

STRATEGIC SESSION INFORMATION SHEET

From Silos to Synergy: Child-Centred Connected Ecosystems

Tuesday 9 June 2026, 14:30–16:00 CEST | Annual Meeting for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action 2026

Purpose and framing

This session asked a foundational question: is organising humanitarian response around separate technical areas of specialisation (child protection, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), education, early childhood development) the most effective way to serve the children, families and communities those technical areas exist to support? The session invited participants to consider a shared, child-centred "ecosystem" model as an alternative to purely sector-specific delivery.

"The purpose is not to erase sectoral expertise. It is to identify where we can work from a shared foundation."

"If a caregiver or child cannot tell which sector is supporting them, that may not be a problem — it may be the point."

Key discussion points

- **Maysa Jalbout (Director, Education Cannot Wait)** — contributed a video message opening with a simple observation: children do not live their lives in sectors, yet the humanitarian system often does. Speaking as the Global Fund for Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises, rather than as a traditional donor, she pointed to ECW's own cross-sectoral work and a new strategic plan moving beyond standalone MHPSS towards integrated protection. She closed by challenging participants to move from shared responsibility to specialised action, with concrete commitments on what must stop, start, and be strengthened.
- **Amina Kleit (Ana Aqra, Lebanon)** — presented a Lebanon case study of an ongoing shift towards more integrated, community-based service delivery, illustrating what a genuinely child-centred, cross-sectoral model looks like in practice. This does not mean eliminating sectoral expertise, but rather building shared planning, common outcome frameworks, and joint operational systems — for example, shared referral pathways, learning spaces that integrate MHPSS, and joint learning packages — so that different actors can contribute to a collective vision.

"If children already experience life as a whole, the challenge before us is ensuring that our system learns to respond in the same way. The opportunity emerging in Lebanon is not simply better coordination, but gradual shift toward shared responsibility for child well-being"

- **Zeinab Hijazi (UNICEF, MHPSS Global Lead)** — argued that cross-sector collaboration on children's mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) only works if it's clear who is accountable for what. Otherwise, "integration" quietly becomes gap-filling: frontline workers end up absorbing cases beyond their training because no one owns the connections between sectors. Real collaboration, she said, means every layer of support — foundational, non-specialist, and specialist — is properly resourced and linked, not left to frontline workers to patch together.
- **Laurent Chapuis (UNICEF, Child Protection)** — highlights that as a result of increased investments into our respective sectors, we have fallen into a trap of hyper-specialisation of our approaches, tools and guidance and often fail to identify the commonalities across them.

- **Sweta Shah (Brookings Institution, Early Childhood Development)** — named the tension between the need for clear sectoral definitions and identity (for funding and professional standards) and a cluster system that compartmentalises response; short-term donor funding cycles reinforce this compartmentalisation.
- **Aniruddha Kulkarni (Better Care Network)** — proposed reframing care as the outcome, rather than a sectoral output: frontline case workers and community volunteers already blend functions across sectors in practice, and systems should recognise and resource that reality.
- **Natasha Raisch (Harvard EASEL Laboratory)** — observed that social-emotional learning sits at the periphery of the education sector; donor reporting requirements pull implementers back into silos even when integration is the stated goal.

Breakout room highlights

Six breakout rooms worked through a shared scenario sorting typical interventions from across the different areas of specialization into three categories: Common/Shared, Targeted, and Highly Specialised.

- Strong convergence: groups largely agreed on which frontline activities are common or shared across sectors (for example psychosocial first aid, basic registration, and safe spaces), suggesting major potential for joint/integrated, cross-sectoral investment in these foundational functions.
- Most contested: case management and family tracing and reunification. Groups disagreed on how specialised these actually are — some placed them in the "Targeted" tier (requiring closer collaboration between actors), while others put family tracing specifically in "Common/Shared" (something frontline workers across sectors could help start) or in "Highly Specialised" (requiring dedicated expertise). This reflects genuine uncertainty in the sector about how much specialist training these functions really need. It also shows the complexity of many areas of work related to protection of children, that may require further untangling before one can put them in one or more of these categories.
- Groups also reflected on "what surprised us" and estimated what proportion of a child's needs in this scenario could realistically be met through shared/common capacities rather than siloed specialists — estimates that pointed to a larger shared/common space than current programming and funding structures assume.

Dieuwerke Luiten (Porticus) closed the session with a synthesis reflection — "it takes a village to raise a child... we are all inhabitants of that village" — followed by a live Mentimeter exercise inviting each participant to name one personal commitment as a "villager."

Recommendations

- Use the breakout scenario findings as a starting point to map which frontline functions are genuinely common/shared across sectors/areas of specialization, and invest in strengthening these as joint capacities rather than duplicating them through different areas of specialisation.
- Clarify ownership and referral protocols for the "contested middle" — case management and family tracing in particular — where sub-sector responsibility is currently ambiguous and children risk falling through gaps.
- Engage donors on funding models and outcome frameworks that reward integrated, child-centred programmatic models rather than single-sector ones, with longer funding cycles that make cross-sectoral programming viable.
- Build on the fact that local and frontline actors already work across silos: prioritise their leadership and resourcing as a practical entry point for system-wide integration.

Link to session recording can be accessed in [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#) and [Arabic](#).