

Unaccompanied and Separated children
Standard Operating Procedures
(UASC SOPs)
February 2015

UASC Task force



Background

- These standard operating procedures (SOPs) establish the roles and responsibilities of government agencies (Family Protection Department (FPD), Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Ministry of Social Development) and UN agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA) and other case management national or international agencies (IRC, IMC, JRF, IFH/NHF) regarding the working procedures for the care and protection of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) as part of the refugee response in Jordan.
- These UASC SOPs should be read in conjunction with the Interagency Emergency Standard Operating Procedures for prevention of and response to Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection in Jordan.

Key guiding principles

- **Best interests of the child:** Decision making regarding care arrangements and family reunification should always be guided by a holistic and comprehensive assessment of the child's situation and what will be in his/her best interests. It should be conducted by competent and trained child protection staff.
- **Preventive Care for Children:** "Support efforts to keep children in, or return them to, the care of their family or failing this, to find another appropriate and permanent solution."
- **Family-based Care:** Family-based care is preferable to the use of residential care, particularly over the long-term.
- **Community-based Care:** The core approach of alternative care in emergency and refugee settings is 'community-based.' Refugee children should be cared for within the refugee community not with host country caregivers to prevent loss of their refugee status and identity.

Standard Case management principles

- Promote the child's best interest
- Ensure the safety of the child
- Comfort the child
- Ensure appropriate confidentiality
- Involve the child in decision-making
- Treat every child fairly and equally (principle of non-discrimination and inclusiveness)
- Strengthen children's resiliencies

Key relevant rights of Separated and Unaccompanied Children

- The right to non-discrimination (art. 2 and art 22 for refugees CRC)
- The right to life and survival (art. 6 CRC)
- The right to health and development (art. 6 CRC)
- The right to a nationality, legal identity and birth registration (art. 7CRC)
- The right to not be separated from their parents (art. 9 CRC)
- The right to participate in decisions about their future (art. 12 CRC)

Objectives

The overall objectives of the Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) are to:

- Standardise and summarise procedures for UASC that all organisations working with UASC should adhere to; ensure compliance with the internationally agreed standards described in the Inter Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children; and ensure compliance with relevant national laws and procedures.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of agencies working within the spirit of complementarity and cooperation so that each member knows the role for which the agency stands accountable for in the process of (i) case management through Best Interest Procedures (BIA/BID) and follow-up; ii) family tracing and reunification (iii) alternative/interim care arrangements ; and (iv) durable solutions.
- Ensure that UASC receive care and protection they need.

Procedures related to UASC SOPs

- **Prevention of Separation:** Prevention of separation within Syria is not currently addressed within the scope of the SOPs. However there are some separations occurring within Jordan that need to be addressed.
- **Identification and referral of the UASC:** Identification of UASC mainly occurs at registration/ verification sites, at reception areas, during provision of services, Community outreach activities and/or Child Protection or other refugee committees.
- **Documentation of the UASC:** Basic bio data of all identified UASC is documented on the Best interest Assessment for further case management by CP case management organizations in addition to registration with UNHCR.
- **Case management of UASC:** Undertake all the steps of case management as outlined in the national SOPs, and if UASC needs to be removed from his/her current care arrangement in case of domestic violence.

Procedures related to UASC SOPs

- **Family tracing of UASC:** Cross-border and in-country. Referring to UNHCR CP focal points when tracing is needed, Referral to ICRC if UNHCR tracing is unsuccessful. Establishment and maintenance of family links
- **Family verification:** All actors involved in the case will alert each other if there are any situations that require a Best Interests Determination prior to family reunification in complex cases. Reunification processes which may involve departure from camps or the country (to the urban setting, to a third country, to Country of Origin) should be conducted/approved by UNHCR.
- **Family reunification:** Family reunification must be documented on the Family Reunification Form. All movement of children, which involves bail out process, inter-camp transfer, traveling or return, should be coordinated with UNHCR. Manage family reunification including preparation of the child and adult, transportation and paperwork.

Procedures related to UASC SOPs

- **Best Interests Determination (BID):**

Best Interests Determination (BID) describes the formal process with strict procedural safeguards designed to determine the child's best interests for particularly important decisions affecting the child. A BID for UASC is required before any decision or action affecting the life of a child in the following situations:

- 1) Temporary care arrangements
- 2) The identification of durable solutions
- 3) The possible separation of a child from her/his parents
- 4) The identification of durable solutions or care arrangements
- 5) Prior to family reunification in complex cases

Procedures related to UASC SOPs

- **Temporary and long term alternative care arrangements:** Every child will benefit from a BIA as a minimum requirement and BID will be completed. The following types of alternative care are available for UASC:
 - Formalisation of existing family care arrangements
 - Placement of the child into care of family member
 - Temporary hosting
 - Formal fostering
 - Supervised Group Living

Procedures related to UASC SOPs

- **Monitoring and follow up:**
 - Follow-up visits are designed to:
 - Provide support and guidance to both the child and the caregiver on developing and maintaining a healthy and protective relationship
 - Monitor and detect any problems arising between the child and the caregiver or if the care plan is being followed as planned
 - Ensure the child and the family are accessing services and community resources in line with the care plan
 - Frequently, update the child and the caregiver on the progress made towards long-term care solutions, specifically around family reunification
 - Monitor for and mitigate the risk of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation of the child
 - Update the child and the caregiver on the family tracing efforts and exchanging information on the issue which might have emerged since the last visit

Procedures related to UASC SOPs

- **Case closure:**

- a. The child has been placed in long-term care and this care arrangement has been formalised
- b. A minimum of 2 years have gone by since the placement and approval of the BID panel
- c. Follow up has been conducted as a minimum every 12 weeks
- d. All specified elements of the permanency plan have been implemented
- e. The long-term caregiver is satisfied that they no longer need support with the placement
- f. The child has fulfilled all necessary integration criteria. The child is:
 - i. protected from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect
 - ii. engaged with education and / or training activities
 - iii. receiving any necessary health care
 - iv. Actively participating in social activities
 - v. Expressing willingness to remain in the long-term care placement

Or

- A permanent plan has been developed and implemented involving supported independent living, small group homes or foster care, and the child has turned 18 and received services for a minimum of 12 months to support their independent living.
- A child turns 18 whilst in interim care and has received services for a minimum of 12 months to support their independent living.
- The child dies, and all necessary investigations in to cause of death have been conducted and concluded

The child is reunified and reintegrated in her or his family after successful tracing

Resettlement or departure to a third country, voluntary or spontaneous return

UASC SOPs

THANK YOU!