing the situation in-context are checked, the overall level of quality for that specific dimension should be defined by checking the appropriate box at the top of that dimension. In general this will be the lowest level of quality achieved for the different rows under that dimension. The QAF also provides space to specify notes on why that level of quality was assigned to that specific dimension. These notes may refer to the specific components checked under that dimension.

1. **Action Planning**

Once the QAF is completed, key actions needed to strengthen the case management response and system will need to be identified and planned for implementation. The Action Plan Template included in this package can be used for this.

A reference for suggested actions to be taken in order to strengthen the case management response and system is included in this package as well in the form of the Change Grid. As noted previously, the actions in the Change Grid are suggestions only. Their use will depend on the particular context and nature of the case management system.

It is important to note that the QAF is not built around the idea of passing / failing. Instead it considers strengths and weaknesses in the case management response and system in order to be able to identify where actions necessary to support improvement need to be concentrated.

1. **Review and Report**

Once the Action Plan is completed, agreed upon and being implemented, it is recommended to regularly review progress of implementation. The frequency and timeframe for reviews will depend on the scope of the Action Plan, but should at minimum be every 3 months. A suggested format for a basic summary report is included in this package.

1. See the [Inter-agency Guidelines on Case Management and Child Protection (2014)](http://cpaor.net/resources/inter-agency-case-management-guidelines-and-training-manuals-2014-available-arabic-english) section 2 on consideration to take into account when planning and/or developing a case management response and system. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It thereby takes into account (but is not limited to) elements such as: building upon existing case management services and programmes, linking to and coordinating with relevant government structures and other stakeholders in the system (including a national coordination mechanism), complying with the legal and policy framework in-context, building upon positive community practices for care and protection, using existing data, and building on national best practices and evidence. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)