

# STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN EMERGENCIES THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED MECHANISMS

A DISCUSSION PAPER



# STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN EMERGENCIES THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED MECHANISMS

A DISCUSSION PAPER

Published on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group  
of the UN Protection Cluster  
by Save the Children UK  
1 St John's Lane  
London EC1M 4AR  
UK

First published 2010

© The Save the Children Fund 2010

The Save the Children Fund is a charity registered in England and Wales  
(213890) and Scotland (SC039570). Registered Company No. 178159

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method  
without fee or prior permission for teaching purposes, but not for  
resale. For copying in any other circumstances, prior written permission  
must be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable.

Cover photo: A camp in Leogane, Haiti, one week after  
the massive earthquake that struck in January 2010  
(Photo: Adriana Zehbrauskas/Polaris)

Typeset by Grasshopper Design Company  
Printed by Stephen Austin & Sons Ltd

# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
Abbreviations	v
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 What are community-based child protection mechanisms and what do they do in emergencies?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3 Case studies: how community-based mechanisms can contribute to system-strengthening</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4 Conclusions</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5 Recommendations</b>	<b>27</b>
References	28
The document set for the review	29
Annexes	
1 Terms of reference for the review	33
2 Countries covered by document set	36
3 Interviews	37
4 Literature review matrix	38
5 Example of a planning checklist	39

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This discussion paper was written by Alyson Eynon and Sarah Lilley of Save the Children. It was commissioned by the Child Protection Working Group of the UN Protection Cluster. The authors would like to thank everyone who shared documentation to be considered for this review. We would also like to thank the following people for their valuable input in taking part in interviews and commenting on drafts of this paper.

Michael Wessells, Columbia University  
Katy Barnett, Child Protection Working Group  
Coordinator

Martin Hayes, ChildFund International

John Williamson, USAID Displaced Children  
and Orphans Fund

Jennifer Keane, UNICEF

Win Aye, Save the Children

Janis Ridsdel, Save the Children

Wayne Bleier, War Child UK

Lauri Haines, Save the Children

Shyamol Choudry, Save the Children

Bill Bell, Save the Children

Elli Oswald, World Vision International

Mike Merryman-Lotze, Save the Children

Amanda Melville, UNICEF

Makiba Yamano, World Vision

Nyi Nyi Htwe, World Vision

Emma Fanning, Oxfam

Lucy Batchelor, Save the Children

Ida Hyllested, UNICEF

Severine Chevrel, Watchlist

Jose de Souza, PLAN International East Timor

Shona Bezanon, Save the Children

Lamia Rashid, Save the Children

Sabine Rakotomalala, Terre des hommes

Patricia Hoyos, Save the Children

Sara Valerio, Save the Children

Riad Arar, Veronica Naranjo and the Defence  
for Children International Palestine Team

Hung Tran Ban, Save the Children

Patience Muderwa Kahuyege, UNICEF

Simon Kangeta, Ajedi-Ka Democratic  
Republic of Congo

# ABBREVIATIONS

ARC	Action for the Rights of Children
CBO	Community-based organisation
CFS	Child-friendly space
CPC	Child protection committee
CPFP	Child protection focal point
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSS	Community support structures
CWV	Community welfare volunteer
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FBO	Faith-based organisation
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LCRC	Local Committee on the Rights of a Child (Myanmar)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OPT	Occupied Palestinian territory
RECOPE	Réseau Communautaire de la Protection de l'Enfance

# I INTRODUCTION

This discussion paper was commissioned by the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). It aims to review experience and further the understanding of how community-based child protection mechanisms can contribute to strengthening national child protection systems in emergencies.<sup>1</sup> The paper builds on a number of ongoing global processes on system-strengthening.

The last few years have seen the beginnings of a significant shift in thinking about how best to protect children – with a movement away from child protection programming focused on a single issue or vulnerable group towards strengthening national child protection systems that respond to and prevent all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. This system-strengthening approach is seen as an organising principle to protect children in emergencies, as well as in development contexts. Experience from the Tsunami humanitarian response, for example, has shown that countries with pre-existing national child protection systems were able to respond better to the disaster in terms of protecting children. Emergencies can also provide an opportunity to strengthen child protection systems that were already weak, in terms of ‘building back better’.

There is currently no consensus definition of a national child protection system (see box ‘Terms and definitions’ on page 3), although much work is in hand towards developing one. In the context of an emergency response, the child protection system may include, in practical terms, whatever exists on the ground at that time for the protection of

children in terms of laws, policies, regulations, monitoring processes, services and workers and their availability, quality, reach, integration and coordination. In some emergency contexts, these components may not exist – either because they did not exist before the emergency or because they were destroyed or weakened by the emergency. In other contexts, the components may exist but be weak, ineffective or of low quality and capacity. System-strengthening, a term used throughout this paper, therefore refers to actions taken to improve the functioning, coordination, integration and, ultimately, effectiveness of these components and their interaction. A system is deemed to have been strengthened if there is evidence of, for example:

- additional capacity
- improvement in the quality of processes and services
- expanded reach
- integration or coordination of mechanisms that were previously separate
- improvement in the functioning of processes and mechanisms.

One potential starting point for strengthening child protection systems in emergency contexts is to support community-based mechanisms, which are critical components of the national system. They allow for immediate action at grassroots level following an emergency. Mobilisation of and support for a network of community mechanisms also have potential for significant coverage at scale and may promote long-term sustainability of child protection action beyond emergency recovery. Community mechanisms are also key local ways of supporting

<sup>1</sup> An emergency can typically be defined as a situation where lives, physical and mental wellbeing or development opportunities for children are threatened as a result of armed conflict, disaster or the breakdown of social or legal order and where local capacity to cope is exceeded or inadequate.



social transformation, such as changing social norms, beliefs, attitudes and practices in favour of child protection. In resource-poor settings and places where the government is unable to fulfil its duties, community mechanisms may support and supplement government capacity.

The body of work on system-strengthening to date has consistently highlighted the importance of considering the interaction between community-based child protection mechanisms and other components of child protection systems. The work includes a CPWG discussion paper on child protection systems in emergencies,<sup>2</sup> a concept paper on child protection systems supported by UNICEF, UNHCR and Save the Children,<sup>3</sup> systems mapping in five countries in West and Central Africa<sup>4</sup> and the mapping of child protection systems in Guatemala, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kyrgyzstan Republic and Tunisia.<sup>5</sup> This is a relatively new field of work, but emerging understanding from these documents points to a number of important areas of learning, including the following findings:

- Community mechanisms are a core component of national child protection systems.
- Community mechanisms are important for the functioning of the system and also draw support from the wider system.
- It is important to build on pre-existing mechanisms and practices at community level.
- Ownership and engagement (including by children, families, communities and government) at all levels is important.
- Coordination and harmonisation among these actors are important.

Additionally, the global inter-agency learning initiative on community-based child protection mechanisms, which is exploring the quality and

effectiveness of community mechanisms on children's outcomes, has identified in the first phase of its work the importance of the links between community mechanisms and other components of the system.<sup>6</sup> One hypothesis being tested in this work is that greater levels of coordination between community mechanisms and the wider system may lead to greater effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes for children.

Community-based child protection mechanisms can be connected to components of the national child protection system in several ways, including through:

- referring individual cases from the community to other parts of the system
- information sharing between the community and other parts of the system
- capacity building and/or the provision of financial or human resource support
- supervision and monitoring
- sharing of learning and best practice.

These connections are explored throughout this paper. Many of them are bi-directional, since community mechanisms can support the system but also draw from the wider system.

There is a growing recognition that community-based child protection mechanisms are important components of a child protection system, along with widespread agency programming aimed at strengthening community-based mechanisms in emergency contexts. Nevertheless, there has been limited exploration of and learning around how community-based mechanisms can support system-strengthening in emergencies. The global inter-agency learning initiative on community-based child protection mechanisms identified only a small number of learning documents relating to

<sup>2</sup> K Barnett and J Wedge (2010) *Child Protection Systems in Emergencies: A discussion paper*, Child Protection Working Group

<sup>3</sup> Wulczyn et al (2010) *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key concepts and considerations*, UNICEF, UNHCR and Save the Children

<sup>4</sup> 'Child protection Systems Mapping in West and Central Africa'

<sup>5</sup> Maestral mapping work

<sup>6</sup> M Wessels (2009) *What are we Learning about Protecting Children in the Community: An inter-agency review of evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms*



emergencies, despite the assumption that this approach was widespread; it identified this as a weakness requiring further exploration.

In summary, this paper builds on the current body of work on system-strengthening and the global

inter-agency learning initiative on community-based child protection mechanisms. It attempts to bring these strands together in the context of emergencies in order to further understanding about the role of community-based child protection mechanisms in system-strengthening.

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

There are several terms used in the child protection sector that are defined differently by different organisations. For the purposes of this paper, the following definitions are used:

**Child protection:** measures and structures to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation affecting children.

**Community:** this is a complex term that has been defined in many ways. For a fuller discussion of the term see the report from Phase I of the global inter-agency learning initiative.<sup>7</sup> For this paper, community is defined geographically, emphasising a group of interacting people living in proximity in a particular location such as a village or urban neighbourhood.

**Community-based child protection mechanism:** a network or group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated manner towards child protection goals. Such mechanisms can be indigenous or externally initiated and supported. They may be more formal or informal in their structure and functioning.

**National child protection system:** Although work is underway to define this concept more clearly, there is no current consensus definition.

For this paper, a national child protection system is broadly defined as a comprehensive and interrelated approach to the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence and to the fulfilment of children's rights to protection. Key elements of a child protection system include<sup>8</sup> families, communities and government mechanisms, as well as children themselves. The components of the system broadly include structures, functions, capacities, a continuum of care, processes of care and accountability. They include both more formal and less formal components. Ideally, the components of a child protection system are coordinated and linked to a common goal.

**More formal:** describes structures, mechanisms or processes in the system that have some degree of institutionalised organisation and are officially recognised and mandated. The term 'more formal' can be used to describe structures, mechanisms or processes that exist at all levels, including community level.

**Less formal (or informal):** describes structures, mechanisms or processes whose functioning is less specifically prescribed. Less formal or informal is generally used to describe structures and mechanisms at community or family level.

<sup>7</sup> M Wessels (2009) *What are we Learning about Protecting Children in the Community: An inter-agency review of evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms*, page 22

<sup>8</sup> This broad definition draws on concepts taken from *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key concepts and considerations*, 2010, UNICEF

## OVERVIEW OF THE REVIEW

This paper builds directly on the methodology and approach of the global inter-agency learning initiative on community-based child protection mechanisms. It extends the review of emergency-related documents from that work and attempts to focus more narrowly on how community mechanisms can contribute to system-strengthening in emergencies.

This review primarily considered community mechanisms that had been supported or newly initiated by external agencies in emergencies. Phase I of the global inter-agency learning initiative on community-based child protection mechanisms highlighted the particularly important role of indigenous and traditional mechanisms. Consequently, we made particular efforts in this review to explore the extent to which agencies worked with and strengthened those mechanisms. Generally, however, there was very limited documentation on this approach.

The three broad research questions guiding this review were:

- How can external agencies best support existing, or introduce new, community-based child protection mechanisms in emergencies?
- How can this support strengthen the community level of child protection systems in emergencies?
- How could this contribute to broader system-strengthening?

## METHODOLOGY

As this review was intended to build on the approach of the inter-agency learning initiative on community-based child protection mechanisms, we employed a similar methodology. This included a global literature review and synthesis looking across all regions, as well as telephone interviews with

field-based practitioners to develop a small number of case studies. The methodology employed a five-step process:

### Step 1

A document search was undertaken to collect relevant evaluation reports. To be included, documents had to meet the following criteria:

- they involved evaluation or learning in relation to community-based child protection in emergencies
- they were written in English
- they were written in the last ten years.

Multi-sector evaluations were included if they had a child protection component. The search involved reaching out to all members of the CPWG with a request for evaluations of child protection in emergency responses to be submitted. Save the Children sent a similar request to its own programmes and key networks. In addition, an internet-based search of key document databases was undertaken, including the UNICEF evaluation database,<sup>9</sup> the ALNAP Evaluative Reports database,<sup>10</sup> and the Emergency Capacity Building Evaluation database.<sup>11</sup> A general search was also undertaken on the Child Rights Information Network.<sup>12</sup> The global inter-agency learning initiative had already identified and analysed a number of documents on community-based mechanisms for child protection in emergencies – relevant documents were included and re-analysed for this review.

### Step 2

Once the documents were collected, each one was assessed by one of the two reviewers to determine whether it met the inclusion criteria. At this point, a small number of documents were excluded from the review.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.alnap.org/resources/evaluativereports.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> <http://209.160.33.30/>

<sup>12</sup> [www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)

### Step 3

Each included document was then fully analysed by one of the two reviewers and relevant information and findings were summarised in a matrix. The matrix was developed from that used in the global learning initiative. It included descriptive data related to composition, structure and support of the mechanism and also key findings in relation to the review's objectives (see Annex 4 for example matrix).

### Step 4

Once all documents had been reviewed, both reviewers looked at the full set of matrices and separately identified findings and areas of learning that appeared repeatedly throughout the document set. The reviewers then compared their respective analyses and together undertook a consolidation of the findings.

### Step 5

Once a consolidated list of key findings had been identified, the reviewers went through the set of matrices once again and noted how many times each finding was mentioned across the document set. This step was used to check for bias in reviewers' interpretation and prioritisation of the findings.

Detailed documentation on the process, successes and challenges of supporting community-based child protection mechanisms in emergencies was generally rare. Therefore, three case studies – in Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territory and Timor Leste – were undertaken to capture experience and learning in relation to the project's research questions. The case studies were compiled by reviewing available evaluation documents from the emergencies, followed by key informant interviews with agency personnel involved in implementing the child protection programmes.

## THE DOCUMENT AND CASE STUDY SET

A total of 76 documents from 2003 to 2010 were compiled for the review, of which 59 were identified as relevant after an initial sift. Of the 59 evaluation documents reviewed, 39 were new documents that had not been included in Phase I of the inter-agency learning initiative. Nine documents related to the three case study countries: Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territory and Timor Leste. Key characteristics of the document set are summarised below.

- Nearly half of the documents (45%) related to natural disasters, while 41% related to conflict-related emergencies. The remainder related to both.
- Overall, 23 countries were represented in the document set. Just over half of the documents related to Asia and around a quarter related to Africa. The remainder related to the Middle East (the occupied Palestinian territory and Lebanon), the Pacific (Solomon Islands) and South America (Peru), or multi-country studies across regions. See Annex 2 for full country list.
- Around two-thirds of the documents were evaluations specifically of child protection programmes and a third were multi-sector evaluations. The multi-sector evaluations tended to be related to natural disasters.

## LIMITATIONS

While we intended that this review would demonstrate a global perspective, the document set is largely reflective of experience in Africa and Asia. Despite concerted searching, we found very little documentation of community-based child protection mechanisms in Latin America or the Middle East, although this was affected by the review team's inability to read Spanish and Arabic. The document set was also limited by the fact

that nearly all documents were generated by international organisations and only a handful came from national organisations. This limits the scope of the review to the emergency programming work of international agencies.

Overall, the detail on community-based mechanisms provided in documents was very limited. In particular, the multi-sector evaluations contained little information on the process of supporting community mechanisms and the lessons learned. Since the discourse on national child protection systems is still relatively new, few of the documents reviewed explicitly explored the role of community mechanisms in the context of national child protection systems. Much of this information was therefore taken from key informant interviews and relied on individual views and experiences.

This review identified only a small number of evaluations containing information on multi-sectoral committees whose work included child protection. This would be an interesting area for further research to learn from other sectors' experience.

While it was outside the scope of this review to assess the impact of community-based mechanisms in emergencies on the lives of children, it was observed that less than five documents reviewed contained any real measurement of children's outcomes. With only limited evidence of whether community mechanisms are leading to improvements in children's protection, it is difficult to make both funding and programme planning decisions.

## 2 WHAT ARE COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS AND WHAT DO THEY DO IN EMERGENCIES?

It is important to understand what community-based child protection mechanisms are and what their key characteristics are, as identified in the document set, in order to examine how they can contribute to system-strengthening. The term ‘community-based child protection mechanisms’ encompasses a wide range of models – from individual child protection focal points to groups and networks. It includes mechanisms operating on a voluntary basis to those where individuals are paid full-time. It also includes highly active mechanisms and those that carry out activities on a sporadic basis.

For the purposes of this paper, the definition does not include the range of protective processes that exist in communities such as immediate and extended families, although these are recognised as highly important and influential on children’s protection. It also does not include formally organised community-based organisations (CBOs) or civil society organisations (CSOs), which are also important components in any child protection system. It is noted, however, that in some cases there is a blurred boundary between what we define as a community mechanism and a CBO or CSO.

The level of community ownership varied among the community mechanisms identified in this review. In some cases, external agencies supported

communities to identify, lead and manage responses to child protection issues. In other cases, particularly following natural disasters, communities participated in delivering child protection responses designed and managed by the external agency – for example, supporting distribution of non-food items and the set-up and management of child-friendly spaces. While the latter are community mechanisms (mostly committees) of a sort, they were quite different in scope and function to mechanisms that had higher levels of community ownership.

### WHAT DO COMMUNITY MECHANISMS LOOK LIKE?

The review found that community-based child protection mechanisms come in many different forms and there are multiple ways in which external agencies support them in emergencies. Such mechanisms are called by various names, including: child protection, welfare or wellbeing committees; networks; support groups; advocacy groups; volunteers; focal points; and activity leaders. While the name itself might not appear important, it may have implications for community ownership. For example, in Myanmar, while the term child protection committee is used by Save the Children staff internally, adults and children in communities

are encouraged to give their own name to the community mechanisms in order to foster local ownership.<sup>13</sup>

Overall, mechanisms with several members were more common in the documents reviewed than individual focal points, and typically consisted of between ten and 15 people. Examples of much larger groups, with up to 40 members, were also found. In DRC and Kenya,<sup>14</sup> groups were challenged by having large numbers of members and attempts were made to reduce the size to increase efficiency in carrying out tasks. However, in Myanmar, Save the Children noted that larger groups could be beneficial, with ten core members and 30 to 40 informal members who supported dissemination of awareness-raising messages and information.<sup>15</sup>

## COMPOSITION

Throughout the documents reviewed, community-based child protection mechanisms were composed of a number of key people from local communities. Around a third of the documents highlighted the importance of engaging people perceived to be respected and influential members of society, such as community and religious leaders, elders, teachers, health workers, members of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or CBOs and local government staff.

Issues relating to the dynamics of power and influence within community mechanisms were documented in 15% of evaluation reports and raised through key informant interviews. A recurring question was the extent to which community-based mechanisms truly represented the diversity of

interests within their communities. For example, one issue raised by community members in an evaluation of a Côte d'Ivoire project working against gender-based violence was that every NGO and government project enlisted the help of the same people in the community, in particular the limited number of literate community members.<sup>16</sup>

Fifteen per cent of the documents mentioned gender issues and referred to challenges in engaging both women and men in community-based mechanisms following emergencies. Twelve per cent of evaluations<sup>17</sup> highlighted the fact that traditional power structures often limited women's participation in child protection activities and decision making. One approach used by agencies to combat this was to initiate and support separate mechanisms for men and women. For example, in Afghanistan, separate committees for men, women, boys and girls were formed.<sup>18</sup> Other approaches included ensuring that the venue and timing of community mechanism meetings were suitable for women's participation. For example, in South Sudan women were able to play an active role in the community-based child protection mechanism if it was geographically and socially close to a woman's home.<sup>19</sup> This approach helped to reduce men's reluctance to allow women to work outside of the home; it also helped women to feel closer and more effectively connected, as members often knew each other outside of the meetings. In contrast, a small number of evaluations mentioned challenges in engaging men in community mechanisms. In Save the Children's project in India, for example, it was noted that where child protection committees were developed from existing community organisations, members were often drawn from women's groups, leading to low engagement by men.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Information provided by key informant

<sup>14</sup> Document number 11 and 21 and information from key informant

<sup>15</sup> Information from key informant

<sup>16</sup> Document number 57

<sup>17</sup> Document numbers 4, 9, 12, 15, 17, 30, 57

<sup>18</sup> Document number 1

<sup>19</sup> Document number 17

<sup>20</sup> Document number 10

Gender composition could also change over time as an emergency situation evolved. For example, child protection focal points supported by PLAN International in Timor Leste were initially composed predominantly of men.<sup>21</sup> Explanations for this included power relations and perceptions that the crisis had reduced women's coping capacities and increased their responsibilities for looking after their families. However, after six to eight months, there was a significant increase in women becoming involved in focal points, which PLAN felt improved the effectiveness of its child protection work.

Although around a third of the documents stated the importance of having influential members of society engaged in community mechanisms, it was also noted that care should be taken to ensure that members are able to reach out to all members of the community, including the most vulnerable children. If adults and children view the mechanism as being politicised or formed of people who are biased or prejudiced, the mechanism is unlikely to be acceptable or effective. For example, in South Sudan, an evaluation of the Community-based Child Protection Network Model concluded that the inclusion of chiefs in the Network is beneficial because they can offer insight and access to traditional protection mechanisms. However, they can also politicise the work. The evaluation found that early management of this tension by staff helped to maintain clarity about the role of the chiefs.<sup>22</sup>

The ethnic composition of community mechanisms was only mentioned in two of the documents reviewed and only in the context of Sudan. Save the Children in South Sudan found that different ethnic groups prioritised protection issues

differently and had their own traditional ways of addressing them.<sup>23</sup> This suggested the need for community-based mechanisms to be relevant for a range of ethnic groups.

Just under a third of documents reviewed mentioned child participation in some form in community-based mechanisms in emergencies.<sup>24</sup> Around 10% of evaluations described children participating in their own forums, such as children's clubs, youth clubs and safe-space activities, which then linked up with the adult community mechanism.<sup>25</sup> For example, in a project in Pakistan, children's councils were established to link with adult child protection committees. However, the evaluation suggested that these links were very weak.<sup>26</sup>

## URBAN AND RURAL CONTEXTS

Nearly two-thirds of the documents in the set related to mechanisms in rural contexts. Examples of community-based mechanisms operating in urban contexts were observed in Gaza and South Sudan.<sup>27</sup> In South Sudan, it was found that community networks in urban areas might more easily establish links with other system components that are available and in closer proximity. It was also observed that urban contexts may offer more opportunities for engaging women in community mechanisms, but might pose challenges in engaging the greater number of different ethnic groups. In a review of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual or gender-based violence, UNHCR<sup>28</sup> found that gaining access to refugee communities in urban settings was often challenging. Difficulties were encountered in engaging a representative number

<sup>21</sup> Key informant interview

<sup>22</sup> Document number 17

<sup>23</sup> Document number 17

<sup>24</sup> Document number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 28, 44, 49, 60, 63, 71, 75

<sup>25</sup> Document numbers 2, 5, 9, 12, 28, 60, 63

<sup>26</sup> Document number 5

<sup>27</sup> Document numbers 17 and 25

<sup>28</sup> Document number 53



of people with respect to age, gender, ethnicity, disability, etc in community-based mechanisms. Since the evidence base on community-based mechanisms in urban areas is more limited than in rural areas, this should be a topic for further exploration.

## ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS

The functions that community-based child protection mechanisms undertake in emergencies were described throughout the documentation in general terms such as: ‘identifying child protection concerns’, ‘preventing and responding to concerns’, ‘taking action to address’, ‘promoting child rights’, ‘intervention’, ‘reducing risk’, ‘providing support’ and ‘mobilising the community’.

The most common activities undertaken by community mechanisms in emergencies appeared to be:

- awareness raising and mobilisation within communities around child protection concerns and child rights (34% of documents)
- identifying risks and protection concerns within communities and villages and taking action to address those concerns (32% of documents)
- responding to and supporting individual children who voice concerns about their safety or where there is suspected abuse, exploitation, violence or neglect (32% of documents)
- arranging and supporting activities for children, eg, psychosocial support, child-friendly spaces and children’s clubs (24% of documents).

Less frequently mentioned activities were:

- being involved in emergency assessments and immediate-post emergency activities, eg, planning the response, prioritising needs and assisting with selection of beneficiaries and distributions (12% of documents)

- family tracing and reunification activities, including monitoring children in foster care (8% of documents)
- engaging with other sectors, eg, helping to improve children’s school attendance or promoting health and hygiene messages (8% of documents).<sup>29</sup>

A common theme emerging from the key informant interviews, but less so from the document set, was the question of the appropriate role that mechanisms can or should play in cases where child protection is a concern. Around a third of documents in the set noted that community-based child protection mechanisms were case managing incidences of child abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence. However, some interviewees suggested that there are important questions around when and to what extent this is appropriate. For example, child protection committees set up in response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar reported that while the training they received from external agencies helped them to identify cases of child abuse, they did not feel equipped to respond on their own without external agencies’ support.<sup>30</sup> In Sri Lanka,<sup>31</sup> it was noted that handling some politically sensitive cases was also beyond the remit of community groups, for example, cases of reported harassment of internally displaced children by the military and police. Since the management of such child protection cases is extremely sensitive and can be complex, community members are very unlikely to have the skills to effectively manage them unless they are well trained and supported, and harm is possibly being caused unintentionally. The evidence shows there were some cases involving serious gaps in training, supervision and follow-up. This was highlighted in 15% of evaluation documents.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Document numbers 1, 11, 12, 13 and 60

<sup>30</sup> Document number 15

<sup>31</sup> Document number 13

<sup>32</sup> Document numbers 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 21, 22, 57, 60 and 63

## FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVENESS

Phase I of the inter-agency learning initiative on community-based child protection mechanisms identified seven factors that influence the effectiveness of such mechanisms across all contexts. These were:<sup>33</sup>

- building on existing resources
- resources
- links
- community ownership
- support from community leaders
- management of issues of power, diversity and inclusivity
- child participation.

This current review identified the first six of these factors as recurring themes in the emergency document set. Child participation was the exception, as there was very little reported in the document set about its importance or efficacy. Comprehensive initial assessment was an additional factor identified from the analysis; the evidence suggests this may be linked to effectiveness. The first three factors, which were most frequently mentioned in the document set, are discussed in detail below.

### Building on existing resources

Overall, 8% of evaluation documents noted that community-based child protection mechanisms had built on existing community structures, while 12% noted they had not. The remainder did not state either way. Three evaluation reports linked limited effectiveness with a failure to build on what already existed.<sup>34</sup> For example, in the occupied Palestinian territory, Save the Children noted this through evaluating two protection committees tackling displacement as a result of the 2009

Operation Cast Lead.<sup>35</sup> One committee formed from members who had no previous affiliation with each other struggled to become active. In contrast, the other committee, which consisted of members of an active voluntary community group, functioned successfully even after the end of the project and it had higher levels of impact through their post-emergency activities. An evaluation of a programme in Kenya found that new community mechanisms had been formed in communities despite the existence of child rights clubs set up by a previous education project. The duplication created confusion among community members, who felt it demonstrated a lack of appreciation and knowledge of existing community structures and context. Rather than creating new structures, resources could have been better invested in strengthening existing ones.<sup>36</sup>

The reasons why existing mechanisms were not built upon in emergency responses were not well documented. However, some possible reasons were suggested in key informant interviews, for example:

- there may be limited time and capacity in the initial assessment and response phase to look at existing structures and mechanisms; this may be exacerbated by tight deadlines for proposal submissions
- agencies may assume that mechanisms do not already exist within affected communities, particularly among displaced populations
- agencies may believe that existing mechanisms may be inappropriate, for example, because they are not adequately focused on child protection issues, they may perpetuate social norms and values that contradict child rights principles,<sup>37</sup> they may not be representative of the whole community, they may be too informal and unstructured or they may not focus on the protection issues for which the agency has a mandate and programme.

<sup>33</sup> See *What are We Learning about Protecting Children in the Community: An inter-agency review of evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms*, M Wessels, 2009, for more detail on the seven factors of effectiveness identified through the review.

<sup>34</sup> Document numbers 11, 21 and 25

<sup>35</sup> Document number 25

<sup>36</sup> Document number 11

<sup>37</sup> Document number 11

## LEARNING FROM THE PSYCHOSOCIAL SECTOR: FACILITATING EXISTING COMMUNITY SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN UGANDA<sup>38</sup>

TPO (Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation) Uganda supports psychosocial and mental health interventions in the aftermath of emergencies. Through a process of trial and error, it concluded that supporting existing community structures was the only meaningful way to form sustainable community mechanisms. TPO's initial interventions to build the capacity of community leadership and develop 300 volunteers to provide community-based psychosocial support were successful in helping families and communities to regain their coping capacity. However, it was unsustainable over time because the concept of volunteerism was difficult to engender when people had to spend their time earning money. There were high drop-out rates and those who did remain were unable to offer support that was either consistent or reliable.

As an alternative, TPO stopped establishing new groups and, instead, developed a community

support structures (CSS) model that facilitated existing community support structures. The model is based on the idea that communities consist of both formal and informal structures that are already mobilised to help people and it aims to draw on such structures. TPO meets with formal and informal leaders and maps existing CSS. It then identifies CSS to work with, assesses their key strengths and weaknesses, and then enhances their capacities so they can provide effective psychosocial and mental health support and referral. TPO found that existing CSS can be a sustainable source of social support in times of rejuvenating and re-building the capacity of traditional community roles, acting as a safety net around vulnerable individuals and families where traditional support structures have been weakened, as is common in emergencies.

### Comprehensive assessment

As mentioned above, one of the reasons suggested by key informants for agencies not building on what exists is that agencies do not always know what exists. Only three evaluations<sup>39</sup> (5% of documents) noted that an assessment was undertaken to find out what existed in communities to protect children before the emergency, and five evaluations highlighted this as a gap.<sup>40</sup>

While the scope of this document review did not include a review of assessment tools, the review team did decide to explore, briefly, three inter-agency

tools to see the extent to which they capture assessment of traditional and indigenous mechanisms for child protection. These tools were: the Inter-Agency Emergency Child Protection Assessment Toolkit; Action for the Rights of Children Resource Pack 2009; and the CPWG Submission to the IASC Needs Assessment Task Force. The review, albeit very superficial, suggested that while all three tools include some assessment of what mechanisms may exist in communities to protect children, it is very limited. This appears to be an area for further work.

<sup>38</sup> See Document number 61, for a more detailed explanation of how TPO facilitates existing community structures.

<sup>39</sup> Documents numbers 10, 12, 62

<sup>40</sup> Document numbers 5, 11, 13, 15, 25,

## Resources

External agencies provided material, financial and technical support to community-based mechanisms. More specifically, resources included low levels of material assistance such as office supplies, visibility materials, bicycles, small amounts of financial support, and training and capacity building.

Most agencies did not provide financial support, but in a few cases it was provided because the community mechanisms covered a large geographical area and members received money for food, accommodation and transport if the work took them far away from home.<sup>41</sup> In DRC, one agency provided community mechanisms with mobile phones and credit so that protection cases could be reported in very remote areas where access and services is limited.<sup>42</sup> In the occupied Palestinian territory,<sup>43</sup> agencies are supporting community mechanisms by paying rent on buildings that members can use for activities. One challenge noted in the document set relating to material and financial support is the difficulty of balancing community ownership with the provision of material support. For example, in DRC when community mechanism members were given the same T-shirts as agency staff and partners, there was confusion over their roles and difficulty differentiating between partner activities, which were paid, and community mechanism activities, which were voluntary.<sup>44</sup>

Overall, the documentation showed that effective community mobilisation around child protection issues requires sensitive staff who are respectful

and skilled at facilitating discussions with members of the community. Therefore, adequate time and a good internal capacity-building strategy is required to ensure that those who are going out to mobilise communities have the necessary skills and a strong understanding of child protection. Fourteen per cent of documents highlighted the importance of regular and long-term technical support and oversight in order to ensure the effectiveness of community mechanisms.<sup>45</sup> However, 10% of documents highlighted this as a gap.<sup>46</sup> In an evaluation of Save the Children's response to Cyclone Nargis, one child protection project officer reported that they could only visit each village once over a four-month period.<sup>47</sup> Another gap identified in two evaluations was the limited training and supervision provided on codes of conduct and child safeguarding policies.<sup>48</sup> Limited agency staffing was noted in four evaluations as one of the constraining operational factors in an agency's ability to deliver high-quality support to community mechanisms.<sup>49</sup> Agencies reported high turnover, rapid recruitment, excessive demands on time and limited handover between staff members, which all led to problems in forming relationships with communities and other sections of the child protection system.

A final resource issue, noted in 10% of evaluation documents and also by key informants, related to funding.<sup>50</sup> In particular, it was highlighted that the nature of proposal submission in an emergency (usually a short timeframe of five to ten days) did not give adequate time to assess or design sustainable community-based interventions that would strengthen child protection systems. For example, an evaluation of an emergency response

<sup>41</sup> Document numbers 17, 21

<sup>42</sup> Document numbers 65 and 66

<sup>43</sup> Key informant interviews

<sup>44</sup> Document numbers 21 and 22

<sup>45</sup> Documents numbers 1, 2, 6, 9, 12, 14, 15, 59

<sup>46</sup> Document numbers 4, 5, 10, 25, 46, 47,

<sup>47</sup> Document number 15

<sup>48</sup> Document numbers 17 and 29

<sup>49</sup> Document numbers 1, 2, 10, 15

<sup>50</sup> Key informant interviews and document numbers 4, 6, 13, 15, 21 and 39

programme in Sri Lanka<sup>51</sup> noted that the ten-day timeframe for the agency to prepare the funding proposal did not allow adequate assessments of community situations. It recommended that ongoing participatory fact finding may be one response to this.

## Links

Links between community mechanisms and other components of the national child protection system were observed in 37% of the evaluation documents.<sup>52</sup> Some of the more formal and less formal components that community-based mechanisms linked with included:

- families
- other community mechanisms (eg, children's groups, children's councils, village education committees, women's groups, church groups, livelihood committees, camp management committees)
- traditional leadership (elders, chiefs and traditional authorities)
- local CBOs, CSOs and NGOs
- local government authorities at town, sub-district and district levels (eg, social workers, probation officers, police, education workers, health workers, district child protection committees, child protection units, child rights mechanisms, etc); and agencies (international non-governmental organisation (INGOs) and UN agencies).

One of the relationships most frequently mentioned in around a third of evaluation documents was between community mechanisms and government components in the system. The ways in which these were manifested included:

- village-level mechanisms identifying child protection cases and reporting or referring them to government mechanisms

- government supporting the work of community mechanisms through links with government social workers or equivalent
- government monitoring of community mechanisms.

In some cases, the emergency appeared to provide an opportunity to strengthen these links (see Solomon Islands case below). However, in other cases, the emergency response created tensions between communities and the government. For example, in DRC, the government did not know about the role of the committees that one agency had initiated and did not have links with them. This led to an extreme situation where committee members were detained for the activities in which they were engaged.<sup>53</sup>

Links with other formal and informal elements of the system were documented in around a third of evaluation documents.<sup>54</sup> In South Sudan,<sup>55</sup> it was noted that the reach of community networks could be extended if better links were made with other sections of the community, for example, village midwives, village leaders, youth groups and women's groups. One recommendation made was for community mechanisms to undertake a community mapping in which potential partners could be identified and progress in developing relationships with them tracked. In Pakistan, an evaluation of the earthquake response showed that one of the factors limiting the performance of child protection committees was lack of links with the Citizens' Action Forum that existed at district level.<sup>56</sup>

Although information regarding child protection systems was scarce in the document set, one factor that may promote links between community mechanisms and other system components, which emerged from a small number of evaluation documents, is the development of strategies

<sup>51</sup> Document number 13

<sup>52</sup> Document numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, 28, 30, 44, 45, 62, 70 and 76

<sup>53</sup> Document number 21

<sup>54</sup> Document numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17, 21, 30, 69, 71, 72, 75, 76

<sup>55</sup> Document number 17

<sup>56</sup> Document number 5

## SOLOMON ISLANDS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SYSTEM-STRENGTHENING<sup>57</sup>

Following the earthquake and tsunami disaster that struck the Solomon Islands on 2 April 2007, UNICEF helped the government to establish community welfare volunteers (CWVs) on the Islands as part of the initial emergency response. Within six to eight weeks after the earthquake and tsunami, 62 CWVs had been identified through a process of selection by communities and were trained in welfare and child protection. Prior to the emergency, the Social Welfare Department had been looking to implement CWVs, and the disaster provided an opportunity

to fast track the initiative, with the support of UNICEF and other NGOs. Initial evaluation suggested that there were strong links between the Social Welfare Department and CWVs. The Department viewed CWVs as useful for extending its presence at community level. New links were also made with the provincial education authorities, who were identified as key partners. One significant challenge, however, was the lack of continuous follow-up, support and monitoring of the CWVs.

for creating links from the outset of an emergency response. For example, an evaluation of an emergency child protection response in India recommended that strategies for linking community mechanisms with existing government district and sub-district mechanisms should be developed from an early stage to maximise the effectiveness of community monitoring, reporting and referral activities.<sup>58</sup>

Since the document set contained limited evidence on outcomes for children overall, it is not possible for this review to draw any conclusions about whether community mechanisms that have strong links with other components of the child protection system are more effective at protecting children. This is an area for further research and will be a key question in Phase 2 of the inter-agency learning initiative.

<sup>57</sup> Document number 14

<sup>58</sup> Document number 10



# 3 CASE STUDIES: HOW COMMUNITY-BASED MECHANISMS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SYSTEM-STRENGTHENING

This section presents three case studies from recent emergencies in Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territory and Timor Leste where community-based child protection mechanisms appear to have contributed to system-strengthening.

## MYANMAR: CYCLONE NARGIS<sup>59</sup>

### Context

Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwady Delta region in south-west Myanmar on 2 May 2008, severely affecting the lives of thousands of children. Before the cyclone, the national child protection system in Myanmar was very weak. There were few child protection services and the Department of Social Welfare had few resources and was not staffed at township and community level in many areas. At township level, there were mandated township Committees on the Rights of a Child to protect children but they were inactive in many places. Due to political pressure, civil society is generally weak and unable to respond effectively to protection issues for children. At community level, before the

cyclone, most villages had a community-based mechanism that dealt with welfare issues such as supporting funeral services and alms giving, but did not cover child protection issues specifically. International agencies had a previous presence in Myanmar, but this was limited to a handful of agencies with regard to child protection.

### What do community-based mechanisms look like?

The Myanmar response was founded on robust community-level coping mechanisms. In the first days, when access by international agencies was very limited, communities themselves were leading the life-saving activities.<sup>60</sup> Despite severe weakening of the existing community mechanisms after the cyclone they were nevertheless a significant asset upon which to build child protection mechanisms.

Due to issues of access and government permission, a smaller number of international agencies responded to the cyclone than would have been the case for other emergencies of this scale. UNICEF, Save the Children and World Vision

<sup>59</sup> The sources of information are document numbers 15, 44, 45, 46, 47, 68 and key informant interviews with staff from Save the Children and World Vision.

<sup>60</sup> Document number 46



were among the agencies that launched a child protection response. As part of the response, agencies worked with communities to build on existing mechanisms and support the establishment of new child protection mechanisms. The establishment of child-friendly spaces (CFSs) was commonly the entry point for this work. The scale of work with community mechanisms was quite large: UNICEF reported that it had established 126 child protection committees and Save the Children reported establishing 36 committees within 12 months of the disaster.

The child protection mechanisms supported were called ‘child protection committees’, ‘community watch groups’ or ‘child protection support groups’. In some cases, child protection committees were a sub-group of a larger multi-sectoral committee. Members were usually village leaders, community health leaders, school teachers or leaders, youth leaders and other people with similar status in the community. In some cases, these members were appointed by the village leader and in other cases individuals volunteered. The selection method used seemed to depend on community dynamics and the particular context. Community mechanisms conducted a wide range of activities including: identifying vulnerable children; receiving reports of child protection cases and responding to them where possible through case management; reporting on missing children and facilitating their reunification; and conducting awareness raising. World Vision and Save the Children identified the development of a Terms of Reference for committees as one factor that could influence effectiveness, although there was an issue of whether the Terms of Reference should be developed by agencies or communities.

An initial assessment of the emergency identified the important role of village leadership and existing indigenous community and family protection mechanisms. While evidence suggests that agencies

did build on these, the response also led to the establishment of new child protection mechanisms, in the form of child protection committees or multi-sector committees in which child protection was a sub-group. One rationale given by World Vision for setting up new groups was that existing mechanisms tended to work informally, often relying on just a few motivated individuals. World Vision, therefore, felt there was a need to put in place more formal, and potentially more sustainable, mechanisms in the form of child protection committees.<sup>61</sup> Another reason proposed was that existing community groups might not have represented or considered the most vulnerable people.<sup>62</sup>

A challenge for the response in Myanmar was that the term ‘child protection’ does not translate well into the local language. Training and discussion had to take place to establish common concepts and understanding. A finding repeated throughout the key informant interviews is that working with community-based child protection mechanisms is a long-term process because it takes time to develop common understanding and values.

### System-strengthening

In terms of system-strengthening, the community-based response in Myanmar appears to have had some success in fostering links between community-based child protection mechanisms and other components of the system, notably the government system.<sup>63</sup> A key part of this was partnership with the Department of Social Welfare from the outset of the emergency response. Through this, agencies were able to work with the government on the plan of action for children, which included a section specifically outlining the links between community-based mechanisms and government structures.<sup>64</sup> A key informant noted that this has also been particularly valuable in setting a framework around which agencies can collaborate.

<sup>61</sup> Information from key informant interview

<sup>62</sup> Information from Myanmar programme

<sup>63</sup> This approach of linking community mechanisms to local government is one that has been piloted by Save the Children in other areas outside of the Delta prior to the cyclone.

<sup>64</sup> *Plan of Action for Child Protection in Emergencies: Response to Cyclone Nargis*, 2008

There is some evidence that links between community mechanisms and government components in the system are being strengthened, and that this is having some impact on the ground: village committees are referring cases to township Committees on the Rights of a Child (CRC), which are taking action in some cases. There is ongoing work to strengthen both village-level and township-level committees as part of the development programme. However, the system is constrained by the limited availability of probation officers (similar to social workers) and low mobilisation of township CRC to provide services to cases referred by communities and to respond to child protection needs.

There was limited documentation of improved links with other components in the child protection system. One challenge noted in the evaluation of Save the Children's emergency response was that too many sectoral committees were established in each village. Some villages had over six different sectoral committees with few links between them. Save the Children noted that this may have had a particularly detrimental effect on child protection, as it was harder to keep members of child protection committees motivated in what is relatively 'invisible' work, when competing with other sector committees that were providing hardware and tangible results, such as livelihood opportunities and early childhood care and development centres.

A challenge identified in many of the cyclone response evaluations is how to ensure that child protection mechanisms are sustainable, particularly in areas where agencies will not have development programmes. Two years after the cyclone struck, all three agencies are now moving to transition strategies and beginning to exit from a number of villages and townships in which they previously operated under the emergency programme.

## THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY<sup>65</sup>

### Context

At the end of 2008 and in early 2009, the Israeli-led military operation Cast Lead brought a large-scale round of fighting and bombing to Gaza. At least 200,000<sup>66</sup> people were displaced from their homes and thousands of civilian deaths and injuries were reported, with at least 350 children killed and 1,815 injured.<sup>67</sup> Much of the infrastructure and key services that were already in poor condition through years of fighting and unrest were further damaged or destroyed by military action.

International agencies found themselves operating in a difficult situation – on the one hand wanting to rebuild and rehabilitate services and systems, and on the other hand being limited by a 'no contact policy' with the de facto government in Gaza, which was and still is compulsory for NGOs and UN agencies that receive funds from certain international donors. This 2008/09 conflict took place at a time when there was already an 18-month Israeli-imposed blockade of many goods and services, internal civil strife between political factions in the West Bank and Gaza and many years of previous conflict and unrest.

Gaza and the West Bank had a strong civil society, with numerous UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, CBOs and voluntary organisations present and responding to both emergency and development issues prior to Operation Cast Lead. However, many of these, particularly at community level were inactive, without resources, time or capacity, or they faced political constraints on their activities. Most referral pathways and services for child protection cases were damaged with the 2007 change in government in Gaza and the ensuing modifications to Ministry of Social Affairs social work staff and capacity. A lack of

<sup>65</sup> The sources of information for this case study are documents 25 and 56 and key informant interviews with Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK, UNICEF and DCI Palestine.

<sup>66</sup> Humanitarian Monitor, November 2009, UN OCHA

<sup>67</sup> Source: Israel/OPT Working group on grave violations against children, 2010

services and support structures to which children could be referred was mentioned as a constraint by all interviewees and evaluations in relations to Gaza and the West Bank.

### **What do community-based mechanisms look like?**

As part of the emergency response, many international and national organisations implemented programmes aimed at supporting community-based mechanisms and at system-strengthening. This review looked at the work of UNICEF, Save the Children UK, Save the Children Sweden and DCI-Palestine, whose programmes were quite different in approach.

UNICEF focused on two child protection work streams following Operation Cast Lead. The first was a pilot programme to initiate and build the capacity of national and district-level child protection systems. The second was working through its implementing partner, Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR), to provide psychosocial support for children and caregivers affected by the crisis. While not directly supporting community-level mechanisms, the psychosocial interventions were based in community structures, schools and CBOs, and involved a significant element of capacity building for child protection and psychosocial workers. In direct response to the conflict – and in conjunction with Save the Children Sweden – PCDCR and UNICEF established 20 family centres where children and families can access a range of services under the overall umbrella of psychosocial service provision. The centres are based in existing community spaces known to the community and help ensure access to services and information about child rights and where to find help.

Defence for Children International Palestine (DCIP) has a programme to ensure that child protection networks form links to community-level child protection activities. As part of this, DCIP supports and coordinates the Palestinian Network for Children's Rights (PNCR), which has a coordination and capacity-building function for a network of

over 60 CBOs working on child rights. PNCR also contains 15 community-level protection groups, which have been trained to play an increasing role in child protection activities in their communities. DCIP found that a major challenge in initiating the PNCR was getting agreement on one definition of child protection among numerous CBOs, who often have limited capacity and sometimes limited commitment. However, during the emergency, protection groups that were established before Operation Cast Lead were able to continue conducting awareness-raising activities and to refer children in need to service providers. Since the end of Operation Cast Lead, the groups have been providing activities for children to help them express themselves and conducting advocacy and campaigns on the protection of children's rights. DCIP also found that within the first few weeks of the emergency response, existing PNCR and protection groups were able to support 5,186 children with debriefing and psychosocial workshops, and train 27 community social workers from PNCR members on drama and psychosocial approaches.

Save the Children UK and its partner MA'AN Development Centre implemented a smaller community-level response, which was to initiate two new community-based protection committees to look at issues surrounding forced displacement. Choosing not to focus on child protection due to the lack of services to refer children to, the committees dealt with issues of evacuation, reconstruction and preparedness. The donor required a ten-day turnaround on the main funding proposal, which did not allow the team, given operational constraints at that time, to analyse what community-based mechanisms existed in the targeted villages prior to the 2008/09 attacks. However, in one committee, members were already part of a community voluntary organisation and so were able to conduct a rapid assessment and identify the most vulnerable families in need of targeted assistance in the post-emergency context.

Save the Children Sweden and its partner PCDCR initiated two community-based child protection committees (CPCs) in Southern Gaza. They invited

all the CBOs to a meeting to explain the project activities and objectives. Initially, one member of each CBO formed the CPC, after which CBO members and PCDCR selected additional influential and prominent members of the community to join. The CPCs consisted of 20 central members; each CPC then had four subcommittees:

- a children's subcommittee, which identified activities for children and safe reporting pathways for children to report abuse
- a fathers' subcommittee, which engaged other men in protection activities
- an emergency subcommittee, which worked on preparedness and response
- a community workers' subcommittee, in which community volunteer social workers conducted case management and the referral of children to other services.

It was found that the fathers' committee was particularly important because it engaged men from the community who would ordinarily not discuss child protection issues. Also, cases that arose were dealt with by the community, which was able to identify its own needs and address them in ways appropriate to their situation. This was significant because the communities were in rural locations and had limited access to city-based services. Another particularly successful element was the emergency preparedness work, which included producing emergency information brochures, village-level planning and mapping, and CPC members asking organisations such as the Red Crescent for support – including first aid training and the storage and distribution of emergency household kits.

## System-strengthening

The backdrop to events in 2008 and 2009, although extremely challenging for organisations, has given rise to some opportunity to build better child protection systems and mechanisms at central, district and community levels.

UNICEF is now piloting a programme to initiate the rebuilding of national and district child protection systems. Through support to the government and in

cooperation with partners, seven district-level child protection networks (CPNs) have been established throughout Gaza and the West Bank. Each CPN acts as the formal child protection body, facilitated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and consisting of key members of society and government ministries such as health, education, justice, social services and NGOs and INGOs. District-level CPNs are intended to act as the link between the formal child protection system, government ministries, referral services and community child protection mechanisms. It is also intended that cases identified at community level will be brought to the attention of the CPN for referral to appropriate services.

Alongside this, UNICEF has implemented a mental health and psychosocial technical support (MHPSS) unit in Gaza, which acts as a coordination mechanism responsible for mapping existing MHPSS services and developing a referral system appropriate for the population. Following the war, many community members in Gaza did not know where to find help, or were being inappropriately referred. The technical unit has been working closely with community structures and organisations to reach both MHPSS actors and members of the population to harmonise the psychosocial response to the Gaza crisis.

DCIP, which works closely with community organisations and protection groups, found that coordination and referrals among a multitude of community structures that specialise in different aspects of protection has been challenging, as many organisations have a different interpretation of child protection. Although links are improving between PNCR members, protection groups, other organisations and government bodies, these links take time to develop and become effective.

Some of the challenges facing system-strengthening in this context are:

- sustainability of community support activities after externally funded projects end
- lack of support structures or services to which communities can refer children
- coordination among different system components.

Coordination has historically been weak and there has been confusion among a wide array of organisations (formal and informal) whose mandates, roles and responsibilities vary. Following the emergency, most community mechanisms were not linked to any central systems or services, due to lack of availability or services' extremely limited reach into affected areas. In addition, agencies' initial assessments, carried out following the emergency, did not generally include assessments of what community structures and mechanisms were already in place and functioning or not functioning in the system.

## TIMOR LESTE<sup>68</sup>

### Context

In April and May of 2006, Timor Leste erupted into politically and ethnically charged violence, which led to the displacement of over 150,000 people into host communities and camps. PLAN International's emergency response activities included taking responsibility for coordination in 13 camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Using this position, PLAN was able to focus on children from the start, working closely with UNICEF and the government to bring other child protection actors together to form a child protection working group. This coordination from the early stages ensured that a common approach was taken across child protection activities, maximising effect from limited resources.

### What do community-based mechanisms look like?

After the initial few months, it became clear that people would remain in IDP camps for some time. PLAN developed a structure for child protection work that encompassed both community groups and elements of the formal child protection

system. The structure initially focused on the work of community-level child protection focal points (CPFPs).

Discussions with the Division of Social Services (DSS), camp managers and the IDP community and its leaders led to the nomination of volunteers (trusted adults such as teachers and youth workers) who were trained for the role of CPFP in each block of every camp, focusing on activities and protection in their block. Each camp commonly had around eight blocks, and each block focal point made up part of the CPFP team, with one person from each team being nominated as a representative across all the camps.

In addition, all the camps were supported by three child protection support teams (CPSTs), comprising staff from the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion (MLCR), the DSS, international and national NGOs. The CPST would regularly visit the camps and CPFPs to provide technical support and training, undertake monitoring of camp activities and engage with the camp management. In turn, CPSTs were monitored and supported by members of the CPWG, who could also monitor and track trends within and between camps.

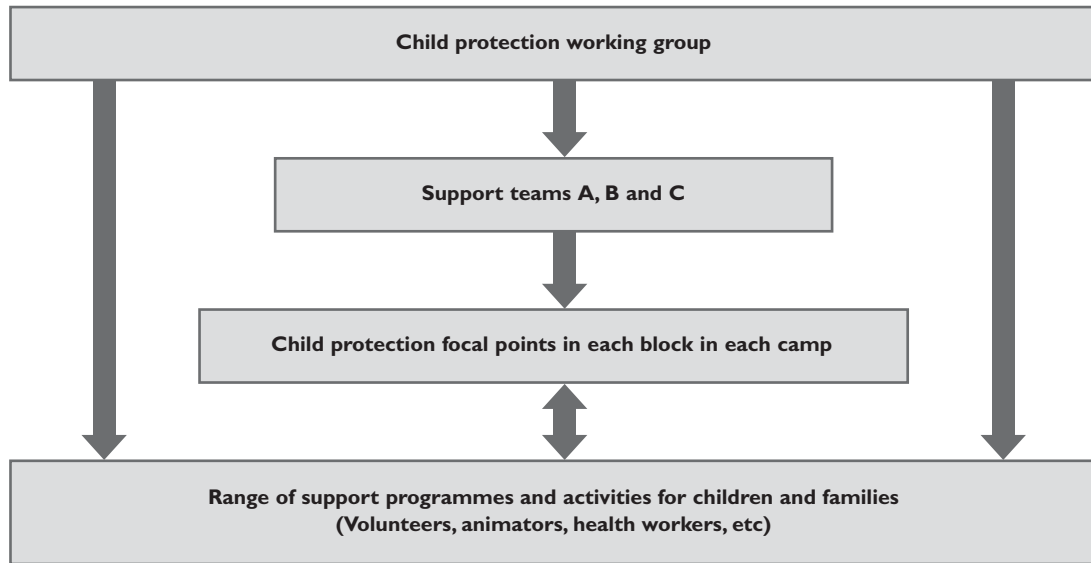
The role of the CPFP is to help families look after their children's wellbeing and safety in the camp environment, by providing information, coordinating activities for children and caregivers, and helping to promote children's participation.

The CPFP was seen as the foundation for children and family support programmes in the camps and essential to the community-based participatory approach taken across the response. It was not intended that the CPFP would have a policing role, but rather that they would be a supportive person nominated by the community and camp managers to uphold the rights of children.

<sup>68</sup> The information for this case study was taken from document numbers 28 and 32, two documents from PLAN's comprehensive review and tools of Timor Leste, and also from document number 62, an inter-agency-led Child Protection Working Group report and key informant interviews with PLAN International staff in Timor Leste.



### Structure of camp-level child protection system in IDP camps in Timor Leste



### System-strengthening

From the very early stages, PLAN worked alongside government counterparts in the MLCR and the DSS to strengthen and support the Ministry but also to add legitimacy and weight to the emergency child protection efforts. As many government officials had also been displaced into camps, coordination in many of the camps started spontaneously and organically. MLCR and DSS staff were encouraged to become members of child protection support teams, receiving training and mentoring. By August 2006, only four months after the initial displacements, the MLCR had taken over the central coordination role of the CPWG.

Although systems for referral to district and national child protection systems theoretically existed, the links were weak and many child protection cases remained at family or community level. It was not until 2008 that links were strengthened by ensuring CPFs understood the roles of different duty bearers, and were empowered to contact them through introductory meetings. From 2007 to 2008, PLAN seconded a national staff member to the DSS as a child protection adviser to support the development of child protection strategies and policies and build capacity. The secondee focused on building the

capacity of DSS child protection officers and child protection networks to strengthen existing child protection mechanisms and to increase the involvement of sub-district and village structures in upholding children's rights. During this time, PLAN also expanded the CPFP model into 15 additional host communities and villages.

A strength of the PLAN model was that the camp-level protection system, including CPFP, was piloted in one of the main camps before being rolled out across other camps. Once the CPWG had adopted the model as a common approach across the camps, it helped to form links within the embryonic child protection system that was in development before the crisis. The involvement of government authorities, who helped in the selection of volunteers and participated in the child protection support teams and the CPWG, legitimised the developing child protection system. Facilitating meetings between the focal points and elements of the formal systems, such as the National Division of Social Reinsertion and Police Vulnerable Persons Unit, also helped bridge the gap between camp-based and district and national systems. This, in turn, led to a significant increase in the number of child protection concerns and individual cases reported.

The PLAN model did face some challenges in terms of system-strengthening. An initial focus on designing and modelling child protection systems and supporting the government, although successful in many ways, had less impact at community level. A lack of community-based engagement in understanding and evidencing child protection issues, and in developing community-based solutions, led to gaps between national and district-level and camp and community-level child protection systems. The referral system should have recognised that most solutions exist in communities, which should be supported to link with national and district-level referral systems. There was also initial confusion over the role of the focal points in relation to handling individual child protection cases and the evaluation concluded that the boundaries of the CFPF role should be clearly

defined within the referral network. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of community consensus and participation in the selection and monitoring of the CFPF, in order to guard against abuse of the role and so that children could identify trusted adults in the community. In terms of inter-agency coordination, it was found that in the initial stages of the emergency it is important to discuss programming approaches and understanding of child protection issues among members of the CPWG, for example, in relation to payment of stipends. This was emphasised by an issue relating to agency 'branding', which grew over time so that in some camps volunteers became increasingly dependent on agencies, undermining community ownership and reaching a point where some volunteers went on strike because of the issues of remuneration.



# 4 CONCLUSIONS

Overall, this review found very limited evidence on how community-based child protection mechanisms can support system-strengthening in emergencies. While a third of documents mentioned the issue of links between community mechanisms and other components in the system, none provided detailed evidence or discussion. However, a number of common observations emerged from the document set and the information generated from interviews. The following conclusions are a summary of those observations, but they should be treated as very provisional given the quality and quantity of the evidence on which they are based.

## COMMUNITY-BASED MECHANISMS CAN SUPPORT SYSTEM-STRENGTHENING IN EMERGENCIES

Overall, the review highlighted the fact that external agency support for the establishment and strengthening of community-based child protection mechanisms is quite common in emergencies. In addition, there is some limited evidence that this work can be an entry point for longer-term system building. In cases such as Myanmar, the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste, the emergency presented an opportunity for a change in practice that is leading to the development of stronger systems. In the initial stages of an emergency, community-based mechanisms were often described as supporting the wider system through their role in monitoring child protection violations at community level

and referring cases to government or other providers. Although community-based child protection mechanisms can contribute to system-strengthening, there were many cases identified through this review where this potential was not realised. There were a number of reasons for this, including lack of strategy, lack of capacity or resources, lack of understanding of existing systems and lack of willingness on the part of various sections of the system.

In order that community-based mechanisms can support system-strengthening in an emergency, the following factors are potentially important.

### **I. Quality assessment of what exists in communities to protect children following an emergency**

The evidence suggests that in order to strengthen systems in an emergency it is important for external agencies to assess and map the more and less formal, statutory and non-statutory mechanisms and structures that exist at community level. Ideally, this should include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of mechanisms and the links between community mechanisms and other components, including children's perspectives. The review has identified that where such an assessment has not been undertaken by external agencies, the child protection response may be inappropriate for the context and, as a result, can undermine and breakdown existing mechanisms and systems rather than strengthen them.

## 2. Strong community-based child protection mechanisms

When looking at the available evidence, it seems that a prerequisite for community-based mechanisms to be able to contribute to system-strengthening is that they are strong and effective. Where community mechanisms did not have the skills, level of activity or capacity to respond appropriately and effectively within their own community, they also did not have the ability to engage effectively with other components of the system. External support to strengthen community mechanisms is therefore important for system-strengthening overall.

## 3. Building on existing strengths

Although evidence is limited, it seems that child protection systems are strengthened when child protection responses in emergencies build on what already exists in communities, capitalising on available resources and strengthening elements to improve sustainability. Building on existing government plans and strategies and including government child protection officials in the design of emergency programmes seems to create stronger systems and reduces the risk of parallel systems that can be created when government or an external agency are not aware of, or do not buy into, agency-supported community mechanisms. In the same way, systems are strengthened when they build on what already exists, for example, any existing referral pathways between components in the system.

## 4. Engaging all stakeholders and planning for system-strengthening from the outset

The national child protection system involves a number of stakeholders, including children, families, communities, civil society and government. To strengthen national systems, it seems important to engage all of these groups from the outset in the

establishment and strengthening of community-based child protection mechanisms. This may include, for example, ensuring that children are engaged appropriately in the community mechanism, ensuring diversity of membership of community mechanisms, supporting links with CBOs and CSOs and working with and through government to establish and support community mechanisms. Making provision in an institutional or legal framework at local or national level for links between community-based mechanisms and government structures also seems to support system-strengthening (for example, the plan of action for children developed in Myanmar). If the engagement of stakeholders is not achieved at the outset (or only thought of at the point of exit strategy), evidence shows that this may cause conflict, lead to mechanisms collapsing once external support is taken away, or create parallel systems and processes that undermine a coordinated national system.

## 5. Coordination across the child protection system

There is some evidence that community mechanisms can support systems where there is good coordination and a clear definition of different roles and responsibilities. In Timor Leste, for example, clear roles for communities, CBOs, CSOs and government officials in relation to handling and referring cases supported the wider system and improved the response to cases. In contrast, where such coordination was lacking and communities did not have a good understanding of their roles there was evidence of duplication or gaps.

Coordination between agencies was also highlighted as important for supporting the national child protection system. For example, in Uganda and Timor Leste, inter-agency coordination of work with community mechanisms appears to be quite successful in building effective integration of community mechanisms with the government

system. However, in contrast, where agencies take different approaches to working with community mechanisms, particularly regarding payment of stipends and the creation of multiple committees, this can lead to duplication, unreasonable burdens on communities and the breakdown of relationships within communities and between other stakeholders in the system. Given the potential for large-scale support for community-based mechanisms following an emergency, it seems important that agencies coordinate their work in this area from the outset. The role of the national child protection sub-cluster, where this exists, seems an important component to ensure such coordination.

## **6. Ongoing and long-term monitoring and support**

A common theme from this review was that building strong and sustainable community-based child protection mechanisms that link into the wider national system takes time and is, essentially, developmental work. Community mechanisms can support system-strengthening if they are given regular and long-term supervision and support, as, for example, in Afghanistan. However, where support is lacking or is short term, community mechanisms tend to collapse, thereby weakening the existing system further and frustrating community members. In sudden onset emergencies particularly, a constraint to system-strengthening may be short-term funding, which does not allow for a long-term approach and could do harm where it is unable to be extended.

# 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to support system-strengthening in emergencies, **child protection practitioners and agencies** should:

- Ensure that explicit approaches to strengthening links between community-based child protection mechanisms and other components of a national child protection system are built into emergency responses from the outset.
  - Ensure that the exploration of what already exists in communities to protect children is part of every emergency assessment for child protection. This should include children's direct participation in the emergency assessment process, wherever possible, to explore children's views on risks and community-based protective mechanisms. To support this, agencies should review rapid and initial assessment tools, including the Inter-Agency Emergency Child Protection Assessment Toolkit as a priority, for their coverage of issues relating to community-based child protection mechanisms.
  - Develop minimum standards for child protection programmes in emergencies, relating to community-based child protection mechanisms. This should include minimum standards related to support and supervision levels.
  - Promote capacity building related to community mobilisation skills and community ownership for child protection staff at all levels and ensure this is a key part of initial response staff training. This should include building relevant skills of facilitation and listening, which may not be part of existing training packages and are different skills to those possessed by many practitioners.
  - Make available on the CPWG website resources on community-based child protection mechanisms in emergencies, such as examples of terms of reference, evaluation reports and training packages.
- Improve the coverage and rigour of evaluations of child protection programmes in emergencies. To do this, the CPWG should develop a small set of key questions that can be inserted into new evaluations in 2010 and 2011.
  - Develop the following tools, which should improve practice in the field:
    - a practical checklist for implementing a community-based child protection programme. This should include details on how to ensure that adequate support is in place where communities are responsible for any form of case management
    - a planning checklist to guide practitioners in deciding how to work with existing community-based child protection mechanisms and whether to support the establishment of new mechanisms following an emergency
    - guidance for promoting agency coordination around community-based child protection programming in emergencies. This should be integrated into the coordinator's handbook and training and should cover payment and support issues, terms of reference and strategies for coordinating links with the government system.

In order to support system-strengthening in emergencies, **donors** should:

- Provide multi-year funding for programmes aimed at supporting community-based child protection mechanisms in emergencies to enable appropriate long-term support.
- Support funding for more specific child protection sector evaluations in emergencies.

# REFERENCES

Barnett K and Wedge J (2010) *Child Protection Systems in Emergencies. A discussion paper*, Child Protection Working Group

Wulczyn F, Daro D, Fluke J, Feldman S, Glodek C and Lifanda K (2010) *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key concepts and considerations*, UNICEF

Wessels M (2009) *What are We Learning about Protecting Children in the Community: An inter-agency review of evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms*, Save the Children UK

# THE DOCUMENT SET FOR THE REVIEW

<b>Matrix number</b>	<b>Document year and title</b>
1	(2007) 'NGO Consortium for the Psychosocial Care and Protection of Children: Internal evaluation integrated consortium report', USAID Afghanistan (Integrated evaluation)
2	(2007) 'NGO Consortium for the Psychosocial Care and Protection of Children: External evaluation report DCOF program in Afghanistan', Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (External evaluation)
3	(2008), 'Evaluation of reintegration of former CAAFAG in Nepal: A final report', Save the Children Alliance and Nepal National Centre for Inclusive Education (NICE)
4	(2008) 'Improving Protection Mechanisms for Orphans and Children of Missing Families in Jammu and Kashmir', Save the Children UK
5	(2007) 'Global Impact Monitoring: Children in emergency earthquake response in Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan', Save the Children UK
6	(2007) 'Programming for Children Involved in Armed Conflict: Case study review of Guinea, Sudan and Nepal', Save the Children US
7	(2005) 'Community-Based Approaches to Child Protection In Emergencies: Review and analysis of Save the Children UK's experience to date', Save the Children UK
8	(2003) 'Going Home: Demobilising and reintegrating child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo', Save the Children UK
9	(2009) 'The First Line of Protection: Community-based approaches to promote children's rights in emergencies in Africa', Save the Children Sweden
10	(2006) 'Global Impact Monitoring (GIM) Report: Child Protection Project in Cuddalore, Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari Districts of Tamil Nadu, India', Save the Children UK
11	(2008) 'Evaluation of Child Protection in Dadaab, Kenya', UNHCR
12	(2007) 'Protecting Children's Rights Using Community-Based Approaches, South Sudan', Save the Children Sweden

<b>Matrix number</b>	<b>Document year and title</b>
13	(2009) 'Integrated Emergency Community-Based Child Protection for Children Affected by Conflict in the North and East of Sri Lanka (2007–2008)', Save the Children UK
14	(2008) 'Solomon Islands Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster: An evaluation of UNICEF's response in the emergency and initial recovery phases', UNICEF
15	(2009) 'Evaluation of the Save the Children Response to Cyclone Nargis', Save the Children
17	(2009) 'The Community-based Child Protection Network Model in Sudan', Save the Children
21	(2009) 'Rapid Review Community-based Child Protection Networks', Save the Children UK North Kivu DRC
22	(2009) 'Rapid Review ITDR Programme', Save the Children UK North Kivu DRC
23	(2005) 'Assessing Afghan Children's Psychosocial Well-being: A multi-model study of intervention outcomes', Christian Children's Fund, Oxford University, & Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh
25	(2009) 'End of Project Evaluation: Prevention and Protection – a programmatic response to forced displacement in the OPT', Save the Children UK
26	(2009) 'TDH Case Management Capitalisation of Projects: Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan & Nepal', Terre des Hommes
27	(2009) 'TDH Case Management: Systems and accountability social work in child protection projects', Terre des Hommes
28	(2006) 'PLAN learning and recommendations from the PLAN emergency child protection response to the crises in Timor Leste and Beyond', PLAN International
29	(2007) 'An Inter-Agency Child Protection Committee Review in Acholi, Lango and Teso Regions in Uganda – Findings, recommendations and the way forward'
30	(2009) 'Christian Children's Fund knowledge, attitude and practices survey report and programme evaluation Touloum and Iridimi Camps Chad', Christian Children's Fund
31	(2008) 'Addressing the Needs of Migrant and other Vulnerable Children in Vehembe District, Annual Report South Africa'
32	(2009) 'PLAN child protection emergency responses to the civil crises in 2006 and beyond', PLAN International



<b>Matrix number</b>	<b>Document year and title</b>
33	(2003) 'Assessment of Christian Children's Fund Emergency Entry Program into Afghanistan: Its impact on child well-being and protection', Christian Children's Fund
39	(2008) 'Save the Children Alliance, Tsunami Response Programme in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Somalia: Mid-Term Evaluation Report', Save the Children
40	(2007) World Vision India Tsunami evaluation – India
41	(2007) World Vision India Tsunami evaluation – Indonesia
42	(2007) World Vision India Tsunami evaluation – Sri Lanka
43	(2007) World Vision India Tsunami evaluation – Thailand
44	(2009) 'Mid-term evaluation Emergency Response Programme', ActionAid, Myanmar
45	(2008) Evaluation of CARE Myanmar's Cyclone Nargis response
46	(2008) Inter-agency real time evaluation of the response to Cyclone Nargis
47	(2009) 'Best practices and lessons learnt', UNICEF Myanmar's response following Cyclone Nargis
49	(2006) 'Rising from the rubble: communities lead the earthquake response', Save the Children Sweden in Pakistan
51	(2006) Real-time evaluation of UNHCR's response to the emergency in Lebanon and Syria, July–September 2006, UNHCR
52	(2008) Evaluation of UNHCR's returnee reintegration programme in Southern Sudan
53	(2008) Evaluation of UNHCR's efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in situations of forced displacement
54	(2009) 'Final Report Child Protection in Emergencies Lessons Learnt Workshop on 2008 Flooding in Nepal', UNICEF Nepal
56	(2009) Community-based protection in Gaza, Save the Children and Overseas Development Institute/Humanitarian Practice Network
57	(2010) 'Project evaluation: GBV prevention and response for children and women in the Toulepleu Department of Western Côte d'Ivoire', Save the Children
59	(2008) 'Community mobilization after an earthquake: case study of the use of the IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings on mental health and psychosocial support in Peru', War Trauma Foundation, Intervention 2008, vol. 6, number 3   4, pages 275–283

<b>Matrix number</b>	<b>Document year and title</b>
60	(2006) 'Together: How communities in Côte d'Ivoire are protecting their children', Save the Children Sweden
61	(2009) 'Mainstreaming Psychosocial Care and Support Facilitating Community Support Structures – Lessons learned in Uganda about community-based psychosocial and mental health interventions', TPO and REPSSI
62	(2006) 'Supporting Children and Families in IDP Camps, Dili, Timor Leste', Child Protection Working Group of the Inter-agency Humanitarian Coordinating Group
63	(2007) 'Community Base Approach – Darfur experiences: June 2007', Save the Children Sweden
64	(2009) Watchlist Project Description Village Committee Child Protection Monitoring, Reporting and Response through Cell Phones Project.
65	(2009) Watchlist / AJEDI-Ka Rapport sur les violations graves des droits de enfants dans les territoires d'Uvira et de Fizi
68	(2009) World Vision Cyclone Nargis Emergency Response Programme: End of program evaluation report
69	(2009) UDDIPAN response to Bangladesh floods
70	Oxfam-Novib Child Protection Programme: Capacity building for civil society networks in Somalia/land, Oxfam-Novib
71	Assessment of UNICEF Supported Programmes for Reintegration of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Groups and Forces in Sudan, UNICEF
72	Final Report: Review of the support package to enable student retention in Northern Uganda, WV
73	Community-Based Child Protection Programme Evaluation and Review in Somalia, UNICEF Somalia
74	(2001) Global Impact Monitoring – Afghanistan Child Rights and Protection Program, Save the Children UK
75	Report of an Evaluation of the Terre des Hommes Programme for Protecting and Promoting the Psychosocial Well-Being of Tsunami and Conflict Affected Children in the Batticaloa and Ampara Districts of Sri Lanka, Terre des Hommes

# ANNEX I

## TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE REVIEW

### BACKGROUND

The last 18 months has seen individual and collective work by child protection agencies to clarify and develop their thinking on both national child protection systems and community-based child protection mechanisms. These work-streams have been critical steps in developing more effective policy and practice for the child protection sector overall.

The work on national child protection systems has emphasised the benefits of significantly improved sustainability and impact arising from a systems approach to child protection. This approach is seen as complementary to earlier issue-based approaches to child protection and focuses on the idea of a bounded set of system components operating at different levels (eg, structures, functions, capacities, continuum and process of care, investigation, accountability and analysis). It is also seen as being highly relevant to emergency child protection work because of its role in preparedness and disaster risk reduction through building the capacity of child protection services to withstand shocks such as natural disasters or civil conflict. However, while the ways in which community-based child protection mechanisms connect or integrate into this wider system are recognised as being extremely important, their practical modalities remain unclear.

The ongoing inter-agency learning project on community-based mechanisms for child protection has led to important learning on the impact, operation and support needs of such mechanisms,

drawing together for the first time evidence across agencies and countries in this field. However, despite the assumption that such mechanisms were a common response in emergencies, the global literature review identified few learning documents relating to such mechanisms in emergencies and this was felt to be a weakness requiring further exploration. It is also evident that the potential of indigenous or spontaneous community-based child protection mechanisms has been neglected in many agency approaches.

Until now, these two global work-streams have progressed mostly in parallel. However, recent thinking, including an inter-agency meeting in Nairobi in September 2009, has emphasised the importance of emphasising the links – and perhaps the inseparability – of these two topics. There is, therefore, now an excellent opportunity to build on thinking developed in both of these areas and to start to bring them together in one place.

The aim of this discussion paper is, therefore, to improve understanding of the role of community mechanisms in emergencies, with a specific focus on their relationship with other parts of the child protection system, including governmental and international actors. The project will contribute to both work-streams discussed above and will build on the global inter-agency processes that are already in place through the systems and community mechanisms work. It will work closely with the agencies involved in each of these processes and will also facilitate links between them.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project are to:

- review and document the roles that indigenous or agency-supported community-based mechanisms for child protection can fulfil in emergencies
- examine the existence of mechanisms before an emergency and explore whether and how this is related to their effectiveness and role in relation to other components of the system
- examine the links and division of labour between government and international actors and community-based groups in supporting child protection work in emergencies, including the appropriate division of roles and responsibilities
- identify promising approaches and challenges to effective partnership between government and international actors and community-based groups in emergency contexts
- identify promising approaches to agency intervention in supporting and enabling community-based mechanisms for child protection.

## SCOPE

For the purposes of this project, emergencies will be defined as both sudden rapid onset emergencies *and* chronic humanitarian crises in fragile states, including natural disasters and conflict. In addition, emergencies will be understood as including both emergency preparedness and response.

As this project is building on a body of inter-agency work, the research will review experience and learning from across a range of agencies and organisations.

The research will provide reflection and identify concrete examples to answer a range of key questions for each objective of the research:

- a) Review and document the roles that community-based mechanisms for child protection can fulfil in emergencies:
  - What are the different functions that community-based mechanisms can

- appropriately undertake in emergencies (preparedness and response)?
  - How can/do existing community-based mechanisms adapt to emergency contexts? Are existing mechanisms more effective and how do they relate to the wider system?
- b) Examine the division of labour between government, international actors and community-based groups in supporting child protection in emergencies:
    - What examples are there of effective and less effective links between community-based groups and government, international actors and other less formal actors in the child protection system?
    - What are the appropriate links and division of roles and responsibilities between government, international actors and community-based groups?
  - c) Identify promising approaches and challenges to effective partnership between government and international actors and community-based groups in emergency contexts:
    - What factors enable effective partnerships between government, international actors and community groups in emergencies?
    - What factors challenge effective partnerships between government, international actors and community groups in emergencies?
  - d) Identify promising approaches to agency intervention in supporting and enabling effective community-based mechanisms for child protection:
    - What are promising approaches in terms of assessment of community capacities for child protection in emergencies?
    - How can agencies support and strengthen indigenous community structures for child protection in emergencies (building back better)?
    - Have agency-led interventions had negative impacts on indigenous structures in emergencies?
    - What are promising approaches for supporting agency-initiated community-based mechanisms in emergencies?

## METHODOLOGY

The research will be desk based and will include:

### Literature review

A literature review will be undertaken of key documents including published literature (journals, research and articles) and 'grey literature' (evaluations, policy and project documents).

Some documents (around ten reports) on community-based mechanisms for child protection in emergencies have already been identified by the inter-agency learning project on community-based child protection mechanisms. Through this review, we will build on that document set and search for more literature in this area. The literature review will also include an analysis of the key pieces of work that have been undertaken on child protection systems.

### Case studies

A selection of country case studies will be collected to demonstrate experiences and learning in relation to the four objectives of the project.

### Review of Nairobi meeting outputs

An inter-agency meeting was held in Nairobi from 23–25 September to explore issues around community-based mechanisms for child protection. The research will review and build on the rich ideas and outputs generated from this meeting.

### Key informant interviews

Telephone interviews will be undertaken with 10 to 12 key informants. This group will include a range of agency representatives from international organisations (at field and global level) and national organisations. We will also aim to include at least one interview with a government representative.

## DELIVERABLES

The outputs of this project will be:

- a draft outline of the discussion paper
- a draft discussion paper
- a final discussion paper of around 12–20 pages

## DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

As the output of the research will be a discussion paper, a key activity will be wide dissemination in order to stimulate discussion and debate.

Dissemination activities will include:

- publication of the paper and wide dissemination to agency, government and donor contacts
- presentation of the paper at the Child Protection Working Group conference in summer 2009
- other key events/networks.

We will also look to present the findings at events that arise during 2010.

# ANNEX 2

## COUNTRIES COVERED BY DOCUMENT SET

Afghanistan

Bangladesh

Chad

Côte d'Ivoire

Democratic Republic of Congo

Guinea

India

Indonesia

Kenya

Lebanon

Myanmar

Nepal

Occupied Palestinian territory

Pakistan

Peru

Solomon Islands

South Africa

South Sudan

Sri Lanka

Sudan

Thailand

Timor Leste

Uganda

# ANNEX 3

## INTERVIEWS

### **Myanmar**

Win Aye, Save the Children

Makiba Yamano, World Vision

Nyi Nyi Htwe, World Vision

### **Occupied Palestinian territory**

Mike Merryman-Lotze, Save the Children

Lucy Batchelor, Save the Children

Ida Hyllested, UNICEF

### **Democratic Republic of Congo**

Emma Fanning, Oxfam

Shona Bezanon, Save the Children

Watchlist

### **Timor Leste**

Jose de Souza, PLAN East Timor



# ANNEX 4 LITERATURE REVIEW MATRIX

Document citation:			Document no:
Reviewed by:			Date:
Document description	Community-based child protection mechanism	Key findings/lessons	
<p>Source:</p> <p>Publication status:</p> <p>Country:</p> <p>Type of emergency:</p> <p>Implementing agency:</p> <p>Project name:</p> <p>Method of evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Qualitative:</li> <li>– Quantitative:</li> <li>– Children's outcomes measured?</li> <li>– Community outcomes measured?</li> <li>– Quality of processes measured?</li> </ul>	<p>What are functions of committee?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Preparedness:</li> <li>– Response:</li> <li>– Protection issues addressed:</li> <li>– Sectors engaged:</li> <li>– Ongoing?</li> </ul> <p>What activities are undertaken?</p> <p>How was group formed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pre-existing emergency?</li> <li>– Initial assessment undertaken?</li> <li>– Participant selection:</li> </ul> <p>What does group look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Name:</li> <li>– Number of participants:</li> <li>– Status of participants:</li> <li>– Gender:</li> <li>– Child participation:</li> </ul> <p>How is group resourced?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Training/capital building provided:</li> <li>– Follow-up/supervision:</li> <li>– Financial/material support:</li> <li>– Costs:</li> </ul> <p>Links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– With government:</li> <li>– With non-formal components</li> </ul>	<p>Key questions from Terms of Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What functions can groups appropriately undertake in emergencies?</li> <li>– Are existing groups more effective? How do they adapt to emergencies?</li> <li>– Are there effective links between groups and other actors, formal and non-formal?</li> <li>– What factors enable effective links?</li> <li>– What factors challenge effective links?</li> <li>– What is an appropriate division of labour between actors?</li> <li>– What are promising approaches to assessment of community capacity in child protection in emergencies?</li> <li>– How can agencies support indigenous community structures better?</li> <li>– Have agency-led interventions had a negative impact on indigenous groups?</li> <li>– What are promising approaches for supporting agency-initiated groups in emergencies?</li> </ul> <p>Other comments:</p>	

# ANNEX 5

## EXAMPLE OF A PLANNING CHECKLIST

The decision about whether or not to include activities for building and strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms should not be an immediate reflexive response in an emergency, but should be based on an adequate assessment of the context and the existing system. In reality, the timeframe for designing emergency programmes and developing funding proposals is often just a matter of days. Therefore, a recommendation of this review is that the CPWG should develop a checklist that could be used by in-country clusters and different agencies, and integrated into assessment formats to guide this decision-making process in a first phase response.

Below are initial ideas for some questions that would be important to include in such a checklist.

- What are the existing community mechanisms that could be built on during the response? What are their strengths or limitations in providing child protection support? If there is an existing development programme, does it include some form of community mechanism? What kind of support will be needed in order that existing mechanisms can ameliorate to the required level following an emergency?
- What are other sectors doing in terms of community mobilisation? Is there opportunity for coordination and standardisation of approaches or integration?
- What are other child protection agencies doing in terms of community mobilisation? Is there opportunity for coordination and standardisation of approaches or integration across similar issues, eg, family tracing and reunification; gender-based violence; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration?
- What are the key constraints that will prevent community members from participating in a child protection mechanism now and in six months' time? Can these be overcome to make the mechanism sustainable? If these can't be overcome, what can be done to engage the community informally?
- What are locally appropriate ways to select members and measure a person's potential commitment? (Have they been involved in community-centred activities before/do they have a formal role within the community to help people/what is their motivation for joining?)
- What amount and types of capacity building are needed for communities to adequately address the planned protection needs? What is the required budget for this training and support in: a) the short term response; and b) the longer-term recovery period? Is this sufficient to address changing needs and possibly a high turnover of staff, which might necessitate complete re-training? Do we have the adequate range of skills and time within our team to be able to conduct the number and depth of training sessions required – including not only child protection skills but also language skills to facilitate capacity building in locally appropriate languages? Do staff have the skills and values required to facilitate effective community mobilisation?
- Given the responses to the above questions – should we be going through with our planned intervention, or do changes need to be made to the strategy?

# STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN EMERGENCIES THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED MECHANISMS

## A DISCUSSION PAPER

This report examines child protection mechanisms that are developed in communities during and after an emergency to keep children safe. In particular, it looks at how the right support for local mechanisms – like child welfare groups and child protection committees – can strengthen national child protection systems, and as a result have a profound and lasting impact.

The report draws on a review of 59 project evaluations from different agencies. In-depth insight into the relationship between local mechanisms and the wider national child protection system is offered through three case studies – from Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territory and Timor Leste.

The report closes by setting out what steps child protection practitioners and donors can take to support system strengthening in emergencies.