



The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

**“Adapting to learn, learning to adapt”:
Overview of and considerations for child
protection systems strengthening in
emergencies**

Written by Child Frontiers on behalf of the Systems
Strengthening and Disaster Risk Reduction Task Force -
co-led by the CPC Learning Network and Plan International

Part of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian
Action

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Glossary of key terms

Accountability may be defined as the responsible use by humanitarian actors of the resources made available to them. Ways of achieving accountability may include:

- Explaining how programmes conform with agreed best practice and commonly agreed commitments (for example, evidence-based standards accepted across the sector)
- Sharing results of activities
- Providing reasons for action and non-action in a particular context in a transparent way
- Involving stakeholders, including and most especially beneficiaries or clients, in all humanitarian action. With regard to affected populations, this means taking into account their needs, concerns and capacities at all stages of humanitarian response, respecting their right to be heard and to be involved in decisions affecting their lives, and providing them with the means to challenge agencies' decisions
- Establishing mechanisms for continual and on going understanding of the perspectives of all stakeholders¹
- More specifically, system accountability refers to mechanisms or operations designed to ensure that system's goals are met²

Capacity: Capacity refers to human resources, funding and infrastructure.³

Capacity building: Capacity building is the strengthening of knowledge, ability, skills and resources to help individuals, communities or organisations to achieve agreed goals.⁴

Case management is a way of organising and carrying out work to address an individual child's (and their family's) needs in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, through direct support and/or referrals, and in accordance with a project or

¹ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?!-H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

² Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children

³ Wulczyn, Fred, et al (2010)

⁴ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?!-H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

programme's objectives.⁵

Cash transfers are sums of money provided to beneficiaries (individuals or households) by government or non-government agencies. This may be either as emergency relief intended to meet their basic needs for food, non-food items or services, or to buy assets essential for the recovery of livelihoods.⁶

Cash-for-work: Cash-for-work is work that is paid for with either cash or vouchers. Cash-for-work activities should benefit the community, be part of a public project, contribute to early recovery efforts post emergency, or result in the creation of public or community assets (e.g. irrigation works or grass cutting).⁷

Child friendly spaces are safe spaces where communities create nurturing environments in which children can access free and structured play, recreation, leisure and learning activities. Child friendly spaces (CFSs) may provide educational and psychosocial support and other activities that restore a sense of normality and continuity. They are designed and operated in a participatory manner, often using existing spaces in the age ranges.⁸

Child protection: The prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. It is not the protection of all children's rights, but refers to a specific subset of their rights.⁹

Community: A group of people that recognises itself or is recognised by outsiders as sharing common cultural, religious or other social features, backgrounds and interests, and that forms a collective identity with shared goals.¹⁰ A community may be geographically defined as a group of interacting people living in proximity in a particular location such as a village or urban neighbourhood.¹¹

⁵ Inter Agency Guidelines For Case Management & Child Protection - The role of case management in the protection of children: A guide for policy & programme managers and caseworkers (2014) Case Management Task Force

⁶ Thompson, Hannah (2012) Cash and Child Protection: How cash transfer programming can protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence

⁷ Thompson, Hannah (2012) Cash and Child Protection: How cash transfer programming can protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence

⁸ CPWG (2012) Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action

⁹ CPWG (2012) Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action

¹⁰ Action for the Rights of Children (2009) ARC resource pack: Definitions of terms, www.arc-online.org

¹¹ Eynon, Alyson and Sarah Lilley (2010) Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies Through Community-Based Mechanisms: A Discussion Paper, Save the Children on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group

Although a community may not always be a homogenous group (there may be different ethnic groups, religious groups, people with varying socioeconomic status, etc.), communities can provide situations of mass displacement where no 'community' is easy to see, groups of people can organise themselves to support children at risk.¹²

Community based child protection mechanism (CBCPM) is a network or group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated way toward child protection goals. These mechanisms can be internal (a mixture of traditional and outside influences) or externally initiated and supported. There is increasing international agreement that externally supported community based mechanisms such as child welfare committees are often set up in ways that are ineffective and inappropriate, and which undermine existing ownership and resources. Effective CBCPMs include local structures and traditional or non-formal processes for promoting or supporting the wellbeing of children.¹³

Conflict: Conflict refers to violent fighting between two or more parties that threatens the safety and security of communities or of the general population. This includes situations of repression through coercion or fear backed by the threat of violence, as well as acts of violence up to and including the level of armed conflict.¹⁴

Disaster: A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts that exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources and therefore requires urgent action. The word 'disaster' may be used to refer to natural disasters as well as to conflict, slow and rapid onset situations, rural and urban environments and complex political emergencies in all countries. The term thus encompasses related terms such as 'crisis' and 'emergency'.¹⁵

Disaster/ emergency preparedness: Disaster preparedness refers to activities and measures taken in advance of a disaster to ensure an effective response to the

¹² CPWG (2012) Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action

¹³ CPWG (2012) Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action

¹⁴ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

¹⁵ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

impact of hazards, including issuing timely and effective early warnings and the temporary evacuation of people and property from threatened locations. It is often called simply 'preparedness' and can also apply to the state of readiness to respond as demonstrated by organisations, NGOs or government departments.¹⁶

Disaster risk reduction (DRR): This refers to the concept and practice of reducing the risk of disaster through systematic efforts to analyse and manage causal factors. It includes reducing exposure to hazards, lessening the vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improving preparedness for adverse events.¹⁷

Do no harm: In the context of humanitarian work, the term 'Do no harm' was developed to make aid agencies aware of the fact that their humanitarian actions may aggravate (violent) conflict. It underscores unintended impacts of humanitarian interventions, and is considered an essential basis for the work of organisations in conflict situations. The concept has acquired a broader meaning that warns humanitarian agencies to avoid unintended negative consequences in any situation in which they operate in order that the humanitarian response might not further endanger affected persons and might not undermine communities' capacities for peacebuilding and reconstruction. In its broader sense, it stipulates that humanitarian agencies should have policies in place to guide them during planning, monitoring and evaluation on how to handle sensitive information that can directly harm people's safety or dignity.¹⁸ In this document we also use it to emphasise the need to consider how humanitarian action may undermine the child protection prevention and response initiatives of pre-existing systems at all levels.

Early recovery is a multifaceted process of recovery that begins in a humanitarian response setting. It is guided by development principles that seek to build on humanitarian programmes and encourages sustainable development opportunities. It aims to generate self-sustaining, nationally owned, resilient processes for post-crisis recovery. It encompasses the restoration of basic services, livelihoods, shelter, governance, security and rule of law, environment and social dimensions, including

¹⁶ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

¹⁷ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

¹⁸ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

the reintegration of displaced populations.¹⁹

Economic strengthening refers to actions taken by governments, donors and implementers to improve livelihoods. This may include microcredit, cash transfers, skills training, and others.²⁰

Emergency: An emergency or crisis is broadly defined as a threatening condition that requires urgent action. Effective emergency action can avoid the escalation of such an event into disaster. A disaster is seen as a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic, or environmental losses. The impact of which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. It therefore requires urgent action on the part of external actors.

Emergencies may be manmade, such as conflict or civil unrest; they may result from natural hazards, such as floods or earthquakes; or they may be a combination of both. They often have devastating effects on children's lives. They result in girls and boys being killed or injured, becoming orphaned, becoming separated from their families, being recruited into armed forces or groups, being sexually abused, becoming disabled, being trafficked, or worse, experiencing several of these at the same time.²¹

Formal: Elements of a system that are established or sanctioned by the government and guided by laws, regulations and policies.

- **Non-formal:** Elements of a system that do not have state/government mandates for the protective functions they fulfil. Instead, they are shaped by attitudes, values, behaviours, social norms and traditional practices in society.
- The boundaries between formal and non-formal elements will depend on the particular country context.²²

Functions: Functions refer to what a system does to achieve its goals.²³

¹⁹ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

²⁰ Josh Chaffin (August 2011) The Impacts of Economic Strengthening Programs on Children: A review of the evidence, Produced by the CPC Livelihoods and Economic Strengthening Task Force

²¹ CPWG (2012) Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action

²² World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A World Vision Discussion Paper

²³ Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the

Humanitarian child protection action: The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations. Humanitarian action has two inextricably linked dimensions: protecting people and providing assistance. Humanitarian action is rooted in humanitarian principles -- humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.²⁴

Humanitarian child protection action therefore seeks to prevent and respond to child protection issues in emergency settings. This covers equally advocacy, campaigning, awareness raising, material and technical inputs, capacity building, reinforcing of other actors work, resourcing, and direct service delivery. Here we consider it to encompass interagency coordination activities as well as individual agency programme interventions.

Note: humanitarian response is only one dimension of humanitarian action. It focuses on the provision of assistance in a given emergency situation.

Kinship care: Kinship care is family based care within the child's extended family or with close friends of the family known to the child, whether formal or non-formal in nature.²⁵

Livelihoods refers to the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living.²⁶

Structures: Is used in various ways: it may refer to the framework within which agents in the system interact and form relationships, it may at times be used to describe more concrete features of a system, such as physical space. Or it may refer to the relationship between components within the system.²⁷

Children

²⁴ The Sphere Project: Glossary, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/glossary/?l=H&page=2>, accessed 11 April 2016

²⁵ Interagency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (2013) Alternative Care in Emergencies Toolkit, United Nations (2009) Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, United Nations, A/RES/64/142

²⁶ Josh Chaffin (August 2011) The Impacts of Economic Strengthening Programs on Children: A review of the evidence, Produced by the CPC Livelihoods and Economic Strengthening Task Force

²⁷ Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children

System: A set of things that interconnect in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behaviour over time.²⁸ All systems consist of three broad categories of ‘things’: elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose.²⁹ In child protection we refer to these as components, interconnections, and a goal.

Social service workforce: The child protection social service workforce is an inclusive term that includes all categories of people who work on behalf of vulnerable children and families. This includes a range of providers and actors, paid and unpaid, both non-formal and traditional such as family and kinship networks, community volunteers as well as formal, employed professional and paraprofessional workers.³⁰

Upstream work: that which influences normative frameworks pertaining to children, through, for example law reform, policy development and standard setting initiatives.

²⁸ Meadows, Donella (2008) *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*

²⁹ Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children

³⁰ Davis, Rebecca, Jim McCaffery and Alessandro Conticini (2012) *Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: A working paper*, Training Resources Group and Play Therapy Africa

Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym or abbreviation	Explanation
ARC	Action on the Rights of the Child
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBCPM	Community Based Child Protection Mechanism
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster
CFS	Child Friendly Spaces
CPC	Child Protection in Crisis
CPIE	Child Protection in Emergencies
CPMS	Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
IACPIMS	Inter-Agency Child Protection Information Management System
IMEU	Institute for Middle East Understanding
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIRAPAD	Network for Information, Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster, Bangladesh
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SitRep	Situation Report
SMA	Swedish Migration Agency
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
Tdh	Terre des Hommes
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WVI	World Vision International

Introduction

Background to the overview and considerations: Systems strengthening is becoming a dominant paradigm for many child protection actors. In spite of the prevailing support, the conceptualisation of a systems strengthening approach remains an area of continued discussion and consensus building. Various studies³¹ have indicated ongoing challenges in implementing and realising systems strengthening activities in practice. Based on this the Systems Strengthening and Disaster Risk Reduction Task Force of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (formerly the CPWG), co-led by the Child Protection in Crisis (CPC) Learning Network and Plan International initiated a process to develop an overview document with key considerations for practitioners.

Who is this document for? This document is targeted at all actors supporting child protection responses in humanitarian settings. Child protection is defined as the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children.³²

What is the purpose of this document? The aims of this document are to:

1. Provide an overview of child protection systems strengthening in emergencies practice to date, and based on this,
2. Propose certain key considerations with regards to systems for child protection practitioners.

How were the overview and considerations developed? The process of development included a desk review and key informant interviews.

The document draws on 248 key informant interviews with individuals representing national governments; UN agencies; international; national and local NGOs; academic bodies; community groups; as well as focus group discussions with children.

³¹ Including for example a series of studies supported by the Systems Strengthening and Disaster Risk Reduction Task Force that took place between 2012 and 2015 in Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan, the Philippines, and Palestine with additional data collected in Yemen. And Davis, Rebecca, Jim McCaffery and Alessandro Conticini (2012) Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: A working paper, Training Resources Group and Play Therapy Africa

³² CPWG (2012) Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action

The desk review was not an extensive or systematic review of all literature on systems strengthening based on certain search criteria. Rather it covered:

- Reports of the country studies on systems strengthening carried out between 2012 and 2015, supported by the Task Force, that took place in Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan, the Philippines, Palestine, and data collected in Yemen;
- Agency specific guidance, frameworks, and policies on child protection systems and child protection systems strengthening;
- Material and literature shared by key informants regarding:
 - How systems thinking has been adopted by others in the humanitarian, development, or child protection sectors;
 - Case studies.

How should you use this document? This document has four main sections. The first two (*What are child protection systems?* and *How do child protection systems vary across contexts?*) provide conceptual clarity on child protection systems and how they vary across settings. The third (*How have we been approaching child protection systems strengthening in emergencies up until now?*) gives an overview of past experiences of child protection systems strengthening efforts in the humanitarian field, identifying promising practice and weak approaches. Each of these has an 'In brief' box at the beginning of the section that summarises the content. These boxes should be read as a minimum before seeking to apply the key considerations on child protection systems strengthening presented in *What does systems thinking mean for child protection in emergencies?* It is thought that a minimum understanding of 'systems' is necessary to understand the considerations. The questions in Section 4 may then be used more effectively to guide humanitarian responders when they are preparing for, coordinating, planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating actions that they hope will contribute to systems strengthening.

What is 'systems thinking'?

'Systems thinking' is a way of working. It is an approach that can be applied to child protection in emergencies work in order to support problem solving and holistic thinking about interventions. Some agencies and certain fields of humanitarian work have already started to draw on systems thinking to improve their responses.

Definition of 'systems thinking': Systems thinking takes into account the interaction between different parts of any system to better understand how together the system works rather than simply trying to understand specific system components in isolation. It identifies the complex ways in which components of systems are grounded in, and respond to, their context, and the way that changes in one component impact upon other parts of the system. It emphasises the sociocultural norms underlying systems components that give rise to systems behaviour. 'Systems thinking' helps to explore the perspectives of different actors and gain insight into different motivations and how these translate into different systems behaviour.

The application of systems thinking to child protection in emergencies

programming: Children often face multiple child protection issues at the same time. The root causes of these issues are diverse, entangled, and may even be hidden. The resources needed to support the child to prevent these problems arising, or respond to them when they do, are equally varied. Prevention and response may require action on the part of everyone from the child and their immediate family and community to the State, and international actors. Programming approaches in the humanitarian sector historically focused on one single child protection issue at a time. Programming activities were developed around a set of assumptions or logic set out at the beginning of an intervention period, without the flexibility to adapt as new information came to light or systems changed. This has not always been successful, as reality is more complex.

Systems thinking looks at an entire situation, taking into account all the different elements and factors and how they interrelate to one another.³³ Rather than looking at protection issues in isolation, or a specific service available to children, systems thinking brings together the range of problems facing the child, the root causes, and the solutions provided at all levels. It promotes flexible programming with integrated learning and adaptation as implementation takes place.

For more details on systems thinking see Annex I: The field of systems thinking

³³ Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

SECTION 1:

What are child protection systems?

In brief: What are child protection systems?

- Child protection systems consist of components, connected around a common goal to protect children, set in a specific context
- They operate at different levels –from the child to the State and international actors. They may be more or less formal in nature
- The interactions between components define how systems operate. We need to acknowledge different actors' perceptions in order to understand their behaviour.
- Systems are unique to the context in which they exist. All aspects of systems reflect inherent sociocultural norms. Recognising the interplay between socio-cultural norms, perceptions, and systems behaviours is helpful
- Systems change, adapt, and evolve in line with changes in the external environment and internal changes within the system
- Child protection systems rely significantly on collaboration with other sectors' systems or areas of activity in order to deliver the full range of child protection prevention and response actions
- We speak of systems, not a system, as there will always be systems nested within systems, and in some places within one context or nation there may be several contiguous or disjointed systems
- Child protection systems that are responsive to humanitarian events have certain key components: 'living' disaster and preparedness plans; disaster and emergency aware and prepared families and communities; skilled, knowledgeable protection actors and workforce; flexibility in functions

The following conceptualisation of child protection systems has been developed based on a review of international agency definitions of child protection systems, see Annex II: Comparing agency and interagency definitions of child protection systems. This will be used throughout this overview document.

Child protection systems are collections of components– structures, functions, capacities –that are organised and connected to each other around

a common goal, where the goal is to address child protection concerns.³⁴

“Capacity” refers to the people – from families, communities, NGOs, government, all the way to international actors, and regional bodies. This may also include funding and infrastructure.³⁵ These actors are all embedded within systems, not separate from or external to them. “Structures” may refer to the framework within which agents within systems interact and form relationships; the term may be used to describe concrete features of systems, such as physical space, or it may refer to the relationship between components. These may be based on formal and non-formal relationships, both of which are equally important. They may be based on cultural convention or national legislation. “Functions” refers to what systems do to achieve their goals; it describes the smaller outcomes or results that are achieved on the way to accomplishing the overall systems’ goal. Child protection systems are nested systems where families play a central role: children are raised in families, families are nested in family systems, family systems are nested in local community systems, community systems are nested in wider societal systems.

The interconnections and interactions between the components, and the relationships between actors are of the utmost importance – they make what could be disparate elements into a system. Within child protection systems are all the components and actors seeking to address child protection concerns. Other elements that support child wellbeing more broadly – such as education, child nutrition, vaccination programmes – are outside child protection systems. The margins between elements focussed on child protection and others demarcate the boundaries of any child protection systems. The goal, the components, the actors, the interactions between them, and the boundaries are all affected by the context in which systems are located. Inherent to systems are the social norms and cultural context; they influence actors’ behaviour, and interactions. Systems change, adapt and evolve, sometimes in line with changes in the external context, for example a crisis or emergency event may cause change. At other times they may change as a result of modifications in one element within a system that creates a ripple of

³⁴ The discussion in this chapter draws upon the definition of child protection systems and exploration of systems thinking as presented in Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children. It also reflects upon an overview of INGO and UN agencies’ definitions of child protection systems, as presented in Annex II: Comparing agency and interagency definitions of child protection systems. This annex summarises agency and interagency reports and documents that conceptualise child protection systems.

³⁵ Wulczyn et al (2010) *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection*

unpredictable change throughout the system, which in turn may further alter the element that was originally adjusted.

Context: The components of systems, the interconnections and the goal are all determined and influenced by the ever-changing context in which the systems operate.³⁶ Context is being used here to refer to the aspects of a location that are external to systems, that surround and influence systems constantly – this includes the politics, the natural environment, the economy, security, among others.³⁷ The term 'environment' is ordinarily used in systems thinking to describe what is external to systems, however given the strong association between the term 'environment' and the natural world rather than other aspects such as politics and economics, here we will use the term 'context'. Systems – whether organically evolved or intentionally designed – are tailored to and uniquely formed by their context. In the case of an emergency, the changed context is likely to affect the pre-existing system, at times considerably.

Sociocultural norms: Context specific, sociocultural norms are at the heart of systems – they are innate to the components within systems, and intrinsic to actors' behaviour, and they influence the interactions and connections between components and actors. They also significantly determine aspects of the contexts in which systems are found.

Goal: While systems should have clearly defined goals, agreed and shared by the full range of actors present, this is not always the case. Child protection systems' goals may vary. The whole of child protection systems may not have a common set of systems-wide strategies, plans and goals. Or there may be documented systems' goals, but the ways in the specific systems function they do not achieve the goals. Within a country State-led formal systems or community level actors may address certain child protection issues, but not others. Alternatively, child protection actions may be subsumed under aims to ensure overall child wellbeing. For something to be considered part of child protection systems there should be the implicit or explicit goal of protecting children.

Components: International actors' definitions of child protection systems specify a

³⁶ Wulczyn et al (2010) Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection

³⁷ Systems thinking uses the term "environment" but as this is frequently used to describe the natural world, here we use the term context to describe these location specific factors external to the systems.

range of components³⁸ that have mainly focused on the structures and not on the full range of capacities and functions. Of the definitions reviewed, all present an understanding founded on an idealised notion of what a system *should* look like, not taking into account the reality of how systems really manifest themselves and how they differ in each context. In terms of capacities, agencies have largely highlighted government capacities, a skilled workforce and service delivery. Lacking has been an understanding of children, families and communities as integral to systems capacities. They have attributed functions to certain actors, rather than seeing how all people at all levels within systems naturally perform prevention and response actions. There has been limited recognition of how the interactions between actors are what give rise to a system's behaviour.

Definitions to date have also consistently overlooked how structures, functions and capacities fulfil responsibilities to children in unforeseen events. We suggest that additional components allowing for systems' **flexibility and preparedness are essential to enable appropriate humanitarian actions that is able to meet the needs of children in the event of a disaster or in times of crisis**. At the family level it may be about considering the ways in which the family unit will evacuate and stay together should a natural disaster strike. At the community level this may mean an understanding of risks faced by children and how to communicate with children about these risks. Among NGO actors this may include interagency disaster and emergency preparedness plans that are known and understood by actors throughout existing child protection systems. And the State may have a set of pre-agreed extraordinary measures based on plans that are flexible and able to meet the needs of children and their caregivers in a humanitarian response, considering the supports required and available at multiple levels – from parents, family, and community, to State and international actors.

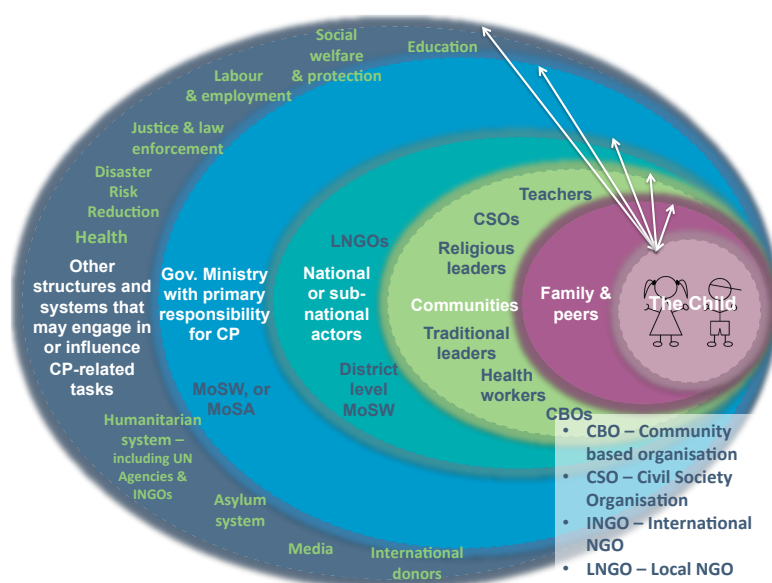
Relationship levels and actors within systems: Actors within systems are present at a range of different relationship levels.³⁹ No systems actors lie outside the systems

³⁸ See Annex II: Comparing agency and interagency definitions of child protection systems

³⁹ Actors across the sector acknowledge that the system acts at numerous different levels. Plan. (2015). Protection from violence is every child's right: Plan International's Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming 2015-2020, Save the Children (2010) Child Protection Initiative: Building rights based national child protection systems: a concept paper to support Save the Children's work, Terre des hommes and Child Frontiers (2014) Understanding and applying a systems approach to child protection: a guide for programme staff, UNHCR (2012) A Framework for the Protection of Children, United Nations Children's Fund (20 May 2008) UNICEF Child Protection Strategy (E/ICEF/2008/5/Rev.1), World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A World Vision Discussion Paper, Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? An inter-agency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in

they are part of, separate from the others. All players, including international humanitarian agencies, are necessarily rooted within the systems. All may contribute to child protection tasks. They may play a contributing role to the way systems evolve, but they cannot fully control the systems or determine exactly what the repercussions of any of their actions will be. In some instances they may also present a threat to child wellbeing.

Relationship levels and actors around children⁴⁰



They include:

- Child – girls and boys
- Family, caregivers and peers
- Community – community members and endogenous community structures, community based organisations and groups
- National and local NGOs
- Government departments who have responsibilities directly linked to child protection/welfare – at local, district and national level

humanitarian and development settings

⁴⁰ Based on Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? An interagency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings, and Terre des hommes and Child Frontiers (2014) Understanding and applying a systems approach to child protection: a guide for programme staff World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A World Vision Discussion Paper

- International actors – INGOs and UN agencies, international or regional bodies influencing and establishing legislation and regulation, other nation states (e.g. bordering countries) whose relationships and policies influence the systems
- Other structures and systems that contribute to or engage in child protection tasks. Within government this may for example include health, education, and justice actors. Within the international sphere it may cover donors, UN agencies, INGOs and the humanitarian system (those working in other sectors or areas of activity). Other systems may also be the asylum system and media.

The distinction between levels is not fixed and strong, and certain actors may operate between two levels. Whilst there is typically greater and more frequent contact between the closer relationship levels and children – for example family and peers will more regularly see, speak with and interact with children than government agents – outer spheres may and do also have direct contact with children. For example there may be temporary care provided by families and peers that is supported by the State. A child may disclose a child protection incident to a friend, who then shares this information with their teacher, and a formal report to local level social workers is then made. The components may be present and functioning at one, several or even all the levels listed at the same time. One instance would be when there are coordination structures at the district-level led by local NGOs that support a national level Cluster. Or, for instance, when data collection methods run at the community level feed into a government-run and UN-supported database.

Child protection systems may contain both **formal and non-formal** elements. Formal structures are those that are established or sanctioned by the government and guided by laws, regulations and policies.⁴¹ Non-formal mechanisms generally do not have government mandates for the protective functions they fulfil. Non-formal mechanisms may include, for example, the extended family and kinship care, religious and cultural groups, friends, and neighbourhood support networks.⁴² The distinction between formal and non-formal elements may be more or less pronounced and will depend on the particular country context.⁴³ Systems elements

⁴¹ World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A World Vision Discussion Paper

⁴² Save the Children (2010) Child Protection Initiative: Building rights based national child protection systems: a concept paper to support Save the Children's work

⁴³ World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection. For example, in situations where child protection systems have evolved naturally and are more rooted in cultural values, principles and attitudes, the institutional and more formal side of systems will function in harmony with the communities and families they seek to serve. There would thus be a more limited distinction in the practice of the formal and non-formal. Conversely where national child protection systems are an expression of imported laws and principles and are not rooted in local

may lie somewhere between the formal and non-formal. There are likely to be a greater proportion of non-formal mechanisms at levels closer to the child, and a greater number of formal structures in the outer levels. Non-formal mechanisms are crucial to children's wellbeing as they are often the first⁴⁴ and only ones to respond, especially in the case of unforeseen events. As such, an understanding of non-formal elements of systems is as important as formal elements.

Interconnections and interactions exist within and between child protection systems' components, between the different levels, and between the components at different levels. For example a family unit confronted by concerns for their child may turn to religious leaders or endogenous community groups for assistance, rather than seek to address the issues all alone or look to formal actors for help. A family member may come into direct contact with government actors from the Ministry of Justice when they are appealing a case. Data collected about children may be used for policy design at a national level. A dedicated budget is a necessary prerequisite for all other components. Due to these interconnections and interactions, if one part of a system changes, many other parts of the system may also be affected. For example, a significant cut in budget will reduce all other child protection activities within a State run system. A large number of new social workers, trained and appointed during an emergency, will require new offices, logistical and administrative supports, management, an adapted case management system, and budget for long-term salary payments. The strength of these interconnections has implications for the efficacy and functioning of systems as a whole. Documented, and agreed regulations, policies and procedures (for example child protection laws, or standard operating procedures) that attempt to influence the functioning of interconnections and interactions may exist, but they may not be put into practice.⁴⁵

Within systems different actors' perspectives will vary. Different individuals, or organisations within systems, may have varying views of what the systems are to protect children in that context, where their boundaries lie, how the context impacts upon them, the components within those systems, and the way in which they are

culture, values and perspectives (for example if they were inherited through colonisation), then there is likely to be greater divergence between the formal and non-formal. Krueger Alexander, Guy Thompstone, and Vimala Crispin, (2013) Learning from child protection systems mapping and analysis in West Africa: Research and policy implications

⁴⁴ Save the Children (2010) Child Protection Initiative: Building rights based national child protection systems: a concept paper to support Save the Children's work

⁴⁵ For example if these are not in line with the pre-existing norms, beliefs and values (Terre des hommes and Child Frontiers, 2014) Understanding and applying a systems approach to child protection: a guide for programme staff if they are under-resourced, or certain necessary components within the system are weak, for example there is a limited workforce to implement

interacting. Divergent views may make interconnections weak or possibly even absent. Actors may have varied views as to which interconnections and interactions are more or less important. When actors' perspectives are more aligned, there is greater coherence in the way actors understand systems and behave. This leads to increased likelihood they will agree a goal and attain it.

Systems boundaries of systems are not fixed and will vary from one context to another. Boundaries are delineated by specifying the child protection concerns a system seeks to address, within an identified geographical area. Boundaries may be conceptual, especially at the level of formal child protection systems. They may simply indicate a demarcation of responsibility between various 'sector' actors for certain initiatives. To give an example, whether an education intervention for out-of-school youth falls within the purview of a child protection system or an education system is a decision that social welfare and education actors, working together at various levels, will need to take. Of course, boundaries may also be geographic in nature. Specifying the child protection concerns a system seeks to address within an identified geographical area delineates these boundaries. This delineation then helps to establish the scale of the problem – the population of children and families that child protection systems are seeking to support, the actors engaged in promotion, prevention and response activities, the existing components, and the levels at which any systems are operational.

For example, actions that fall under the responsibility of education actors in one setting may well be the responsibility of child protection workers in another. The delivery of training on prevention of violence in schools may fall to those working within the Ministry of Education (MoE) or the MoE may seek to draw on expertise from the Ministry of Social Welfare in a given situation. Programmes to prevent children dropping out of school may focus on improving education quality and outreach – thus be part of the education system. In other situations they may look at the pull factors of child labour and push factors of childhood poverty and family vulnerability and thus be part of both the education and child protection systems. We see, therefore, that child protection actions may also be important within other systems. Another case is the role child protection plays within the refugee protection system. Certain child protection initiatives, such as the operationalisation of the best interest principle in decisions regarding refugee status determination and durable solutions, have an important impact on refugee children. However, these processes remain within the refugee protection system. These are points of intersection and

overlap between two national level systems. Others may and do exist. These examples indicate how though boundaries to child protection systems exist, child protection prevention and response actions and supports by their very nature represent a broad swath of 'sectors' or areas of activity; they must, for example, be linked to efforts to help children and their families to access health, education, and livelihoods as well as other basic supports including food, water, hygiene and sanitation

Child protection systems may be **nested** one inside the other, for example a child is nested in a family system, which in turn is nested in a community system. A government-led national child protection system may have within it a social welfare office in one district, and within that office there may be a mechanism to record child protection cases – a case management system – each of these is a system within a system. Whilst it is not ideal, we must recognise that in some locations systems may work in **parallel** to each other without being aware of each other. A national child protection system may be made up of many other systems that work on a narrower range of issues or at a lower relationship level, without being aware of each other, and without any links or interrelationships. For instance a community level response to child protection concerns in a rural village may occur without referring to or engaging national actors, who only have representatives in a distant capital office. An example may be that in a certain setting there may be two systems:

A community-led case management system may include:

- *Components:* religious and traditional leaders
- *Interconnections and interactions:* The contact those leaders have with families and children. The ways in which they respond to children and families when certain members of the community demonstrate a need for support
- *Goal:* wellbeing of the overall population within their community, including children

Government-directed case management system may include:

- *Components:* staff, various agencies, direct services
- *Interconnections and interactions:* the ways in which social workers implement agreed protocols, and standard operating procedures. The actual referrals that are made and support given to access services. The way the Ministry of Finance allocates and disburses budgets. The way the Health or Education

sector identifies and refers children in need of protection to the social workforce.

- *Goal:* to address needs of individual children (and their families/caregivers) in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner

These two may work in parallel to each other, with no awareness of each other – with community groups addressing the needs of their population without adhering to laws or sharing information with the State. For example, a family of children who lose both their biological parents may be taken in and cared for by their maternal aunt, without any formal adoption process happening. The aunt may receive community support for the extra children. Or the community may respond to a reported rape case by sending a child away to live with relatives in another community, so as to save the reputation of the perpetrator, as well as protect the child from further abuse. In the process they disrupt the child's education and remove the child from the family they love. The goals of community harmony and traditional honour may not always be in line with international ideals of child rights, or sometimes even national laws.

Alternatively, they may interconnect and interact smoothly and operate in complementary ways. The community system may support the aunt to complete formal adoption proceedings and apply for government-implemented protection safety nets. Community leaders may adhere to national laws by reporting the rape to security forces. They may document the case using standardised forms and refer the child and their family to social services and health workers. In this scenario the community system can be seen as 'nested' within the overall national child protection system.

Throughout this paper we will talk about systems, rather than a single national system, as multiple systems may be coordinated and interconnected in one national system in some instances, but not in all.

SECTION 2:

How do child protection systems vary across place and over time?

In brief: How do child protection systems vary across place and time?

- Tailored systems strengthening actions demand an in-depth knowledge of the systems, the situation of children and families, sociocultural norms, and context at a given moment in time, whilst retaining a vision of preparedness, recovery, and development phases
- Within one context child protection systems may be inconsistent, behaving in diverse ways, and delivering different responses depending on the individual characteristics of a child: such as where the child lives, their legal status, gender, ethnicity, religion, ability, and other aspects
- Child protection systems are adaptive, differ according to context, and are unique to each location. This has an impact on children's vulnerability to child protection concerns and the prevention and response actions available to them. It is thought that...
 - Pre-existing child protection systems will influence the impact an emergency has on children
 - The location, nature, intensity, and magnitude of any humanitarian event will determine the amount of disruption to child protection systems
 - The support required from external actors will be site and event specific
 - Sociocultural norms influence systems responses
 - Political environment influences systems responses
 - Population movements may import and overlay two or more sets of systems in one location
 - Within one context child protection systems may be inconsistent, behaving in diverse ways, and delivering different responses depending on the individual characteristics of a child: such as where the child lives, their legal status, gender, ethnicity, religion, ability, and other aspects
 - Emergencies pose challenges to systems in all contexts, regardless of economic development
 - Similar events in the same setting at different times may have different impacts on children, and require a different humanitarian response

The nature of child protection systems may change significantly over place and time. Systems do not operate in a vacuum; they are embedded within a broader context

(or what systems thinking refers to as 'environment').⁴⁶ All child protection systems are determined by traditions, customs, norms, and economic, political, historical, geographical and natural settings. Thus context is of utmost importance. Significant events such as natural disasters, economic downturn, change in government, social movements, health crises, conflict, and complex emergencies may all heighten child protection needs, weaken the capacity for response, and alter how systems operate. Some crises, such as influxes of refugees and/or migrants, for example in mixed migratory movements, can also present new challenges in terms of child protection needs for which a system may not be well equipped. Each of these presents distinct challenges. Such situations may also offer new opportunities for strengthening systems.⁴⁷

Variation across place

The nature and composition of systems that protect and promote the wellbeing of children vary according to the setting. These differences have consequences for children's vulnerability to protection concerns and access to prevention and response services.

Efforts are being made to establish a globally applicable typology (or method of classification) of child protection systems. This will propose a framework – with sets of dimensions that may be calibrated – for the categorisation of child protection systems across the world.⁴⁸ However, the application of systems strengthening in emergencies is not yet sufficiently advanced to enable us to suggest which of these methods for determining system forms and characteristics is most suitable, or propose specific sets of intervention that align with different categories of systems.

⁴⁶ Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children. As mentioned in section 1, the term "environment" is ordinarily used in systems thinking to describe aspects external to the system. However, given the strong association of the term "environment" with the natural world rather than other aspects such as politics and economics, here we will use the term context.

⁴⁷ Barnett, Katy and Wedge, Joanna (2010) *Child Protection Systems in Emergencies: A Discussion Paper*, Save the Children on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group

⁴⁸ Connolly, Marie; Ilan Katz; Aron Shlonsky; Leah Bromfield; (3 February 2014) *Towards A Typology For Child Protection Systems: Final report to UNICEF and Save the Children UK*. They describe the following forms of systems: Authoritarian Individualism, Permissive Individualism, Authoritarian Collectivism, and Permissive Collectivism. UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, World Vision (July 2013) *A better way to protect all children: The theory and practice of child protection systems: Towards a Typology for Child Protection Systems: Revised discussion paper*. This paper describes four possible dimensions for categorisation. 1) Orientation - child protection, family service, child focus, community care; 2) Formality - community-based, charitable, statutory; 3) Context - Fragility, developing, complex; 4) Performance. More established is the work of Esping-Andersen on forms of welfare states, with three types identified: Liberal Welfare, Corporatist, and Social democratic. See Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Due to need for further work in this area, categorisation is not used to frame the discussion on variation across contexts.

a. Pre-existing child protection systems will influence the impact an emergency has on children

Each child protection system is unique. The nature of the systems in place, their preparedness capacity and ability to adapt to the changes in their environment, will play a key role in determining risks and threats to children in the case of an emergency event. Where actors have worked with communities and children to prepare for events, it is thought the number of casualties will be less, and the incidence rates of certain concerns – such as child separation – may be reduced.

b. The location, nature, intensity, and magnitude of any humanitarian event will determine the amount of disruption to child protection systems

The nature of any crisis or emergency event is also influential. A humanitarian event that impacts upon a whole country is likely to be more disruptive than if it is in a localised area. The scale and strength of an event will also be a key factor. Weaker earthquakes, and cyclones, shorter floods, less severe droughts, will all be less likely to reduce family ties, disrupt community bonds, diminish NGO functionality, or undermine State structures. Location is also key: an emergency striking a population centre will impact upon more lives but also is likely to disrupt a greater range of systems. For example, if an event occurs in the national capital, where there is a concentration of systems' actors, as was the case when Haiti was struck by an earthquake in 2010, this may have a more damaging effect on child protection systems⁴⁹ than when a similar sized earthquake strikes in a provincial town or rural area.

c. The support required from external actors will be site and event specific

Some systems are prepared for emergencies, are less affected by similar events, and are in a position to refuse international assistance when emergencies occur.⁵⁰ In other cases the scale of impact, the preparedness of the system, mean that external actors step in to provide more assistance to in-country actors.

⁴⁹ A significant number of government buildings were lost, 25% of civil servants in Port au Prince were killed, and government ability to respond was severely limited. Dionne Akiyama (January 2014) Strengthening Child Protection Systems through the Emergency Response to the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti, Columbia University

⁵⁰ The New Zealand government refused certain offers of foreign assistance that were unneeded, considered unsuitable or which might have diverted other resources
McLean, Ian, Oughton, David, Ellis, Stuart, Wakelin, Basil, Rubin Claire B., (29 June 2012) Review of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Response to the 22 February Christchurch Earthquake, Public Information
Michele Poole (October 2012) Management in Christchurch following the February 2011 earthquake: lessons learned

d. Sociocultural norms influence systems responses

The people who work within any systems', and that make systems function, are embedded in the customs, norms, beliefs and practices of a setting. The context – its political, economic, geographical, environmental, and historical nature – also all depend upon the sociocultural norms. Thus systems' behaviours are influenced from within and without by those norms.

An example relates to Afghan asylum seekers in Germany. In reception centres providing temporary housing for asylum seekers, cultural differences with regards to care practices between asylum seekers and host communities have led to some misunderstanding. Afghan parents find it acceptable to leave their children under the supervision of neighbouring families for one night while they are away. These neighbours are individuals that live in close proximity to them in the centres, that they may only have met recently. They feel confident these families will care for their children. German camp operators consider the same behaviour neglectful and unacceptable. In Germany, parents who allow their children to be taken in by families without any proper assessment of risks are considered irresponsible. Because of cultural differences, these Afghan parents are identified by German camp operators as highly vulnerable families and are screened by Government social workers. They are singled out for support on better parenting practices and warned that if they do this again they may face the possibility of social services removing their children.⁵¹

Another example can be seen in Palestine. With limited government sponsored social safety nets families and neighbours have had to act to support their own populations. Cultural and religious norms require that extended family members assume care and responsibility for the families of siblings and other kin when necessary. This endogenous form of childcare is considered to be associated with the values and norms of that society.⁵²

e. Political environment influences systems responses

The political setting influences child protection systems, and thus also the humanitarian system and humanitarian child protection actions in any given location. In Myanmar after cyclone Nargis initial difficulties in bringing staff in-country, and

⁵¹ Key informant interview

⁵² Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU) (June 2006) Palestinian Social Customs and Traditions, available at <http://imeu.org/article/social-customs-and-traditions>, [accessed 29 April 2016]

accessing affected areas due to government restrictions, meant that, unlike in other settings, there were a reduced number of less professional actors and there was a much more prominent role for local actors.⁵³ The humanitarian actors also then influenced existing child protection systems through strong collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare in the development of a National Plan of Action for Child Protection in Emergencies.⁵⁴ Humanitarian action is thought in turn also to have impacted upon the political situation, by opening up discussion on protection concerns, and contributing to widening political space.⁵⁵

f. Population movements may import and overlay two or more sets of systems in one location

In refugee, internally displaced people, and/or other migration contexts the customs and social norms from the place of origin may be maintained and transformed as populations settle into camps or host communities based within different systems and culture. Populations may transport with them community level protective actions. There may thus be an overlaying and adaptation of two systems – one from the place of origin and the other from the host setting. There may also be new components in the systems present – in particular the humanitarian machinery. Refugee specific systems may operate across borders as they deal with different populations' countries of origin, transit or host countries, and resettlement countries.

Among Congolese refugees in Rwanda, for example, it was found that traditional child protection mechanisms were to some extent maintained within the camp setting. Primary helpers for children were their parents (especially mothers), extended family and clans provided advice to parents and children, and sometimes also financial support, friends and neighbours sometimes reported threats to parents or authorities, and churches also gave guidance and financial aid. However, the protracted refugee experience and dependence of families on aid had eroded some of these endogenous mechanisms.⁵⁶

⁵³ It is not recommended that host governments restrict movement and entry international aid, but somewhere between the responses to cyclone Nargis and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami lies a balance that provides adequate, and timely, access to professional responders whilst not opening the doors to all. - Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Response to Cyclone Nargis

⁵⁴ Tripartite Core Group (Government of the Union of Myanmar, ASEAN, and UN) (December 2008) Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan

⁵⁵ Turner, Robert, Baker, Jock, Dr.Zaw Myo Oo, Naing Soe Aye (17 December 2008) Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Response to Cyclone Nargis

⁵⁶ Prickett, Imogen, Israel Moya, Liberata Muhorakeye, Mark Canavera and Dr. Lindsay Stark (December 2013) Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms in Refugee Camps in Rwanda: An Ethnographic Study

The same pattern of overlaying systems may be true for situations where **displaced people** are moving into a location with very different social norms and culture, or even political system. In each refugee or displaced people's setting how systems components operate – the balance of systems components from the place of origin, host community and new actors – and how they interact will be unique.

g. Within one location child protection systems may be inconsistent, behaving in diverse ways, and delivering different responses depending on the individual characteristics of a child

Systems may behave inconsistently towards children within the same setting. A child's legal status, nationality, place of residence, ethnicity, religion, place of origin, linguistic group, ability, socioeconomic background, gender and gender identity, and sexual orientation may all affect their access to a system. Poor system level response due to challenges around individual identity may cause an exacerbation of child protection concerns.

A good example of how different children have different access to the child protection system can be found in the case of refugees. Refugee children may be excluded by child protection systems, or complementary systems that contribute to protective actions (e.g. education, health, justice) for many reasons, including due to:

- A lack of necessary documentation
- Religious, cultural, political, ethnic, and language barriers, including discrimination
- Locations where the formal system does not operate, or operates with low capacity
- Legislative and/ or procedural exclusion
- Formal system would not be protective
- The child protection system is not equipped to address the needs of refugee children

In some cases contradictions also exist in the way refugees of different countries of origin are treated. In Egypt, for example, Syrian and non-Syrian refugees⁵⁷ have

⁵⁷ Egypt is a transit country and a destination or asylum country for refugees and asylum seekers from numerous nations throughout the East and Horn of Africa, and the Middle East – source countries include Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Iraq. Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, UNHCR Division of International Protection (May 2015) UNHCR Input for the “Study on Care and Recovery”

differing access to the education system.⁵⁸ Many child protection concerns are related to protracted displacement, limited access to livelihoods and education for children and restricted access to documentation and basic services in countries of asylum, rather than to the conflict that caused displacement.⁵⁹

Systems strengthening efforts in refugee settings

Typically, in a refugee setting, child protection actors will work to strengthen systems in one or several of the following ways:

- i. Linking with and strengthening child protection within the asylum and refugee protection system
- ii. Strengthening existing child protection systems' ability to respond to the needs of refugee children, both at the community and national levels
- iii. Advocating for non-discriminatory access to child protection and other essential systems
- iv. Ensuring a systems approach, which looks holistically at the needs of children and links to other systems, in child protection programming at camp/ community level

h. Emergencies pose challenges to systems in all contexts, regardless of economic development

While well established, responsive and effective systems that are coordinated across the different protective levels around a child may exist, situations may arise for which they are unprepared, and that may exceed their capacity for response. The problem confronted may not normally be a priority, thus they do not have the allocated resources, readiness, flexibility, and deep understanding of how to react. Certain specific groups within the population may then not be adequately served.

From September to December 2015 Sweden received an unexpected number of adult and child asylum seekers.⁶⁰ A rapid, unprecedented influx of unaccompanied children seeking asylum overwhelmed the system. International NGOs had to step in

⁵⁸ UNICEF (2015) Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification for Syrian Children and UNHCR (2014) Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-16 in Response to the Syria Crisis: Egypt.

⁵⁹ Studies of refugee children, including adolescents' mental health and psychosocial distress, have shown that for most children the main stressors are increasingly related to displacement and less to conflict related violence. UNHCR and UNICEF (2015) Child Protection Syria Crisis Regional Interagency Workshop Report: A UNICEF-UNHCR regional initiative in consultation with child protection partners, Amman, 20-21 May 2015

⁶⁰ As of December 1st 2015 the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) registered more than 163,000 asylum applications, 35,400 unaccompanied children applied for asylum. Migrationsverket, 4 January 2016, Statistics, available at: <http://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics.html>

to provide psychosocial support for children and their families, and provide language-learning opportunities.⁶¹ Over-extended services were unable to meet the need for child-focused registration procedures⁶² thus Save the Children provided assistance. While the Swedish national system demonstrates some flexibility in order to address needs, the system lacked preparedness and ability to adapt immediately at the onset of events. Change to mechanisms and procedures took time. As a result the Swedish government did not respond as effectively as it might have had contingency measures been in place.

Better resourced systems may have to change their actions – adapting their structures, and functions, and capacities, even maybe their goals, as they realise the systems are not fit for purpose.

Variation over time

On a daily basis children, their families, communities, child protection actors, their activities, and the ways they work together are in a perpetual process of dealing with new small or large events, changes in their lives, procedures, perspectives and approaches. The context and thus any systems components, interrelationships, boundaries and goals, are open to continuous change over time. Large national level, State led formal systems may demonstrate inertia and only change slowly over time, or only alter slightly at the margins. Small scale, micro level systems may go through more frequent flux. Some significant changes at one point within any existing systems (such as full staff turnover in one social welfare office) may not lead to wider change throughout systems, but may have a significant impact on the children engaged at that point. Typically core aspects of systems such as the values, principles and norms on which they are based, change more slowly. These patterns of change might be challenged when the system undergo a shock. Certain events may provoke more accelerated shifts also at the core of systems, and may present significant, new, more dramatic and visible adjustments and alterations at a wider scale. Here we will look at how the stages of the humanitarian response, the rapidity of onset, and the duration of an emergency may alter the way in which international agencies must approach systems-strengthening efforts.

a. Stages of humanitarian action

⁶¹ Save the Children (26 February 2016) Children on the Move in Europe: Save the Children's response to the deepening child refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, available at: <https://savethechildreninternational.exposure.co/children-on-the-move-in-europe>

⁶² SCS Child Protection Rapid Assessment – Border registration camp, Hyllie – Malmö, 23.11.2015.

Organisational approaches to programming have divided up the humanitarian continuum into discrete parcels of time and action. These are the development, emergency preparedness, response, early recovery and transition phases. Many aspects of the humanitarian system and structure are sub-divided in this way: programme guidance, donor funding sources, reporting requirements, monitoring and evaluation systems, staffing, among others. Linear programming strategies, with fixed action plans and goals, guide the work that is implemented, with restricted possibility of iterative learning and revisions of approach. After or during a humanitarian crisis, staff may be brought in from other locations with insufficient background knowledge, and are expected to respond to immediate needs, with little time for familiarisation. In many cases, few links are made between the humanitarian system and systems already present - be these national, State-led, formal child protection systems, local level responses and services, or family and community practices.⁶³

Whilst this [a system strengthening approach] is a very essential part of the humanitarian action continuum, it's also the least achieved in a systematic manner... the active linking of immediate emergency response and systems development remains on the backburner until the recovery phase.

- Key Informant

To maximise the potential of systems-strengthening efforts preparedness, response, transition and development programming and coordination must all be seen as on a continuum. They should not be considered as discrete periods of time with divergent ways of working, drawing on unrelated resources, guidance and staff.

One example relates to working with refugee populations. Whilst refugee presence may be considered temporary, it is important to maintain a long-term view ensuring non-discriminatory access to child protection systems for refugees given populations may be in that situation for years or even decades.

Dadaab Refugee camps in Kenya

Dadaab Refugee camps in Kenya, host 372,551 refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan and other neighbouring countries, and were first established nearly twenty-five years ago, in

⁶³ A frequent message in KII with a wide range of actors was the need to change the whole structure of the humanitarian system in order to allow the flexible approach and iterative learning that system change needs.

October 1991. Due to the way that the camps were set up, there is now a significant dependency on humanitarian organisations for support in all sectors, including child protection. While in recent years there have been some successful efforts to involve the national authorities in child protection, had a long-term perspective been taken when the camps were first setup, they might have benefitted from more comprehensive protection systems relevant to the population, with volunteers and or staff who were trained on children's needs, and case management processes suitable to context.⁶⁴

The nature and stage of the emergency may affect the degree to which humanitarian responders are able to understand the setting and adapt their programming.

b. Protracted long-term situations, or slow onset emergencies

In theory, these may give greater time to learn about existing systems, the impact of the event, and thus identify appropriate interventions. Similarly, it may be easier to prepare for cyclical, seasonal or repeat emergencies – such as annual droughts, floods, or cyclones. Disaster risk reduction measures may include researching and documenting the existing systems and their functioning, designing adapted interventions, pre-sourcing stocks, and contingency staffing plans. Preparedness measures ideally should include strategies to ensure any humanitarian action is cognisant of context.

c. In the **case of rapid onset, unexpected events** less time may be available. Responders will have to put in place mechanisms that allow for quick assimilation of information relating to child protection systems in the context. Programme design may have to allow for ongoing adjustments and alterations as knowledge of systems is gathered over time. This may include for example flexible, 'living' strategies and programme plans set out with the context in mind, and open to regular review. National staffing at senior levels, delivery through local mechanisms, participation of children and community groups in programme design and monitoring may also contribute to more appropriate and contextualised actions.

d. The same events at different moments in time in the same context may have a different outcome

⁶⁴ UNHCR (21 February 2012) Dadaab - World's biggest refugee camp 20 years old, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/4f439dbb9.html> [accessed 2 February 2016]. Lack of long-term vision has meant that agencies working in Dadaab continue to struggle to systematically address children's protection needs – Key informant interview

The death toll of Cyclone Sidr was recorded as over 3,000 people. Yet, whilst it was of equal magnitude, this is a significantly reduced death rate as compared to cyclones in 1970 that killed 500,000 and 1991 that killed 140,000 people.⁶⁵ Better preparedness has reduced the impact and harmful outcomes of emergencies in Bangladesh. The **same emergency at a different moment in time has had a different outcome** due to changes in the in-country systems – in this case Disaster Management systems as opposed to those relating to child protection.

Conclusion on place and time:

The unique form of any system causes its own behaviour. An outside event may unleash that behaviour, but the same event happening in other systems may produce quite different outcomes. An in-depth knowledge of the specific situation of children and families, the inner workings of any systems, and their components is necessary. Furthermore, due to their dynamic nature, child protection systems are unique at each moment in time. What is possible in terms of efforts to strengthen systems may be best determined by an in-depth and evolving understanding of the context in which the emergency has taken place and the nature of the event. This is best achieved when humanitarian actions ensure that preparedness, immediate response, transition, and development phases are all closely linked.

⁶⁵ NIRAPAD - Network for Information, Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster (17 Nov 2007) Bangladesh: Cyclone SIDR 2007 SitRep No. 21, available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-cyclone-sidr-2007-sitrep-no-21>, accessed 5 April 2016

SECTION 3:

How have we been approaching child protection systems strengthening in emergencies up until now?)

In brief: How have we been approaching child protection systems strengthening in emergencies up until now

Child protection systems strengthening efforts are any actions taken in order to influence child protection systems – their constituent components, the ways in which they function, or the ways in which systems’ components interact – with the aim of maximizing the quality and impact of efforts to protect children.

Advances: Humanitarian child protection actors are in some instances...

- Asking themselves what child protection systems mean for their work
- More aware of how their own actions may impact upon wider systems, and other actors within systems
- Increasingly using systems language, and seeking to collaborate with long-term actors within systems where they are working
- Innovating and testing promising practice
- Seeking stronger evidence of the efficacy of their initiatives and how their programmes bring about change for children
- Expecting greater sustainability

Limitations: However humanitarian child protection programme activities still often...

- Lack sustainability caused by short term investment, lack of transition plans, or by not building on indigenous structures
- Establish alienating parallel systems – such as those used for coordination, information management, or case management – that are not familiar or accessible to national actors
- Take a narrow focus of collaboration whereby systems strengthening has been interpreted as either supporting State actors or community based structures
- Use poor human resource practices that weaken other agencies and organisations that may be engaged in activities that strengthen systems
- Superimpose approaches that are not adapted to the context
- Lack learning from and honesty about mistakes made
- Heavily focus on response services over prevention

Child protection systems strengthening efforts are any actions taken in order to influence child protection systems – their constituent components, the ways in which they function, or the ways in which systems’ components interact – with the aim of moving them closer to the goal of protecting children. Strengthening interventions recognise any actions will have repercussions throughout systems, whether negative or positive. In turn, the systems’ change will influence the nature of those interventions.⁶⁶

The following is an overview of child protection systems strengthening work. It does not suggest ways of working, but recaps what has been done so far in the humanitarian sector. Programming has had variable outcomes. The impact on overall system functioning or achievement of systems goals is unclear.

4.1. What are the characteristics of systems strengthening activities?

Literature and feedback from key informants suggest that strengthening actions are considered to be those that, among other characteristics: improve the functioning of systems so they more effectively prevent and respond to child protection issues; increase the number of children the systems support; ensure the systems are more inclusive and accessible; address a wider range of child protection concerns, tackle issues comprehensively; deliver a wider spectrum of services to address child protection issues. They provide support to actors operating at all levels from the child, and their families, to their peers, communities, the local, regional and district level all the way to the State. They cover issues of leadership, coordination, inclusion, participation, efficacy, and equity. They may increase knowledge, and skills, and seek to improve awareness and change harmful attitudes and practices.

Given such a broad spectrum of expectations from systems strengthening activities it is no surprise that agencies are struggling to define, measure, or implement strengthening efforts. Many of these characteristics demonstrate improved process, or output with no evidence on how this ensures the desired outcome.⁶⁷ These changes may strengthen a specific component or interconnection, but it is not certain

⁶⁶ The definition and characteristics of systems strengthening are based on discussions with key informants and: Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children, Eynon, Alyson and Sarah Lilley (2010) *Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies Through Community-Based Mechanisms: A Discussion Paper* and Davis, Rebecca, Jim McCaffery and Alessandro Conticini (2012) *Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: A working paper*, Training Resources Group and Play Therapy Africa

⁶⁷ Meadows, Donella (2008) *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*

that such a modification would subsequently strengthen whole systems moving them closer to their goal. There have been limited monitoring and evaluation efforts to ascertain the impact of systems strengthening interventions on overall systems' goals in humanitarian settings. Thus the criteria proposed by international actors are untested. Understanding of systems in emergencies may not yet be sufficiently advanced to provide metrics that indicate they have been strengthened.

4.2. Child protection systems strengthening activities to date

Based on the literature reviewed, including published and unpublished evaluations, as well as key informant interviews, the following key trends have been identified in the ways in which people have been defining and implementing child protection systems strengthening in humanitarian settings.

Much of the work has focused on assessing and understanding systems to identify bottlenecks and develop strengthening strategies. This is evidenced by the proliferation of tools to support the development of mappings and country and regional mapping reports.⁶⁸ These reviews of child protection systems provide a snapshot of the components and functions at one moment in time.

Programmes that attempt to put into practice systems strengthening strategies in humanitarian settings have focussed on a range of actions including:

- a.** Support to key partners within systems - the State, national and local NGOs, community groups, children and their families
- b.** Collaboration with other sectors
- c.** Creating or reinforcing links between actors at different levels
- d.** Setting up or reinforcing coordination mechanisms
- e.** Emergency planning and strategy development
- f.** Legislation development and policy change
- g.** Contextualisation of the child protection minimum standards
- h.** Developing standard operating procedures
- i.** Establishing or reinforcing information management systems
- j.** Capacity building of the social workforce
- k.** Child led or child centred disaster risk reduction

⁶⁸ Nti, Stephanie Asare, James McCaffery, Rebecca Davis, and Laura Guyer (2011) Policy and Programming Resource Guide for Child Protection Systems Strengthening in Sub-Saharan Africa, Training Resources Group

- I. Strengthening access to child protection systems for marginalised or excluded children

- a. **Support to key partners within systems**

Systems strengthening activities have included significant efforts to reinforce actors within the context. By enabling a range of stakeholders to developing their strategic direction (e.g. strategy development, advice on how to restructure organisations, budgeting assistance), technical guidance, training, and resources (e.g. financial, logistical supports, material inputs – such as computers, paper, filing materials), agencies have aimed to help them improve systems wide efficiency.

The State

Various agencies and individual actors interpret systems strengthening as solely upstream work.⁶⁹ This view is based on two principles. First, government is the ultimate duty bearer for children’s rights. Second, the national scope of a child protection system in its ideal form would indicate the State as a key partner. Thus many strengthening practices have promoted the need to support and engage central government in leadership, coordination structures, planning, implementation, and monitoring.⁷⁰ Wherever possible it has been thought that the State should lead on the humanitarian response. Actors have supported the State to respond to humanitarian crises through financial injections, strategy and legislation development, organisational restructuring (for example decentralisation of service provision), enhancement of government procedures, skills building, secondments, logistical support, and material inputs.

Humanitarian agencies have also supported the operationalisation of State managed social work at district and local level, by training staff, at times providing salaries, and material inputs, as well as enabling transport. They have also supported decentralised government structures to assume leadership with regards to coordination, harmonisation of practices, case management, data collection, and oversight.

⁶⁹ “Upstream work” is that which influences normative frameworks pertaining to children, through, for example law reform, policy development and standard-setting initiatives, supporting Ministries in strategic planning and budgeting. United Nations Children’s Fund (20 May 2008) UNICEF Child Protection Strategy, E /ICEF/2008/5/Rev.1 This view of system strengthening was apparent in numerous Key Informant Interviews and is reflected in the grey literature on system strengthening efforts

⁷⁰ United Nations Children’s Fund (20 May 2008) UNICEF Child Protection Strategy

States are primarily responsible for the protection of all children on their territory: they need to establish and implement child protection systems in accordance with their international obligations, ensuring non-discriminatory access to all children under their jurisdiction, including for example refugee and asylum seeking children. Thus, strengthening national and community-based child protection systems and services and advocating for access for refugee and asylum seeking children to systems is a critical part of child protection work in a refugee setting. However, in exceptional situations where States are unable or unwilling to fulfil their responsibilities toward children, UNHCR, as part of its international protection mandate, may temporarily substitute, in whole or in part, aspects of the child protection system for children of concern. Even in such situations, UNHCR will work to link to any national child protection system, adopting a long-term, multi-year strategy.

In certain settings, humanitarian actors have seen collaboration with the State as unrealistic, or inappropriate.⁷¹ For example where State structures and agencies are seen as extremely weak and not adequately functioning; when State structures and influence do not extend to the geographical areas or populations affected by the emergency; where the authority in the affected location is a non-state actor;⁷² and/or the State is unable or unwilling to provide the full assistance necessary.⁷³

Working with and through national or local NGO partners

Work through and with national and local NGO agencies may enable a rapid expansion of geographical coverage (including access to locations in which international actors may not have legal rights or security access to operate), an increase in human resource capacity, or improved quality. National and local agencies may act as advisors, or mediators, they may have pre-established relationships with local stakeholders, and may provide more in depth understanding of the local context. Given this potential, humanitarian agencies have helped local agencies by providing grants or supporting their fundraising efforts, giving material inputs to their work, seconding staff, or training their existing personnel, supporting them in improving efficiency (such as improved strategy development, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation) or putting in place certain essential policies and protocol (for example child protection, and staff conduct policies).

⁷¹ Save the Children (2009) A 'Rough Guide' to Child Protection Systems

⁷² Save the Children (2009) A 'Rough Guide' to Child Protection Systems, and Key informant interviews

⁷³ The Sphere Project (2011) Humanitarian Charter Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response

Engagement of local or national organisations may vary over time, with more management of protection interventions being handed over by international actors as responses advance.⁷⁴ This may be as partnership agreements are drawn up, as training is completed or in some instances in line with a process of international agency withdrawal.

Collaboration with local and national NGOs is not without challenges and areas for improvement. Personnel working for national and local agencies may seek employment with the international agencies they collaborate with, weakening the local agency.

Post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire

Post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire at the end of 2010 and into 2011 led one international organisation to scale up its national child protection programming. In mid-2012 an evaluation of the NGOs work indicated two challenging findings in relation to their collaboration with local actors:

- Many local organizations lamented that they had 'used' them for the delivery of very specific services in the emergency response without including them in the planning or follow-up to activities
- The international NGO recruited heavily from local organisations and other international partners with little apparent concern for the impact of these recruitments on partner organisations' long-term capacity and sustainability, including the sustainability of programmes in place before the emergency⁷⁵

In many contexts international coordination mechanisms have been found to exclude local level groups⁷⁶ either through alien processes, language barriers,⁷⁷ or in some cases by posing a security risk.⁷⁸ The short term funding available in humanitarian responses has also meant that in many instances local NGO programmes have to come to an end when international agencies withdraw.

Community based groups and organisations

⁷⁴ Akiyama, Dionne (2014) Strengthening Child Protection Systems through the Emergency Response to the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti, Columbia University

⁷⁵ Based on an independent evaluation of one international agency's response

⁷⁶ CPWG (2012) Coordinating Child Protection Responses in Emergencies: Lessons learned for Child Protection Sub-Clusters

⁷⁷ Akiyama, Dionne (2014) Strengthening Child Protection Systems through the Emergency Response to the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti, Columbia University

⁷⁸ For example, in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis in 2008 local NGO actors were reluctant to attend international agency coordination mechanisms as association with foreigners

Some guidance suggests that an excessive emphasis on the State may not be suitable in all humanitarian settings.⁷⁹ Where the State fails or is overstretched, actors have often focussed on civil society as an entry point for strengthening systems.⁸⁰ This is logical given that community groups, together with families, are likely to act on their own to fill protection gaps after or during a crisis.⁸¹ External actors have cooperated with positive pre-existing community mechanisms, working in partnership with and strengthening the capacity of local actors, or have newly established groups at the community level.⁸² Agencies have expected communities, local and community based organisations to assume part or all of the responsibility for promotion of children's rights, and prevention and response service provision.

Work with community groups has produced mixed results. Not least because in many situations external actors have not taken the time needed to identify what systems are already present at a grassroots level. For the sake of speed and ease they have instead set up and supported committees or groups using imported models and ways of working. There has also been limited reflection and effort on how to link the community systems supported with formal systems that exist in context that may enable greater efficiency and sustainability.

Whilst certain actors felt that CFS may mobilise communities around the protection and wellbeing of children evidence now suggests that CFS did not have much impact on strengthening community protection systems. Challenges have been noted in particular in adapting the model to local contexts.⁸³

Research in Sierra Leone indicated a number of key challenges when external

⁷⁹ Save the Children (2009) A 'Rough Guide' to Child Protection Systems

⁸⁰ See for example Eynon, Alyson and Sarah Lilley (2010) Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies through Community-Based Mechanisms: A Discussion Paper, Save the Children on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group, Save the Children (2010) Child Protection Initiative: Building rights based national child protection systems: a concept paper to support Save the Children's work, Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A World Vision Discussion Paper

⁸¹ World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A World Vision Discussion Paper, Akiyama, Dionne (2014) Strengthening Child Protection Systems through the Emergency Response to the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti, Columbia University, Kostelny, K., Wessells, M., Chabeda-Barthe, J., & Ondoro, K. (2013). Learning about children in urban slums: A rapid ethnographic study in two urban slums in Mombasa of community-based child protection mechanisms and their linkage with the Kenyan national child protection system. Prickett, Imogen, Israel Moya, Liberata Muhorakeye, Mark Canavera and Dr. Lindsay Stark (December 2013) Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms in Refugee Camps in Rwanda: An Ethnographic Study

⁸² Eynon, Alyson and Sarah Lilley (2010) Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies through Community-Based Mechanisms: A Discussion Paper, Save the Children on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group, Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community?

⁸³ Metzler, J., Savage, K., Yamano, M., and Ager, A., (2015): Evaluation of Child Friendly Spaces: An inter-agency series of impact evaluations in humanitarian emergencies. New York and Geneva: Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and World Vision International

agencies worked with community based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs); these included:⁸⁴

- The tendency of many agencies to cause inadvertent harm by, for example, establishing CBCPMs as parallel mechanisms poorly linked to national child protection systems
- The paucity of evidence regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of CBCPMs
- Failure of many externally catalysed CBCPMs to build on already existing mechanisms and processes

A broader interagency review identified other Do No Harm issues when collaborating with community groups⁸⁵

- Field programmes often encountered problems of confidentiality
- Numerous programmes unintentionally created unrealistic expectations
- In anti-trafficking work, some overzealous committee members limited the freedom of movement of children who were not being trafficked
- Externally initiated child protection groups may have weakened or undermined endogenous supports that had already been present in the communities

The humanitarian community's response to a lack of locally functioning formal protection mechanisms has often been to set up community based groups. However, externally established structures at the level of communities have largely failed.

Work with children and their immediate families

Parents, and guardians are the first layer of support for children. Extended families in particular often provide help if and when issues arise with parental care.⁸⁶ Children will often share experiences with, or seek support from, their immediate peers, especially as they get older. Information or misinformation on rights and protection may be communicated through friends.

Certain response initiatives have put children and families at the centre. Child protection actors have done significant work on behavioural change and life skills for

⁸⁴ The Columbia Group for Children in Adversity (July 2011) *An Ethnographic Study of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms and their Linkage with the National Child Protection System of Sierra Leone*

⁸⁵ Wessells, Mike (November 2009) *What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? An inter-agency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings*

⁸⁶ Wessells, Michael G. (April 2015) *Bottom-up approaches to strengthening child protection systems: Placing children, families, and communities at the center*, *Child Abuse & Neglect* 43 (2015) 8-21, Prickett, Imogen, Israel Moya, Liberata Muhorakeye, Mark Canavera and Dr. Lindsay Stark (December 2013) *Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms in Refugee Camps in Rwanda: An Ethnographic Study*, and Author and data unknown, "And then they left": *Challenges in child protection systems strengthening efforts in South Sudan*, *The Columbia Group for Children in Adversity* (July 2011) *An Ethnographic Study of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms and their Linkage with the National Child Protection System of Sierra Leone*, Wessells, Mike (November 2009) *What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community?*

children and adolescents, see UNICEF's Adolescent Kit⁸⁷ and War Child's Deals modules⁸⁸, aiming to empower children and promote resilience. The IRC has been working on positive parenting programmes in crisis settings since 2009 with some positive results for children.⁸⁹ There are disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness programmes that focus on children.⁹⁰

Child Brigade in Bangladesh⁹¹

A fire in a Dhaka slum in 2004 affected an estimated 10,000 people – 4,000 of them children. Child Brigade, a local child-run organisation (primarily of street and working children) responded to the blaze by organising a meeting place, providing medical care, distributing food, locating families, supporting needs assessments and liaising with non-governmental and other organisations.

Children have also been increasingly engaged in programme design, accountability mechanisms, and monitoring and evaluation,⁹² with agencies seeking more systematically to draw on the views of children in programme design and implementation.

But even for child-focused agencies children's participation across sectors is not systematically realised. In particular the level of meaningful child participation across sectors at the planning and design stage of humanitarian responses is sometimes quite limited, and the voices of children do not influence humanitarian decision-making.⁹³ Where child consultation initiatives do exist they are rarely evaluated to assess their contribution to systems strengthening or to the achievement of any protection systems' goals.⁹⁴ To date, less reflection has been centred on the role of children themselves and their families within a paradigm of systems strengthening.

⁸⁷ See UNICEF's The Adolescent Kit, available at <http://adolescentkit.org/history/>

⁸⁸ War Child Deals Modules are available at <http://www.warchildlearning.org/about>

⁸⁹ See IRC (November 2014) Families make the difference <http://www.rescue.org/blog/families-make-difference-irc-reports>, and IRC (November 2014) Building Happy Families: IRC Research Brief, available at: http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/HappyFamilies_brief_FINAL_18Nov14.pdf

⁹⁰ These are discussed below in section 4.2 k. Child led or child centred disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness

⁹¹ O'Kane, Claire (2013) Review of Children's Participation in humanitarian programming, Save the Children, and Jabry, A. (ed), 2005 (second edition). After the Cameras Have Gone – Children in Disasters. London: Plan International

⁹² See a review of several countries feedback mechanisms as presented in Wood, Anna (2015) Interagency Study on Child-Friendly Feedback and Complaint Mechanisms within NGO Programmes, Educo, Plan International, Save the Children UK, War Child UK and World Vision

⁹³ O'Kane, Claire (2013) Review of Children's Participation in humanitarian programming, Save the Children, and Jabry, A. (ed), 2005 (second edition). After the Cameras Have Gone – Children in Disasters. London: Plan International

⁹⁴ These programmes were not discussed or reported in Key Informant Interviews and are little covered in the reviews of system strengthening efforts to date

Economic strengthening – through microcredit, skills transfers, or cash transfers for example – is increasingly used as a means to assist families to protect children. Governments, UN agencies and International NGOs have applied economic strengthening strategies to prevent child separation, improve foster and parental care, and reduce the incidence of child labour.

Institutional care in Indonesia⁹⁵

In Indonesia, after the Indian Ocean tsunami and earthquake of 2004 the number of *panti asuhan* (children's homes) grew exponentially. One major concern was the secondary separation of children due to the financial strains placed on foster families and the prevailing poor economic conditions. While international agencies responded by giving cash grants to households to try to ensure families stayed together,⁹⁶ some overseas donors, individual givers and the government supported institutional care. The Ministry of Social Affairs, supported by Save the Children, embarked on a research and policy review. It was found that only 6% of children in institutions were orphans with no family care available. Families had placed 97.5% of children in residential care so as to access education. Government, donors and individual givers exacerbated this by supporting institutions. If funding had been directed at families and communities, the majority of girls and boys could have remained at home.

Examples such as that above from Indonesia indicate potential benefits of economic strengthening, and the role of humanitarian actors in demonstrating the advantages of safety nets as a way to support families to protect their children. However, the use of cash transfers to achieve child protection outcomes is a relatively recent approach. The potential of cash transfers is underexplored. There are reports from other sectors (notably education, livelihoods, health and nutrition) and non-emergency contexts that indicate positive outcomes are possible. In some instances, cash-for-work has been linked to negative outcomes for children –for example carers may engage in cash-for-work and older children are pulled from education to care for younger children.⁹⁷ Long-term sustainability is also unclear. Once direct economic strengthening support ceases it is not known if the benefits are maintained. Humanitarian actors may be able to encourage State level actors to provide safety nets to family-based care systems, that may in turn serve to strengthen child protection systems within a setting, but the evidence is not yet clear.

⁹⁵ Thompson, Hannah (2012) Cash and Child Protection: How cash transfer programming can protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence

⁹⁶ UNICEF, the British Red Cross and Save the Children all started to provide cash transfer programmes – including direct transfers to caregivers and cash-for-work initiatives.

⁹⁷ Thompson, Hannah (2012) Cash and Child Protection: How cash transfer programming can protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence

b. Collaboration with other sectors and systems

Child protection agencies are increasingly recognising the value of collaborative, integrated, and inter-sectoral programming as a way to holistically tackle the root causes of child protection concerns, and respond to child protection needs. This may include child protection staff inputting on assessment design, supporting child participation in monitoring and evaluation efforts informing vulnerability and other beneficiary targeting criteria, training other sector staff on child safeguarding, mainstreaming child protection into programme activities, or joint programming. Child protection and education responders are natural allies in humanitarian settings. Frequent close collaboration has included development of psychosocial support modules for the school curriculum or teacher training on how to work with children in distress.⁹⁸ Economic strengthening implemented by child protection, education and livelihoods programme staff to address child labour has been one new form of cooperative action.⁹⁹ Child protection actors have also supported the development and implementation of child friendly procedures for asylum seeking and refugee children.¹⁰⁰ Referral pathways, an essential component of child protection programming, are frequently designed with inputs from other sectors (often health, education and livelihoods counterparts). Agreements may be made as to the response and service provision that may be expected from a range of sectors when certain child protection cases come to light. Or the content of referral pathways is disseminated through other sectors to ensure more extensive identification of vulnerable children.¹⁰¹ But the humanitarian sector struggles to put into practice the integrated programmes it aspires to deliver.¹⁰²

c. Creating or reinforcing links between actors at different levels

Agencies have in many instances sought to strengthen the links between levels of the system, most specifically between community actors and groups and more formal mechanisms within systems. This has been encouraged through training, awareness raising, provision of financial and human resource support, supervision and

⁹⁸ Reported in Bangladesh after cyclone Sidr, in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011 as part of the post-election violence response, and in a number of the North African Arab states affected by the uprisings of the Arab Spring, including Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.

⁹⁹ Thompson, Hannah (2012) Cash and Child Protection: How cash transfer programming can protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, the UNHCR and UNICEF (October 2014) Safe and Sound: what States can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe

¹⁰¹ Referral pathways are also discussed as part of the section on Standard Operating Procedures below

¹⁰² See for example a review of ACFs work. They are seeking to take a more holistic approach to addressing malnutrition, by for example promoting improved childcare and psychological support to mothers. But the application of integrated approaches has been piecemeal. Dolan, C et al (2009). A review for ACF International of integrated approaches to treat and prevent acute malnutrition.

monitoring, establishment of referral pathways, and information sharing systems.¹⁰³

This links strongly with processes of developing standard operating procedures described below. It is felt that greater levels of coordination between community mechanisms and wider systems may lead to greater effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes for children,¹⁰⁴ and may create greater sustainability of community initiatives.¹⁰⁵

Negative perceptions, or a lack of understanding of different actors protective actions, create parallel systems, that are disconnected and do not operate effectively.

Perceptions of child protection system functioning in South Sudan¹⁰⁶

In South Sudan during research to explore perceptions of child protection system functioning it was found that there were significant differences in understanding of child protection concerns as well as a lack of acknowledgement or awareness of the prevention and response actions of other systems or actors. A relatively small number of trained personnel within government and civil society organisation were perceived to be able to both directly provide services and oversee child protection activities of others. National level actors almost never spoke about community level capacities, skills, or functions. Community level actors were described as not understanding child protection. National level actors had an extremely limited understanding of the community level protective capacities that were present. Whilst “standard operating procedures” for cases of child sexual abuse existed, it was often unclear which actors should do what to address other issues facing children.

Whilst the focus has been on creating a connection between community level groups and formal systems it has been found that even in countries in which people at community level regarded the government as legitimate and generally helpful, community members often viewed government systems as impositions from outside. Linkages between community groups and non-formal systems – such as traditional leadership structures and mechanisms – whilst often overlooked, are also important and may provide more legitimacy within the wider community. In addition community level child protection may benefit from greater collaboration with processes of

¹⁰³ Eynon, Alyson and Sarah Lilley (2010) Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies through Community-Based Mechanisms: A Discussion Paper, Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community?

¹⁰⁴ See for example Eynon, Alyson and Sarah Lilley (2010) Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies through Community-Based Mechanisms: A Discussion Paper, Save the Children on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group, Save the Children (2010) Child Protection Initiative: Building rights based national child protection systems: a concept paper to support Save the Children's work, Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A World Vision Discussion Paper

¹⁰⁵ Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community?

¹⁰⁶ Author unknown (date unknown) “And then they left”: Challenges in child protection systems strengthening efforts in South Sudan

community development relating to improved health, livelihoods, and literacy. Finally, whilst the prospects of establishing effective linkages are greater in relatively stable countries, even in stable settings, issues of responsiveness, capacity, ownership, differences in perceptions, and potential conflict or discord with traditional practices can impede the development of effective linkages.¹⁰⁷

d. Setting up or reinforcing coordination structures

Since 2005, in non-refugee settings the Cluster Approach has been used as a standardised but adaptable method for coordinating humanitarian action.¹⁰⁸ Child Protection Sub-Clusters have been formally established in over 20 countries.¹⁰⁹ These aim to follow standardised and predictable structures, sitting under the overall Protection Cluster. They have predictable leadership and a pre-agreed set of responsibilities. In many settings, they enable collaboration, coordination, and harmonisation on specific programming issues by establishing thematic task forces and technical working groups – such as on the subject of family tracing and reunification; mental health and psychosocial support; gender based violence; or children associated with armed forces and groups. The issue-focussed ways of working applied by in coordination, many lead to an over-emphasis on certain sub-categories of children and subsequently a situation where those that are most vulnerable or hidden are not recognised.

Haiti Earthquake 2010

In Haiti after the earthquake of 2010 there was a lot of work done for separated and unaccompanied children. A special task force was established, and in turn this supported the establishment of systems, structures, and guidelines for support to children without appropriate care. Actors addressing concerns relating to children without caregivers agreed that separation should not be considered the only risk to children, and the wide range of risks within the context needed to be addressed.¹¹⁰ However, during interviews carried out in Haiti government actors, NGO workers, and children themselves felt certain vulnerable children's needs were going unaddressed, for example those of children with disabilities. Children with pre-existing disabilities, and those who suffered injury during the disaster, were cited as not

¹⁰⁷ Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community?

¹⁰⁸ This was done as part of the humanitarian reform process. For a summary of the humanitarian reform process see: OCHA (2006) Humanitarian Reform, available at:

http://www.unocha.org/annualreport/2006/html/part1_humanitarian.html, accessed 29 April 2016

¹⁰⁹ CPWG (2012) Coordinating Child Protection Responses in Emergencies: Lessons learned for Child Protection Sub-Clusters

¹¹⁰ See for example, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children, Terre des hommes (Tdh), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Vision International (WVI), Plan International, War Child UK (2010) Unaccompanied and Separated Children following the Haiti Earthquake January 2010: Child Protection Working Group Guiding Principles

receiving necessary specialised services. Where care was available, there were concerns that the private sector service providers were driven by financial incentives as opposed to an obligation to support the children in their care. Whilst the focus on unaccompanied and separated children does not directly cause actors to lose sight of others, such as those with disabilities, applying systems thinking may have reduced the possibility of certain groups of children being overlooked. Issue specific coordination groups and task forces may undermine the ability to address children's needs holistically.

Assessment has indicated there are weaknesses in child protection coordination in non-refugee settings: a lack of skilled senior staff to lead coordination, sub-national level mechanisms are inadequate, some coordinators adopt agency-centric leadership styles,¹¹¹ and there is a frequent disconnect with in-country long-term systems of collaboration.¹¹² Some evaluations indicate that Child Protection Sub-Clusters may be more effective when they are co-chaired by individuals from two different agencies, with suitable soft skills to complement technical knowledge and are operational at sub-national level, as well as at the national level.¹¹³ Other sources have indicated that NGO co-leadership of Child Protection Sub-Clusters has been less effective, so this issue requires further evaluation, consideration, and reflection.

In line with these findings, there is some promising practice in supporting governments to take a lead in coordinating humanitarian response using the Cluster approach. In the West and Central Africa region a formal process has been established to reinforce government leadership and coordination capacity.¹¹⁴ In cases where Clusters had successful links with the government and civil society actors, positive results were achieved in relation to creating local ownership and supporting sustainable solutions,¹¹⁵ for example the case of Uganda, below.

Despite the sense that the Cluster Approach would address the predictability and duplication issues seen in humanitarian responses prior to the humanitarian reform process, in certain contexts there are still a plethora of disconnected or poorly linked working groups and task forces that address specific concerns relating to children

¹¹¹ CPWG (2012) Coordinating Child Protection Responses in Emergencies: Lessons learned for Child Protection Sub-Clusters

¹¹² Key informants reported that humanitarian structures often duplicate or even undermine national mechanisms

¹¹³ CPWG (2012) Coordinating Child Protection Responses in Emergencies: Lessons learned for Child Protection Sub-Clusters

¹¹⁴ UNICEF (2016) Government-Led Coordination of Child Protection in Humanitarian Settings; From Preparedness to Transition

¹¹⁵ CPWG (2012) Coordinating Child Protection Responses in Emergencies: Lessons learned for Child Protection Sub-Clusters

protection humanitarian action, rather than looking at the needs of children holistically.

In refugee settings, UNHCR is accountable for ensuring international protection and seeking durable solutions. Its obligation in refugee situations begins with preparedness and continues through the emergency stage, ending only when solutions are identified. Since the mandate and accountability for refugees and persons of concern is non-transferable, the cluster approach does not apply, and UNHCR leads efforts to coordinate. This is often done in collaboration with state actors, and other UN agencies and NGOs providing support.¹¹⁶

Coordination in Eastern Cameroon¹¹⁷

The Child Protection sub-sector meetings were set up and chaired by UNHCR and the government, with UNICEF support. The refugee situation spanned two districts, thus the coordination mechanism alternated the site of meetings between two areas. This helped to ensure the inclusion of relevant authorities and enabling coordination mechanisms to take into account the whole of the humanitarian situation and needs, without requiring multiple coordination bodies

Flexibility in the way that humanitarian coordination is implemented, adapting the coordination mechanism to the context and to the needs of the population you are supporting, may contribute to a greater likelihood of achieving systems' goals.

e. Emergency planning and strategy development

In many settings humanitarian actors come together to develop a shared plan for the child protection response. This may be done through the cluster approach, or other mechanisms, such as refugee emergency contingency plans. In some instances child protection actors are asked to contribute to multi-sectorial disaster response or preparedness plans, so as to ensure the views of children are considered.¹¹⁸

Leadership by or engagement of the government at the programme development stage is essential to the process. Joint and ongoing monitoring of progress ensures

¹¹⁶ For further details see: The UNHCR Refugee Coordination Model: <http://www.coordinationtoolkit.org/?p=453>, The Joint UNHCR – OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice <http://www.coordinationtoolkit.org/?p=456>, The UNHCR Coordination Toolkit <http://www.coordinationtoolkit.org/>

¹¹⁷ Key informant

¹¹⁸ After Cyclone Sidr International Agencies supported the government of Bangladesh to integrate a greater child focus into their Standing Orders on Disaster – See Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management Disaster Management & Relief Division Disaster Management Bureau (6 April 2010) Standing Orders On Disaster

strengthening efforts progress appropriately. However, this may be undermined by change in government. New Ministers may not be aware of or willing to adhere to plans that had been agreed with their predecessors, as was seen in Haiti, see above.

Transition and government formalisation of working group functions in Uganda¹¹⁹

The child protection Sub-Cluster in Uganda provides a good practice example of how humanitarian response may be transitioned into long-term plans. The standards and guidelines adopted by the Sub-Cluster were endorsed by the Government of Uganda, who then looked at how to roll out the approach in non-affected areas of the country.

- In Uganda the Sub Cluster set up in 2005 had been led by UNICEF with district-level government staff
- During the latter months of 2009, actors noted that issues for discussion were not peculiar to northern Uganda; hence the CPWG started to address child protection concerns at a national level
- In 2009 leadership was handed over to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development who host a coordination office. This is facilitated by a partnership between the Ministry and Civil Society Organisations from the working group
- The member agencies collaborated jointly to design a Child Protection Recovery strategy for Northern Uganda (2009-2011).
- Uganda concluded a country mapping of child protection systems in 2013 and then the CPWG developed its medium term (2014-2016) strategy framework.

f. Legislation development and policy change

Lobbying for or supporting legislation, and policy change or enforcement may be essential in some settings in the first phase of a response. For example international agencies speaking out against expedited inter-country adoptions after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti brought a halt to a large scale, and mainly inappropriate, evacuation of children through enforcement of international legislation.¹²⁰ And in

¹¹⁹ CPWG (date unknown) PowerPoint presentation: Module 6: Session 1: Transition and Cluster Deactivation: Function 6: Contingency Plan, Preparedness And Capacity Building, CPWG (2012) Coordinating Child Protection Responses in Emergencies: Lessons learned for Child Protection Sub-Clusters

¹²⁰ Thompson, Ginger (AUG. 3, 2010) After Haiti Quake, the Chaos of U.S. Adoptions, New York Times, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/04/world/americas/04adoption.html?_r=0 [accessed 30 January 2016], Dambach, Mia and Christina Baglietto (August 2010) HAITI: "Expediting" intercountry adoptions in the aftermath of a natural disaster ... preventing future harm, International Social Service. The Hague Conference on Private International Law in January 2010 called on all contracting states to apply in Haiti the same standards and safeguards that would be required had the country ratified the international Convention covering intercountry adoptions, see The Hague Justice Portal (22 January 2010) Haiti earthquake and intercountry adoption of children, available at: <http://www.haguejusticeportal.net/index.php?id=11382> [accessed: 4 February 2016], Save the Children pointed out most children still had relatives alive - Schapiro R, (21 January 2010) Haiti earthquake: groups urge adoption freeze, believing kids' kin may be alive, New York Daily News, available at: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/haiti-earthquake-groups-urge-adoption-freeze-believing-kids-kin-alive-article-1.459850> [accessed 4 February 2016]

Egypt the Ministry of Education only extended free education to Syrian refugees as a result of advocacy from UNHCR and partners.¹²¹

An act mandating the provision of emergency relief and protection for children before, during and after disasters and other emergency situations¹²²

On 15 December 2014 the Philippines Senate passed new legislation outlining the imperative to formulate a comprehensive programme of action to assist children in the event of an emergency. This is based on the principles outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction and takes into account the child protection minimum standards. Guidance is given on the form of the response, including interventions that link with health, nutrition, and education sectors.

However, in other cases informants report that where efforts were made to develop or change legislation, the application and awareness of new laws were limited and thus the efforts to invest in and develop new legislation were wasted.

g. Contextualisation of the child protection minimum standards

As of December 2015 twelve countries had contextualised the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Contextualisation is important not only because of the final outcome (standards that are widely used in country to inform and guide policy, practice, contingency planning and strategy) – but the process may help build a strong community of practitioners and policy-makers vested in the elaboration and delivery of quality, accountable protection of all emergency affected children. When facilitated well, contextualisation offers an opportunity to hear hidden voices and perspectives from, for example, local staff or stakeholders who may previously have been excluded. Local staff (regardless of their positions within their organisations) may lead and feel ownership of the process, as they are the ones who have the most context-specific knowledge and understanding of systems.¹²³

Child Protection Minimum Standards (CPMS) contextualisation in Indonesia¹²⁴
UNICEF and Wahana Visi Indonesia¹²⁵ with support from the Child Protection Working Group

¹²¹ Education is often cited as a key protection mechanism. UNICEF (2015) Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification for Syrian Children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt: Regional Study, UNHCR (2014) Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-16 in Response to the Syria Crisis: Egypt

¹²² Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality: Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development: Finance; and Youth with Senators Defensor Santiago, Sotto 111, Guingona III, Recto, Aquino IV, Marcos, Jr., Legarda, Villar, Revilla, Jr., and P, Cayetano (15 December 2014) An Act Mandating the Provision of Emergency Relief and Protection for Children before, during and after Disasters and other Emergency Situations, S.B. No.3034

¹²³ Tzvetomira Laub (2013) Contextualizing Global Standards to Local Settings: Challenges and Lessons Learned. INEE

¹²⁴ Vradenburg, Kimberley (January 2015) Strengthening Preparedness and Response to Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE): Report on the Contextualization, SOP and CPiE Training Process in Indonesia

assisted the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) to strengthen their capacity to prepare for and respond to child protection in emergencies.

The process engaged two government directorates: Directorate of Social Protection for Natural Disaster Victims under the Directorate General of Protection and Social Security, and the Directorate of Child Welfare under the Directorate General of Social Rehabilitation.

Activities covered were:

- Contextualisation of the CPMS as a tool to strengthen on child protection preparedness and advocate for Government commitment to preparedness actions
- Integration of CPMS into the Ministry of Social Affairs' Standard Operating Procedures for child protection in emergencies
- Child protection in emergencies training

"The CPMS provides an opportunity for the Government of Indonesia to strengthen capacity through existing national systems and prepare for the circumstance of a future emergency. To strengthen internal systems and capacity is to depend less on international actors during an emergency and the CPMS is a key means to strengthening such internal systems. The Government of Indonesia, through the participation of MOSA at each and every event ... indicated a state of readiness and commitment to adopting and prioritizing [sic] child protection in emergencies."

h. Developing standard operating procedures

Standard operating procedures are frequently established by child protection actors in humanitarian settings as a way to ensure that all stakeholders in the humanitarian child protection response:

- Agree to minimum standards for prevention and response
- Follow the same principles and practices
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of the various actors
- Refer cases effectively to other service providers within the system operating at different levels

When developed appropriately, standard operating procedures involve government and local actors at the drafting stage to increase the chances of sustainability. This should include not only child protection and social welfare actors, but also those from across the full range of responding sectors – education, health, livelihoods and justice among others – to ensure comprehensive agreement on practicalities to addressing child protection needs.

¹²⁵ Wahana Visi Indonesia is a partner of humanitarian organisation World Vision Indonesia and implements most of World Vision's programs - http://www.wvindonesia.org/?mod=55&cPath=399&WVI_ID=8d1527b94d709bf0f211e374d695cc06

Formalisation of Alternative Care Procedures for Refugee Children in Jordan

In Jordan, UNHCR, UNICEF and Save the Children worked closely with key government actors, including the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and national NGOs to develop and formalise standard operating procedures and alternative care procedures that map out legal and operational responsibilities for children in need of alternative care. Child protection actors involved noted that the process was as important as the product because it brought together key actors, each with a different perspective, to determine how to address key protection issues for children.

However, the development of procedures does not always translate into improvements in practice. There may be limitations in the content of SOPs. The range of child protection concerns covered may be limited, they may target only one sub-population of children, they may inadequately align and integrate with existing in-country case management systems, or they may be impractical. Too few actors may be aware of their content in order to make any impact on the lives of children, or they may be inappropriate and unrealistic given the sociocultural norms of the setting.

i. Establishing or reinforcing information management systems

Numerous agencies and groups have developed data collection and information management systems for child protection in humanitarian settings that they feel may harmonise data collection across child protection systems. These may collate information on individual child cases in order to support case management processes, or may collect generalised data to assist with child protection programme design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, or advocacy. Examples include the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, UNICEF's new software PRIMERO, the Interagency Child Protection Information Management System (now integrated into PRIMERO), UNHCR's information management in refugee settings, and Cluster-led information management supports. Two initiatives will be discussed here as they have been formally evaluated: the Child Protection Information Management System and Cluster-led information management supports.

The Child Protection Information Management system (IMS) is managed by an interagency group of international UN and NGO agencies. It contains information on individual child cases and was designed to harmonise case management across agencies in emergency settings. It aims to improve coordination and collaboration, and the quality of programmes, and quicken agencies' responses to children's

needs. The tool supports any thematic area of child protection, including programmes that underpin child protection systems.¹²⁶ Overall the IMS has been found to have a positive impact on emergency child protection programmes fostering better coordination and collaboration. Yet, in many countries the formats did not fit with programme requirements or with forms used outside of the emergency response. And there was a lack of long-term funding to ensure continuity.¹²⁷ Thus it may be concluded that only international actors feel the positive impacts. This demonstrates that imported, parallel systems, applied only by international humanitarian actors, without adequate contextualisation may not achieve their aims.

Clusters are also intended to serve a role in information management for all child protection actors in humanitarian settings. Depending on the location, they collect and analyse data on child protection needs; they establish monitoring and evaluation systems; they ensure harmonised data collection about children across other sectors within the humanitarian response; they collate information about who is doing what, where, and when; and they put in place policies and build capacity for appropriate handling of information about children. Whilst emergency child protection working groups are said to have improved information sharing, information management remains weak with information getting lost or not being shared in a timely manner.¹²⁸

j. Capacity building of the social workforce

Actors across humanitarian responses invest a great deal in skills and knowledge building. Civil servants, new international agency recruits, staff and partners of local and national NGOs, and representatives from community groups may all take part in training initiatives. Significant time is spent delivering workshops, and seminars on a wide range of child protection topics from the full range of child protection needs, to programming approaches, monitoring and evaluation and staff management and wellbeing. More recently, systems of coaching and mentoring have been established to provide on the job learning.

Counterparts share skills in Yemen¹²⁹
In Yemen international agencies work with the government to support skills building among

¹²⁶ UNICEF, Save the Children, IRC (2012) Interagency Child Protection Information Management System (IA CP IMS)

¹²⁷ McCormick, Christine (January 2010) Evaluation of the Inter-Agency Child Protection Information Management System: Final Report

¹²⁸ CPWG (2012) Coordinating Child Protection Responses in Emergencies: Lessons learned for Child Protection Sub-Clusters

¹²⁹ Key informant interview

staff working on case management in emergencies. They have established a system of counterparts where experienced government social workers perform their roles alongside humanitarian caseworkers from Save the Children or UNICEF. Those from international agencies provide knowledge and skills on addressing humanitarian needs. The joint activities aim to ensure girls and boys identified as in critical need have access to survival and safety services. The service provision is arranged during confidential case management conferences and the more open sub-national and national level child protection coordination for a (the Child protection working group and child protection sub-clusters). Government and international agencies lead these for a jointly.

Little is done to assess how this translates into better work practices and even less on the degree to which capacity strengthening efforts impact on the wellbeing of children or support child protection systems to achieve their goals. In addition, more sustainable options such as trying to influence training institutes to change their curriculums or trying to deliver in collaboration with them may be time consuming when academic bodies are not used to working in humanitarian settings.¹³⁰

k. Child led or child centred disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness

Plan International and Save the Children have both worked on child centred Disaster Risk Reduction programming.¹³¹ Through these processes some positive outcomes in communities and schools have already been identified.¹³² Children have shown a greater awareness and knowledge of possible risks and hazards. They learned how to protect themselves and their communities when disasters occur. In the Philippines children learned how to use early warning systems; were engaged in small-scale prevention, mitigation or adaptation projects; raised community awareness; and led campaigns to reduce risks. In El Salvador young people helped a community to evacuate when a tropical storm struck.¹³³

l. Strengthening access to child protection systems for marginalised or excluded children

¹³⁰ Akiyama, Dionne (2014) Strengthening Child Protection Systems through the Emergency Response to the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti, Columbia University

¹³¹ For Save the Children's work see: http://www.preventionweb.net/files/3820_CHLDRR.pdf and for Plan International see: <https://plan-international.org/child-centred-disaster-risk-reduction-toolkit>

¹³² Plan International (2010) Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction: Building resilience through participation: Lessons from Plan International

¹³³ Plan International (2010) Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction: Building resilience through participation: Lessons from Plan International

Many children are excluded from child protection systems on the basis of their legal status, nationality, ethnicity, religion, ability, place of origin, socioeconomic background, gender and gender identity, and sexual orientation. Child protection actors therefore often work to strengthen the access these children have to child protection systems through capacity building and technical support as well as advocacy. For example, in refugee settings, child protection actors will need to work to ensure that the government's policies, structures and development plans for child protection reflect an awareness of the protection and assistance needs of refugee and displaced children. This may mean working with the government to ensure that national alternative care placement schemes are flexible enough to respond to unaccompanied refugee children's needs in an emergency setting or that social workers cover refugee camps or settlements in their areas. In addition, child protection actors may need to support specific programmatic measures to ensure that refugee children have non-discriminatory access to child protection systems, for example through training for social workers on the specific needs of refugee children, or supporting the provision of existing government parenting trainings in refugees' own language.

Integrating refugee children in Nepal

In Nepal, UNHCR has worked to strengthen coordination with local authorities and host communities, seeking to identify potential areas of collaboration and gradually mainstream the protection of refugee children. In 2015, a mapping of locally available child protection services in Damak and facilities was conducted to support the integration of refugee children. Coordination with the District Child Welfare Board was strengthened to support the Board to look into refugee children cases requiring government support. In addition, several joint child protection initiatives for both refugee and host community children were undertaken with the Damak Municipality.

Caution must be exercised, as issue-focused ways of working applied by many agencies may lead in some settings to an excessive emphasis on certain sub-categories of children and subsequently a situation where those that are most vulnerable or hidden are not recognised.

Children with disabilities in Haiti¹³⁴

In Haiti after the earthquake of 2010 there was a lot of work done for separated and

¹³⁴ Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

unaccompanied children. A special task force was established, systems and structures were put in place, and guidelines were developed.¹³⁵ Issues facing these children and the ways to address their needs were identified. Programming included family tracing, reunification, reintegration activities, and advocacy on international adoptions. Actors addressing concerns relating to children without caregivers agreed that separation should not be considered the only risk to children, and the wide range of risks within the context needed to be addressed. However, during interviews carried out in Haiti government actors, NGO workers, and children themselves felt certain vulnerable children's needs were going unaddressed, specifically those of children with disabilities. Children with pre-existing disabilities, and those who suffered injury during the disaster, were listed as not receiving the necessary specialised services. Where care was available, there were concerns that the private sector service providers were driven by financial incentives and not ensuring quality protection for the children.

4.3. Conclusion on system strengthening efforts to date

Based on the above certain advances and limitations in the ways in which humanitarian child protection actors are approaching efforts to strengthening the child protection system are observed. They are:

Advances: Humanitarian child protection actors are...

- Asking themselves more questions about **what child protection systems mean for their work**
- Increasingly aware of **how their own actions may impact** upon wider systems, and other actors within systems
- They are increasingly using systems language, and seeking to **collaborate with long-term actors** within systems where they are working
- There are pockets of **innovation and promising practice** although the impact of these new forms of programming on overall system outcomes are not yet clear
- Seeking **stronger evidence** of the efficacy of their initiatives and how their programmes bring about change for children
- Programme implementers, coordinators and funders are all **expecting greater sustainability**

¹³⁵ See for example, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children, Terre des hommes (Tdh), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Vision International (WVI), Plan International, War Child UK (2010) Unaccompanied and Separated Children Following the Haiti Earthquake January 2010: Child Protection Working Group Guiding Principles

Limitations: However humanitarian child protection programme activities still often...

- **Lack sustainability** caused by short-term investment, lack of transition plans, or by not building on indigenous structures. In some settings humanitarian actors have opted to assume part or all of the responsibility for direct service provision. In many cases not considering long-term solutions or sustainable transitions for the services they deliver
- **Establish alienating parallel systems**, such as those used for coordination, or information management, that are not familiar or accessible to national actors
- **Take a narrow focus of collaboration** whereby many actors have seen strengthening as either supporting State actors, or community based structures, with limited nuanced analysis of the other levels of long-term protection for children. Global level strategies and guidance may promote work with protective factors at multiple levels – the child; family, caregivers and peers; community; national actors; regional actors; and others¹³⁶ – however, this is not always realised.
 - Systems present at all levels, all the way from the child, and the family, to the State, and all levels in between, must be recognised as potential resources and capital on which to base efforts for responding to the protection needs of children.
- **Use poor human resource practices** that weaken other agencies and organisations that may be engaged in activities that strengthen systems. In order to support their growing programmes international actors have sought national qualified child protection staff, often in the process weakening State, community and local NGO structures by 'poaching' their personnel. Human resourcing also poses a problem when international agency benefits packages, or volunteer stipends distort national level salary scales in an unsustainable way.
- **Superimpose approaches** that are not adapted to the context. Actors frequently import external programming models developed in other contexts. These may not be adequately adapted to context, and thus may not lead to the intended results.
- **Lack learning** and honesty about mistakes made, such that they are repeated time and again. Frequently actors seek to be positive about their work and

¹³⁶ Wessells, Mike (November 2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? An interagency review of the evidence on community based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings

efforts, and dampen negative feedback or outcomes, unwilling to share information on challenges encountered, failures and lessons learnt.

- **Heavily focus on response service provision** as opposed to implementing a full continuum of child protection actions that promote awareness of child protection concerns, prevent these issues from arising, and then seek to respond if they do occur.

SECTION 4:

What does systems thinking mean for child protection responses?

In brief: What does systems thinking mean for child protection responses?

Foundations, ethics, and principles:

Ways of working that you should seek to follow yourself, and promote among others

- **Adaptation:** Draw on ideas and concepts from other countries, but make sure these are adequately adapted to the context
- **Accountability, transparency and openness:** Ensure systems are in place for sharing plans, and receiving feedback from the full range of stakeholders
- **Flexibility:** Plans and implementation should allow for a constant process of learning and adjustment
- **Innovation:** Seek to try out, test and implement innovative programmes
- **Inclusion:** Consider the diversity of the groups of children, families, communities, and actors with whom you are working. Are different children treated differently by the system? Champion and nurture practices that enable equality and equity. Address the needs of children holistically
- **Participation:** Ensure that the perspectives of children – in all their diversity – parents, communities, local actors, NGOs, State representatives, and regional bodies perspectives bodies are all understood, acknowledged and influence decision making in a meaningful way
- **Sustainability:** Programme plans should take into account transition and long-term impact

Seven main guiding questions:

1. **OUTCOMES:** What are the outcomes of child protection systems actions in this context? How does the behaviour of systems affect children?
2. **SYSTEMS:** What child protection systems exist in this location? At what level are they operating?
3. **SOCIOCULTURAL NORMS:** What are the sociocultural norms upon which the systems are based?
4. **PERCEPTIONS:** How do pre-existing actors within systems perceive us? How do they perceive each other?
5. **ROLE:** What is your role within systems? How do you interact with and / or

- influence them? How do they interact with and / or influence you? How do decisions you take –in relation to working with systems – affect children?
6. ASSUMPTIONS: What are our assumptions and preconceptions based on the context where we come from? Based on the contexts we have worked in in the past? How can we prevent these from influencing our understanding of the systems and context we are now working in?
 7. CONTINUUM OF ACTION: How can we complement and support all actors at all levels within existing systems to provide children and their families with a holistic range of actions that promote, prevent, and respond to child protection?

Systems thinking indicates the need to look at the underlying causes of a problem, its component parts and how these contribute to the problem or its possible solution; requires inclusion of different stakeholders, understanding of their perspectives and their roles; implies greater collaboration across actors within systems and beyond; draws attention to preventive as well as responsive actions; and emphasises the value of understanding both sociocultural norms and the wider context. It inspires adaptive programming design that responds to the dynamic nature of systems. The ambition is to identify changes that may bring about systems-wide advances benefiting more children than direct actions for one child alone.

Key considerations with regards to the application of systems thinking to child protection systems strengthening in humanitarian settings are outlined below. While it is recognised that each context is different, the considerations listed should be applicable in all locations. They are discussed under five broad headings, each of which may address some of the limitations of child protection systems strengthening efforts to date, as outlined in section 3. Following this are some broad actions to consider, addressed at specific international humanitarian actors.

This is not an exhaustive list of questions or actions to consider when addressing child protection issues in emergencies. Thus it should not be taken as a checklist. Those using it are not expected to go through all the questions documenting the answers. These are points to keep in mind and continuously ask yourself as you plan, begin, implement, and evaluate child protection programmes. More are listed in “Annex III: Full list of considerations” and even more may come to light as systems thinking is applied to child protection in emergencies programming more frequently, and processes for capturing learning on systems thinking in humanitarian responses are improved. The same is true of the list of actions – it may not be definitive.

Guiding questions

Seven main questions that must be reflected upon throughout and guide all our actions are:

1. *OUTCOMES: What are the outcomes of child protection systems actions in this context? How do the systems affect children and their families?*
2. *SYSTEMS: What child protection systems exist in this location? At what level are they operating?*
3. *SOCIOCULTURAL NORMS: What are the sociocultural norms upon which the systems are based?*
4. *PERCEPTIONS: How do pre-existing actors within systems perceive us? How do they perceive each other? What are the power relationships between actors?*
5. *ROLE: What is your role within systems? How do you interact with and/or influence them? How do they interact with and/or influence you? Are we substituting, or replacing elements of existing systems? If so, why? And are you sure this is not weakening the existing systems?*
6. *ASSUMPTIONS: What are our assumptions and preconceptions based on the context where we come from? Based on the contexts we have worked in in the past? How can we prevent these from influencing our understanding of the systems and context we are now working in?*
7. *CONTINUUM OF ACTION: How can we complement and support all actors at all levels within existing systems to provide children and their families with a holistic range of actions that promote, prevent, and respond to child protection?*

Key considerations

- i. **Know and understand the context and any systems within the context**

Child protection in emergencies interventions often look similar across settings, suggesting that many actors are not contextualising their approaches to the extent necessary. We must recognise the impact that cultural norms, politics, economics,

history, traditions, religion have on all actors, including staff working for your own organisation. We need a minimum level of social and anthropological understanding so as to enable quality programming, as well as establish an understanding of the way in which any child protection systems are acting in the setting. We may seek to develop and adhere to international minimum standards or draw from lessons learnt and best practice in other countries and settings, but this does not prevent contextualisation, flexibility and adaptation. Doing so will avoid the creation of alienating, parallel or superimposed systems.

Understand the context:

- There are always systems for preventing and responding to child protection, what are they in this location? Are they different at various levels?
- What are the sociocultural norms and beliefs with regards to child protection/welfare?
- Is this a situation where two situations coincide? For example when there are refugees in a host community, two or more sets of refugees from different countries of origin, or displaced people in a culturally contrasting host community

Understand the systems in this context:

- What are child protection systems at all levels doing to protect children?
- What components, structures, functions and mechanisms of child protection systems existed at what levels before and after the emergency? How are they meant to interconnect? How do they interconnect in reality?
- Who was and is playing a leading role in coordinating the systems or leading on community level action?
- What are the perspectives and motives of the different actors – from children, parents, families and communities, to government and UN agencies, and local and international NGOs? What are the power relationships between actors?
- How do sociocultural norms influence perceptions of different ethnic, racial, social, political, economic, religious, linguistic, gender, or other marginalised group (such as those with specific gender identity, disabilities, refugee status, IDP, etc.)?
- What strengthening efforts were already taking place? How have communities been responding to emergencies, and can these activities be supported?
- What are the in-country funding mechanisms for State and civil society services that promote, prevent, and respond to child protection? How are communities

funding their activities?

- Has the emergency created or identified gaps in any of the systems across all sectors ensuring the protection of children? For example are refugee children excluded from certain services? Are certain locations under-served by the education and health systems? Are communities too stretched to provide traditional supports? Or has displacement eroded community cohesion?

ii. Recognise, acknowledge, and understand the full range of actors operating to achieve the goal of protecting children

Agencies may achieve greater impact by moving beyond a view of systems as comprising only of national or State-led actions. Or in other cases having a narrow focus of collaboration on community groups. They need to be more cognisant of which level they are working at and aware of what is happening at other levels. Systems strengthening efforts may benefit from efforts to widen the range of stakeholders with whom international actors collaborate, and focus more on multi-stakeholder approaches. Work should seek to co-identify points of intervention, and co-create strengthening strategies with local stakeholders. “Systems thinking” encourages us to break out of organisational and sector-based silos. It recognises we cannot solve problems alone and need to be multidisciplinary when relevant.¹³⁷

When choosing to operate at a certain level rather than others, agencies need to be clear with regards to the rationale for their decision. Frequently overlooked stakeholders within any child protection systems include children and families, a range of community level actors (including local NGOs, civil society groups, customary, religious and political leaders), and those from other sectors who support child protection efforts (such as doctors, nurses, teachers, probation officers, and others). It can be important to consider organisations and actors from different groups as well – for example, when working in a refugee setting, looking to work with host community organisations as well as those endogenous to the refugee community. Children and families as frontline responders to child protection needs, in particular, should be acknowledged as prime contributors to and collaborators in efforts for systems strengthening.

When collaborating more extensively across the range of levels agencies should

¹³⁷ Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

seek to reduce differences in power and bring in different ideas and perspectives, so as to achieve a deeper, less biased understanding of the systems in which they are engaged.¹³⁸ Power differences between international actors and national operators must be identified and challenged.

International actors should not see themselves as conducting and catalysing collaboration, but rather should seek to understand what systems are already present, what their impact on these systems may be, and subsequently, hopefully more meaningfully and positively engage with these systems. Collaboration at all these levels should be seen as work in partnership, with transfer of skills, knowledge, and expertise in both directions. Local abilities, insights, know-how, and understandings must be valued as much as those of international and government actors. Local perceptions should have an equal influence on intervention outcomes.

Understand any possible bias:

- Are actors at the different levels, all the way from the State to the community, representative of the diversity of interests among the population you are looking to serve? Are they aware and recognising the needs of the diverse children within the setting (those of different genders; abilities; from different religious, socioeconomic, linguistic, political, racial, or ethnic groups; migrants, displaced, refugees; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex; infants, toddlers, younger or older children and adolescents)?

Working with the State:

The Sphere standards provide the following guidance in relation to working with States.¹³⁹

“...the primary role and responsibility of the affected state to provide timely assistance to those affected, to ensure people’s protection and security and to provide support for their recovery [is recognised]. [It is felt that]...a combination of official and voluntary action is crucial to effective prevention and response, and in this regard National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other civil society actors have an essential role to play in supporting public authorities. Where national capacity is insufficient... the role of the wider international

¹³⁸ Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

¹³⁹ The Sphere Project (2011) Humanitarian Charter Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response

community, including governmental donors and regional organisations, in assisting states to fulfil their responsibilities [is affirmed].... the special roles played by the mandated agencies of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross [are recognised and supported].”

“As humanitarian agencies, we interpret our role in relation to the needs and capacities of affected populations and the responsibilities of their governments or controlling powers. Our role in providing assistance reflects the reality that those with primary responsibility are not always fully able to perform this role themselves, or may be unwilling to do so. As far as possible, consistent with meeting the humanitarian imperative and other principles set out in [the Humanitarian] Charter, we will support the efforts of the relevant authorities to protect and assist those affected.”

Place the child and their family at the centre of any child protection systems strengthening efforts.¹⁴⁰

- What are children’s perceptions with regards to the main risks, threats, and concerns they face? What do children do when they face certain threats and risks?
- What are children’s real life experiences of any identified child protection systems? What help actually reaches children and their families?
- Which children are accessing the child protection systems? Which children are being excluded or are less well served? Are there existing barriers to access for certain populations, such as physical obstructions, linguistic or legislative restrictions, etc.?
- What are families and children doing to avoid, prevent or respond to child protection problems? Can we do more to strengthen these mechanisms?
- Is there sufficient direct collaboration and communication with children and their families?

Recognise the role and importance of community:

- Who is part of the community? How do individual children and families fit within the wider community?
- What is the community’s role in caring for children? What protective elements –

¹⁴⁰ Munro, Eileen (May 2011) The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A child-centred system Professor Eileen Munro

individuals, groups, organisations, and practices – exist at the community level?

- What is being done to acknowledge and collaborate with communities?
- What systems or segments of systems are community groups themselves aware of and interacting with?

Work with those operating in systems outside of the child protection sector:

- How do existing child protection systems link with other systems? Depending on context this may include education, health, justice, and/or asylum systems
- How is child protection integrated into other essential systems that contribute to children's protection, such as the health, education, justice, or refugee protection systems?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the different sectors that contribute to protecting children?

iii. Examine the position and role of your agency and of all international humanitarian actors within the child protection systems

Humanitarian actors need to recognise and be honest about their own paradigms and pre-conceived ideas that may limit their ability to understand and work collaboratively within varied contexts. They may have long-term development programmes working in the specific context, or may newly arrive in a location to respond to a specific emergency. Their approach, and modes of operation will impact on the nature and form of any engagement with location specific child protection systems. Humanitarian agency human resource practices may influence and impact on pre-existing systems. Recruitment processes, benefits packages and terms and conditions for paid employees and programme volunteers need to be established in consideration of practices of other actors within systems present. Specifically, international agencies are part of a global system, bringing with them their own culture and ways of working.

Pre-existing actors such as the State, national NGOs, community based organisations, children and their families may have expectations of international actors that may or may not be realised. In trying to rapidly respond to children's, families' and communities' needs, international actors may implement programmes that either strengthen or weaken systems. They may superimpose ideas, programmes, and activities of work. They may operate in ways that are undermining of others. All these aspects need to be understood if international actors are to make a beneficial contribution to the child protection systems.

Understand the role of humanitarian actors within child protection systems:

- What is the role of humanitarian actors? How may they strengthen or weaken systems? How may they contribute to systems strengthening?
- Is it possible to harmonise the way in which humanitarian actors engage with the different components and different levels of the child protection systems?
- How do other actors – from family and community all the way to State actors and regional bodies – within the existing systems perceive humanitarian actors?
- What power differentials are there between humanitarian actors and others within systems present? How may the balance of power influence relationships and ways of working?

Understand your own organisation's role within the child protection systems:

- What are your own paradigms and pre-conceived ideas that may limit your ability to understand systems and actors in new contexts?
- What role has your organisation played within systems before the humanitarian event? What role has it played since the emergency (whether it was present before the event or established after)? What are others' expectations of your organisation? How does your organisation's work relate and link to the contribution of others?
- Who are the staff working for your organisation? Are they representative of the population and children you are working with?
- Are there key staff you may retain or employ in senior positions to guide the work who have a deep understanding of the context and the systems?
- What organisations or structures are the staff you are recruiting coming from?

iv. Take a more systems-led approach

Staff working in a country should adopt a learning culture, where they use their expertise to assess and understand needs and adapt interventions so as to provide the right assistance.¹⁴¹ Better results may be achieved with a reduction in the amount of prescriptive models. A shift away from fixed, long-term planning to more iterative and flexible planning processes based on learning and experimentation¹⁴² may increase the sustainability and effectiveness of efforts to strengthen child protection

¹⁴¹ Munro, Eileen (May 2011) The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A child-centred system Professor Eileen Munro

¹⁴² Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

systems. We should be open to the fact that trialling a way of working may start to move us closer towards achieving the goal, and then cause other events to occur which push advances back.

For this reason systems thinkers focus on trends over time, rather than focusing attention on individual events.¹⁴³ Ideally we should seek to move away from phased response and see a continuum of children's needs, as well as responses, that change over time irrespective of emergent events, recognising that children and family's needs change on a regular basis, whether or not a significant humanitarian emergency occurs.

Issues of sustainability, limited innovation, lack of learning, insufficient openness to unpredictability, and inflexibility are structural issues that may hamper organisations' ability to contribute positively to systems, or may even undermine other actors' systems strengthening efforts.

Take a long-term view

- Can you plan and implement programmes in a way that looks beyond a short emergency response timeframe? Is it possible to make time for review of existing context specific systems material, to gain an understanding, and permit tailored programme plans?
- What actions can be put in place to prevent future possible child protection concerns from arising?
- Do your monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning mechanisms take a long-term perspective into account?
- How will you maintain funding to deliver your organisation's strategy? How viable is your strategy? Can the systems actors that will remain when you end your operations maintain the initiatives you plan to implement in the long-term?
- Is it possible to predict, understand and prepare for certain frequently confronted challenges, or changes that may occur after an emergency?
- What is the organisation's exit strategy? How will programming initiatives be phased-out or handed over to long-term actors?

Adopt a flexible and innovative approach to deciding on the programmatic activities

¹⁴³ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

- Are you able to identify context-specific solutions in addition to adapting activities that are based on lessons learnt in other contexts?¹⁴⁴
- Is it possible to take an incremental approach, trying out interventions on a small scale, learning from them and then modifying them?¹⁴⁵
- How will you verify these interventions are viable at scale?
- Are your monitoring and evaluation systems designed to allow for continuous monitoring, learning, feedback, and adjustment?

Actions to consider

i. Staff directly supporting child protection responses

Preparedness:

- Work with all other actors to understand the systems present and what role, if any, your organisation may have in systems strengthening. Any planning and preparation should be influenced by this
- Where child protection systems mappings have been carried out, prepare a “mapping snapshot” that summarises the findings in a shorter more digestible version appropriate for rapidly deployed responders
- Establish a locally developed, continually evolving portfolio of interventions that may address potential weaknesses in systems caused by humanitarian events. This should be regularly updated even once an emergency occurs
- When preparing a disaster or emergency preparedness plan facilitate the involvement of actors from all the levels affording protection to children
- Establish protocols for coordination mechanisms that will be set up during emergencies. Confirm that these have mechanisms for linking with actors working within other systems that have responsibilities towards the wellbeing of children – such as education, health, justice, refugee protection, and livelihoods actors.

Ask yourself:¹⁴⁶

- What aspects of a Child Protection system are critical to **mitigating** the impact of a (potential) disaster?

¹⁴⁴ Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

¹⁴⁵ Bowman, Kimberly, et al (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

¹⁴⁶ Hiddleston, Trish, Pia Vraalsen, Padraig Quigley and Alexander Krueger (2013) Study on the Mitigating Effects of Child Protection Systems in Disasters, Child Frontiers for UNICEF

- What aspects of the emergency **response** are best **served through** the Child Protection System?
- What aspects of a Child Protection system should be **better prepared** to mitigate the emergency and support disaster preparedness measures?
- What aspects of a Child Protection system **lend themselves to being strengthened** during or in the aftermath of a disaster?
- Which aspects of a Child Protection system are particularly **vulnerable to disruption or collapse** during or in the immediate aftermath of a disaster?

Immediate response:

- Take part in any efforts to coordinate and collaborate so you understand your role and the role of others within any efforts to strengthen systems
- Find areas of agreement, convergence of views, and compatibility with others within systems, so as to reach consensus, and build coherent interagency plans
- Ensure your organisation's vision and strategy fit with and complement those of other agencies (local, national, international, governmental) and is consistent with communities perspectives
- Whilst it may not be feasible to review the whole of a systems mapping report due to its length, reading essential sections including introduction and recommendations when planning your response may give invaluable knowledge
- Retain a long-term vision of the response, even if you will only be supporting response efforts for a matter of days or weeks. Decisions made in the first few days (such as strategies, staffing, material purchases, and coordination structures) may have an impact months or years later
- Meet with long-term national staff and partners to discuss and understand systems prior to the emergency or event. Be sure to probe on all the different levels of systems, not only consider the community or government level actors
- Work with national and local government as far as is realistic and possible given the constraints they are under after an emergency
- Make sure any interventions and strategies you put in place integrate and complement what is already there. That they are appropriate and viable (in terms of financial and material resources)
- Wherever possible and appropriate appoint staff and select partners who have a long-term knowledge of the context and who will be based in the country for the foreseeable future
- Consider transition from the outset. For example:

- How will emergency coordination structures be phased out and handed over to long-term actors?
- How will material resources be used after the immediate response?
- How will parallel systems (such as case management standard operating procedures) be linked to long-term systems? Or be sustained?
- How will local NGO or government workers be integrated into systems given it may not be possible to cover their salaries after the peak in humanitarian funding stops?
- Gather baseline data that allows for ongoing monitoring and learning, ensuring disaggregation for children of different sexes, ages, abilities and legal or immigration status wherever possible and/or applicable
- Design programme plans that may be adjusted throughout their life cycle in line with learning from monitoring and evaluation activities.¹⁴⁷ Take a flexible programme approach that allows you to respond quickly to emerging opportunities and to amend, augment or abandon interventions. Implementing, learning and changing your programming along the way may mean you do not move closer to your objectives on a daily basis. Piloting new initiatives, learning from mistakes, and addressing mistakes may lead to greater impact for children
- Show a willingness to be honest and open about failings. Demonstrate the courage to say when something is not working or appropriate and change the way things are being done. This may cause delays in implementation, but may lead to a better overall outcome for children
- Establish a process for quickly, and continually, reviewing the understanding of systems. For example, getting feedback from a range of actors within systems, holding meetings with actors from different levels, and agreeing interagency responsibility for information sharing with regards to the functioning of systems, actors, components and interconnections
- Ask yourself constantly: Are we having an impact at the level of the child?
- Seek community perspectives on the systems available to them, and ask them to map the links they have with other actors

Inter-sectoral collaboration:

- Determine the nature and form of collaboration with other systems that contribute to the wellbeing of children, specifically education, health, and

¹⁴⁷ Ramalingam, B., Lalic, M. & Primrose, J. (2014). From Best Practice to Best Fit: Understanding and Navigating Wicked Problems in International Development. ODI Draft Paper.

livelihoods, but also other sectors. For example feed into needs assessment design, and programme planning, agree vulnerability criteria, jointly implement activities, share evaluation and monitoring reports, and support processes for child participation

- Jointly agree and design inter-sectoral vulnerability criteria that will take into account child protection concerns and enable the most often excluded to be reached – this may be girls, boys; those with disabilities; those from certain religious, socioeconomic, linguistic or ethnic groups; displaced, refugees; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex; or a certain age category of children: infants, toddlers, younger or older children, adolescents and others.

ii. Senior managers¹⁴⁸ within organisations delivering child protection programmes:

- Encourage and embody a management style that creates the dynamics of an adult-adult relationship as opposed to a parent-child relationship. Empower the entire staff body and provide them with sufficient autonomy so they may innovate and adapt. Model less hierarchical relationships within the organisation as this may enable more equal partnerships outside of the organisation
- Enforce collaborative ways of working with partner agencies that make sure your organisation does not duplicate or undermine existing child protection systems
- Recognise your organisation's weaknesses– in relation to programming, resourcing, capacity and others – and the impact these may have on other actors
- Enable staff who are assigned responsibilities on certain child protection issues alone, or certain phases of a response to have a broader view of how this fits within whole child protection systems, and link with others operating on other aspects of child protection systems. For example staff that provide technical support solely on family tracing and reunification or on gender based violence in emergencies must have the right to follow and understand the work taking place in development, preparedness, and transition phases
- Support mechanisms for methodical exchange between all programme designers, those focussed on preparedness, emergency response and

¹⁴⁸ Here we are referring to a range of agency roles that are not specific to child protection, that relate to more senior management functions, influencing the ways of working, roles and responsibilities of their whole organisation generally, and child protection managers and teams specifically. They will influence the way plans are drawn up, how targets are set, the ways programmes are monitored and evaluated, they set targets, establish the tools and mechanisms for assessing performance, and decide what information may or may not be shared. This will include the likes of country directors, emergency managers, heads of programmes, deputy country director, and so on and so forth.

development personal

- In an emergency seek to recruit and appoint individuals who have a background and knowledge of the local context or the contexts of those systems are seeking to benefit (for example, in a refugee context, seek to build capacity in the refugee community itself by hiring and training refugee workers)
- Seek to hold all accountable to the principles of inclusion, diversity, non-discrimination, participation, and sustainability
- Advocate to donors for long-term funding to support child protection programmes
- Allow flexibility in programme plans, approaches and monitoring such that ongoing learning and frequent revisions are possible
- Model transparency, openness and accountability as a way to encourage staff to behave in the same way in relation to other actors
- Create a culture of open and honest discussion of challenges and failings to generate greater learning
- Allow child protection staff the time to better understand the context and systems, to identify actors at different levels, build relationships, comprehend perceptions, enhance knowledge, and transfer skills so as not to do harm, and to assist them in a process of identifying ways to strengthen systems, and ensure greater sustainability

iii. Child protection coordinators:

- Review any existing working groups on child protection that operate at any levels within child protection systems in context, establish if they may be adapted to take on the coordination of humanitarian child protection actions, or if a separate working group needs to be set up
- When setting up a separate child protection working group for humanitarian response institute mechanisms for information sharing with any long-term coordination groups
- Hold interagency meetings for sharing information with regards to pre-existing systems and how they have changed due to the emergency
- Support efforts for developing a working group owned package of easily digestible, comprehensive material on pre-existing child protection systems and systems strengthening efforts. This should look at the context information on pre-existing protection concerns facing children, sociocultural norms, values and beliefs, and the internal workings of any systems. The internal aspects include a summary of mapping information, information about the actors and levels at

which they operate, the components and how they interconnect in practical terms, the boundaries of systems, the other systems which intersect them, and the actors engaged in strengthening activities

- Share this information with personnel who are newly in-country
- Ensure that action plans do not focus only on prevention and response to specific child protection issues, but also how humanitarian actors will take into consideration existing systems (it may be they have strategies either to do no harm or that they actively seek to strengthen child protection systems)
- Ensure that taskforces do not create an over-focus on specific issues of concern to the exclusion of others, possibly leading to the needs of certain vulnerable children being systematically overlooked
- Establish and support harmonised data collection and sharing, monitoring and evaluation, case management and service delivery, in line with and not undermining pre-existing child protection systems
- Prepare a phase out plan for the working group's functions
- Document how working group members will enable smooth transition after phase out

iv. Donors:

- Promote flexible programme planning built on honesty and learning, allowing for continuous revision of strategies, and if necessary indicators, in order to meet an overall goal of positive systems change (when agencies are seeking to engage in systems strengthening activities)
- Stipulate that partners and actors across systems work in concert to achieve change. Support this by providing funding for coordination platforms, shared monitoring and evaluation systems, and learning events
- Hold international agencies to account when they undermine systems or systems strengthening efforts of others
- Allow for slow progress to meet certain objectives and goals in emergency contexts. Giving child protection programmes the time to better understand the context and systems. Enabling them to better implement actions that seek to do no harm, and give time to establish appropriate, contextualised systems strengthening strategies
- Provide tranches of funding targeted at longer term more systematic change, that accompany short term funding pools already available
- Prioritise the funding of proposals that 1) show that the organisation/s has/have

an understanding of existing child protection systems, and their role within it 2)
clearly demonstrate how their proposed actions will contribute to systems
strengthening, or at the very least, will not undermine the systems present

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ANNEX I:

The field of systems thinking

Definition of systems thinking: Systems thinking tries to take into account the interaction between different parts of a system and understand how together they are effecting change rather than simply trying to understand specific components in isolation. Where a system is defined as:

“a set of things—people, cells, molecules, or whatever—interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behavior over time. The system may be buffeted, constricted, triggered, or driven by outside forces. But the system’s response to these forces is characteristic of itself, and that response is seldom simple in the real world”

- Donella Meadows¹⁴⁹

(Note this is a generic definition of all systems – not the child protection system – for a definition of a child protection system see section one of this guidance)

Systems thinking takes into account the interactions between different parts of a system and understand how together they are effecting change. It does this by creating a full and deeper understanding of the reality of a system, instead of focussing on isolated components within a system or simplified models. Systems thinking may allow us to approach humanitarian responses in a way that may achieve transformative, effective and sustainable change.¹⁵⁰

All systems consist of three broad categories of ‘things’: elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose. Child protection actors applying systems thinking to their work have for the most part started referring to the elements as ‘components’, and the function or purpose as the ‘goal’.¹⁵¹ We will use this terminology throughout this guidance: components, interconnections, and goal.

Instead of drawing simplified models of existing components and their interactions that are based on assumptions about how actors and components work together,

¹⁴⁹ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

¹⁵⁰ Bowman, Kimberly, et al (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

¹⁵¹ Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children

systems thinking allows us to map the complex reality of the system.¹⁵² Systems thinking provides a powerful language, way of thinking, and tools that may help child protection actors investigate and address inefficiencies in meeting the protection needs of children.¹⁵³

Components: The components of a system are often the easiest parts to notice, because many of them are visible and tangible. These may include certain actors, organisations, activities, or pieces of equipment. But they are not always physical. Trying to list the elements of the system may prove to be a never-ending process;¹⁵⁴ a certain item may be sub-dividable and thus perceived as multiple items on the list. If we consider for example a child friendly space – the CFS may be seen as one component within a larger system or may be subdivided into animators, activities, outreach services, a community space, and so on.

Interconnections are the relationships that hold the elements together.¹⁵⁵ For that same child friendly space this would be the policies and procedures that guide animators' actions and behaviours, the schedules of activities and the ways it is intended that the CFS interact with other programme activities, such as case management.

Goal: When a system has evolved organically, the system's goal is not necessarily spoken, written, or expressed explicitly, except through the operation of the system. The best way to deduce the system's purpose is to observe over time to see how the system behaves.¹⁵⁶ This leads to the conclusion that a written or stated goal of the system may not be reflected in the actual lived outcomes of the system. Time needs to be invested in order to understand how the elements and interconnections respond to situations, in order to see what the outcomes of that system really are. When a system is intentionally designed, the goal to be achieved would be specified.

Is there anything that is not a system? Yes – a collection of items without any particular interconnections, shared function or goals.¹⁵⁷ For example a set of toys left

¹⁵² Ramalingam, Ben and Harry Jones with Toussaint Reba and John Young (2008) Exploring the science of complexity: Ideas and implications for development and humanitarian efforts

¹⁵³ David H Peters (2014) The application of systems thinking in health: why use systems thinking?

¹⁵⁴ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

¹⁵⁵ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

¹⁵⁶ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

¹⁵⁷ To establish whether or not something is a system Donella Meadows (2008) proposes a set of 4 questions: 1. Can you identify parts? 2. Do the parts affect each other? 3. Do the parts together produce an effect that is different from

in a room, without structured activities, or children to enjoy them. Take one toy away and the other toys are still there. They are still just a set of toys, nothing more. However toys, with an animator, in a space, with a programme of activities to use those toys, and the goal of improving child wellbeing becomes a child friendly space, and that may be considered a system. If in a child friendly space you take away components (such as the facilitators, the toys, or the schedule of activities) the system as a whole will change and the outcomes will be altered, but it will remain a system.

All three aspects of the system, the components, interconnections and goal are essential to making it a system. However, the least immediately obvious part of the system, its goal, is often the most crucial determinant of the system's behaviour. Interconnections are also critically important as changing the nature of relationships often changes the system's behaviour and outcomes. The elements, the parts of systems we are most likely to see and notice, are often (not always) least important in defining the unique characteristics of the system – unless changing an element also results in changing relationships or the goal.¹⁵⁸

Systems can be nested one within another; for example, a case management system is nested within the national child protection system as a whole.¹⁵⁹ Systems rarely have clearly determinable boundaries, as one system is typically linked to others.¹⁶⁰ In the way that national child protection systems draw on technical expertise and service delivery from the education and health systems, for example.

Systems in context: Systems do not exist in a vacuum; rather systems are embedded within a broader context or environment, inextricably linked to the social, economic, religious, and other contexts in which the system is located. All the components and interconnections of the system are constantly undergoing change as they adapt to fluctuations in external conditions.¹⁶¹

the effect of each part on its own? And possibly also: 4. Does the effect, the behavior over time, persist in a variety of circumstances or contexts?

¹⁵⁸ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

¹⁵⁹ Save the Children (2009) A 'Rough Guide' to Child Protection Systems. See also section one, What are child protection systems?

¹⁶⁰ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer. See also further discussion on determining the boundaries of the child protection system given in this guidance in section one.

¹⁶¹ Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children

How we seek to contribute to changing the system: Quick technical solutions may exist for some specific, discrete problems, however most of the time we face an aggregation of different, and more complex problems. We call these ‘adaptive challenges.’ In order to achieve transformational change on a large scale, dealing with some forms of adaptive challenges would appear to be critical.¹⁶² Furthermore systems thinking teaches us that child protection is not a simple, or even just a complicated problem, but is a complex problem. A complex problem is one where expertise can contribute to finding a solution, but is neither necessary nor sufficient to assure success, set procedures and processes have limited application, and overall there is always an uncertainty of outcome.

COMPARING TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES¹⁶³

Characteristics of technical problems	Characteristics of adaptive challenges
Problems are easy to identify	It can be difficult to identify the causes and dimensions of the problem
Problems are often suitable for quick and easy solutions	Solutions may involve changes in beliefs, attitudes or approaches
Problems can often be solved by an ‘expert’	The problem needs to be diagnosed and the solutions driven by the affected stakeholders
Change is often only required in a limited number of places	Solutions require change across numerous places, and across organisational and systems boundaries
People are often receptive to technical solutions	People are often resistant to acknowledging adaptive challenges
Solutions can be deduced from generic best practice	Solutions are context-specific, and cannot be derived from generic ‘best practice’
Solutions can be implemented quickly	Solutions require experimentation and adaptation (which takes time)

Systems thinking provides a useful framework for better understanding adaptive challenges. Often, initial symptoms we see are far removed from the underlying problems that cause them. This means that to understand the reasons behind certain problems reasonable resources and expertise need to be dedicated to understanding the system. Systems thinking provides a perspective and analytical tools that may

¹⁶² Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

¹⁶³ Table taken from Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

assist in this process. Systems thinking indicates that to understand what is happening within a system, and as a result of the system, we need to understand how the different parts of the system interact and affect each other, which actors are affecting the system and what motivates them.¹⁶⁴

Some broad principles and approaches from systems thinking may be useful for child protection in emergencies actors:

- The system will always take time to respond to changes. So systems thinkers focus on trends over a more extended period of time, rather than focusing attention on individual events¹⁶⁵
- There is recognition that causality is not one-directional; there is feedback within the system.¹⁶⁶ If you change A it may change B, but in addition the change to B may cause A to change again. For example if a case of child rape is reported in a village within an agencies' area of operation, but where they do not currently have programmes, they may expand their area of operation into the area so as to respond to the child's needs. If in addition it comes to light that the perpetrators were members of a specific armed force or group, this may alter the child protection monitoring systems in the area, and the national level advocacy and policy work of numerous agencies operating within the system. It is not only the system that impacts upon the child, the individual characteristics of that child (where they live) and what has happened to them, may impact upon the whole system.
- Complex systems are non-linear, unpredictable, and exhibit a great deal of fluctuation in behaviour.¹⁶⁷ Thus the intended outcome of an action may not be immediately achieved. For example, an NGO may run training for children on their rights, in the hope of ensuring they have better understanding of their entitlements and thus those rights would be better fulfilled. But if the NGO does not also work with the children's' families with regards to children's rights, or explain to the children the resource requirements and challenges in achieving those rights, children may become more demanding of their families, and cause tension within the home this may lead to greater physical violence.

¹⁶⁴ Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

¹⁶⁵ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

¹⁶⁶ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

¹⁶⁷ Glouberman, Sholom and Zimmerman, Brenda (2002) Complicated and Complex Systems: What Would Successful Reform of Medicare Look Like?

- It is important to consider factors that may initially seem to be external or anomalous, they may tell you a lot about the way the system works
- Look at actual relationships between elements, as opposed to idealised ones, as documented in procedures and guidance
- Significant changes may occur as a result of small interventions¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Meadows, Donella (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

ANNEX II:

Comparing agency and interagency definitions of child protection systems

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
Child Protection Working Group	Child Protection Working Group (2012) Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action	The people, processes, laws, institutions and behaviours that normally protect children	
Child Protection Working Group (written by Save the Children for the CPWG)	Barnett, Katy and Joanna Wedge (2010) Child Protection Systems in Emergencies: A Discussion Paper, Save the Children on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group	<p>The publication identifies areas of consensus across agencies on the characteristics of child protection systems. These characteristics are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamic interplay between components is important • Focus on prevention of and response to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect • Interconnectedness of child protection and other sectors • Child protection as a distinct sector of work, the entirety of which would not be covered by other sectors in the absence of a child protection system • Based on a child rights framework, and, where 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal and policy framework 2. Effective regulation and oversight 3. Preventive and responsive services 4. Effective coordination 5. Knowledge and data 6. A skilled child protection workforce 7. Children's voices and participation 8. An aware and supportive public 9. Adequate funding and appropriate budgeting

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
		<p>applicable, are inclusive of rights to protection enshrined in international humanitarian law. Thus designed and implemented to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Serve the best interests of children – Enable the meaningful participation of children – Accessible to, relevant to, and actively inclusive of all children in the territory covered, regardless of nationality, gender, race, age or stage of development • They are national in scope and thus necessitate government responsibility and ownership; humanitarian agencies, as external and temporary actors, can only contribute to their development – Child protection systems are built up of essential elements, processes and activities at the levels of, and between the levels of the individual child, the family, the community, and interim levels (i.e. municipal, district, provincial) – As well as the linkages between formal and 	

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
		<p>informal structures. In particular, children, young people, and civil society are extremely important actors in the assessment, functioning and on going monitoring of child protection systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are needed and relevant in emergency and crisis situations, including situations of natural disaster, extreme poverty, conflict and complex emergencies • Their structure and composition respond to their context and will depend upon many situation-specific factors and priority child protection concerns <p>Document focuses entirely on the issue of child protection systems in emergencies contexts</p>	
	<p>Eynon, Alyson and Sarah Lilley (2010) Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies Through Community-Based</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Looks at specifics of the role of community-based mechanisms within child protection systems in</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Laws 2. Policies 3. Regulations 4. Monitoring processes 5. Services 6. Workers

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
	Mechanisms: A Discussion Paper, Save the Children on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group	emergencies	
Plan International	Plan (2015) Protection from violence is every child's right: Plan International's Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming 2015-2020	<p>A comprehensive, interactive and sustainable series of functions and structures including laws, policies, and services (at all levels) within a country with the purpose of preventing and responding to all forms of violence against all children in that country.</p> <p>A systems approach recognises the interconnectedness of children's rights and the complex causes and consequences of violence. It seeks to contribute to comprehensive, lasting social change, led by governments that fulfil their primary responsibilities as duty bearers for all children in their country. The approach also recognises that a fragile state (e.g. in situations of emergency) needs support and necessary guidance to build back these mechanisms.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A legal and policy framework 2. Services for families and children 3. Family and community support mechanisms <p>Supported by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. A range of professionals, volunteers and community actors (some mandated by law) who work to protect children 5. Coordination mechanisms and networks charged with management of the child protection system, ensuring its effective functioning 6. Active civil society organisations, which represent children, promote their interests and deliver services 7. Specialised budgets and funds for implementation of the system, aiming to make the system function at a maximum level for the

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
<p>Save the Children</p>	<p>Save the Children (2009) A 'Rough Guide' to Child Protection Systems</p>	<p>Comprehensive approaches to the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence and to the fulfilment of children's rights to protection. The foundations of such systems are the state's human rights obligations to children that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, responding effectively when it occurs and providing necessary treatment, rehabilitation and compensation to child victims • Acquiring knowledge about the root causes of child protection failures and the extent of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children in all settings. • Developing appropriate policies and regulations, interventions for prevention and response, and ways to measure progress. • Encouraging the participation of girls and boys, their parents, caregivers and community members, and international and national NGOs and civil society. 	<p>protection of children</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child Protection laws and policies, compliant with the UNCRC and other international standards and good practice 2. Meaningful coordination across government and between sectors at different levels 3. Knowledge and data on child protection issues and good practices 4. Effective regulation, minimum standards, and oversight 5. Preventive and responsive services 6. A skilled child protection workforce 7. Adequate funding 8. Children's voices and participation 9. An aware and supportive public

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
		<p>Crucially, child protection systems are systems made up of a set of components that, when properly coordinated, work together to strengthen the protective environment around each child.</p> <p>Countries with pre-existing, well-established child protection systems are better able to cope and recover from shocks caused by disasters and emergencies. Building resilient child protection systems may be seen as an integral part of emergency preparedness planning and disaster risk reduction.</p>	
	<p>Save the Children (2010) Child Protection Initiative: Building rights based national child protection systems: a concept paper to support Save the Children's work</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Laws and policies that protect children 2. Government coordination mechanism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Across central government departments, with civil society, human rights bodies and mechanisms, international organisations, and – At different levels 3. Effective regulation and monitoring at all levels of child protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A centralised data collection system

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Accreditation, licensing, enforced minimum standards, independent oversight 4. A committed workforce with relevant competencies and mandates. 5. There is a range of preventive and responsive child friendly services that recognise the need to support and strengthen the role of families in the care and protection of their children, and which can intervene when families are unable or unwilling to fulfil their role appropriately. 6. Adequate and appropriate resource allocation all levels, including within the child’s community 7. Children have genuine opportunities to express their views 8. An aware and supportive public 9. Informal protection mechanisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Include extended family and kinship care, religious and cultural groups, friends and neighbourhood support networks
Terre des hommes	Terre des hommes and Child Frontiers (2014)	“...A coherent set of actions and actors, in which the child is the starting point and which aims to	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal and regulatory framework 2. Structures

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
	<p>Understanding and applying a systems approach to child protection: a guide for programme staff.</p> <p>Stephanie Delaney and Pdraig Quigley, for Child Frontiers and Mirela Shuteriqi, Terre des Hommes</p>	<p>guarantee the rights and well-being of the child by constructing synergies within and between protective environments”.</p> <p>A child protection system is more than the sum of its parts. The different parts of the system (sometimes called components or elements) need to work together in order to realise the vision. ‘Synergies’ is the term normally used to describe how the different parts of the system interact with and influence each other.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Continuum of services 4. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms 5. Human and financial resources 6. Social participation 7. Knowledge and data management
<p>UNHCR</p>	<p>UNHCR (2012) A Framework for the Protection of Children</p> <p>Executive Committee of</p>	<p>A child protection system includes functions undertaken by a range of formal and informal actors to prevent, mitigate and respond to the risks faced by children.</p> <p>In 2007 UNHCR first set out a commitment to a</p>	<p>The system consists of six multi-sector components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal and policy framework 2. Knowledge and data 3. Coordination 4. Human and financial capacities 5. Prevention and response activities 6. Advocacy and awareness-raising <p>The systems components operate at community, national and international levels. Nothing operates in isolation - all functions and actions are interrelated.</p>

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
	<p>the High Commissioner's Programme (October 2007)</p> <p>Report of the fifty eighth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, A/AC.96/1048</p>	<p>system strengthening approach to child protection concerns as faced by children who are asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced or returnees assisted and protected by UNHCR, or are stateless, particularly addressing the situation of those at heightened risk.</p> <p>The following extracts highlight key statements made in that document with regards to child protection systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While many risks may be prevalent in all settings, camp and urban environments may generate different protection needs. • The protection of children is primarily the responsibility of States, whose full and effective cooperation, action and political resolve are required to enable UNHCR to fulfil its mandated functions • Host countries <i>have</i> varied means and capacities of. The Excomm calls the international community, in cooperation with UNHCR and other international organisations, to mobilize the 	

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
		<p>financial and other resources necessary, including in support of host communities, to ensure the provision of protection and material assistance and the achievement of durable solutions, based on international solidarity, cooperation and burden and responsibility sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates need for States, UNHCR and other relevant agencies and partners, to identify components that may form part of a comprehensive child protection system, with the aim of strengthening the protection of children at risk • Strategies and actions should be underpinned by the following principles and approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Children should be among the first to receive protection and assistance – States should promote the establishment and implementation of child protection systems in accordance with international obligations of states concerned and to which children under their jurisdiction should have 	

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
		<p>non-discriminatory access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The support provided by UNHCR and other relevant agencies and partners in helping States fulfil their obligations should supplement and strengthen the national child protection system in areas where gaps exist and be delivered in a spirit of partnership by building on each actors’ comparative advantages to reinforce the beneficial impact on the protection of children – Due consideration should be given to the importance of the family and family support structures for the protection of children 	
UNICEF	UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children and World Vision, (2013) A Better Way to Protect ALL Children: The Theory and Practice of Child Protection Systems: Conference Report	<p>Certain formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that have been assembled to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children.</p> <p>It includes different actors – children, families, communities, those working at subnational or national level and those working internationally. Most important are the relationships and interactions</p>	<p>A Child Protection system is generally agreed to be comprised of the following components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human resources 2. Finance 3. Laws and policies 4. Governance 5. Monitoring and data collection 6. Protection and response services

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
		<p>between and among these components and these actors within the system. It is the outcomes of these interactions that comprise the system.</p>	<p>7. Care management</p>
	<p>Wulczyn, Fred, Deborah Daro, John Fluke, Sara Feldman, Christin Glodek, Kate Lifanda (2010) Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations, UNICEF, UNHCR, Chapin Hall, Save the Children</p>	<p>By definition, a child protection system has certain structures, functions, and capacities, among other components that have been assembled in relation to a set of child protection goals.</p> <p>The components, within the context of the community and the state, may include formal (e.g., NGOs) and informal organizations (neighbourhood watch groups) dedicated to protecting children. In more formal systems, management of the system may be split between branches of the government (at the national level) together with local managers. Families and other community members may share responsibility for child protection in less formal systems (e.g. voluntary associations). The structural form exhibited may be different but the specific function fits with overarching system goals.</p>	<p>1. Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Relationships between system components and actors <p>2. Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Governance, Management, Enforcement <p>3. Capacities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Human resources, Infrastructure, Funding <p>4. Continuum of care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promotion, Prevention, Response <p>5. Process of care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identification, reporting, Referral, investigation, Assessment, treatment, follow-up <p>6. Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Data collection, Quality standards, Research, analysis, communication
	<p>United Nations</p>	<p>Child protection systems comprise the set of laws,</p>	<p>Interconnected elements that work individually and</p>

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
	Children's Fund (20 May 2008) UNICEF Child Protection Strategy (E/ICEF/2008/5/Rev.1)	<p>policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors — especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice — to support prevention and response to protection related risks.</p> <p>The above definition has been expanded over time based on further work on child protection systems by UNICEF. This is reflected in the two documents below.</p>	<p>collectively to strengthen protection and reduce vulnerability:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governmental commitment to fulfilling protection rights 2. Legislation and enforcement 3. Attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviour and practices 4. Open discussion, including the engagement of media and civil society 5. Children's life skills, knowledge and participation 6. Capacity of those in contact with the child (specifically families, community members, teachers, health and social workers and police) to protect children 7. Basic and targeted Services 8. Monitoring and oversight
World Vision International	World Vision International (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A	A child protection system is a set of coordinated formal and informal elements working together to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence against children.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Laws, policies, standards and regulations 2. Services and service delivery mechanisms 3. Capacities to provide and perform the child protection services, including capacity building,

Agency	Publication	Definition	Components of the CP system
	World Vision Discussion Paper	<p>Where <i>formal elements</i> are established or sanctioned by the government and guided by laws, regulations and policies.</p> <p><i>Informal elements</i> do not have state/government mandates for protective functions. Instead, they are shaped by attitudes, values, behaviours, social norms and traditional practices in society. The boundaries between formal and informal elements will depend on the particular country context.</p> <p>The main aims of a systems approach are to strengthen the protective nature of the environment around children and to strengthen children themselves, in order to ensure their well being and fulfil their rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence. A systems approach to child protection also integrates and connects advocacy, humanitarian emergency and long-term development programming while working at all levels of the ecology of the child.</p>	<p>human and financial resources, and adequate infrastructure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Cooperation, coordination and collaboration mechanisms 5. Accountability mechanisms 6. Circle of care includes positive and protective attitudes, values, behaviours and traditional practices; and a caring, supportive and protective immediate social environment 7. Children’s resilience, life skills and participation

ANNEX III:

Full list of considerations

i. Know and understand the context and any systems within the context

Understand the context:

- There are always systems for preventing and responding to child protection in any given location – be they child, family, community, NGO, or State level responses, what are they in this context? Are the systems different at different levels?
 - These responses may or may not be resourced, effective, in the best interests of the child, in line with international standards, etc. How are they being resourced at different levels? How well are they functioning? Do they meet the needs of children? Are they having a positive impact on the child? Are some of them excluding certain groups of children?
- What are the sociocultural norms and beliefs with regards to child protection/welfare?
- What are the cultural norms and beliefs with regards to the definition of a child, and children's role, position, and activities within society?
- What is under stress in the current emergency context, are there any fundamental belief/social dynamics likely to change?
- Is this a situation where two contexts coincide? For example when there are refugees in a host community, two or more sets of refugees from different countries of origin, or displaced people in a culturally contrasting host community we need to understand both the context of where they are now, and where they came from
- Is there the possibility of repatriation, resettlement, relocation or some other form of planned movement (for example refugees who are in transit to another location)? What is the impact of the context, and thus the child protection system, that children and their families may move to in the future? And how will we prepare them for this so as to reduce risks and prevent concerns arising. This is especially the case for internally displaced people, refugee, or asylum seeking children.
- What predictable changes and challenges should we prepare for that may impact the way child protection system(s) are working in this context, such as elections, economic shocks, market changes, recurring natural disasters,

escalations in violence, among others?

Understand the systems in this context:

- What systems existed before the emergency and what exists now?
- What are child protection systems at all levels doing to protect children?
 - How and in what ways have systems changed?
 - What components, structures, functions, and mechanisms of child protection systems existed at what levels before and after the emergency? How are they meant to interconnect? How do they interconnect in reality?
 - What still exists and what has been weakened or destroyed? What was introduced during the emergency? How have the interconnections between the components, structures, functions, and mechanisms changed?
 - What networks, working groups, interagency structures exist? How are they functioning in reality?
 - Who was and is playing a leading role in coordinating the systems or leading on community level action?
- What are child protection systems at all levels doing to protect children? What do children want us to do to protect them and help their families? Is there a gap between the two?
 - What are the perspectives and motives of the different actors within the system? How are the various actors conceptualising the child protection system?
 - How are actors defining the child protection system? What are perceived as the boundaries of the system?
- What are the goals of child protection systems in this location?
 - Are the goals of any child protection systems documented? Are they agreed across agencies and actors at the various levels of the system? Are the goals at the various levels the same? Have international humanitarian actors understood and adopted the same goal as those who are engaging in long-term child protection programming?
 - How are the different motivations of the different actors influencing their behaviour?
 - What does the goal of the system need to be as a result of the emergency?
 - Is there a gap between children's expectations, and agencies' expectations

and the goal? Is there a gap between the different agencies' goals?¹⁶⁹

- When there is a gap, how can you contribute to reaching consensus? Or if this is not possible, how may actors operate so as to make sure the variation in goals does not undermine the various actors' work, and the ability to meet the needs of children?
- What components of child protection systems existed at what levels before the emergency? (Leadership, effective coordination structures, legal and policy frameworks, regulation, minimum standards, and oversight, monitoring and evaluation, accountability, and learning mechanisms, funding and budget, continuum of services)?
 - For example were there competing and different forms of legislation at the national, district and local levels? At what level were they known and enforced? At what levels within the child protection system were they operational? What is their measure of effectiveness? How effective were they?
- How do the components interconnect?
 - Have international standards and guidelines been adapted to the context?
 - How are they meant to interconnect? How do they interconnect in reality?
 - What agreed and documented processes and procedures exist for coordination and case referral? Are these documented processes and procedures the way in which things are being done in reality, are they put into practice? Were the policies and procedure designed in a contextually appropriate manner? Do they respond to the local norms, beliefs, and practices?
 - What are the relationships between actors within the system? What is the history of those relationships? How do actors reach agreements on ways of working? What level of agreement or discord is there with regards to:
 - Defining the child protection systems present – components, interconnections, boundaries, and goals?
 - The impact of the emergency?
 - The challenges and opportunities within the system?
 - How do you ensure an acceptance and respect for different perspectives across all stakeholders? What role can you play in ensuring openness to

¹⁶⁹ The gaps can be multiple and of different nature, for example policies and laws may exist that are totally unrealistic for the context given the normative framework, values and beliefs of the population. Or there may be a gap in objectives between the national child protection actors and the existing systems and international humanitarian actors expectations of the systems.

compromise?

- How do interconnections operate at the different levels? Are all levels of the system integrated into the overall system? Are there clear links and systems for collaboration between the different levels within the system? Are different levels interconnected? And what is the strongest connection and why? Are there levels which are weakly connected to the rest of the system and why?
- What networks, working groups, interagency structures exist? What are their official responsibilities and how are they effectively functioning?
- Who was and is playing a leading role in coordinating the system? At which level are they operating? How do others view their leadership role within the system?
- What strengthening efforts were already taking place? How have communities been responding to emergencies, and can these activities be supported?
 - What are understood as child protection system strengthening actions in the setting? Can the different actors at all levels agree? Can they jointly establish priorities and leverage points for strengthening? Can you jointly agree how to measure accomplishment of strengthening actions?
 - Was there a national, district or local level mapping of child protection systems prior to the emergency?
- Are there individuals you can identify to brief you on the systems key characteristics, entry points, and challenges? Can you make time to review at least the executive summary of any existing child protection system mapping documents?
- What are the in-country funding mechanisms for services promoting, preventing, and responding to child protection? What funding sources does the State draw upon? What humanitarian funding may pre-existing actors have access to? How are communities funding their activities?
- What are the perspectives and motives of the different actors – from children, parents, families and communities, to government and UN agencies, and local and international NGOs? What are the power relationships between actors?
- How do socio-cultural norms influence perceptions of different ethnic, racial, social, political, economic, religious, linguistic, gender, or other marginalised group (such as those with specific gender identity, disabilities, refugee status, IDPs, etc.)?
- Has the emergency created or identified gaps in any of the systems across all sectors ensuring the protection of children? For example are refugee children excluded from certain services? Are certain locations under-served by the

education and health systems? Are communities too stretched to provide traditional supports? Or has displacement eroded community cohesion?

ii. Recognise, acknowledge, and understand the full range of actors operating to achieve the goal of protecting children

Understand any possible bias:

- Are actors at the different levels, all the way from the State to the community, representative of the diversity of interests among the population you are looking to serve? What are their perspectives? Do they show a bias to certain children over and above others? Do they exclude certain groups of children? This includes the need to understand any bias among your own staff and partners.
- Are they aware and recognising the needs of the diverse children within the setting (those of different genders; abilities; from different religious, socioeconomic, linguistic, political, racial, or ethnic groups; migrants, displaced, refugees; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex; infants, toddlers, younger or older children and adolescents)?

Place the child and their family at the centre of the child protection system strengthening efforts:¹⁷⁰

- What are children's perceptions with regards to the main risks, threats, and concerns they face? What do children do when they face certain threats and risks? How would their conceptualisation of child protection issues differ from the conceptualisation of other actors?
- Is there sufficient direct collaboration and communication with children and their families?
 - Have children and their families been engaged in processes to communicate about the child protection concerns they face? How much are children empowered to provide feedback on the quality, accessibility and appropriateness of services? How often are children consulted on local, regional and national government legislation, policies and resource allocations?
 - What child friendly feedback and complaints mechanisms exist? How much are children involved in monitoring and evaluation efforts?

¹⁷⁰ Munro, Eileen (May 2011) The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A child centred system

- What are families and children doing to avoid, prevent or respond to child protection problems? Can we do more to strengthen these mechanisms?
- What do children do when they face child protection concerns? Who do they go to when they have concerns? Who do they feel most comfortable talking to about the problems they face? What actions do they take?
- What, if any, are the points of entry into existing child protection systems (points where children report concerns themselves, where children are identified, or where they are referred into child protection systems)? Which factors about the child protection systems pose a challenge for them? What is suitable and appropriate in a way that makes children feel at ease? Can we step into their shoes for a day to understand the processes they have to go through to address their needs?
- Why would a child and their family use or not use the child protection systems available to them?
- What are children's real life experiences of any identified child protection systems? What are their experiences of formal child protection systems? What are their experiences of more informal protection systems?
- What help actually reaches children and their families? What help do children and their families receive most consistently when they have problems? (From any source – extended family, community, society, local, district and regional level organisations, government services, non-government actors, among others)? What response services are available to children and their families?
- Which children are accessing the child protection systems? Which children are being excluded or are less well served? Are there existing barriers to access for certain populations, such as physical obstructions, linguistic or legislative restrictions, etc.? Are certain groups of children less well served by the system or not taken into account? For example refugee, stateless, asylum seeking children, those with disabilities or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender children. Are certain child protection issues overlooked?
- What are other actors' in child protection systems expectations of the child? What do they assume children would and should do if they confront child protection concerns? Does this match with the reality?
- What protective mechanisms exist at the level of the family? This includes parental response, and extended family actions to child protection needs. Can we do more to strengthen the response mechanisms at the level of the child, and within the family? Many children will discuss the challenges they face either with

family members, peers, or members of their community before they go to someone officially assigned the responsibility to address child protection concerns. How can child-to-child and peer-to-peer communication methods help system strengthening programmes?

Recognise the role and importance of community:

- Who is part of the community? How do individual children and families fit within the wider community?
- What is the community's role in caring for children? What protective elements – groups, organisations, and individuals – exist at the community level? Religious, traditional, and customary leaders, community-based organisations, teachers, police, health workers etc.
- What is being done to acknowledge and collaborate with the communities' actions to protect children?
- How can you support the connection with, support and respect for often overlooked actors within the community level of the system, such as children, extended family, community groups, traditional, customary, and religious leaders?
- What segments of the system are community groups aware of and interacting with? Is it possible to ask community groups to map out gaps or links in child protection systems from their perspective?

Work with those operating in systems outside of the child protection sector

- How do existing child protection systems link with other systems? Especially those that may have responsibilities for or contribute to protecting children, depending on the context this may include those in the education, asylum, health, and justice systems. Is there collaboration with other sectors' systems?
- How is child protection integrated into other essential systems that contribute to children's protection, such as the health, education, justice, or refugee protection systems?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the different sectors that contribute to protecting children? For example, what protection promotion, prevention and response actions are actors from within the education, health, and asylum systems leading on? Are these roles, responsibilities and the division of labour clear? Are they documented? Are they adhered to at all levels of the system?
- Has the emergency created or identified gaps in any of the systems across all

sectors ensuring the protection of children? For example, does the presence of a new refugee population indicate the need for collaborative action between the national child protection system, the humanitarian system, and the relevant government Ministry – with key action on behalf of UNHCR? Are certain locations now under served by the education system as schools have closed, or by the health system as hospitals have closed? How have the roles and responsibilities changed since the emergency?

iii. **Examine the position and role of your agency and of all international humanitarian actors within the system**

Understand the role of international humanitarian actors within the child protection system:

- What is the role of international humanitarian actors? How may they strengthen or weaken the system?
 - Which levels and with what components have international child protection humanitarian or development actors worked with in the past? Are there gaps? Can/should the range of levels and or components be expanded? If so, how, and why?
 - What role does the international humanitarian community play in establishing or supporting interconnections between components and levels? Has the humanitarian system created challenges or opportunities for the national child protection system's interconnections?
- How do humanitarian actors link with or support system leadership?
 - Who is playing a leading role? What may the humanitarian community do to support this? What can your organisation do to contribute?
 - How do you ensure that humanitarian actors do not take over leadership, pushing out local actors?
 - How will you ensure that the humanitarian system contributes to the existing systems, and respects what exists rather than dominating, duplicating, or ignoring existing structures and mechanisms?
 - Is it possible to harmonise the way in which international actors engage with the different components and different levels of the child protection system(s)? It is possible to harmonise the way in which they provide support

(resources, training, among others)?¹⁷¹

- How do other actors within the system perceive humanitarian actors?
- How may humanitarian actors contribute to systems strengthening?
- How do other actors – from family and community all the way to State actors and regional bodies – within the existing systems perceive humanitarian actors?
- What power differentials are there between humanitarian actors and others within systems present? How may the balance of power influence relationships and ways of working?

Understand your own organisation's role within the child protection system:

- What are your own paradigms and pre-conceived ideas that may limit your ability to understand systems and actors in new contexts?
- What role has your organisation played within systems before the humanitarian event? What role has it played since the emergency (whether it was present before the event or established after)? What are others' expectations of your organisation? How does your organisation's work relate and link to the contribution of others?
- What are others' expectations of the organisation you work for? What is your expectation of others within the system (the State, local NGOs, CBOs, religious leaders, families, and children...)?
- What role is there for your own agency within the system and in contributing to system strengthening efforts since the emergency?
 - What role can you play in protecting children directly? What is the added value of your organisation's presence? And how can this be integrated into the existing system in the most positive way?
 - What are the ways in which your presence may weaken the system? How may these issues be avoided?
- Who are the staff working for your organisation? Are they representative of the population and children you are working with?
 - What culture, language, ethnic, socioeconomic, political, and religious, ability, or other groups within society do they and should they represent? What can you do to understand the background of your own staff so as to recognise any bias in their perception of the child protection system(s) and

¹⁷¹ Alyson Eynon and Sarah Lilley (2010) Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies Through Community-Based Mechanisms: A Discussion Paper, Save the Children on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group

- limitations to their role within the system(s)
 - What skills do your staff team have in working with communities?
 - Is it possible that the team you have would reinforce discrimination in any way?
 - Do your staff have the necessary soft skills to collaborate and work respectfully with actors at various levels within the system?
 - Where are the staff you are recruiting coming from? Are you weakening State, local or community based structures by recruiting all their most qualified staff? Do your benefits packages distort or effect local salary scales?
- Are there key staff you may retain or employ in senior positions to guide the work who have a good understanding of the context and the system(s)? Who may even already part of the system themselves and have existing relationships with other components within the system?
 - Not all long-term staff operating at certain levels within any systems will have a positive impact or relationship within the systems. How will you confirm their role within the systems before taking this approach?

iv. **Take a more systems-led approach**

Take a long-term view

- How can you plan and implement programmes in a way that looks beyond a short emergency response timeframe? What systems can you build in to your plans for linking with long-term pre-existing, in-country programming, strengthening plans and strategies?
- What actions can be put in place to prevent future possible child protection concerns from arising?
- Do monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning mechanisms take a long-term perspective into account? Are you building an evidence base that allows for longitudinal study and reflection? What monitoring and evaluation benchmarks, milestones, and indicators on the systems functioning may be collected and used to measure change over the longer term?
- How will you maintain funding to deliver your organisation's strategy? Short term grants that cover discrete periods of time: immediate response to transition/ early recovery and development phase may not last long enough to strengthen the system in a sustainable way.

- How can staffing structures avoid assigning responsibilities based on specific needs or for specific phases?
 - Are international humanitarian organisations able to restructure their staffing such that the same individual or team provides technical support and programming oversight over the whole continuum?
 - Is it possible to avoid full substitution of staff in a location, keeping staff that are familiar and already working with the child protection system(s)?
 - If this is not possible, how can child protection humanitarian responders collaborate with staff responsible for programming and coordination across different timeframes within the humanitarian continuum – preparedness, response, recovery and transition into development?
- Is it possible to predict, understand and prepare for certain frequently confronted challenges, or changes that may occur after an emergency? Those that are specific to the context, but also those identified in other contexts, for example:
 - Staff turnover in government, civil service, and NGO positions
 - Political change
 - Restricted funding timeframes or funding shortfalls
 - Further emergency events
 - Donor requirements that place emphasis on results within a short time frame
- What is the organisation’s exit strategy? How will programming initiatives be phased out or handed over to long-term actors? What actions should be made sustainable, and how? Actors need to consider phase out and exit strategies right from the outset of the response.

Adopt a flexible and innovative approach to deciding on the programmatic activities

- Are you able to identify context specific solutions in addition to adapting activities based on good practice elsewhere?¹⁷²
- Is it possible to take an incremental approach, trying out interventions on a small scale, learning from them and then adapting them?¹⁷³
- Are your monitoring and evaluation systems adapted to allow for continuous monitoring, learning, and feedback?
 - Are staff within and across agencies open about failings and sharing lessons

¹⁷² Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

¹⁷³ Bowman, Kimberly, John Chettleborough, Helen Jeans, Jo Rowlands and James Whitehead (2015) Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam programme staff

learnt, both good and bad, so that the system as a whole can advance towards its goal?

- Are there mechanisms in place for regular critical reflection, allowing a change in programming based on learning, outcomes, and changes in external circumstances?¹⁷⁴
- Are there complaints and feedback mechanisms in place that reach all the levels (from those working in other systems, the State, to community groups and children) within the system?

Recognise that a child protection system is complex and may respond to actions in an unpredictable way.

- Is it possible within your organisation and with the funding frameworks you have to take an iterative and learning approach to programme implementation? To pilot new ways of working. Monitor and evaluate the work on an ongoing basis. Revise strategies and plans as necessary. Recognising that the strategy developed at the outset may need adjusting on a regular basis.
- Is it possible to make time for review of existing context specific systems material, to gain an understanding, and ensure tailored programme plans? It may be best to develop flexible plans that allow for ongoing understanding, learning, trial and error, and refinement to activities.
- Are there opportunities for marginal gains? Small changes you can make in system functioning that may cost little to implement, that may lead to significant outcomes for children. For example drafting a new confidentiality policy and including this in staff training, to prevent the leaking of the identities of child survivors of sexual violence are less frequently leaked.

¹⁷⁴ Munro, Eileen (May 2011) The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A child-centred system Professor Eileen Munro