PRACTICE NOTE

Child Protection Systems Strengthening

This Practice Note provides guidance on how programming can support the strengthening of child protection systems in developing countries. It details the context, value added, and a common understanding to promote prevention and early intervention on child protection based on key considerations such as efficiency, accountability, and "do no harm."[1] Consistent with the evidence base, interventions to remove major barriers for enhanced protection are outlined, as are the means by which expected results and change can be monitored. This Practice Note outlines six principles identified in our programming that, through discussions with partners, we consider best practice in trying to bolster child protection.[2]

In recent years there has been renewed thinking about what is required to address protection risks to young children, girls, boys, and adolescents. This has seen a transformative shift to a **systems approach** to strengthen national protection frameworks, moving away from a focus on **single protection issues,** such as human trafficking, child labour, child soldiers and HIV/AIDS. Child protection systems seek to address the **spectrum of risk factors** girls and boys face in a variety of settings.[3]

A child protection system is a comprehensive and sustainable approach to address risks to overall child well-being, with a particular focus on preventing and responding to all forms of violence, exploitation, and harm against girls and boys to ensure they are safe and secure. This Practice Note describes a structured protection framework that orients the "**child protection system**" in terms of **eight key "building blocks"**: 1) political leadership, 2) policy framework, coordination, and ownership, 3) child protection information system, 4) child protection systems coverage, 5) child protection workforce, 6) financing system, 7) child participation and voice, and 8) public attitudes and values.

> *Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children—the most vulnerable citizens in any society—a life free from violence and fear. In order to ensure this, we must be tireless in our efforts not only to attain peace, justice, and prosperity for countries, but also for communities and members of the same family. We must address the roots of violence.*
>
> Nelson Mandela,
> in *World Report on Violence and Health*

This Practice Note draws extensively on the lessons learned by a community of practice, including country programs, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups. It is designed to be used in combination with other DFATD guidance documents including the *Gender Equality Action Plan, Children and Youth Strategy, Children and Youth Portfolio Review: Geographic Program Aid in Countries of Focus, and Children and Youth Protection Toolkit.*

Best Practice Programming Principles to Bolster Child Protection Systems

1. ***Context is critical for addressing risks and strengthening protective factors.*** While social norms and cultural practices are root causes of violence against children, violence manifests itself differently in different socio-cultural and political contexts, with key factors including the setting (conflict, humanitarian, or more stable situations), and the level at which the violence occurs (such as within families, in communities, or perpetuated by the state or in schools).[4]

2. ***The state has primary responsibility*** to fulfill, protect, and respect child rights, including legislation and policy mechanisms and enforcement consistent with international standards.

3. ***Holistic and multisectoral program approaches to promote prevention and early intervention*** are more likely to have impact.

4. ***Social change addressing behaviour and practices at all levels*** (including in families and communities) increases protective factors and minimizes risks.

5. ***Child and youth participation*** is "right in principle" and "right in practice."

6. ***Donor coordination to ensure global accountability*** for child protection, including through safeguarding policies, is a critical intervention.

The problem

Specific types of exploitation and abuse, particularly child labour, have to take into account contextual factors, including government legislation and policies, family and household dynamics, schooling, and formal/informal economies. It is important to understand that a child in difficult circumstances faces multiple risks. A victim of human trafficking is more likely to be a girl used for forced commercial sexual exploitation, rather a boy used for forced labour.

There is ample evidence that a single-issue approach focusing solely on child labour, for example, results in a fragmented response.[5] This includes significant inefficiencies, unintended consequences, and pockets of unmet needs for girls and boys.[6]

The effective safeguarding and care of children requires a coordinated and child-centred approach. It considers the best interests and views of the child, and it requires a holistic approach and gender-responsive manner[7] to assess appropriate child protection responses considering the child's engagement in a variety of settings, including the family, community, and school.[8] Overall, the systems approach increases coverage by serving all children with preventative initiatives and early intervention services to vulnerable children, while being capable of responding with targeted services to address the needs of at-risk children and families.[9] Building on the strength and resilience of local communities, families, and children is a key challenge moving forward. This links formal and informal structures such as families, communities, traditional leaders, and other local actors who have knowledge of endogenous practices.

The Children and Youth Strategy recognizes that investments in health, education, and other sectors cannot yield sustainable improvements in the lives of children and youth if protection and security issues are not addressed. Understanding the multidimensional nature of childhood vulnerability[10] and severe poverty to include deprivations in health, education, and standard of living is key to addressing protection risk.[11] This includes best practices and lessons learned to address harmful traditional cultural practices, such as child and early forced marriage.

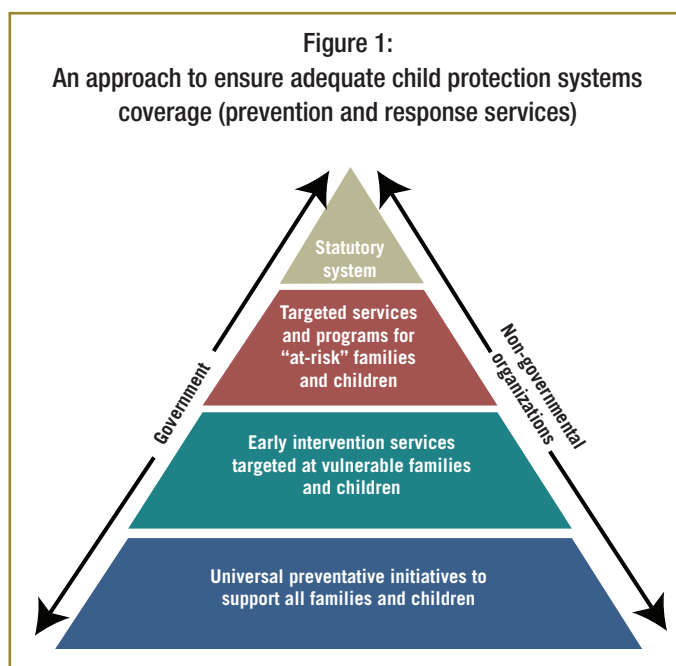## Toward a common understanding on child protection systems

Work in developing countries to improve the quality and performance of child welfare and child protection systems has benefited from the practices in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD–DAC) countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. This has included lessons learned when public attention has turned the spotlight onto the death of a child having "fallen through the cracks," resulting in public inquiries to reform the system.[12]

To ensure the safety, security, and well-being of children, Canada and other country governments mandate departments with the legal responsibility to protect children.[13] For example, from a legislative and policy perspective, governments seek to ensure the delivery of early intervention service, with thresholds triggering statutory involvement to support "a child in need of protection" and "a child at risk." This includes standardized practices to assess "risks" and "needs" at all stages of child protection involvement (see Figure 1).[14]

In a broader international context, following the World Health Organization's launch of the 2002 *World Report on Violence and Health*, there has been a series of global public health reports on violence, including violence against women and children. These started to shine a light on

Figure 1:
An approach to ensure adequate child protection systems coverage (prevention and response services)

Statutory system

Targeted services and programs for "at-risk" families and children

Early intervention services targeted at vulnerable families and children

Universal preventative initiatives to support all families and children

Government

Non-governmental organizations

the pervasiveness and broad socio-economic implications of violence, including child maltreatment and sexual violence. Other actors, including the International Labour Organization, have studied the economic costs and benefits to society of eliminating child labour exploitation so that girls and boys have increased opportunities to enjoy their childhood, play, learn and prepare for a decent working life as adults and parents.[15]

The 2006 *World Report on Violence Against Children* recommended that "all States develop a multifaceted and systematic framework in response to violence, exploitation and abuse against children, which is integrated into national planning processes." This was followed shortly thereafter with the launch of UNICEF's Child Protection Strategy.

The need to develop a "common understanding" of child protection systems became an important prerequisite for moving international child protection efforts forward. Work contracted by UNICEF to Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago in 2009 resulted in a clear conceptual framework.[16] This work continues to guide interagency collaboration, including key actors such as UNICEF, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision, ChildFund, Harvard University, Columbia University, Child Frontiers, Maestral International, World Bank, Terre des Hommes, the former AusAID and United States Agency for International Development.

To date there have been two regional conferences on child protection systems that have made significant contributions to forging a consensus on a collective agenda for work on child protection systems. In May 2012 the Conference on Child Protection Systems Strengthening in Sub-Saharan Africa took place in Dakar, Senegal. The goal of the conference was to reinforce, support, and sustain national efforts to improve the impact of child protection systems on children in sub-Saharan Africa through cross-country exchange, dialogue, and learning on effective systems strengthening approaches and practices. The conference was organized by the African Child Policy Forum, Terre des Hommes, Plan International, Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative, Regional Inter Agency Task Team on Children & AIDS, Save the Children, World Vision International, and UNICEF, with support from Oak Foundation and others. In April 2013 some of the organizers of this conference issued a joint interagency statement on *Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Call to Action.*

In November 2012 the conference A Better Way to Protect All Children: The Theory and Practice of Child Protection Systems took place in Delhi, India. The conference brought together more than 130 policy makers, academics, practitioners, and other experts to consolidate lessons learned about the development and reform of child protection systems, explore new ideas, and outline an agenda for future work on child protection systems. The conference was organized by UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, and World Vision.

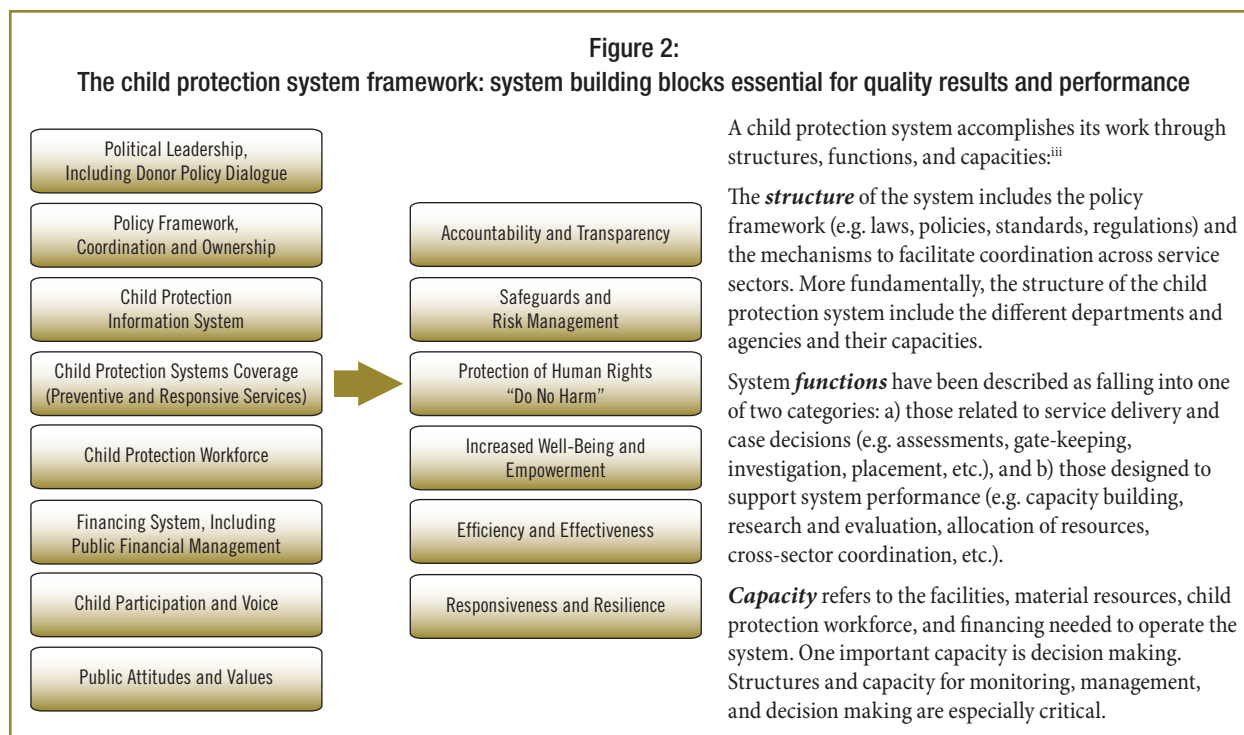## Key building blocks for child protection systems

Giving increased attention to the strengthening of social systems—such as the public health and education sectors—would not be sustainable in the absence of a sound understanding of the theory of social change to track progress and performance, evaluate impact, and ensure accountability at country and global levels.

Based on the lessons learned from the governance of the health system, this Practice Note describes a structured protection framework that orients the "child protection system" in terms of eight key building blocks (See Figure 2).[17]

A chief purpose of the protection framework is to promote a common understanding of what constitutes child protection systems strengthening. It also provides a means of assessing where there are gaps in support. If it is proposed that the country system to protect children's needs be strengthened, then it is essential to be clear about the barriers, where and why investments are needed, what will happen as a result, and by what means change can be monitored.[18]

Programming to strengthen the child protection system can mean addressing one of the key building blocks or several at once. For example, it is possible to focus exclusively on expanding systems coverage (i.e. prevention and response services) targeted to address child and early forced marriage, child labour, or the human trafficking of girls and boys. Alternatively, this work might benefit from complementary investments to other building blocks, for example, to tackle barriers related to negative public attitudes or the lack of legislation, policies, and regulations to address a child protection issue.

Key program entry points for inserting a systems approach into issues include: Sexual and gender violence and harmful traditional practices; community, school, and domestic violence; protection from exploitation, including child labour and trafficking; special protection and violence in the justice and security sector; environmental health protection, including in agriculture and mining; violence in (post-) conflict and emergency situations; and equality of opportunity and special measures including for participation

Figure 2:
The child protection system framework: system building blocks essential for quality results and performance

| Political Leadership, Including Donor Policy Dialogue |
| Policy Framework, Coordination and Ownership |
| Child Protection Information System |
| Child Protection Systems Coverage (Preventive and Responsive Services) |
| Child Protection Workforce |
| Financing System, Including Public Financial Management |
| Child Participation and Voice |
| Public Attitudes and Values |

| Accountability and Transparency |
| Safeguards and Risk Management |
| Protection of Human Rights "Do No Harm" |
| Increased Well-Being and Empowerment |
| Efficiency and Effectiveness |
| Responsiveness and Resilience |

A child protection system accomplishes its work through structures, functions, and capacities:[iii]

The **structure** of the system includes the policy framework (e.g. laws, policies, standards, regulations) and the mechanisms to facilitate coordination across service sectors. More fundamentally, the structure of the child protection system include the different departments and agencies and their capacities.

System **functions** have been described as falling into one of two categories: a) those related to service delivery and case decisions (e.g. assessments, gate-keeping, investigation, placement, etc.), and b) those designed to support system performance (e.g. capacity building, research and evaluation, allocation of resources, cross-sector coordination, etc.).

Capacity refers to the facilities, material resources, child protection workforce, and financing needed to operate the system. One important capacity is decision making. Structures and capacity for monitoring, management, and decision making are especially critical.

and decision making.[19] Such entry points provide opportunities to engage on issues with the public, to garner political leadership, to gather data and information, and to start to secure financing—all of which can be catalytic to start to change the discourse on the child protection system writ large.

Other DFATD program opportunities for investments include adding thematic emphasis to child protection (i.e. the third path of the Children and Youth Strategy) when already programming in the health or education sector. For example, investments in maternal, newborn, and child health might be complemented with activities to ensure universal access to birth registration as an early intervention service to vulnerable children. Programming to ensure increased completion of a quality basic education by girls and boys might see added activities to ensure schools are safe and secure and child-friendly, gender-responsive places for learning.

Using a holistic, multisectoral approach to address child and early forced marriage can help address root causes. Combined interventions in health, education, social services, governance, and civil society are better suited to achieve expected outcomes, such as the delivery of comprehensive services, the empowerment of women and girls, and changing on social norms. There are opportunities to enhance the efficiencies and rollout of public health programs that are targeted to young women by including parenting and violence prevention programs, as well as awareness raising about harmful social norms.

The benefit of applying child protection systems thinking to project development is that it recognizes that child protection needs are inherently complex and mired in ineffective responses. Experience with reforms of the United Kingdom's child protection system (i.e. the Munro Review of Child Protection[20]) provides the evidence base for this approach. The Munro Review showed repeated reports of concerns about child well-being failing to trigger an adequate assessment of the harm they were suffering.

In particular, the Munro Review identified the need for greater focus on "Strengthening accountabilities and creating a learning system" so that the child protection system becomes better at monitoring, learning, and adapting as a key priority in moving forward. The Government of the United Kingdom's response to the Munro Review acknowledges that the child protection system "is characterized by recognizing … that risk and uncertainty are features of the system where risk can never be eliminated but where it can be managed smarter."[21]

Eight Key Building Blocks of a Structured Protection Framework: A Guide to Plan Interventions to Remove Major Barriers for Enhanced Child Protection

- **<u>Political leadership, including donor policy dialogue,</u> involves ensuring global and country accountability and oversight combined with the selection of responses that are nationally or locally selected, with strong legitimacy and leadership at a high level.**

Political leadership that champions child protection both inside the government and with the public is catalytic to direct attention to violations of child protection, including violence against women and children. Key country accountability mechanisms to ensure oversight of policy formulation include parliamentary bodies, ombudspersons, or other bodies such as civil society organizations and national coalitions for child rights. The political system includes rule making and top-level executive actors in the public sphere at various levels, including villages, with some being formal and some informal. Country policy dialogue by donors is a central function of Canada's development cooperation, and is an important element in raising issues affecting children and youth, including for the post-2015 development framework. Donor coordination and joint policy dialogue in countries can help leverage existing political leadership on child rights protection, including harmful practices against children, such as child and early forced marriage, and violence against women.[22]

> *A recent evaluation of the Colombia program noted that Canada plays a crucial leadership role in donor coordination and lauded Canada's achievements in helping the Government of Colombia develop "policies that entrench child human rights protection and in fostering youth-led peacebuilding activities."*
>
> DFATD (2013), Colombia Country Program Evaluation 2006–2011

Example indicators:

- extent to which there are parliamentary or other oversight bodies on child protection with clear mandates and regular meetings;[v] and

- proportion of received complaints on all forms of violence against children investigated and adjudicated by the national human rights institution or ombudsperson, and the proportion of these responded to effectively by the government.

- **Policy framework, coordination, and ownership** includes the country's public policy management system for child protection, the effectiveness of policy coordination and country ownership of strategies to tackle child protection issues.

Examples of implementation mechanisms demonstrating **country ownership** include the existence of a national policy statement, country framework document, or national plans of actions on specific child protection issues (such as violence against children, the worst forms of child labour, or the protection of orphans and vulnerable children).

The **policy framework** (legislation, policies, and programs) includes some measure of the extent to which a country has ratified international conventions for child rights protection. This is an important indicator to assess the state's commitment to meetings its human rights obligations. However, these should be coupled with domestic policies and institutions charged with bringing into effect these commitments. A statutory child protection system needs a clear regulatory framework to ensure the best interests of children are protected. As is the case with Canada's child welfare system, this includes clear minimum standards governing the operation of alternative care options such as children's institutions; fostering and adoption; national standards; and the professionalization, licensing, and regulation of child protection service providers.

In Ukraine, DFATD is involved in a Juvenile Justice Reform project (Project Z020624-002 – 2010–2015) that will help to establish a more effective and responsive juvenile justice system, in keeping with international standards. The program is working with Ukrainian legislators, law enforcement agencies, and the court system to move away from incarcerating adolescents for relatively minor crimes toward crime prevention, probation, and rehabilitation. More than 471 judges and other judicial stakeholders have been trained in how Canadian models and other best practices for youth justice can be applied.

Government coordination is a key intervention to enhance the institutional capacity of the state. Quality prevention, monitoring, and response to violence against children requires coordination of relevant services, both within the child protection sector itself and with other sectors such as health, social welfare, education, and justice. Government departments must clearly understand their roles and responsibilities for the delivery of statutory child protection services.

A permanent secretary for the Ministry of Women and Child Development can play an important role to tackle the barriers to effective inter-ministerial coordination and to intervene by putting in place a country framework on child protection. Inter-ministerial mechanisms—as those that are in place within the Government of Canada to coordinate on child rights, trafficking, and child sex tourism—and subnational bodies that meet regularly can increase the performance of the child protection system. There are unique challenges to strengthen child protection systems in highly decentralized governance systems and in contexts where community-based practices and violence against children derive from custom.

Example indicators:

- extent to which the state has ratified relevant United Nations conventions and protocols germane to child rights protection and exploitation;[iv]

- extent to which domestic mechanisms give effect to international instruments ratified by the country (including a national plan of action on specific issues);[v]

- extent of policy coordination for child protection[v] (includes establishing an inter-ministerial council on trafficking to coordinate prevention efforts);

- time frame and coverage of policy to eliminate sexual exploitation, harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child early forced marriage OR time frame and coverage of specific legislation on community and domestic violence[iv] OR time frame and coverage of legislation, policies and regulations (including teachers codes of conduct) that address corporal punishment and/or sexual abuse in schools;[iv]

- legally stipulated minimum age for marriage;[iv] and

- minimum age for employment by occupation type.

- **A well-functioning child protection information system** ensures that up-to-date information necessary for effective child protection programming is collected, used, stored, and shared, with full respect for confidentiality, to support key elements of the child protection response, including case management and situation monitoring.

Understanding the magnitude, characteristics, and trends of child protection problems is a crucial first step in developing effective and appropriate child protection programs. It is important to have the statistical capacity to accumulate data on the prevalence of individual child protection issues. Similarly, it is important to collect sex- and age-disaggregated data to show the long-term impact of child protection problems, including social and economic costs.

Although large-scale household surveys are important sources of data on child protection, they are not suitable to monitor the prevalence and incidence of certain particularly sensitive or illegal issues. UNICEF supports the collection of nationally representative data on child protection through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)—one of the world's largest sources of internationally comparable data on child protection, both in terms of the range of child protection issues covered, as well as the number of countries with available

In South Africa, DFATD is supporting the National Department of Social Development's Child Protection Surveillance Project (2008–2014). This is a national research study on child abuse, neglect, and exploitation to be conducted in partnership with the provinces, key child protection NGOs, and national departments. The data and analysis generated is to be translated into more targeted, effective, and evidence-based responses to the problems of child abuse in South Africa. The project will create linkages among child protection stakeholders and inform policy development, programming, and advocacy for the protection of children, especially girls and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

data. This includes data on birth registration, child labour, child and early marriage, violent discipline, FGM/C, child disability, and attitudes toward domestic violence.[23] Other key surveys include those by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Demographic and Health Surveys, International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC surveys), and national surveys on related issues.

Example indicators:

- extent to which child protection data is disaggregated by age, ethnicity, gender, and disability status;[iii,v]

- extent to which survey data on children at risk and in need of protection is used in the policy process;[v] and

- extent to which source data are soundly based for capturing required information on child protection.[v]

- **Good child protection systems coverage is measured in terms of its capacity to address the full spectrum of risks to which children are exposed, from universal prevention initiatives (such as birth registration), to targeted early intervention and protection response services for vulnerable and at-risk families and children.**

This includes a mechanism in the child protection system to ensure quality, access, and efficiency in service delivery, such as surveillance, gatekeeping, and referrals. It also includes inspection and quality assurance for social welfare services, labour, and juvenile justice.

DFATD's Key Performance Indicator to measure child protection system coverage is the "Number of vulnerable girls and boys reached with child protection services." This is a consolidated indicator created from investment-level indicators that are clustered together with other related indicators (a family of indicators) to form one indicator that will allow the aggregation of related data for use at higher or broader levels such as at the program, branch or corporate level.

Prevention and early intervention services seek to cover both immediate and root causes, such as poverty, discrimination, conflict, gender, poor parenting, parental death or chronic illness, family separation, an unsafe physical environment, and local cultural beliefs and practices. These services include, as examples, birth registration, awareness raising with children and adults on key protection issues, children's clubs and committees, social-protection measures including cash transfers, community education and awareness programs, parenting programs, maternal and child health services, formal and non-formal education, mental health/psychosocial services, and Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives.

Protection response services are aimed at reducing the impact of system failures and supporting recovery. Response services vary significantly depending upon the nature of the protection failure and include drop-in centres; night schools and vocational training; life skills training; Child Help Lines; placement services; emergency shelters; reintegration services, including disarmament, demobilization and, reintegration for child soldiers; family tracing and reunification services; removal from hazardous or the worst forms of labour; treatment and rehabilitation services; prosecution and legal action; child-friendly spaces; and support to child-led organizations and community-based child protection mechanisms/groups.

In terms of best practices on child protection systems coverage, *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Assistance* has been accepted as a companion to the Sphere Handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*. The new child protection standard, which has the financial backing of the Government of Canada, reflects the growing emphasis on quality standards and accountability within the humanitarian sector. The document formally identifies 26 standards to 1) ensure a quality child protection response, 2) address child protection needs, 3) develop adequate child protection strategies, and 4) mainstream child protection in other humanitarian sectors.

Example indicators:

- number/proportion of referrals of at-risk children and youth by NGOs, social services, religious organizations;

- number of children and youth supported with community child-friendly spaces;

- number/percentage of child victims (survivors of violence, including trafficking and sexual/labour exploitation) who used recovery, reintegration, or psychological support services during a 12-month period;

- number/percentage of children (and women) accessing child protection services in humanitarian action (including family tracing and foster care for separated children, assistance for children demobilized from armed groups, services for victims of gender-based violence, psychosocial support, and life skills programs);[ii]

- number/percentage of children and youth enrolled in gender-sensitive psychosocial activities (including children affected by HIV/AIDS, unaccompanied children, those without parental care, children who have been sexually/physically abused, trafficked, etc.);

- number of perpetrators of violence against women and/or children arrested, adjudicated, convicted, and serving sentences; and

- number/proportion of children in contact with the law benefiting from adequate access to a (new) specialized juvenile justice system, including juvenile justice services, programs and/or practices, including extrajudicial/alternative measures to divert children away from proceedings and into rehabilitation.[ii]

- **A well-performing child protection workforce is one that recognizes that the quality of the relationship between the practitioner and a child or young person is essential for a good outcome, with the right practitioner in place at the time ensuring that the best interests of the child or young person are met.**

The child protection workforce covers public service management systems and personnel management for public employees working on child protection, professional qualifications and standards, strategies for staff recruitment/retention, training

Australia's Child Protection Policy (2008) for international assistance is an example of best practice including a zero-tolerance of child exploitation and abuse in the delivery of Australia's overseas aid program and shared responsibility for child protection. AusAID was the first bilateral donor and Commonwealth agency to implement such a policy. The policy takes a risk-management approach, and applies to all staff, as well as contractors, civil society organizations, multilateral organizations, and bilateral donor partners that were funded by the organization. The policy includes mandatory standards, education, and training for staff, including codes of conduct signed by all staff, and internal/external compliance management.

and performance evaluation, and codes of conduct for staff. While it recognized that there is much diversity in the way in which child protection systems are organized, there is starting to emerge a consensus that key indicators include the "overall size of civil service/public sector staff with responsibility for child protection" (all social workers across all ministries, qualified and unqualified, benchmarked against the size of the child population). Furthermore, international standards to protect children in justice (e.g. children in formal care, children involved in or victims of crime, child victims of forced labour/trafficking, etc.) recognize that there needs to be specialized human resources dedicated to children and justice, including department staff, police personnel, prison personnel, social workers, probation personnel, and psychologists.

Example indicators:

- overall size of civil service/public sector staff with responsibility for child protection (all social workers across all ministries, qualified and unqualified) OR number of professionally trained social workers per 10,000 people in the population;[v]

- human resources dedicated to children and justice;[v]

- proportion of teaching staff trained against the use of physical violence against children;

- extent to which girls and boys with urgent child protection needs receive age- and culturally-appropriate, gender-sensitive information;

- extent to which there is, as well, an effective, multisectoral, and child-friendly response from relevant providers working in a coordinated and accountable manner; and

- extent to which child protection services in humanitarian assistance are delivered by staff with proven competence in their areas of work, and recruitment processes and human resources policies that include measures to protect girls and boys from exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers.[i]

- **A good child protection financing system, including public financial management, includes the systems, process, and institutions needed to manage budgeting for child protection in a sound manner that is credible and transparent, and with specific considerations for decentralized systems and local governance.**

Child protection financing systems can be complicated as they are often "sector wide" stretching across traditional boundaries and existing ministries and sectors (such as health and education). Regardless of the challenges, financial governance is

The United States Action Plan for Children in Adversity: A Framework for International Assistance: 2010–2017 demonstrates the donor best practice in whole-of-government coordination for child protection. The US Action Plan for Children in Adversity is the US government's interagency strategy for children responding to requirements under Public Law 109–95 (2005) to respond to the global orphans and vulnerable children crisis, including through the development of a US government response that is comprehensive, coordinated and effective. According to the 2013 report: "US international assistance to children is substantial and channelled through more than 30 offices in 7 US government departments and agencies."

essential to ensure that child-friendly budgets, and specifically child protection budgets, are formulated and allocated, and deliver value for money. This often requires the execution of state and subnational budgets based on national priorities. For donors requiring accountability for results, policy-based budgeting for child protection greatly assists to report on expenditures and results achieved. The recent expansion of social-protection measures to ensure child protection has seen the identification in some countries of a minimum package of child protection services to tackle poverty and extreme hunger. This includes early intervention, prevention, and response services, and child-focused cash transfer programs. In countries across the Americas, such as Colombia and Brazil, this includes expanding early childhood development and school feeding programs as a priority, and interventions to tackling child labour, including its worst forms. Ensuring literacy for vulnerable, at-risk families with children is key to ensure good uptake of universal preventative initiatives and services targeted to meet their needs.

> **Example indicators:**
>
> ■ extent to which there is a costed strategy for child protection;[v]
>
> ■ credibility of budget allocations across child protection-related sectors;[v] and
>
> ■ proportion of national and other budgets allocated to the social sector, and within that allocated to children and youth both directly and indirectly[ii] OR proportion of national or other budgets allocated to address child labour, including the eradication of the worst forms of child labour.

■ **Child participation and voice constitutes one of the fundamental values of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, seeking to assure guarantees to every child capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views in all matters that affect them, particularly in judicial and administrative proceedings.**

The views expressed by children add relevant perspectives and experience, and should be considered in decision making. Since the adoption of the convention in 1989, considerable progress has been achieved at local, national, and global levels in the development of legislation, policies, and methodologies to promote child participation and voice. Child agency is key to bolster resilience and enable self-protection. Child-to-child peer support is often one of the first avenues pursued by girls, boys, and adolescents; and children are more likely to turn to more formal protection services when it has been recommended by their peers. This is a foundational building block encompassing both "formal" and "informal" elements.[24]

In Canada, the views of the child are taken into account in various judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child. In the family law context, for example, the views of the child may be brought to the attention of the court in various ways: representation of the child by counsel, an assessment of the child's situation by a mental health professional, or a judicial interview. The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development has published lessons learned in this area in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, and Kosovo, and has drafted guidance on results-based management and child participation for programming.[25]

> **Example indicators:**
> - number of children and/or youth clubs (including safe spaces for girls), parliaments, councils, and children- and youth-led media or other child- and youth-centered participatory processes that are gender-sensitive;[iii]
> - number of children and youth participating in human rights and conflict prevention training;[ii] and
> - number and percentage of community-based protection mechanisms (including centres or telephone lines) supported that involve children in decision making and community protection.

- **Positive public attitudes and values** are measured to assess how proactive the government and civil society are in promoting behavioural change, and raising awareness about the risks to children and their negative effects.

  Social values and public attitudes to children are no less important for child protection as are services to assist families, communities, and countries to prevent violence, exploitation, abandonment, and abuse. On the other hand, discriminatory social and cultural attitudes toward children, as well as harmful traditional or religious attitudes and practices, can represent strong barriers to reforms in child protection.[26] Public attitudes and values can be measured using attitudinal national surveys, prevalence studies, and advocacy and awareness-raising programs to combat existing attitudes, customs, and practices contrary to child well-being. This covers an open discussion of child protection issues and a measurement of how the system of child protection is likely to evolve in the long term. Community-based children's organizations, such as Save the Children, Plan International, and World Vision, have shown leadership in this area.

> **Example indicators:**
> - extent to which there is a countrywide awareness campaign on violence against women and/or children;
> - extent to which there is a countrywide awareness campaign on child early forced marriage;
> - number and percentage of children who report that local support services (e.g. child-protection committees, child-friendly spaces, social workers, care staff, police, court procedures, etc.) are child friendly;[vi]
> - percentage of children and community members who know where and how to formally report a protection violation;
> - extent to which violence prevention (including counter-trafficking) is integrated into school curriculum;
> - time frame and coverage of awareness-raising program on labour standards (includes existence of a national hazardous child labour list);[iv]
> - number and percentage of children and adults who demonstrate increased awareness of the services available for those at risk of trafficking e.g. anti-trafficking committee, trafficking telephone help line;[vi] and
> - percentage of working children who understand their rights to be protected from the worst forms of child labour and their legal position.

Government of Canada approach

With the release of the Children and Youth Strategy (2009), DFATD committed to "strengthen national protection frameworks to safeguard human rights and build public sector capacity to protect children and youth, particularly girls, at risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse."[27] This includes the commitment to "ensure schools are safe and free from violence and abuse, and are child-friendly learning environments," and "create opportunities for youth at risk to find alternatives to violence and crime, and become engaged as positive members of their societies."

International law is the starting point for program development in the area of child protection, which recognizes the unique vulnerability of children as a priority concern. Under *Canada's International Human Rights Policy*, child rights and protection has been a long-standing priority for the Government of Canada's foreign policy. Canada recognizes that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, together with its Optional Protocols, "provides a solid foundation for the protection of children's rights worldwide."[28]

Canada has in place a National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, with particular focus on protecting children and women. To ensure the safety and security of children and youth in the context of human trafficking, "the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of developing holistic strategies that address the root causes and risk factors" that can lead to children experiencing violence, exploitation, and harm.[29]

In a whole-of-government approach, DFATD works with Employment and Social Development Canada, Public Safety Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Status of Women Canada on international commitments to protect children, including trafficking, sexual violence, children affected by armed conflict, and child labour. Additionally, DFATD is represented on the Interdepartmental Working Group on Children's Rights.

Endnotes

1. DFATD (2013), *Official Development Assistance Accountability Act Guidance Note: Be Consistent with International Human Rights Standards* (draft – for internal use only, EDRMS 6837749)

2. Speech by David Morrison, ADM Americas, for National Child Day, November 20, 2013.

3. See the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

4. DFID (2012), *Violence against Women and Girls: CHASE Guidance Note Series* (Guidance Note 1)

5. Fafo (1997), *Achievements and setbacks in the fights against child labour: Assessment of the Oslo Conference on Child Labour*.

6. Wulczyn, Fred, et al (2010), *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key concepts and considerations*.

7. **Gender-responsive:** A gender-responsive approach is one that assesses the different needs and interests of women/men, girls/boys, as well as the different impact of initiatives on women/men, girls/boys and develops programming that responds to these so that neither women nor men (girls nor boys) are disadvantaged from the initiative and the gender gap in access and control can be reduced.

8. Lessons learned from the experience in the UK, and *The Munro Review of Child Protection* leading to development of a child-centred system.

9. 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.

10. **Vulnerable:** There is no single standard definition of set of inclusion criteria that is globally accepted; and the group of vulnerable children and youth is seen as a moving target. Generally the concept refers to orphans and other groups of children and youth who are more exposed to risks than their peers. It includes children and youth whose safety and security, well-being and development are at significant risk due to inadequate care, protection or access to essential services. Child vulnerability is a downward spiral whereby each shock leads to a new level of vulnerability, and each new level opens up for a host of new risks. "Vulnerable children" includes those who are without protective family care or living in abusive households, on the streets, or in institutions; trafficked; participating in armed groups; exploited for their labour; and/or living within fragile families and face a multitude of risks posed by extreme poverty, disease, disability, conflict, and disaster. Adapted from *The US Government Assistance to Highly Vulnerable Children PL 109-95 and the World Bank's OVC Toolkit*.

11. See Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at www.ophi.org.uk

12. Lamont, Alister and L. Bromfield (2010), *History of child protection services*. Published by Australian Institute of Family Studies. Government of Western Australia Department of Child Protection (2011), *The Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework.*

13. The phrase "**statutory child protection services**" refers to statutory agencies/departments (i.e., departments established by parliament) charged with the responsibility of securing the safety and welfare of children. Such services/departments are designed to intervene to protect children where children have been harmed or at risk of harm. Statutory agencies possess a legal mandate for such intervention.

14. Government of Australia (2008), A National Approach for Child Protection: project report.

15. ILO (2004), Investing in every child: An economic study of the costs and benefits of eliminating child labour.

16. Wulczyn, Fred (2010), Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations.

17. Building blocks identified in this Practice Note are based on lessons learned in Canada and other OECD-DAC countries, including Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as international best practices. This includes example indicators from these sources:

    i.   Child Protection Working Group (2012), *Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action*

    ii. DFATD (2012), *Securing the Future of Children and Youth Performance Management Strategy* (PM Strategy) and existing geographic programming, including a draft reference guide for geographic programs on supplementary indicators for the Children and Youth Strategy

    iii. Save the Children UK (2008), *Menu of Outcome Indicators* and Save the Children UK (2009), A "*Rough Guide" to Child Protection Systems*. The report outlines the importance of a coherent government-led child protection system, with a checklist of questions for each focus area

    iv. OHCHR (2012), *Human Rights Indicators*

    v.   UNICEF East Asia and Pacific (2012), *Measuring and Monitoring Child Protection Systems*. This publication proposes a framework of core indicators for measuring and monitoring national child protection systems. These indicators will support monitoring and assessment of the enabling environment or "governance" of national child protection systems: the relevant legal and regulatory structure, the social welfare system for children and families, and the justice system as it relates to child protection.

18. WHO (2007), *Everybody business: strengthening health systems to improve health outcomes: WHO's framework for action*.

19. *Child and Youth Protection Toolkit* and DTATD (2013), *Children and Youth Portfolio Review: Geographic Program Aid in Countries of Focus*

20. UK Department of Education, *Munro Reports* at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/munro-review

21. UK Department of Education (2011), *A child-centred system The Government's response to the Munro review of child protection*.

22. SIDA, *The Rights of Children and Youth: Conducting a Dialogue (Part 1)*. This is part of a three-part series.

23. UNICEF, Global Monitoring for Child Protection brochure.

24. Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009. *General Comment No. 12 (2009), The right of the child to be heard*.

25. DFATD (2007). *Lessons Learned on Children and Young People's Participation in Development*. DFATD (2006), *RBM and Children's Participation: A Guide to Incorporating Child Participation Results into Programs*.

26. UNICEF East Asia and Pacific (2012), *Measuring and Monitoring Child Protection Systems*.

27. DFATD (2009), *Securing the Future of Children and Youth*.

28. *Canada's International Human Rights Policy* at http://www.international.gc.ca/rights-droits/policy-politique.aspx

29. Government of Canada (2012). *National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking*.