Examining Child Protection Rapid Assessment:  
a structured review of field learning from the Child Protection Rapid Assessment toolkit

A report commissioned by the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG)

Debbie Landis, Lindsay Stark, Hani Mansourian, and Alastair Ager on behalf of the Child Protection in Crisis (CPC) Network, December 2013

From May-September 2013, the Child Protection in Crisis (CPC) Network conducted a structured analysis of field learning regarding the Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA) toolkit, in order to identify key findings, lessons learned, and recommendations for its future use and implementation. The review covered use of the CPRA toolkit in 15 countries: Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, and Yemen. The CPRA toolkit was consistently described by respondents as a valuable addition to the field, and a means of increasing the methodological rigor with which child protection assessments are carried out. However, findings suggest that the usage of the tool is often dependent on technical assistance from the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). Additional training and capacity building is needed in order to promote the sustainability of the toolkit and make it accessible in more diverse contexts. The study also found that assessments conducted in the earlier phases of emergencies are more likely to be used by actors in the area of program development and coordination. Although the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) recommends that cluster-specific assessments begin during the third phase of emergencies (3-4 weeks), assessments examined in this review took place at two months or later, suggesting that efforts be made to use the CPRA toolkit as close to the third phase of emergencies as possible, in order to increase the impact of findings. Overall, respondents reported satisfaction with the toolkit, although its usage varied significantly by context. In 7 out of 15 assessments, additional approaches such as focus group discussions were included along with the components of the CPRA toolkit. This suggests that additional guidance is needed regarding the intended design of the CPRA toolkit, as well as the potential challenges and risks associated with incorporating other methods. In particular, respondents raised the issue of child participation in research as an issue for further consideration, in light of the current CPRA guidance that children not be involved in rapid assessment exercises. A confidential case discussed in this report highlights harm that came to children as a result of their participation in focus group discussions, reinforcing the importance of viewing the use of such methods in crisis contexts with extreme caution.

Recommendations:

The CPWG and its partners should work to sustain the level of support provided to the field and expand existing training opportunities in the area of research methods: The CPWG should continue its current role in providing training and technical assistance with regard to the use of the CPRA toolkit. Additional training opportunities should also be provided, particularly in the areas of data analysis and study design, which could make the tool accessible to more diverse contexts and promote its sustainability.

Child protection actors should strive to use the CPRA toolkit during Phase III of emergencies, or as soon as possible thereafter: Additional guidance should be provided to Child Protection Sub-Cluster Coordinators regarding the importance of carrying out child protection rapid assessments as close as possible to the third phase of emergencies, in keeping with IASC guidance, and given the benefits of conducting assessments earlier in emergencies identified in this review.

Additional guidance on the involvement of children in assessments should be provided, including elaboration of the concerns underlying the current CPRA guidance regarding engagement with children: Given the frequency of issues raised on involving children in research, additional clarification on this issue should be provided, along with the elaboration of potential risks.

Additional clarification is needed regarding the rationale behind the design of the CPRA toolkit: In light of the large number of cases that involved significant revisions to the CPRA toolkit, additional guidance should be provided by the CPWG regarding the rationale for the current design of the CPRA toolkit, and how it relates to other tools and methods. Further, given the significant challenges in data analysis that resulted from multiple adaptations, additional guidance in this area should be provided.