



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4



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PREVENTION



GOAL: Prevention is understood and prioritised as a critical element of child protection across humanitarian action.

Prevention is fundamental to the holistic and sustainable protection of children. Prevention is also necessary for The Alliance to achieve its vision of a world in which children are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. More broadly, it is key to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 that looks to end all forms of violence against children, and the full realisation of the rights within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for all children.

Prevention is rooted in a more dignified and ethical approach to humanitarian action, as humanitarians have an ethical duty to both *do no harm* and *prevent* harm where possible. It can support critical elements of justice and accountability for children, particularly around preventing grave violation of their rights, such as child recruitment. If principled humanitarian action has the imperative to respond to needs and save lives with dignity, then humanitarian actors also have a moral and ethical duty to work, where possible, to prevent harm.

The Alliance's work on prevention is rooted in a public health approach that looks to prevent risks and address harm at the population level (primary prevention), prevent the specific sources of threats or vulnerability to high-risk children (secondary prevention), and reduce the longer-term impacts of harm and its chances of recurring (tertiary prevention). More specifically, The Alliance looks to holistically reduce risks and promote protective factors that enable well-being and allow populations to thrive.



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Preventing harm to children requires measurement approaches to identify, understand, and address the risk and protective factors that drive harmful outcomes for children, along all levels of the socio-ecological model. Interventions must consider the specific risks to children of different ages and stages of development, genders, abilities, and other diversity factors; as well as, the capacities children, their families, and communities can contribute to reduce and prevent harm. As the roots of child protection risks are often complex and multi-sectoral in nature, preventing harm to children requires integrated approaches

that work across sectors and disciplines, and strategies to strengthen protective factors. Prevention provides opportunities to bridge evidence and learning from across operational contexts and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to strengthen child protection outcomes. Critical within all these actions, and in support of the sustainability of interventions, prevention must reflect and incorporate indigenous and community approaches to protecting children.

There is strong and growing evidence, predominantly from development and peace settings, on how prevention can be used to end violence against children, notably linked to the seven strategies identified within the [INSPIRE](#) package³⁰. Programmes that integrate both preventative and responsive actions can ultimately support stronger sectoral and multi-sectoral outcomes, including for child protection in humanitarian action. For example, a school-feeding programme responding to early warnings indicating protection risks linked to food insecurity can help to mitigate school drop-out linked to child labour. A livelihoods intervention helping conflict-affected families weather economic shocks, can help prevent push factors of child recruitment or child marriage. To better leverage these opportunities across sectors and response stages, greater understanding is needed on how prevention strategies, actions, and policies can contribute to stronger sectoral and multi-sector outcomes that strengthen the protection and well-being of children, their families and communities.

Prevention is also increasingly viewed as a smart investment. Cost-benefit analyses, from disaster risk reduction repeatedly support the idea that prevention pays off³¹. Yet, despite evidence and learning suggesting the ripple in benefits from taking a preventative approach to humanitarian action, humanitarian funding continues to skew towards addressing what is visible and can (more easily) be counted and accounted for. It continues to be more difficult



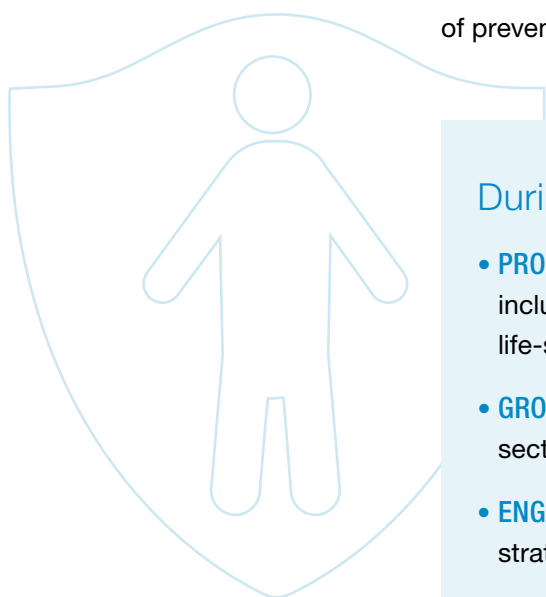
If principled humanitarian action has the imperative to respond to needs and save lives with dignity, then humanitarian actors also have a **moral and ethical duty** to work, where possible, to prevent harm.



to secure investment to *prevent* unseen harm – for example, to prevent child-family separation – than funding to respond to the consequences of harm that has already been done, such as reunifying families and providing care and support to address the distress and harm caused by the separation. A shift in thinking and approach is needed to better integrate and fund both preventative and responsive actions and strategies within humanitarian response.

Beyond the need for further investments in research and evidence, gaps exist within the child protection sector in understanding and awareness of prevention levels, approaches, and strategies; on how to apply these and integrate these throughout the programme cycle; and on identifying the entry points and pathways to support prevention through multi-sector and integrated programmes.

The Alliance is playing a leading role to help address this prevention gap³² through generating evidence, developing standards and guidance, strengthening and sharing of capacities, and advocating for the importance of population-level, multi-sectoral approaches to prevention. A key step was the integration of prevention within the revised Child Protection Minimum Standards. Looking forward, there is a need for resources, tools, and guidance, particularly on primary prevention, accompanied with appropriate learning opportunities; as well as advocacy with decision-makers, donors, and practitioners across the sector on the cost-benefits and potentially life-saving nature of prevention approaches.



During 2021-2025, The Alliance will:

- **PROMOTE** increased prioritisation of prevention funding and programming, including generating evidence on prevention as a cost-saving and life-saving intervention.
- **GROW** knowledge, capacity, and understanding within the child protection sector on child protection prevention strategies and approaches.
- **ENGAGE** other sectors on incorporating child protection prevention strategies and approaches within humanitarian programmes.