

PILOT STUDY IN RWANDA

to develop evidence-based Child Protection / Sexual and Gender-Based Violence assessment tools



With the support of the US Government, UNHCR launched at the end of 2013 the 3-year “Safe from the Start” initiative to enhance Sexual and Gender-based Violence [SGBV] prevention and response at the onset of an emergency. A key component of the initiative is to develop sound assessment tools and methodologies to strengthen evidence-based child protection and SGBV interventions in humanitarian settings.

UNHCR, the Child Protection in Conflict Learning Network [CPC Network] and the Association of Volunteers in International Service-Rwanda [AVSI] conducted a first assessment towards measuring impact through a Child Protection Index in December 2013 in Kiziba Camp, Rwanda. Kiziba Camp was established in December 1996, and currently has a population of 16,314 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, including 8,163 children aged 0-17 years old (3,993 boys and 4,170 girls).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to answer the following questions:

What is the strength of the child protection system in Kiziba Camp, Rwanda (Child Protection System strength)?

What is the current status of child protection amongst adolescents (13-17) – levels of exposure to violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect, and levels of psychosocial wellbeing (Child Protection Outcomes)?

A second assessment will seek to understand the linkages between any changes in the child protection system and outcomes on the protection of children.

CORE CHALLENGES

in measuring child protection
in humanitarian settings

CPC researchers identified several challenges to measure the impact of child protection strategies in humanitarian settings:

- Traditional impact assessment methodologies (for example, randomized control trials) are often not feasible or appropriate in humanitarian settings.
- The focus of research has primarily been on specific interventions, rather than taking a systems-approach to child protection, and researchers have not focused on methodologies to assess multiple components of child protection.
- Studies on child protection in humanitarian settings have focused on specific outcomes, primarily mental health, rather than on a range of child protection outcomes.

These challenges leave child protection actors with little evidence on the patterns of violence, exploitation and abuse against children, as well on the impact of interventions that may prevent and respond to these concerns.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

UNHCR's 2012 Framework for the Protection of Children articulates the centrality of child protection formulated around six Goals. Strategies to achieve the goals of the Framework are being rolled out in 11 pilot countries. Measurement and assessment of the impact of these strategies on child protection outcomes is an important aspect of implementation of the Framework.

In recognition of the importance of measurement and assessment of UNHCR's child protection activities, including protection from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), UNHCR, the CPC Network and AVSI collaborated on this pilot study, as a first step towards developing tools that can measure change in key child protection indicators.

The larger study (of which this pilot study is part) seeks to test the hypothesis that a *good child protection environment is associated with lower levels of exploitation, violence and other child protection concerns and higher levels of psychosocial wellbeing*. Data from this pilot study tests this hypothesis.

METHODOLOGY

Researchers developed a Child Protection Index [CPI], based on UNHCR's Framework for the Protection of Children, to measure the strength of the child protection system. Data for the CPI was collected from key informant interviews with child protection stakeholders in Rwanda. In addition, researchers developed two survey instruments: an adolescent survey, including measures of exposure to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect and psychosocial wellbeing, and a caregiver survey that measures knowledge of and attitudes towards child protection and child protection services, as well as caregiver wellbeing.

Households were selected through adapted systematic sampling to ensure that all villages and *quartiers* in the camp were represented in the final sample of 129 adolescent and caregiver pairs. Ethical considerations included obtaining permission for adolescents' participation from a caregiver, informed consent, and training for data collectors on response to distress.

FINDINGS

Child protection in Kiziba camp: Results from the CPI indicate a moderate child protection system strength in Kiziba Camp. Areas for improvement include utilization of reporting mechanisms for abuse and violence, utilization of services (such as health and psychosocial support) for adolescents who have experienced violence and abuse, provision of age-appropriate complaints mechanisms, and processing of best interests determinations. Strengths include high levels of school attendance, existence of community-based child protection mechanisms, and various services, including clubs and committees for adolescents.

Results from the adolescent survey provide insight into various aspects of wellbeing and protection of adolescents in Kiziba Camp:

- 27% of adolescents reported high symptoms of anxiety, and 12% of adolescent reported a high level of emotional difficulties
- 15% of adolescents reported high levels of hope and future orientation, while 10% of adolescent reported high resilience levels
- 72% of adolescents reported having witnessed shouting and yelling at home
- 18% of adolescents reported having seen physical violence at home
- Direct experience with violence at home was commonly reported, including being pushed, grabbed or kicked (11%), being hit, beaten or spanked (19%) and being beaten with a belt, paddle, a stick or other object (11%)
- 4% of adolescents reported forced intercourse in the past year, 2% reported being pressured or persuaded to have sex in the past year, and 8% reported unwanted sexual touching in the past year
- 20% of adolescents reported feeling unsafe in their home in the past week (compared to 10% at the market and 10% in other places in the camp)
- 29% of adolescents reported having been injured while walking around the camp

Low rates of abuse and violence, and utilization of services after experiencing violence or abuse, were reported. At the same time, high levels of knowledge of available services and community-based child protection mechanisms were reported; however, relatively low utilization of community-based child protection mechanisms was evident.

Results from the caregiver survey indicated that **74%** reported high levels of emotional distress. Caregiver wellbeing impacted adolescents: findings indicated that adolescents with caregivers with high levels of depression were more likely to have high levels of anxiety symptoms.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Rwanda pilot study enabled researchers to field test assessment tools and methodology. Some key lessons from the pilot study include the need for more time for fieldwork, the importance of appropriate site selection in terms of accessibility and security, the need for additional time to train data collectors, use of established protocols for instrument translation, and the need for mapping of the camp prior to selecting a sampling methodology.

This pilot study indicated a number of strengths to the methodological approach. The key informant interviews and adolescent and caregiver surveys provided complementary data affording a full description of child protection issues in the Camp. Piloting the instruments and the use of cognitive interviewing proved effective and improved both the reliability and validity of the survey instruments. However, revisions of instruments and approach are necessary. The length and scope of the long-version of the CPI piloted in this study proved to generate extensive data. However, the goal of generating a clear and concise measure of the strength of the child protection systems requires that the CPI be consolidated. The reported low incidence of sexual violence may reflect low disclosure rates, and indicates a need to explore effective methods for assessing exposure to violence and abuse.

NEXT STEPS

Rwanda: The findings of this study have informed recommendations for strengthening the child protection system in Rwanda, and specific actions that can be taken to improve outcomes for adolescents in Kiziba Camp. In follow-up research in Kiziba Camp, changes in the child protective environment will be measured, and their subsequent impacts on adolescents' safety and wellbeing assessed.

Methodology: The CPI provides researchers and practitioners with a tool for measuring change over time and monitoring key aspects of the child protective environment. Moreover, based on this pilot study, researchers have revised and refined the measurement instruments in order to conduct similar studies in additional humanitarian settings in 2014 and 2015.

Overall, the research provides insight for researchers, policy makers, donors and practitioners regarding the impact of child protection activities for adolescents in humanitarian settings.