

Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms

A review of indigenous community oriented mechanisms used by TPO Uganda in Northern Uganda and Somalia

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The Community Support Structures Model:

Rationale

- Communities are made up of pre-existing formal and non-formal structures that offer support to their members.
- For any external intervener, the first point of contact with the affected community, should be a clear understanding of how communities support themselves in times of need, grief and happiness.
- An understanding of cultural and traditional practices will build a basis upon which community and family CP support can be provided in a non prescriptive manner.

How the Community Support Structures (CSS) Model Works

Step 1: Identify a community or target population in need of support.

Step 2: Mapping & identification of CSS to determine their CP roles, positive impact and limitations.

Step 3: Determine their needs and conduct a child protection capacity gap assessment. E.g a women's group may be supporting orphans to attend school but might not know how to protect them from exploitation and abuse.

Step 4: Together with the group develop a capacity building plan.

Here topics, learning objectives and session plans are identified and prioritised by group members guided by the role of the CSS, gaps identified & needs of target beneficiaries.

Step 5: Disseminate knowledge and skills through non didactic methods *The interactive Learning Methodology* until you complete the agreed capacity building plan and the CSS feels all child protection knowledge gaps identified have been exhausted.

Continue follow up support with emphasis on do no harm, ethical conduct and quality control. E.g refresher meetings, case management, referrals for specialist services.

What we have seen work well

- CSS are part of the community and hence have their trust and respect. As such they are in a better position to challenge harmful traditional practice & stimulate the process of change from within. E.g FGM in Pokot.
- Unlike most externally facilitated mechanisms CSS does not bring people together in a committee to manage CP issues on behalf of communities. It directly empowers them to do so.
- CSS can act as safety nets that provide a protective fabric & widen the circles of support around the child especially where traditional governance structures have been weakened.

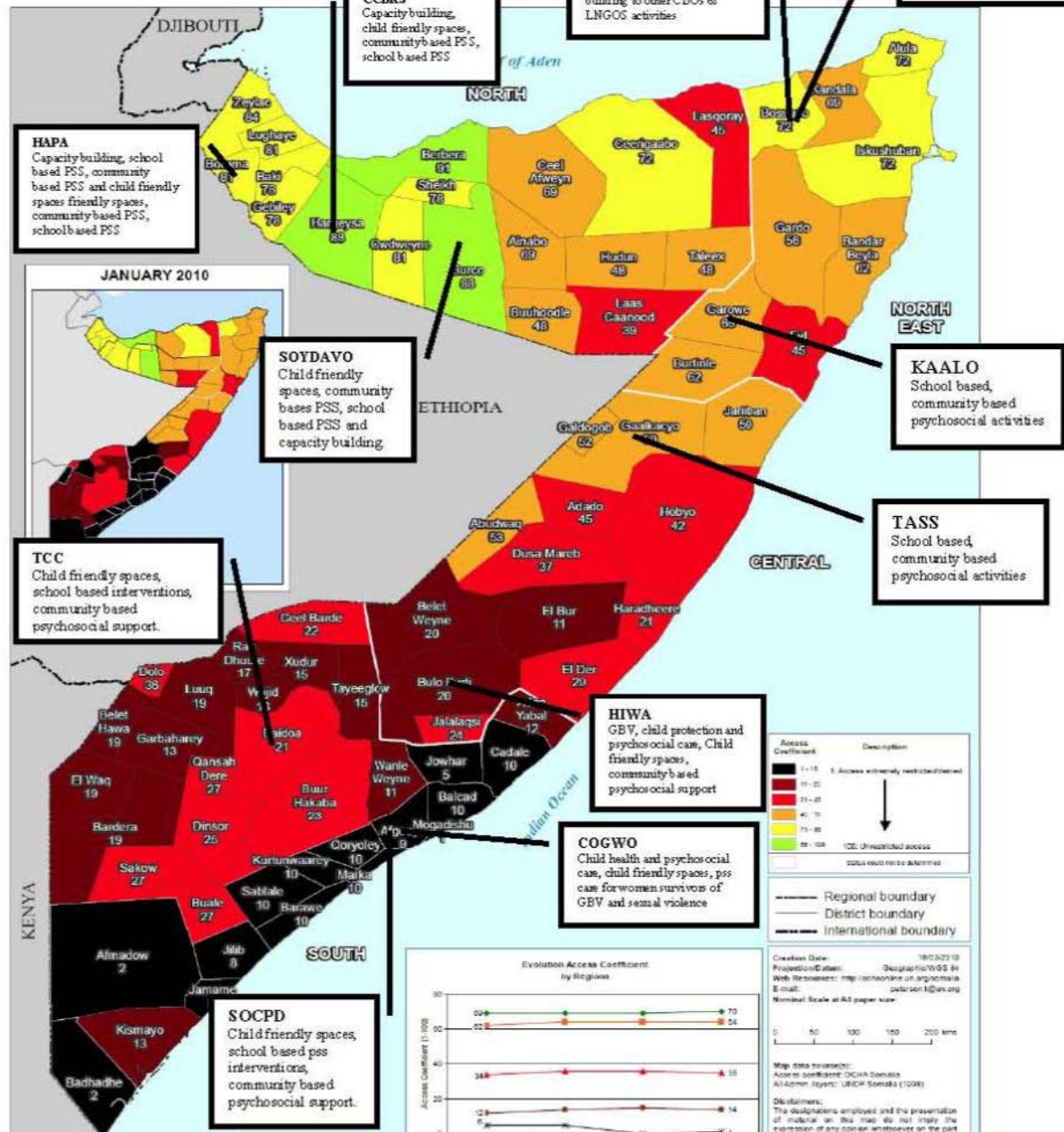
- CSS can be a sustainable source of social capital, as communities become more enlightened on CP issues, they are able to make informed decisions as their capacity to self organise increases.
- It is almost impossible to get children to participate in CP committees due to socio-cultural inhibitions. Because some of the CSS are youth groups participation of young people is directly enhanced.
- This model targets the CP system in its entirety. We have used it across formal structures such as school management committees, health centres, district probation office and the informal structures e.g youth clubs, women self-help groups, clan leaders etc

The shortcomings we have experienced with this model

- Reliance on traditional structures has tended to give men more voice and power as most community governance structures are inherently patriarchal in nature.
- The CSS model is most effective in the aftermath of an emergency when communities begin to return. Group activities can expose participants to risk in times of heightened insecurity.
- Measurement of effectiveness especially quality of care outcomes is still a challenge. It requires rigorous investigative methods yet capacity to design such studies is often limited in these contexts.

Map Ends.

Delivering PSS and CP Services in Somalia using the TPO community support structures model.



ROLES

DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Child Welfare Officers, Probation Officers, other govt coordination mechanisms e.g CPC

- Policy enforcement
- Planning and Strategy
- Coordination

LNGO/INGO ACTORS

- Service Delivery
- Capacity Development
- Evidence based knowledge management



- Family tracing & reintegration
- Service delivery
- Referrals
- Case Management
- Social Mobilization

TARGET BENEFICIARIES

(demand services, provide forums for civic participation, a source of invaluable knowledge, provide platforms for social accountability)

COMMUNITY BASED CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM