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Understanding and applying a systems approach to child protection: a guide for programme staff.

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Foreword.

This year the annual report of Terre des hommes puts forward the engagement of the organisation to make sure that every child has a chance to access his/her rights and exercise them fully. At the international level, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, being ratified today from 194 States, provides a strong legal instrument, guiding our fight for child rights. In our daily work, we continually seek how best to apply the learning from the past and find innovative and efficient solutions to meet our engagement.

It is against this background that the work on strengthening national child protection systems comes high on the institutional agenda of Terre des hommes. As the Convention states, the primary responsibility for the protection of the rights of the children lies on the States. Evidence also shows us that by working on systems strengthening, we are able to assist more children and in a more durable manner. As an international organisation, we see our role as working for and with national partners in realising children's rights. Moreover, Terre des hommes believes in the agency of children and their communities and support them to use such agency at their benefit as well as the benefit of the society. Our vision of child protection systems endorses values of peace and progress, equality and partnership.

Working in strengthening child protection systems is nevertheless not always an easy task. Various studies demonstrate how the protection of the rights of the

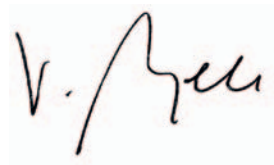
child requires multi-sectorial responses, with areas such as education, social protection, labour market, justice, health, migration management, etc., all playing a crucial role. How could Terre des hommes contribute to all this? What does it mean for Terre des hommes intervention in a country facing a humanitarian crisis? In the more developed countries, where the child protection system is rather in place, is there still an added value for an organisation like Terre des hommes?

These questions and others pushes us to grow in terms of professionalism and expertise, they drive us to plan long term and strategically, not alone but together with all the actors pursuing the same objective: making sure that every child has a chance to realise his/her rights and exercise them fully.

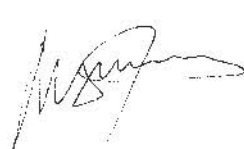
The current guide on child protection systems strengthening explores further some of these issues. It also provides references and working tools for child protection practioners, managers and policy makers. It is in this mixture of policy debate, technical assistance and support to the agency of children and communities that Terre des hommes sees its contribution to a system strengthening work.

We very much hope that this publication will benefit also other organisations and encourage them to invest further in knowledge and practice for a better protection of the rights of the child.

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Acknowledgement.

This publication has been inspired by the dedicated work of various child protection actors around the world. The authors would like to thank all these agencies and individuals for their commitment. Special thanks go to the Terre des hommes delegations and their partners who contributed to this publication through their practices and results. Our gratitude also to Guy Thompstone and Maria Bray who peer reviewed the various drafts, contributing thereby to the quality of the publication.

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Introduction.

Over the past decade there has been growing recognition among humanitarian and development organisations of the need to build national systems for the protection of children. International children's rights organisations are embracing a '**systems strengthening approach**' as their strategic framework based upon learning and reflection and also as an acknowledgement of the need to 'do something different'. Along with agencies such as UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision and Plan International, Terre des hommes has adopted this approach to underpin the organisation's child protection work.

In 2009, Terre des hommes brought together child protection specialists and other staff from within the organisation to discuss the systems approach and to outline how Terre des hommes would apply it to the organisation's child protection programmes¹. These discussions provided the foundation for what would become the Terre des hommes' '**Thematic Policy, Enhancing Child Protection Systems**' approved in 2012.

Thematic or issue based programmes (also referred to as **vertical programmes** by Terre des hommes), where the focus is placed on a specific issue or category of children, have traditionally been the approach applied to child protection work. However, among child protection organisations there is now general agreement that child protection programmes that come from a systems approach deliver more holistic and sustainable outcomes for children and provide a framework to increase the impact of thematic pro-

grammes. For example both the UN Study on Violence against Children (2006) and the related General Comment Number 13 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, recommend increasing the focus on systems strengthening as an effective means of addressing all forms of violence against children.²

This does not mean that tackling specific child protection issues or working through thematic programmes is in opposition to a systems strengthening approach. Focusing on systems strengthening is a *way of thinking about and organising work*. It requires a switch in emphasis from the typical **thematic programming** approach to '**think system**' at all stages of the programme cycle. The challenge is to ensure that thematic programmes are no longer conceived in isolation but are coordinated with and linked to the overall process of strengthening a national child protection system. The convergence and compatibility between the two approaches is discussed in more detail in Section II of this guide.

The reality is that many children face multiple and simultaneous protection violations and vulnerable or at risk children cannot be neatly categorised (for example, street children, children in conflict with the law, and victims of physical or sexual abuse). More comprehensive, holistic approaches are needed to address both the underlying causes of protection issues and ensure that children receive better quality support to recover from harmful and traumatic experiences.

¹ For a more detailed description of this process see Terre des hommes Thematic Policy Enhancing Child Protection Systems, 2012.

² See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13_en.pdf

Purpose and scope of this guide.

In its Thematic Policy, *Enhancing Child Protection Systems*, Terre des hommes sets out its understanding of and investment in child protection systems and identifies the added value that the organisation brings. This new guide builds upon the thematic policy document and other related literature by giving additional guidance for applying a systems approach in practice.

The guide is specifically aimed at programme staff, assisting them in the transition from programmes that focus on specific thematic issues or that target certain groups of children towards addressing child protection through a systems lens.

For ease of reference the guide has been divided into three sections:

Section I: Understanding a systems approach to child protection

This section explores the 'theory' of child protection systems, how they are defined, central features and components of a child protection system. This builds upon the Thematic Policy, *Enhancing Child Protection Systems* by referencing more recent thinking and experience from child protection and children's rights agencies.

Section II: Putting Terre des hommes' approach to systems into practice

This section considers the implications of the shift towards systems strengthening and the consequences for child protection programming. This section provides four case studies that explore the experiences of Terre des hommes in practice.


Section III: Learning more about a systems approach to child protection

This section signposts suggested reading and resources to help programme staff develop their understanding of a system approach and its application in Terre des hommes' child protection programmes.

Throughout the guide, different concrete examples are provided in text boxes. Their aim is to assist the implementation of the theory into practice, and as such, reading the text boxes could be particularly relevant for programme staff in the field.





A photograph of two young boys of African descent. The boy on the left is wearing a light-colored shirt with a Spider-Man graphic and is looking down at a drawing on a table. The boy on the right is wearing a yellow shirt with a blue and white striped collar and is looking at the same drawing. They are both smiling and appear to be engaged in a creative activity. The background is a light green wall. The text 'Section I: Understanding the systems approach to child protection.' is overlaid on the image in a white box with a black border.

Section I: Understanding the systems approach to child protection.

The purpose of this section is to clarify a number of concepts relating to child protection systems and to explain why this approach is now central to the child protection strategy of Terre des hommes.

The section covers the following topics:

- The rationale for Terre des hommes adopting the systems approach to child protection.
- The definition of a child protection system according to Terre des hommes.
- Important features of the systems strengthening approach.

Why is Terre des hommes adopting a systems approach to child protection ?

Before exploring in more detail some of the main concepts associated with a systems approach to child protection, it is important to outline the reasons behind the shift in strategy towards systems strengthening. Terre des hommes has identified six reasons for basing the organisation's child protection strategy around a systems approach. These reasons were drawn from lessons learned in implementing and evaluating child protection programmes in different countries and contexts; through internal reflection across the organisation; and during consultations with other child protection organisations.

- **A child protection system can provide the majority of children greater access to better quality protection services.** Rather than reacting to protection issues facing specific categories or children, a system approach tries to address the protection rights of all children.
- **Guaranteeing continuity in children's protective environments.** Compared to other approaches, systems strengthening efforts are more likely to deliver a standardised package of services in a more predictable manner. If standards are set across the system then all service providers are bound to deliver their support to children in a consistent manner. This helps to improve equitable access to high-quality services regardless of where children are living.
- **Child protection responses will no longer reduce children to specific 'categories' but rather begin to address their protection needs in a more holistic manner.** The systems approach recognises children as whole people rather than a collection of problems.
- **A systems approach provides a more conducive environment for piloting, testing and (where appropriate) up-scaling models of good practice.** This can happen in two ways. Firstly, individual organisations will have greater opportunities for sharing their successes and challenges and demonstrate the relevance of particular approaches for wider use within the system. Secondly, child protection organisations might also agree on joint pilots or learning forums, perhaps sharing the testing of the relevance and effectiveness of different models. In turn this may improve the effectiveness of the overall system.
- **Promote coordinated and coherent management of existing resources.** By pooling and aligning their resources towards the national vision of the system, child protection agencies can work together more effectively. In the area of capacity building, core competencies can be developed collectively to fulfil the agreed roles and responsibilities across the system. This prevents duplication and enables each initiative to build on the foundations of others rather than starting from the beginning each time.
- **Guarantee the durability of protective actions.** By working in partnership with others and combining formal and informal elements of the system, agencies are better equipped to reinforce the actions of the other, thereby bringing about lasting positive outcomes for children.

What is a child protection system?

Child protection organisations and national governments are still grappling with the transition to and application of a systems approach to child protection. Currently there is no internationally agreed definition of a child protection system and many child protection agencies and national governments have developed their own. This can sometimes cause confusion.

Although many of the definitions are very similar, they nonetheless highlight some of the different concepts and perspectives that determine the type of programmes that individual agencies develop (see Annex 1 for a comparison of definitions of child protection systems).

Box 1: Terre des hommes definition of a child protection system

Terre des hommes defines a child protection system as:

“...a coherent set of actions and actors, in which the child is the starting point and which aims to guarantee the rights and well-being of the child by constructing synergies within and between protective environments”.

Terre des hommes, Thematic Policy, Enhancing Child Protection Systems, 2012

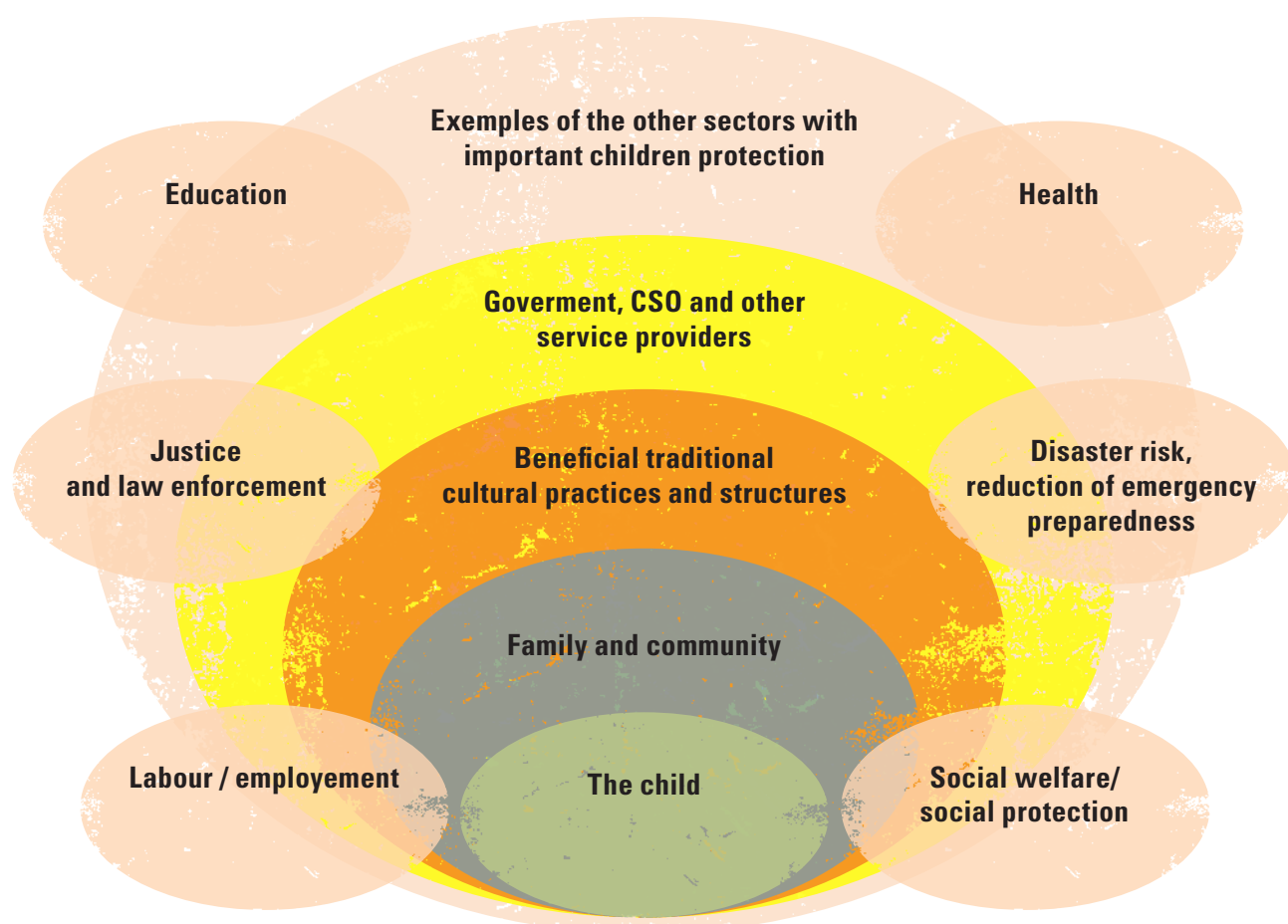
The Terre des hommes definition articulates a number of important principles, elements and characteristics of child protection systems. It is worth expanding on these further as they have direct implications for how the organisation can support child protection systems strengthening in practice. These key points include:

- Strengthening a child protection system should be based on a clear vision supported by a strategic plan. This helps to define and shape the ‘coherent’ set of actions that can then be undertaken in support of creating more protective environments. A coherent system is one that is based on a logical approach, where the different components and processes of the system are working together and functioning effectively.
- The vision for the system needs to be shared and jointly owned by a range of different actors including government, child protection agencies, communities and civil society. The number of actors involved is likely to be complex and extensive.
- All of the actors involved in child protection need to share an understanding of the child protection system within the context they are working and understand why and how the system needs to be strengthened.

This includes articulating their own role and responsibilities within this process. All actors should understand their relative contribution to achieving the common goal of strengthening the system.

- 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.
- The purpose of the system is to improve protection outcomes for all children. Consequently everything that happens within the system should be aligned to achieving this outcome for the children. With its thematic policy document, Terre des hommes places the child at the heart of the system. This has consequences both in the way Terre des hommes supports the strengthening of the system and the way it evaluates its outcomes.

Figure 1: Other sectors with associated child protection functions at a national level.



Key characteristics of a systems approach.

In some countries a systems approach for protecting children may be quite new. However, in other countries the development of a national system may already be a well-established priority. Globally, there is a very considerable body of research and analysis on child protection systems. In other sectors such as health and justice there are also important findings and lessons about systems strengthening that can be applied to child protection.⁴

Key features of a system include:

- All systems - including child protection systems - are made up of a collection of different **components** that are organised around realising a **common goal or vision**. This vision provides the strategic direction for system strengthening activities and articulates how the different components of the system **fit together and reinforce** each other.
- A child protection system is characterised by **specific sets of functions, structures and capacities**. These define how the system will operate in 'practice' on a day to day basis.
- In a well-designed and functional system changes to one component have an effect on all the others. The different components of the system are **constantly interacting** with and **influencing** each other. For example, changes in laws or financial resources will have an impact on the kind of services that are provided, the standards or guidelines that regulate these services, and the roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved.
- There are a **wide range of different actors** involved in the child protection system and all have essential functions to play. Sometimes these actors are referred to as having either a **formal or informal** function, but a principal feature of an effective system is that it takes into account and clearly defines the complementary role of all actors rather than creating divisions or contradictions between them.
- There is **no one way** to design a child protection system and the shape, functions and actions of the system should always be grounded in the context in which it operates. The child protection system needs to **fit with its context** and needs to make sense to the communities which it is designed to serve. That means it should be **relevant and appropriate**. The way laws are framed, policies designed and services are delivered need to reflect the socio-cultural context and be understood as being beneficial or adding value to the protection of children. If they do not they will not be used.
- Child protection systems **do not exist in isolation** and are also constantly interacting with other systems including for example, the justice, social protection, education and health systems.

Box 2: Working together

In Sudan the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) – including agencies working across the country – developed a handbook on working with Community Child Protection Committees (CCPC). The purpose of the handbook was to harmonise and standardise the work of different agencies in supporting CCPCs. The capacities of those informal actors working with the CCPCs were strengthened in recognition of their important role in protecting children, especially in remote areas.

A copy of the handbook can be downloaded from:

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Community_Child_Protection_Committees_HandbookEnglis.pdf

⁴ Adapted from Wulczyn F. et al. *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations – Working Paper*; UNICEF, New York, 2010.

Box 3: Mapping child protection systems

As a first step to strengthening national child protection systems in West and Central Africa, UNICEF WCA-RO, Plan International, Save the Children International came together in 2009 with national partners to initiate a regional child protection systems mapping, assessment and analysis exercise in five pilot countries: Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone (conducted by Child Frontiers).

These countries and others completed a mapping of their national system and are using this evidence to influence advocacy, strategic planning and programming. A 5-country multi-country analysis of the pilot countries was undertaken, which highlighted common gaps and opportunities for systems strengthening in the region.

For further information see http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/overview_6588.html

- As different systems exist alongside and interact with each other it is important for the child protection system to establish clear **boundaries**. Identifying boundaries focuses the system and defines its structures and functions, the necessary capacities and resources to enable it to operate in an optimal way and the management and governance of the system. In broad terms the boundaries are the limits to what is included within the scope of the child protection system.
- The boundaries of the system also **define the range of services or continuum of care that the system commits to deliver for children**. This promotes greater accountability: if the different actors know what they are responsible for then it is easier to hold them to account.

Box 4: Importance of both formal and informal actors

Terre des hommes believes that child protection systems need to include both formal and informal actors, and that the system is the **interconnection of two equally important parts - the formal and the informal**. The system is made up of both and they need to be given appropriate value. Establishing compatibility and synergies between the formal and informal parts of the system is essential if the system is to be effective in protecting children.

Under the leadership of government the **formal aspect** of the system organises roles, relations, resources and activities which are essential to fulfil children's rights to protection. Nevertheless, this formal aspect is too often thought to be the child protection system in its entirety, leading to a marginalisation of informal actors. It is impossible for formal structures to be effective at all times and in all places.

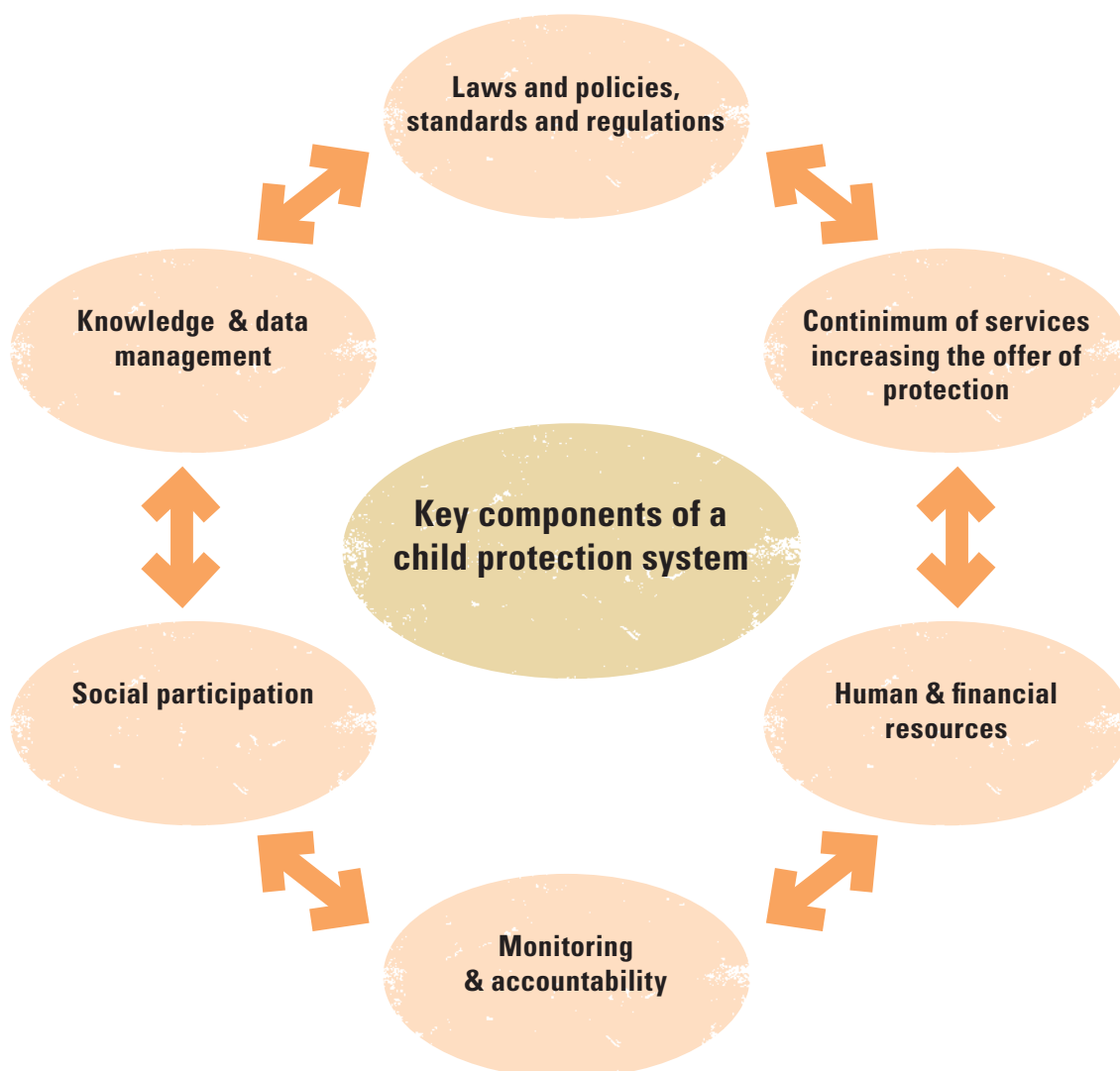
The **informal aspect** of the child protection system is critically important and in many of the contexts where Terre des hommes is working it is often more accessible to the majority of children, and regarded as more trustworthy and reliable. Safe children live in safe communities and it is essential that the capacities of informal actors and stakeholders (including children and families) are harnessed to increase the protection to children. Unless the formal and informal sides of the system are well-linked or connected there is a danger that they will work in parallel or even contradict each other.

Key components of a child protection system.

Despite differences in terminology between different organisations and varying ideas of how to define a system, there is broad agreement that child protection systems need to include the following components:

- **Legal and regulatory framework:** A legal and regulatory framework typically outlines the laws, policies, services delivery protocols and standards, and roles and responsibilities (mandates) of different actors involved in the protection of children. The legal and regulatory framework provides the 'blue print' for the system and defines and shapes the other components. Legal and regulatory frameworks generally reflect the principles of international laws such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as national and customary laws. It is essential for this framework to be designed for and fit with the context in which the system is to operate. Otherwise it will probably not be seen as relevant.
- **Structures:** These are the organisations or mechanisms that take on the responsibility for implementing the system and are responsible for - among other functions - providing leadership, promoting coordination, decision making and planning. At a national level the lead role for the child protection systems normally rests with government through a ministry or national committee with designated responsibility for children. The structures also include the different types of service providers or organisations providing financial and technical support.
- **Continuum of services:** The child protection system needs to outline and commit to providing a continuum of services capable of delivering better protection outcomes for children. These are often described as ranging from *prevention* services through to *response* services. Ideally the system will strive to prevent children from being exposed to violations of their protection rights but there will unfortunately always be a number of children who need specialised services to help them overcome traumatic situations and ensure they are safe in the future. Important decisions and choices have to be made about how the system will balance the need to both prevent and respond to child protection problems.
- **Monitoring and accountability mechanisms:** The child protection system needs to be able to assess if it is delivering on its stated objectives. Monitoring mechanisms will help to provide the information required to see if the system is functioning and delivering better outcomes for children, identify challenges and inform how these challenges might be addressed.
- **Human and financial resources:** In order to operate in practice the system needs to be supported by well trained and supported staff and appropriate financial resources. Plans for strengthening the system need to consider and allocate the necessary resources to allow the system to work in practice. Without such investment the system will not be sustainable.
- **Social participation:** Involving children, families, communities and civil society will enhance the overall effectiveness of the child protection system. Through social participation the system will create awareness about protection concerns or risks and the types of services offered to children. Social participation also helps service providers and decision makers to understand the perspective of communities on child protection issues. By taking these perspectives into account the system can ensure its relevance or legitimacy in the eyes of the people it is designed to support.
- **Knowledge and data management:** Decisions about the goal and vision for the child protection system should be based on learning and evidence so that the system is grounded in the contextual reality of where it operates.

Figure 2: Key characteristics and components of a child protection system.



Examples of guiding principles:

- Targets all children
- Rights based
- Non-discriminatory
- Evidence based
- Context relevant
- Balances prevention & response services
- Culturally sensitive
- Promotes equity
- Gender sensitive
- Etc.

Key features of the system:

- Synergies or Inter-relationships
- Perspectives
- Boundaries





A photograph of a lush green field of plants, likely a vegetable garden or farm. In the background, there is a building with a doorway and some trees. The foreground is filled with dense green foliage, and a small portion of a person's hand is visible on the left side.

Section II: Putting the Terre des hommes approach to systems into practice.

The purpose of Section II is to build on the background knowledge outlined in Section I and to give guidance on how the systems approach will be put into practice through Terre des hommes' programmes.

Applying a systems approach has a number of implications for how Terre des hommes will engage in child protection work. The organisation's approach has shifted and it is important for all programme staff to be clear about the changes required and the results Terre des hommes expects to achieve. Moving towards a systems strengthening approach may also require new working relationships, partnerships and alliances.

The section is divided into a number of sub-sections including:

- The results Terre des hommes hopes to achieve
- The added value of Terre des hommes
- Linking thematic programmes to the systems approach
- Evolving approach to working in partnership

Some of the points are illustrated at the hand of four case studies of programmes which contribute to strengthen the child protection system in the respective country. These are all Terre des hommes programmes. Of course, other agencies are implementing programmes which aim to strengthening the system but because the move to a systems approach is relatively new, the learning from these programmes is not always widely published. As this body of knowledge develops, experience from the field will contribute to further guide programme staff in implementing a systems approach.

The section ends with a summary of the main points to be considered when developing or reviewing programmes for enhancing child protection systems. They also help organisations to think systems throughout their protection intervention.

Box 5: Overview of Terre des hommes interventions in systems strengthening

Terre des hommes programmes that contribute to national child protection systems are currently concentrated in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, namely in Albania, Kosovo, Romania and Moldova. An internal meta-assessment (unpublished) of these programmes was conducted at the end of 2012 to better understand the work done by Terre des hommes regionally and to analyse the extent to which they contributed to the development of child protection systems. The assessment concluded that all four country programmes improved the functioning of the child protection system in a number of concrete ways. These included:

1. **Institutionalising nationwide the models of intervention piloted** during the programme, seeking through advocacy to improve the national legal framework and the linkages between the system at national and regional level.
2. **Enhancing the capacity of state social service providers** through coaching and training of social workers; development of mentoring capacities of their supervisors; and information and management tools. In Albania and Kosovo, the projects also aimed to improve the implementation and monitoring of standards of care in residential institutions.
3. **Improving the response to child protection cases** by facilitating joint interventions by child protection actors (social workers, education staff, police, justice, health, etc.) through piloting and supporting multi-disciplinary case management groups and linking state actors to community based organisations and groups (such as from the Roma community).
4. **Strengthening the ability of staff in the educational system** (the most developed state agency at local level in the countries reviewed) to identify children in need of protection. A curriculum was developed for school psychologists and their role was explored, psychosocial activities for children at risk were developed, the relationships between school children and parents were enhanced through school based activities and steps were taken to prevent children dropping out of school.

It is important to note that many of the programmes reviewed as part of the meta-assessment were initiated prior to the development of the Thematic Policy, Enhancing Child Protection Systems. As a result, they have been adapting to the emergence of system strengthening as an organisational priority and identifying entry points for working through this approach. Nonetheless, they are still having a positive impact on the systems which is likely to increase in the future as country programmes develop their strategic plans specifically around systems strengthening.

The results Terre des hommes hopes to achieve.

In working in system strengthening, Terre des hommes has identified the main components of the system as elaborated in Section I, and decided to focus on four of them. According to the thematic policy, these are: knowledge management; the establishment and monitoring of policies, laws and standards; the expansion of the offer of protection; and social participation. By prioritising these four areas, Terre des hommes contributes to delivering a number of results. These results will be achieved by working in partnership with national governments, other child protection actors and communities.

Child protection systems strengthening activities will be designed to contribute to achieving the following:

- Legal and regulatory frameworks for child protection strengthened and supported by the structures, guidelines and standards for service provision. The expected results will only be achieved if laws and policies are actually implemented, resourced and enforced to deliver better protection outcomes for children.
- Improved coordination within a common vision of the system enhances opportunity for more effective protection outcomes for children. Child protection actors are not only working more closely with each other but also working in greater harmony with other relevant sectors, e.g. health, justice and social protection.
- Formal and informal parts of the child protection system are interconnected and working together to prevent and respond to child protection issues. For Terre des hommes both the formal and informal parts of the system are important and need to be integrated into a single vision for the system.
- Realistic and effective budgeting and financial management procedures in place. A detailed analysis of the resources required by the system has been undertaken and is used to coordinate and secure the resources for the system to deliver on its stated commitments to children. Systems strengthening processes need to be based on what is viable or what can realistically be done with the level of resources available in a given context.
- The capacity of child protection actors built and delivery of quality services in a context relevant and appropriate manner. Work in partnership is needed to undertake analysis and develop plans to build the capacity of all of the child protection actors. Terre des hommes has identified its relative position and the specific way it coordinates support to this process in collaboration with others. Moreover, in order to provide effective support to its partners, Terre des hommes will also need to look at its own internal capacity. The systems strengthening approach requires expertise beyond technical child protection skills.
- Increased and more equitable access to services delivered on the basis of common standards and processes across the system. Regardless of geographic location or which service provider might be responsible, children are receiving the same range and quality of support.
- Children, families and communities empowered to play a more active role in child protection. Policy makers and service providers value and take into account their perspectives and ideas about how child protection issues should be addressed. Achieving this will improve the effectiveness of the system and ensure that the services it provides are seen as relevant or useful to children, families and communities.
- Effective management procedures established and supporting constant improvement and increased efficiency across the different components of the system at all levels. Child protection systems operate at national, sub-national and local or community levels so oversight mechanisms are necessary to maintain the functioning of the system. This includes ensuring that appropriate indicators are established in order to guarantee the accurate monitoring both of the situation for children and also the effectiveness of the system in operation.

Case study 1: Developing a child protection safety net in Albania.

Summary of the context

Following the successful implementation of two programmes focused on child trafficking, Terre des hommes Albania began implementing a 'Child Protection Safety Net' programme in 2011. This programme involved supporting the establishment of Child Protection Units in areas where Terre des hommes was active. Although initially established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 2005, Child Protection Units were only made a legal requirement in 2010.

Recently, many agencies working in Albania have increased their focus on child protection issues. A National Council for the Promotion of Children's Rights was established and a new law on child protection drafted. The coordination body that proved effective in curbing child trafficking, United for Child Care and Protection (more commonly known as BKTF), was reconstituted to deal with child protection issues in general.

This group recognised the need to maximise their collective resources and to develop a joint strategy for strengthening the child protection system. As part of this strategy it was agreed to provide support to the Child Protection Units and to ensure that these were functional across the country and to advocate for the adoption of a systems strengthening approach.⁵

Programme result areas

The programme achieved a number of results including:

- **Enforcement of laws, rules, procedures and standards for service provision.** This was achieved through the development of a national protocol for protecting children and the formal recognition of the Child Protection Units and their establishment in each municipality.
- **Enhanced cooperation between child protection actors:** This was achieved through the establishment of child protection network meetings at local and national levels.
- **The training of practitioners and the improvement of service quality:** A national in-service training curriculum was developed in conjunction with the University of Tirana. All child protection agencies are now able to avail of this training programme and which includes a specific focus on minimum standards for service provision.
- **Increasing the financial resources available for child protection.** The legal recognition of the Child Protection Units has helped in terms of providing a more solid basis for fund raising to support the services provided by the units.

Lessons for wider application

- The programme reflects the value of **working collaboratively with other actors to increase impact, sustainability and scale.**
- **Joint approaches require compromise** and this takes time in order to build consensus and develop a shared vision to achieve greater collective impact.
- **Seizing opportunities for system strengthening as they arise by being flexible and adaptable.** For example, the development of a national curriculum was not something which was originally planned but will ultimately have an important outcomes in terms of improving service provision.

⁵ BKTF is the acronym for this group based on its name in Albanian.

The added value of Terre des hommes.

Many of the leading child protection agencies are now developing their child protection strategies around a systems approach. Like other similar agencies, Terre des hommes has an important role in coordinating and working with partners to strengthen the child protection system in its programme countries. Terre des hommes has reflected upon what the organisation can bring or where it can add value to efforts to strengthen child protection systems. This includes:

- Close connection to communities. This asset enables Terre des hommes to understand more about the nature of child protection issues and how they might be addressed in a way that is relevant and appropriate to the context. This experience and learning helps Terre des hommes to engage in advocacy and sharing lessons learned at national level.
- Technical and programmatic knowledge on child protection based on the organisation's work in range of different contexts and countries. Terre des hommes has a wealth of experience in the area of child protection and a willingness to reflect on, learn from and share this experience. Terre des hommes is aware of the limitations and challenges that face child protection programmes and is willing to change and develop new strategies and approaches that can deliver better outcomes for children.
- Existing experience of systems strengthening. The systems approach may be new to child protection but Terre des hommes has considerable experience of working on systems in other sectors including health and justice systems. Child protection programmes can therefore tap into and learn from this experience and apply it to their system strengthening work. As explored later in this section, Terre des hommes also has a growing experience of specific systems strengthening programmes.
- Commitment to developing strategic alliances which are fundamental to applying a system approach in practice. No single organisation can seek to strengthen a child protection system on its own. Terre des hommes understands this as a fundamental principle of a systems approach and will increasingly collaborate with government partners, United Nations agencies, civil society organisations and communities. This builds upon already established relationships.

Case study 2: Promoting case management through partnership in Burkina Faso.

Summary of the context

Terre des hommes has been working in Burkina Faso since 2002, particularly with domestic migrant girls, children working in the mines and minors in conflict with the law. Until 2009, Terre des hommes teams were engaged in direct support of cases in collaboration with State services and welfare associations. However increasingly State institutions in Burkina Faso are taking over their responsibilities and a variety of services related to the protection of children are currently run by them. In addition the country has also a very engaged civil society and for all these reasons, Terre des hommes gradually shifted its strategy by prioritizing partnership and working for national actors of child protection.

Together with Terre des hommes, the main actors in the protection of children in Burkina Faso, led by the Ministry of Social Action, convened the Working Group on the Protection of children (WGES) and launched an initiative to strengthen the national child protection system for children. Guidelines for this work were established from a study commissioned by the WGES. This study highlighted the need to strengthen the capacity of social services by a technical support, as well as resources and financial assistance. In the context of the strengthening of the technical capabilities, Terre des hommes launched the case management approach in 2011 – which has now been adopted country wide.

Programme results area

The programme is working towards, achieving a number of results, including:

- **Development and introduction of standardised protocols.** Two years of testing of the case management protocol gave the possibility to refine it and the current protocol is expected to be validated and approved nationally by the Ministry of Welfare at the end of 2014. The work so far included also training together and advocacy for necessary resources and appropriate budgets to be allocated to the relevant ministries to support individual cases.
- **Establishment of child protection networks.** Both to increase coordination and ensure follow up of cases, and that community resources are mobilised. This is necessary due to the lack of access to formal services (ie distance) and to increase protection within communities
- **Phasing out reliance on outside support.** As part of the support to the strengthening of the operational capacities of social services, motorcycles, computers, fuel and communication costs are granted each year to increase the quality of interventions. As part of the longer term planning the responsibility for identifying these resources through the child protection system is being transferred to the Ministry of Social Action.

Lessons for wider application

- **Validation is essential!** Whatever the relevance of an initiative and the involvement of stakeholders in the field in charge of its implementation, the lack of validation and appropriation by the different levels of decision-making at central level can undo years of efforts and human, material and financial investment.
- **Learn from others** – experiences from one country, if properly adapted rather than just transplanted, not only capitalise on existing knowledge but also act as powerful arguments for showing ‘what can be done’.
- **Use evidence of change** – some of the most persuasive ways of encouraging systems change, including entrenched opinions of staff, is to show the results of new professional practices in terms of the difference made to children and families.
- **One off training is not enough.** Strengthening the capacity of social workers through a system of continuous training and coaching; and linking this to institutions (such as universities) is important in order both to ensure quality and sustainability of the social services workforce.

Linking thematic programmes to the system approach to child protection.

Traditionally child protection programmes have tended to address issues or themes by focussing on specific categories of children or child protection issues.⁶ The move towards a systems approach in child protection has left some people wondering if any there is still a role for thematic programmes in the future.

The simple answer is that there is still space for thematic programmes within a systems approach. Terre des hommes, like many other child protection organisations, continues to implement programmes targeting specific groups of children or thematic protection issues. While the systems approach takes a longer term view to ultimately having a sustainable system that will protect all children, it is recognised that there are groups of children who are especially vulnerable to certain risks and in need of protection now. For example, when a specific child protection concern exists on a large scale or there is political motivation to tackle a specific issue then it might be necessary to still work on a thematic issue.

If such situations arise, the point is to work in a way that will ultimately contribute to system strengthening in the longer-term. To do this means:

- Investing further in those elements of programmes that have the potential to benefit all children: Child protection staff need to move beyond only responding to specific thematic issues and consider how their decisions about child protection activities can support the right to protection of all children. Children, regardless of their personal circumstances or geographical place of abode, need to be able to access and rely on support from services on the basis of need.

- Situating thematic programmes within the vision for the child protection system: Thematic programmes should be planned for, designed and implemented within the framework of the overall system. Essentially this means that they should not be undertaken as standalone activities and should clearly identify how the programme contributes to the process of systems strengthening, even if systems development is at an early stage in the country. This is possible since there are a number of underpinning principles that apply to all systems so even if the system is under development and not fully defined decisions can still be made.
- Identifying the entry point for child protection system strengthening programmes: Choices will have to be made about which parts of the system are most in need of attention or whether focusing on particular components might have a larger impact across the system as a whole.

The child protection systems in various countries may be at very different stages of development. Some will be primarily on paper - with laws and policies but no resources to implement them. Others may be operating but limited to a response in only the extreme cases. Staff will need to design programmes based upon a detailed analysis of the current system: legal and policy framework; level and distribution of services; and key challenges or gaps.

Existing thematic programmes help in conducting the above-mentioned analysis. Through them, the organisation has developed also its institutional know-how and expertise and this entry door entitles the organisation to work in strengthening the overall system

⁶ For example protecting children on the move, children lacking parental care or children in conflict with the law.

- Testing the way the child protection system works through thematic protection programmes: Working on a thematic programme, for example alternative care, can help to build a picture of how the overall system is functioning in practice. This information can then be used to identify strategic entry points for making improvements not only in one part of the continuum of care but across the system as a whole.
- Increasing the scale and sustainability of outputs and achievements: For Terre des hommes the systems approach presents an opportunity for sharing the best examples of child protection programmes and demonstrating how these might be of benefit for wider application. New and more innovative approaches are now needed to ensure that Terre des hommes can demonstrate the effectiveness of the activities it supports and then advocate with government and other partners about the benefits of these being up-scaled.

Terre des hommes can also explore opportunities for developing and testing models and projects with other child protection actors. The challenge is to avoid competition or duplication between individual organisations. By working more closely with other child protection actors, Terre des hommes will be able to generate a sound body of evidence about what works in practice.

The switch in emphasis is to now 'think systems' at all stages of the programme cycle. It is also important to build upon the existing and not create additional structures or parallel processes for addressing child protection issues. In all contexts some form of child protection mechanism or system exists at either the formal or informal level. Whatever exists needs to be understood and analysed to see where Terre des hommes can add value to contributing to its development. Understanding how communities deal with protection issues (sometimes referred to as endogenous practices) and the challenges facing formal service providers will also help to tailor programmes and keep them contextually relevant.

Case Study 3: Using a thematic programme to strengthen the state run protection services in India

Summary of the context

Several studies have recognised Andhra Pradesh as the state that contributes most to the problem of child trafficking in India. The state is considered as a point of origin, transit and destination for trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, labour and domestic work.

According to the Indian Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act of 2000, Child Welfare Committees are the sole authority to deal with children in need of care and protection. The Department of Women and Child Development in Andhra Pradesh also runs nearly 30 Child Care Institutions which care for trafficked children. Assessments have highlighted that these institutions lack many services, staff have inadequate skills and the institutions are not child-friendly environments.

Responding to this situation, Terre des hommes developed a programme to strengthen the child protection system through the enhancement of structures including the Child Welfare Committees and Child Care Institutions. The programme plans to reach out to Child Welfare Committees in the 11 most trafficking prone districts of Andhra Pradesh and the 9 institutions with the highest number of trafficked children.

The Department of Juvenile Welfare under the Department of Women and Child Development is a significant partner in the programme. The project is being implemented through partnership with HELP (a local NGO) which has been working on anti-trafficking issues since 2000. Over the years, HELP has been able to build a solid relationship with government partners, and is regularly consulted about policy issues and programme issues relating to anti-trafficking.

Programme result areas

The expected results of the programme include:

- Strengthening capacities of agencies to respond to child protection issues: Better case management is necessary to decrease average stay in institutions. This will be achieved through training, mentoring and the establishment of a helpline for staff.
- Development of standards, procedures and protocols to support the operation of the Child Welfare Committees and improve the quality of services. This will also include support for the Department of Juvenile Welfare to carry out inspections and the allocation of appropriate budgets.
- Monitoring and data collection including training to use a database developed by the National Informatics Centre of the government of India.
- Acting as a template for other children in need of protection by reaching out to other categories of children who have experienced different forms of violence and abuse. The expectation is that by improving services for one discrete category of children this practice can be further developed as a model for working with all children in need of protection.

Lessons for wider application

The programme has only been running for one year, but lessons so far include:

- Ensure that partners are included from the beginning in developing the strategy, taking into account partners strengths and weaknesses. The selection of HELP as a partner was based both upon their experience and existing capacity, but also upon their ability to influence policy and procedure.
- If the programme is to achieve its objectives it is important to ensure that there is a clear focus on supporting and developing the capacities of programme staff.
- Although the programme targets a specific category of children, the intention is to develop and test protocols, procedures and ways of working that can be rolled out across other parts of the child protection system.

Evolving approach to working in partnership.

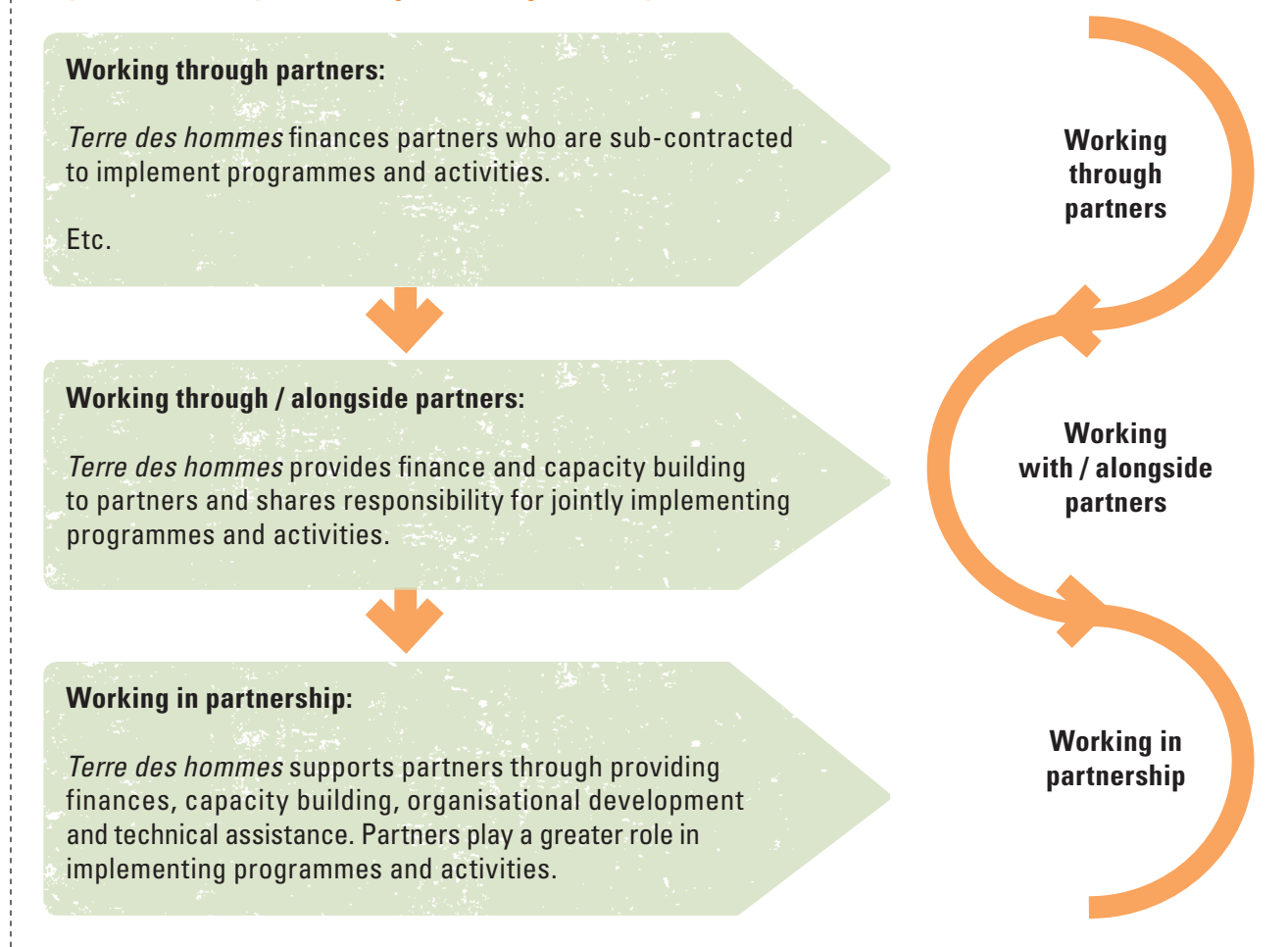
A number of references have already been made to the importance of working in partnerships as a core principle of the systems strengthening approach. In the past, Terre des hommes either carried out work directly, or if the organisation did work with civil society organisations or community groups this was through a subcontracting arrangement. Work was done on behalf of Terre des hommes and while some capacity building may have been undertaken the support provided was primarily financial. The emphasis was on meeting programme objectives, rather than on capacity development of the partner organisation.

Terre des hommes approach to working with others has already gradually moved towards working with or alongside partners. Having a greater role in programme implementation had benefits in terms of building relationships with target communities and for developing a more in-depth understanding of local contexts.

One of the challenges of working in this way is to avoid Terre des hommes staff taking on responsibility for implementing activities, with local partners playing a more passive role. As a result, this undermined the capacity of local partners to take on the full responsibility for implementation and decreased the sustainability of the programme.

More recently, greater emphasis has been placed upon working in partnership. This approach is characterised by a greater sense of equality between Terre des hommes and local NGOs, government ministries, civil society or community groups with which it works. It goes beyond achieving the objectives of specific projects towards exploring how Terre des hommes can have a more sustainable impact on the organisations it works with and can leave a legacy beyond the programme in terms of capacity development and strengthening of local partners. Working in this way is consistent with a systems approach to child protection.

Figure 3: Evolving nature of partnership working ⁷.



Working in partnership focuses more on supporting the development of partners, both technical child protection skills and also organisational development (such as governance structures, financial and human resource management). As well as developing the capacities of partners, systems working also requires *Terre des hommes* to build strategic alliances and joint programmes of work with other international NGOs, government counterparts and United Nations agencies.

The development of strategic alliances need to focus on working with other child protection actors but also with allied sectors, such as health and education. For example in Burkina Faso, the introduction of a health screening programme led to wider debates about the protection of

children generally. This in turn has led to wider discussions as to how the child protection system needed to be enhanced to address child protection more effectively.

In considering potential partners child protection staff will need to analyse the benefits or opportunities that working with these partners will give for improving the system. Depending on the context some groups are likely to be more influential in affecting change than others. These may be representatives of the formal or informal side of the system. Programme staff will therefore need to consider potential partners in a strategic manner and identify who the organisation needs to work with in order to deliver better protection outcomes for children.

⁷ The scheme and theory on partnership are inspired also by the work of Handicap International. See Stephannie Zigler, Guide for Handicap International Staff, Capacity development and partnership Overview and Methodology, Handicap International, 2008, available at : http://www.handicap-international.de/fileadmin/redaktion/pdf/renf_cap_eng.pdf

Case study 4: Capacity building in Moldova.

Summary of the context

Moldova remains one of the poorest countries and children, particularly in rural areas, experience substantial barriers to services, while their quality remains poor. High numbers of children are left alone or with the elderly by migrant parents. In the first two decades of independence, the government response to the needs of children was defined by budgetary constraints, a strong focus of the social sector on poverty reduction, and fragmented “sectorial” approaches resulting in multitude of strategies and action plans that lacked coordination and implementation. Gradually, since 2013, the Government has been placing a higher value on system wide protection and promotion of the rights of the child.

Against this backdrop, Terre des hommes’ role and activities to strengthen child protection system have also been evolving. In 2007-2009 work focused on community level interventions and support to local authorities in case management. In 2010, the scope of work broadened, focused on strengthening the child protection capacities of district authorities that manage the community professionals in health, education, police, local public administration and social assistance sectors.

In 2014, the Government of Moldova approved a pilot project on application of a revised case management protocol. Terre des hommes together with its partners embarked on its national roll-out, aiming to ensure that all authorities have basic knowledge on the protocol, as well as tools and templates needed during the case management.

Programme results area

The programme has, or is working towards, achieving a number of results, including:

- **Production and implementation of laws, rules, procedures and standards** together with the participation of key actors in advocacy actions.
- **Increased cooperation** between services, sectors, structures and bodies to support the provision of safety nets in given settings, and in all protective environments for children.
- **Training of practitioners to improve service quality.** By the end of 2016, at least 550 district representatives in the 27 Moldovan districts will have the basic knowledge about inter-agency guidelines. This is being delivered through modules developed in line with the approved training curriculum set out in the inter-agency protocols.
- **Interconnection of the formal and informal parts of the protection system.** This also included greater empowerment of children, families, and communities through opening 36 self-sustaining child friendly facilities, operated by community schools. These facilities help strengthen families’ resilience and capacity to get out of the social exclusion circle. Monitoring and feedback received indicates that where the facilities operate they are seen as the main place where children communicate with adults and where child needs can be identified and solved or referred for assistance.

Lessons for wider application

- **Efforts should be made to build integrated and holistic systems** which are designed to protect all children from harm. Often referral schemes and interventions are designed for very narrowly defined categories of children in need and as a result, some children and their carers can fall through the cracks.
- **Meaningful system change is complex, takes time, and requires flexibility** of both donors and partners. A positive donor- NGO partnership, where the donor can take a longer term view on the programme determines whether a programme delivers only short term gains, or is genuinely contributing to wider systems development.

The essentials of a systems strengthening approach to child protection.

Understand the context and build upon existing resources – both formal and informal

- Ensure that all programmes are developed on the basis of a detailed analysis of what already exists in terms of formal and informal protection mechanisms.
- If this information is not already available then it may be necessary to conduct research. Ideally, this might be undertaken jointly with other child protection agencies (for example, to undertake a mapping of the national child protection system).
- Avoid developing child protection programmes on untested assumptions, for example regarding cultural practices or the ways families support each other (or don't). This needs to be avoided.
- Build upon what exists and avoid creating unnecessary structures or parallel processes.
- The Terre des hommes priority focus areas for systems strengthening should be aligned with the vision for the national child protection system. Consider the vision for the system and how work in the focus areas can support the system development
- If no national vision or strategy is in place then Terre des hommes might consider supporting the development of such a strategy in coordination with others and especially the government. This is an important advocacy function.

Always think systems and establish partnerships – systems strengthening is a collective effort

- Think systems all stages of the programme cycle. Even if working on a thematic issue frame it within the context of the wider system. Think about how the activities the programme supports can benefit all and not just specific categories of children.
- Where possible work with others through partnerships or close co-ordination and think strategically about picking partners who have influence on the formal and informal components of the system.
- Provide support to both informal and formal child protection actors – they are equally important and working!
- Build the capacity of Terre des hommes programmes staff to ensure that they can provide good quality technical or other forms of support to partners.

Sustainability and up-scaling must be viable and grounded in demonstrable evidence

- Think about impact and up-scaling or how to build the evidence that will support a project or programme for wider application (for example what is needed to support a locally based project to be considered as a model at a national level). Small one off projects or limited geographical activities should be avoided generally.
- Balance your activities between supporting different components of the system (laws, policies, services, etc.) and the need to develop interrelationships or synergies between these components. A system is more than the sum of its parts!
- Don't just generate knowledge but ensure that it is used! Research, evaluations, assessments and such, are only really useful if they have an impact on how child protection activities are undertaken.



A woman with blonde hair tied in a ponytail, wearing a pink sleeveless shirt, is leaning forward and interacting with a group of children outdoors. She is holding up her hand, possibly showing something or gesturing. In the background, a young boy in an orange sleeveless shirt and grey shorts is looking towards the camera. Another child in a red shirt is partially visible behind him. A man in a white and blue plaid shirt with 'SAD' and 'ENGINE' printed on it is standing behind the woman. The setting appears to be a grassy area with some buildings in the background.

Section III: Learning more about the systems approach

The purpose of this part of the guide is to give an overview of additional reference materials and resources on a systems approach to child protection. It is included to help programme staff deepen their knowledge by encouraging them to manage their own learning and engage with how other child protection organisations are also applying a systems approach in practice.

It is worth restating that although there is still no internationally agreed definition of just what constitutes a child protection system some common thinking is beginning to emerge. There are now a number of interesting inter-agency initiatives at national, regional and global levels that are trying to ensure that child protection actors are sharing and consolidating thinking, learning and practice. Ultimately, child protection organisations will need to find ways of coordinating and harmonising their different approaches, especially when working together to support a national child protection system.

Several documents are highlighted in this Section and are presented in terms an overview of their contents, a summary of key points of interest and also a number of bullet points outlining why the document might be useful or relevant for the child protection programme staff. A summary table of further readings is also included at the end to guide programme staff to additional readings that they also might want to explore.

The process of selecting the documents was guided by a number of criteria. In assessing different documents particular consideration was given to documents that would in some way complement this guide or give additional details on topics and issues that have maybe only been dealt with in a general way. The documents included here were selected based on how they:

- help to clarify concepts relating to the systems approach to child protection
- provide guidance or approaches that can be applied to programmes
- contain case studies or illustrative examples
- contain information relevant to the Terre des hommes approach to system strengthening
- reflect the views and perspectives of a range of different actors including national governments, international and national civil society organisations, etc.

This review of useful documents is by no means exhaustive. Terre des hommes is not suggesting the documents presented here are examples of best practice. There are a wide range of different organisations developing position papers, programme tools and other documents relating to system strengthening. This ever expanding body of information is all equally relevant and provides all organisations involved in child protection with the opportunity to learn from each other. The intention here is just to give programme staff some additional reading to supplement information contained in this guide.

Rough Guide to Child Protection Systems, Save the Children, 2009

Overview

This document aims to set out in a clear and accessible fashion just what child protection systems are, why they are necessary and what this might mean for child protection programmes. The authors of the guide acknowledge that there is currently no agreed definition of child protection systems but that there is an emergence of some common thinking about what the systems approach entails and that the 'rough guide' is an attempt to summarise some of this thinking in a single place. The document also stresses that issue-based approach still has a role to play as they can be integrated into "local or national child protection systems as important inputs to delivering children's rights to protection"⁸.

Key points of interest

- This guide states that systems are made up of components including a "strong legal and policy framework for child protection, adequate budget allocations, multi-sectorial coordination, child-friendly preventive and responsive services, a child protection workforce, oversight and regulation, robust data on child protection issues, etc"⁹.
- The section on 'basic questions' helps to clarify both the 'common' or inter-agency thinking that is emerging on the system approach while at the same time highlighting some of the on-going debates.
- Sections two and three are useful for the way in which present different elements or components of the system but also raise 'practical' steps for strengthening systems.
- The guide outlines a number of interesting points that should help child protection workers to engage in discussions about systems strengthening regardless of the context in which they are working.

Why you might find this document useful?

- This document contains many similar ideas to the Terre des hommes Enhancing child protection system policy.
- The paper notes that child protection systems "are seen as a more comprehensive, adaptable and sustainable response to child protection failures. However, the two approaches – issue-based programming and service provision and the systems approach – are not mutually exclusive".
- The paper also notes that "Issue-based approaches address the specific needs of individual vulnerable groups while the systems approach addresses key issues in the vitally important 'infrastructure' of child protection (e.g. laws, policies, standards, regulation, multi-sectorial coordination, human resources, and funding)".

You can access this document by clicking the following link:

<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/rough-guide-child-protection-systems>

⁸ Save the Children, Rough Guide to Child Protection Systems, Save the Children, London, 2009

⁹ Save the Children, Rough Guide to Child Protection Systems, Save the Children, London, 2009

The Child Protection Programme Strategy Toolkit, UNICEF, East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2007

Overview

This toolkit was designed to help support the implementation of what was in 2007 a new child protection strategy for UNICEF in the East Asia and Pacific region. This strategy was based around the decision to move away from focussing on 'specific manifestations' of child protection concerns. The strategy recognised that *"strengthening or creating those systems will produce more fundamental and tangible impact in terms of solidifying a protective environment for all children"*¹⁰.

The purpose and the structure of the toolkit *"was to help UNICEF officers understand the systems-building approach, how to apply it within a national context and how to use it with government and civil society counterparts as well as other partners. The Toolkit focuses on the practical work of UNICEF staff in the building up and strengthening of the three categories of systems, by assessing: the existing systems (judicial, legal, child and family welfare, etc. in whatever way a government has organised them); identifying gaps in terms of child protection; selecting approaches and programming"*¹¹.

Key points of interest

- The toolkit notes that the principal means for establishing a protective environment for children can be categorised into three core 'systems' for children and families that:
 - o sensitise the public on the behavioural changes need to better protection children
 - o create the official basis for prevention and response by enabling legislative and regulatory frameworks
 - o mechanisms – prevention and response services, both formal and non-formal
- The toolkit links theory to practice and provides useful guidelines on how to go about strengthening a number of different components of the child protection system.
- The toolkit discusses in detail the issues of the 'theory of change' in terms of moving from thematic programmes to the systems approach.

Why you might find this document useful?

- The sections on the theory and practice of implementing child protection systems are likely to be useful for anybody working on child protection systems.
- Even though it was developed in 2007, this document is still one of the most comprehensive attempts to develop a practical guide to the implementation of child protection system. It also acknowledges that is a living document and that constant adaptations would be required as experience of working on systems developed over and coincidentally a revised and up-date version is due to be completed in 2014.
- The toolkit contains both theory and practices, with the practical checklist likely to be of use for field level child protection staff. These cover a range of different issues including juvenile justice, case management role of child protection, etc.

You can access this document by clicking the following link: ¹²

http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Protection_Toolkit_all_Parts.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Protection_Toolkit_all_Parts.pdf

¹¹ http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Protection_Toolkit_all_Parts.pdf

¹² An up-dated handbook style version of this resource should become available by the end of 2014.

Policy & Programming Resource Guide for Child Protection Systems Strengthening in Sub-Saharan Africa, Interagency working group on child protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2011¹³.

Overview

This guide was developed to *“provide policy makers and programmers alike with a menu of tools and resources designed to assess systems, plan for strengthening interventions, implement activities and monitor and evaluate for success”*¹⁴. The guide outlines a four stage activity cycle for systems strengthening that includes mapping and assessing the system, planning for system strengthening implementing plans, programmes and policies and monitoring and evaluation of the system performance.

Key points of interest

- The section on mapping and assessing the system contains a range of tools that can be accessed to support general systems mapping as well as looking at different components of the system in greater detail.
- Section II focusses on planning for system strengthening and highlights a range of different planning tools. The tools reviewed should help policy and decision makers to undertake more effective and comprehensive strategic planning processes.
- Building on the first two sections, the third section highlights resources to assist in the development of guidelines, standards and coordination models for service provision.
- The final part of the resource focusses on tools that can help in monitoring whether the system is working in practice and delivering on its stated commitments for children.

Why you might find this document useful?

- The resource guide contains a lot of references to different publications and tools that are useful for applying the systems approach in practice.
- The structure based around the activity cycle helps the reader to search for papers or tools in a clear and targeted manner.
- The document is structured in a user friendly format and each section is introduced by a useful summary page that explains the four different stage of the cycle for action.

You can access this document by clicking the following link:

http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Policy_and_Programming_Resource_Guide_for_CP_SS_9-2011.pdf

¹³ This resource can be downloaded as a pdf file but really works best when you are connected to the internet as the links in the different sections can be accessed taking you to the resources that might be of interest.

¹⁴ Policy & Programming Resource Guide for Child Protection Systems Strengthening in Sub-Saharan Africa, prepared by Training Resources Group on behalf of the interagency working group on child protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2011.

Analysis, Design and Planning Tool (ADAPT) for Child Protection, World Vision International, 2012.

Overview

This resource was designed to help child protection staff to identify and understand the root causes of child protection issues and in so doing to help them to make decisions on priority areas for action. The resource was designed to specifically to assist with understanding child protection systems in more detail and especially in terms of mapping the different components of the system that are in place.

Divided into two main sections, the first of these focusses on a national level child protection analysis and the second part focussing more on an analysis of child protection issues at a local level. Each of the two main sections are further sub-divided with part two focussing on the 5 different steps for undertaking and sharing analysis.

Key points of interest

- Useful explanation of how World Visions conceptualises and approaches child protection systems strengthening.
- Contains a lot of practical tools and activities for use with different groups of stakeholders
- Has sections on how to improve child and adult participation in defining their child protection concerns and how these might be addressed.
- Highlights a number of ethical issues for consideration when undertaking analysis with different stakeholders
- Explains the different steps involved in the process of analysis
- Presents a schedule and guidelines for training groups on how to use different tools and activities.

Why you might find this document useful?

- A very practical guide for undertaking analysis on child protection issues including national and local level child protection sections.
- Contains guidance on how to increase social participation by involving partners and community members in the analysis process.
- The resource should assist programme staff in understanding more about the formal and informal sides of the system and ensuring that their strategic decisions making reflects the context in which they are working.
- The range of tools and activities included can be applied to other uses beyond the process of analysis.

You can access this document by clicking the following link:

<http://www.wvi.org/child-protection/publication/adapt-child-protection>

Case Management & Child Protection: The role of case management in the protection of children: A guide for policy & programme managers and caseworkers

Overview

The case management guidelines were developed to provide “a general framework of agreed principles, considerations, steps and procedures for effective child protection case management in line with the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)”¹⁵. Developed for use in humanitarian settings, the guidelines are also likely to prove useful to child protection workers involved in establishing/improving case management procedures in a range of other contexts.

The guidelines are divided into three main sections including **Section 1 – Principles & Practices, Section 2 – Implementing Case Management Services, Section 3 - Case Management Steps**. The guidelines outline a generic approach and guidance for case management and stress that further adaption is required to support their application at a national level.

Please note that Annex 2 contains a suggested curriculum for social workers, developed by Terre des hommes, which may also be of use to programme staff.

Key points of interest

- These guidelines are a useful point of reference for exploring the role of case management as a key process within the framework of child protection systems.
- They not only provide clarification and guidance on the process of case management, outlining key steps and processes, etc., but also explore the process of setting up or strengthening case management and the implications of adopting case management for a range of different actors across the child protection system, including governments, service providers and communities.
- The guidelines are a practical tool that raise the key issues and considerations that need to be address if case management is to become more effective and lead to better outcomes for children, families and communities.

Why you might find this document useful?

- Ensuring more effective case management procedures is one of the key reasons for Terre des hommes adopting the systems approach to child protection.
- This resource provides useful and very relevant guidance and food for ‘thought’ about the case management process and should prove useful for both frontline workers and their supervisors.
- Effective procedures for case management are also indicative of two of the other main reasons identified by Terre des hommes for strengthening child protection systems – namely promoting coherent and coordinated management of resources and guaranteeing the durability of protective actions.

You can access this document by clicking the following link:

Please note at present the guidelines are in the advanced stage of publication but have not yet been issued. They will be available to download from www.cpwg.net

¹⁵ Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Child Protection Working Group, 2012

Measuring and Monitoring Child Protection Systems Proposed Regional Core Indicators for East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF, 2012

Overview

This is the third resource in a series that was developed to try and improve how the systems approach to child protection is applied in practice. The report highlights the importance of developing a strong evidence base in order for governments and their partners to be able to advocate and fundraise for the implementation of an effective national child protection system. The report also highlights the fundamental role that monitoring plays in measuring or assessing how the child protection system is functioning. The report outlines seven different domains and the indicators that need to be tracked in order to understanding whether a national child protection system is delivering better outcomes for children. These domains include the child protection policy framework; public financial management; human resources child protection; statistics and information; child protection system coverage; surveillance, gate keeping, referral and quality assurance; and public attitudes and values.

Key points of interest

- A very comprehensive discussion of a wide range of different indicators that can be built into monitoring and evaluation frameworks for national child protection systems.
- In addition to discussing the role, purpose and benefits associated with the systems approach, the report also explores in detail the links between child protection systems, governance and public financial management.
- The different components of the child protection system are discussed in detail and especially the inter-relationships between them. This is useful in terms of illustrating different areas for action or targeting programmes.
- Though developed for the east Asia and Pacific region, the seven domains and the supporting indicators are likely to prove relevant (with adaptation) for a range of different countries and contexts.

Why you might find this document useful?

- Terre des hommes needs to be able to demonstrate impact and this report outlines and discusses a wide range of indicators that are relevant to the Terre des hommes approach to system strengthening.
- The seven different domains and the supporting indicators are very consistent with the key results that Terre des hommes hopes to achieve through systems strengthening.
- This resource provides a useful discussion on the importance of resource management - both human and financial- for the system approach.
- The seven different domains are illustrative of the need to ensure that different parts of the system are functioning together and influencing each other.

You can access this document by clicking the following link:

http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Measuring_and_monitoring.pdf

Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies through Community Based Mechanisms – A discussion paper. Child Protection Working Group, 2010.

Overview

The purpose of this discussion paper is to “review experience and further the understanding of how community-based child protection mechanisms can contribute to strengthening national child protection systems in emergencies”¹⁶. In noting that the system-strengthening approach is an ‘organising principle’ to protect children not only in emergencies but also in development contexts, the paper notes that countries with a stronger pre-existing system are better able to deal with emergencies than countries where the system is weak.

Key points of interest

- This paper states that a “system is deemed to have been strengthened if there is evidence of, for example additional capacity, improvement in the quality of processes and services, expanded reach, integration or coordination of mechanisms that were previously separate improvement in the functioning of processes and mechanisms”¹⁷.
- The paper also notes that emergencies can provide an opportunity for ‘building back better’ by addressing weaknesses in the child protection system that existed prior to the emergency.
- The paper identifies seven factors that influence the effectiveness of such mechanisms across all contexts. These are building on existing resources, resources (human and financial), links across the system, community ownership, support from community leaders, management of issues of power, diversity and inclusivity, and child participation.

Why you might find this document useful?

- The seven factors that influence the effectiveness of a child protection system are also broadly speaking very consistent with the Terre des hommes enhancing child protection systems policy
- The paper contains a number of interesting case studies that provide useful insights and are relevant for a number of different contexts in which Terre des hommes is working.
- Many of the recommendations are also likely to prove relevant for the work of Terre des hommes and in this way the paper can be used to ‘cross-reference’ or check the organisations approach to link communities or the informal parts to the overall system.
- As an organisation Terre des hommes is committed to working with both the formal and informal parts of a child protection system and this is what makes the lessons learned and recommendations about working with community mechanisms particularly relevant.

You can access this document by clicking the following link:

<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/strengthening-national-child-protection-systems-emergencies-through-community-based>.

¹⁶ The Save the Children Fund, Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies through Community Based Mechanisms, Save the Children, London, 2010.

¹⁷ The Save the Children Fund, Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies through Community Based Mechanisms, Save the Children, London, 2010.

Additional Resources.

<p>Tool kits & frameworks</p>	<p>“Children at the Center: A guide to supporting community groups caring for vulnerable children.” Save the Children, 2007. http://www.crin.org/docs/Children%20At%20the%20Centre%20Text.pdf</p> <p>Research Manual: Child Protection Systems Mapping and Analysis in West and Central Africa Phase II Child Frontiers August 2010: http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/overview_6415.html</p> <p>A Framework for the Protection of Children, UNHCR, 2012. http://www.unhcr.org/50f6cf0b9.html</p>
<p>Theoretical, academic & discussion papers</p>	<p>Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations, Wulczyn et al., 2010. http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Adapting_Systems_Child_Protection_Jan__2010.pdf</p> <p>A better way to protection all children – the theory and practice of child protection systems conference report 13-16th November 2012, New Delhi, India. United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Save the Children and World Vision 2013. ¹⁸ http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/better-way-protection-all-children-theory-and-practice-child-protection-systems-conference</p> <p>A Systems Approach to Child Protection, A World Vision Discussion Paper, World Vision International, 2011. http://www.wvi.org/child-protection/publication/systems-approach-child-protection</p> <p>Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa - A working paper, Inter-agency Group on Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa, 2012. http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening_child_protection_systems_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_-_August_2012_.pdf</p> <p>“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”, Wessells, Mike, 2009. http://www.ohchr.org/DOCUMENTS/ISSUES/VIOLENCEAGSTCHILDREN/VACCOMMUNITY_FULLREPORT.PDF</p> <p>Conference Report on child protection systems strengthening in sub-Saharan Africa, Dakar, Senegal, 2012. http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/Dakar_CPSS_Conference_Report_V1.1-FINAL.pdf</p>
<p>Web-based resources</p>	<p>Better Care Network www.bettercarenetwork.org Child Protection Working Group www.cpwg.net Children Protection in Crisis Learning Center www.cpcnetwork.org</p>

¹⁸ Support for this conference was provided by the GHR Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development.

Annex 1: How some other organisations define child protection systems.

As mentioned several times throughout the guidelines, at present there is no standard definition for a child protection system.

The slightly differing descriptions hint at some aspects of the ongoing debates regarding the conceptualisation of what constitutes a child protection system. It is true to say that there is some divergence of opinion among actors / stakeholders particularly with regards to whether broader social protection (such as financial aid) is also included, or whether it is limited strictly to those issues / services which relate to the protection of children from harm.

These descriptions are included here so that, if they wish, programme staff can reflect further on the Terre des hommes definition of child protection systems and how this compares with other organisations. This might be especially useful when working in a multi-agency way or in partnership to ensure a shared understanding.

Box 7: Examples of other common definitions of child protection systems¹⁹

UNICEF

Child protection systems comprise the set of laws, 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 risks²⁰.

Save the Children

Essential components of such a system include: laws and policies; a meaningful coordination across government departments and between sectors at different levels; knowledge and data on child protection issues and good practices; minimum standards and oversight; preventive and responsive services; a skilled child protection workforce; adequate funding; children's voices and participation; and an aware and supportive public²¹.

UNHCR

The “systems” approach comprises a coordinated and inter-related set of legislation and policies, services and capacities needed across a range of sectors at national, local and community level to strengthen the protective environment around all children. Furthermore, it requires the implementation of all necessary processes and procedures that are necessary to generating a real assistance when it comes to protecting a child²².

World Vision

A set of coordinated formal and informal elements working together to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence against children²³.

¹⁹ This box has been adapted from Terre des homes ‘Thematic Policy, Enhancing Child Protection Systems’, 2012.

²⁰ Child protection strategy, UNICEF, 2008

²¹ Fact sheet on national child protection systems in Swaziland, Save the Children, 2010.

²² Protecting children of concern through a systems approach, UNHCR, 2010

²³ A Systems Approach to Child Protection, A World Vision Discussion Paper, World Vision International, 2011.

Annex 2: Suggested training for social workers / child protection staff.

This outline of a training programme for social workers / child protection workers was originally developed by Terre des hommes Albania (with Stephanie Delaney) and elaborated for wider use by Maria Bray (Terre des hommes). It should be noted that it is a guide only. The specific training needed will be determined by the nature of the child protection system that is defined (for

example if the emphasis is on community resolution of problems then more emphasis will need to be placed on working with communities). A careful assessment of existing capacities and learning needs is also required before designing / implementing structured training in country.

Sub Module	Topic Area / Objectives
1.a. Principles, ethics and values guiding CP work	<p><i>A number of ethical considerations are key :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and understand CPW ethics • Clarify and understand CPW roles and responsibilities • Evaluate participants own values and principles and identify any potential conflicts and tensions that might arise • Working with supervisions and accessing support to prevent burnout
1.b. International and national legal framework	<p><i>The legal framework sets the context for the work of protecting children. This sub-module should explore the main concepts and provisions within National and international law to protect children.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define child rights and explain their relevance to child protection work • Identify the key international legal standards for protecting children and explain how these are connected to national law and policy frameworks
1.c. Existing Social services and multidisciplinary work	<p><i>Working together collaboratively is a fundamental principle of good practice in child protection, and a core element of national child protection systems. This module considers the importance of multidisciplinary working and some of the factors that impinge on its success.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the importance of interagency working in relation to child protection and review the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders involved • Introduce an existing mapping/coordination tool or develop one • Practical skills for facilitating inter-agency collaboration and managing a case management meeting
1.d. Knowledge of target group	<p><i>It is essential that social workers have in-depth knowledge of the population they are working with in term of norms, values and cultural beliefs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the main developmental milestones for children • Explore the importance of relationships and adults in the life of children • Understand the different styles of parenting and how these affect the life of the child, and their behaviour • Define resilience, and its importance, and identify strategies for enhancing resilience (protective factors) • Identify, and understand the specific nature of conceptions of childhood, caregiving and problem solving that operate within the communities

1.e. Understanding Child Abuse & Protection	<p><i>For children to be safeguarded, it is essential that workers have a good understanding of the child protection concerns. This needs to be not only in terms definitions but also with regards to daily experiences of children</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the phenomenon of child abuse, including the social and environmental factors and dynamics that perpetuate abuse • Define 'child abuse' and its manifestations from with reference to international standards and national law • Identify and explore the signs and symptoms of abuse – considering its impact on children • Identify situations of immediate risk • Understand vulnerability and risk factors
2.a. Assessment	<p><i>Assessment is a critical skill for workers. Without it, decision making and plans may have little impact on the life of the child and their family. In order to promote good outcomes for children, assessments must be based on the individual needs of children, not predetermined by services available. Furthermore, careful management of risk is necessary to safeguard children.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the assessment process – including , principles, types and dimensions of assessment • Examine risk, and risk levels and assess protective factors, including the positive attributes of children and their families / communities • Consider the importance of analysis and decision making in relation to the development of plans for children (best interest determination) • Effectively engage children and families during the assessment process (interviewing techniques, manage disclosure etc.) • Explore different tools that can be used to gather information during the assessment process • Consider the key observation skills necessary when visiting families and practice skills
3.a Community Mobilization	<p><i>Community collaboration in responding to the protection of children</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to engage with communities (eg who are key community actors? what are the main dangers? what are the protective factors?) • Supporting community awareness and action for protecting children • Learn and test participatory methodologies
3.b. Empowerment of children and families	<p><i>Children and families have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Social workers need to understand how to promote the participation of children and families in order to ensure that they are empowered to be agents of change in their own lives. In addition, workers need to be able to communicate with and support children. This module considers some of the processes involved, and gives an introduction to the necessary skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop capacity to better communicate with children and families • Explore the dynamics of 'helping' children and the process involved • Examine the concepts of child participation and child involvement, in-

3.c.. Family Support	<p>cluding marginalised children (e.g. children with disabilities, street children etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how to empower children and increase their abilities to keep themselves safer (tools) • Explore the concepts of 'peer support and the basic principles involved • Identify conflict resolution methods • Identify mediation techniques
4.a. Case management ²⁴	<p><i>Early intervention is an important feature of a child protection system, on the continuum of intervention. Intervening early, when risks are identified, can prevent situations becoming worse and risk levels rising. Being able to offer early intervention to families is an important prevention strategy for workers to acquire</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine interventions that can be useful when working with families to manage difficult situations in order to limit impact upon the child • Explore how resources within communities can contribute to effectively supporting children and their families • Explore the reasons for family visits and how to manage visits successfully • Positive parenting / discipline, and how to give advice to caregivers
5.a. Specific target groups that may need to be addressed	<p><i>It is important that workers feel confident in dealing with situations where there are high levels of risk. This module explores the key processes and stages necessary when providing protective services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the purpose of the case management process • Explore the principles to be taken into account during the development of individual care plans (key steps) • Explain the importance of monitoring care plans, and processes for doing so, how to evaluate change in relation to individual protection plans • Explore the importance of appropriate record Identify the circumstances under which closure of a case is appropriate and the way to proceed
5. b Specific issues that may need to be addressed in situations of conflict or natural disasters	<p><i>According to programmes specific issues may arise that need additional knowledge.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with street and street working children • Working with children on the move • Working with children in situation of labour • Working with children victim of trafficking • Working with young girls pregnant or with children • Prevention and response to commercial sexual exploitation and abuse • Understanding alternative care • Working with the juvenile justice system • Working with separated and unaccompanied children • Working with children associated with armed groups (CAAFAG) • Monitoring and reporting of violations of children's rights MRM) • Psychological First Aid

²⁴ Since this module requires participants to integrate all the knowledge from previous modules it can also be considered as a useful refresher.

Impressum.

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