Programmatic Guidance on

Cross-Border Case Management

December 2025

Programmatic Guidance on Cross-Border Case Management

Contents

List of acronyms and abbreviations

BIA	best interests assessment
BID	best interest determination
CBCM	cross-border case management
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FTR	family tracing and reunification
GBV	gender-based violence
KPI	key performance indicator
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MHPSS	mental health and psychosocial support
MoU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
RLO	refugee-led organization
SOPs	standard operating procedures
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Acknowledgements:

Suggested citation: UNICEF UNHCR Programmatic Guidance on Cross-Border Case Management (2025).

It is attributed to UNICEF and UNHCR HQ Child Protection teams.

1. Purpose

Cross-border case management (CBCM) refers to a specific component of broader case management for children at risk who are asylum-seekers, refugees, including stateless refugee children at risk, other children with international protection needs, and refugee children who have returned to their country of origin or previous country of asylum, and their families who move across multiple international borders. The term cross-border case management is used when the case management process requires the identification and registration of the child, safe and secure cross-border information sharing, and coordinated action among child protection authorities and relevant organizations across one or more jurisdictions.

This programmatic guidance offers practitioners recommendations for implementing cross-border case management (CBCM) for children on the move with the aim of ensuring a continuum of protection, identifying and implementing durable solutions[1], in line with international refugee protection standards and the best interests of the child. **Where relevant, appropriate, safe and in each child's best interests, the guidance aims to support engagement with national authorities, who are duty-bearers under international law, in providing appropriate cross-border child case management services, addressing children's specific needs, vulnerabilities and risks, within broader child protection systems.** This guidance highlights the importance of meeting established quality standards and ensuring the rights of children on the move are upheld with respect to international protection.

Figure 1: Children on the move covered by the CBCM programmatic guidance[2]

Children in need of international protection	Other category of children on the move	Returnee children
• Refugee children under the mandate of UNHCR • Children in refugee-like situations • Other children in need of international protection • Asylum-seeking children • Palestine children registered as refugees with UNRWA	• Children who had previously claimed asylum and found not to be in need of international protection • International migrant chlidren	• Refugee returnee children • Other category returnee children

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[1] Return, local integration, resettlement and complementary pathways such as family reunification
[2] Derived from International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC) conceptual framework.

BOX:

"Children on the move" is a term used to refer to a diverse category of children who are both internally and internationally forcibly displaced and migrant children. For the purpose of this programmatic guidance, this term refers only to refugee and asylum-seeking, including stateless refugee children, stateless children outside their country of habitual residence, other children with international protection needs, and refugee children who have returned to their country of origin or previous country of asylum (irrespective of whether they have made a formal asylum claim). While this programmatic guidance focuses on the category of children listed above, recognising that refugee and asylum-seeking children are part of children in mixed, it may also be adapted to support solutions for other category of children on the move.

The approaches proposed are aligned with and built on relevant policy frameworks,[3] the respective mandates and expertise of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),[4] agency and inter-agency policies[5] and the experience acquired in strengthening national systems[6] and the social service workforce, more specifically.[7] In doing so, the guidance highlights the mutually reinforcing roles of national child protection and asylum authorities in delivering this specialized service.

The document is based on a desk review of over 70 documents (see Annex 2)[8] and key informant interviews with 21 individuals conducted between December 2024 and April 2025. Key informants were selected from various countries, regions and agencies, reflecting their expertise in CBCM. The interviews offered valuable field-based insights into important aspects, lessons learned, challenges and opportunities related to CBCM.

The introductory sections (2–5) provide the rationale for CBCM, highlight key principles, outline parameters to engage with national authorities and propose a framework for programmatic opportunities. These are followed by specific recommendations for potential programmatic entry points (section 6). These recommendations aim to prioritize and sequence support for national authorities. Depending on the context, these interventions may be implemented independently or as part of a comprehensive package. The decision will depend on the scale and nature of the needs, the interests and capacities of national counterparts, and the available resources. The document concludes with suggestions on how to effectively monitor and evaluate CBCM programmatic interventions (section 7).

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[3] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention> and general comments <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/general-comments>; the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/4ec262df9.pdf>; the Hague Conventions on Protection of Children (1993 <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/full-text/?cid=69> and 1996 <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/full-text/?cid=70>); the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/global-compact-refugees> and the Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (GCM) <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

[4] UNHCR-UNICEF Strategic Collaboration Framework <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/unicef-unhcr-strategic-collaboration-framework>; UNICEF Child Protection Systems Strengthening Approach <https://www.unicef.org/media/110871/file/1.%20the%20unicef%20child%20protection%20systems%20strengthening%20approach.pdf>; UNHCR Route-Based Approach <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/explainer_unhcr_route_based_approach.pdf>

[5] The United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/673583?v=pdf>, the UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines < https://www.refworld.org/policy/opguidance/unhcr/2021/en/122648> and Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection <https://alliancecpha.org/en/technical-materials/inter-agency-guidelines-case-management-and-child-protection> and Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action <https://alliancecpha.org/en/technical-materials/cpms-handbook-2019-edition>

[6] UNICEF Child Protection Systems Strengthening Approach <https://www.unicef.org/media/110871/file/1.%20the%20unicef%20child%20protection%20systems%20strengthening%20approach.pdf>

[7] UNICEF global Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/Guidelines-to-strengthen-social-service-for-child-protection-2019.pdf>

[8] Please note that not all the internal documents reviewed have been referenced.

2. The rationale for cross-border case management (CBCM)

Children on the move, as defined in this programmatic guidance, face significant risks including exposure to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. Amongst this group, unaccompanied and separated children face heightened risks due to the lack of parental care and potential lack of a legally responsible caregiver. Whether travelling alone or with family members, irrespective of their legal or immigration status or lack thereof, movement across international borders can create and exacerbate vulnerabilities. These include family separation, refoulement, statelessness, gender-based violence (GBV), human trafficking, labour exploitation, and recruitment into armed forces, groups or gangs. Compounding these factors, the intertwined mandates of a range of actors – such as child protection, immigration and asylum authorities and humanitarian agencies – across international borders can result in gaps in support, inefficiencies, and delays in providing adequate assistance. This situation is particularly concerning when it comes to individual case management for these vulnerable children.

Child protection case management[9] and Best Interests Procedure (BIP) for refugee and asylum-seeking children[10] are approaches to addressing the needs of an individual child who is at risk of harm or has been harmed. These processes are designed to help identify and implement solutions that are in the best interests of the child. A caseworker, ideally a social or parasocial worker[11], provides support in a systematic and timely manner through direct assistance and referrals. Case management offers individualized, coordinated, holistic and multisectoral support for complex and interconnected child protection issues.

CBCM addresses the needs of a child who has crossed or is about to cross an international border. It is essential in realizing the aims of the route-based approach to strengthening protection and solutions in the context of mixed and onward movements of children.[12] It ensures that there is a mechanism in place to implement case management steps in a coordinated and standardized way by various stakeholders on both sides of the border where relevant, prioritizing the child's best interests. This approach ensures a continuum of care as children move across different jurisdictions. It enables early identification and risk assessment, as well as the safe and ethical sharing of case information among child protection actors. This method addresses immediate needs and supports referrals to complementary services, including alternative care, health care and education as needed. Additionally, case management aids in identifying durable solutions and helps mitigate the risks of harm to children.

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[9] Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Inter Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection (2nd ed., 2024) <https://alliancecpha.org/sites/default/files/technical/attachments/Inter-agency%20Child%20Protection%20Case%20Management%20Guidelines_2nd%20Edition_2024.pdf>; Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action <https://alliancecpha.org/en/technical-materials/cpms-handbook-2019-edition>

[10] UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines < https://www.refworld.org/policy/opguidance/unhcr/2021/en/122648>

[11] Guidelines-to-strengthen-social-service-for-child-protection-2019.pdf

[12] UNHCR Route-based Approach <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/explainer_unhcr_route_based_approach.pdf> and Protecting Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Children along Routes <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118840>

Figure 2: Cross-border case management scenarios
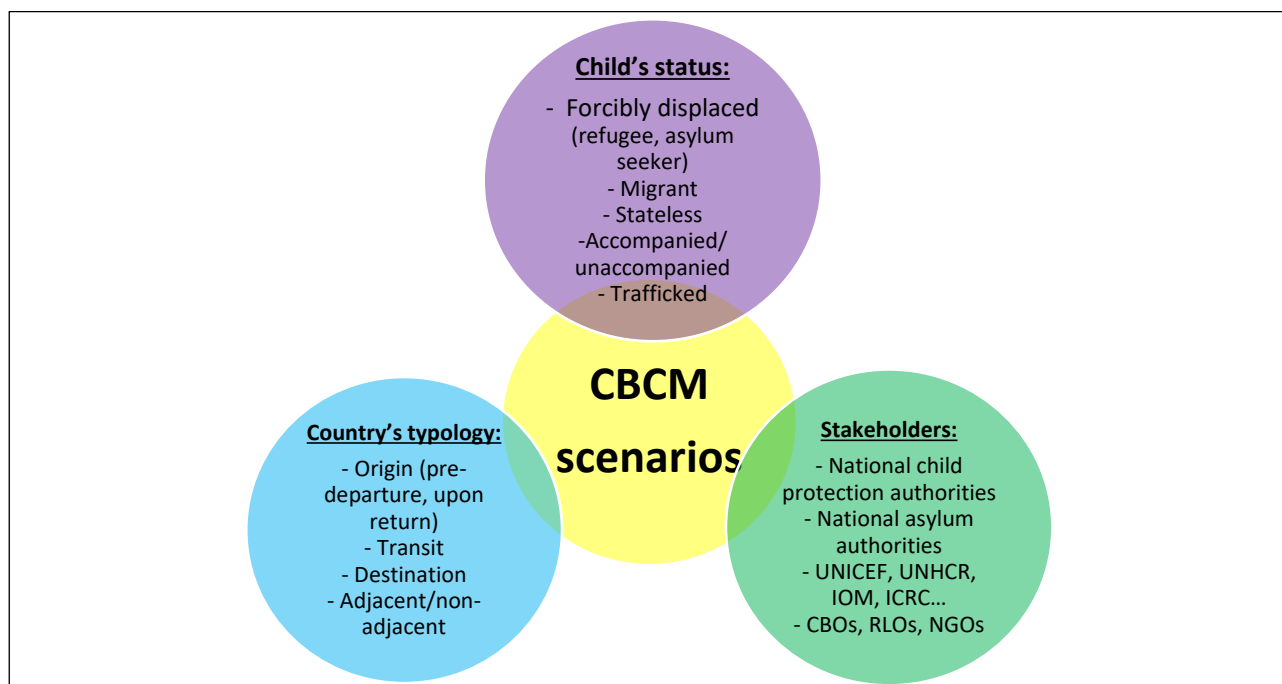
3. Key principles

Working on CBCM for children, especially within the context of the joint collaboration frameworks between UNICEF, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration and their respective mandates, is grounded in humanitarian values, child rights and operational effectiveness. A set of key principles to advocate for is listed here, while their core aspects and applications are summarized in Annex 3:

- Non-discrimination (CRC art. 2)
- Best interests of the child (CRC art. 3(1))
- Right to life, survival and development (CRC art.6)
- Right to be heard (CRC art. 12)
- 'Do no harm' and humanitarian principles
- Non-refoulement
- Legal, durable and sustainable solutions
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Continuity of care and case management
- Safety of the child's parents and other family members

4. Engaging with national authorities on CBCM

In the context of the programmatic guidance, CBCM is envisaged as an integral part of a child protection system strengthening approach that acknowledges and promotes national authorities' accountability towards children on the move, as duty-bearers under international law. Nevertheless, it is understood that in certain contexts, national authorities in countries of origin, transit or destination might be responsible for or may not be able to address the conditions that have triggered children's displacement and their increased vulnerability. The role played by national authorities can vary across situations and population groups, ranging from being directly responsible for persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, to more systemic forms of neglect and discrimination. These may stem from laws and service delivery models that fail to align with international

standards and overlook the specific risks faced by children on the move, including those who may require international protection. Similarly, in some contexts, national authorities may not have control over a certain segment of its territory (i.e., controlled by another actor/state) and therefore be unable to deliver services in these locations.

In such situations, engagement with national authorities needs to be undertaken on a 'do no harm' principle, on a need-to-know basis and guided by a context-specific analysis. As such, no individual data should be exchanged between states where the child may face persecution or other human rights violations. In other contexts, where vulnerabilities are not resulting from deliberate actions or omissions that contravene children's human rights, teams may opt for gradual approaches where broad collaboration frameworks on children on the move are prioritized before the sharing of individual information with government agencies is envisaged.

All actions from planning to implementation should be informed by a detailed analysis of risks and opportunities. This is particularly important in situations where the child has left the country of origin owing to conflict or generalized violence. Teams may partner with national authorities hosting children on the move, while engagement with countries of origin on issues of return, individual social enquiries or family reunification is determined on a case-by-case basis through an analysis of the general situation and state of human rights.[13] This guidance is most relevant to situations where there is a clear programmatic reason to collaborate with national authorities on CBCM. The extent of engagement, however – including information sharing – must be strictly governed by the principle of acting in the best interests of the child. Additionally, the level of collaboration should align with the comprehensive analysis outlined in section 6.

5. Core dimensions of cross-border case management

Drawing upon the desk review and the key informant interviews that constitute the basis for this guidance, the authors have clustered the programmatic opportunities to work with national authorities on CBCM into five core dimensions:

- **Cross-border collaboration frameworks** including memoranda of understanding (MoUs), blueprints, road maps or other frameworks outlining governments' commitment to cooperate across sectors and/or across borders on children on the move
- **National and regional legislation and policies** on child protection, asylum and data protection
- **CBCM oversight, coordination and leadership mechanisms**
- **Case management steps**
- **Human and financial resources** allocated to CBCM, including technical expertise

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[13] Refer to European Country of Origin Information Network <https://www.ecoi.net> and UNHCR position on returns <https://www.refworld.org/search?order=desc&sort=score&ss_collection_name%5b%5d=Policy%20%26%20Guidance&ss_docum ent_type_name%5b%5d=Country%2FSituation%20Specific%20Policy%20%26%20Guidance>

Figure 3: Five core dimensions of cross-border case management
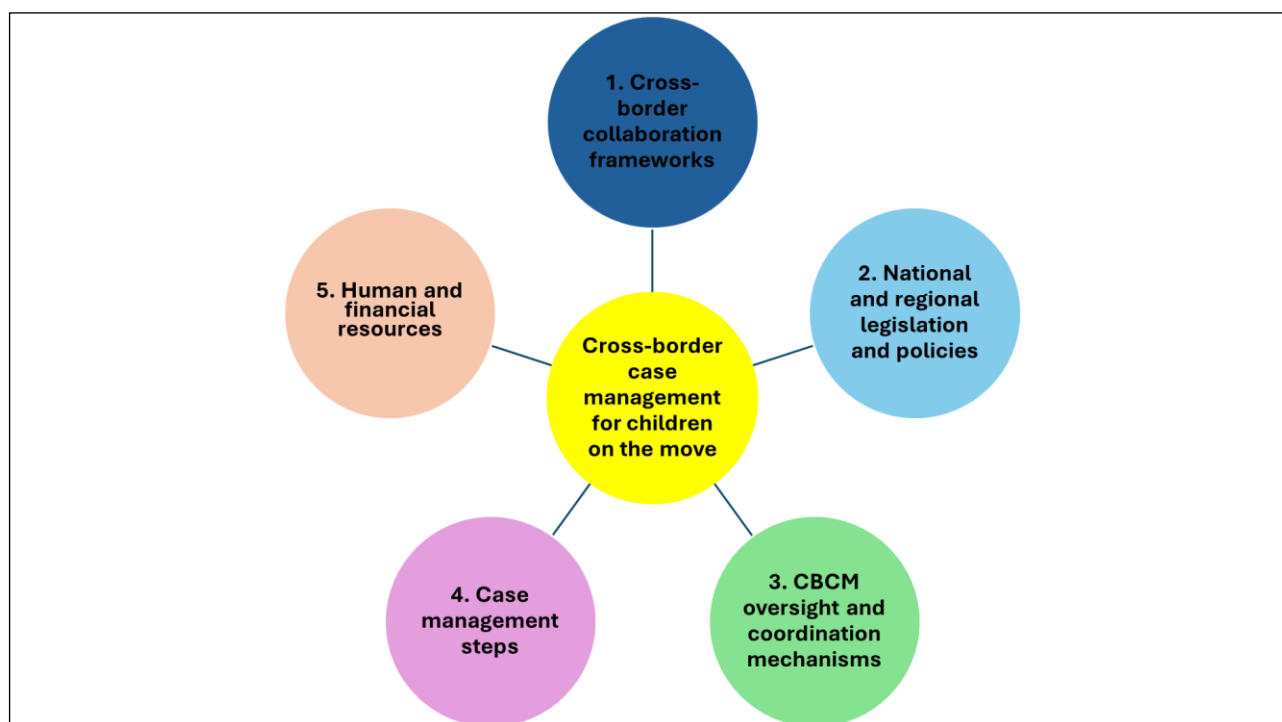
CBCM is a complex and resource-intensive process that requires coordinated efforts across multiple systems, institutions and national contexts. Despite the growing recognition of its importance, several structural, legal, operational and financial challenges hinder effective implementation. These challenges often arise from inconsistencies in legal frameworks, fragmented coordination mechanisms, limited data interoperability, unequal distribution of resources and capacity across borders, and language differences between states. In refugee contexts, these barriers are further exacerbated by high caseloads, political sensitivities and the limited integration of refugees into national child protection systems. This, in turn, can lead to onward movement of children to neighbouring countries, exposing them to risks along the route. This situation increases the urgency for coordinated and cross-border solutions. Understanding and addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that children on the move – particularly the most vulnerable – benefit from a continuum of care along their journey.

5.1.   Cross-border collaboration frameworks

Cross-border collaboration frameworks may include MOUs, blueprints, road maps or other frameworks outlining governments' commitment to cooperate across sectors and across borders on protecting children on the move. One of the most pressing challenges in CBCM programming, however, is the lack of formal bilateral or multilateral agreements that guide national responses to migration and forced displacement. This absence results in ad hoc, misaligned and inconsistent practices. When intentions are not integrated into a clearly defined approach, it becomes difficult to secure financial resources and assign responsibilities effectively. In some cases, diplomatic or political tensions between neighbouring states hinder the development of cooperation agreements. Furthermore, regional coordination mechanisms and route-based approaches are not always implemented effectively or tailored to specific contexts, preventing the establishment of a seamless continuum of services. Establishing cross-border cooperation agreements and bilateral or multilateral MoUs that demonstrate a commitment to supporting children on the move – in alignment with international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 1951 Refugee Convention – is essential for addressing political, legal and policy challenges.

5.2.   National and regional legislation and policies

Laws and policy frameworks for the protection of children on the move essentially include legislation and polices on child protection, asylum, migration and data protection at the national and regional levels. These, however, may not always be aligned with relevant instruments and best practices, and when they are in place, they may not be inclusive of children on the move and or be explicit about their specific vulnerabilities. Discriminatory measures are not uncommon. Moreover, definitions, standards and procedures often vary between countries, impeding coordinated responses. For instance, the age of majority, guardianship procedures or refugee status determination may vary, creating legal grey areas for children on the move across borders. Inconsistent or absent data-sharing protocols further hinder continuity of care, especially when strict national data protection laws conflict with the need for safe and ethical information exchange. In refugee contexts, these issues are particularly acute when host and transit countries differ in their recognition of refugee status, leaving children in legal limbo. These legal gaps can affect the realization of the rights of children on the move. More specifically, they can delay decisions about a child's best interests, obstruct family tracing and reunification (FTR) and increase the risk of refoulement and immigration detention.

5.3.   CBCM oversight, coordination and leadership

Establishing formal and structured CBCM coordination mechanisms with clear accountability, such as case conferences or mechanisms for best interests determination (BID), is essential as it requires relevant practitioners to jointly review individual cases of children on the move. This collaboration is key due to the multisectoral and iterative nature of casework, the frequent need for both direct support and referrals, and the involvement of various institutions and jurisdictions. Practitioners also need supervision and leadership. Structural and political barriers, however, can hinder these collaborative efforts. Asylum, migration and child protection authorities often operate under different mandates and ministries, leading to unclear roles, limited communication channels and overlapping responsibilities. The lack of a harmonized approach can disrupt critical protection processes, such as implementing case management steps, BID, providing direct support, making referrals, identifying durable solutions and sharing necessary information among practitioners. Variations in language and cultural norms may result in operational inefficiencies. Furthermore, power imbalances between countries – particularly between origin, host and transit states – can constrain collaboration, with some countries bearing a disproportionate burden. For refugee children, poor coordination among border management, the asylum system and national child protection systems, alongside the absence of child-friendly asylum procedures, can hinder access to international protection and lead to fragmented support that does not adequately address their specific vulnerabilities.

5.4.   Case management steps

Case management includes specific interrelated steps to ensure that response to children at risk is predictable and consistent. Successful case management typically depends on standard operating procedures (SOPs), which outline each step of the process, clarify roles and responsibilities, establish referral pathways, provide documentation forms for each step and detail planned implementation measures. When these procedures are misaligned, it can lead to delays in case management, including BID, hindering the achievement of planned outcomes and resulting in poor decisions about durable solutions. This challenge is even greater in situations where children lack proper documentation, come from politically unstable environments or face difficult family circumstances. Effective case management is essential for identifying the needs of children seeking international protection from persecution, conflict or generalized violence. Furthermore, if case management steps are not executed in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child and do not incorporate a participatory approach, there is a significant risk that the desired outcomes will not be achieved.

Another common challenge is the fragmentation of child protection information management systems for case management across countries and jurisdictions. Nations may use various digital platforms, forms, data standards and case definitions, which complicates the reliable and secure exchange and interpretation of individuals' information. In some cases, digital systems are either underdeveloped or non-existent, relying

instead on paper-based records or ad hoc communication. This increases the risk of errors, duplication and breaches of confidentiality. The lack of interoperability obstructs efforts to monitor case progress, share assessments related to the best interests of the child and oversee service delivery and case closure after transferring cases. Additionally, in refugee settings, the absence of formal guidance and the limited experience in transferring case information from humanitarian organizations to government systems can disturb the support provided. This disruption jeopardizes the implementation of durable solutions and adversely affects the sustainability of case management services.

5.5. Human and financial resources

Effective CBCM demands personnel with requisite technical expertise and appropriate funding being allocated to implementation. A significant challenge in managing cross-border cases is the disparity in technical and financial capacities among the countries and organizations involved. Some national systems lack functioning and comprehensive child protection services. In low-resource or crisis-affected settings, social-service workers and other professionals are often not equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge in case management and international protection. Additionally, some systems lack the infrastructure and funding required to sustain human resource-intensive approaches, such as case conferencing and cross-border referral mechanisms. In refugee contexts, national services that are already stretched may overlook the needs of refugee children, highlighting the necessity for inclusive systems and adequate resources. Gaps in technical capacity can result in individual vulnerabilities going undetected, inadequate responses and missed opportunities for durable solutions. To tackle these challenges, targeted and sustained investments are essential to strengthen systems, particularly in workforce development, cross-border coordination and, where applicable, digital infrastructure. Furthermore, predictable and flexible financing from governments and donors is crucial to ensure the continuity and scaling up of CBCM initiatives that meet the demand.

6. Identifying cross-border case management programmatic opportunities

UNICEF, UNHCR, other United Nations agencies, national and international civil society organizations and donors play a critical role in supporting national child protection, asylum and immigration authorities to ensure that CBCM is child-sensitive, rights-based and effectively implemented. The following section recommends potential entry points and programmatic interventions under each of the five CBCM core dimensions outlined.

6.1. Cross-border collaboration frameworks

Formal frameworks for cross-border and or intersectoral collaboration – such as MoUs, multi-party agreements for voluntary repatriation[14] or road maps – provide a foundation for predictable and structured cooperation between states and ministries aimed at protecting children on the move. These generic instruments typically express a shared commitment to addressing the issue, outline essential principles and responsibilities, and describe, in broad terms, the measures proposed to safeguard children at every stage of their journey.

Identifying potential entry points:

Existence of frameworks

- Is there a formal cross-border collaboration framework, MoU or road map in place between your country and other country(ies) involved in mixed population movements?
- Do these frameworks apply to child protection, asylum, immigration and/or border management authorities, and are their roles clearly defined?

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[14] UNHCR sample tripartite voluntary repatriation agreement <https://www.unhcr.org/media/10-point-plan-action-chapter-7-annex-7-2-tripartite-voluntary-repatriation-agreement>

- Does the framework include data sharing?

Coverage of child protection needs

- Do the provisions within the framework adequately define and address key child protection concerns potentially requiring case management, such as family separation or child trafficking?
- Are there specific provisions related to refugee and asylum-seeking children and the application of the best interests principle and the non-refoulement principle?

Institutional endorsement and accountability

- Which national authorities or institutions have formally endorsed the collaboration framework, and who holds accountability for its implementation? Does the collaboration framework articulate modalities for coordination (e.g., steering committee), milestones, budget and a timeline?
- Are there any relevant actors missing from the framework – such as ministries of social welfare, justice, interior, refugee, asylum, border, immigration authorities, civil registration, emergency management or law enforcement agencies – whose absence leaves gaps in protection or service delivery for children on the move?

Barriers to effective collaboration

- If key actors are not engaged, what are the underlying reasons (e.g., political sensitivities, lack of awareness, institutional fragmentation, capacity or resource constraints)?
- What strategies could be pursued to strengthen multisectoral collaboration, including advocacy or technical support to build political will and institutional capacity?

Depending on the answers to these questions, UNICEF, UNHCR and other actors propose a range of interventions to national authorities (e.g., child protection, asylum, immigration).

UNICEF, UNHCR and other actors can support national authorities in the development and formalization of structured, rights-based bilateral and regional agreements or cooperation frameworks that facilitate collaboration on the protection of children on the move, including those in need of international protection. Ideally, such collaboration entails the establishment of shared definitions, principles, roles and referral pathways for case management, information exchange and continuity of services.

In refugee contexts, frameworks must explicitly reference principles of non-refoulement, access to asylum procedures and recognition of international protection needs. Agreements should ensure that refugee children have continuous access to protection systems while crossing borders, and that they are not prevented from entering the territory nor are they forcibly returned or prevented from accessing asylum-seeking procedures when moving across borders. Where relevant, regional asylum frameworks – like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's Nairobi Declaration[15] – should be referenced to ensure protection continuity for refugee children.

Programme interventions can focus on – though not be limited to – the following practical areas:

- Facilitate structured bilateral and multilateral dialogues between governments and across sectors to develop shared definitions, visions, priorities and long-term commitments to the protection of children on the move, including refugee children;
- Assess the scale and nature of displacement, needs and views of the children on the move, as well as motivations, capacities and concerns to better understand the general context;
- Map actors involved in migration and forced displacement programming – e.g., states, United Nations agencies, national and international civil society organizations – and identify coordination gaps, role duplications or weaknesses in service provision that hinder effective protection responses;

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[15] IGAD Nairobi Declaration on durable solutions for Somali refugees and reintegration of returnees in Somalia < https://igad.int/communique-special-summit-of-the-igad-assembly-of-heads-of-state-and-government-on-durable-solutions-for-somali-refugees>

- Support the co-development of national and cross-border frameworks that clearly define: i) Scope of the collaboration and profile of children targeted; ii) Roles and responsibilities of relevant authorities under the response proposed; iii) Mechanisms for oversight, monitoring and dispute resolution across jurisdictions; and iv) Actions envisaged and timeline;
- Provide technical assistance towards the alignment of such frameworks with the CRC, refugee law and other relevant international and regional instruments, as well as with national laws and institutional capacities, as it pertains to the best interests of the child, alternatives to detention, durable solutions and non-refoulement;
- Advocate for the integration of cross-border child protection collaboration into broader migration and refugee governance frameworks, including regional compacts and national development strategies;
- Leverage the mandates and convening power of regional organizations such as the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the South African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of American States and the European Union, to support the establishment or strengthening of regional coordination platforms to: i) Harmonize cross-border child protection practices; and ii) Promote mutual accountability and cooperation among states.

> **Examples from the field: Middle East and North Africa Region**
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> In September 2022, UNICEF signed an MoU (https://www.unicef.org/egypt/press-releases/signing-memorandum-understanding-mou-between-nccpimtip-and-unicef) with Egypt's National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration & Trafficking in Persons to implement the country's Third National Action Plan on illegal migration. This MoU formalized cooperative mechanisms for early awareness-raising, capacity-building of law enforcement, joint case management of children on the move (including referrals, family tracing and service delivery) and cooperation with Sudanese authorities to exchange best practices.
>
> Furthermore, UNICEF and the International Detention Coalition organized a three-day workshop (https://idcoalition.org/idc-unicef-joint-workshop-children-on-the-move-cross-border-continuum-of-protection-care) in Amman titled 'Children on the Move Cross-Border Continuum of Protection & Care', bringing together eight governments from the Middle East and North Africa Region. The initiative fostered peer exchange and empowered governments to coordinate child protection frameworks, alternative care practices and case management approaches across borders.

6.2.   National and regional legislation and policies

National legal and policy frameworks should protect all children, including those on the move, while upholding their rights and clarifying accountability across different jurisdictions. To achieve this, it is essential that laws regarding child protection, migration, asylum and data protection are aligned with international and regional instruments and best practices. This alignment is crucial for effective CBCM, ensuring that services are consistent, efficient and rights-based.

Identifying potential entry points:

Legal and policy frameworks

- Are there comprehensive and coherent legal and policy frameworks on child protection, asylum and data protection in place that govern case management?
- Do these frameworks reflect the best interests principle?
- Do they contain provisions for mechanisms such as case conferencing, BID or other similar modalities, essential to operationalizing the principle?

Inclusive systems and services

- Does the national child protection system, its legal and policy framework, and its services explicitly include children on the move, including refugees, asylum seekers and stateless children?
- Are these children entitled to and able to access child protection and other essential services (e.g., legal aid, health, education, psychosocial support) on an equal basis with nationals?

Legal gaps and exclusion risks

- Are there any legal or policy gaps, restrictions or practices – such as a limiting definition of family composition or a rigid or intrusive age assessment procedure – that could lead to discrimination based on nationality, culture, religion or language, or that could exclude certain categories of children (e.g., undocumented children, stateless children, children without legal guardians, children living in camps or informal settlements) from protection services or asylum procedures?
- Do existing laws or policies create or reinforce protection risks (e.g., risk of detention, deportation, refoulement, family separation, statelessness)?
- Has the state made any reservations to the international treaties it is party to? And how do these reservations affect protection of children who are not nationals of the state?

Child rights safeguards

- Are national laws aligned with international instruments and best practice, including the CRC, the 1951 Refugee Convention and relevant regional frameworks (e.g., the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Cartegena Declaration)?
- Does the national child protection system have an effective complaint mechanism (e.g., hotlines, ombudspersons) allowing children to report any violations of their rights safely? Are these mechanisms available and accessible to children on the move, including refugees?

Depending on the answers to these questions, UNICEF, UNHCR and other actors propose a range of interventions to national authorities (e.g., child protection, asylum, immigration).

UNICEF, UNHCR and other actors provide technical assistance to governments to review and strengthen national legal and policy frameworks so that they are in line with international and regional standards. This may involve supporting law and policy reform to close protection gaps, clarifying procedures for case management, best interests assessment and determination, ensuring access to asylum procedures, and aligning national data protection legislation with best practices.

Legal and policy reform must include safeguards for children on the move, ensuring that national child protection laws are inclusive of non-citizen children and protection of children in need of international protection, including protection from refoulement or returns where the child may experience protection risks in their homes, communities and society. This includes lifting birth registration bottlenecks and removing other discriminatory legal and operational barriers to services. Data protection reforms must allow for ethical, effective and confidential information sharing across borders on a need-to-know basis, including in coordination with UNHCR's refugee case management systems where relevant (e.g., proGres and the PRIMES platforms), while maintaining the best interests of the child.

Programme interventions can focus on – though not be limited to – the following practical areas:

- Conduct legal and policy reviews on child protection, access to justice and asylum, and data protection; undertake gap analyses and assessment of discrepancies with relevant international and regional instruments (e.g., CRC, 1951 Refugee Convention, the Hague Conventions, regional regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation[16]), with specific focus on children on the move;
- Provide technical assistance for drafting and/or amending laws, policies and administrative procedures that strengthen the legal recognition, protection and more generally the rights of

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[16] The General Data Protection Regulation <https://gdpr-info.eu/>

children on the move, including refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless children during and after cross-border movement;

- Advocate for child-sensitive asylum and migration policies, including:
    a. Presumption of minority in age-dispute cases, and other child-friendly, multidisciplinary, evidence-based, procedural safeguards in approaches to age assessment;
    b. Child-friendly protection procedures[17];
    c. Legal guardianship and safeguards for unaccompanied and separated children;
    d. Access to birth registration;
    e. Access to legal aid and assistance including representation and interpretation;
    f. Non-refoulement;
    g. Alternatives to immigration detention, in line with United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children;[18]
- Support legislative advocacy and stakeholder consultations to ensure inclusive and participatory law reform processes, including the voices of civil society, legal experts and children themselves;
- Support the development and implementation of a continuum of services operationalizing laws and policies, inclusive of children on the move, ensuring non-discrimination and access, encompassing case management and referrals to services such as health, education, psychosocial support, legal aid and alternative care as needed;
- Advise governments on how to integrate best interests' standards and procedures outlined in General Comment No. 14 (2013) of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child[19] into the national case management mechanisms for asylum, migration and return processes, working towards the provision of durable solutions and alternative pathways;
- Support the establishment of strong national data protection laws and protocols that regulate the ethical, secure and child-sensitive sharing of personal information, ensuring alignment with international and regional standards on child data privacy, protection and agency.

Example from the field: Mexico

In Mexico, interventions by UNICEF and UNHCR for children on the move have spearheaded a broader national care reform, moving away from residential care and towards family- and community-based alternatives. Initially, unaccompanied and separated children crossing borders were placed in closed residential settings, effectively replicating detention. However, improving conditions for these children was impossible without revising the entire care framework. The national reform was catalysed by targeted interventions, such as the launch of foster care guidelines and the expansion of alternative care options. This included developing national residential care standards and launching Mexico's National Care Model for Children and Adolescents on the Move in July 2022, which was supported by the National System for Integral Family Development. This model emphasizes short-term shelter, community integration and the child's right to family life. This systemic approach has resulted in significant government investment of US$70 million and tangible outcomes, including the certification of 172 foster families and the provision of care to over 20,000 children on the move in 2023.

6.3.   CBCM oversight, coordination and leadership

Effective institutional leadership, oversight and inter-agency coordination are essential for efficient CBCM. CBCM requires mechanisms that connect and convene practitioners and their supervisors to identify, assess and process individual cases, with a view to recommending durable solutions that reflect each child's unique circumstances. Similar to traditional case management, these processes are most effective when they cross sectors and span multiple jurisdictions, allowing for thorough reviews and holistic approaches.

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[17] UNHCR, Technical Guidance: Child-Friendly Procedures
<https://www.refworld.org/policy/opguidance/unhcr/2021/en/124121>
[18] The United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/673583?v=pdf>
[19] UN CRC General Comment No. 14 (2013) <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/gc/crc_c_gc_14_eng.pdf>

Identifying potential entry points:

National authorities' leadership and mandate

- Is there a national authority designated to lead, oversee and manage cross-border child protection case management? If so, how is this leadership defined within national frameworks, and how is it recognized by relevant stakeholders?
- How clearly is the division of labour outlined among authorities such as child protection services, asylum agencies and border police? Are there additional actors involved, such as United Nations agencies, national or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or the International Committee of the Red Cross?
- Are there any key actors missing – particularly child protection authorities – whose absence may create gaps in the protection of children on the move? If so, what are the reasons for their absence, e.g., limited political will, resource constraints or a lack of clarity regarding roles?

Oversight, supervision and accountability

- Do routine supervisory or quality assurance processes exist, such as file reviews, performance indicators or field monitoring, to assess how child and family case management is functioning in practice?
- To what extent does oversight involve reviewing individual case outcomes, identifying system-level bottlenecks and addressing collaboration gaps?
- Is there a process in place to gather feedback from front-line social workers, children or families for the purpose of quality improvement?

Effectiveness and frequency

- Are there formal mechanisms in place for reviewing, assessing, coordinating and implementing individual cases (such as case conferencing and mechanisms for BID)? Are these mechanisms officially established through clear terms of reference?
- Are the frequency and functionality of these coordination mechanisms sufficient to ensure timely, effective and rights-based responses to cross-border child protection needs?
- Are there provisions in place for handling emergency cases?

Barriers and opportunities for engagement

- Are there barriers preventing the engagement of relevant stakeholders (e.g., specific ministries, local authorities, NGOs)?
- What strategies could strengthen or formalize their involvement (e.g., advocacy, technical assistance, capacity-building, transportation)?

Depending on the answers to these questions, UNICEF, UNHCR and other actors propose a range of interventions to national authorities (e.g., child protection, asylum, immigration).

UNICEF, UNHCR and other stakeholders assist national authorities at the national and/or subnational level in establishing or strengthening oversight and coordination mechanisms that connect child protection, asylum, immigration and law enforcement practitioners dealing with individual cases. Refugee-hosting countries should assess where specific measures are needed to bridge the activities of national child protection and refugee protection systems. In cases where leadership is lacking – such as in countries that are not parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention – UNICEF and UNHCR may take a more proactive role in facilitating coordination and ensuring compliance with international protection principles.

Programme interventions can focus on – though not be limited to – the following practical areas:

- Map and review the current formal and informal practices, legislation and policies regarding CBCM at both the national and subnational levels;
- Examine whether these practices apply to all children on the move, including refugees, children at risk of recruitment by armed forces and groups, and those vulnerable to trafficking, among others;

- Analyse the roles and responsibilities outlined in the national framework with the goal of proposing a clear and comprehensive accountability matrix for CBCM (e.g., terms of reference);
- Where such mechanisms are established, review the caseload and children's profiles along with the recommendations for durable solutions to assess effectiveness and overall outcomes;
- Establish or strengthen formal coordination and recommendation-making mechanisms for individual cases, such as case conferences, judicial reviews and mechanisms for BID. This approach will ensure cross-sector collaboration involving child protection, asylum and law enforcement, thereby facilitating effective processes for identifying durable solutions;
- In cases where CBCM has primarily been led by United Nations agencies or other international actors, explore and design plans for a gradual and safe transfer of responsibilities to relevant government entities in the short to medium term.

6.4. Case management steps

Clear and specific steps are essential for effective CBCM. This ensures timely, coordinated, systematic and child-centred responses that prioritize the best interests of the child throughout their journey across various jurisdictions.

Identifying potential entry points:

Case management steps' definitions, and roles across jurisdictions
- Do the SOPs for CBCM clearly outline the steps and harmonized tools (such as forms) necessary for all involved parties across different borders, where appropriate and safe?
- Do the SOPs explicitly define the roles and responsibilities of all relevant actors at each stage, including identification and registration, assessment, case planning, implementation of the case plan, follow-up and review, and case closure?
- Are there robust, context-specific and up-to-date referral pathways established, detailing the organizations that provide the most relevant services? This includes, but is not limited to, alternative care, FTR, legal aid and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)?

Actors involved in the identification of children in need of CBCM (at the border or elsewhere in the country)

- Who is responsible for identifying children at border points and elsewhere in the country? Is it the security or law enforcement agencies, social welfare or child protection services, immigration or asylum authorities, or a combination of these?
- Who is primarily responsible for the initial identification of children who need international protection?
- Are there measures in place reducing the risks of immigration detention and refoulement, to provide alternative care when needed, and to ensure a timely handover from law enforcement to child protection authorities?

Child-sensitive and rights-based procedures

- Is the principle of the best interests of the child systematically applied at every stage of case management, assessment, and case planning and implementation, especially concerning life-changing decisions such as placement in care and prospective durable solutions (including returns, local integration, resettlement and family reunification)?
- Are the proposed modalities conducive to analysing the four key rights groups considered in determining the best interests of the child: the views of the child, family and close relationships, safety and protection, and developmental and identity needs?
- Are procedures such as identification, registration, assessment and asylum processing child-friendly, sensitive to gender and disability, trauma-informed and tailored to meet the specific needs of refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant children?

Child participation

- Are these procedures communicated in a language and format that children and their families or caregivers can easily understand?
- Is child participation meaningfully integrated into the case management process?
- Are children informed about and involved in decisions that affect them, in line with their age, maturity and developing abilities?

Data sharing and protection

- Is cross-border information-sharing on individual child cases taking place? Is it formal, at what scale and under which circumstances?
- Is it governed by clear, ethical and legally compliant frameworks and tools (e.g., data-sharing agreements, SOPs aligned with national and international data protection standards, specific forms)?
- Are there safeguards in place to ensure personal data is maintained and shared safely, with informed consent/assent, on a need-to-know basis, and only with actors who have a defined and legitimate role in the management of the child's case?

Depending on the answers to these questions, UNICEF, UNHCR and other actors propose a range of interventions to national authorities (e.g., child protection, asylum, immigration).

Throughout the case management process – which includes identification and registration, assessment, case planning, implementation of the case plan, follow-up and review, and case closure – UNICEF, UNHCR and other organizations can offer guidance tailored to the unique needs of children on the move, particularly those who are refugees. Developing common SOPs and data-sharing protocols that are endorsed by officials at the appropriate level, investing in interoperable (digital) tools and sustainable reintegration services, and adhering to child and data protection standards are necessary steps to overcome existing challenges and ensure safe, consistent case continuity across jurisdictions.

Important considerations, such as the risks of detention, age assessment, access to asylum procedures, guardianship, legal aid and cross-border family reunification, must be carefully addressed when advising national authorities on the necessary referral pathways. Additionally, proposed strategies should accommodate children with disabilities, various gender identities and cultural differences.

Programme interventions can focus on – though not be limited to – the following practical areas:

1. Strengthen case management process

- Support the leadership of relevant national authorities in developing SOPs for CBCM and referrals. This includes procedures for emergency cases and information sharing, with clear and standardized definitions and well-defined steps, roles, responsibilities and communication flows;
- Review, harmonize and streamline case management tools, forms and data categorization across different jurisdictions (for the purpose of expediency, this may take the form of including specific elements within the existing tools relevant to CBCM);
- Assess age assessment procedures, promote alternatives to medical approaches, and align with best practices where necessary, emphasizing multisectoral solutions;
- Harmonize and formalize identification mechanisms among relevant actors and institutions that may encounter vulnerable children requiring CBCM, such as schools, shelters, clinics and border posts;
- Train and support child protection and asylum screening teams to ensure early identification of children in need of international protection and other vulnerable children, including when they are unable to articulate an asylum claim;
- Promote the development and regular updating of comprehensive referral pathways that cover the full range of services and interventions likely to be necessary for children on the move. This includes MHPSS, GBV support, legal aid, alternative care and FTR.

2. Enhance legal representation, child-friendliness and safeguards

- Ensure that children have access to free legal aid and guardianship to receive advice and representation in immigration, asylum and protection proceedings;
- Provide clear, child-friendly information in relevant languages about durable solutions, including return, local integration, resettlement and complementary pathways such as family reunification;
- Offer guidance and tools to obtain child consent/assent in a manner that is appropriate for their age and developmental level, and ensure access to complaint mechanisms that are equivalent to those available to children from the host country.

4. Promote safe and appropriate reception, temporary care and longer-term care

- Advocate for and support the development of child-friendly reception facilities with appropriate and specialized care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children, promoting community- and/or family-based care as needed;
- Ensure adequate linkages with FTR actors to minimize family separation, as per the child's best interests.

5. Support digital information management systems

- Review data collection, analysis, reporting and sharing practices and tools related to case management; support standardization and alignment with best practices while ensuring compliance with child protection and data protection standards;
- Enhance the collection and analysis of data regarding children in CBCM to improve service delivery, supervision, planning and advocacy (this should align with established forms and data categorization);
- Identify key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the timely resolution of cases, family reunification rates, continuity of care and compliance with child protection standards, which will provide a foundation for informed policy decisions and effective programming;
- Advocate for the appointment of a lead government agency (e.g., the child protection or asylum/migration authority) to coordinate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts and set clear objectives and KPIs, allocate dedicated resources and develop protocols for data collection, analysis and reporting;
- Promote the design and adoption of data protection and information-sharing protocols that enable ethical, secure and purpose-limited information sharing between relevant actors including in-country and cross-border child protection and asylum authorities and other service providers, as needed and feasible;
- Promote secure and interoperable digital case management platforms that adhere to national and international data protection standards, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
- Support inter-operability between systems.

Example from the field: West Africa

The ECOWAS Support Procedures and Standards for the Protection and Reintegration of Vulnerable Children on the Move and Young Migrants <https://www.ssi-suisse.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/04001_ssi_content_EN_RZ_web_72dpi.pdf> is a region-wide guide adopted by the 15 ECOWAS member states (plus Mauritania), detailing an eight-step, child-centred case management process. The procedure covers multiple phases, from the identification, emergency support and protection of the child, to family assessment, alternative care, follow-up on his/her reintegration and reinforcement of the socio-economic capacity of the family. Importantly, it includes standards at each step to ensure quality support. Developed and tested over a decade by the West Africa Network for Child Protection (WAN) and International Social Service Switzerland – resulting in the reintegration of over 6,000 children – the protocol was formally endorsed by ECOWAS states in December 2016 during a meeting held in Abuja.

Figure 4: Case management steps in cross-border settings
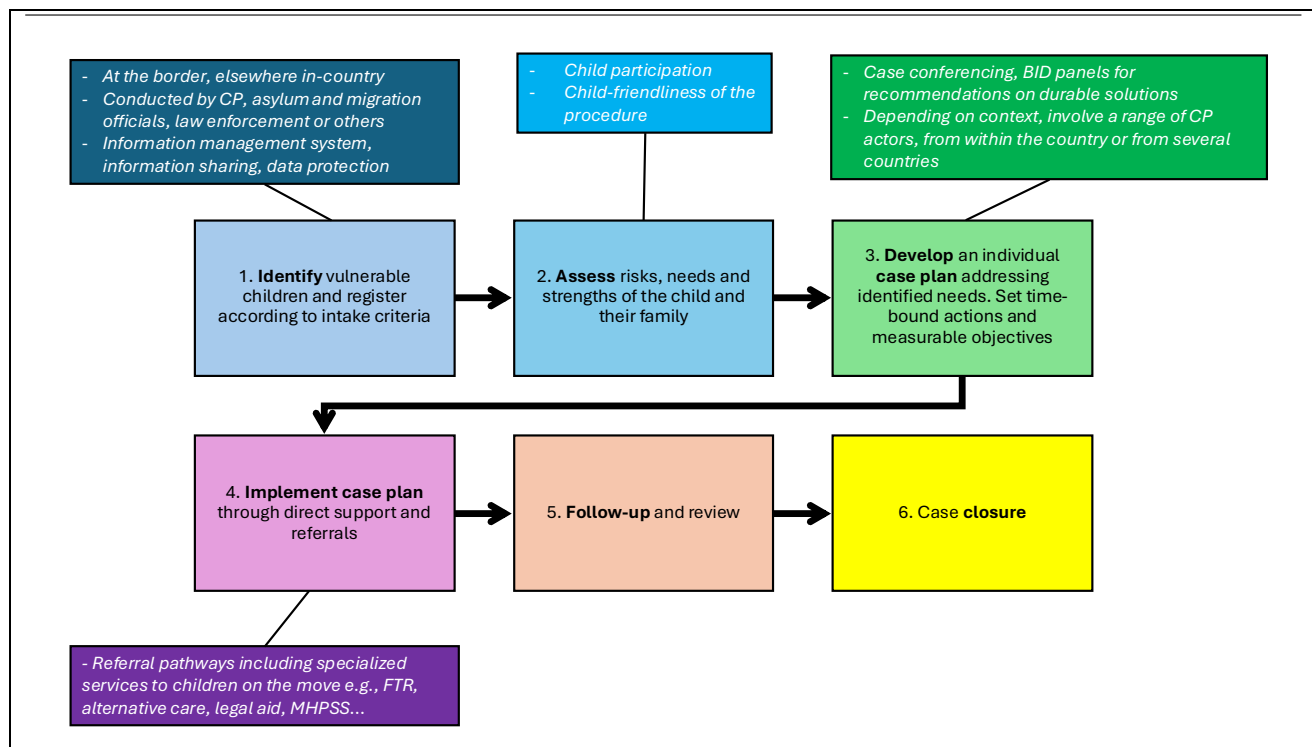
6.5. Human and financial resources

Technical expertise, along with sufficient human and financial resources, is essential for effective CBCM. These elements enable systems to identify and refer children in need of international protection to the appropriate authorities. Additionally, they help address complex child protection needs with quality, continuity and accountability across borders.

Identifying potential entry points:

Human resources for CBCM

- What are the government and civil society human resources allocated to the implementation of CBCM – in terms of geographical coverage, ratio of cases per worker, supervision, etc. – from child protection, asylum and other relevant authorities?
- Did the training provided adequately cover child- and disability-sensitive, trauma-informed and gender-responsive services throughout CBCM?

Capacity-building and institutional support

- Is CBCM for children on the move part of the regular curricula taught in-country, as pre-service and in-service options, by national social work training institutions?
- Is CBCM taught in any other ad hoc manner by social work training institutions and other actors, including United Nations and civil society organizations?
- Have the personnel – including social and parasocial workers, asylum and border officials – been equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to identify children in need of international protection and manage cross-border child protection cases, including those involving refugees and asylum seekers, across the case management steps?
- Is there a mechanism for technical support, supervision or mentoring to ensure sustainable capacity strengthening at the central and local levels?
- What is the formal status – if any – of the government and/or civil society personnel delivering and supervising CBCM services?

- Are interpreters and cultural mediators trained on working with children on the move, understanding specific vulnerabilities, and following information-sharing and data protection principles?

Financial resourcing and integration within national systems

- Are there adequate financial resources for CBCM (e.g., service delivery, supervision, referrals to specialized services including temporary care, FTR, legal aid or psychosocial support, cross-border coordination, travel, interpretation)?
- Are these resources predictable and sustained, included in national budgets? Are resources primarily reliant on short-term humanitarian funding?
- Are CBCM services embedded within broader child protection systems, with corresponding detailed budget lines and staff roles?

Depending on the answers to these questions, UNICEF, UNHCR and other actors propose a range of interventions to national authorities (e.g., child protection, asylum, immigration).

UNICEF, UNHCR and other organizations support national governments by investing in the capacity of front-line social service workers including child protection officers, immigration and asylum officials, and border personnel, focusing on child protection principles and CBCM. Their efforts can also help mobilize resources for staffing, infrastructure, digital tools and cross-border referral mechanisms. In situations with limited resources, agencies can provide temporary operational support while gradually fostering national ownership and sustainability.

In refugee contexts, investments should prioritize strengthening both national asylum and child protection systems. Improved coordination between these systems is essential, requiring capacity-building among officials in refugee-hosting and transit countries, such as border guards, immigration officers and social service workers. Training should focus on recognizing and responding to the specific protection needs of refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless children, including aspects of non-discrimination, child rights in refugee law and refugee-specific case procedures. Funding must take into account contexts with prolonged displacement, large-scale influxes or limited government infrastructure, where refugee children are often at heightened risk and national systems are overstretched.

Programme interventions can focus on – though not be limited to – the following practical areas:

- Evaluate the capacity of relevant actors to plan, implement, oversee and coordinate CBCM;
- Propose suitable capacity-building activities such as training, mentoring, supervision and coaching, focusing on training trainers and collaborating with national social work training institutions;
- Support the adaptation, integration and rollout of existing capacity-building packages for social workers, parasocial workers, asylum authorities and other relevant personnel. This should be done through national training institutions and academia, specifically addressing the protection of children on the move (please refer to Annex 4);
- In addition to the specifics of case management, packages may include modules on specialized services commonly required for children on the move, such as alternative care, FTR, BID and MHPSS;
- Provide expertise at both central and decentralized levels, including border areas, to offer practical technical assistance to national counterparts in the design, implementation and evaluation of CBCM;
- When necessary, address urgent gaps in CBCM delivery by mobilizing own technical and financial resources, accompanied by a detailed, time-bound handover plan to national authorities;
- Promote and advise on costing CBCM services for children on the move independently and/or as part of broader child protection budgeting exercises, working towards informed advocacy, planning and resource mobilization efforts with national governments' finance authorities and donors.

Examples from the field: Europe and Central Asia Region

Supported by the Swiss Government, in 2023, the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office launched a regional programme <https://www.unicef.org/eca/stories/supporting-integration-refugee-and-migrant-children-host-eu-countries> across Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia to bolster national child protection systems. This included dedicated funding, technical oversight and capacity-building to help governments integrate refugee and migrant children into their case management processes and foster cross-border coordination.

Following the start of the war in Ukraine, more than 2,500 children from Ukrainian residential care were evacuated to Poland under ad hoc arrangements with a variety of public and private entities. In accordance with the bilateral agreement between the two governments, the children remained within the Ukrainian alternative care system and received additional care and supervision from the Polish child protection authorities. UNICEF collaborated with both governments to establish registration, supervision, individual assessment and planning mechanisms aligned with the country's legislative frameworks. This enabled the provision of care that aligns with the needs of each child, facilitates individualized care placements and prevents trafficking, exploitation and abuse. One of the agreed mechanisms was the establishment of a registration centre in Poland, which hosted seconded social workers from Ukraine. This centre played a critical role in verifying Ukrainian documents, registering children in Poland and referring them to the appropriate locations. Three years later, only around 600 children remained in Poland, while the rest either returned to Ukraine, were placed in alternative care facilities or had left care because they had reached the age of majority. The systems in Poland and Ukraine are able to monitor the situation of children and have established collaboration mechanisms. UNICEF continues to support the two governments in providing quality alternative care in line with national standards.

Figure 5: Cross-border case management – Five dimensions and programmatic entry points
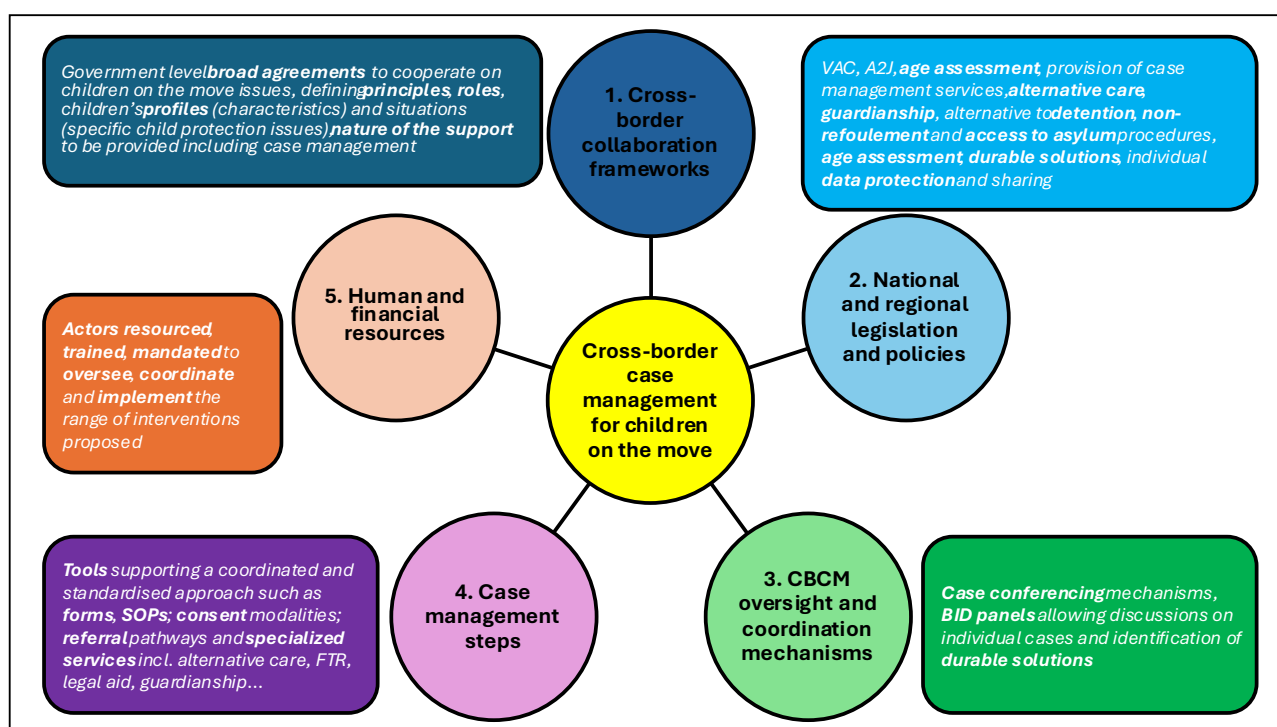
7. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are crucial elements of effective CBCM. They ensure that actions are evidence-based, accountable to children and their communities, and contribute to ongoing learning and improvement. M&E interventions should be designed to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of CBCM systems. Regular planning and review meetings between countries jointly implementing CBCM can enhance documentation, facilitate experience exchange, promote peer learning and encourage replication, ultimately contributing to greater adaptability and accountability.

In addition, efforts to mobilize resources should focus on securing funding for national M&E activities. This includes benchmarking exercises, mapping and assessments, pilot testing of monitoring tools, and independent evaluations. When effective CBCM exists, countries should work together to develop harmonized indicators and share aggregated, anonymized data to enhance regional understanding and cooperation. UNICEF and UNHCR teams are encouraged to systematically monitor and evaluate CBCM mechanisms by identifying KPIs that measure progress across the five critical dimensions.

Overall, in view of supporting national authorities in developing their own M&E systems for CBCM, UNICEF and UNHCR teams are invited to draw from established tools such as the UNHCR-UNICEF *Inclusion Toolkit*[20] – which includes specific guidance on CBCM for refugee children – or the child protection system strengthening benchmarking toolkit,[21] which provides a broader framework for system-level monitoring.

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[20] UNHCR and UNICEF inclusion toolkit: Refugee children in national child protection systems | UNHCR

[21] United Nations Children's Fund, 'Measuring the Maturity of Child Protection Systems: A guide on how to use the CPSS benchmarks', UNICEF, New York, April 2022 <https://www.unicef.org/media/120221/file/CPSS-Benchmark-Guide.pdf>.

8. Annexes

Annex 1 – Glossary of terms

Annex 2 – Desk review bibliography

Annex 3 – Key principles for CBCM and their operationalization

Annex 4 – Resources, readings and training packages on CBCM

Annex 1 – Glossary of terms

Child	A child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. This programmatic guidance treats anyone below the age of 18 years as a child.
Child protection system	Certain formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that have been assembled to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. A child protection system is generally agreed to be comprised of the following components: human resources, finance, laws and policies, governance, monitoring and data collection, protection and response services and care management. It also includes different actors – children, families, communities, those working at subnational or national level and those working internationally. Most important are the relationships and interactions between and among these components and these actors within the system. It is the outcomes of these interactions that comprise the system.[22]
Asylum-seeker	A general term for any person who is seeking international protection. In some countries, it is used as a legal term referring to a person who has applied for refugee status or a complementary international protection status and has not yet received a final decision on their claim. It can also refer to a person who has not yet submitted an application but may intend to do so or may be in need of international protection. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum-seeker. An asylum-seeker may not, however, be sent back to their country of origin until their asylum claim has been examined in a fair procedure, and is entitled to certain minimum standards of treatment pending determination of their status.[23]
Best interests of the child	A principle set out in article 3 of the CRC which affirms: "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." A child's best interests are determined by a variety of individual circumstances, such as the age, gender, level of maturity and experiences of the child. Other factors also determine well-being, such as the presence or absence of parents, the quality of the relationships between the child and their family or caregivers, the physical and psychosocial situation of the child and their protection situation (security, protection risks, etc.). The interpretation and application of the best interests principle must conform to the CRC and other international legal norms, as well as to the guidance provided by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.[24]
Best interests assessment (BIA)	The BIA consists in evaluating and balancing all the elements necessary to make a decision in a specific situation for a specific individual child or group of children. It is carried out by the decision maker and his or her staff – if possible, a multidisciplinary team – and requires the participation of the child.[25] In refugee contexts, UNHCR uses this term to refer to a formal UNHCR process, which has strict procedural safeguards designed to determine the child's best interests when taking particularly important decisions affecting the child. It facilitates adequate child participation without discrimination, involves decision makers with relevant

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[22] United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Protection', n.d., <www.unicef.org/child-protection>, accessed 2 November 2025.
[23] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR Mastery Glossary of Terms: Asylum-seeker', n.d., <www.unhcr.org/glossary#asylum-seeker>, accessed 2 November 2025.
[24] Refer to the United General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3.
[25] Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 14, CRC/C/GC/14, 29 May 2013, para. 47.

	areas of expertise and balances all relevant factors in order to assess and determine the best option.[26]
Best interest determination (BID)	The BID describes the formal process with strict procedural safeguards designed to determine the child's best interests on the basis of the BIA.[27] In refugee settings UNHCR uses this term for the formal process implemented by UNHCR under its mandate and in line with the Committee on the Rights of the Child General comment No. 14 to determine the child's best interests when taking particularly important decisions affecting the child. It facilitates adequate child participation without discrimination, involves decision makers with relevant areas of expertise and balances all relevant factors in order to assess and determine the best option.[28]
Best Interests Procedure (BIP)	In refugee settings, BIP is the UNHCR case management framework for asylum-seeking and refugee children. It may also be applied to other children of concern to UNHCR in certain circumstances. BIP includes the key steps of child protection case management as well as the UNHCR BID process and is implemented for individual children at risk who are in need of targeted, structured, systematic, sustained and coordinated support. It ensures that decisions and actions aimed at addressing protection risks and needs for children are in their best interests. BIP is embedded within, and linked to, refugee protection case management.[29]
Child protection case management	An approach to addressing the needs of an individual child and their family in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, through direct support and/or referrals.[30]
Children on the move	A compound concept that has gained traction on the operational level in the international community, the term describes children who have been directly or indirectly affected by migration and displacement, either internationally across borders or within the same country. When referring to children on the move, this includes child migrants; children in need of international protection, such as refugees and asylum-seekers; internally displaced children; children indirectly affected by migration and displacement, such as children who stay behind while parents or caregivers migrate; stateless children; and child victims of cross-border trafficking.[31] For the purpose of this programmatic guide this term refers only to refugee and asylum-seeking, including stateless refugee children, stateless children outside their country of habitual residence, other children with international protection needs, refugee children who have returned to their country of origin or previous country of asylum (irrespective of whether they have made a formal asylum claim). **.**
Cross-border	In this guidance, the term 'cross-border' refers to different jurisdictions in both adjacent and non-adjacent countries.
Family reunification	The process of reuniting family members who have been involuntarily separated through displacement. It has a special application in the pursuit of durable solutions.[32] The right to family life and the principle of family unity are of particular importance in the context of international protection and apply irrespective of

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[26] UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines.

[27] General comment No. 14, para. 47.

[28] UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action 2019 Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

[31] International Data Alliance for Children on the Move, *Children on the Move: Key terms, definitions and concepts*, United Nations Children's Fund, New York, 2023.

[32] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*, ICRC, Geneva, January 2004.

	whether or not a country is a Contracting State of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and/or its 1967 Protocol.[33]
Family tracing	The process of searching for family members or primary legal or customary caregivers. Family tracing should be organized for all separated children as soon as possible. The exchange of information within and between countries is important in this process; however, the protection and the best interests of the child should determine to what extent this exchange is performed and what kind of information is transferred. If tracing is successful, it must be ensured that family reunification is in the interests of the child.[34]
Migrant	There is no universally accepted definition of the term 'migrant', but the term is usually understood to cover all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of 'personal convenience' and without the intervention of a compelling external factor. This term, therefore, applies to persons and family members moving to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospects for them or their family.[35]
Migration	The process of population movement across an international border or within a country. It covers any type of movement, regardless of duration, composition and causes, and includes the movement of refugees, displaced and evicted persons and economic migrants.[36]
Mixed movements	The cross-border movement of people, generally in an irregular manner, involving individuals and groups who travel alongside each other using similar routes and means of transport or facilitators, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have different needs and profiles and may include asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, stateless persons and migrants (including migrants in irregular situations or migrants in vulnerable situations). Note: Related terms such as 'mixed flows' and 'complex or composite movements' are sometimes used to refer to mixed movements. The term 'mixed migration' is not recommended, as it can cause confusion.[37]
Non-refoulement	A core principle of international human rights and refugee law that prohibits states from returning individuals in any manner whatsoever (whether directly or indirectly) to territories where they may be at risk of persecution, torture or other forms of serious or irreparable harm. The most prominent expression of the principle of non-refoulement in international refugee law is article 33(1) of the 1951 Convention. The principle also is part of customary international law and is therefore binding on all states, whether or not they are parties to the 1951 Convention.[38]
Refugee	Any person who meets the eligibility criteria under an applicable refugee definition as provided for in international or regional refugee instruments, under the mandate of UNHCR or in national legislation. Under international law and UNHCR mandate, refugees are persons outside their countries of origin who are in need of international protection because of feared persecution, or because of a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or

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[33] UNHCR Guidelines on international legal standards relating to family reunification for refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection <https://www.refworld.org/policy/legalguidance/unhcr/2024/en/149243>.

[34] *ICRC Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children.*

[35] International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2011). International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration (Report No. 25). IOM, Geneva <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml25_1.pdf>.

[36] Ibid.

[37] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR Mastery Glossary of Terms: Mixed movement', n.d., <www.unhcr.org/glossary#mixed-movement>, accessed 2 November 2025.

[38] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR Mastery Glossary of Terms: Non-refoulement', n.d., <www.unhcr.org/glossary#non-refoulement>, accessed 2 November 2025.

	freedom in their country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder.[39]
Reintegration	A rights-centred process through which children who have returned or been relocated across borders are supported to reclaim their safety, family and community connections, access to education, health and psychosocial well-being, and the opportunity to thrive without being treated differently from their peers. It involves ensuring children regain their full potential and dignity, free from discrimination, and become active participants in shaping their future.[40]
Resettlement	The selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought treaty protection to a third state that has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against refoulement and provides a resettled refugee and their dependents with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country. As such, resettlement is a mechanism for refugee protection, a durable solution and an example of international burden and responsibility sharing.[41]
Separated child	A child separated from both parents or their previous legal or customary caregivers, but not necessarily from other relatives. The term may, therefore, include a child accompanied by other adult family members.[42]
Solution (durable)	The means by which the situation of a refugee or stateless child can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved through ensuring national protection for their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In the refugee context a durable solution requires (re-)establishment of a permanent legal status and generally involves voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement. In the case of internally displaced persons, this is achieved when individuals no longer have specific assistance or protection needs linked to their displacement. For stateless persons, durable solutions are linked to the provision or recognition of nationality.[43]
Solution (sustainable)	A comprehensive, secure and sustainable solution is one that, to the greatest extent possible, caters to the long-term best interests and welfare of the child and is sustainable and secure from that perspective. The outcome should aim to ensure that the child is able to develop into adulthood, in an environment that will meet his or her needs and fulfil his or her rights as defined by the CRC.[44]
Unaccompanied child	A child separated from both parents and other relatives, who is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.[45]
Voluntary repatriation	The free and informed return of refugees to their country of origin in safety and dignity. Voluntary repatriation may be organized (i.e., when it takes place under the auspices of the concerned states and/or UNHCR) or spontaneous (i.e., when refugees repatriate by their own means with little or no direct involvement from government authorities or UNHCR).[46]

[39] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR Mastery Glossary of Terms: Refugee', n.d., <www.unhcr.org/glossary#refugee>, accessed 2 November 2025.

[40] International Organization for Migration, 'Reintegration Handbook: Module 6 – A child rights approach to the sustainable reintegration of migrant children and families', 2020, <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-module-6-child-rights-approach-sustainable-reintegration-migrant>, accesssed 2 November 2025.

[41] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR Mastery Glossary of Terms: Resettlement', n.d., <www.unhcr.org/glossary#resettlement>, accessed 2 November 2025.

[42] Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 6, CRC/GC/2005/6, 1 September 2005, para. 8.

[43] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR Mastery Glossary of Terms: Durable solutions', n.d., <www.unhcr.org/glossary#durable-solutions>, accessed 2 November 2025.

[44] Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Committee on the Rights of the Child, Joint general comment No. 3, CMW/C/GC/3 and CRC/C/GC/22, 16 November 2017, para. 32(j), footnote 9.

[45] General comment No. 6, para. 7.

[46] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR Mastery Glossary of Terms: Voluntary repatriation', n.d., <www.unhcr.org/glossary#voluntary-repatriation>, accessed 2 November 2025.

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Annex 3 – Key principles for CBCM and their operationalization

The table below summarizes a set of key principles to advocate for:

- Non-discrimination (CRC art. 2)
- Best interests of the child (CRC art. 3(1))
- Right to life, survival and development (CRC art.6)
- Right to be heard (CRC art. 12)
- 'Do no harm' and humanitarian principles
- Non-refoulement
- Legal, durable and sustainable solutions
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Continuity of care and case management
- Safety of the child's parents and other family members

KEY PRINCIPLE	CORE ASPECT	APPLICATION
Non-discrimination (CRC art. 2)	It obliges States parties to respect and ensure all rights in the CRC to every child within their jurisdiction – without discrimination of any kind, "irrespective of the child's or their parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status."	Every child must enjoy equal access to protection, care and services, regardless of nationality, migration status or documentation. States have an active obligation not only to refrain from discrimination, but also to identify and address policies, practices or barriers that create de facto discrimination. Authorities and service providers must prioritize inclusion and ensure that procedures, eligibility criteria or institutional arrangements do not disadvantage specific groups (e.g., refugee, asylum-seeking, stateless, or migrant children, including unaccompanied children). Its application includes: - Equal access to protection and services; - Best interests determination without bias; - Non-discriminatory information sharing and coordination; and - Inclusive national systems and cooperation frameworks.
Best interests of the child (CRC art. 3(1))	Every decision or action affecting a child must explicitly consider how it serves the child's best interests. Authorities must identify, assess and balance all relevant factors before making a decision. When multiple interests conflict, the child's best interests must carry "a primary" weight, ensuring they meaningfully influence the outcome.	The best interests principle demands individual assessment (BIAs, BIDs), procedural safeguards, cross-state cooperation, and documentation showing that the child's interests were a primary consideration in all actions, as well as measures of a general nature (including formulation of legislation and policies, procedures and allocation

	The Committee on the Rights of the Child General comment No. 14 (2013) clarifies that the best interests principle applies individually (case by case) and collectively (in law, policy and administrative practice).	of resources) that inform and affect the best interests process for individual children.
Right to life, survival and development (CRC art. 6)	Every child, without exception, has an inherent, non-derogable right to life. States have a positive obligation to create the conditions – legal, social, economic and environmental – that enable all children to survive and reach their full potential. The obligation extends beyond protection from physical harm or death to include proactive measures that promote children's well-being, health, education, safety and family environment.	In CBCM, this principle compels states and partners to prevent exposure to danger, maintain continuity of care and services, and seek durable solutions that protect both the child's immediate safety and long-term development (the latter encompassing physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social growth).
'Do no harm' and humanitarian principles	All actions must adhere to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Actors providing assistance have a duty of care and should assess any proposed action for the potential for harm.	Avoid actions that could endanger children or compromise their protection. This also entails careful consideration of disclosing information about a refugee child to state authorities in a third country without a full evaluation of the child's international protection needs.
Non-refoulement	A legal and ethical obligation preventing the return of individuals to a country where they face a well-founded fear of persecution or other serious harm.	Review country-of-origin information, whether it is in relation to contact with country of origin, previous country of asylum or a third country.
Participation and agency	Article 12 of CRC recognizes the child's right to be heard. It promotes respect for the child's right to express their views freely and for those views to be considered and taken into account seriously in all decisions, in line with the child's age and maturity.	The child should be involved and engaged in decisions about their care, protection and future, including exploring available sustainable solutions and possible outcomes. Appointed guardians and legal representatives should facilitate information dissemination in an age-appropriate manner to ensure informed consent for unaccompanied and separated children.
Legal, durable and sustainable solutions	Children have the right to seek asylum, which also means the right to enter a territory to seek asylum, a legal identity, family unity and long-term protection.	Facilitate access to asylum, family reunification, resettlement or local integration, in line with international law.

Confidentiality and data protection	Children's personal data must be handled with the highest standards of confidentiality and security. Consent and assent are key ethical and procedural safeguards ensuring that children's personal information is collected, stored and shared lawfully, ethically and respectfully. 'Consent' means informed, voluntary and explicit agreement by a person with legal capacity (usually a parent, guardian or the child if mature enough) to the collection, use and sharing of their data. 'Assent' refers to the affirmative agreement of the child, recognizing their evolving capacities and right to be heard, even when they cannot legally provide full consent.	When handling cross-border child protection cases, practitioners must ensure the use of secure information-sharing protocols and that informed consent and assent are integral to data sharing and confidentiality procedures.
Continuity of care and case management	Children should receive consistent and coordinated support throughout their journey.	Ensure case plans are portable and adaptable across borders, with clear handover and follow-up procedures.
Safety of the child's parents and other family members	Communicating information about the child and/or the child's whereabouts without due consideration can place the child's relatives in danger from persecution, parties to a conflict, or armed groups or gangs.	Assess the risk to relatives in the country of origin or third country as part of the overall assessment prior to establishing contact across the border.

Annex 4 – Resources, readings and training packages on CBCM

Core, authoritative guidance (must-read foundations)

1. **Inter-agency Child Protection Case Management Guidelines (2nd ed., 2024)** – Comprehensive, field-oriented global guidance on case management in humanitarian contexts (assessment, case planning, monitoring, referrals, supervision). *Serves as the primary framework for child protection case management in humanitarian action, offering adaptable guidance suitable for various contexts and work (including development of national child protection case management SOPs, trainer curricula and standards).* (alliancecpha.org)

2. **UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines (2021)** – Detailed guidance on BIP/BID processes for refugee/asylum-seeking children, including operational steps and considerations for cross-border cases where best interests determinations are needed. *Essential for UNHCR staff, partners and authorities handling unaccompanied or separated children across borders, particularly asylum-seekers and refugees.* (alliancecpha.org)

3. **UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection No. 8: Child Asylum Claims under Articles 1(A)2 and 1(F) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol (2009) –** This guidance provides detailed norms and best practices for assessing asylum claims made by or on behalf of children, including special vulnerabilities, procedural safeguards, evidence and interview techniques. It complements the *Case Management Guidelines* and *Best Interests Procedure Guidelines* by setting the legal protection framework within which case management and cross-border child protection decisions are made*. It's aimed at national asylum authorities, legal practitioners and refugee status determination officers to aid in understanding children's rights under refugee law, and is also useful for caseworkers and advocates handling cross-border child protection where asylum status is involved*. (unhcr.org)

4. **UNHCR Technical Guidance: Child-Friendly Procedures (2021) –** Practical guidance to ensure protection procedures, including arrival and reception, Registration, Refugee Status Determination, Best Interests Procedure (BIP) and Durable Solutions as child-friendly. It provides descriptive guidance on the six components of child-friendly procedures: Accessibility and Safety; Condusive Physical Environment; Skills and Attitudes of Personnel; Information and Child Participation; Sensitivity to Children's Age, Maturity, Background and Situation; and Support Measures and Safeguards (unhcr.org)

4. **Your Guide to Protection Case Management (2023)** – Practical, human-rights based guidance and standard forms for protection case management (helpful for mixed/forced displacement contexts). *This is a broader protection sector document, useful to complement the Case Management Guidelines.* (globalprotectioncluster.org)

5. **UNHCR** Guidance on Supervised Independent Living for Unaccompanied Children (2021) – A UNHCR guidance providing practical details on programmatic approach to establishing and strengthening supervised independent living arrangements for unaccompanied children for whom family-based alternative care options are limited, and guidance on approaches protection and living arrangements for children transitioning to adulthood. (unhcr.org)

5. **Toolkit on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (2017)** – Inter-agency toolkit providing practical tools and step-by-step guidance for identification, interim care, guardianship, family tracing and reintegration across borders. It supports the implementation of core principles and capacity-building in programming for unaccompanied and separated children. *It is aimed at front-line practitioners, government authorities and NGOs who identify, protect and support unaccompanied or separated children in migration and displacement contexts across jurisdictions.* (iom.org)

Training courses and e-learning (for front-line staff, supervisors and government counterparts)

6. **Children on the Move: Core skills and knowledge for social workers and para social workers (2025) –** Training focused on the unique needs, risks and protection considerations for children migrating across borders (unaccompanied, separated, child survivors, etc.). Training modules can be adapted and integrated into existing social work/child protection curricula or delivered as in-service training. *Useful for front-line workers and national authorities in identifying, safeguarding and case-managing children in transit or after crossing borders*. (iss-usa.org)

7. **UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines Training Pack** – Training material designed for front-line caseworkers and supervisors, covering the basics of child protection case management and legal/ethical frameworks (including modules like assessment, planning, implementation, etc.). *Useful as a 'starting standard' training for staff working in refugee/displacement settings, to ensure consistency in skills and understanding.* (unhcr.org)

8. **UNHCR Best Interests Procedure for Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children at Risk** –A self-paced microlearning online course that covers legal and policy underpinnings of BIP, case management steps and how to implement BID processes, including in emergency or cross-border situations. *It is for staff across United Nations agencies, governments, NGOs and protection caseworkers.* (agora.unicef.org)

9. **Child Protection Case Management Training (2023)** – Ready-to-deliver training curriculum, facilitator guide, participant workbook and competency framework for case management. The foundational training covers the case management process as well as the foundational knowledge that is required to work meaningfully, safely and helpfully with children and families throughout. *This training package offers solid foundations to case workers, front-line teams and supervisors, as well as ongoing skill-building and additional in-depth training in complementary areas.* (alliancecpha.org)

10. **Introduction to Case Management for Refugee Service Providers** – Practical, seven-module introductory course on strengths-based case management (not child-specific). *It supports refugee service providers in the provision of case management services for refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable immigrants in a resettlement or integration programme.* (kayaconnect.org)

11. **Reintegration Handbook: Module 6 – A child rights approach to the sustainable reintegration of migrant children and families (2020)** – A module aimed at child-protection practitioners, migration and reintegration specialists, and national authorities. *It provides a child rights framework for reintegration of migrant children and families and practical guidance on how to design, implement and monitor reintegration programmes with a rights-based lens*. (publications.iom.int)

12. **IOM E-Campus –** Courses and webinars on child protection, information management and data analysis for protection. (ecampus.iom.int)

Practical forms, templates and SOPs (to adapt and adopt)

13. **BIP Toolbox and BIP templates (2021)** – Forms used in BID and documentation; adapt to include cross-border transfer decisions and receiving country contact points. *Essential for legal precision and evidence trail.* (alliancecpha.org)

14. **Protection case management forms (2023)** – Assessment templates, referral/consent/closure forms and supervision checklists used in protection case management guidance (p. 87 and 100). *These could be used as the base for cross-border case transfer forms (add sections for consent, data-sharing and receiving-state responsibilities).* (globalprotectioncluster.org)

15. **'Operationalizing Protection of Children in Mixed Movements in the Route-Based Approach'** – A UNHCR operational note on a specific approach to children on the move (including cross-border coordination, case transfer considerations and recommended state/agency roles), it includes practical steps for assessing whether cross-border coordination exists and how to enact case transfer safely. *Good for designing SOPs for cross-border case transfer and continuity of care.* (unhcr.org)

16. **Inter-agency Child Protection Case Management Data Protection and Information Sharing Protocol (2024) –** Protocol template/agreement document for agencies to sign on to. It lays out guiding principles, roles, who holds what data, under what circumstances data is shared, how to protect data (storage, encryption, access) and how to ensure ethical practice. *It can be adapted for CBCM, setting out responsibilities of each agency (origin and receiving), what minimum data is shared and what confidentiality safeguards are in place.* (alliancecpha.org)

Systems, workforce and supervision (for national authorities)

17. **Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection (2019)** – Global guidance for national authorities, social service institutions and NGOs. It focuses on planning, developing and supporting the social service workforce (paid and unpaid) to build sustainable capacity for prevention, response and case management in child protection systems. This guidance is not cross-border-specific, but it's highly relevant as a foundation, ensuring that the social service workforce is equipped and supported to engage in cross-border coordination when required. *Useful for strengthening workforce systems: supervision, curriculum and training, retaining staff, and ensuring workforce coverage and competency.* (socialserviceworkforce.org)

18. **Proposed Guidance on Developing Minimum Social Service Workforce Ratios (2020)** – Guidance for national authorities and child protection system planners to help define minimum staffing ratios for social service workforce (including caseworkers, supervisors, auxiliary staff) to ensure case management, supervision and coverage are realistic and sustainable. *Useful when planning budgets, staffing for cross-border case roles or advocating for adequate workforce investments.* (socialserviceworkforce.org)

Specialized/complementary resources (GBV, trafficking, data protection, child labour)

19. **Cross-Border Care, Safety and Risk Mitigation for Child and Adolescent Survivors on the Move (2020)** – Short, operational guidance on continuity of care and safety for child survivors (including migrant, asylum-seeking or other displaced girls who have experienced GBV and boys who have experienced sexual violence) moving across international borders (risk mitigation, safe referral, sharing case info securely). *In practical checklist style for front-line workers and protection focal points, the guidance is designed for use in contexts where there are no existing guidance or protocols in place to support cross-border referral and support for child or adolescent survivors on the move. Important when cases involve sexual violence, trauma or multisector referrals.* (gbvaor.net)

20. **Identification of Victims/Persons 'At-Risk' of Trafficking in Human Beings** – A UNICEF Europe and Central Asia regional tool for front-line responders (border/immigration officials, child protection authorities, social workers, NGO staff) providing indicators, screening methods and child-friendly communication techniques to identify and refer children at risk of human trafficking, especially in displacement or cross-border situations. *Useful for orienting staff to risk factors and standardized screening/referral practices in the Europe and Central Asia region.* (unicef.org)

21. **Data Protection and Information Sharing for Child Protection Case Management in Humanitarian Settings including Specific Considerations for Settings with Refugees (2024)** — Provides principles, standards, processes and tools for how data (especially child protection case data) should be collected, stored, shared, consented and destroyed. Includes special guidance where BIP is involved

and explicitly deals with settings involving refugees and thus cross-border movement. *It helps in establishing trust and legality when transferring case data between agencies or across national jurisdictions.* (alliancecpha.org)

22. **Preventing and Responding to Child Labour in Humanitarian Action (2021)** — A global toolkit for humanitarian actors, government staff, NGOs and coordinating bodies which offers risk analysis, programme design guidance, and tools and case studies to prevent and respond to child labour (including worst forms) in crisis settings. *Useful for front-line workers and protection authorities planning multisector responses, assessments and referral systems.* (alliancecpha.org)