

Child Protection Learning Symposium

“Adapting a systems approach to child protection in Uganda: What is the way forward?”

Concept Note

1. Context

Child protection systems have unique structures, functions, capacities, and other components. These are typically assembled in relation to a set of child protection goals. These systems have traditionally neither been the particular focus of child protection discourse nor that of child protection practice and action.

Traditionally, child protection has focused on singular issues, for example – child labour, children living on the streets, child headed households, violence against children, justice for children, etc. As a result responses to these issues have taken place in isolation without having a deliberate understanding of how they relate to each other and the overall child protection system. To illustrate this; a child who is abused by one of the parents and ends up with a broken leg; will be taken to the Doctor, who may focus on addressing the medical needs of the child without sufficiently dwelling on the non-medical background information to refer such a case to relevant service providers for further redress beyond the medical aspect.

The above example is a clear illustration of the complex interface between systems and the context. The line is thin, but it exists. The clear understanding of how the two interface is critical in being able to articulate a systems approach to child protection, which is a critical factor that has been missing over the years.

Taking on board a systems approach means an internal critical review (taking stock), being clear on the boundaries (between systems and issues), understanding the external forces (forces against and the risks), and embedding in child protection programming the critical role of the informal systems. These are core aspects that this symposium will seek to address.

2. Programme Learning Group

The Child Protection in crisis network (CPC) established an interagency Program Learning Group (PLG) in Uganda which is being hosted by ChildFund with a full-time PLG Coordinator. The Uganda PLG was launched in July 2010 in a meeting attended by representatives from a wide variety of Ugandan and International non-governmental organizations, UN, government and community based organizations. Through this meeting participants formed a Ugandan-based network of actors working for children in situations of crisis to promote research and learning in the field of child protection. The goal of the PLG in Uganda is to promote scientifically sound research methods and evidence-based learning among agencies so as to improve child protection programming and policies. Currently, the PLG consists of a membership of over 40 organizations including community based organizations. The PLG works closely with the Ministry of Gender, labour and Social

Development (MGLSD) and the National Child Protection Working Group (NCPWG) in promoting evidence based research and learning in the child protection sub-sector.

The CPC network was established in 2008 as a mechanism to strengthen and systemize child protection in crisis- settings through collaborative action of humanitarian agencies, local institutions and academic partners. The secretariat of the CPC network is housed at Columbia University.

Emphasizing learning, the CPC network undertakes innovative research and builds evidence to affect change in child protection policy and practice. At country level, the CPC network brings together policy makers and practitioners to determine learning priorities and ensure the results of these endeavours are put to good use. Globally, the CPC network works with coalitions of UN, NGO, private sector and government actors to generate evidence and link research findings to global practice <http://www.cpcnetwork.org/>

3. The Child Protection Learning Symposium

The Child Protection Learning Symposium is a follow up of a two-day retreat that was held in March 2012 on the theme “Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms and their Linkage with the National Child Protection System of Uganda.” At this retreat it was agreed that PLG members will convene annually to deliberate on the emerging key issues in domain of child protection in Uganda. Therefore, in line with this, the PLG together with the National Child Protection Working Group (NCPWG) a coordination mechanism within MGLSD for national level child protection stakeholders, are organising the Child Protection Learning Symposium.

3.1 Theme

The theme for the symposium is: ***Adapting a systems approach to child protection in Uganda: What is the way forward?***

The theme is anchored on the key question – What are the gaps in the Uganda Child Protection Systems and how can these be effectively addressed in the best interest of the children?

3.2 Objectives

- a) To adapt a common understanding of what constitutes “a systems approach to child protection”
- b) To share the status and trends of existing child protection systems in Uganda.
- c) To jointly reflect on what is required to achieve a systems approach to child protection. This will include an analysis of resources, existing systems and capacity.
- d) To map out the way forward in supporting the strengthening of child-friendly protection systems in Uganda.

3.3 Activities

To engage on the theme, the Symposium will:

- Convene child protection experts, practitioners, researchers, the academia, policy makers and government representatives to facilitate the sharing of innovative child protection systems initiatives, best practices, and research.
- Provide a framework for the adaption of a systems approach to child protection in Uganda.
- Provide a forum for dialogue and networking so that the opportunities and challenges in instituting effective child protection systems are fully discussed.
- Launch of the Uganda National Child Protection Systems Mapping Report.

3.4 Target

- Child Protection Experts
- Government Representatives
- Practitioners
- Researchers and the academia
- Policy Makers
- Multi-national Agencies
- Donors

3.5 Outcomes

- Proceedings of the Symposium.
- A guide to the institution of child-friendly child protection systems in Uganda.
- A publication of the key symposium technical presentations.
- Development of an e-platform for continued learning, networking and dialogue.

3.6 Timeline

The symposium will be held on 2nd -3rd October, 2013 at the Silver Springs hotel Bugolobi. It will be a non-residential symposium so as to maximise time for dialogue and networking.

4. Contacts

For further information please contact either contact below:

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