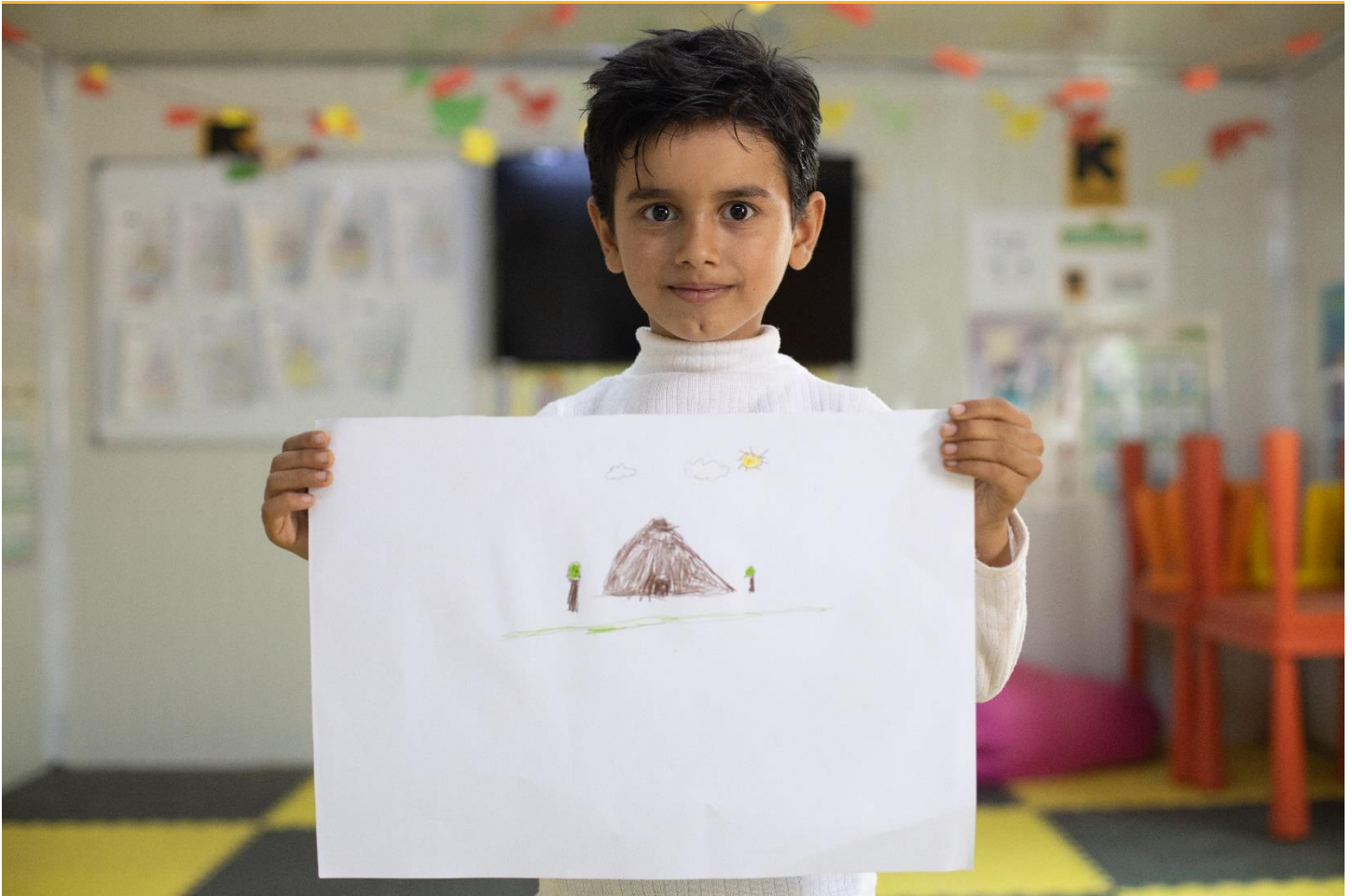


CHILD PROTECTION

Violence Prevention & Response Unit – International Rescue Committee



Our mission is for children and adolescents to be safe from violence, supported to heal from harm, and able to grow and thrive in protective environments.

Who we are

IRC Child Protection programs prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation affecting children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings. We center family-based approaches as well as individual and population-level interventions to avert exposure to violence or mitigate harm.

Our approach is grounded in child rights, meaningful child participation, best-interests practice, and evidence generated through research and learning. We work in close partnership with governments, communities, children and local organizations to build sustainable protection systems.

What we do

We strengthen family based care, improve mental health and psychosocial support services, support family and community-based protection interventions, and strengthen national systems and social service workforces.

Given the violations most observed in crisis settings, we pay close attention to child sexual violence and child recruitment prevention and response, while strengthening family environments for children to be safe. The IRC is at the forefront of delivering evidence-based interventions to reduce violence against children.

Why this matters

Violence against children persists as a significant global crisis, with over one billion children experiencing violence annually, yet the majority receive no support, because the systems needed to reach them do not exist or cannot withstand crisis. Emergency response alone cannot close that gap. Addressing it requires sustained investment in the national planning and workforces, coordination mechanisms, and community-based protection systems that determine whether proven solutions actually reach children. The cost of inaction extends beyond individuals and families to undermine community resilience and national development.

520M

children live in conflict-affected areas

50M

children forcibly displaced globally

35%

increase in sexual violence against children in conflict

41,370

verified grave violations in one year—highest ever

Conflict, displacement, and climate shocks disrupt family and community structures, increase poverty and stress, and overwhelm social services, leaving children more exposed to harm. Caregivers affected by adversity have weakened capacity to provide protective environments for their children.

Who we serve

Primary: Children and adolescents (girls and boys) affected by conflict, displacement, climate shocks, and humanitarian crises. This includes unaccompanied and separated children, child and adolescent survivors of sexual violence, children recruited and used by armed forces and groups, children at heightened risk of exploitation, and children without appropriate parental care—including child-headed households, street-connected children, and children caring for adults.

Secondary: Caregivers and families, community members and leaders, social workers and frontline service providers, local and national authorities responsible for child welfare, and children and adolescents engaged in prevention and social change efforts.

Our Strategic Objectives

1. Immediate Protection & Recovery

Children who have experienced severe harm or face acute protection risks receive timely, specialized, and coordinated services that restore their safety, dignity, and psychosocial wellbeing.

Response to child sexual violence: IRC provides specialized, survivor-centered services through Child Protection Case Management and the Caring for Child Survivors (CCS) framework—including identification and safe disclosure, best-interest procedures, individualized case planning, psychosocial support, access to clinical care, and ongoing follow-up to reduce risk of re-harm.

CAAFAG response and recovery: IRC implements targeted interventions for children associated with armed forces and groups, focusing on evidence-based prevention, reintegration, and recovery. Programming supports families to reduce risk of recruitment, and support children to exit armed groups, reunify with families, address trauma, and access education and livelihoods pathways while prioritizing family-based reintegration and mitigation of re-recruitment risks.

Family Based Care: IRC works across the full continuum of care from prevention through family strengthening and early warning, to tracing and reunification, de-institutionalization, interim and alternative care arrangements, , parenting and support for durable reintegration. Family separation is both a highly visible crisis phenomenon and a gateway concern: children without family care face heightened risk of violence, recruitment, and exploitation, making this work foundational to all other child protection responses.

2. Protective Families & Communities

Families and communities are strengthened to prevent violence, reduce harmful practices, and provide nurturing, protective environments where children can safely develop.

Parenting and caregiver support (Families Make the Difference): Evidence-based parenting programs that support caregivers to adopt nurturing and positive parenting practices, improve caregiver wellbeing, strengthen parent-child relationships, and reduce violence against children.

Family violence prevention (Safe at Home): Addresses the co-occurrence of child maltreatment and intimate partner violence by working with entire families to improve communication, reduce harmful norms, and strengthen family functioning in humanitarian contexts where family stressors are acute.

Community engagement: Engagement with community leaders, caregivers' networks, and youth groups to anticipate and mitigate child protection risks, shift norms that tolerate or enable violence, strengthen informal systems through which communities identify and support children to thrive, and connect community-based protection to broader systems of care including government-led services—building sustained protective capacity rather than substituting for it.

3. Crisis-Responsive Child Protection Systems

National and local child protection systems are able to anticipate, mitigate, and respond to child protection violations during crises and recovery, with increased government ownership and sustainable capacity.

Policy and legal frameworks: Supporting governments to develop and operationalize child protection policies, strategies, and guidelines aligned with international standards.

Workforce development: Strengthening national social service workforces through training, supervision, tools, and mentoring—embedding quality standards, referral pathways, and ethical information management.

Advocacy and political engagement: Evidence-informed advocacy to elevate child protection priorities, increase domestic and donor investment, and integrate child protection into broader humanitarian, social protection, education, and health systems.

4. Research & Learning

Generate, apply, and share evidence to continuously improve programming and influence global child protection policy and practice.

IRC's Child Protection programming is grounded in a strong culture of evidence, learning, and innovation. Research priorities focus on improving the quality and effectiveness of prevention of recruitment and use, mental health and psychosocial support, family and caregiver-focused interventions, and system-strengthening approaches in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

We employ a mix of rigorous methodologies—including impact evaluations, implementation research, cost-efficiency analysis, and learning partnerships—to inform program design and policy influence. Findings are systematically translated into updated guidance, tools, and practitioner resources.

Our Approach



Service Delivery Modalities

- Community-based services embedded within communities, where they live
- Child and family-friendly spaces providing safe, structured environments for psychosocial support and life skills
- Adaptive and mobile teams enabling outreach to hard-to-reach and newly displaced communities
- Facility-based services integrated within health, social service, and education facilities
- Remote and hybrid modalities including phone-based follow-up and digital tools

Modalities are layered and combined to ensure continuity of care as contexts evolve.

Response Services

Lifesaving, individualized services through structured case management:

- Identification and assessment of children at risk
- Individualized case plans guided by best interests of the child
- Direct support and cross-sector referrals (MHPSS, health, education, legal)
- Specialized response for child survivors of sexual violence using CCS principles
- Ongoing monitoring, follow-up, and safe case closure

All services are child-centered, with best interests as primary consideration.

Prevention

Reducing children's exposure to harm by strengthening families, communities, and protective norms:

- Parenting and caregiver support programs
- Child and adolescent life-skills and resilience programming
- Community-based protection mechanisms with local leaders and youth
- Norms-focused approaches addressing violence, child marriage, child labor, and recruitment
- Prevention of family separation and recruitment in conflict-affected areas

Prevention programming is adaptive—appropriate interventions vary by crisis stage.

Evidence-Based Models

Child Protection Case Management

Core IRC intervention providing individualized, survivor-centered support. Extensive implementation research demonstrates effectiveness, feasibility, and critical enabling factors.

Caring for Child Survivors

Interagency model co-developed with UNICEF for safe, ethical, child-appropriate response to sexual violence. Widely adopted across humanitarian settings.

Families Make The Difference / Happy Families

Evidence-based parenting programs with multiple RCTs demonstrating reductions in harsh discipline and improvements in parenting practices in displacement contexts.

Growing Strong Together

Family-centered model for CAAFAG prevention and reintegration. Informed by qualitative research, evidence reviews, and implementation research on recruitment drivers.

Safe at Home

Family-based violence prevention model addressing co-occurring IPV and child maltreatment. Pilot RCTs demonstrate promising impacts on family functioning and violence reduction.

Safe Healing & Learning Spaces

Structured environments providing psychosocial support, life skills, and protection activities. A signature IRC model widely implemented across crisis settings.

Proven Results

Safe at Home: RCT Outcomes

Addressing the co-occurrence of intimate partner violence and child maltreatment through a family-based intervention:

- 86% less likely to report physical IPV
- 74% less likely to report sexual IPV
- 80% less likely to report emotional IPV
- ~70% reduction in harsh physical discipline of children
- ~45% reduction in harsh emotional discipline
- Improved parenting skills for male and female caregivers

Families Make the Difference: RCT Outcomes

- 56% reduction in physical punishment
- 29% reduction in verbal punishment
- Increased use of positive parenting strategies

These outcomes are also measured through routine M&E data across countries where FMD/parenting interventions is implemented.

Cost-Effectiveness

Evidence-based parenting programs can reduce violence against children at home by up to 30–50%, and can be delivered at a cost comparable to routine childhood vaccinations once systems are in place.

Source: UNICEF, WHO; IRC cost-effectiveness analyses

Data from randomized controlled trials conducted in humanitarian settings

Our Reach

Metric	Number
Total children and caregivers reached	652,456
Number of children supported through child protection services including alternative care and case management	150,375
Number of caregivers supported through parenting and family strengthening interventions	39,794
Number of children and adolescents who attend safe spaces	72,663
Number of participants in capacity strengthening activities including awareness sessions and trainings	387,949
Number of child protection committees and civil society organizations supported to strengthen child protection systems	1,675

Data from FY 2025

Multi-Sectoral Integration

Child Protection programming is intentionally multi-sectoral. IRC works closely with:

- Health – mental health and clinical services for child survivors
- Education – safer learning environments, addressing school-related violence
- Women's Protection & Empowerment – family violence, caregiver wellbeing
- Economic Recovery & Development – addressing economic stressors
- Protection & Rule of Law – access to justice, civil documentation, legal frameworks

Our Capacity & Global Leadership

Global Reach

- Programs in 25+ countries across Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe, and Latin America
- 90 years of experience since IRC founding—specialized focus on child protection

Research & Innovation

In close collaboration with Airbel Impact Lab, IRC designs, tests, and adapts child protection interventions using rigorous methodologies—including impact evaluations, implementation research, and cost-efficiency analysis.

Research priorities focus on improving case management, MHPSS, family-focused interventions, and system-strengthening approaches. Findings are systematically translated into updated guidance and practitioner resources.

Interagency Tools & Standards We've Shaped

Minimum Standards for CP in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)

Long-standing contributor to the globally recognized normative framework aligned with Sphere. IRC helps ensure standards are grounded in operational reality and usable across emergencies.

Interagency Case Management Guidance

Central role shaping case management principles, minimum requirements, supervision expectations. Led development of CPIMS+ training package and toolkit on monitoring child wellbeing and satisfaction in case management practice.

Global Leadership Roles

- Executive Committee & Steering Committee member, Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
- Co-lead: AME Working Group (Advocacy, Measurement & Evidence)
- Co-lead: Advocacy Working Group
- Co-lead: CPMS Working Group (Minimum Standards)
- Co-lead: UASC Task Force (Unaccompanied & Separated Children)
- Contributing partner: Global Initiative to Support Parents (WHO/UNICEF)

Through these roles, IRC contributes directly to interagency guidance, tools, and global good practice.

Caring for Child Survivors Guidelines

Co-developer and global steward of this interagency framework defining ethical, safe responses for child survivors of sexual violence. Widely adopted by UN agencies, NGOs, and governments.

UASC Guidance & Alternative Care

Contributing to interagency guidance on prevention, identification, and response for unaccompanied and separated children—including best-interest determination, family tracing, and durable solutions.

Evidence, Advocacy & Quality-Focused Tools

Through co-leadership of the Advocacy Working Group and the AME (Advocacy, Measurement and Evidence) Working Group, IRC contributes to interagency tools and guidance that strengthen:

- Accountability to children in humanitarian response
- Use of evidence to inform child protection prioritization and advocacy
- Outcome-oriented measurement and learning frameworks
- Translation of research and program data into policy and funding influence

What makes IRC distinctive

IRC combines frontline service delivery, systems strengthening, and rigorous evidence generation at global scale, allowing us to influence policy and continuously improve outcomes for children in crisis. We don't only support the development of global tools—we test, adapt, and strengthen them through implementation, learning, and feedback from crisis-affected contexts, ensuring interagency standards remain relevant, practical, and accountable to children and families.

Get Involved

Children who experience violence without adequate support are more likely to carry its effects into adulthood perpetuating cycles that undermine family stability, community resilience, and national development across generations. Investment in child protection is investment in breaking that cycle: scaling evidence-based prevention that stops harm before it occurs, building national social service workforces that sustain protection when emergencies recede, and reaching the children most at risk; survivors of sexual violence, children associated with armed groups, and those separated from family care. For more information on partnership opportunities and ways to support child protection programming globally, please visit www.rescue.org or contact us directly.