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**Course: Diploma in Child Protection in Humanitarian Crises**

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**Module three assignments**

**QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the main four sections of psychological support of children in emergencies
2. Discuss the consequences of emergency situations to children
3. What are the consequences of emergencies at the community level?
4. Children engagement in fighting groups and forces as well as gangs is common in humanitarian crises. What are the factors that will push minors to getting involved in such activities and how can this be reversed from a professional point of view?
5. Going to school is very important way of imparting psychosocial support. Do you agree with the statement? Support your answer citing various examples
6. Lack of basic commodities normally for children when in emergency situations, is likely to bring about psychological discomfort for the minors who may not understand what they are undergoing. As an expert in this area, how would you prescribe therapy for this situation
7. **Discuss the main four sections of psychological support of children in emergencies**

In emergencies, people are affected in different ways and require different kinds of supports. A key to organising psychosocial support is to develop a layered system of complementary supports that meets the needs of different groups. This may be illustrated by a pyramid. All layers of the pyramid are important and should ideally be implemented concurrently.

**Basic services and security.** The well-being of all people should be protected through the (re)establishment of security, adequate governance and services that address basic physical needs (food, shelter, water, basic health care, control of communicable diseases). In most emergencies, specialists in sectors such as food, health and shelter provide basic services. An MHPSS response to the need for basic services and security may include: advocating that these services are put in place with responsible actors; documenting their impact on mental health and psychosocial well-being; and influencing humanitarian actors to deliver them in a way that promotes mental health and psychosocial well-being. These basic services should be established in participatory, safe and socially appropriate[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Community and family supports.** The second layer represents the emergency response for a smaller number of people who are able to maintain their mental health and psychosocial well-being if they receive help in accessing key community and family supports. In most emergencies, there are significant disruptions of family and community networks due to loss, displacement, family separation, community fears and distrust. Moreover, even when family and community networks remain intact, people in emergencies will benefit from help in accessing greater community and family supports. Useful responses in this layer include family tracing and reunification, assisted mourning and communal healing ceremonies, mass communication on constructive coping methods, supportive parenting programmes, formal and non-formal educational activities, livelihood activities and the activation of social networks, such as through women’s groups and youth clubs.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Focused, non-specialised supports.** The third layer represents the supports necessary for the still smaller number of people who additionally require more focused individual, family or group interventions by trained and supervised workers (but who may not have had years of training in specialised care). For example, survivors of gender-based violence might need a mixture of emotional

and livelihood support from community workers. This layer also includes psychological first aid (PFA) and basic mental health care by primary health care workers.

**Specialised services.** The top layer of the pyramid represents the additional support required for the small percentage of the population whose suffering, despite the supports already mentioned, is intolerable and who may have significant difficulties in basic daily functioning. This assistance should include psychological or psychiatric supports for people with severe mental disorders whenever their needs exceed the capacities of existing primary/general health services. Such problems require either (a) referral to specialised services if they exist, or (b) initiation of longer-term training and supervision of primary/general health care providers. Although specialised services are needed only for a small percentage of the population, in most large emergencies this group amounts to thousands of individuals.

**Question 2. Discuss the consequences of emergency situations to children**

**Consequences of emergency situations on the family and household hence children in the following ways.**

* Displacement, insecurity and other factors can lead to a decrease or loss of household income. This loss can have far-reaching effects on children including poor nutrition and reduced access to basic services such as health care and education. In addition, parents and other adult care givers may have less time to care for children as they seek economic opportunities to provide for basic needs.
* During periods of displacement, families may be forced to live in crowded accommodations that present risks to health, hygiene and safety. Importantly, there may also be a lack of privacy, creating additional stress on families and perhaps changing social and cultural norms within a household.
* Traditional gender and status roles may change with the potential losses of male heads of household, or the need for all family members, including women and children to assist in providing household income.
* The stress of all of the losses and changes created by the emergency may create strain within families that can lead to substance abuse and violence.

This is not an exhaustive list of the consequences emergencies can have on children, their families and communities. However, they are among the most common and significant. There are several additional consequences which must be taken into consideration when developing programmes for children’s protection and psychosocial well-being. These consequences and are discussed below

Separation. The risk of children’s separation from their parents or guardians greatly increases in situations of conflict and some natural disasters. Children can become separated either accidentally during evacuation, or when fleeing from danger; or deliberately when children are abandoned, abducted, recruited into an armed force, orphaned or have run away from home. Children who have been separated are at an increased risk of various forms of abuse and exploitation. Many separated children are vulnerable to becoming involved in criminal activity, drug abuse, and other high risk behaviours as a result of coercion by predatory adults or their own exploration of newfound independence. Unaccompanied girls are at especially high risk of sexual abuse, and boys of participation in violence and armed conflict.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Violence, Abuse and Exploitation. Due to the breakdown of protective mechanisms in traditional families and communities, and the potential for violence, children in emergencies are often at an increased risk for exposure to violence. This violence can take many forms; physical, emotional or sexual abuse, exploitative labour, trafficking, torture, abduction, various forms of gender-based violence.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Very young children, children in poor health or with disabilities, children belonging to marginalised ethnic groups and girls are the most vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation. Due to poverty and desperation some children may feel forced to exchange sex for such basic necessities as food and shelter.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Sexual violence and inappropriate sexual activity is a particular concern in emergency situations. Such violence can take a variety of forms including rape, commercial exploitation, and sexual and domestic abuse. UNHCR defines sexual violence as all forms of sexual threat, assault, interference, and exploitation, including ‘statutory rape’ and molestation without physical harm or penetration.

Violence, abuse and exploitation have potentially devastating effects on the physical and mental health of children, including emotional distress, health risks from physical injury or contraction of sexually transmitted infections including HIV and the additional stress resulting from sexual abuse or exploitation. All of these impacts can have long-lasting developmental implications for individuals.

1. **What are the consequences of emergencies at the community level?**

**Consequences of emergencies at the community level**

Emergency situations affect not only the individuals and households of a community, they may also have a significant impact on the services available in a community and the social norms that provide a sense of safety and support well-being.

Loss of services

* A lack of health services may also mean inadequate immunisation, reproductive health care, neo-natal care and paediatric programmes. The capacity to control infectious diseases likely will also be compromised. These effects will have considerable impacts on the healthy development of children and adolescents.[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Lack of clean water and adequate sanitation will pose particular threats to the health of a growing child, particularly infants who are at high risk of diarrhoeal diseases.
* A breakdown in law and order may lead to violations of legal rights ranging from discrimination and the denial of inheritance rights for women and children to arbitrary detention, military recruitment of children or a lack of basic services. There may also be a subsequent increase in criminality and lack of protective measures for vulnerable groups, especially children in conflict with the law.[[7]](#footnote-7)
* Loss of educational opportunities can have far-reaching effects on children’s development. Children whose primary education is disrupted often find it difficult to return to schooling later in their childhood. Girls are particularly likely to discontinue education. The absence of basic education violates the rights of children and can be a life-long handicap

Breakdown of community supports

* Loss of peers for children and adolescents means a loss of the emotional support and social interaction which comes from other children and young people. As adolescents and young adults are developing their own identities, they begin to distance themselves from their parents or adult care givers. They form strong bonds with boys and girls their own age children can communicate freely and explore new roles and boundaries. With the death and displacement that may come in emergency situations, the loss of peers, if even temporarily, can be a source of enormous distress for children and adolescents.
* Traditional cultural institutions often exist to help those most vulnerable in communities by providing financial resources during difficult times, assistance with burial and other transitional rites or spiritual guidance and the transmission of cultural knowledge that binds communities. These may be weakened during emergencies, and their resources may be overwhelmed by the massive needs of the community.
* Cultural norms and values may undergo change due to the disruption of communal practices and influences from outside forces that come with the relief effort. While may offer the possibility of creating positive change for groups, especially women, children and others who might have been marginalised prior to the emergency. These changes, however, can produce stress and tensions that impact the well-being of everyone in the community.
* Social tensions often increase during emergencies when needs are enormous and resources limited. These tensions can strain community cohesion, even leading to divisions within the group or conflict between different parts of the community. Already vulnerable or marginalised members of the community may be of even greater risk of further exclusion.
* Can cause an unexpected number of deaths and wounded or sick people that exceed the local resources capacity to respond and require external aid.[[8]](#footnote-8)
* Can destroy health infrastructure not only affecting the immediate response, but also disrupting preventive activities, leading to long-term consequences with increased morbidity and mortality.
* Can have adverse effects on the environment that will increase the risk for infectious transmissible diseases and environmental hazards. This will impact morbidity, premature death, and future quality of life.
* Can affect the psychological and social behavior of the community.
* Can cause shortages of food, with severe nutritional consequences.
* Can cause large movements of the population, both spontaneous and organized, to areas where health services might not be able to handle the excessive requirement.

1. **Children engagement in fighting groups and forces as well as gangs is common in humanitarian crises. What are the factors that will push minors to getting involved in such activities and how can this be reversed from a professional point of view?**

A child soldier is defined here as a child who participate actively in a vio-lent conflict by being member of an organization that applies violence in a systematic way. The standard definition of a child as a person below 18 years old is used by most NGOs engaged in child soldier advocacy and much of the received research of the phenomenon (Goodwin-Gill & Cohen, 1994; Brett & Specht, 2004).

During the 1983-2005 north-south war in Sudan, thousands of child soldiers were used by southern rebel groups including the SPLA that became South Sudan’s official military after the 2005 peace deal[[9]](#footnote-9). After the CPA In 2005, thousands of children were released, many from militias that had been absorbed into the SPLA.10 by 2012 some 4,000 children had been released.[[10]](#footnote-10)

During their 2011-2013 insurgency, a group called the South Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SSLA/M), initially headed by Bapiny Monytuel, and used children in their rebellion against the South Sudanese government.[[11]](#footnote-11) Some 200 children from this force were due to be released after Monytuel agreed to an amnesty deal in 2013. In addition, many hundreds of child soldiers fought in the 2012–2013 rebellion headed by David Yau Yau in Pibor area of Jonglei state. With the assistance of UNICEF and the government, Yau Yau in 2015 released 1,755 children from his forces.

In south Sudan like many other countries around the world, there various reasons and factors that lead minors to getting involved in fighting and wars.

Conscription or forcefully recruitment. Many boys and girls have been fighting because they have been forced to, in the most brutal ways, for instance boys were recruited at gun point by soldiers, were arrested and then put in detention facilities until they agreed to fight or were simply abducted, handed a gun and then, sometimes within a day, thrown into battle.

In the context of the wars most boys joined conflicts to provide for the best chance of surviving the war. Without the protection of a gun and an armed group, many boys believed they would have been even more vulnerable to being killed because of their ethnicity or assumptions about their allegiances.

Access food or money. In South Sudan, this has been one of the reasons boys join conflicts. For instance in Bentiu, Human Rights Watch documented several cases, where boys as young as 12 years old and often from the poorest families or living without families, went to work for commanders as bodyguards or as servants. Poor conditions in the Protection of Civilians area in the UN Bentiu base also contributed to boys leaving to join armed forces

To defend communities and cattle. The boys joined armed groups not just to protect themselves but also out of a strong sense of responsibility to defend their communities and cattle from attack. In South Sudan fighting has often been seen as part of fulfilling a necessary role, especially as army and police have done little over the years to protect communities, and a way to get a gun to be able to continue as a community protector and sometime cattle raider in the future. Cattle raiding is common practice among most communities in South Sudan, most youth joined local defence to defend their communities from numerous attacks by raiders.

In South Sudan among some communities such as cattle keepers’ boys of ages of 14 and 18 usually viewed themselves as members of an age set who would ideally as able warriors, and as such with a duty not only to those they loved, but also to themselves. Among the Dinka, Nuer and Murle culture youth cannot run away of being a warrior, the community will insult you if you hide like a woman.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**The involvement of children in fighting can be reduced through the following possible ways discussed below.**

Supporting and enforcing youth rights, the rights of children and young people are enshrined in international law and most domestic laws and the state has an obligation to protect and promote them. The options include supporting the development and implementation of national youth policies and legal rights for youth, protecting the rights of children and young people, promoting accountable child- and youth-friendly security and justice services, empowering and informing young people and their families to hold state actors accountable, and supporting preventative programmes to protect youth at risk and their families.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Supporting parents. Increasing safe, stable and nurturing relationships are parenting training, provision of social support for parents and families, and the creation of social environments that support and protect children. Evidence from developed countries shows that the life skills acquired in social development programmes aimed at building social, emotional and behavioural competencies can prevent youth violence. Preschool enrichment programmes, which provide children with academic and social skills at an early age, also appear promising. These effects are most pronounced in children from poor families and neighbourhoods.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Education is highly valued by youth in many places and is essential to prepare them for adulthood, for participating in the workforce and for instilling values of citizenship, responsibility and co-operation. However, access to education is often highly unequal, which can be a major source of frustration for some young people and also the education provided is sometimes poorly matched to the life skills young people need in the job market. include delivering emergency education for conflict-affected and displaced populations; supporting the rapid rehabilitation, equipping and staffing of schools; improving equality of access to education; supporting accelerated “catch-up” programmes; supporting non-formal, vocational education linked to employment programmes, secondary and tertiary education; ensuring the relevance of education and training to the local job market; and supporting curriculum reform and development, as well as teacher training.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Family protective factors include parental involvement with their children, reasonable disciplinary measures, clear expectations of behaviour, open lines of communication and a support network of other adults that offers a variety of experiences and viewpoints.

A strong community infrastructure can serve as a protective factor. Communities can generate activities for youth that offer opportunities to make decisions and share responsibility, helping them to increase their skills and self-confidence as well as contribute to the community. Structures within communities, such as faith-based organisations in sub-Saharan Africa, help build youth resilience by giving them a sense of identity and belonging as well as a place to grow and practise adult skills such as leadership.

Protective factors on a societal level include national and local policies and basic services that support child and youth-oriented programmes, reduced group conflict, reduced economic inequality, changed cultural norms to end tolerance of violence and increased adult understanding of and engagement with young people.

Supporting youth participation in the society and economy. Much research on young people and their involvement in gangs and violent groups discusses the role these groups play in creating a sense of status and belonging for young people, especially those who may have frustrated expectations and may lack opportunities to participate in the economic and social life of their communities and nations. By promoting youth political participation, supporting youth leadership and development programmes and supporting youth centres, donors can build greater participation and inclusion of young people in their societies as a way to embrace their potential and meet their needs.

Establishing family and child protection units in police stations. Establish family and child protection nnits are to strengthen child-friendly procedures. The FC PU are designed to provide a “one-stop-shop” of professional services to children who have survived crimes, witnessed crimes, or are accused of having committed an offence

**5. Going to school is very important way of imparting psychosocial support. Do you agree with the statement? Support your answer citing various examples**

I do agree with the statement that “going to school is very important way of imparting psychosocial support” in the following ways;

All children have an absolute right to basic education. Established as a human right in some of the earliest United Nations declarations, the right to free and compulsory primary education without discrimination is now enshrined in international law. [[16]](#footnote-16) The 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child. Article 28 calls for states to make primary education compulsory and free to all, and to encourage the development of accessible secondary, and other forms of, education. Quality and relevance is detailed in Article 29, which mandates an education that builds on a child’s potential and supports their cultural identity. Psychosocial support and enriched curriculum for conflict-affected children are both emphasized in this article.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Education can play a fundamental role in protection. On a practical level, there are several components of education that, when combined, play a part in addressing children’s protection needs:

A safe space and a supervised environment can protect both a child’s body and their mind. Schools, as a nearly universal structure, are often the first place families look toward to provide this security for their children. Other educational activities, such as organised sport, recreation, or children’s clubs, may also provide a similar safe place. Participation in structured activities gives children stability that they lack in the midst of an emergency. Daily routines that include children’s attendance at school can help families regain a sense of normality and ease parents’ fears for their children.[[18]](#footnote-18) In schools the children will be able to play and have enjoyment in their childhood lives. For example, physical education games, athletics, football matches, and many other games that they get at school will make them become better people in their nearest future. For example, games like football make children to grow knowing it and taking it as part of their life others take it to be their career for life

Learning to cope with increased risks. Education programmes can impart important messages related to the risks that arise from a crisis. Areas addressed might include hygiene, HIV/AIDS or landmine safety. Knowledge about these topics can individually protect children and help them cope with the impact of the emergency at a practical level.

Care for vulnerable groups. Education can play a critical role in caring for vulnerable populations such as girls, children with disabilities, or those from ethnic minority communities. Ideally, services should include all children, with special efforts made to ensure access to schools for disadvantaged or vulnerable groups. This is particularly important when the emergency increases children’s vulnerability (eg, landmines/violence create disabilities, ethnic groups are targeted).[[19]](#footnote-19)

Shielding from exploitation. Within the classroom environment, teachers and peers can oversee children who may be vulnerable to drug traffickers, military recruitment or the sex trade. For instance, school officials can alert other authorities if recruitment of children into the armed forces or abduction for other purposes is taking place.

Psychosocial support. While it is generally understood that schools nurture cognitive development, education also plays a central role in providing psychological and social support. Education efforts can play a role in helping communities to understand and cope with both their own and their children’s reactions to the emergency. For instance for kits at the early age they will be able to discover a lot of things and meet other children with the similar age and have good relationships with them. Most people believe that sending children to school early, the faster they catch up with society and make them grow up smart. Attending pre-school is the most excellent way for children before attending primary school because in the pre-school they will be taught basic knowledge or skills that will assist them in their further study.

Restoration of communities. Working together to build or manage a school can foster informal links within the community and lead towards other collective initiatives. Education opportunities for children can also free parents to focus on earning income or managing domestic responsibilities. Resulting reductions of stress at home will benefit the whole family. Help to develop their mental and interpersonal skills at the early age. These help children to be able to interact with members from different communities, for example elders, how to present their issues to their parents, how to communicate with their peers and other group of people in the communities.

Therefore in conclusion, education services are a normalising force in children’s lives both during and after a crisis event. As well as offering practical survival skills and alternative perspectives to organised violence, quality education can provide children with a sense of hope and aspirations for the future. Education can change the lives of children and their families not only the quantity of lessons, but also the quality of education provided.

**6. Lack of basic commodities normally for children when in emergency situations, is likely to bring about psychological discomfort for the minors who may not understand what they are undergoing. As an expert in this area, how would you prescribe therapy for this situation?**

In emergency contexts, it is important to reaffirm the fundamental right of everyone to have access to adequate and safe food. The Humanitarian Charter and the Minimum Standards (1998) aim to quantify people’s requirements for water and sanitation, food and nutrition, shelter and health care. Taken together, the Humanitarian Charter and the Minimum Standards contribute to an operational framework for accountability in diverse humanitarian assistance efforts.[[20]](#footnote-20) Therefore the lack of such basic commodities greatly affects children who most vulnerable during emergency situation.

The CRC articles (. 23, 24 and 27) states that the right of children to humane living standards and adequate health services should be well established. During emergency situation when children are cold, hungry and without shelter, they do not develop well and they become ill quickly. If services related to food, water, environmental sanitation, shelter and basic health services are not properly planned and delivered, children are the first to die. As an expert I would prescribe therapy for this in the following ways;

A standard food ration:In a general food distribution, a standard food ration5 is provided to every beneficiary without distinction. Population sub-groups with obvious additional nutritional requirements (e.g. malnourished children) may require an additional ration over and above the standard basic ration.[[21]](#footnote-21) Timely distribution of an adequate, basic ration:At the onset of an emergency,ensuring an adequate basic ration for the needy population is crucial. The quick provision of an adequate ration not only saves lives, but also reduces the likelihoodof later having to introduce more costly and cumbersome interventions such as selective feeding programmes.

Providing fresh food items during general food distribution ration (or facilitating access to fresh foods) and this could be through cash programing through vouchers or provision of cash to the beneficiaries.

Promoting the production of vegetables and fruit through supports self-reliance activities by distributions of vegetables kits to beneficiaries and also through provision of fresh foods of preferred choice of beneficiaries.

As an expert I will give priority to ensuring availability of clean water and adequate sanitation are in place in the camps, settlement and centres during emergency situation. This will help to avoid diarrhoea which is one of the single most common and most serious threats to the lives of young children. Also provision of water containers in camps and settlements where children are expected to carry water from watering points to their homes, the size and type of water containers must be considered. Children cannot lift and carry large and heavy containers.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Ensure the availability and an adequate standard of shelter and environment, with particular concern for space, privacy and security. Mostly, the shelter and spacial environment imposed upon beneficiaries by humanitarian agencies, particularly when families are forced into shared facilities.

Playgrounds and Space. The availability, distribution and location of shelter, schools, playgrounds or centres and recreational facilities all affect the safety and well-being of children. Lack of space for play may force children away from their parents into remote places and streets.

I will ensure that children have adequate clothing and blankets. Where such essentials are lacking, I will attempt to find participatory ways in which parents and children contribute to producing or acquiring them. Children require better and more efficient clothing than adults. The frequent lack of warm winter clothes and adequate nutrition make children extremely vulnerable to the cold. They may also, in certain situations, need sleeping bags or extra blankets.

Therefore in conclusion, the most important factor in predisposing children to high mortality during the emergency situation is an inadequate food ration. Parents and adults have the primary responsibility for providing food and ensuring the health of their children. The World Food Programme is the responsible UN agency in resource mobilization of basic food commodities, and UNHCR for other essential commodities which are called complementary commodities. The basic food commodities include: cereals, oil, sugar, salt, blended foods, and a protein-rich food such as pulses/beans or fish and meat in dry or canned form. Complementary food items include: fresh meat/fish, vegetables, condiment and spices, dried skimmed milk and high energy-high protein biscuits[[23]](#footnote-23)

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