A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO CHILD PROTECTION

A World Vision Discussion Paper

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Introduction

World Vision is committed to protecting children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence, and has chosen to utilise a systems approach to strengthen the protective environment around children. This paper explains World Vision's understanding of a **systems approach to child protection**, its concept of a **child protection system** and key implications for programming.

UN calls for systematic approach to child protection

Over recent years there has been a growing recognition of the limitations of a fragmented approach to child protection, which traditionally focused on specific child protection issues. The report from the UN Secretary's Study on Violence Against Children recommended that 'all States develop a multi-faceted and systematic framework in response to violence against children which is integrated into national planning processes.'[1] This was re-emphasised in the *Machel Study 10-Year Strategic Review,*[2] which recommended the development of national systems and capacity building to protect children against violence, exploitation and abuse following the departures of international actors in emergency and conflict-affected situations. Since then, numerous agencies, such as UNICEF, Save the Children and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have been investing considerable energy and resources in defining and implementing a systems approach to child protection.[3] This paper explains World Vision's understanding of a child protection system and a systems approach to child protection. While the perspectives in this paper are similar to and influenced by those articulated by other organisations, this paper has also sought to reflect World Vision's unique identity and opportunities. It is hoped, therefore, that this paper will contribute to the ongoing fruitful dialogue between agencies, organisations, governments and other stakeholders about a systems approach to child protection.

A systems approach to child protection requires a considerable conceptual shift from the traditional stand-alone programming focus on particular groups of children in need of protection, to the achievement of more sustainable, comprehensive and long-term responses to child protection issues. A systems approach addresses child protection more holistically, brings greater focus on prevention, and strengthens the critical roles and assets of the key actors responsible for child protection. These key actors include government, civil society, parents, caregivers, families and other community structures – which together provide formal and informal child protection mechanisms and services. World Vision's child protection programmes have been a part of strategic systems strengthening work with governments in some national offices through law reforms, institutional care reform, capacity enhancement, research, and community awareness raising and mobilisation campaigns. The systems approach to child protection is, therefore, not necessarily a radical change in World Vision's work practice, but it does provide a comprehensive framework across national offices and across the organisation as a whole to strategically plan and consolidate work in child protection to achieve sustainable child well-being outcomes.

A family in Vietnam celebrate their child's success.

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[1] P.S. Pinheiro, *World Report on Violence Against Children* (2006), UNICEF p18.

[2] UNICEF, *Machel Study 10-Year Strategic Review: Children and Conflict in a Changing World* (2009), pp100–101.

[3] UNICEF has published *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts & Considerations,* Chapin-Hall (2009); *Protection System: Comprehensive Mapping and Assessment Toolkit* and *A Concept Note on Child Protection Systems Monitoring and Evaluation,* Chapin-Hall (2010). Save the Children Fund has published several papers on child protection systems and child protection systems in emergencies. To access these resources, go to **http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/**. UNHCR's ExCom Conclusion on *Children at Risk,* No. 107(LVIII) - 2007 addressed child protection systems.

Adoption of a systems approach to child protection

For World Vision, a systems approach to child protection is critical to achieving its ministry goal of 'Sustained well-being of children within families and communities, especially the most vulnerable.' All children need a strong child protection system – and this is particularly important to the most vulnerable children, since they are usually more at risk of abuse, exploitation or neglect. A systems approach to child protection also utilises World Vision's agreed programming approach, integrating and connecting advocacy, humanitarian emergency and long-term development programming while working at all levels of the ecology of the child. **The main aims of a systems approach are to strengthen the protective nature of the environment around children and to strengthen children themselves, in order to ensure their well-being and fulfil their rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence.**

Adopting a systems approach does not eliminate the need for some specific issues-based programming targeting the most vulnerable children. A systems approach to child protection is sufficiently flexible and robust to implement a wide range of interventions for the benefit of all children in various situations, while simultaneously addressing, promoting and advocating for the interests of significantly under-represented, marginalised or vulnerable children in a particular situation or context. Even when focusing on a particular child protection issue, a systems approach seeks to do the following:

- address child protection issues in a comprehensive and sustainable manner
- affirm the role of parents and caregivers as the first responsible for care and protection of children
- affirm the responsibility of states to guarantee the care and protection of children, through respecting, protecting and fulfilling children's protection rights outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international human rights instruments
- strengthen the protective environment for all children.

Definition and understanding of a child protection system

Each nation's child protection system is unique and made of formal and informal elements appropriate to its context. *Formal elements* are established or sanctioned by the government and guided by laws, regulations and policies. *Informal elements* do not have state/government mandates for protective functions. Instead, they are shaped by attitudes, values, behaviours, social norms and traditional practices in society. The boundaries between formal and informal elements will depend on the particular country context. For example, some of the formal elements of the system, such as services, may be provided or implemented by non-state/informal providers. Where the government has no capacity or fails to put in place adequate protective services and mechanisms, civil society or other bodies may act on their own to fill in the protection gaps, or may be requested by the government to do so. However, even where the formal elements of the system are strong, the informal elements still play a significant role in ensuring that children are protected.

There is no universal consensus on the definition of child protection systems. However, based on current child protection discourse, literature review and internal values and reflection, World Vision has come to the following definition.

A **child protection system** is a set of coordinated formal and informal elements working together to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence against children.

World Vision's understanding of a child protection system consists of seven elements and five main types of actors:

Actors

Family

Child

Community

International

State

6. Circle of care   7. Child resilience

2. Services   3. Capacities   4. Coordination   5. Accountability

1. Laws, policies

Elements of the system
formal and informal
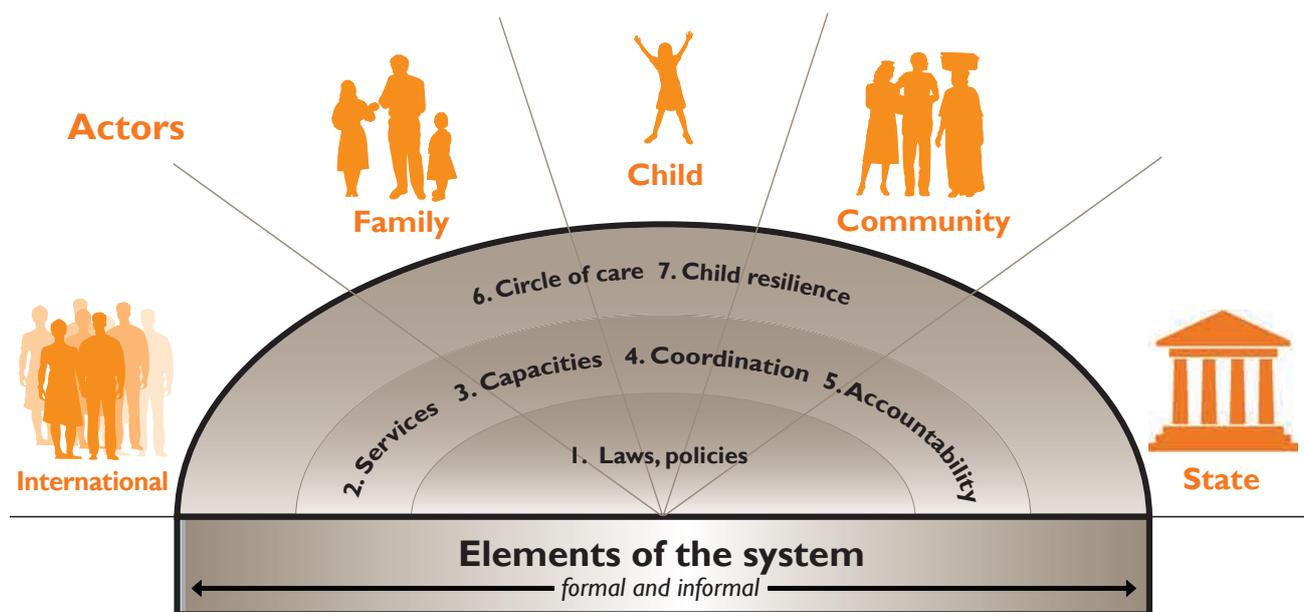
Figure 1: The seven elements and five main types of actors of the child protection system

The next two sections of the paper explain the elements and main types of actors.

Elements of a child protection system

1. Laws, policies, standards and regulations determine the system's structures, mandates and functions

Formal examples of this element

- International child protection laws comprising:
  - human rights instruments (e.g. CRC)
  - international humanitarian laws (e.g. Geneva Conventions)
  - international customary laws

- Regional human rights instruments

- National laws and policies:
  - family law, social protection law, criminal law, etc.
  - policies and regulations for children in need of care and protection, children in conflict with the law, children with disabilities
  - national plans of actions/strategies
  - birth registration and nationality rights

Informal examples of this element

- Customary laws related to child protection

Albanian children addressing Parliament, government and media regarding child rights and the need for adequate protective legislation.

2. Services and service delivery mechanisms which provide protection for children

Formal examples of this element

- Ministries of social welfare, education, health, justice; agencies focused on implementing child protection services

- Services in the continuum of care and protection: prevention, protection, restoration and reintegration

- Processes of care and protection: government-supported or -mandated identification, reporting, referral, investigation, assessment, treatment (e.g. hospital, psychosocial or rehabilitation care), follow-up

- Family and social care and support services (including institutional care)

- Implementation and enforcement of children's inheritance rights

- Social protection programmes, including safety nets for poor families and tax credits for children

Formal elements can include services provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) when NGOs are contracted or formally mandated by the government to provide services.

Informal examples of this element

- Informal community-based referral and reporting mechanisms, kinship care, family mediation and other alternative dispute resolution processes

- Support and mentoring services for children and families provided by faith-based groups

A Cambodian girl who was sexually exploited shares her feelings with a social worker.

3. Capacities to provide and perform the child protection services, including capacity building, human and financial resources, and adequate infrastructure

Formal examples of this element

- Adequate number, capacity and skills of relevant professionals in child protection – e.g. social workers, teachers, healthcare workers, judiciary, legal and law enforcement workers, local authorities and community leaders

- Ability of professionals working with or in contact with children to identify children at risk or those experiencing violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation and report it

- Adequate national budget allocations for child protection institutions and services

- Availability of adequate facilities for protection services (e.g. building and equipment)

Informal examples of this element

- Ability of parents/caregivers to protect children in their care from violence or exploitation

- Capacity of volunteer community-based child protection groups or child/youth clubs

- Capacity of religious leaders or groups to engage in child protection

- Donor understanding and resourcing of child protection system approaches

- Community funds for child protection functions

- Capacity and attitude of civil society, popular culture, etc., to ensure extended family, friends, and neighbours notice and respond to vulnerable children

Case Study: Collaboration and networking of various child protection service providers (World Vision's Mongolia office)

The first time Tsetseg, a 17-year-old girl, became a victim of sexual abuse was when a young man, her cousin, sexually abused her. There was further abuse when another man, who lived on the same premises as her family, used to take Tsetseg to the storeroom and sexually abuse her there. This happened during a difficult time in her life, and as a result, she dropped out of school. The only person she ever told of her sexual abuse was Erdene-jargal, a Child and Family Information Centre (CFIC) social worker.

Erdene-jargal met Tsetseg in 2002, when a group of children from the CFIC found Tsetseg and brought her to the centre so that she could get help. 'When Tsetseg arrived at the CFIC for the first time, she looked exhausted,' said Erdene-jargal. 'I myself have brought many children to the Child and Family Information Centre for help, but Tsetseg was the worst case I have ever seen.' Erdene-jargal said one of the first characteristics that she noticed about Tsetseg was that her countenance was downcast. She looked very sad. She had scars on her face from the physical abuse she had received. Erdene-jargal said that in the beginning Tsetseg was very closed and introverted and did not want to interact with anyone. And at that time, Tsetseg felt incompetent and had no purpose in life. 'I like to spend my free time at the Child and Family Information Centre,' said a shy Tsetseg, rubbing her arms. Since Tsetseg has been coming to the CFIC, she has been communicating well with others. Today, Tsetseg is more confident and can make decisions on her own. 'If Tsetseg had not gone to the CFIC, then she would never have been able to enter secondary school,' said Dulmaa, her mother.

Tsetseg has finished a one-year cooking course through the network of organisations working with youth. Recently she successfully completed a one-year building course. (In Mongolia, it is not unusual to find women working in the building industry.) During her summer vacation, she worked as a builder, and as a result, she was able to receive an income. This temporary job has given her a lot of encouragement, boosted her morale and increased her self-esteem. Tsetseg comes from a poor family, and she is now also helping her family financially. She keeps 30 per cent of her income and gives 70 per cent to her parents. 'She has always been hardworking and helpful,' her mother confirmed.

4. Cooperation, coordination and collaboration mechanisms ensuring that all elements of the systems, formal and informal, across different sectors and levels (global, national and local) work in a holistic and coordinated manner to ensure protection of children

Formal examples of this element

- Vertical interaction within ministries with clear mandates and official reporting lines

- Framework for horizontal interaction between government ministries and departments and international entities on related child protection work

- Cooperation and collaboration structures or agreements regarding protective services, such as referral and response mechanisms

Informal examples of this element

- Networks, informal coordination mechanisms, and agreements amongst civil society, NGOs, formal community-based organisations (CBOs), academic and human rights institutions, private sector and relevant international entities; with linkage to formal systems where appropriate

- Multi-stakeholder coordination structures which connect local initiatives and actors to strengthen child protection

Case study: Towards the end of sexual cleansing (World Vision's Zambia office)

Sexual cleansing is a common traditional cultural practice throughout Zambia, though rituals differ from one ethnic group to another. It is believed that this practice removes the spirit of the dead from a living spouse, and if it is not done, then when the widow or widower remarries or has sex with someone else, both will become incurably insane. Children are often used in sexual cleansing because of their innocence, making them vulnerable to sexual abuse, HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases. Community child protection committees were equipped to lobby traditional leaders to eliminate this deeply rooted traditional practice. Because of these efforts in Keembe Area Development Programme (ADP), a by-law was enacted in December of 2009 that outlawed sexual cleansing. In April of 2010, Teddy, a rural farmer and chairperson of his local committee, faced a huge challenge when a 10-year-old boy named Peter was given the task of having sex with a widow who was old enough to be his great-grandmother. 'When I heard about it, I quickly mobilised some of our committee members, and we used the by-law on sexual cleansing to safeguard Peter's health. The family accepted that such cultural practices not only spread diseases like HIV and sexually transmitted infections, but also promote promiscuity among children who we expect to be the leaders of the future,' he said.

From *Vulnerable Child Advocacy Case Studies from Pilot Countries, World Vision International,* October 2010.

5. Accountability mechanisms to ensure that the system is effectively responding to key child protection concerns and functioning according to the CRC, relevant laws and in the best interest of the child

Formal examples of this element

Child protection standards

- Child protection standards of care and code of conduct for government ministries, institutions (schools, care facilities, juvenile detention centres), professionals, para-professionals and those in direct contact with children; mechanism for monitoring the standards

- Child protection accreditation/registration schemes for continual professional education

Reporting on child protection issues

- Local complaints and response mechanisms

- Annual reports to Parliament and other high-level governance bodies

- Country reports to UN treaty bodies (including the UN Human Rights Council) and Committee on the Rights of the Child

- Independent reporting

- Human rights institutions and children's ombudsperson

- Alternative NGO reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Research in child protection

- National surveys and studies

- National databases on child protection to monitor trends, evaluate, etc., and to feed back into the system

Informal examples of this element

- Memorandum of associations/rules of conduct, etc., of civil society associations, faith leaders working with children, youth clubs and other community organisations

- Alternative NGO reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on child protection issues

- Media reporting

- Academia research and critique

- Civil society or public monitoring of behaviours and services of duty-bearers in the child protection system

- Children's agency and participation on protection issues – e.g. Children's Parliament (this can be a formal element if it is mandated by the government)

- Public awareness of children, families, stakeholders and general public of protective services so they are able to hold duty-bearers accountable

- Efforts to make complaints mechanisms/hotlines accessible and well known to all children

Child Parliament in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

6. Circle of care includes positive and protective attitudes, values, behaviours and traditional practices; and a caring, supportive and protective immediate social environment

Bolivian family enjoying their time together.

Informal examples of this element

- External assets* related to support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time

- Early childhood care and development practices

- Discipline practices

- Traditional care or protection practices

- Inclusive and gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours in children's immediate environment

- Open dialogue environment on child protection issues

- Sensitised public regarding child protection issues and practices

- Religious teachings on child protection and care

- Attitudes and behaviours of service providers and authorities in direct interaction with children

- Attitude towards education for all children, and development of life skills and resilience in children

*See http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets for more information.

7. Children's resilience, life skills and participation which strengthen children's ability and opportunity to contribute to their own protection and that of others

Formal examples of this element

- Safe inclusion of children in:
  - local governance procedures related to child protection issues
  - reporting processes to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on child protection matters
  - the design, monitoring and evaluation of child protection services
  - all matters affecting their protection, according to their evolving capacity
- Children have access to:
  - complaint and redress mechanisms
  - free, inclusive and compulsory education that includes life skills development

Informal examples of this element

- Internal assets* related to commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies and positive identity
- Community view of youth
- Youth engaging in acts of service for individual and community needs
- Weight given to children's voice in family and community
- Ability of children to identify abuse and know where to go for help

*See **http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets** for more information.

Case study: A local Children's Parliament is enhancing child protection (World Vision's Kenya office)

Located in Kaloleni district in Mombasa, Kenya, Kaloleni Children's Parliament was founded to ensure children's direct participation in making valuable input in designing community initiatives that address their well-being. The Children's Parliament is a community participation structure that unifies all the other child participation forums in schools within the ADP. Its membership is drawn from forums such as Rights of the Child Clubs, Adventure Unlimited Clubs, and Peer Educators Clubs, among others. Forty children are nominated by their peers from these community participation forums to represent them in the Parliament. Here, children get the rare opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences on matters affecting them with a view towards charting a way forward in improving their plight. While in Parliament, they get to learn from each other in an interactive forum, where they debate and carry out discussions on various motions and go on exploratory tours, where they get exposed to many challenges and experiences of other children. The main objectives of the Children's Parliament are to promote participation of children in key decision-making processes on issues affecting them; to empower them to be their own advocates on their rights; to create a forum for children, community and leaders to be sensitised about the rights and responsibilities of children; to develop their individual and collective talents for personal and communal good; and to encourage involvement of children in design, monitoring and evaluation of community, national and international programmes/projects that have direct effect on them. Among the many issues that they address and are familiar with are their fellow children not being taken to school, child labour, child sexual abuse, early marriages and other child protection issues. The children have learned their rights so well that they train other children in their schools and in other schools on their rights and how to air their views, even as they work as a link between the government and the community.

Main types of actors in the child protection system

The multiple elements of a child protection system operate at different levels of the ecology of the child, from the micro to the macro level. World Vision represents this ecology of the child in the following diagram:[4]

| **child** | **micro**
 most important relationships, such as parents, siblings and peers | **meso**
 direct influence such as early childcare, school, church, child clubs | **exo**
 indirect influence such as parents' work, access to services, PTAs* | **macro**
 such as economy, culture, and religious historical, and political issues |

*Parent-Teacher Associations
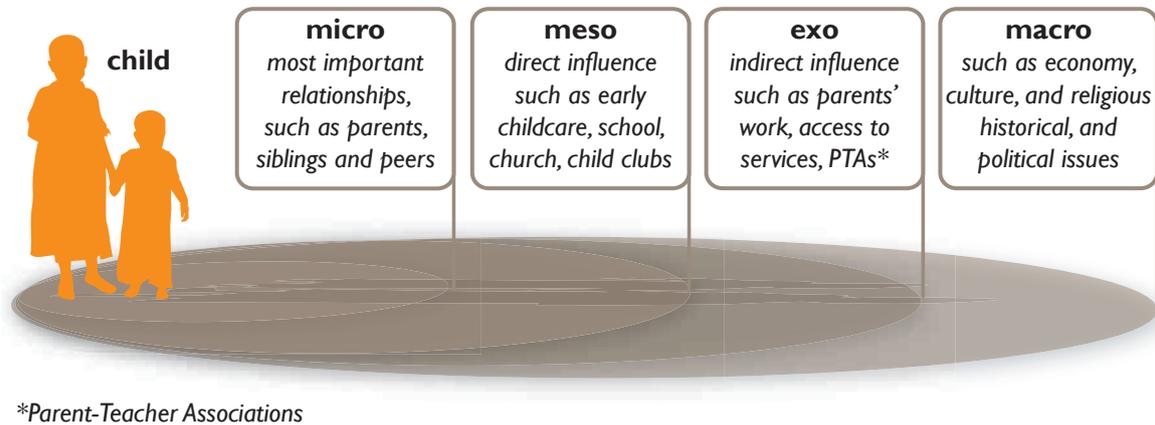
Figure 2: The ecology of the child

Children's well-being depends on their relationships with others and the social, political, spiritual, physical and environmental contexts in which they live. The ecology of the child shows us the different levels and types of influence on a child's development and protection, from the closest (e.g. families and peers) to the farthest (e.g. political and cultural systems and structures). World Vision has identified five main types of actors in the child protection system which have an impact on various levels of the ecology of the child. (See Figure 1.)

The five types help to conceptualise different contributors and roles in the child protection system, and recognise different entry points for impacting the child protection system. Each type of actor might cover multiple levels of the ecology of the child. Also, these categories are not mutually exclusive – some people or institutions might fit in more than one type of actor. Below is a brief explanation of the five main types of actors in the child protection system.

The child

The child is the focus of the child protection system, as well as an important actor in the system. The effectiveness of the system is ultimately measured at the level of the child – whether children are safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence. Children are also one of the actors in the system, and as such have a role to play in their own protection. Life skills and spiritual development can build children's capacity to make good decisions, influence their environment positively and build resilience to difficult situations. Their innate skills of self-protection, plus their growing capacities to manage themselves and influence their environment, mean that they are able not only to protect themselves but other children as well. It also means that they are equally able to do harm to other children.

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[4] World Vision International, *Child Well-Being Reference Guide* (2011). **https://www.wvcentral.org/cwb/Pages/Events.aspx**.

A Systems Approach to Child Protection

Family

The family often plays the most influential role in the quality of care and protection that each child receives. The role of the family is determined through the knowledge, attitudes, capacity and beliefs of each family related to the care and protection of children. However, families rarely operate outside community boundaries and are critically influenced by local culture, including traditional attitudes, behaviours and practices. It is important to recognise local cultural understanding of the definition and roles of family, as well as the protective roles and responsibilities of families. For example, in some cultures the extended family has a critical role to play in the protection and care of children, and gender often determines different roles which are played within families.

Community

In communities, both formal and informal elements are at work, and their combination will depend on the particular context. In places where the government system is decentralised, the presence of formal system elements such as special police forces or services may be greater. In other contexts, the informal elements may be dominant. For example, in many communities where World Vision works, there are informal child protection committees, youth clubs or other structures that perform prevention and protection functions. This level includes most

Members of a Child Protection Committee in Uganda.

civil society organisations as well as businesses. Individual community members also have important roles to play in the protection of children, whether as neighbours, mentors, friends or other positive figures. Community members and families together also have a critical role in building assets which will help children to thrive while also preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation.

State

The state is a critical actor, given its role and responsibility in the implementation of children's rights to protection, which are articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The majority of formal components of the child protection system are put in place and implemented by the government authorities at different levels; however, the state is strongly affected by informal elements of the child protection system. This level includes people hired by the state who have roles to play in the protection of children, including teachers, health workers, police and others.

International structures and actors

International structures and actors play a significant role by supporting the implementation of child rights to protection and holding states accountable as duty-bearers pursuant to the CRC and other international rights instruments. They often do this through establishing mechanisms for reporting, review, monitoring and evaluation, complaints, and limited redress. The international entities also contribute to the development of research, data analysis, information and database management, and advocacy campaigns. Some entities, such as UN entities, act as lead agencies to coordinate efficient and effective responses in emergencies.

International child-focused NGOs are also actors in the child protection system. They often are an actor in the informal elements of the system, as they advocate and build capacity of children, family members, partners and government to fulfil their responsibility in protecting children. In some rare cases, NGOs might be part of the formal elements of the child protection system if they are providing services under the formal mandate of the government. International NGOs must be careful not to contribute to the creation of parallel, competing, non-sustainable structures in child protection systems. This is prevented through ensuring that their work is sufficiently rooted in collaboration with the government and communities.

Cooperation, coordination and collaboration

A child protection system is not only multi-level and multi-dimensional as described above – it is also multi-sectoral. This is why collaboration and coordination is a critical element of child protection systems. While it is clear in the formal health system that the national Ministry of Health is the lead ministry and all relevant health institutions fall under its regulations and jurisdiction, this is not the case for the child protection system. The lead national government ministry for the child protection system is often the Ministry of Social Welfare, but not all mandates and functions of the child protection system fall under this ministry. In reality there are mandates and functions in the child protection system that are performed by the ministries of health, education, justice, labour, women's and children's affairs, emergency and disaster response actors, and others. In the same way, various actors at the informal and community level must cooperate and be accountable for the protection of children, and caregivers must protect their children through addressing their health, education, emotional, social, spiritual, and other needs.

Therefore, in order to fulfil its purpose, the child protection system must have cross-sectoral mandates and functions. This implies that all actors with responsibilities to prevent and respond to child protection concerns need to be linked into the child protection system. This would then include collaboration with certain functions of the education, health and justice systems. For example, the education system may contribute to the child protection system through the promotion of child rights to protection, building skills for self-protection, non-violent curricula, reporting suspected cases of abuse, and inclusion of excluded groups of children. The health system contribution typically includes reporting cases of abuse; promotion of appropriate care among new parents, especially those in vulnerable or risky situations; and in some places providing specialised services like mental health interventions for victims. The justice system plays a role in convicting and prosecuting perpetrators of child abuse or exploitation, as well as administering juvenile justice and protecting children in family law adjudication and custody issues. Therefore, while the education or justice systems are not subsumed under child protection systems, some functions of the education, health and justice systems are within the child protection system. This concept is represented in the diagram below. Note that the diagram is only illustrative of the relationships and inter-connectedness of the various systems, and does not include all examples.

Given the cross-cutting nature of child protection, the relationships between the child protection system and other formal or informal systems need to be clearly established: functions, capacities, processes of care, governance and accountability of respective systems should be clearly defined to eliminate and minimise protection gaps for children.[6]

Figure 3: Relationships between various actors and the child protection system[5]
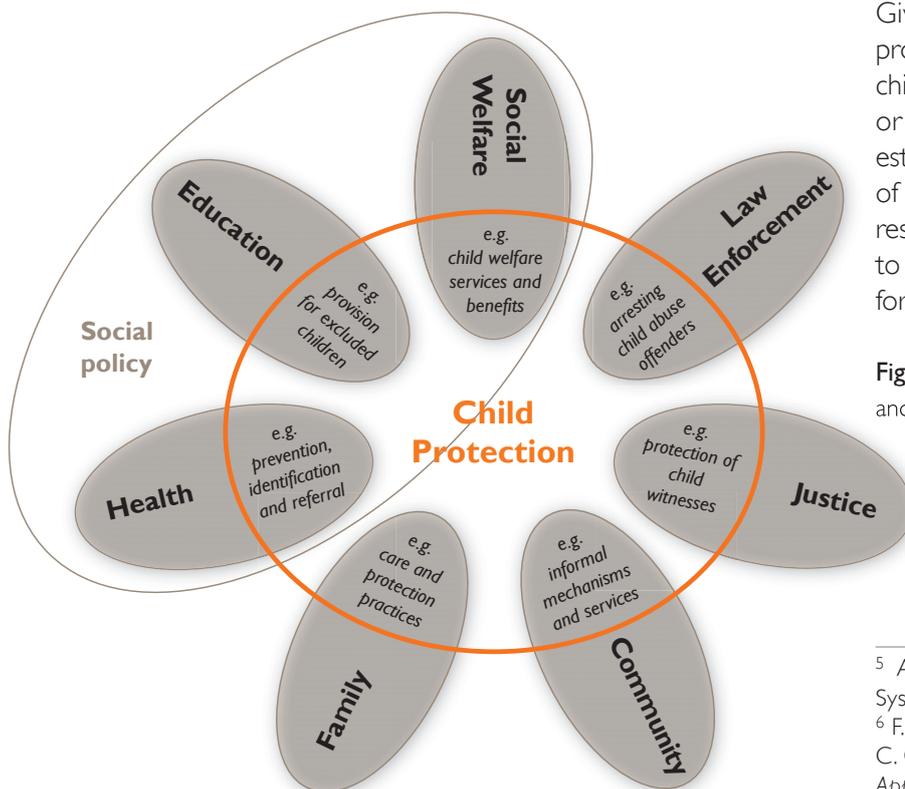
[5] Adapted from J. Reichnberg, Child Protection System presentation, UNICEF (2005).
[6] F. Wolczyn, D. Daro, J. Fluke, S. Feldman, C. Glodek, K. Lifanda, *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Consideration*, UNICEF (New York, 2010), p12.

Adopting a systems approach in programming

There are a number of practical implications of a systems approach to child protection. Some of World Vision's child protection work already utilises a systems approach; however, a significant amount of the child protection programming currently has a more limited focus on helping individual or groups of children, without intentionally impacting the wider environment to more effectively protect other children.

1. Context analysis and strategic action

A systems approach requires an in-depth understanding of the child protection context and child protection system. This initial analysis builds a holistic understanding of the following areas:

- child protection issues and their root causes
- existing assets and strengths in the child protection system
- weaknesses or gaps in the child protection system.

This analysis can then guide planning so that programmes fill identified child protection system gaps in ways that strengthen one or multiple elements of the child protection system.

Analysis and strategic action should be undertaken at the *national level,* to strengthen aspects of the child protection system to deliver better protection for children. It should also take place at the *local level*, building an understanding of the context and the effectiveness of the child protection system at the local level and its impact on the end user, *the child* – whose well-being is the fundamental measure of effectiveness of the child protection system.

The analysis should result in a strategic plan for World Vision's national offices, which guides their own contribution and focus areas for child protection. The strategy should describe how the national offices will focus their programming towards strengthening certain elements of the system. This analysis and strategy process allows national offices and partners to take a strategic view of the overall child protection environment and make good choices about undertaking and linking interventions at various levels. A systems approach to child protection does not mean that every national office must design huge programming initiatives to build entire national child protection systems. Rather, it means that all child protection programmes are planned, designed, implemented and evaluated with an understanding of how they contribute to the overall system. This can be done on a large or small scale.

2. Integrated programming

A systems approach to child protection helps different projects to be more strategically linked to each other. For example, rather than having a number of stand-alone 'special projects' in a national office targeting a number of different issues (such as child labour, child rights, child trafficking, etc.), a national office could link its various efforts on different issues so that they are all focused on elements of the child protection system that have been identified in the national child protection strategy.

In each national and local context, World Vision's work to strengthen child protection systems will look different, based on local context. However, each sector and theme is able to contribute to this endeavour. See Annex I for some practical examples. Some of these interventions are not new to national offices, and have already been a part of strategic systems strengthening work with governments in some national offices. The systems approach to child protection is, therefore, not necessarily a radical change in World Vision's work, but provides a comprehensive framework across national offices and the organisation to strategically plan and consolidate work in child protection.

3. Design, monitoring and evaluation

A systems approach to child protection affects how national offices design, monitor and evaluate programmes. Rather than just trying to offer activities to serve a vulnerable group of children – such as a drop-in centre

for child labourers – a systems approach would be built first on an intentional analysis of the root causes of child labour and of the child protection system's strengths and weaknesses at multiple levels in preventing and responding to child labour. One of the resulting projects might still be a drop-in centre, but it would be designed in such a way as to address gaps in the child protection system (such as building government capacity to respond to child labourers and other vulnerable children through a partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare or helping to develop national standards for the Ministry of Education around education for child labourers). A systems approach can sometimes validate and measure direct impact on children, but it also will measure and emphasise differences made on some element(s) of the system as a primary objective of any project. It is, therefore, critical that design, monitoring and evaluation procedures and tools enable national offices to design, implement and measure the effectiveness of longer-term and integrated interventions aimed at strengthening the child protection system.

4. Technical capacity

A systems approach will require a significant investment in child protection technical capacity at both the national office and programme level. National offices will need national technical leadership in child protection – with the capacity to coordinate national-level child protection analysis and strategy development, guide programme planning and lead child protection capacity building. Staff across sectors will need to understand the basic elements of a child protection system and the implications for their programmes. Moreover, staff in child protection projects will need a strong understanding of the child protection system and the particular ways that their project is aiming to strengthen this system.

5. Innovative funding

A systems approach to child protection also has implications for marketing and funding. World Vision needs to develop messages and products that affirm a systems approach as a sustainable way of addressing root causes of child protection problems and building sustainable safety nets for all vulnerable children. A systems approach reflects the current global discourse among major child protection actors, and ,therefore, will strengthen our credibility with many donors. Marketers will also need to articulate the compelling difference that a systems approach makes for children, both immediately and in the longer term.

6. Global strategy and guidance

Finally, World Vision is currently developing a global Child Protection Sector Strategy, along with a number of related project models. In support of this global sector strategy, World Vision is also developing a global Child Protection Systems Advocacy Strategy. These strategies will provide further guidance on priority programming approaches for World Vision. However, at this point we can anticipate that globally our most common child protection programming initiatives will include:

- advocating for effective national policies, resources and programmes that enable child protection at the community level
- catalysing community awareness and conscientisation around child protection and care beliefs and practices, including discriminatory attitudes and actions
- gender equity building to ensure the best care of children and prevention of harmful traditional practices, discrimination and gender-based violence
- strengthening reporting and referral mechanisms at the community level
- strengthening community-based care and support mechanisms for vulnerable families
- strengthening capacity and will of child protection duty-bearers, teachers and health workers to prevent and respond to abuse exploitation and vulnerabilities
- empowering civil society actors, children and families to hold government to account for delivery of protection at the local level
- advocating for access to and strengthening community-based care and services for children who have suffered abuse or exploitation
- empowering children to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and building their skills as advocates for protection of others.

Glossary

Child protection: All measures taken to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and all other forms of violence against children.

Child protection programming: All efforts to ensure that children are safe within their families and communities. This includes interventions aimed at the prevention of abuse, exploitation neglect and other forms of violence against children; as well as *protection* of children who are in these situations; and *restoration* of children who have survived them.

Community-based child protection: Specific interventions that are focused towards empowering and enabling a community to protect their children, and for children to protect themselves. In essence, almost all of World Vision's child-focused work can and should have a protective impact on children. However, the term 'Community-based child protection' is reserved for activities which *intentionally address* abuse, neglect, exploitation or other forms of violence within families and communities. It focuses on strengthening the protective environment for children and can include addressing root causes as well as strengthening community-based referral and assistance to children whose rights to protection have been, or are at risk of being, violated.

Continuum of Care: The specific ways that the system responds to child protection rights violations (promotion or awareness raising, prevention and response).

Prevention: of exploitation, abuse, neglect and other forms of violence against children. This includes sensitising communities, raising awareness and strengthening families, as well as advocating for social protection mechanisms (such as birth registration and child benefits), child protection services, basic service provision, the empowerment of children to protect themselves and addressing harmful traditional practices.[7]

Process of Care: Procedures that are followed when the system engages children and families and communities in responding to protection rights violations (for example, identification, reporting, referral, investigation, assessment, treatment and follow-up).[8]

Response: This includes both 1) *Protection* of children who are in situations of abuse, exploitation, neglect or other forms of violence. This includes helping children get out of harmful situations, strengthening behaviour change to address abusive and exploitative situations, or reducing the risk to children living in dangerous situations. 2) Restoration of children who have survived, been removed or escaped from exploitation, abuse, neglect or other forms of violence.

Social protection: Social protection is the set of all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide: 1) Social assistance to extremely poor individuals and households; 2) social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; 3) social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; 4) social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse.

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[7] F. Wolczyn, D. Daro, J. Fluke, S. Feldman, C. Glodek, K. Lifanda, *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Consideration*, UNICEF (New York, 2010), p22.
[8] Ibid., p22.
[9] S. Devereux and R. Sabates-Wheeler, *Transformative Social Protection*. Institute of Development Studies Working Paper 232, (October 2004).

Suggested readings

There are a number of documents which provide additional details to the definitions and implications of a systems approach to child protection. The following readings provide much of the foundation for the content of this paper.

DFID, HelpAge International, Hope & Homes for Children, Institute of Development Studies, International Labour Organization, Overseas Development Institute, Save the Children UK, UNDP, UNICEF, The World Bank and World Vision, *Advancing Child-Sensitive Social Protection* (2009).

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Save the Children, *A 'Rough Guide' to Child Protection Systems* [Brochure], United Kingdom.

Wolczyn, F., Daro, D., Fluke, J., Feldman, S., Glodek, C, Lifanda, K., *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*, UNICEF (New York, 2010).

World Vision International, *World Vision International Ministry Framework* (2010).

Annex 1
Child protection system strengthening for other sectors

Following are some examples of how various sectors can include activities which can strengthen the child protection system.

Sector	Possible Interventions
Health	Strengthening the child protection system by ensuring early and timely identification, treatment and referral of cases of violence, abuse and neglect through: • Training health workers to recognise signs of abuse and injuries caused by violence • Training health workers to record and report cases • Promoting non-violent discipline in parenting trainings • Promoting equitable access to health services for most vulnerable children, including those with disabilities.
Education	Strengthening the child protection system by ensuring inclusive education for all and a safe and protective learning environment in which children are equipped with skills for self-protection to increase their resilience. This may be achieved by the following interventions: • Supporting and advocating for inclusive education of most vulnerable children, including those with disabilities • Equipping teachers to recognise the signs of abuse and violence and to know where and how to report cases • Enabling children to access independent reporting mechanisms • Promoting violence-free schools initiatives • Including self-protection in life-skills education • Helping Parent-Teacher Associations to be aware of and take action regarding child protection in the school environment.
Social Protection	Strengthening the child protection system by the following interventions: • Advocating for child-focused social protection, enabling most vulnerable children to access social protection entitlements • Advocating for balance and synergies between social transfers and social services to ensure that resources are not diverted from child protection services and that cash transfers contribute to the measures to prevent and protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation • Advocating for and supporting greater inter-sectoral coordination in delivering social protection programmes, measures and services to minimise risks and maximise outcomes of interventions to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation • Advocating for and supporting investments in child-sensitive support and responsive services by increasing budget allocations and increasing capacities of social services providers • Advocating for social policy frameworks and legislation that will enable effective functioning of the child protection system (i.e. alignment with CRC provisions for protection) • Undertaking research and monitoring whether the cash transfers are reaching the most vulnerable children.

Sector	Possible Interventions
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	Strengthening the child protection system by ensuring that infrastructure projects include mechanisms to increase safety and protection of children by: • Promoting safe and equitable access to water for vulnerable children. This entails both ensuring that no child is discriminated against and that water distribution units are located in safe places. This is a particular concern in emergencies. • Promoting safe and equitable access to sanitation facilities for vulnerable children (including minimising risks of abuse in accessing sanitation facilities).
Economic development	Strengthening the child protection system by: • Supporting government and communities to put in place livelihood enhancement projects and strategies that will eliminate or at least not increase incidence and scope of child labour • Supporting government and communities to design interventions that can provide opportunities for child survivors of exploitation to learn new marketable skills • Supporting and advocating for institutionalisation of youth employment schemes to reduce vulnerability to exploitation.
Disaster preparedness	Strengthening the child protection system by: • Ensuring that community members are aware of child protection issues in disasters (i.e. separation of children from parents, increased vulnerability of certain groups of children) • Building the capacity of communities to manage disaster response in a child-sensitive way • Promoting birth registration and keeping of birth and family registers in safe places • Ensuring protection and vulnerability of children is addressed in national plans for emergency response • Preparing community structures for tracing and family reunification as a part of disaster preparedness plans • Teaching children how to protect themselves during and after disasters • Encouraging parents to teach young children their names and place identification tags on their clothes, belongings or in form of bracelets in case of imminent threat of disaster.
Emergency Response Programmes	Strengthening the child protection system by: • Ensuring that particular child protection issues in emergencies (i.e. separation of children from parents, increased vulnerability of certain groups of children) are recognised and addressed through a systems approach in the response process • Ensuring elements of the child protection system are addressed as a growing priority in the emergency response, recovery and 'build back better' efforts, along with meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable children • Helping transition initial protective activities into new or strengthened elements of the child protection system • Ensuring awareness-raising and sensitisation amongst internally displaced persons and people affected by emergencies to the vulnerabilities and need to care and protect children • Ensuring that all programmes are child-friendly, include children among beneficiaries and/or measure impact on children • Distributing information regarding child protection threats, such as child soldier recruitment practices and avoidance practices.

Sector	Possible Interventions
Advocacy	Strengthening the child protection system by: • Targeting duty-bearers at the local level (e.g. social workers, teachers, health workers, parents, local community-based organisations, local authorities, etc.) to help them understand children's rights and their role in protecting them • Empowering civil society actors to hold government to account for delivery of care and protection services at the local level • Advocating for the existence and implementation of national legislation to achieve effective community-based child protection (compliant with CRC and optional protocols) • Advocating for effective national policies and programmes to support community-based child protection (e.g. through decentralisation, focus on vulnerable groups, systems for accountability at local level) • Advocating for compliance with international commitments such as the CRC and follow-up to the Violence Against Children Study • Influencing key donors, inter-governmental bodies and institutions (e.g. UNICEF, bi-laterals, the World Bank) to support and promote a child focus in social protection to ensure greater care for children • Influencing regional and global policy debates to advance child protection on key issues (for example the post-MDG [Millenium Development Goals] agenda, protection in fragile states and emergencies, and food security) • Influencing global debate on statelessness to highlight birth registration as a key protection mechanism (e.g. through UNHCR).

Annex 2
Child well-being aspirations and outcomes

World Vision focuses on improving children's well-being through child-focused transformational development, disaster management and promotion of justice. The child well-being aspirations and outcomes provide a practical definition of World Vision's understanding of well-being for children.

Our goal is 'the sustained well-being of children within families and communities, especially the most vulnerable.' World Vision views the well-being of children in holistic terms: healthy individual development (involving physical and mental health, social and spiritual dimensions), positive relationships and a context that provides safety, social justice and participation in civil society.

The child well-being aspirations and outcomes are intended as a catalyst for dialogue, discussion and visioning as World Vision partners with children, parents, community partners, churches, governments and other organisations. World Vision does not proselytise nor do we impose our understanding on others. These aspirations and outcomes reinforce each other and enable an integrated, holistic approach to ministry. While our active contribution to specific outcomes varies from context to context, our definition of 'well-being' remains holistic.

Goal	Sustained well-being of children within families and communities, especially the most vulnerable			
Aspirations	Girls & Boys:			
	Enjoy good health	Are educated for life	Experience love of God and their neighbours	Are cared for, protected and participating
Outcomes	Children are well nourished	Children read, write and use numeracy skills	Children grow in their awareness and experience of God's love in an environment that recognises their freedom	Children are cared for in a loving, safe family and community environment with safe places to play
	Children protected from infection, disease and injury	Children make good judgements and can protect themselves, manage emotions, and communicate ideas	Children enjoy positive relationships with peers, family and community members	Parents or caregivers provide well for their children
	Children and their caregivers access essential health services	Adolescents are ready for economic opportunity	Children value and care for others and their environment	Children are celebrated and registered at birth
		Children access and complete basic education	Children have hope and vision for the future	Children are respected participants in decisions that affect their lives
Foundational Principles	Children are citizens and their rights and dignity are upheld (including girls and boys of all religions and ethnicities, any HIV status, and those with disabilities)			

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