Summary of Highlights

UNICEF Global Child Protection Systems Mapping Workshop

Bucharest, Romania
11-13, June 2008

Background and Objectives

Background

UNICEF's new Child Protection Strategy was adopted by the Executive Board in June 2008. The Strategy builds on the Protective Environment Framework and further elaborates on two key pillars of UNICEF's strategy: strengthening CP systems and enhancing social change

The Strategy describes CP systems as 'a set of laws, policies, regulations and services, capacities, monitoring, and oversight needed across all social sectors—especially social welfare, education, health, security, and justice—to prevent and respond to protection-related risks.' Responsibilities for CP system components are often spread across government agencies, with services delivered by local authorities, non-State providers, and community groups, underscoring the importance of both coordination and referral mechanisms. Underpinning such a system must be a strong normative legal framework, building on government accountability for protecting children established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments. The emphasis on prevention within the CP strategy means that CP systems should be viewed as interlinked with social protection, encompassing efforts to reduce social exclusion and insure that the most vulnerable children are reached by services.

In support of this systems approach, the strategy identifies a series of priority actions. The following two are a pre-requisite:
? Identify <u>a minimum package of child protection services</u> and advocate for their inclusion in social protection strategies, in national and sectoral development plans, and in legal reforms.
? <u>Develop and apply an analytic tool</u> for mapping and assessing existing child protection policies, laws and services for adequacy and to identify obstacles and opportunities in implementation, especially in reaching vulnerable or excluded groups.

The meeting was organized to bring together UNICEF's existing experience and expertise from country and regional offices and across focus areas to establish an agreed basis from which to undertake this work.

Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to produce three products:

1. A diagram of the types of services that should be provided by a CP system, indicating the possible service providers in different sectors. The diagram should reflect:
    a. The core or minimum package of services for all settings.
    b. Core statutory and regulatory responsibilities of the State.
    c. Services emphasized in emergencies.

2. Agreement on the key elements and supporting capacities and competencies that need to be in place for these services to function, including:
   a. The legal and normative framework (laws, policies, regulations, standards).
   b. Human and financial resources.
   c. Management, coordination, and referral mechanisms.
   d. Monitoring and oversight.

3. Consensus on the list of outcomes to which a CP system should contribute.

The Workshop

The Workshop was held 11-13, June, 2008 in Bucharest, Romania. Participants included 29 UNICEF (and 1 UNHCR) colleagues from regional, country, and headquarters offices representing child protection, social policy, education, HIV/AIDS, and Country Office management. Local arrangements were made by the UNICEF Romania office, and the workshop was facilitated by Silvie Bodineau. Presented below are highlights and conclusions from the 2 ½ day meeting, not minutes of the proceedings. Highlights necessarily require subjective judgment and selection of themes, and they do not reflect the entire variety, detail, and richness of the discussions that took place.

More detailed information about the meeting is available on the UNICEF CP Intranet site including
   (a) list of participants
   (b) Regional and country office presentations
   (c) Group work summaries and related presentations.

Draft Diagram of a Child Protection System Framework

A major objective of the workshop (see Objective No. 1 above) was to produce a simple visual diagram that would represent on one page in an easily grasped format the basic components of a child protection system (CPS).

Initial Diagram

The discussion began with the presentation of a working draft of such a diagram presented in Figure 1. The draft incorporated several general principles and components that needed to be represented:

1. The legal and normative framework (laws, policies, regulations, standards, etc.).

2. The institutions or structures (government, NGOs, private sector) that have assigned child protection functions.

3. The processes to carry out these roles, appropriate management and budgeting structures, monitoring and information systems, referrals, and coordination mechanisms.

4. Human and financial capacities, including the minimum professional and paraprofessional competencies and the funding available to support regulatory, supportive, and service provision functions.

5. Research and data analysis to inform evidence-based policy development and advocacy.

6. Budget and budgeting processes.

Figure 1.
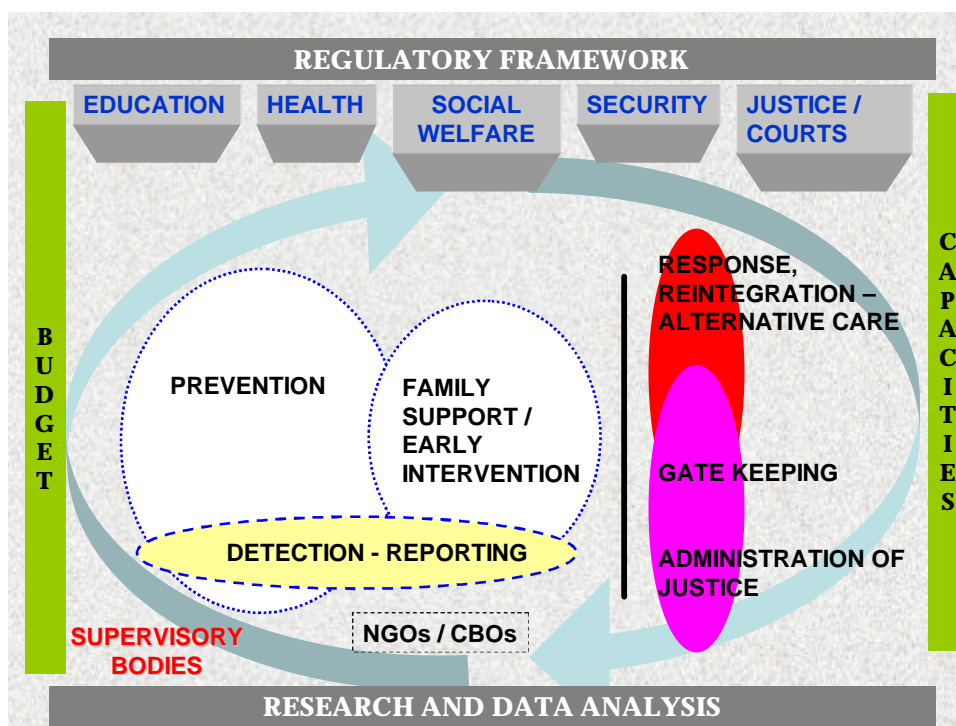
Suggested changes to the diagram. Vigorous and diverse discussion produced consensus on certain changes that needed to be incorporated in a revision of the diagram of the CP SYSTEM:

1. Add externalities, which include cultural factors, macro policies, social and political factors, economic circumstances (e.g., European Union policies), and other factors outside the direct control of CP system actors that influence the opportunities, threats, and procedures pertaining to child protection.

2. Broaden the informal aspects of the system beyond NGOs/CBOs to include the private sector, community mechanisms, informal networks, etc.

3. Change the representation of other government sectors to highlight that only part of their formal structures contribute to the CP system.

There was somewhat less consensus on revisions to the interventions and services component of the diagram. Suggestions included
   ? emphasize functions rather than specific services, e.g. detection & reporting, gate-keeping, case management, information management
   ? collapse prevention and family support into a single category
   ? represent prevention/early intervention—response as one end of the overall continuum rather than as separate categories
   ? clarify prevention terminology [e.g., "at risk;" "primary" (all children), "secondary" (at risk), "tertiary" (manifest problem)]
   ? maintain a distinction between formal and informal elements,

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> ? separating gate-keeping and the administration of justice and possibly folding gatekeeping into another category, or viewing it as function that crosses the full continuum of services
> ? represent detection as a cross-cutting issue
> ? rename "response, reintegration, and alternative care."

<u>Terminology concerns</u>

Throughout the workshop participants noted the need for greater clarity around terminology. Agreed definitions are needed for terms such as 'function', 'intervention', 'gate-keeping'. The meeting made strides in moving us towards greater common understanding of what is meant by a child protection system, but further definitions will also be needed around each of the components.

Consensus

Although a final diagram was not produced, there was broad consensus that a CP system diagram should reflect the crucial elements of a system, namely that components work together, overlap one another, and are dynamic including services and interventions; legal and normative frameworks; institutional (including community/informal) structures; processes; coordination and referral mechanisms; the institutional, human, and financial capacities that support these elements; externalities (e.g., macro-economic policies, EU integration framework); and research and data analysis (information from within or outside the system that can or should influence its nature and decision making).

Further, the purpose of such a diagram is to provide a simple visual representation of a CP system that describes its components in a neutral manner. It is recognized that quality issues, effectiveness, and efficiency are crucial to systems operation but are not part of the diagram and should be explored through capacity assessment. The diagram should help improve communication with both government and other national partners and other actors and should contribute to identifying synergies with other sectors and initiatives. It should help UNICEF focus attention on children, protection risks, and the need for coherent and connected interventions for prevention and response. Specific elements of packaging and communicating about child protection will require additional future effort, but the agreement reached on the components of the CP system have made an initial contribution to this process.

<center>Lessons Learned from Country and Regional Experience</center>

The workshop included two sessions to identify lessons learned from the country and regional offices' experience of applying a systems approach to CP work. Presentations were given on the experiences of the CEE/CIS region (Jean Claude Legrand), Romania (Voica Pop), Uganda (Cornelius Williams), and EAPRO's emergency response to the 2004 tsunami (Alexander Krueger). Later in the workshop each of these examples (except CEE/CIS) were reviewed in working groups to identify their crucial activities with respect to the CP systems components of legal framework, standards of care, institutions and structures, processes, human resources, financial resources, externalities and internalities, and research and data analysis.

Major Common Theme

A major theme in these discussions was the importance of addressing more than one systemic element at a time. There was a common view that progress in improving services and outcomes for children was dependent on identifying and strengthening the underlying system elements and focusing on the linkages between them. The success of each of the three programs was dependent on each component of a CP system.

In Uganda, for example, it was impossible to analyze accurately the success of a single service without considering the whole system of components. In Romania, the "externality" of the European Union regulation requirements plus the "internal circumstance" of a very high number of abandoned children and overflowing institutions created the need for a legal framework requiring the placement of social workers in hospitals to work with parents and dissuade them from relinquishing their children. But the health and social services sectors generally did not collaborate well, too few social workers were available, and none had appropriate skills because this type of work was not part of formal social work training. Further, "standards of care" had to be developed in the absence of appropriate training. The entire enterprise worked primarily when all of these service elements were accomplished, such as when NGOs provided their expertise, skilled personnel, financial resources, and will and then lent their leadership clout to coordinate the entire system in that specific location.

Consensus on Major CP SYSTEM Components

Discussions on the major CP system component produced the following common observations and conclusions:

1. **Legal and policy framework**. Having policies and a legal framework sets a national agenda, but it is not sufficient—*implementation* is a necessary component for success.

2. **Standards of care**. Standards of services are often lacking, and without them, the nature and quality of services are uncontrolled. Formal education of social workers and other professionals often does not provide standards of care for the kinds of services such professionals and paraprofessionals actually face in practice. Having minimum standards may also help justify budgets and to insure that one does no harm.

3. **Institutions and structures**. Different sectors, institutions, and agencies typically work in isolation from one another, focus on specific problems, and no one is responsible for their coordination. Capacity building is thus needed to help more than one agency, and to help them improve how they interact if positive systems change is to result.

4. **Processes**. Appropriate management structures, effective budgeting, monitoring and information systems, referrals, and coordination mechanisms are needed. A major requirement is to collaboratively establish a common agenda, perhaps using evidence as a neutral criterion, and to have contributing agencies establish the system of mutually beneficial collaboration. Build consensus among stakeholders as a necessary pre-requisite to collaboration and a systematic approach, and do not create unnecessary and parallel structures.

5. **Human resources**. Typically, there are insufficient numbers of formally trained professionals, formal training may be more theoretical than practical and not cover services in situations actually faced in practice, and there is a great need to train non-professionals specifically in the services that need to be delivered. Serious consideration needs to be given to the nature of formal training, accreditation strategies, and the training of non-professionals to do specific tasks.

6. **Financial resources**. Financial resources can vary from woefully limited to adequate. Sectors and agencies need experience in the budgeting process, both to make credible and sufficient requests for funding, to be able to state, and cost, results, and to be able to operate services within budgetary limitations. The nature and extent of services must match resources.

7. **Externalities**. Factors typically viewed as outside the CP system have an impact on how the latter functions and should be taken into account when assessing a system and identifying capacity gaps. For example, the desire to be accepted into the European Union may motivate a country to pass legislation, provide financial resources, and otherwise address child protection issues that have previously languished from inattention. But a long history of prohibiting contraception may be an initial internal circumstance that must be overcome if prevention efforts at limiting unwanted children are to be successful.

8. **Research and data analysis**. Typically, little systematic monitoring information is collected, children are relatively low priority in most developing countries, child protection indicators are not often part of national data collection, and no one seems to have the responsibility of creating and monitoring such a data collection system. There is also a lack of consensus on what should be the core indicators of child protection. Yet a stronger evidence-base both on child protection trends and establishing "what works" in CP programming can provide politically neutral criteria for budget allocation, service selection, and implementation.

Emergency Situations

Emergency situations, including natural disasters as well as armed conflict, present unique problems but also opportunities. A summary of key considerations for using and strengthening CP systems during emergencies is given in Table 1.

Unique problems. In emergency situations, the government and many private organizations divert attention from child protection issues to the specific needs created by the emergency. Child protection policies and services, already low on the priority scale, may sink even further. The number of children needing basic services may increase, and coordination among agencies may decrease.

Table 1.

CP Systems in Emergencies

Must take into account:
- Competent authority might not be the State
- IASC & other guidelines should complement state frameworks
- Priority on saving lives & protecting separated children
- Criteria for vulnerability change,
- Higher ethical responsibility of service providers and international actors (no state monitoring)
- Detection of violations may need to focus on groups rather than individuals in high risk situations
- Greater risk of state or armed groups as abusers
- Children's voices in transitional justice processes
- OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD BACK BETTER

Opportunities. The same elements that represent challenges may also present opportunities. In emergencies, demands change and change could occur in child protection as well as in other systems. The glaring inadequacies of the CP system coupled with increased international scrutiny and sometimes the influx of substantial amounts of money provide the opportunity to motivate the government to make more permanent improvements in the CP system. Further, emergencies often focus international attention on children which can have the effect of raising child protection issues on the list of priorities for a country. Of course, sustaining such changes, even those heavily financed by short-term emergency aid, is an enduring challenge. Family tracing services, which become crucial in many emergency situations, may provide an entry point. It helps to build incrementally on the existing structures of the country, because increments in established budgetary categories are more easily sustained than totally new initiatives.

Minimum Basic Functions, Interventions, and Services

A key workshop objective was to develop a list of the minimum CP functions, interventions, or services that directly reach children. Such interventions are both specific components of the CP system, and the most visible expression of the system supported by the remaining components. A draft list of interventions was provided, broken down into five categories: 1) Prevention, 2) Family support and early intervention, 3) Detection and reporting, 4) Justice and gatekeeping, and 5) Response and reintegration. Workshop participants divided into five groups covering each these categories, identified additional services, and selected those they felt were minimally necessary; then groups shifted topics to refine the previous work of their colleagues.
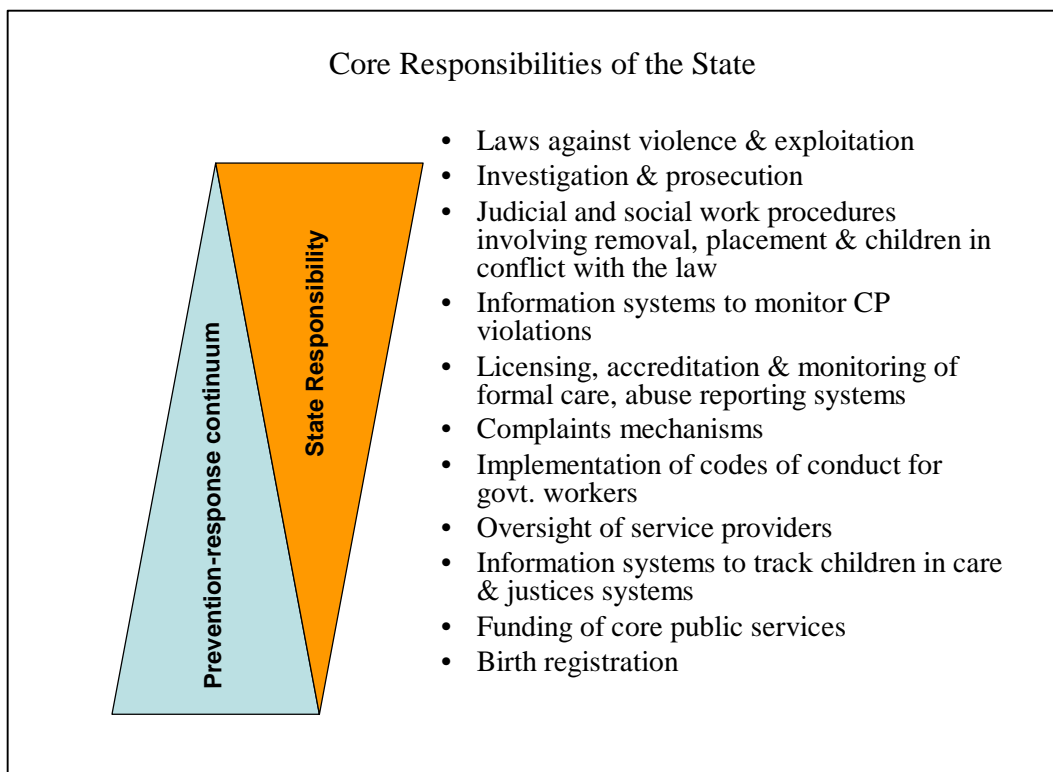
Conceptual and Practical Issues

This exercise raised several conceptual and practical issues beyond identifying the specific services to be included. Many of these were similar to those discussed in relation to the CP system diagram. These included the need to (a) define 'detection' and 'gate-keeping' as functions rather than services; (b) be clear about which services are within and which are outside the CP system; (c) reconsider the categories or functional areas to minimize overlaps and (d) recognize that the list cannot capture issues of service quality. Other key suggestions were as follows:

?   The lists should contain service *functions*, rather than *specific services*, because functions will be general across countries while specific services will vary from country to country.

?   "Prevention" and "response" may be better viewed as points along a sequential continuum of services rather than as distinct categories

?   Rather than a "minimum package", the urgency of different interventions should be indicated by benchmark levels, with level 1 indicating the most basic requirement, level 2 represent "highly desirable," and level 3 present "desirable". This will convey a sense of progressive realization, and the need to strive beyond the most basic functions.

?   May need to distinguish between universal preventive interventions meant for all and targeted interventions for high-risk groups or individuals

?   Reporting is everyone's responsibility, but reports must also be verified by mandated professionals and services must be available for victims.

? The informal justice system must be considered as well as the formal government justice system, as in many countries access to informal or traditional justice is greater.

? While the lists were originally limited to interventions that directly reach children, it may be necessary to include certain interventions to prevent harm which do not involve direct services (e.g. background checks on those who work with children).

Participants once again wrestled with the lists within the context of these issues, adding benchmark levels, indicating sectors responsible for each, and how things might differ in emergency situations. Core responsibilities of the State were also identified, focusing on what is required to legislate, promote, and otherwise ensure the availability of appropriate interventions; see Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Core Responsibilities of the State

Prevention-response continuum

State Responsibility

- Laws against violence & exploitation
- Investigation & prosecution
- Judicial and social work procedures involving removal, placement & children in conflict with the law
- Information systems to monitor CP violations
- Licensing, accreditation & monitoring of formal care, abuse reporting systems
- Complaints mechanisms
- Implementation of codes of conduct for govt. workers
- Oversight of service providers
- Information systems to track children in care & justices systems
- Funding of core public services
- Birth registration

Each of the bullets describes a core State responsibility within the child protection system. The triangles are meant to illustrate that the extent of State responsibility for direct service delivery and need for detailed policies and laws is greatest at the response end of the continuum. However as the list makes clear, State has responsibility for oversight throughout, as well as for key preventive functions such as birth registration

Approaching Consensus

Taking into consideration the lists that had been produced and the issues raised about them (see above), a single list of Benchmark Level 1/basic required interventions was created and ordered approximately from "responsive" (which pertains to relatively fewer cases) to "preventive" interventions (which

involves the most children and families) taking account also of detection, reporting and gate-keeping functions. For each intervention or function, participants noted which sector(s) were likely to have a role.

The summary presented in Table 3 lists these basic required child protection interventions and functions. It also provides an indication of where the health, education, social welfare, justice and security sectors as well as civil society (NGOs, private sectors, community) have a role to play. More detailed lists were also prepared for each intervention category, indicating statutory State responsibilities of the State and include the regulatory and oversight role of governments. How such services are modified in emergency situations is also identified. Participants acknowledged that both the summary and more detailed lists were a good start, but require further refinement.

Table 3.

		Social welfare Sector	Education Sector	Health Sector	Justice & Security Sectors	Community, NGOs, Private Sector
Response	Sensitive health, police, judicial, social work case management, shelter services for child victims of violence or exploitation	X		X	X	
	Verification & investigation of cases	X		X	X	
	PSS/mental health services	X		X		X
	Identification, reporting, verification of suspected abuse/exploit	X	X	X	X	X
	Tracing , reunification, reintegration	X			X	
	Diversion & alternatives to custody	X			X	
	Alternative care (foster, residential, emergency shelter, adoption)	X				
	Best interests determination & gate-keeping procedures	X			X	
	Complaints mechanisms –care, detention, schools, health facilities	X	X	X	X	X
	Individual family support – mediation, assist with entitlements, service access, respite entitlement, legal aid	X	X	X	X	X
	Identification of at-risk children & families	X	X	X	X	X
	Public education & community mobilization for social change	X	X	X	X	X
	Life skills, youth civic engagement	X	X		X	X
	Background checks & codes of conduct for those working with children	X	X	X	X	X
Prevention	Daycare	X	X			X
	Birth registration			X or civil affairs		
	Income supplements	X and others				

Overarching issues for further development of the systemic approach to Child Protection

Throughout the workshop, it was recognized that both preventive and responsive child protection measures are the responsibility of various sectors including social welfare, justice, health, security, and education (see Table 3). While much, if not all of the child and family related work of social welfare agencies (both govt and NGO), justice and security sectors probably qualifies as child protection, the same cannot be said of health and education. There was thus much dialogue around which aspects of these sectors' work should be "in" and "out" of the child protection basket. Similar questions arise when looking at the issue through the lens of UNICEF priorities or sectors, which themselves do not have one single corresponding government sector, e.g. social policy and HIV.

Presentations by colleagues from social policy, HIV and education illustrated that determining which elements of these sectors are "in" and "out" of child protection is both difficult and possibly artificial. For example, the education system keeps children in school, which reduces their risk of abuse, violence, and exploitation while they are in school and provides an educational foundation that may limit their long-term risk for abuse, violence, and exploitation. Thus it may be more important to identify and foster linkages between sector services and child protection than to focus on the "in-out" distinction.

A similar principle applies in relation to UNICEF priorities. Poverty plays a large role in much of the harm that children experience - child labour, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, child marriage. HIV/AIDS is both a cause and a consequence of child protection failures. Thus both social policy – including social protection – and HIV/AIDS have intrinsic links with child protection which should be fostered in our work rather than focusing on where dividing lines lie.

Another key issue is that of social norms. Certain types of harm children experience are deeply rooted in social norms and cannot be satisfactorily and effectively addressed by the child protection system. Moreover, the people running the child protection systems are also part of the culture and their attitudes and behaviours towards children, towards gender discrimination, violence and justice are also rooted in the social norms that lie at the root of many forms of child abuse. Moving forward, we will need to ensure that these linkages are clear, and to take account of social norms, and the work done to change them, while considering the most effective ways to strengthen CP systems.

Next Steps

Several next steps were identified.

1. **Emphasizing a child protective *system*, rather than simply specific child protection programs or services, is the necessary next developmental step in promoting child protection**. The benefits of conceiving of child protection as a system are readily apparent, and characterizing it as an integrated system will help in promoting greater ownership and a sense of responsibility from the many different actors who have a role to play. The concept of a child protection system does exist in some middle income and many industrialized countries, but is often limited to the interventions and services needed to respond to rather than prevent child protection failures. Thus, UNICEF professionals need to communicate clearly within and outside of UNICEF the concept of a CP system, build partnerships around this approach, and take a leadership role in this regard, grounded in evidence with respect to effective child protection services, organizational development, governance, and developmental theory.

2. **Work on creating and packaging child protection as a system is just beginning.** This future process needs to be defined, including a time table.

3. **UNICEF needs to present a coherent push towards a systems approach.** This is a prerequisite for developing partnerships within and outside of the United Nations whose feedback on the developing system would be invaluable. Such coherence should begin by establishing standard terminologies and definitions, identifying why it is important to define child protection as a system, and creating links with other sectors by working from a base of evidence.

   a. *Create a discussion paper based on the current workshop and its outcomes.* This should articulate why it is important to define child protection as a system and how it links with different sectors.

   b. *Review the academic and professional literatures on systems development.* This should include the necessary components and processes of system development, and evidence for the effectiveness of operational strategies and interventions/services in achieving child protection outcomes. Establish some consensus, based on these literatures, for standard definitions of major concepts.

4. **Create a one-page visual diagram representing the overall child protection system that includes its major components and represents to the extent possible linkages and major influences.** This diagram of the formative structure of a CP system can then be used as a basis for communicating the nature of a CP system and advocating for its strengthening. Such a diagram will represent a compromise between being simple and easy to grasp on the one hand and being accurate and comprehensive on the other. It must be recognized that all such diagrams are visual metaphors, do not include all relevant information and detail; and break down as accurate reflections of the system when pushed to the limits of detail, but they can communicate the essence of a child protection system. Major components of the diagram themselves may have separate sub-diagrams to reflect an additional level of detail.

5. **Develop assessment tools that follow from the diagram of the general child protection system.**

   a. *The first tool should help countries assess their strengths and limitations with respect to the CP SYSTEM diagrammed in No. 4 above.* Its primary purpose would be to help a country identify its strengths and limitations within the context of opportunities and threats ("SWOT") as a strategic method to identify priorities for creating or improving a CP SYSTEM in that country.

   b. *An inventory of other tools relevant to CP system mapping and capacity assessments should be created.* UNICEF country and regional offices should identify such tools that they have encountered in their work (which are often embedded in larger documents) and send them to a central source as a basis for creating this inventory.

6. **UNICEF staff should take advantage of additional opportunities to further discussion, development, and dissemination of the child protection systems approach.** This should include attending relevant conferences (e.g., Congress on Sexual Exploitation [Brazil, 2009]) and collaborating with existing and new projects (e.g., UNHCR, Separated Children in Europe, Global Child Poverty Study, ESARO, ROSA).

7. **A strategy to communicate about CP systems should be developed.** While some communications can occur now, most of the development of a "child protection package" and communication strategy lies ahead and should be built on the child protection diagram, the necessary components of a CP system, the list of functions/interventions, and the general child protection system assessment tool.