



Child Protection

The number of children affected by humanitarian crises is continuing to rise. These children are among the most vulnerable in the world, facing heightened risks of multiple forms of violence. Armed conflict and violence now affect about one in five children globally, with more than half a billion children living in or near situations of violence.

At the same time, the child protection sector of the broader humanitarian system is facing an ongoing funding crisis. As a result, lifesaving and life-sustaining child protection programs are being closed, scaled back or left severely understaffed, leaving millions of children without the support they urgently need.

In the face of these challenges, International Medical Corps' child protection programs continue to adapt and respond. Working across diverse contexts, we are reprioritizing limited resources, strengthening community-based approaches and seeking new ways to sustain child-protection outcomes, 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, offering 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 enable effective response 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 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 providers of other services 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 helps children and their families in a systematic and timely manner through direct support and referrals, providing individualized, coordinated, holistic and multisectoral services that address complex and often interconnected child-protection concerns. This includes support for unaccompanied and separated children, such as family tracing as well as 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 to 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.



Maintaining Safe Spaces for Children in Protracted Crisis: Syria

Children remain at the heart of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, where more than 7.5 million require humanitarian assistance to support the impacts of displacement, economic hardship and limited access to essential services.

Our child protection teams create spaces where children can connect with others through structured group activities, psychosocial support and community engagement, helping them to express themselves, rebuild trust and strengthen their resilience. Children at risk of violence, exploitation, abuse or neglect receive specialized case management services.

We support adolescents through life-skills and youth-empowerment activities that help them strengthen social connections and express their views in a safe environment, while caregivers are supported through parenting sessions to strengthen positive caregiving practices and help families better protect and support their children.

Effective Emergency Response: Gaza

Being a child in Gaza has always been extremely difficult, as many children have lived through a lifetime of violence. The situation in Gaza today continues to be catastrophic, with children exposed to deeply distressing events marked by conflict, widespread destruction, displacement and denial of access to basic needs.

Our child-protection program has responded by providing services aimed at supporting children's safety and well-being. We provide case management to address children's protection concerns, and link children with appropriate services. We also provide psychological first aid and individual counseling to support children in our field hospitals, including those experiencing serious injuries and medical concerns, as well as psychosocial support and recreational activities to provide a sense of normalcy and the opportunity for play. Our awareness sessions provide parents with resources for parenting challenges in times of crisis.



Community-Based Support: Venezuela

Venezuela is undergoing a complex political, economic and social crisis that has weakened its systems and impacted the lives and well-being of children. The situation has been exacerbated by natural disasters including devastating earthquakes in June 2026, which have increased the need for humanitarian assistance.

Children in Venezuela face significant protection risks, including displacement, family separation, economic hardship, exposure to violence and limited access to services, affecting their safety, well-being and development while placing increasing pressure on families and communities to meet their needs.

International Medical Corps supports children through child protection programming delivered in child-friendly spaces and community settings. Structured psychosocial activities, recreation and life-skills sessions provide children with opportunities to express themselves, build positive relationships, strengthen coping mechanisms and enhance resilience.

Through community engagement and collaboration with local service providers, we strengthen the protective environment for children and reinforce community-based networks that contribute to children's safety and well-being.



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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.

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