Uganda: Three-Year Strategic Plan
Introduction

Child Protection in Crisis, a network for research, learning and action, is a collaboration of humanitarian agencies, local institutions and academic partners working to improve the protection of children in crisis-affected settings.

The CPC Network established an interagency Program Learning Group (PLG) in Uganda hosted by ChildFund Uganda. The Uganda PLG was launched in July 2010 in a meeting attended by representatives from a wide sector of Ugandan and international non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, government and community based organizations. Through this meeting, participants formed a Ugandan-based network of actors working for children in crisis situations to promote research and learning in the field of child protection. The PLG’s focus includes three types of crisis situations relevant to the challenges in Uganda: conflict, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Priorities

Over the next three years, the PLG strategic direction will seek to implement learning initiatives identified by PLG members across crisis contexts including conflict, chronic poverty and HIV/AIDS to generate knowledge through research and documentation of good practices to inform child protection policies and practices. Specific priorities include:

• **Promoting learning from applied research:** The PLG pilots new and innovative program interventions. It promotes learning through modeling these interventions and uses what is learned to replicate and scale up program activities.

• **Strengthening linkages and interface between academic institutions and practitioners in Uganda:** The PLG network is involved in the interagency development of child protection curriculum to professionalize the field of child protection and to promote the accreditation of the curriculum in learning institutions in Uganda. The network will collaborate with Columbia University to train academic institutions in research and evaluation methods, to build skilled communities of academicians.

• **Child Protection Systems Strengthening:** The demand for child protection systems mapping has steadily grown in recent years, emanating from a realization that informal and traditional child protection systems play a sustainable role in creating a protective environment for children. The Uganda PLG is supporting action research in selected districts on how to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms by supporting better linkages with national child protection systems.
Mission Statement

The Uganda PLG is committed to promoting learning through research and advocacy for improved child protection policy and programming.

Strategic Partnerships for Change

Our goal is to promote scientifically sound research methods and evidence-based learning among agencies to improve child protection programming and policies.

The PLG activities are guided by the Steering Committee that provides strategic leadership and vision for the larger PLG. The Steering Committee establishes learning priorities, promotes findings of learning initiatives and turns learning into practice by advocating for incorporating lessons learned into policies and practice.

Approaches and Principles

The PLG provides learning space by collaborating with existing coordination mechanisms such as the Child Protection Working Group and the Child Labor Partner Forum to mobilize members to participate in the PLG activities. Collaboration with existing structures helps activate members, promote coordination to prevent wasteful duplication of efforts and complements the coordination efforts by addressing relevant learning needs.

Six key principles govern our work:

• We are child-focused—putting children at the center of our work.
• Our approach is ethical, respectful, and based on the ‘Do No Harm’ principle.
• We value partnerships and actively promote collaborative interagency-driven research.
• We are committed to supporting and developing national and local research capacities.
• We are committed to widespread dissemination of our research findings.
• We seek to work within the framework of child rights and to have open and transparent relationships with national and local authorities in the environments where we carry out research.

Critical Areas of Enquiry

1. Learning from applied research through pilots of new and innovative program interventions
2. Linkages/interface between academic institutions and practitioners in Uganda strengthened through trainings, research and advocacy
3. Child Protection Systems strengthened through action research on community-based child protection mechanisms in selected districts and through the support of better linkages with national Child Protection Systems.
The challenge

Priority one: Utilization of Research Findings

The varied child protection programming approaches across agencies and donors may pose a threat to the adaptation of new approaches that may compete with a particular organizational approach.

Priority two: Low capacity of academic institutions in research and evaluation

Limited technical capacity of institutions of higher learning in applied research may affect the quality of collaborative research.

Priority three: Weak linkages between informal and formal child protection systems

Some of the traditional child protection systems may be at the verge of extinction and unknown to respondents due to cultural erosion and knowledge gaps. There could also be resistance from supporters of formal protection systems since proponents of informal systems could be viewed as competitors rather than collaborators.
**What we have achieved so far**

- **Successfully created a vibrant and dynamic inter-agency PLG Steering Committee:** The Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, donors and child protection agencies. Its role is to provide strategic leadership and vision for the larger PLG members in Uganda. The Steering Committee has begun to establish learning priorities, promote findings of learning initiatives and turn learning into practice by advocating for the incorporation of lessons learned into policies and practice.

- **Implementing livelihood research:** The aim of this research is to examine the link between livelihoods and the protection of children. The livelihood research project started in June 2011 and is being led by a local NGO. It seeks to examine the link between increased income and assets and the protection and wellbeing of children. The findings will be widely disseminated to inform livelihoods interventions aimed to improve children’s wellbeing in poor households.

- **Developing culturally relevant psychosocial indicators and evaluation tools:** This work was initiated in March 2011 and is supported by the Psychosocial Global Working Group. The PLG strengthened the capacities of child protection agencies by increasing their understanding of psychosocial monitoring and evaluation concepts, developing draft psychosocial indicators and validating these indicators. The outcome of this initiative will be beneficial for child protection programmes as a whole, and psychosocial interventions in particular, as it will develop a common approach to defining and measuring the objectives and outcomes of psychosocial support within child protection programming.

- **Developed a 5-year Strategic Plan:** The plan sets out the vision, strategic goal and core outcomes that will guide the work of the Uganda Program Learning Group, 2011-2015.

- **Acquisition of grants** from UBS and Columbia University to undertake a community mapping exercise to document current community-based and formal child protection systems in Lira, Gulu and Dokolo districts. The project will allow representatives from the Ugandan PLG (ChildFund and TPO Uganda) to undertake a mapping project that will identify the traditional protection mechanisms in the communities in three districts. It will also pilot initiatives that seek to link these systems with formal child protection systems to address the problem of childhood sexual violence in Ugandan schools and communities.

- **Developing Child Protection Course modules:** This initiative is being led by a PLG member organization, Trans-cultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO), through collaboration with Makerere University and other child protection agencies to standardize and harmonize child protection training in Uganda. The child protection courses will be accredited by public institutions to train practitioners in the field of child protection.

- **Developing a learning framework for early childhood developmental experiences:** This is being led by the Uganda Ministry of Education together with UNICEF and the PLG is an active partner. The learning framework will be used by institutions and individuals who are working with children to create an environment that stimulates children’s growth and development.
• **Collaborating with other networks for advocacy based on evidence generated through the PLG:** The Chairperson of the PLG Steering Committee, who is the National Director for ChildFund Uganda, also sits on the National Steering Committee for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children (OVC)’s strategic plan. This connection is facilitating synergies between the work of the PLG and the application of evidence-based policy development.

• **Disseminating research findings:** The PLG has been active in coordination meetings led by UNICEF and has utilized such fora to disseminate research findings and encourage greater participation in PLG activities.
What we will do next

The Uganda PLG will focus on implementing the three key priorities, widely disseminate research findings of on-going studies and advocate for improved policy, programming and monitoring of child protection interventions. The target group will be the government, the donor community and agencies involved in child protection work.

In addition, a meta-evaluation of existing child protection research reports will be undertaken to document key findings, lessons learnt, emerging good practices and recommendations for improved policy and programming. This will identify linkages and avoid duplication of efforts.

The on-going systems mapping will be scaled up to other regions not currently covered to provide scientific evidence on traditional protective mechanisms that can be strengthened and linked to formal child protection systems.

A pilot project to strengthen and link child protection systems to national systems will be undertaken to inform wider interventions aimed at strengthening child protection systems in Uganda.

An inter-institution forum will be initiated at Makerere University to build local capacity in teaching and applied research. A resident professor from Columbia University will be sought to provide on-the-ground support for local initiatives.

Finally, the PLG together with Columbia University, the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Makerere University, TPO and ChildFund Uganda submitted a proposal to the Optimus Foundation to conduct a study on the nature and magnitude of child sexual violence in Uganda. The PLG will identify synergies between the various applied research projects to promote holistic learning in child protection policy and programming.
Mission Statement

Steering Committee
The Members of the Uganda PLG Steering Committee comprise of high level representation from the Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, UNICEF, DFID, ChildFund, Trans-Cultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), USAID, European Union, Uganda NGO Child Rights Network and Makerere University. This rich representation of a wide array of strategic actors on the PLG steering committee has great potential to utilize the outcomes of the learning initiatives to influence government, donors and NGOs to improve policy, funding, programming, monitoring and evaluation to effectively address child protection gaps.

Core Secretariat Staff
Core PLG network staff include a full time PLG Coordinator who works for and on behalf of the Network. In addition, ChildFund’s Finance Director is responsible for ensuring accountability to the donors while ChildFund’s National Director supervises the PLG Coordinator and is the accounting officer for this project. The PLG Network’s three year agenda will require additional technical expertise to undertake specific research projects. These will be harnessed by existing members whenever needs arise.

PLG Members
Membership of the Uganda PLG encompasses a wide variety of stakeholders working across crisis contexts (including conflict, HIV/AIDS and poverty). The PLG comprises of representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development; national and international NGOs including World Vision, Save the Children, ChildFund, TPO, IRC, War Child, Batwana Initiative and the Inter-religious Council; Makerere and Kyambogo Universities; and UNICEF. Representatives meet bi-annually to identify areas requiring further research, participate in research and the dissemination of findings, as well as to utilize findings to improve programming and policies. The Network will draw technical staff from its steering committee and PLG members to undertake specific projects.

Local and Global Linkages
The PLG Network will collaborate with other initiatives in other countries to promote cross border learning and draw on research and lessons learned in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. The PLG brings together child protection agencies to participate in reflection and research in critical child protection issues that require further research. It also provides opportunities for members to disseminate research findings undertaken by agencies.

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## Budget

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Year Annual Budget</th>
<th>Year 1 - USD</th>
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