

# Child Protection

**Across the globe, millions of children are being denied their fundamental rights because of a broad array of interconnected crises—from conflict to natural disaster to public health emergencies and rising poverty. The scale of children’s humanitarian needs is at a historically high level, with more children affected every day.**

There are currently more than 460 million children living through devastating conflicts, where they continue to

suffer terribly from violations of their rights—and are sometimes even wounded or killed in their own homes and communities. Their schools and hospitals are coming under attack, and they are losing access to the services they need, including protection.

Child-protection actors work to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. During humanitarian crises, timely interventions support the physical and emotional health, dignity and well-being of children, families and communities. International Medical Corps implements child-protection programs across different contexts globally, helping to ensure that children are safe in their communities and receive support when they experience harm.





## OUR APPROACH

International Medical Corps' child-protection programs are designed and implemented according to the needs of children, their families and communities. Primary considerations at all levels of programming include the safety and well-being of children, and the desire to protect them from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.

All actions we take are guided by the best interests of the child. We improve the protective environment for children by providing high-quality child-centered and family-focused services, acknowledging that child participation is key and that building upon children's strengths and resilience must occur alongside reducing or eliminating risks.

We deliver services through child-friendly spaces, community centers and mobile teams, with activities that range from awareness-raising about child protection and the services and support available (including community-based support), to specialized programming that includes case management and counseling for individual children at risk of harm. We engage communities in the protection of children by understanding and building on existing community capacities, structures and processes around children, helping to create supportive community environments that respond when children are at risk.

## CHILD AND ADOLESCENT SAFE SPACES

These spaces provide a safe and structured environment in which trained staff and volunteers conduct age-specific focused and non-focused well-being activities for both individuals and groups.

Group activities, which can provide a sense of normalcy, offer children the opportunity to come together in a predictable and stimulating environment, as well as to be safe, learn, express themselves, make connections and feel supported. Activities include arts and crafts, games, sports, theater and music. Such activities also give staff the opportunity to identify children who are vulnerable or experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence, and to make appropriate referrals.

We also engage parents and caregivers through key messaging about parenting skills and support services, and through participation in community-based activities.







## CHILD-PROTECTION CASE MANAGEMENT

When child-protection staff or staff from other service providers identify children as being at risk of harm because of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation, they refer these children for case management services. A qualified child-protection case manager supports children and their families in a systematic and timely manner through direct support and referrals, providing individualized, coordinated, holistic and multisectoral support for complex and often interconnected child-protection concerns. This includes support for unaccompanied and separated children, such as family tracing and support for kinship and foster care.

International Medical Corps offers case management in line with global standards and best practices, and ensures that case managers have the support, supervision and coaching they need to provide quality services and to ensure the safety and well-being of children. We work with high-risk, complex cases that require specialized intervention by well-trained and supported staff.

## CHILD-PROTECTION COUNSELING

Children requiring more intensive therapeutic support may be referred for child-protection counseling—a child- and family-centered specialist service where the overarching purpose is to work toward the recovery and ongoing safety and well-being of children and youth affected by child-protection concerns. Counselors help children and young people recover from violence, abuse or neglect, and to address the effects of abuse and trauma on their lives.

Child-protection counselors also help parents and caregivers make positive changes so they are better able to support their children's safety and well-being.



## PARENTING SUPPORT

Parents and caregivers play a significant role in strengthening children's capacity to cope with stressful situations, particularly during crisis. Supporting parents and caregivers is an important component of child-protection programming. This includes helping families provide children with caring and protective environments, and ensuring that children have healthy relationships with responsive and supportive caregivers to reduce the overall risk of child abuse and neglect.

International Medical Corps implements a range of parenting-support programs, including individual and group counseling support and parenting-skills programs that follow set curriculums.



## DRC

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, children are growing up in the middle of crisis. Decades of armed conflict, displacement and poverty have left families fractured and entire communities struggling to protect their children. In 2025, more than 11 million children need humanitarian assistance. Many children have been separated from their families, living with foster caregivers or trying to rebuild their lives after being associated with armed groups.

Working through partners, our child protection team restores a sense of safety and stability for these children, working to identify and support unaccompanied and separated children through case management, family tracing and reunification, and—when needed—placement with carefully trained and supported foster families.

We also support children who have been recruited or used by armed forces or groups. Our teams provide psychosocial support, link children to education or training, and walk alongside families through every step of the reintegration process.

In safe spaces and youth groups, children and adolescents have the chance to talk, play, express themselves and learn the skills they need to cope and grow.

We work hand in hand with parents, foster caregivers and communities—offering parenting support, strengthening local protection systems and making sure the people closest to children are equipped to protect and support them, even in the hardest circumstances.

## SYRIA

Children remain at the heart of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, which continues to be one of the world's most complex and protracted emergencies. In 2025, more than 7 million children across the country need support. Many have been displaced multiple times, while others live in areas where conflict, poverty and instability continue to threaten their safety and well-being.

Our child protection teams create spaces where children can feel safe and connect with others. Through group activities, psychosocial support and community engagement, we help children express themselves, rebuild trust and gain the

confidence to participate in their families and communities. For those at risk of violence, abuse or neglect, we provide individual case management and link them with the support they need.

We also focus on life skills and youth empowerment—giving adolescents tools to navigate challenges, make informed choices and imagine different futures. Whether it's through discussions, creative activities or peer support, our programs give young people space to be heard and to grow.

We offer parenting sessions, emotional support and guidance to caregivers, to help them protect and nurture their children, even in the most difficult circumstances. We also involve them directly in the case management process when their children need specialized help.

## GAZA

Being a child in Gaza has always been extremely difficult, as many children have lived through a lifetime of escalating violence. The situation in Gaza today is catastrophic. Children in Gaza have been exposed to deeply distressing events marked by widespread destruction, relentless attacks, displacement and severe shortages of essential necessities such as food, water and medicine.

International Medical Corps' child-protection program has responded to the crisis by providing services adapted to current needs and the security situation. Activities previously conducted in coordination with local organizations throughout Gaza are now taking place in child-friendly spaces established within International Medical Corps' field hospitals.

Our child-protection team provides services aimed at supporting children's safety and well-being—including vital services for unaccompanied and separated children, who are some of the most vulnerable. We provide case management to address children's protection concerns and link children with appropriate services, including family tracing, alternative care and referrals to other services as needed. We also provide psychological first aid and individual counselling to support children in distress, psychosocial support and recreational activities to provide a sense of normalcy and the opportunity for play, and awareness sessions to provide parents with resources to support parenting challenges in times of crisis.



[www.InternationalMedicalCorps.org](http://www.InternationalMedicalCorps.org)

A pre-eminent first responder since 1984, International Medical Corps delivers emergency medical and related services to those affected by conflict, disaster and disease, no matter where they are, no matter what the conditions. We also train people in their communities, providing them with the skills they need to recover, chart their own path to self-reliance and become effective first responders themselves.

June 2025

**CONTACT INFO:** **Lucy Cracknell, Senior Child Protection Advisor, Global Technical Unit**

[lcracknell@InternationalMedicalCorps.org](mailto:lcracknell@InternationalMedicalCorps.org)

International Medical Corps is headquartered in Los Angeles, CA, and has offices in Washington, DC; London, UK; and Split, Croatia.

For contact information, visit [InternationalMedicalCorps.org/contact](http://InternationalMedicalCorps.org/contact).