Child Protection in Crisis Uganda: March 2012 Learning Retreat

Community Mapping and Capacity Building Initiative – Identifying and Strengthening Community Systems

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Why Child Protection Systems?

Examining systems puts child protection violations within a larger context of range of interrelated factors, including immediate and underlying causes.

Children may face multiple protection problems, a focus on individual issues can sometimes resolve one problem without addressing others.

A systems-building approach to child protection is required, especially in settings where formal systems are weak and communities must assume the majority of the child protection burden.
Mapping Child Protection Systems

- Mapping formal and informal child protection systems will provide evidence upon which to base future programming
- Mapping will demonstrate strengths and gaps of existing systems
- Mapping will also show where or whether the formal systems interact, and how that interaction can be improved
- We cannot move forward to strengthen systems until we know what presently exists
What are Informal Child Protection Systems?

- These are also called Community-based Child Protection Mechanisms

- A collection of supports and resources that help take care of children including:
  - Immediate and extended family
  - Friends
  - Neighbors
  - Traditional leaders and elders
  - Teachers
  - Youth and community groups,
  - Religious leaders, and
  - Others who provide valuable care and protection
Why Are CBCPMs Important?

- Children’s protection and healthy development depend critically on the care and protection provided by caretakers, typically family and extended family.

- Families’ ability to provide care and protection for children depend on having a secure, protective environment and access to child and family support at the community level.

- Evidence suggests that 80% of cases are resolved under the community systems.
Informal child protection mechanisms may have difficulty meeting all child protection challenges. In some circumstances formal child protection mechanisms are desirable.

The formal child protection system includes any mechanism that is instituted, funded or authorized by the government according to the law, such as:

- Police
- District and National Court
- Probation and Social Welfare Office
- The Local Council system
- Related laws and policies
The aim of the research is to learn about existing community-based mechanisms of child protection and support for children.

The task is to describe the mechanisms and supports that currently exist, as diverse members of the communities understand them.

The locations are Arua and Nebbi districts.
Key Research Questions

- What are the factors or practices in communities, homes, families, and schools that protect children from or put them at risk for abuse, exploitation, violence or neglect?
  - How do these connect to formal child protection mechanisms, if at all?

- When children have been harmed (e.g. abuse, exploitation, violence, neglect) whom do they go to for help, and what are the processes and perceived outcomes?
  - What proportion of the ‘child protection burden’ falls to communities in comparison with formal systems like government?
Pilot Mapping In Dokolo and Lira

- A pilot took place June – August 2011
- Data collection includes community observation, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews
- Results included:
  - Mapping of the informal system,
  - Mapping of pathways of response to child protection violations
  - Identification of factors contributing to the vulnerability of children in relation to potential risks and threats
Example of a Child Protection System

Informal:
- Family
- Chief
- Community Groups

Local Council

Formal:
- NGOs
- Police
- Government Institutions
- Courts
How will this research be used?

- This research will be used to inform future programming, policy and advocacy by PLG and others in the country.

- The long term goal is to strengthen existing child protection systems, both formal and informal.

- This research will directly contribute to the development of programs that will take place in years 2 and 3 of funding to address issues encountered during this research.