

DISCUSSION PAPER

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**A Concept Note on Child  
Protection Systems Monitoring  
and Evaluation**

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This is a working document that was commissioned by UNICEF. It has been prepared to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and to stimulate discussion. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF.



## Introduction

The overall goal of this concept note (note) is to provide support for planning discussions for the Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (CPMERG) by providing a brief explication of the prospects for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts in the area of child protection systems. The objectives outlined for this in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the note were as follows:

- To identify major issues and challenges related to monitoring and evaluation of child protection systems
- To propose initiatives that the CPMERG could undertake to address these issues and challenges, including in the short term (over the next two years) and in the longer term

In taking on this task the authors feel it is important to be clear that in the preparation time available, the obvious complexities of the topic, and the brevity of this note that it is only possible to scratch the surface of existing and potential M&E efforts, as well as, the relevant documents. It is also important to recognize that the scope is limited to a discussion of M&E in relation to child protection systems, and that even this limitation defines a broad scope that we can only begin to summarize. That said, our hope is that this document does stimulate discussion, and will help to provide some focus on topics that require much more in depth consideration.

## Background

The systems approach for child protection efforts recently emerged through discussions amongst a range of global child protection advocates based on concerns that child protection efforts had primarily been addressing single issues such as manmade and natural disasters, trafficking, street children, and so forth.<sup>1</sup> This concern is summarized below:

Since the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, legal reforms for the most part have addressed child protection concerns on an issue-by-issue basis, rather than adopting a comprehensive approach. In addition to thoroughly reviewing legislative frameworks – and reforming and amending them as necessary – governments need to adopt national budgets, policies, practices and monitoring mechanisms through a human

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<sup>1</sup> Save the Children (2006). Why effective national child protection systems are needed: Save the Children's key recommendations in response to the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children. United Kingdom: Save the Children.

rights-based approach. Governments also need to encourage public discussion of child protection issues, because legislation alone will not have sufficient impact unless awareness is raised and attitudes are changed. (UNICEF, 2009, p 2).<sup>2</sup>

Historically, analysis and programming in child protection have focused on particular issues or specific groups of vulnerable children, sometimes referred to as a vertical approach. Issues receiving attention in recent years include violence against children, alternative care, justice for children, children affected by armed forces and groups, trafficking, sexual exploitation, child labor and child separation. However, many children are vulnerable to multiple child protection violations. While vertical, issue-focused programming can be very effective in serving the specific cohort of children targeted, it can result in protection gaps, lack of coherent referral systems and insufficient attention to early intervention, family support mechanisms and prevention efforts.

In contrast, child protection systems are seen as a comprehensive and sustainable approach to preventing and responding to child protection issues. They comprise the set of laws, policies, regulations and services required across all social sectors – especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to respond to and prevent protection-related risks. This approach does not negate the importance of addressing child protection issues, but rather ensures that these issues are placed within a holistic service structure. Vertical concerns in this view can become an entry point to strengthen child protection systems more broadly. Such systems seek to protect all children and to unite all stakeholders behind a common set of goals, creating a long term response that is robust, properly coordinated and adapted to evolving problems.

Since the notion of a child protection systems approach began to gain traction a number of efforts have taken place on the part of UNICEF and other related internationally based Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in order to help clarify what is meant by a systems approach and how such an approach can be infused into global, national, and local efforts aimed at addressing children’s rights and improving their well-being. The need for an M&E framework focused on the systems approach is a key part of the process needed to understand and improve such systems.

### *Child Protection Systems: An Overview*

All systems including child protection systems consist of interactive parts that operate together within some discernable boundary or scope. It is important to be clear that the idea of a systems approach does not prescribe the scope or the components of a child protection system in the context of a given setting. Another assumption is that regardless of the

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<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2009). Progress for Children; a Report Card. New York: UNICEF.

state of the system, a child protection system exists wherever children are being raised.<sup>3</sup> Through the UN consensus represented by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the broad goals of a systems approach in child protection must address whether children are effectively protected from violence, abuse, exploitation, and other forms of maltreatment.

Given this high level view of child protection systems there are also certain dynamics of these systems that may help to guide discussion from an M&E perspective. First, dynamics exist between the status of children (measured as outcomes), child protection goals, and the child protection system in relation to change, including social change. Further, there are boundaries or embeddedness between or among the components of the child protection system and other systems such as health and education, as well as, externalities and emergencies that influence the child protection systems. This means that, observing, understanding, and determining the impact of these events and structures on the status and well-being of children is undoubtedly one of the more important functions of an M&E effort. Finally, over time all systems respond to the gap between their goals and their attainment. One complexity of child protection systems is that the goals may be difficult to identify from the M&E perspective as they may not only be responding to both explicitly stated policy goals, but also to the cultural context and interpretation of those goals which may be implicit.<sup>4</sup>

### *Defining, Mapping and Assessing Child Protection Systems*

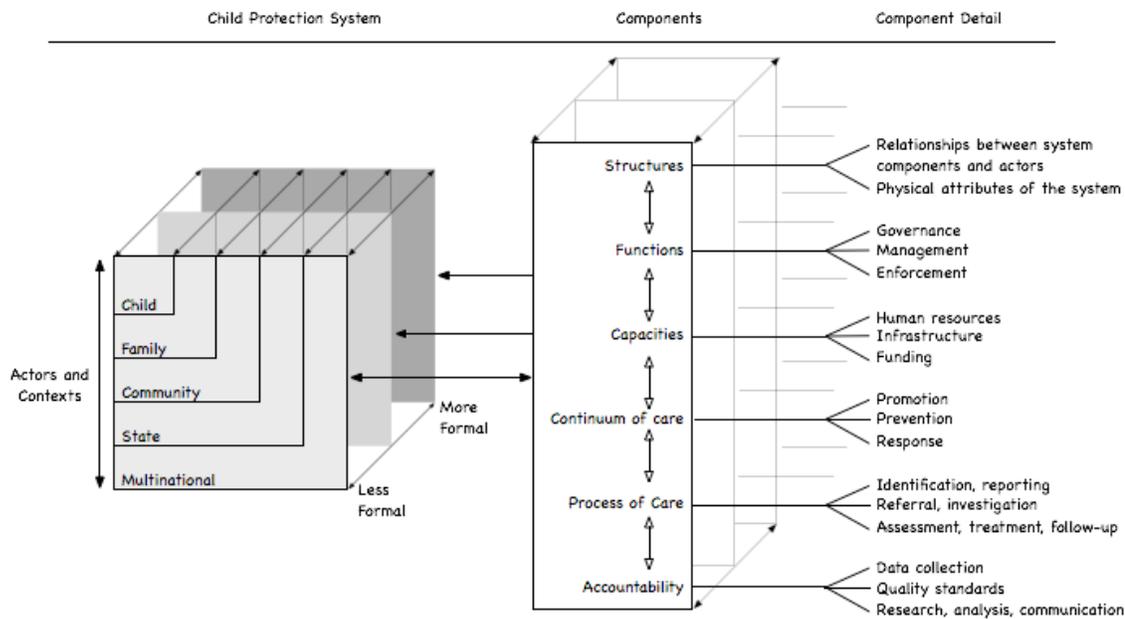
Figure 1 provides a schematic of a child protection system in relation to levels and components that are consistently identified as part of such a system in the literature. The components of the system are tied to a continuum of levels that consist of actors and contexts along one dimension and more formal to informal manifestations of the components on a second dimension. While more formal systems run the gamut from national agencies to systems established locally and operated professionally by NGOs, more informal child protection systems are most often those that operate between individuals and family members, but may also operate more broadly at a community level. Both informal and more formal systems can emerge from and are impacted by social or cultural norms related to the care and protection of children.

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<sup>3</sup> Wulczyn, F., Daro, D., Fluke, J., Feldman, S., Glodek, C., & Lifanda, K. (2009). *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*. Chicago: Chapin Hall.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 1. Child Protection Systems: Actors, Context, and Components<sup>5</sup>**



Aside from helping to explain what a child protection system is, another objective of such schematics is to provide a blueprint for mapping exercises within country specific contexts. The expectation is that the mapping exercise can provide a structure on which to hang the detail of the actual system of child protection in a given setting, to help assess the status of a system, and to prioritize ongoing efforts to develop the system further in support of its goals, including refining the goals themselves.

One such mapping process was recently developed by UNICEF and their partners Maestral International<sup>6</sup> that incorporates seven key elements thought to contribute to describe the basic range of child protection systems components including: 1) Laws, Policies, Standards and Regulations; 2). Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration; 3). Capacity Building; 4). Service and Service Delivery Mechanisms; 5). Communication, Education and Mobilization for Change; 6). Financial Resources; and 7). Accountability Mechanisms. This toolkit has now been piloted in several countries, and other efforts of a similar nature are underway, however, the value and utility of the mapping and assessment have yet to be determined (see looking ahead section below). We now turn to the complexities of the M&E enterprise itself and the issues and challenges associated with how it may contribute the systems approach.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF. (2009). Child Protection Systems Mapping and Assessment: User's Guide. New York: UNICEF.

## Monitoring and Evaluation: Main Issues and Challenges

M&E efforts can be viewed as a component part of what supports and drives a child protection system toward goal attainment. A child protection system impacts multiple outcomes. If a given system is successful, the attainment of outcomes can be viewed collectively as meeting the goals of addressing children's rights and improving their well being. On the other hand, the complexity of child protection systems means that M&E efforts are not simple and that they must be multi-faceted.

M&E is crucial for examining systems for multiple reasons. The obvious first priority is to address accountability and help determine the status of children and whether outcomes for children are changing (i.e., improving or not). The second is to help identify what elements and dynamics of a system provide the most leverage for goal directed change. Less obviously, and as a minimally organized process, M&E can be viewed abstractly as one of the key ingredients of the system since as a source of information it is also used by the system to modify its behavior in the form of feedback. Thus, like the assumption regarding the implicit existence of child protection systems themselves, the actors in the system interpret M&E information for feedback purposes. As the systems become more complex and formal the issues of data quality, validity, and interpretation become increasingly complex as well. Because of this role in the feedback dynamics of the system, attention to the relative accuracy, validity and interpretation of the M&E information and knowledge is a critical aspect of the systems approach.

While the section above provides some context for the systems approach to child protection, the role of a MERG in this area is much broader. Given the recent and burgeoning status of the systems approach, the M&E concerns that bear specifically on the approach are likely to be emergent. With this in mind the challenges in defining a productive role for a CPMERG with respect to child protection systems are also addressed somewhat broadly in this section, at least within the limitations of the note.

### *Definitional Challenges*

Definitions are a typical starting point for M&E planning and generally a challenging one, and unfortunately space in this note limits the specifics that can be addressed here. One potentially useful observation given much of the material reviewed for this note is that there are many terms for which good operational definitions are needed in order to facilitate communication within the CPMERG itself in order to minimize miscommunication. That said, too much focus on definitions, especially where consensus is not possible may hinder progress. The terminology that might be reviewed includes the following categories:

Surveillance related terms: These not only include relatively standard terms from epidemiology such as prevalence and incidence, but require some customization specific to various child protection phenomenon. For example, incidence of child maltreatment may involve measures of self reporting or be based on official sources of children coming to the attention of the appropriate authorities. Both may meet definitional requirements for maltreatment incidence, but are distinct measures with very different interpretations and uses.

Child protection service continuum terms: It is not clear that a shared understanding of key terms like promotion, prevention, response, and intervention exists.

Evaluation related terms: These include outcomes, inputs, indicators, quality indicators, baselines and so forth. All these need clarification, sub-classification (e.g., short term vs. long term outcomes), and child protection contextualization.

Unit of analysis related terms: These include typical subjects of child protection M&E efforts such as children, caregivers, families, communities, local authorities and so forth.

Systems related terms: The terminology here includes feedback, dynamics, structures, components, and the like.

One or more frameworks: In this context, a framework would describe how actions within the system are connected to outcomes so that corrective actions (pathways) can be tested.

The utility of appropriate definitions is apparent; considering how much attention is needed with respect to definitions may also be an appropriate exercise in as much as general resolution is rarely precise.

### Goals, standards, and baselines

Monitoring can be thought of as an exercise in gap analysis between the current set of conditions and the desired goals. Gap analysis implies having a sense for what would be true—a *standard*—if the effort met all goals. According to the National Institutes of Health, a *baseline* is the time point just before an intervention when starting measurements are taken.<sup>7</sup> Used in conjunction with standards, a baseline may also point to process and quality improvements that are needed in the first place.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/Glossary.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Wulczyn, F., Orlebeke, B., and Haight, J. (2009). Finding the Return on Investment: A Framework for Monitoring Local Child Welfare Agencies. Chicago: Chapin Hall.

An obvious starting point for setting goals and standards is Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Children. Setting goals and standards in the area of child protection systems is complicated for several reasons. Among these is the need to formulate meaningful standards at various levels including local or community levels, cultural levels, the country level, and at the multi-national level. Ideally, standards would have some coherence across levels.

Another complication is the technical process through which goals, standards, and baselines are likely to be set. For example, in part owing to the issue oriented history of child protection work, there may be a tendency to focus on key themes in child protection<sup>9</sup> that do not address the full range of the child protection system. In the same vein, the knowledge and technology for M&E associated with specific child protection themes may be differentially developed leading to a focus on themes as a straightforward way to make progress. It may be worthwhile to try and insure that attention to the development of M&E and attendant resources are not too lopsided in favor of methods and approaches that are better known and understood.

Another complicating aspect of the process for setting goals, standards, and baselines is the participation of key constituents, and especially children. Further complicating this participation process is the degree to which participation by some constituents is accepted by governments, local authorities, or community members and the degree to which some stakeholders are constrained from participating due to concerns about their governments or because they are marginalized or socially excluded.<sup>10</sup>

## Measurement

A primary orientation of the paper *Adapting a Systems Approach*<sup>11</sup> is on insuring that children's rights are addressed and that child well-being is improved as part of the goal setting framework of the child protection systems approach. The implication is that child outcomes and their measurement are a fundamental aspect of what is needed from an M&E perspective. Obviously the formulation and testing of appropriate and valid measurement of well-being related outcomes is extremely challenging.

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<sup>9</sup> Examples of themes include (i) birth registration; (ii) child labor; (iii) harmful cultural practices (e.g., female genital mutilation/cutting, child marriage, discrimination); (iv) physically, sexually, and psychologically abused and neglected children; (v) children without adequate family care or alternative care, (vi) child mobility and child trafficking; (vii) commercial sexual exploitation; (viii) children and justice; and (ix) child protection in emergencies/armed conflict.

<sup>10</sup> Wessells, M. (2009). *What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community?* United Kingdom: Save the Children.

<sup>11</sup> Wulczyn, F., Daro, D., Fluke, J., Feldman, S., Glodek, C., & Lifanda, K. (2009). *Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations*. Chicago: Chapin Hall.

In the international context apparently successful efforts have been made to address the measurement of child outcomes as they pertain to specific related sectors (i.e., health, education) or issues/themes (i.e., HIV/AIDS, Children in Care, etc.). In contrast while efforts have been made to develop child outcome measures for child protection, these appear to be less developed at this stage, their utilization limited, and experience with these measurement approaches is not common at least among low and middle income countries.<sup>12</sup>

Further complicating the measurement of outcomes is the concern that child well-being is culturally specific. Does this imply that measurement must also be culturally specific rendering the possibility of comparisons between or even within countries that much more complicated, or are there features of child development or other aspects of well-being that can be considered more broadly in common? Clearly the CRC provides the basis of a universal view of children's rights, but this may not lead directly to an understanding of child well-being in relation to these rights. If there are common outcome measures of well-being, does this imply that homogeneity of expression and the degree of homogeneity is sufficient to support the development of standards?

Surveillance measurement that pertains to child protection appears more systematically developed and methodologically advanced than other M&E efforts for child protection. For example the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)<sup>13</sup> and the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)<sup>14</sup> both collect common information at the household level regarding the status of children specific to child protection including child labour, child marriage, birth registration, female genital mutilation/cutting, domestic violence, child disability and child discipline across low and middle income countries. While these data have important limitations such as not covering the range of child protection themes and being limited to children residing in households, they are a very valuable tool in the M&E repertoire. Because these are ongoing data collection programs, the potential exists to utilize these data to help monitor gaps in relation to baselines at regional, country, and multi-national levels. Furthermore, the data from these programs permit the use of multi-variate analyses that can be exploited to identify key strategies and develop programs that are grounded in evidence and the size of the impact of a potential system of interventions can be estimated. In the context of child protection systems the MICS and DHS programs could prove most useful and perhaps even serve as a source of outcome measurement in terms of monitoring the promotion and prevention end of child protection system continuum and in helping to identify high impact prevention needs. Data collection tools and data collection programs with

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<sup>12</sup> See for example the following documents: UNICEF. (undated). Draft ToR on the Child Protection MERG; Wessells, M. (2009). What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? United Kingdom: Save the Children. Save the Children (2008). Menu of Outcome Indicators. United Kingdom: Save the Children.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.childinfo.org/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.measuredhs.com/start.cfm>

similar scope are needed to address other M&E needs in child protection. Further attention also needs to be given to measurement of changes in attitudes and social norms that underlie various forms of violence, exploitation and abuse.

Other country specific and even regional efforts (e.g., Balkan Area Epidemiologic Survey of Child Abuse and Neglect) are also underway to develop a range of data gathering programs addressing both surveillance and system level intervention processes in child protection that could potentially be coordinated to a greater extent. One example of such coordination is the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Working Group on Child Maltreatment Data Collection (ISPCANWG)<sup>15</sup> which is attempting to maintain current information on national child maltreatment data collection programs.

Measurement of inputs including financial inputs, workforce development including recruitment and training, legal and policy development, numbers and characteristics of service recipients, and so forth also require attention. Experience by the authors with multiple systems in high income countries has shown that the implementation of these measurements is exceedingly challenging, and is likely to be especially complex in settings that are informal. Much of the M&E work in this area in high income countries relies on the development of administrative data systems and consequently some degree of ongoing governmental support. In low income countries some of the same difficulties experienced by high income countries can be anticipated, although perhaps more so, including difficulties in sustaining long term infrastructure development, sufficiency of trained personnel, local cooperation with regional or national governments, and of course adequate financial resources.

Another fundamental measurement issue when considering systems is the degree to which the outcomes can reasonably be attributed to the performance of the system. The overall quality of the data is a concern here and apart from not inconsiderable issues concerning the reliability and validity of measurement the sustainability of the data collection program over time with a high degree of consistency is also a critical part of the infrastructure needed.

Finally, consideration of contexts in which countries often find themselves may prevent or interrupt the M&E process. These include countries addressing emergencies, fragile states that are burdened by other critical priorities, and states in political or social transition. Although ideally the existence of a child protection system would help to facilitate effective responses to these types of events and particularly emergencies and would help to prevent violations of rights or other child protection issues from arising, it is also possible for weak systems that the events may cause the unraveling of both the informal and more formal child protections systems in a country or region.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ispcan.org/CMDData/index.html>

Monitoring and evaluation involve activities that are universal – observations have to be made, data have to be recorded and analyzed, and the findings must be interpreted. These linked actions are fundamental to knowledge development. The purpose to which monitoring and evaluation are applied is more context sensitive and frame answers to the how, what, and why of a particular monitoring and evaluation project. For example, monitoring system performance requires a different skill set when compared with monitoring the health and well-being of children within the rights perspective. Yet, observation, recording, analysis, and interpretation are essential in both instances.

The link between monitoring, evaluation, and the systems perspective can be traced back through to the CRC. In one sense, the CRC provides a scope of work that answers a relatively simple question – what is the subject matter of concern? What does one want to monitor and evaluate, and toward what end? For example, Article 19 of the CRC directs “States Parties . . . to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.” These are further directed to pursue legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures deemed appropriate, including the development of social programs to support children and those who care for them. Finally, Article 19 goes on to call for other forms of prevention as well as procedures for “identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up of instances children maltreatment.”

The charge, if you will, is further clarified in UNICEF’s own child protection strategy which states that “[P]reventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse is essential to ensuring children’s rights to survival, development and well-being.” The vision and approach of UNICEF is to create a protective environment, where girls and boys are free from violence, exploitation, and unnecessary separation from family; and where laws, services, behaviors and practices minimize children’s vulnerability, address known risk factors, and strengthen children’s own resilience. This approach is human rights-based, and emphasizes prevention as well as the accountability of governments. It enhances aid effectiveness by supporting sustained national capacity for child protection. Finally, it reflects children’s own roles and resilience as agents of change and actors in strengthening the protective environment.

Subsequent work in the area, including Chapin Hall’s paper titled *Adapting a Systems Approach*, the mapping and assessment tool developed by UNICEF and Maestral International, together with other regionally designed papers, tools, and frameworks, all play a role in bringing needed clarity (i.e., operational definition to use a measurement term) to the vision set forth in the CRC and other foundational documents.<sup>16</sup> For example, the *Toolkit to Map and Assess Child*

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the following documents. Save the Children (2006). Why effective national child protection systems are needed: Save the Children’s key recommendations in response to the UN Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children. United Kingdom: Save the

*Protection Systems* addresses content (what data to collect), process (how to collect the data), record keeping, informants (who to ask), and definitions. These are all steps in a process intended to produce actionable knowledge about the well-being of children, the extent to which their rights are being upheld, and the extent to which underlying systems are performing their functions within the context of a given child protection system.

If there is one element missing from these documents, one would have to say that on balance the documents outline what might be called the data collection phase of monitoring and evaluation. Much less time is spent on the 'methods' by which the data are analyzed (i.e., the ways in which meaning is derived from the data collected). We will consider this set of issues as well as others in the section on looking ahead that follows.

## Looking Ahead

In this section we identify a set of basic ideas that the CPMERG may want to take on within both a short and long term timeline. Our suggestions are guided by our experience developing data systems, designing monitoring systems, and evaluating programs in a variety of circumstances and context.

Here are some ideas to start with.

- Definitions: as described above, the CPMERG may be helpful in clarifying the range of terms related to child protection M&E work. A systematic process to review terms of art and achieve some degree of consensus would help to unify the M&E efforts; however, this activity should be time limited and it must be recognized that even basic agreement on all terminology will not be possible.
- Case studies: Case studies of existing monitoring and evaluation efforts would provide a template of experience relative to how monitoring and evaluation 'projects' evolve over time. For example, many countries now have administrative data systems but many do not. While administrative data systems do not provide all the data one needs to monitor and evaluate child protection systems, such systems do form a backbone of sorts without which the structures needed to monitor and evaluate are incomplete. That said, the development, maintenance, and use of administrative data systems is an area fraught

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Children. Save the Children (2008). *A 'Rough Guide' to Child Protection Systems*. London: Save the Children. Save the Children (2009). *Child protection systems in emergencies: A review of current thinking and experience*. United Kingdom: Save the Children UNICEF (2008). *UNICEF Child Protection Strategy*. Annual Session, 2008. UNICEF EAPRO (2009). *East Asia and Pacific Child Protection Programme Strategy Toolkit*. East Asia and Pacific Regional Office. Bangkok, Thailand: UNICEF. World Health Organization. (2007). *Everybody's Business: Strengthening Health Systems to Improve Health Outcomes. A Framework for Action*. World Health Organization. Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2008). *Inverting the pyramid: Enhancing systems for protecting children*. Allen Consulting Group: Melbourne. Inter-American Children's Institute (2003). *Basic Prototype: National Child System*. INN/OAS: Montevideo, Uruguay. United Nations High Commission on Refugees (2009). *Summary note: Inter-agency expert consultation on child protection systems*. 19 and 20 January 2009. Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue: Geneva, Switzerland. UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b38f0.html> [accessed 27 October 2009].

with challenges and the potential for expensive mistakes.

Case studies offer a way to highlight the 'lessons learned' in those contexts where the development of monitoring and evaluation systems are more advanced. Also, possible are the formation of comparative case studies on child protection systems which could highlight key features of particular sets of countries, or provide input for regional planning.

- Mapping and assessment: The process of mapping and assessment of child protection systems is already being supported, however, an assessment of the utility of the work has not been undertaken. Perhaps specific systematic attention to the evaluation of the mapping and assessment processes would help inform the improvement of the toolkits and provide some sense of how the data gathered during these processes could be used on an ongoing basis. The key to a successful process would be the development of evaluation dimensions and criteria in advance to insure the process is rigorous.
- Exploit existing data: Despite their limitations, a clear example here is that data such as MICS and DHS are underutilized in the M&E work on child protection systems. Several questions could be envisioned with respect to MICS: 1) what extent do child protection systems exist and what characterizes the systems in the MICS countries? 2) Is it possible to formulate a study design in one or two countries that employs the MICS data to set baselines and then subsequent iterations of MICS to assess prevention program effectiveness on multiple child protection surveillance measures?; and 3) What would be the benefits, challenges, and limitations of such studies?

Investment in the use of existing data will help to reinforce and improve the infrastructure that must be developed to support the complex M&E process needed for child protection systems. There are other sources of existing data both quantitative and qualitative that need to be inventoried, assessed for utility and data quality, and where appropriate utilized.

- Ethics and the politics of information – standards for the release of (any) data (publication and public use access): One of the main concerns once data are collected has to do with access to the data. Access to information provides for broad participation in how meaning is derived from a given set of data. A crucial step, one that frames the enterprise over the long term, has to do with standards for public access to data. What set of rights and obligations fall to those who gather the data, those who analyze the data in the event the two parties are not one and the same, and the types of data covered by the policy (administrative data, survey data, etc.)?

Having clear policy in this area may have the ancillary benefit of increasing participation if informants know that access to the data is 'open.' Open is, of course, subject to definition insofar as confidential information is often involved.

- Incentive based interventions/transfers: Transfer approaches appear to offer the possibility of concrete methods for community interventions for specific interventions in child protection issues and are being considered for child protection system formation and sustainability.<sup>17</sup> Some review of the literature and development of evaluation design for social transfer approaches to child protection could be explored and assessed for its utility in systems development and the reinforcement of more informal systems. This could be an ideal area for M&E related efforts given the possibilities of integrating cost and outcomes data.
- Indicator development: There are ongoing processes associated with indicator development in children's services, child well-being, etc. The draft ToR for the CPMERG states indicator development as one possible function of the group including "... technical review and advice on M&E indicators for national, inter-country and global reporting, and other information gaps and outlining an agenda to address them, which takes into account field settings and realities."<sup>18</sup>

The scope of indicator development is quite broad since indicators are needed to understand system functions and outcomes. The most important indicators are likely to be outcome indicators, both short and long term, for children. However, because of the previously mentioned challenges associated with attributing outcomes to systems, indicators for the inputs, processes, resources, and dynamics of the child protection systems are also needed.

- "Neurons to neighbourhoods" – child development: In the literature covering child rights and the systems approach one might argue that some amount of work has to be expended on the critical question of child well-being. The right to survival, development, and well-being are well established. The questions are: what do we mean by well-being and how do long term secular improvements in child well-being relate to what systems can and cannot do relative to risk and protective factors that affect how children grow up.

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<sup>17</sup> Gregson, K., & Yates, R. (2010). UNICEF UPDATE (unpublished slide set).

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF. (undated). Draft ToR on the Child Protection MERG

A paper which clarifies the interaction between bio/genetic 'indicators' and the more malleable aspects of well-being is an important contribution to the large debate not to mention the implications for how one conducts monitoring and evaluation.

- Methods paper: As noted earlier, one can divide monitoring and evaluation into two discrete phases, although the intent in doing so is not to suggest a linear process when it is clear the process is not linear.

The first phase is data capture (e.g., data collection); the second is data analysis. Each phase has separate, embedded processes. Nevertheless, data collection and data analyses require coordination or choreography between the types of questions one wants to answer, the data collected, and the means used to answer those questions. A methods paper could incorporate a compilation and synthesis of information on measurements and indicators that would be applicable for child protection M&E. Evaluation in particular often involves one issue in particular: high-end statistical methods. Use of sophisticated methods is not required in every instance but in some cases the value of the work done is diminished if proper consideration as to the means of analysis is not given. The virtue of the more sophisticated methods has to do with what one learns (potentially) about cause and effect relationships; the challenge has to do with expertise that needs to be assembled in order to do the work. Expertise is in some contexts more difficult to 'acquire.'

A methods paper would be one way to articulate the issues involved, including the challenges one faces when using one set of methods as opposed to another. For example, how one describes the status of children descriptively and by what means (quantitative versus qualitative methods, for example) affects how one generalizes to larger populations, cost, and detail (how much can one say about children). Interviews with children provide rich detail, but it is much harder to replicate over time and much harder to generalize without large samples. With social indicator data it is, relatively speaking, easier and less costly to track well-being over time at the child level, the community level, and the national level, but the level of detail is often lacking. The choices implied involve trade-offs, costs, and opportunity costs. A methods paper would highlight what is involved.