

# Building Child Protection Systems in Humanitarian Crises

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# Overview

- Why take a systems approach?
- What is a national child protection system?
- Three important lenses for viewing national child protection systems
- Systems building during humanitarian crises
- Importance of strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms as part of building effective national systems
- Reflection on how to build effective systems

# Why Take a Systems Approach?

- Limits of a focus on different categories of vulnerable children
- Project focus and fragmented programming
- Improved coordination and use of resources
- Building government and civil society capacities
- Long-term approach and sustainability
- Prevention as well as response & mitigation
- Accountability for fulfilling children's rights

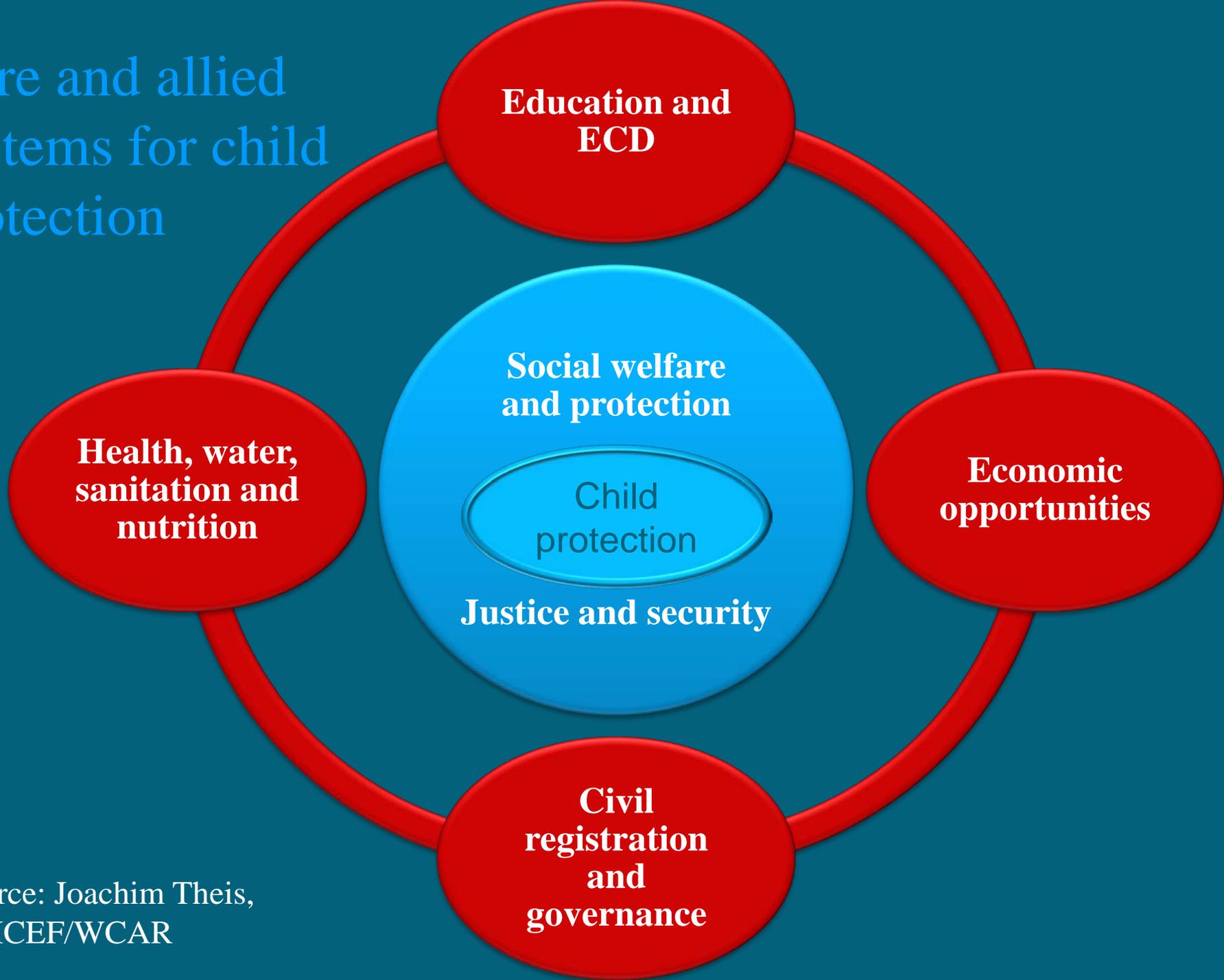
# What is a National Child Protection System?

A national child protection system is an interlocking, dynamic set of mechanisms, norms and practices at different levels (e.g., family, community, district, society) that have nationwide reach and that protect children by preventing, responding to, and mitigating the effects of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect of children. Governments have the obligation to protect, yet a national system requires protective action by many nongovernmental stakeholders.

# Elements of a National Child Protection System

- Child protective laws
- Enforcement mechanisms that work
- Advocacy
- Supports and services at multiple levels that aid prevention, monitoring, response, recovery, reintegration
- Civil society mechanisms and processes—traditional practices, customary law, chieftom processes, norms
- Referral mechanisms within and across levels
- Capacities—governmental, community, family, individual
- Children’s competencies, voices, and participation
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Coordination
- Resources

# Core and allied systems for child protection



Source: Joachim Theis,  
UNICEF/WCAR

# Three Valuable Lenses

- Do No Harm
- Social transformation
- Learning and evidence

# Do No Harm

- National systems of child protection can cause harm if they are poorly designed or implemented (e.g., discrimination)
- One size fits all approaches
- Parallel systems
- Poor coordination
- Extensive mandates but limited capacities
- Not building on what's already there

# Social Transformation

- National systems are incomplete in the face of evolving challenges
- Systems are dynamic
- Tensions frequently arise due to gaps between national systems and international standards of child rights
- Transformations may be important in, for example, improving relations between police and local people, or changing harmful traditional practices
- Change is contextual and best guided from within

# Learning and Evidence

- Emphasis needed less on structure than on function & outcomes for children
- Many national systems focus mostly on case-based monitoring and evaluation
- Yet under-reporting is very common
- Need exists for population-based measures of how widespread particular protection threats are
- Need data on well-being to support resilience and prevention
- Using the data to guide program and system improvements
- Key for accountability, funding, and policy impact

# Building Back Better: Building a National Child Protection System Through Emergency Response

- The case of Aceh, Indonesia following the 2004 Asian Tsunami
- Rudimentary emergency responses evolved into substantial protective systems for children in tsunami-affected areas
- Strategy: Early linkage of dual objectives:
  - (1) responding to immediate needs of vulnerable children
  - (2) welfare and legal systems-building for all children

# Linking Responsive Action with Systems Building

Early response tracing and reunification and safe space programs paved the way for:

- New child care and placement policies and practices
- Favorable shift in government policy away from financial support for orphanages only to substantial support of livelihoods to prevent child-family separations
- New government-civil society partnerships to provide integrated social services at sub-district level
- Emerging professional social service staff: 240 TKSK covering 215 sub-districts paid under the provincial parliament budget
- New university-based school of social work—human resource development

# Aceh Good Practice Exemplar

## Exploitation and Abuse

### Early Response

- Policewomen trained and deployed to barracks-children centers and key transit areas to monitor movement of separated children out of province; 50 by April 2005; 195 by October 2005.

### Recovery-Early Development: early responses evolved into:

- 22 women's and children's desks established in police departments throughout province
- Diversion program adopted (PPA) throughout province and a separate child court was established in Banda Aceh
- Integrated (legal and medical) service centers (PPT) for victims of exploitation, abuse and violence
- Restorative Justice Working Group---police, judge-social welfare and NGO members---now an NGO

# Outcomes

## Exploitation and Abuse System

### Juvenile justice:

- Sharp increase (76% vs. 8%) in the percentage of children who had a lawyer or NGO representative with them while they were questioned by the police
- Increased diversion of children from jail (71% vs. 33%)



# Outcomes: Aceh

- Increased percentage of women who received an explanation of the purpose of their interview in the hospital
- 67% of abused women were monitored and followed up after health treatment
- Large increase in government funding for child protection 2006-2008



# Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms

- Key components of a national child protection system—does the formal system reach the people?
- In humanitarian crises, external agencies frequently organize Child Welfare Committees or other community mechanisms to monitor, respond to, mitigate, and prevent various forms of child abuse
- But do such externally facilitated mechanisms work and are they sustainable?
- To answer these questions, an inter-agency study reviewed in 2009 160 evaluations (either from the gray literature or from published studies) of programs, mostly from Africa and Asia, that established community-based child protection mechanisms

# Key Finding 1:

## A Very Weak Evidence Base

- Most evaluations included no baseline measurements.
- Measures of actual outcomes for children were rare.
- Few measures of household and family well-being were used.
- Quantitative data were typically for output or process indicators.
- Qualitative data were typically collected on convenience samples.
- Methods of analyzing data were seldom described.
- Many of the interviews and focus group discussions that comprised the bulk of the evidence were subject to numerous biases which evaluators seldom mentioned.

## 2. Seven Factors Contributed to the Effectiveness and Sustainability of Community-Based Child Protection Groups

- Community ownership and responsibility
- Incorporating and building on existing resources
- Leaders' support
- Genuine child participation
- Ongoing management of issues of power, diversity, inclusivity
- Resourcing—ongoing training/capacity building, material support
- Linkages—engagement with formal and nonformal, traditional systems

# Factors That Promote or Limit Community Ownership

- **Promote**

- A sense of collective responsibility
- Patient cultivation
- Skill in facilitation
- Identity
- Mobilization of community resources

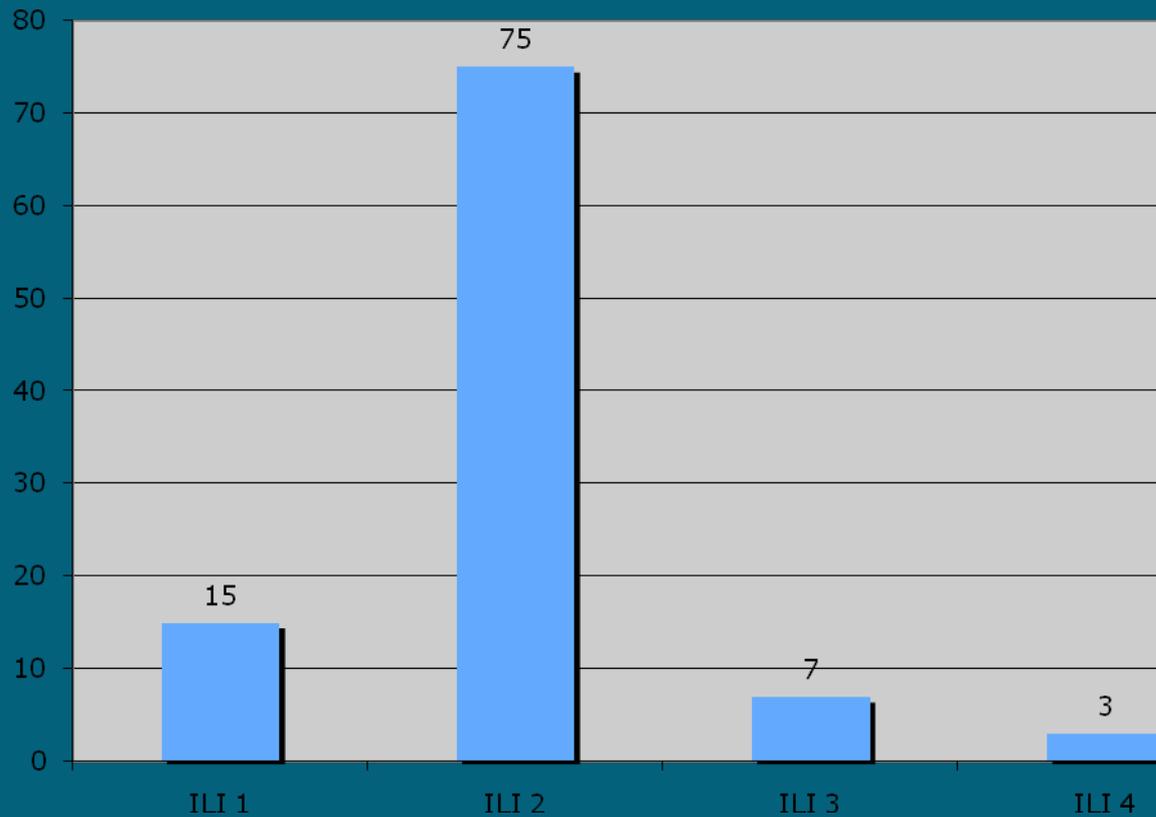
- **Limit**

- Early introduction of large sums of money
- Agency oriented engagement with community
- Didactic, top-down approaches
- Failure to build on local ideas and resources

# Different Ways Agencies Engage with the Community

- **Category 1:** Direct implementation by agency: The agency is a service provider; community members are beneficiaries.
- **Category 2:** Community involvement in agency initiative: The agency is a promoter of its own initiative, a planner and a trainer, and community members are volunteers and beneficiaries.
- **Category 3:** Community owned and managed activities mobilized by external agency: The agency is a catalyst, capacity builder, a facilitator of linkages, and a funder after community ownership has developed. The community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and also beneficiaries.
- **Category 4:** Community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community: The agency is a capacity builder and funder, and community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and also beneficiaries.

### 3. The Dominant Mode of Community Engagement Supports Limited Ownership



# How To Build Effective Systems

- Top-down approaches are useful but risk the imposition of governmental system
- Example: In Sierra Leone, the Child Rights Act (2007) mandated CWCs in each village, but the implementation evoked strong backlash over ‘child rights’
- Value of bottom-up and middle-out approaches
- Even in emergencies, many opportunities exist for strengthening linkages between communities and formal systems
- Strategic awareness
- Persistence and following through from emergency response – early recovery – long-term development