Each & Every Child

Understanding and Working with Children in the Poorest and most Difficult Situations

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UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH
CHILDREN IN THE POOREST
AND MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

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Prepared for Plan

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HIV and AIDS projects in Tororo, Uganda (May 2005)

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*Young boy in a camp for internally
displaced people, in the Tsunami aftermath,
Banda Aceh, Indonesia (January 2005)*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report discusses the challenges that confront Plan and other child-focused organisations as they seek to assist those children whose rights are most violated and who are living in some of the poorest and most difficult situations in the world. Organisations have mainly worked with these children according to different categories, such as street children, children in conflict with the law and children in the worst forms of child labour. However, many children have multiple problems and belong to more than one category or move between categories over time. Many of the root causes and factors that impact on the lives of these children are similar. There is therefore the need to develop a more holistic approach, particularly in terms of prevention. This report proposes a framework that can help staff think about working with these groups of children from an integrated child centred and rights based development perspective.

Plan fulfils its mission of achieving lasting changes in the quality of life of disadvantaged children in developing countries mainly by working through child centred community development programmes. From the mid-1990s it started to work with specific groups of children at risk. This area of work has grown dramatically over the last ten years and was subject of a review that was commissioned to determine what the organisation needs to do to improve its capacity to work with these children. This report has evolved from the findings of the review.

Working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations is important because of significant inequities both within and between countries, and the increasing concentration of poverty among specific marginalised groups in many cases. Within marginalised groups, poverty and lack of opportunity are experienced disproportionately by children. As a result, very large numbers of children live their lives without adequate care and protection from adults and are excluded from the benefits of their societies. In their choice of where and with whom to work, child-focused organisations therefore need to consider how the impact of poverty is distributed between different social groups and within the family, as well as its geographic distribution.

Some children in the poorest and most difficult situations are separated from their families, such as some street children and child soldiers. However, the majority, such as children with disabilities, children affected by abuse and neglect and many children in hazardous labour, live in very poor rural and urban communities where their situation is often not recognised and their needs and rights not addressed by community development activities or by

service delivery. Organisations working with poor communities therefore need to understand how to help them recognise and address the needs and rights of the most marginalised children and ensure that community development activities and service provision is inclusive of them and relevant to their lives.

A child rights-based approach is needed to challenge the dynamics that prevent children in the poorest and most difficult situations and their families from participating equitably in society. Actors at different levels need to be held accountable for meeting their responsibilities for realising children's rights. The child rights principles of 'non-discrimination' and 'in the best interests of the child' are particularly important. In addition, working with these children requires the inclusion of an individual approach in which action is based on an understanding of each child's situation, as well as drawing on a group approach, derived from community development work.

Programmes to assist children living in the poorest and most difficult situations should be based on an understanding of protective and risk factors in different contexts, the process by which children fall into difficult situations and their own perspectives on their experiences. The main inter-related factors that shape the lives of these children are: relationships characterised by violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation; exclusion from the benefits of their societies; and the deprivation of basic needs and services. How individual children experience their situation depends on their resilience – their ability to cope positively with the challenges that they face, and their solidarity with other children and with adults.

The programme framework proposed for working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations consists of the following intervention phases:
• Identification and research
• Prevention
• Empowerment, support and protection
• Rehabilitation and reintegration

Strategies that are related to the main factors impacting on the lives of these children are integrated into the interventions. These are:
• Promoting childhood resilience, peer solidarity and adult support
• Child protection
• Promoting social inclusion
• Supporting access to basic needs and services

A thorough child rights-based analysis is necessary for the identification of those children whose rights are most violated within each country and local context, as the basis for the choice of groups with which to work at country or local levels and to guide programme design.

Programmes of prevention can use either community-wide or targeted approaches. The preferred approach is the integration of marginalised groups within community development programmes. This requires working with communities and service providers to identify and address the barriers that marginalised children and their families experience to their participation in community development activities and their use of basic services, particularly health, education and livelihood.

Programmes of prevention promote protective factors and aim to reduce the risks of poor children. Childhood resilience and solidarity is encouraged by providing opportunities for children's participation in the family, school, community and wider community, taking care to facilitate the inclusion of marginalised children. Child protection should be mainstreamed within community development programmes and community-based child protection programmes should be developed that are linked to local and national social services and legal infrastructures. Social protection measures have the potential to reduce risk and are within the financial capacity, even of low income countries, although multiple challenges remain to be overcome if the provision of child benefits, old age pensions and disability benefits is to be scaled up and effectively delivered on a sustainable basis.

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations cannot always be 'rescued' but can be supported to enable them to cope positively with their situation. Opportunities for them to meet together and participate in education help them to have confidence and can improve their relationships with their families and other adults such as employers. Child protection is enhanced by training children to protect themselves, working with the people and institutions with which they come into contact to respect their right to protection and by developing effective child protection services. Local and national governments should be strengthened to provide the flexible, child friendly services that the children and their families need.

Rehabilitation of children in the poorest and most difficult situations and their reintegration into society is achieved by helping children to recover from their experiences in a safe environment, through counselling and the resumption of normal routines. Children should be assisted to plan their future and choose from the life options that are available to them.

Children should be provided with opportunities to participate in policy discussions at all levels and should encourage governments to develop legislation, policy and programmes that promote the realisation of all children's rights. Compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) should be monitored. Governments also need to be pressured to develop child protection

legislation, to enforce existing legislation and to provide adequate child protection services and law enforcement and judicial systems appropriate for children.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Base design and delivery of programmes on child rights-based situation assessments and monitoring and evaluation systems

Programmes to assist children in the poorest and most difficult situations should be based on a child rights-based situation assessment that identifies the children whose rights are most violated in each context and analyses the roles, responsibilities and capacities of different duty bearers and stakeholders. Programmes should include activities to empower, strengthen and build the capacity of the different individuals and institutions that are responsible for children.

Programmes should be assessed in terms of their outcomes and impact on the lives of children, their families and communities in order to ensure that what is being done is in the children's best interests.

2. Develop approaches that address common causes and integrate programmes of prevention, support and reintegration

Programmes of prevention that address the causes of children being in the poorest and most difficult situations should be developed with communities. Programmes of support and reintegration should be integrated with and inform broad based programmes of prevention.

3. Promote the social inclusion of marginalised groups

In order to address the structural causes of inequity, social inclusion and non-discrimination should be mainstreamed into community development programmes. Communities and institutions should be assisted to identify marginalised children and their families and to analyse and address the barriers that they experience to their participation in community development activities and their use of services. Legislation, policy, and budgetary allocations that discriminate against excluded groups should be challenged.

4. Strengthen children's resilience and solidarity

The resilience and solidarity of children from poor and marginalised families and children in the poorest and most difficult situations should be strength-

ened by opening opportunities for their participation in the family, school and community, raising awareness and respect for children's rights and promoting their empowerment.

5. **Mainstream child protection in community development programmes and address child protection violations**

Child protection should be mainstreamed in community development activities as a preventive measure and specific child protection issues that are of concern to children should be identified and addressed.

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations should be assisted to protect themselves, and the individuals and institutions with which they come into contact helped to understand and respect children's rights to protection. Local and national government should be strengthened to develop the child protection services that children need.

6. **Support sustainable solutions to meeting the basic needs of children and their access to essential services**

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations should be supported to meet their basic needs through measures that empower them and are based on an understanding of their own positive coping strategies. Families and communities should be encouraged to understand and take responsibility for these children. Local and national governments also need to be strengthened to provide the flexible services that these children need. Social protection measures need to be developed that are responsive to child rights and feasible and sustainable in various contexts.

7. **Child rights monitoring and advocacy**

CRC monitoring and the development of legislation that is consistent with the CRC can help to promote an environment that facilitates the realisation of children's rights. Analyses of the legislative framework and its consistency with the CRC should be conducted and of the quality of law enforcement, social policy and programmes, services and budgets at local and national levels. Gaps should be identified and advocacy activities planned to address them.

Opportunities should be provided for children in the poorest and most difficult situations to express their concerns to local and national government and participate in policy discussions. The organisations supporting them have the responsibility to follow up and pursue the issues that they raise.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

Chapter 1 describes the purpose of the report and the background to the review of Plan's work with children in the poorest and most difficult situations on which it was based. The terms and definitions used in the report are discussed.

Chapter 2 examines why working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations is important and the scale of the problem in terms of the numbers of children involved. It discusses the importance for child-focused organisations of working with very marginalised children who live with their families and communities as well as those who have separated and who may be more visible.

Chapter 3 helps us to understand the life experiences of children living in the poorest and most difficult situations and discusses the main factors that impact on their lives. It discusses the degrees of risk that different groups of children face. Finally it introduces the interventions and strategies that are proposed for working with these children.

Chapter 4 discusses the importance of child centred and rights-based approaches to working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations.

Chapter 5 is the core of the report and proposes a framework of interventions and strategies that can help organisations think about how to work with
children with the poorest and most difficult situations. This is organised around the four intervention phases of Identification and Research; Prevention; Empowerment, Support and Protection; and Reintegration.

6 months after the earthquake, children in a tent school, Siran Valley, Pakistan (March 2006)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report discusses the challenges that confront Plan and other child-focused organisations as they seek to assist those children who are most at risk and who are living in the poorest and most difficult situations in the world. Traditionally organisations have worked with these children on a group by group basis according to the different categories of 'children in especially difficult circumstances' (CEDCs). In addition they have focused their efforts mainly on the more visible groups of children, such as street children, children working in urban settings and children affected by conflict and disaster. The greater numbers of children who are more hidden from view within very poor households and communities, such as those who are affected by abuse and neglect, children with disabilities and those working in the agricultural sector, have received much less attention[1].

The best practices and lessons learnt in working with specific groups of children are very important, but there is increasing awareness of the need for a more integrated approach that recognises the common causes and experiences of these different groups. Many of the immediate and root causes that precipitate children into very difficult situations are similar. Many of the principles behind working with specific groups of children are the same, such as the need to understand their own experiences and perspectives and to provide support in such a way as to promote their positive coping strategies. In addition, children often face multiple challenges and do not fit neatly into one category, or they move between categories in their search for safety and security.

[1]Feeny, T., Boyden, J. (2003). Children and Poverty. Shaping a Response to Poverty: A Conceptual Overview and Implications for Responding to Children Living in Poverty. Children and Poverty Series. Part III. Christian Children's Fund.

There is a particular need to develop integrated approaches to prevention. This requires the recognition of those children and their families who are living in the poorest and most difficult situations within communities. The willingness of different stakeholders to take responsibility for these families, their participation and inclusion in community development activities and their equitable access to services need to be promoted in order to reduce the risks that they face. Programmes of prevention inevitably lead to the emergence of children who are already affected by the issues being addressed and therefore should be linked with and informed by activities of support, protection and rehabilitation.

In this report we propose a framework that can help staff of child-focused organisations think about how to work with children in the poorest and most difficult situations from an integrated, child centred development perspective. This requires improvements in the quality and reach of community-based programmes to ensure the inclusion of these children.

This report has been written for decision makers, managers and programme advisers at various levels. Throughout the report the challenges that face organisations are presented, the solutions that exist in best practice, both with-in Plan and other organisations are identified, together with areas where more work needs to be done.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW OF PLAN'S WORK WITH CHILDREN IN THE POOREST AND MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Traditionally Plan has aimed to fulfil its mission of achieving lasting improve-ments in the quality of life of deprived children in developing countries through
integrated community development programmes in poor rural and some urban communities. Child Centred Community Development is Plan's programme approach. It is a rights-based approach in which children, families and communities are active in achieving their own development and in which children's participation is a key component. Consultations with children led Plan to understand that even within apparently stable communities, many children experience very precarious lives and face multiple risks. For example, they frequently experience abuse and neglect, drop out of school for many reasons, and migrate or are trafficked to exploitative and hazardous situations of child labour.

In the mid 1990s Plan began to establish programmes with specific groups of children facing particular risks. These included programmes both with those who were still living with their families, such as children with disabilities and children from discriminated castes and ethnic groups, and with those who were

already separated from their families and communities, such as street children. At the same time, Plan has responded when its programme areas have been overtaken by conflict and disaster.

The scope and content of this work has increased rapidly. Plan is now working

• Children with disabilities

• Children in the worst forms of child labour

• Street and working children

• Children in conflict with the law

• Children affected by conflict and disaster

• Children affected by HIV/AIDS

• Children affected by violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse

• Children from discriminated castes and ethnic minorities

with a wide range of different groups of children, the main ones being:
Plan programme countries now have a considerable body of experience of working with these groups. This review was commissioned in recognition of the need to further develop organisational policy, learning and support for this area of work, given its rapid growth and increasing importance.

1.3. THE CONDUCT OF THE REVIEW

An advisory group of representatives from all parts of the organisation was established to guide the process of the review. Workshops were held with this group at the start of the project and to review the final conclusions. Interviews were held with internal and external resource persons and internal and external literature was reviewed. Visits were made to programmes implemented by Plan, its partners and other organisations in eight developing countries. During these visits discussions were held with children, adult community members, staff of Plan, its partners and other specialist organisations and representatives from local and national government. Participatory methods were used in consulting with children such as songs, drawings, role play and group discussions.

The main focus of the programme country visits was as follows:

Children with disabilities	Egypt, Uganda
Street and working children	Vietnam, Nepal, Senegal, India
Prevention of trafficking	Nepal
Children in the worst forms of child labour	Nepal, India
Children living in a post conflict situation	Sierra Leone
Child headed households	Uganda
Children affected by violence and abuse	Guatemala

1.4. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Over the years many different terms have been used to describe those children whose rights are most violated, but few clear definitions are to be found. Clear definitions are necessary to help organisations appreciate the links between children in different situations and design integrated programmes for working with them.

In the 1980s UNICEF and other child-focused organisations started to work with groups of 'children in especially difficult circumstances' (CEDCs). The World Declaration on the Survival, Development and Protection of Children of 1990 listed a wide range of CEDCs[2]. These included children affected by apartheid, foreign occupation, natural and man-made disaster and street and working children. The CRC contains many articles that deal with the rights of these
children to protection. Initially UNICEF worked with CEDCs on a group by group basis but has now integrated this work into its Child Protection Programme.

The term 'orphans and vulnerable children' is commonly used in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. USAID found that different country policies used a wide range of definitions for vulnerable children[3]. However, these mainly consist of lists of groups of children that are similar to the groups of children in especially difficult circumstances. See Annex 1.

In reality, there is no one definitive list of children in especially difficult circumstances or vulnerable children that is appropriate to all situations. The children whose rights are most violated vary by location and over time and

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[2]UNICEF. (1990). World Declaration on the Survival, Development and Protection of Children.
[3]Smart, R. (2003). Policies for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: A Framework for Moving Ahead. Policy. USAID

need to be identified within each country and local context. In addition, many children experience multiple problems and belong to more than one category or move between different categories. For example, many of the street children that we met at the Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) Transit Centre in Kathmandu had left their homes due to abuse, had been involved in various forms of hazardous labour and had also been in conflict with the law.

What most clearly distinguishes children whose rights are most violated is that they lack care and support from their families and communities and live their lives outside of the mainstream of society[4]. Our research found that the main factors that precipitate children into the most difficult situations and shape their life experiences are; extreme poverty, relationships of violence, exclusion by society or a catastrophic event such as conflict, disaster or the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We have therefore defined children whose rights are most violated as:

'Those children whose quality of life and ability to fulfil their potential is most affected due to the violation of their rights caused by:
* *extreme poverty*
* *violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation*
* *exclusion and discrimination by society.*
* *catastrophic events such as conflict, disaster or the AIDS pandemic'*

This report focuses mainly on the first three causes, though some reference will be made to the rehabilitation of children from catastrophic events. It does not deal with the humanitarian response to disaster and conflict.

For the purposes of this report, we decided to use the phrase 'children in the poorest and most difficult situations' to describe children whose rights are most violated because it is more holistic and expresses the link between extreme poverty and other situations of risk. We have also avoided using the term 'vulnerable children' which has connotations of helpless victims and was difficult to use when speaking with children themselves. Instead we prefer to use the concept of 'risk' because it implies the external as well as the personal problems that children face.

[4]ESCAP. HRD Course on Psychosocial and Medical Services for Sexually Abused and Sexually Exploited Children and Youth.

Chapter 2

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN THE POOREST AND MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Article 2 of the CRC commits States Parties to respect and ensure the rights of each child within their jurisdiction, without discrimination. One of the implications of the CRC is therefore that attention should be paid to equity and that there should be a particular focus on those children whose rights are most violated[5].

In this chapter we explore how the growth of inequity has led to increasing numbers of children living in particularly poor and difficult situations in relation to their peers[6]. Some of these children are separated from their families and communities, such as some street children and child soldiers, but the majority live with their families in very poor rural and urban communities. We explore the implications of this for how child-focused organisations should consider their choice of where and with which groups of children they should work.

2.1. THE GROWTH OF INEQUITY

Inequity both within and between countries is increasing through forces that include globalisation, urbanisation, poor governance, conflict, environmental degradation and the AIDS pandemic. Poverty and lack of opportunity are being concentrated among specific marginalised groups.

Due to discrimination and exclusion, poverty in many countries is concentrated among ethnic minority groups and discriminated castes and tribes. In Guatemala, indigenous groups account for 43% of the population, but 58% of the poor and 72% of the extreme poor[7]. Even in the rapidly growing economy

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[5]Theis, J. (2004). Promoting Rights-Based Approaches. Experiences and Ideas from Asia and the Pacific. Save the Children Sweden.
[6]The World Bank. (2005). Equity and Development. World Development Report 2006.
[7]World Bank. (2004). Poverty in Guatemala. A World Bank Country Study. 2004.

Young girl, Togo (2006)

of Vietnam, poverty is becoming increasingly focused among ethnic minorities and migrant populations that have not shared equitably in the benefits of development[8]. In Nepal, dalit families suffer extreme discrimination and are twice as likely to be poor as the population as a whole and have twice the child mortality rate. Many children from discriminated castes and tribes are therefore doubly disadvantaged. They face the dangers and risks of extreme poverty as well as social exclusion and loss of opportunity because of who they are.

Poverty and lack of opportunity among excluded groups are experienced disproportionately by children who are withdrawn from school in order to work, or who are neglected or subject to violence resulting from the stress that poverty brings[9]. These children are at risk of exploitation for their labour, trafficking, recruitment into armed groups and youth gangs and unsafe migration to urban centres. Although the majority of children stay with their families despite very poor and exploitative conditions, the emergence of children living and working on the streets is one marker of a society's inability to care adequately for its children. Although the exact numbers are impossible to verify, reports from around the world indicate that the numbers of children on the streets are increasing[10].

In East and Southern Africa the impact of the AIDS pandemic has reversed the developmental gains of the previous decades. The growing numbers of orphans has stretched the caring capacity of the extended family, leading to children being left in the care of the elderly or looking after themselves in child-headed households.

The international development community is moving towards viewing development as a process of realising people's rights rather than more narrow approaches to distributing welfare. This has meant that there is increasing concern about those whose rights are most violated and who are excluded from the development process. The need for equity and social justice as a necessary prerequisite to poverty reduction, security and stability is now being more widely recognised[11]. It is therefore important that development organisations base their decisions on where and how to work, not only on a geographical assessment of poverty but also on an understanding of how it's multiple dimensions are distributed within families, communities and the wider society.

2.2. THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Estimating the numbers of girls and boys in developing countries who are living in very poor and difficult situations is not easy due to problems of definition and access to the children concerned. However, we know that they are very

[8] Joint Donor Report to the Vietnam Consultative Group Meeting. (2003). Poverty. Vietnam Development Report 2004.

[9] Boyden, J., Eyber, C., Feeny, T., Scott, C. (2003). Children and Poverty. Voices of Children: Experiences and Perceptions from Belarus, Bolivia, India, Kenya and Sierra Leone. Children and Poverty Series Part II. Christian Children's Fund.
[10] Casa Alianza. (2000). Exploitation of Children – a Worldwide Outrage. Worldwide Statistics

high. For example, a study commissioned by UNICEF estimated that more than half of all children in developing countries experience severe deprivation and that one third, or 674 million children, live in absolute poverty[12].

Consultations with children have revealed that violence and abuse are common. In a multi-country consultation coordinated by the UK Grow Up Free from Poverty Coalition, alcohol-related violence and threats to children's personal security ranked second and third as the most frequently mentioned issues of concern to children[13]. The UN Study on Violence Against Children confirmed that violence against children is a grave and urgent global problem[14]. Studies show that up to 36% of parents use severe forms of physical punishment towards their children and that around 20% of girls and up to 15% of boys experience sexual abuse[15].

The loss or separation of parents puts children at additional risk. During our consultations, children frequently mentioned being fostered or the presence of a step parent as risk factors for abuse and neglect and for pushing children to leave home. At the end of 2003 an estimated 130 million children under 18 years of age (around 6%) were living with the loss of one or both parents, 15 million of which were due to AIDS[16]. In some African countries severely affected by HIV and AIDS, orphans make up over 15% of the childhood population.

The problem of child labour exists on a large scale, though figures from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) show an apparent recent reduction in the numbers of children engaged in the worst forms of child labour. The ILO estimates that in 2004, 14% of all children aged 5 to 17 years were engaged in forms of labour that should be abolished according to international labour conventions[17].

According to WHO estimates, children with disabilities make up around 10% of the childhood population and yet they are often hidden from view and denied their rights due to traditional taboos and ways of viewing children affected by disabilities. Parents that we met in Egypt admitted that before participating in the community-based rehabilitation programme supported by Plan they did not care properly for their disabled children and failed to feed them adequately or take them to the health centre when they were sick.

Girls and boys experience these forms of failure of care and exclusion differently. The most common sector in which boys experience exploitative and hazardous

[12] Gordon, G. et al. (2003). Child Poverty in the Developing World. The Policy Press.
[13] Grow Up Free from Poverty Coalition. (2005). Achieving our Dreams for 2015.
[14] United Nations General Assembly. (2006). Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children.
[15] WHO. (2002). World Report on Violence and Health.

[16] UNAIDS/UNICEF. (2004). Children on the Brink.
[17] ILO. (2006). The End of Child Labour Within Reach. Global Report under the Follow Up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

work is in agriculture, while girls are in demand as domestic workers and are more likely to be trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation. Gender based violence against girls takes the form of female foeticide, incest, rape, genital cutting and sexual harassment[18]. In some countries such as Mali up to 90% of

A camp for internally displaced people, in the Tsunami aftermath, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

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[18] Plan. (2005). Gender Equality and Plan. Our journey so far.

women have been subjected to genital cutting. Forced early marriage is wide-spread and marks the end of a girl's education. It leads to early pregnancy which is very risky and is the leading cause of death worldwide among girls aged 15 to 19 years.

It is impossible to say how many children live and work on the streets world-wide, though the figure of 150 million is often used. However, most of these have some form of contact with their families who live in deprived urban areas. Other groups of children who have separated from their families and communities are also relatively few in number. In 2000, around 1.2 million children were trafficked and at any one time there are around 300,000 child soldiers[19].

It can be seen from the discussion above that the majority of children who live in the poorest and most difficult situations are located with their families in poor rural and urban communities. Although the experiences of children who separate from their families may be more extreme and dramatic, those children who find it difficult to be assertive and to shape their own lives, particularly girls and children with disabilities, stay behind in situations of poverty, neglect and exploitation in which their quality of life is also seriously compromised. However, the situation of these children is often not recognised and their needs and rights not addressed by community development programmes. In addition the child protection work of most organisations focuses mainly on groups of children 'in special need of protection' such as children in conflict with the law and children affected by armed conflict, while far fewer organisations are working with communities to protect the very large numbers of children who experience violence in the home, school and community.

Child-focused organisations need to be concerned with children whose rights are most violated within their families and communities as well as those who have separated. Improvement in the quality of life of children whose rights are most violated within communities also serves to prevent separation. Many of the children's groups that we met were very aware of this. For example, a group of street children that we met in Delhi were critical of NGOs that were too concerned about the numbers of street children using their services and felt that:

'NGOs should focus more on the root causes that result in the migration of children onto the streets. NGOs do not appear to want to change the system, but rather only make changes that support their own agenda'.

Organisations working with poor communities need to understand how to help them recognise and address the needs and rights of those children that are most at risk. This is discussed further in Section 5.1.

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[19] Machel, G. (2001). The Impact of War on Children. UNICEF and UNIFEM

Chapter 3

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN
IN THE POOREST AND MOST DIFFICULT
SITUATIONS

In this chapter we look at the main factors that impact on the lives of children in the poorest and most difficult situations and how their own resilience and solidarity with their peers and with adults can help them to cope positively with their difficulties. We also discuss a practical way of thinking about the degrees of risk that children experience and how this can be linked to appropriate programme interventions.

3.1. THE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN IN THE POOREST AND MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Discussions with groups of children in several countries gave us useful insights into their experiences and the factors that protect children and those that put them at risk of falling into very difficult situations. We asked groups of children, both those who were community-based and groups of street and working children, a series of simple questions about their quality of life. See the table below for the summary of their responses and Annex 2 for the full results of these consultations. What is notable is the priority given by children to good relationships and their concern about inequitable treatment and violence against them as well as their material situation.

The responses correlate well with in-depth studies conducted by others that identify the protective factors that help children to be resilient and to cope positively with their difficulties[20] and the factors that put children at risk of falling into difficult situations[21].

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[20] Banaag Jr., C.G. (1997). Resiliency: Stories found in Philippines Streets. AusAID National Project on Street Children and UNICEF, Manila, Philippines.
[21] Veale, A. (1998). Developmental and Responsive Prevention. Prevention of Street Migration. Resource Pack. Consortium for Street Children. University College Cork.

6 months after the earthquake, a family has just returned to their village after the government's decision to close down camps for internally displaced people, Siran Valley, Pakistan (March 2006)

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM THE CHILDREN'S CONSULTATIONS

What makes life good for children (protective factors)
• a loving family environment in which girls and boys are treated equitably
• parents who are good role models and do not indulge in vices such as substance abuse
• parents who give encouragement and good advice to their children
• parents who have jobs that pay them a living wage
• having enough to eat
• going to a good school
• the support of peers
• communities in which children can meet together and in which they are respected and listened to

What makes life difficult for children (risk factors)
• being discriminated against - girls being treated less well than boys and children with disabilities being neglected
• the use of negative traditional practices such as early marriage
• aggression and violence within the home, school or community
• unemployment of parents and lack of land
• sickness or disability within the family
• the death or separation of parents
• lack of support and encouragement within the home and community
• lack of quality schooling

From these consultations and the review of the literature, four main factors emerged as shaping the life experience of children living in the poorest and most difficult situations. The first three are both the main causes that push children into dificult situations and the factors that impact negatively on their quality of life and keep them there. They are inter-related and reinforce each other and are:
• relationships of violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation
• exclusion from their societies
• the deprivation of basic needs and essential services

However, the way in which individual children experience living in very difficult situations varies and depends on the fourth factor which is:
• children's own internal resilience and ability to cope positively with their situation and the support that they have from their peers and from adults

The relationship of these factors is visualised in the diagram below[22].

**FACTORS THAT SHAPE THE EXPERIENCE OF CHLDREN
IN THE MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**
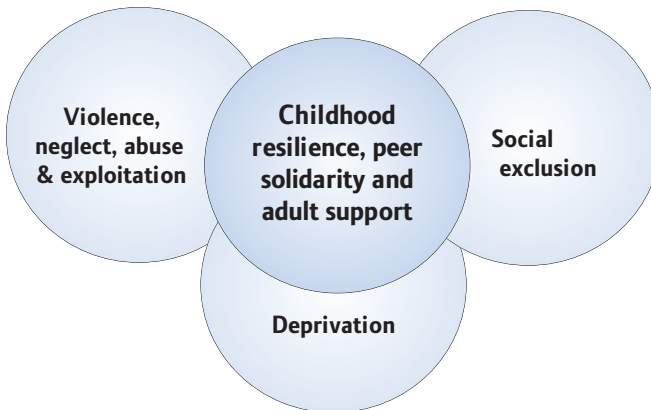
3.1.1. Relationships characterised by violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation

Due to children's position of dependence, adults can exert power over children in ways that are detrimental to their well-being. As the UN Study on Violence against Children has confirmed, violence against children is a widespread and serious problem that exists in all societies, but particular dimensions of violence may relate to specific situations of poverty and inequity[23]. The manifestations of violence depend on cultural and societal norms that determine how girls and boys of different ages and abilities are viewed and treated.

Plan's Strategic Framework for Fighting Poverty in Asia makes the point that the quality of the relationships that children have with adults conditions their experience of poverty[24]. This is particularly true of children living in the poorest and most difficult situations who frequently have relationships that are characterised by violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

In poor communities abuse is very common in the home and school. In Malawi, 24% of school children aged 9 to 18 years reported having been forced to

[22] Some of the inspiration for this model came from the DEV Framework developed by Christian Children's Fund for understanding child poverty. This can be found in: Wordsworth, D. et al. (2005). Understanding Children's Experience of Poverty: An introduction to the DEV Framework. Working Paper 1. Children and Poverty Series. Christian Children's Fund.

[23] United Nations General Assembley. (2006). Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children.
[24] Plan. (2005). Growing Up in Asia. Plan's Strategic Framework for Fighting Child Poverty in Asia 2005-2015.

have sex against their will[25]. Children who face pressures to be passive and obedient, particularly girls, may have no choice but to stay within their very deprived or abusive households, which has a profound impact on their growth and development. They are likely to suffer from poor mental and physical health, a lack of confidence and low self esteem. Children from the Bal Panchayat (children's
parliament) supported by CASP/Plan in Delhi told us:

> 'It is difficult for children, particularly girl children who are exploited mentally and physically at home, to speak out and develop. They lack self esteem and start to hate themselves'.

Abuse is often the immediate reason for children who are able to take a more proactive approach to leave home, particularly boys. However, children who have separated from their families can also experience new relationships of abuse with a wide range of actors including the police, gang leaders and employers, as illustrated by the drawings of boys from a transit centre in Kathmandu.

DRAWINGS BY BOYS UNDER 13 YEARS
AT THE CWIN TRANSIT CENTRE, KATHMANDU,
ON WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE AND NOW

Common themes that emerged from the drawings were:
- The predominant reason for leaving home is abuse from within the family
- Violence from police, older children and adults is also a significant problem for those living on the street
- The public have a lack of respect because they are street children
- Disabled children, particularly those with mental disability, face particular problems on the street
- The CWIN centre has benefited them by providing safety, support, care and love

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The abuse of children is often institutionalised within the judicial system. Children may be abused by law enforcement officers, held in cells with adults, lack the support of the probationary system and tried in open court rather than in a juvenile court.

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[25] Burton, P. (2005). Suffering at School. Results of the Malawi Gender-based Violence in Schools Survey. Institute for Security Studies, South Africa.

Children in the worst forms of child labour experience abuse and exploitation from employers. Children working in brick kilns, stone quarries and as porters in Nepal told us that they experience the following problems at work:
• Injuries that may lead to handicap or death
• Very hard work, long hours for little pay
• If something is accidentally broken the cost is deducted from their wages
• The supervisors are very rude
• If children complain the owners just tell them to go

Child protection violations have a wide range of serious consequences including greater susceptibility to life-long social, emotional and cognitive impairments and to risky behaviours such as substance abuse, early initiation of sexual behaviour and anti-social behaviour[26]. Child protection violations have a significant impact on school attendance and learning. The gender-based abuse and harassment of girls in school or on their way to school is a common reason for them to drop out at adolescence. Adults who were abused as children frequently have difficulties caring for their own children and repeat the pattern of abuse.

3.1.2. Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is one of the major causes of poverty and inequity within families, communities and the wider society. Because of social exclusion children are systematically denied their rights on the basis of who they are or where they live. Social exclusion is defined by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as:

'a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live[27]'.

Social exclusion can be institutionalised within legislation. For example, migrants to urban centres in Vietnam are unable to register with the local authorities and do not have access to the benefits that are available to the resident population, such as health cards and exemptions from school fees. Many of these families cannot afford to send their children to the formal school and attend non-formal education programmes supported by NGOs.

Social exclusion also takes place in the provision of basic services. Service provision is usually skewed in favour of richer urban areas. For instance, education systems take inadequate account of the needs of children who do not speak the language of the majority or who need to work. In Guatemala,

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[26] United Nations General Assembley. (2006). Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children.
[27] DFID. (2005). Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion. A DFID policy paper.

the lack of flexibility of the school calendar is one of the causes of the 50% drop out rate from primary school because it fails to take account of the seasonal migration of poor families to work on plantations[28].

THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN GUATEMALA

A group of young people from both indigenous and ethnic majority backgrounds in Guatemala discussed with us the differences between growing up in the two communities. They talked about how indigenous people are rejected by main stream society and are humiliated on the basis of their race, culture and religion. They have greater difficulties in finding work, are paid less well and are not allowed by employers to use their traditional dress. However, indigenous people also discriminate and use their own language to make fun of ethnic majority people.

These young people were working to overcome discrimination and exclusion on the basis of racial background within their communities.

Within families children are treated differently on the basis of their age, gender, position in the family, disability and whether they are the natural children of both parents. Within polygamous families unloved wives and their children fare much worse than those that are in favour. Children who experience multiple dimensions of exclusion, such as girl children with disabilities from low caste families, may have extremely precarious lives.

Social exclusion not only plays a role in precipitating children into difficult situations but also in keeping them there. Children and young people from rural communities in Nepal who migrate or are trafficked to work in the worst form of child labour, such as commercially sexual exploitation, are discriminated against and victimised by the judicial system and are often not accepted back into their communities, particularly if they are HIV positive.

3.1.3. Deprivation

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations are deprived of their rights to health care, education and a reasonable standard of living. A study by Plan in West Africa showed that the poorest families have less physical access to health care services and use them less often than better off families, the most commonly cited reason being financial barriers[29].

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[28] UNESCO (2005). EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005.
[29] The Plan Health Equity Study Team. (2004). Who Benefits? A Study of Equity in Health Programmes in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Senegal. Plan West Africa Region.

Deprivation is perpetuated when the poorest find it difficult to participate in community development programmes. Groups of women who participate in microfinance programmes supported by Plan in Nepal estimated that around 20% of families do not make use of the microfinance programme because they are unable to save, cannot participate in meetings because they are daily wage earners or live too far away from the village centre.

Children in difficult situations often have extreme difficulty in meeting their basic needs. Finding enough food to eat was the most common problem mentioned by children from the child headed households that we met in Uganda. Many of the older children have to drop out of school to work to support their younger siblings and some of the girls marry early as a means of support and survival, or engage in commercial sex work. Although children on the streets may be able to earn enough to cover their most immediate consumption needs through work, begging and criminal activity, their needs for shelter, education and health care are more difficult to fulfil.

Children in the worst forms of child labour are often paid very little or no wages for very long hours and are denied their rights to education, health care, leisure and a reasonable standard of living. Many of the child domestic workers that we met in Kathmandu had been lured away from their homes by promises of schooling and a better life. The children were very distressed by the failure of their employers to keep their promise to send them to school.

3.1.4. Childhood resilience, peer support and adult solidarity

Due to their youthfulness and lack of social power, children and adolescents are often among the most affected by extreme events such as disasters and conflict. However, global studies exploring the effects of these events on children shows that the catastrophic impact that might be expected does not always take place. Plan in India followed the response of children to the Asian tsunami by monitoring their drawings. Initially these were full of destructive images but by 60 days after the event they were back to normal, showing houses, people and flowers.

Researchers have found that street children tend to display better mental health than other poor urban children and show a high level of self management and ability to cope with stressful events[30]. Recognition of this ability to adapt and recover in face of adversity has led to a shift in focus from childhood vulnerability to childhood resilience[31].

We found difficulties in discussing the idea of resilience with groups of poor and marginalised children. In particular they found the notion of the resilience

[30] Panter-Brick, C. (2002). Street Children, Human Rights, and Public Health: A Critique and Future Directions. In: Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 2002. 31:147-71
[31] Werner & Smith. (1998). Vulnerable but invisible: a longitudinal study of resilient children and youth. Adams Bannister Cox

of an individual child difficult to grasp and felt that children could only be strong if they had the solidarity of a group of peers. In-depth discussions with individual street children by Banaag in Manila, however, showed that resilience depended on the personal resiliency traits of each child and on certain protective environmental factors[32]. These were:

- Personal resiliency traits:
  - Internal strengths: self confidence, belief in self, self monitoring, self control, easy temperament
  - Externally directed traits: leadership skills, altruism, empathy, going along with the group
  - Something bigger than oneself: morality, religion

- Family and peer protective factors:
  - Family responsibilities, traditions, and positive and supportive relationships with parents and siblings
  - Positive adult modelling, positive peer relationships

- External protective factors:
  - Involvement in school and the community, agency assistance

Children's feelings of confidence and self esteem are particularly reinforced by opportunities to meet together and develop solidarity with other children. Children, however, also look to adults to support them and advocate to others. For example, a children's group in Uganda found it difficult to confront their parents and community leaders with the issues that concerned them. They therefore looked to the NGO staff that were supporting their club to help them do this in a positive way.

3.1.5. Relating the experience of children to strategies

Strategies for working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations need to respond to the main factors that impact on their lives and are shown in the diagram above. These strategies are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.
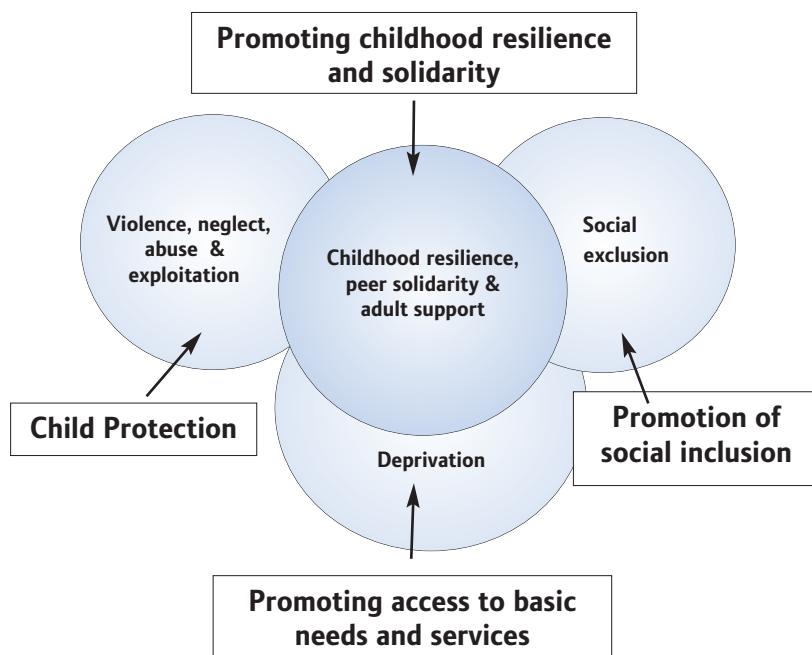
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[32] Banaag Jr, C.G. 1997. Resilience Stories Found in Philippine Streets. Seen in: Wernham, M. 2004. An Outside Chance. Street Children and Juvenile Justice – an International Perspective. Consortium for Street Children.

SVEN TORFINN

HIV and AIDS projects
in Tororo, Uganda (May 2005)

**STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN THE POOREST
AND MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

3.2. UNDERSTANDING RISK

Consideration of the four main factors that affect the lives of children in the poorest and most difficult situations helps us to understand and anticipate the problems that they experience. However, risk factors vary in different contexts and time periods and the particular dynamics of what precipitates children into very poor and difficult situations in each context needs to be understood. For example, staff of an NGO in Delhi felt that the children currently most at risk in the area in which they worked were the children of families who had been forcibly relocated from an urban squatter area to a peri-urban area with no facilities or access to employment.

Risk also varies depending on the characteristics of the child such as gender, age, position in the family, disability, caste, ethnicity and whether his or her natural parents are still alive. For example, a study on violence in school in Malawi showed that girls over 13 years of age are more likely to experience violence than boys and younger children[33]. The research that organisations need to conduct to understand these issues prior to the design of programmes is discussed in Section 5.1.

[33] Burton, P. (2005). Suffering at School. Results of the Malawi Gender-Based Violence in Schools Survey. Institute for Security Studies, South Africa.

3.2.1. Levels of risk

In order to prevent children from falling into the poorest and most difficult situations, there needs to be an understanding of the processes by which this happens. Various ways are used to describe the different degrees of risk experienced by children. These include the spiral of vulnerability used by the World Bank[34], and the idea of children falling through community safety nets used often in the context of the AIDS pandemic.

Three levels of risk are used by Barker and Fontes in their paper on youth[35]. In reality, of course, the degrees of risk that children experience are a spectrum rather than being divided into discrete levels, but the three levels are particularly useful because they can be related to relevant programme interventions. The three levels of risk have been adapted here for children in the poorest and most difficult situations.

1. *Children living in poverty:*
   Children in the lowest level of risk are those who are poor but who are still participating in school and other aspects of community life. They may not be in immediate danger but, due to the lack of family assets, they may be at risk of dropping out of school and their rights failing to be realised in the advent of adverse situations like an economic down-turn or illness in the family.

2. *Children living in poverty but with a specific risk factor:*
   The second level of risk consists of children who are living with their families but whose connections are weaker or who face specific risks or stress factors. For example, they have joined a youth gang, have dropped out of school or a parent has died.

3. *Children in the poorest and most difficult situations:*
   The highest level of risk is experienced by children who are already in situations in which their rights are being seriously violated, such as being subject to abuse or neglect within their families or being separated from their families and working in hazardous labour or living on the street.

[34] Vulnerable Children and Youth. The Children and Youth Website of the World Bank
[35] Barker, G., Fontes, M. (1996) Review and Analysis of International Experience with Programmes Targeted on At-Risk Youth. LASHC Paper Series No 5. Human and Social Development Group. Latin America and the Caribbean Region. World Bank.

3.2.2. Relating the levels of risk to interventions

Prior to initiating any work with children it is important to have a clear under-
standing of their situation. The necessary preparation in terms of the identifica-
tion and research of the issues and the children affected needs to be completed
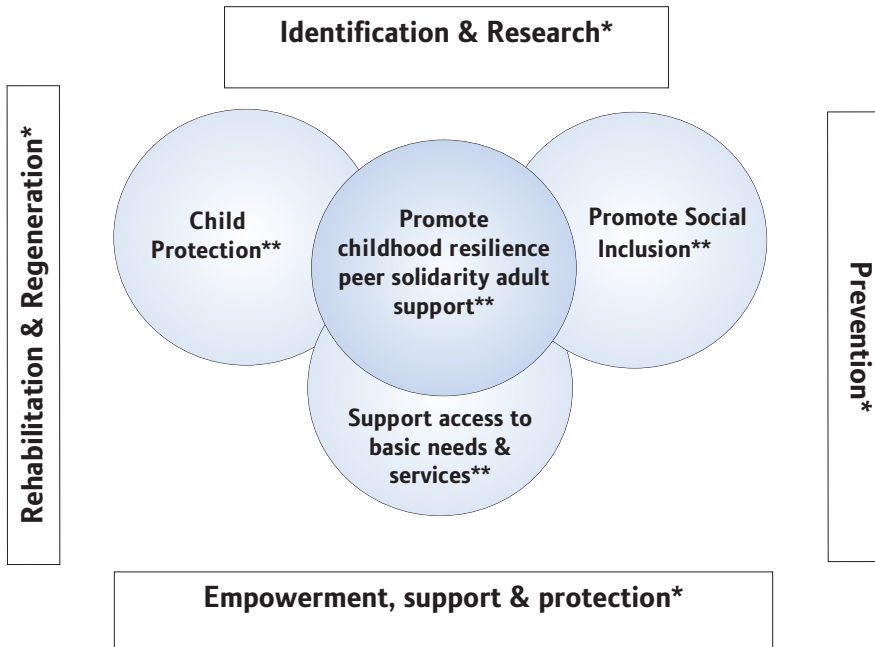and is the first activity that needs to be undertaken in any programme.

The risks facing children in the first and second levels who are still living with
their families can be reduced by programmes of prevention. These are most
effective when community-wide interventions to assist the majority of children
living in poverty (at the first level of risk) are combined with activities to
address the specific risk factors experienced by those who are harder to reach
and who are not fully participating in family or community life (those at the
second level of risk).

Appropriate responses to children in the third level of risk who are already
living in very poor and difficult situations are those of empowerment, support
and protection to help them to cope positively with their situation. When it is
feasible programmes of rehabilitation can be implemented to enable them to
integrate back into their society.

RELATING LEVELS OF RISK TO PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS	
Level of risk	**Intervention**
All levels of risk	• Preparation - identification and research
1. Children living in poverty	• Prevention - community-wide programmes of prevention that integrate activities to address the needs of children with specific risk factors
2. Children living in poverty with a specific risk factor	
3. Children in the poorest and most difficult situations	• Empowerment, support and protection • Rehabilitation and reintegration[a1]

The following diagram puts together the interventions and strategies that have been discussed above. The interventions establish the overall objectives of the programme for prevention, empowerment and rehabilitation while the strategies are the means of achieving these and are implemented as appropriate within each of the interventions. The interventions and strategies are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

INTERVENTIONS* & STRATEGIES**

Identification & Research*

Rehabilitation & Regeneration*

Child Protection**

Promote childhood resilience peer solidarity adult support**

Promote Social Inclusion**

Support access to basic needs & services**

Prevention*

Empowerment, support & protection*

Family in a camp for internally displaced people, in the Tsunami aftermath, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Chapter 4

APPROACHES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN THE POOREST AND MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Many of the major development organisations have now adopted rights-based approaches to development[36]. In this chapter we discuss why child rights-based approaches are particularly important for working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations.

4.1. CHILD RIGHTS BASED APPROACHES

Over the last few years the international development community has recognised that traditional development programmes with their focus on resource transfer from North to South have failed to have a significant impact on poverty. In response to this many organisations have adopted rights based approaches to programming. The leading child-focused organisations have further developed their programmes to incorporate the principles and provisions of the CRC. This requires adaptations that respect the position of dependency of children in relation to adults[37]. It is generally agreed that there is no blue print for child rights based approaches, though there are some critical elements that are essential[38,39].

Child rights-based approaches are particularly important when working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations. The dynamics that exclude them from participating equitably in society are generally reproduced in the

[36] One exception to this is Christian Children's Fund which has decided to make the consideration of rights a more central part of its work but not to formally adopt a rights based approach. See: Wessells, M. (2005). Children's Rights, Development and Rights Based Approaches. The Way Forward. Children and Poverty Series. Working Paper 5.
[37] Lansdown, G. (2005). What is the difference. Implications of a Child Focus in Rights Based Programming. Discussion Paper. Written for SCF UK

[38] Lansdown, G. (2005). Benchmarking progress in adopting and implementing child rights programming. International Save the Children Alliance.
[39] Theis, J. (2004). Promoting Rights-Based Approaches. Experiences and Ideas from Asia and the Pacific. Save the Children Sweden

course of welfare approaches to development. Child rights-based approaches, with their emphasis on inclusion and non-discrimination, require specific efforts to be made to identify children most at risk, facilitate their participation and address their particular issues.

Plan has adopted Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) as its programme approach. This approach puts children and the realisation of their rights at the centre of the community development process. It emphasises the participation of children, their families and communities and the transformation and building of relationships between children and those on whom they depend for their quality of life within the family, community and the wider society. Child centredness is a powerful integrating concept that is at the heart of CCCD and all child rights-based approaches.

4.2. APPLYING CHILD CENTRED, RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN THE POOREST AND MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Children in the context of their families, communities and wider society

Child centred rights-based approaches view children in the context of their relationships with their families, peers and the wider society as shown in the diagram, each of the different actors having complementary rights and responsibilities and playing their role in the realisation of children's rights.

CHILD CENTRED, RIGHTS BASED APPROACHES
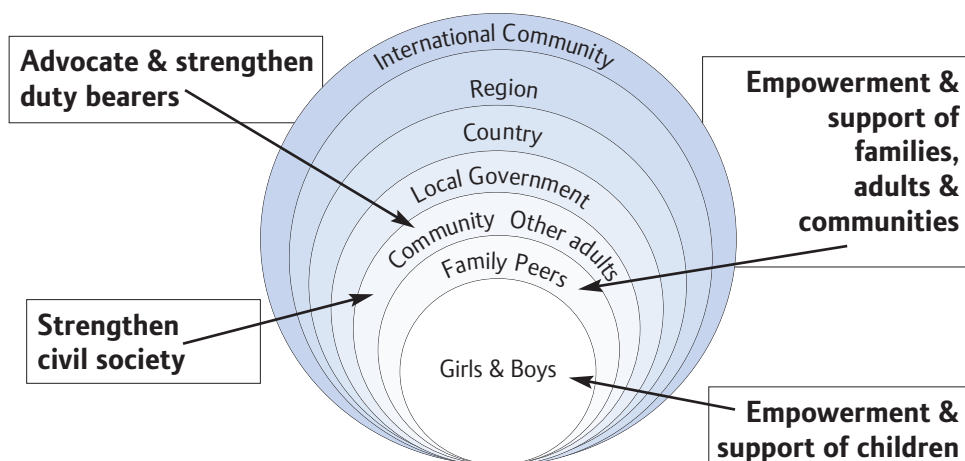
(adapted from the Country Strategic Plan of Plan Guatemala)

Viewing children in the poorest and most difficult situations in the context of their relationships and wider society is particularly important. Many children live without the support of parents and in societies in which their exclusion is systematic and institutionalised. It is therefore necessary to understand the roles of different actors and institutions in the lives of these children. As well as family members these include peers and other adults such as employers, teachers, police and gang leaders. It is also necessary to understand how children are viewed by local and national government in terms of the legislative framework, social policy and programmes and budgetary allocations and how they are treated by institutions such as the health and education services and the judicial system.

For the purposes of this review we will view child centred rights-based approaches as having the following main operational elements:

- **Empowerment and support of children** to know their rights and responsibilities, to shape their own lives in positive ways, to participate in their society and claim their rights in a manner that is safe and appropriate to their situation and evolving capacities.
- **Empowerment and support of parents, other adult care givers and communities** to know and exercise their responsibilities towards children, participate in their society and to claim their rights to those who have duties towards them.
- **Advocate for the local, national and international authorities to fulfil their duties** towards children, their families and communities and support and strengthen them in doing this where appropriate
- **Strengthen local and national civil society** to work for the rights of children

These operational elements are reflected throughout Chapter 5 which looks at how to work with children in the poorest and most difficult situations. They emphasise the primary role of those who have the main responsibilities for the well-being of children – children themselves, families, communities, local and national government. The role of child-focused organisations is to help strengthen these primary actors to claim their rights and take up their responsibilities towards children and to monitor progress towards the realisation of children's rights.

Child rights-based situation assessment, monitoring and evaluation

In order to identify groups of children in the poorest and most difficult situations and develop ways of working with them it is necessary to conduct a child rights-based situation assessment. This includes the identification of those children whose rights are most violated and the analysis of the role of the different

actors and institutions that have responsibilities for their situation. This is discussed further in Section 5.1.1.

In order to know what is in children's best interests it is necessary to monitor and evaluate the impact of development activities on the children, their families and communities and detect any unexpected negative impacts. The direct support to child headed households by NGOs in communities seriously affected by HIV and AIDS provides an example of the negative impact that well-meaning assistance can deliver. In some instances it had the effect of suppressing the sense of responsibility to these children on the part of their communities and further alienating them. NGOs are now grappling with how to reverse this situation.

Acting in children's best interests

In order to ensure that any action that is taken is truly in their best interests it is important to understand children's experiences in relation to their families and the particular context in which they live. Difficult decisions may need to be made that do not conform to societies' expectations about what is right for children. For example, when children need to work to support themselves and their families, the strategy that is in the best interests of the children may be to support improvements in their working conditions, rather than try to withdraw children from work, which may force them into even more risky and exploitative situations such as commercial sexual exploitation.

Non-discrimination

Children themselves are very aware of how children are treated differently and some of the most common difficulties that they expressed during consultations were the discrimination between girls and boys, the different treatment by families of orphans who had been fostered and the lack of care for children with disabilities. A group of child workers in Kathmandu explained how they were discriminated against at school because they were poor, from a different ethnic origin than the children from better off families and sometimes came late to school because of their work. The principle of non-discrimination therefore needs to be promoted through action at all levels to overcome its attitudinal and structural causes.

Although progress has been made by many organisations in reducing gender discrimination, there are other dimensions of discrimination that have received less attention such as disability, ethnicity and age. Organisations should consider the expansion of gender as a cross cutting programme principle to a broader social exclusion principle that addresses these other dimensions of exclusion and marginalisation.

Understanding the varying experiences of girls and boys of different ages

The experience of childhood varies not only between different countries and cultures but within communities, households and between siblings. Children's experiences of poverty and other stressors are mediated by the ways in which societies and families view and treat children differently depending on such characteristics as their gender, age, ability and whether their natural parents are alive.

The story of Hung illustrates the responsibilities that many children in developing countries take on at an early age. As the eldest child, Hung has sacrificed his own formal education in order to help his grandmother support the younger children through school and look after his sick grandfather. The non-formal education classes that he attends provide him with hope for the future and are essential for his development

Hung's story
Hung is 15 years old and lives with his siblings and grandparents in Hanoi, Vietnam. His 3 siblings attend Grades 3, 6 and 8 in the formal school. His parents are divorced and have left the house. Hung attended formal education until Grade 3, but then dropped out to help his grandmother sell noodles on the street and look after his siblings and sick grandfather. He now attends the multi-grade classes for street and working children supported by Plan in Hanoi. His hopes are to finish primary education and enter vocational training.

Organisations working with children need to understand the impact that such factors as gender, age and disability have on how children are treated in different contexts. The use of gender disaggregated data, consulting with girls and boys of different ages separately and ensuring that children with disabilities, orphans and children out of school are represented and actively participating in children's groups will help to achieve this. The organisation of programmes using the life cycle approach can also help to ensure that children of different age groups are not excluded.

Strengthening child agency and resilience

The way that children respond to their social situation is as important as the way in which they are treated by adults. Child agency refers to children as social actors who are instrumental in shaping their relationships, responding to the difficulties that they experience and directing their own lives. Children's resilience is their capacity to cope positively with difficult situations.

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations are often forced to take action for their own survival and protection. Some of the actions that children take are detrimental to their long term well-being. In communities seriously affected by AIDS or stressed by famine, girls often resort to having unprotected sex for money in order to survive. Children who see no future for themselves in their poor rural or urban communities may be willing to leave with traffickers or military groups in the hope of a better life.

The recognition of children's role in contributing to their family life and in coping with their own difficulties is very important. One of the main themes of this report is how organisations should understand and build on children's capacity to develop positive coping strategies and help to prevent and address negative ones.

Children also value and need alliances with supportive adults who can assist them to have a dialogue with their care givers and the wider community to challenge negative attitudes and behaviour and to stimulate more caring responses. Child-focused organisations can help to build community groups of adults who are willing to support children and strengthen local and national organisations and alliances that work in the interests of children.

Individual approaches

Working with the poorest children and their families requires individual approaches and developing the ability to listen and learn from them is important. ATD Fourth World, an NGO of poor people, says that in order to work with the poorest families it is not enough just to invite them to a meeting. There is a need to develop individual relationships by visiting for informal conversation and the development of trust over time. The capacities of those who work with the poorest need to be built so that they are less likely to make preconceived judgements about these families.

Programmes of support and rehabilitation require consideration of each child's situation and discussion with them about the options that are available. Avenir de l'Enfant, an NGO in Senegal provides support to street children in a 'family home' until they are able to reintegrate with their families or live independently. The process of reintegration may require several visits to the family both by staff and the child until the best solution is found. This work is very time consuming and requires specialist skills.

Peer approaches

As children grow, the importance of their peers in guiding their behaviour and forming their values increases. This is the basis for peer approaches to

behaviour change. Children and young people in difficult situations may be particularly suspicious and untrusting of adults and it may be difficult for adult development workers to immerse in difficult situations. It took CAC-Nepal, a partner organisation of Plan Nepal three years to develop strong and trusting relationships with the commercial sex workers that they were trying to assist. Peer education is one of their key strategies.

A camp for internally displaced people, in the Tsunami aftermath, Banda Aceh, Indonesia (January 2005)

An HIV post-test support club, started among others by Betty in a small village outside Tororo, Uganda. People affected by HIV and AIDS ather to talk about the different challenges they face (May 2005)

Chapter 5

WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN THE POOREST AND MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

In this chapter we consider in more detail the interventions and strategies for working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations that were introduced in Chapter 3. In Chapter 3 we identified the different levels of risk experienced by children and related the programme interventions that are appropriate to each level, as shown in the table.

RELATING LEVELS OF RISK TO PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS	
Level of risk	**Intervention**
All levels of risk	• Identification and research
1. Children living in poverty 2. Children living in poverty with a specific risk factor	• Prevention - community-wide programmes of prevention that integrate activities to address the needs of children with specific risk factors
3. Children in the poorest and most difficult situations	• Empowerment, support and protection • Rehabilitation and reintegration[a1]

Four main strategies for working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations that correspond to the main factors that impact on their lives were also identified. These were:
• Promoting childhood resilience, peer solidarity and adult support
• Child protection
• Promoting social inclusion
• Supporting access to basic needs and services

This chapter is organised according to the interventions. The strategies are integrated into the discussion as appropriate. The interventions and strategies can be visualised in the following diagram.

INTERVENTIONS* & STRATEGIES**

Identification & Research*

Rehabilitation & Regeneration*

Child Protection**

Promote childhood resilience, peer solidarity adult support*

Promote Social Inclusion**

Prevention*

Support access to basic needs & services**

Empowerment, support & protection*
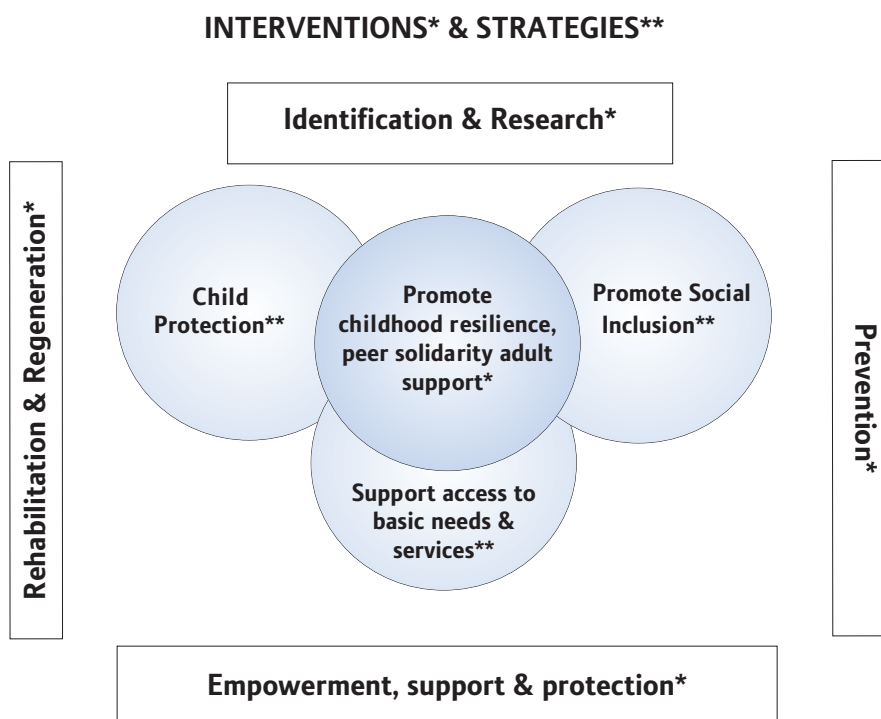
5.1. IDENTIFICATION AND RESEARCH

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations are often secluded within their families or places of work and are not registered and not reflected in the regular collection of statistics and data by the authorities. Organisations wishing to promote the realisation of children's rights therefore need to adopt a thorough process for identifying these children and facilitating the choice of groups with which to work.

Similarly, community-based organisations need to work with communities to identify those marginalised children and families that are most at risk and that need particular attention to help them access services and participate in community development activities.

Careful research is also important in supporting work with children in the poorest and most difficult situations. The specific reasons why children find themselves in difficult situations and their ways of coping are complex, particular to the context and need to be understood in order that assistance to children is properly informed and in their best interests.

5.1.1. Identification of groups of children in the poorest and most difficult situations

Country Level

Assessments of the geographical distribution of poverty have often formed the basis of the decisions on where and with whom to work by organisations like Plan. However, in recent years there has been increasing recognition that these do not permit the systematic identification and analysis of the situation of those children whose rights are most violated. For example they will not identify children in rural areas who are working in hazardous situations in mines, agriculture and fishing, nor children who live in less poor urban areas, such as domestic workers. Participatory assessments with communities are often not deep enough to capture very sensitive issues or rights violations that staff are not looking for or expecting.

A systematic method for identifying children whose rights are most violated within countries has been developed by Save the Children Denmark. The Tool Kit on Child Rights Programming makes detailed use of the articles of the CRC and could be adapted for use by other organisations such as Plan.

Save the Children Denmark's Tool Kit on Child Rights Programming[40] provides guidance on how to conduct a child rights situation assessment. The situation assessment consists of tools that investigate rights violations and identify which children are most affected. The tool kit also contains guidance on how to conduct a problem analysis, stakeholder mapping, analysis of the roles of carers and duty bearers and how to formulate programme strategies.

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[40] Save the Children Denmark. (2002). A Tool Kit on Child Rights Programming.

Community level

Child-focused community development programmes are often orientated towards those children and community members who can attend meetings and access services, neglecting groups whose needs are greater and who are marginalised because they experience barriers to their participation.

The awareness by communities of marginalised groups and the search for community-based solutions to their empowerment and inclusion needs to be raised from the beginning of an organisation's relationship with communities. The existence of marginalised groups may start to emerge during participatory processes such as wealth ranking exercises, social and resource mapping and home visits. A series of such participatory methods is described in 'Circles of Care: Community Child Protection' by Cook and Du Troit. This paper describes how children and communities were helped to identify what makes children vulnerable and what makes them resilient, how the coping mechanisms of children and communities were supported and the assistance of local government mobilised[41].

Issues involving children living in the poorest and most difficult situations are often sensitive and the subject of taboos within communities and usually only start to surface when organisations consult with children. Care needs to be taken not to expose children to greater risk through premature disclosure of issues such as abuse. The discussion and research of these issues needs to take place over time during which the awareness of adults is raised and measures put in place to support children who are affected.

Identifying and monitoring the progress of individual children and families at risk

Most tools for tracking the progress of children and families within communities are based on monitoring their use of services and participation in community development activities. These do not capture those children and families who are unable to use services and do not participate in community development activities.

Tools for identifying and monitoring the progress of children and families at risk need to be based on census data i.e. the complete enumeration of households, rather than on sampling. Issues that would need to be considered in developing such tools include:

- *Ownership*: tools should be manageable by communities or local organisations and the information should be useful to them
- *Resources*: such activities consume considerable amounts of time and effort

[41] Cook, P., du Toit, L. (2004). Circles of Care: Community Child Protection. A Participatory Research Model Strengthening Restorative Local Governance in Support of South African Children's Rights. Final project report prepared for the CIDA Child Protection Research Fund.

and this needs to be taken into consideration in decisions about the
periodicity of the application of the tools.
• *Confidentiality*: issues of confidentiality should be carefully considered
• *Information fatigue*: people get tired of answering questions, especially if they
  do not perceive any benefit from doing this

During our field visits we identified some tools and approaches that were being
used to identify and track the progress of children in the poorest and most
difficult situations and that could be developed for wider use.

The Orphans Community Based Organisation, an NGO based in **Rakai,
Uganda**, has developed a tool for identifying and tracking orphans and vulnerable
children within the community. This is a simple house-to-house survey which is
conducted periodically and the information is shared with all organisations working
in the area in order to facilitate coordination.

The MV Foundation, an NGO based in **Hyderabad, India**, has developed a
system for tracking which children are in and out of school and their progress in
school. Children who drop out or fail exams are followed up and if possible, action
is taken to assist them to return to school.

Plan Nepal conducts a household survey as part of its phase-in process. Information
is collected on household composition, income, age, education, ethnicity, caste and
disability. This will be repeated at the mid term and final evaluations of its country
programmes.

In Egypt, house-to-house visits were conducted to identify children with disabilities
who were then invited to take part in the activities of **Plan's Child-Focused
Rehabilitation Programme.**

5.1.2. Research of issues

Programmes need to be based on a thorough understanding of the issues
related to the groups of children concerned. These include:

• The nature and scale of the problem and which children are involved
• The perceptions of children, care givers and other stakeholders
• Lessons learnt and best practices through previous work
• Organisations that are already involved
• Potential partners
• Existing legislation, degree of enforcement of legislation, policies, pro-

grammes
   and budgetary provisions
• Gaps and the role that the organisation could play

The methods that should be used include:

• Review of existing reports and secondary data
• Consultations with children[42] (with due consideration to ethics),
   care givers and community leaders
• Listening to the experiences of individual children and families
• Research by children
• Consultations with local and national government and civil society
• Visits to projects already being implemented by other organisations
• Operations research to learn from the process of programme implementation

Various methods such as the Child to Child Approach[43] can be used to assist
children to conduct their own research. This not only helps to clarify the issues
but builds the capacity of children to look critically at their situation and can
lead to them taking action.

Action research by children

A children's group supported by Plan in Honduras researched the issue of domestic
violence and found that alcohol abuse was one of the main causes. They raised
awareness in the community and lobbied their local authority, resulting in the closure
of the bars where the alcohol was sold and a reduction in episodes of domestic
violence in the community.

5.2. PREVENTION

Programmes of prevention are clearly very important and the best way to tackle
the issues that precipitate children into the poorest and most difficult situations.
Indeed, some of the street children and children working in hazardous labour
that we met felt that organisations should do more to prevent the situations in
which they had found themselves.

Programmes of prevention are difficult for specialist organisations to undertake
due to the problems of evaluating the impact of activities to prevent an event
such as street migration from happening. However, organisations like Plan that
have a grass roots presence and implement integrated child centred pro-
grammes are well placed to develop models for prevention and the reduction

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[42] Save the Children. (2003). So you want to consult with children? International Save the Children Alliance
[43] See www.child-to-child.org

of the risks that children experience. This involves extending the reach of community based development activities and service delivery to include very poor and marginalised children and families. The experience gained through the development of these models then needs to be harnessed to advocacy work to influence the policy, practice and budget allocation of governments in favour of these children.

Preventive measures need to be tailored to the particular problems that children experience in each community, for example there is a high rate of trafficking from many Southern Nepalese communities into India. In the following sections we discuss approaches to reducing the risks of the most marginalised children through their inclusion in community development programmes and through the use of the four strategies that were identified in Chapter 3.

5.2.1. Community wide or targeted approaches?

Programmes of prevention may be community-wide and aim to target all poor children and families or may be targeted towards groups with specific risks. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. The conclusion of this report is that the preferred approach is to combine the two and develop mechanisms to integrate marginalised groups into community-wide development activities.

An example of a community-wide approach is the project implemented by Plan Guatemala to prevent child abuse by raising awareness of children's rights to protection through the formation and training of children's and youth groups. One important measure of the success of such a programme is the number of children that have benefited. ie. the numbers of children trained and taking part in children's clubs. However, at the same time, it needs also to be recognised that the children most at risk may not participate in this type of programme because of their difficulties in attending meetings due to such factors as distance, language, discriminatory attitudes or because they are working.

Plan Vietnam's Home Return and Prevention of Street Migration Programme is an example of a targeted programme in which families are identified for inclusion in the programme based on the perceived risk of the street migration of their children. Criteria were used such as; already having a child on the street, children being out of school, parents being separated and illness in the family. The need to identify the children and families at risk and the development of strategies to work with them means that these programmes are more time consuming and resource intensive. A danger is that singling out particular children and families for assistance may cause jealousy and increase discrimination.

The preferred solution – the inclusion of marginalised groups in community-wide development activities

Many of the disadvantages of community-wide and targeted approaches may be overcome by the inclusion of marginalised groups into community development activities from the beginning. Specific mechanisms need to be developed to achieve this and simply opening programmes to everyone is not sufficient.

A good example of how marginalised groups can be included in community development programmes is the education programme developed by the MV Foundation, an NGO based in Hyderabad, India, to combat child labour. The MV Foundation conducts social mobilisation campaigns to encourage children to go to school and works with the education authorities and teachers groups to improve the quality of education[44].

Once the initial social mobilisation campaign has been conducted, those children who are still out of school are identified and specific actions are taken to address the barriers. For example, remedial classes are held for those who have dropped behind and the illegality of bonded labour is discussed with employers and parents to secure the release of children.

This approach still requires time and effort to raise the awareness of communities, promote changes in attitude and behaviour and develop specific strategies with marginalised groups. However, in the end the whole community benefits from their sense of achievement and unity and other benefits may accrue. For example, studies conducted by the MV Foundation have shown that increased school attendance by children has reduced their numbers in the job market and improved the amount of work for adults and the conditions that they can negotiate with employers.

Judgements will have to be made about when the approach of promoting the inclusion of marginalised groups in community development activities can be used and when it is not feasible. When deeply entrenched divisions exist it may be difficult and the particular dynamics between marginalised groups and the dominant community group will need to be assessed. A lack of resources may make inclusion difficult in some instances. For example, attempting to include children with significant learning difficulties in schools that are very overcrowded and of poor quality is not be in the best interests of the children and other solutions tailored to their needs have to be sought.

[44] Chandra, K. (2002). Social Mobilisation for Elimination of Child Labour: A Case Study of MVF. National Institute of Rural Development (An Organisation of the Minstry of Rural Development, Government of India)

5.2.2. Supporting inclusion through public policy

Many states have introduced legislation to counter societal traditions of exclusion and discrimination, but gaps remain. For example, there are many points of discrimination against women still enshrined in Nepalese law. However, even where the legislative framework is adequate, the enforcement of the law is often weak and budgetary allocations and the way that institutions work still maintain patterns of exclusion and discrimination.

Organisations assisting excluded groups need to work with them to analyse the legal and policy frameworks, national programmes and budget allocation in order to lobby for the reduction in the structural causes of exclusion. For example, in many countries Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) actively lobby for improvements in the national environment for disabled people. However, DPOs seldom have a clear focus on the needs and rights of women and children with disabilities or on people with learning disabilities and there is scope for child focused organisations to partner with them to strengthen these areas of their work.

5.2.3. Promoting childhood resilience and solidarity

Promoting the resilience of children from poor families enables them to make better use of their opportunities and cope positively with adverse conditions such as a deterioration in their families' economic situation or their communities being overtaken by disaster or conflict.

The practice of children's participation is very important in promoting childhood resilience. It has been found to increase their personal resiliency traits such as self confidence, leadership skills, sense of identity and their optimism and hopes for the future[45]. It also contributes to their ability to communicate, collaborate with others and to a sense of support and solidarity with their peers. Children's participation leads to a more protective environment that enhances children's status within the family, to greater parental support and to a reduction in abuse. Children's participation in the school and community increases community awareness and support for children's issues.

[45] Hart, J., Newman, J., Ackermann, L. (2004). Children Changing their World. Understanding and Evaluating Children's Participation in Development. Plan.

THE BETTER LIFE OPTIONS PROGRAMME SUPPORTED BY CWS MAKWANPUR DISTRICT, NEPAL.

What children said about how participation in the programme had improved their lives.

Individual level
- Developed more self confidence
- Mental development – able to think and make decisions
- Understand more about physical development, what is normal and about disease
- Solidarity, co-operation and togetherness, more helpful, friendly and team oriented
- Better able to analyse situations rather than just accepting them

Family Level:
- Parents behaviour has changed
- More positive attitude towards girls and women
  which leads to a more encouraging family environment
- All family members are more co-operative towards children
- Adolescents now participate in family decision-making process
- The level of alcoholism and domestic violence has decreased

Community Level:
- Bad traditional practices are less
- Have been able to raise awareness and promote the rights of the child
- Raised awareness on hygiene and sanitation and the houses and community are tidier
- Those who have traditionally been left out are now taking part in main stream education
- Understand more about legal issues and raised awareness on legal rights

Children's clubs have an overwhelmingly positive impact on the children who participate in them. The children's clubs in Nepal supported by Save the Children Norway and US were found to be the most inclusive social structures in their communities, though children with disabilities and children from lower income families were not equitably represented in the membership[46]. Similarly, although the children's clubs that we visited paid lip service to the inclusion of children with disabilities, in practice there was very little evidence that any proactive efforts were made to include them.

Facilitators of children's clubs need to be trained in how to assist the children to think about and take active steps to include marginalised groups of children, recognising and being sensitive to the social barriers that exist. School-based clubs mean that children out of school cannot participate and clubs based in the

[46] Rajbhandary, J., Hart, R., Khatiwada, C. (1999) The Children's Clubs of Nepal: A Democratic Experiment. Summary and Recommendations from a Study of Children's Clubs supported by Save the Children (Norway) and Save the Children (US).

centre of the village mean that they are often too far away for children from the more isolated parts of the village, who are usually the poorest, to attend. Community facilitators need to consider whether smaller, more local clubs would be an advantage and would be feasible given resource constraints.

The facilitators of children's clubs need to be careful to raise awareness by children of their responsibilities as well as their rights in order to avoid an overreaction by children and a backlash by adults. Raising the adults' awareness of children's rights and responsibilities also improves relationships within the family and creates a community environment in which children are better supported. A group of parents in Guatemala who had received training on children's rights were very enthusiastic about it and told us that they had come to understand that their children need 'more than the tortilla[47] and an occasional beating, but also support and to discuss issues'.

Promoting children's participation in governance

Children's right to express an opinion in matters that affect them is one that they value. One of the clear messages from children during our consultations was that they appreciate a community environment in which their views are listened to and respected. Banaag also found that children are more resilient when they feel part of something larger than themselves[48]. The importance of children's and young people's participation in governance at local, national and international levels is becoming more widely recognised and is an important theme of the 2007 World Development Report[49]. Although the evidence is not yet clear or well documented, experience suggests that children's participation in governance can improve the sensitivity of decision-making to the needs and issues of children, provide them with opportunities to address the issues that concern them in constructive ways and develop their ability to act as responsible citizens from an early age[50].

Evidence shows that children are excellent ambassadors for their own concerns in policy discussions at all levels. Children are now sometimes consulted in national planning processes such as PRS processes and in international discussions and studies on children's issues such as the recent UN Study on Violence against Children.

In many countries children's and youth participation in governance is being institutionalised through such mechanisms as having youth representatives on local government committees and through Children's and Youth Parliaments. However, the democratic representation of children, the authenticity of their

[47] A staple food in Guatemala
[48] Banaag Jr., C.G. (1997). Resiliency: Stories found in Philippines Streets. AusAID National Project on Street Children and UNICEF, Manila, Philippines.

[49] World Bank (2007). World Development Report. Development and the Next Generation.
[50] Hart, J., Newman, J., Ackermann, L. (2004). Children Changing their World. Understanding and Evaluating Children's Participation in Development. Plan.

participation and the inclusion of marginalised groups in these activities often leaves much to be desired, though countries are learning from their experiences. For example, to date the members of the Children's Parliament in Malawi have been chosen by teachers and local leaders, rather than by other children, and there are questions about the degree to which the resolutions of the Parliament are recognised and acted upon by government[51]. However, there are moves to deepen the democratic roots of the Parliament by organising fora for children at the local level, from which the Parliamentarians will be chosen.

The World Development Report points to the importance of building on current experiences to systematically recognise young people as stakeholders in public institutions and provide them with opportunities to have a voice in public life. Child-focused organisations have a role to play in supporting children's and youth participation at the local level and taking advantage of the more favourable international environment to promote opportunities for children's participation at national and international levels. They can prepare and support children for their participation in national and international events, ensuring the quality and appropriateness of these events and making sure that appropriate measures are put in place to keep children safe. They should follow up the issues that children raise with government and promote action on them.

Other family and community factors important for childhood resilience can be promoted through the child protection measures and access to school and learning opportunities that are discussed in the following sections.

5.2.4. Mainstreaming child protection

Significant proportions of the childhood population in poor communities are affected by violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation at home, at school and in the work place. (see also Section 3.1.1.). An environment in which children's protection rights are upheld and violations are prevented can be promoted by mainstreaming child protection measures into community development programmes. See Annex 3 for a list of child protection measures that can be mainstreamed into different child-focused community development programmes.

Building a protective environment for each child starts with the preparation of parents during the peri-natal period through parenting classes and the promotion of breast feeding. Registration at birth helps children access the services that they need in childhood and later life and can help to protect them from abuses such as early marriage and under-age recruitment into the armed services. Parenting classes that continue during the pre-school and school years can

[51] Personal communication from a Malawian Child Parliamentarian.

support parents to develop loving and positive ways of interacting with their children and non-violent methods of disciplining them. Domestic violence is very common and affects women and children alike. There is scope for child focused organisations to work more closely with the women's movement on this issue.

Physical and sexual abuse is common in schools[52]. Parents who understand the importance of non-violence and children themselves are good advocates of banning corporal punishment in schools. Attention needs to be paid to bullying, discrimination in the classroom and sexual exploitation by peers and teachers. Girls need privacy and separate toilets, particularly after puberty. Organisations like Plan should lobby Ministries of Education to develop and enforce Codes of Conduct for teachers and train them in the prevention and detection of abuse and how to counsel children who experience child protection violations.

Children's awareness of their protection rights should be raised and they should be trained in how to protect themselves and how to lead safe and healthy lives. Gender roles are established by adolescence and need to be discussed with children as early as possible. This was clearly demonstrated during an encounter with a group of young people in Uganda in which the boys participated actively in the discussion while the girls sat silent, demonstrating very passive body language. Only when they were in a group without the boys did they participate freely.

In low income countries in which the judicial system and social service infrastructure are weak, systems of primary justice can be developed through the training of village committees and para-legal volunteers for the protection of children. These committees and volunteers can play a role in establishing an environment in which the abuse of children is no longer socially acceptable, can mediate minor cases and counsel children and their families. However, they need to be linked to the formal system for the referral of serious cases.

The development of a protective environment for children requires open discussion and engagement with child protection issues at all levels[53] (see Annex 4 for the eight elements that UNICEF's has defined as constituting a protective environment). The UN Study on Violence Against Children has been an important milestone in the building of national and international awareness of the gravity of the problem and has proposed measures that are essential to the reducing the level of violence against children. Child-focused organisations have a role to play in keeping the issue alive and in lobbying governments to meet their responsibilities to build legislative and policy frameworks for the protection of children and invest in the legal, administrative and service infrastructure that is necessary to put them into practice.

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[52] Plan Togo. (2006). Suffering to Succeed? Violence and abuse in schools in Togo.
[53] Progr amme Division, UNICEF (2003) Child Protection. Progress Analysis and Achievements in 2003. Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2002-2005.

The importance of birth registration in preventing violence against children

Birth registration is key to the realisation of children's right to a name and nationality. It helps children access health and education services in countries where proof of citizenship is a requirement. It also ensures that the state has accurate information about its population on which to base social policy and plan and budget for the provision of services.

Birth registration contributes to the prevention of the exploitation and abuse of children and is particularly important for children from marginalised groups. In the context of the AIDS pandemic, land and property grabbing by relatives after the death of both parents can be challenged if children have birth certificates to prove their identity. Similarly early marriage, trafficking and early recruitment into the armed forces can be prevented if children have birth certificates to prove their age. Proof of age can also help in the prosecution of cases of sexual exploitation and the exploitation of children for their labour.

Plan's campaign on Birth Registration[54]
Activities included:
• Local activities to promote birth registration
• Promotion of birth registration among marginalised groups such as in Muslim and indigenous communities in the Philippines, Baka pygmy people in Cameroon and the *talibe* (boys who beg on the streets from koranic schools) in Senegal
• National campaigns to raise awareness of birth registration through media activities
• Lobbying for changes in legislation, such as the elimination of fees
• Support to civil registrars
• Regional conferences on birth registration
• Lobbying bilateral and multilateral donors to recognise birth registration in their policy documents and support it financially
• Lobbying on birth registration at the UN General Assembly Special Session on children
• Global Campaign launched at the UN

5.2.5. Facilitating access to basic needs and services

In this section we look in more detail at the access of marginalised children and families to health and education services and livelihood opportunities and their importance in preventing children from falling into difficult situations.

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[54] Plan. (2005). Universal Birth Registration – a Universal Responsibility

Health care

Ill health within a poor family is a clear risk factor for the wellbeing of all its members. In Vietnam the participatory poverty assessments conducted in preparation for the Vietnam Development Report 2004 identified serious illness as one of the most significant risks faced by poor families and a common cause of impoverishment, especially if it affects an income earner. The loss of income and expenditure on medicines means that families frequently sell their assets, take children out of school and send them out to work.

A study conducted by Plan in West Africa found that the poorest families lived further away from health facilities and made less use of health services than less poor families . They also suffered from more episodes of illness and had higher mortality rates. The main reasons given for not making use of the health services were the cost and distance.

The identification by local health service providers of those families who are unable to access health care services is important. The causes should be explored and strategies developed to address them, together with recommendations to local and national government for how improvements in access and quality can be achieved. Two of the proposed strategies that emerged from the West African study to facilitate the access of marginalised groups to health services were the need to include the consideration of the social equity of access in the placement of health care facilities as well as geographical coverage, and the need for governments to review their policy of charging user fees.

There are other community based mechanisms that can be used to facilitate the access by families to health care services. For example, Plan in Guatemala supports the Department of Health to train a health volunteer for every group of 30 households to provide them with information and encourage and monitor their use of health care services. Plan Guatemala also supports the use of mobile clinics for communities that are far from the health centres.

Adolescent health

Adolescence is an important period of development and preparation for adult life. During adolescence many behavioural patterns are established which persist into adult life. Young people need access to adolescent reproductive and sexual health services in order to receive the information, advice and treatment that they need to be able to make informed decisions and lead safe and healthy sexual lives. This, of course, is particularly critical in the context of AIDS pandemic.

**The Adolescent Reproductive Health Clinic and
Youth Centre, Tororo, Uganda**

The Adolescent Reproductive Health Clinic and Youth Centre were established with a grant from CIDA through a partnership between the Ministry of Health, the Family Planning Association of Uganda and Plan.

The clinic offers services to over 400 young people per week. Services include family planning advice, voluntary counselling and testing for HIV, treatment for sexually transmitted infections and counselling on reproductive and sexual health issues.

The Youth Centre offers educational activities on adolescent reproductive health issues through talks and activities run by youth volunteers and conducts outreach activities through the establishment of children's clubs in communities.

Basic education

Learning opportunities are critical for developing the resilience of children, to protect them from exploitation and to expand their chances of safe employment. Attention needs to be paid to the access, quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education and the personal safety of children when they attend school. The Education for All movement places special emphasis on the inclusion of children who are marginalised and experience barriers to their inclusion in school[57].

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCD) programmes have been found to have a wide range of positive benefits that can help to strengthen children's resilience and equip them for later life. These include improved psycho-social development, improved health and nutrition and better performance in school. It has also been found that ECCD programmes help to reduce the disadvantage of children from more deprived back-grounds[58]. The challenge is to ensure that ECCD centres are accessible to those who need them most, who are children from marginalised groups.

The orientation of most formal schools is exclusively towards children that attend school and most of the schools that we visited during our field visits were unable to identify those children who were out of school within their catchment areas. Schools need to be encouraged to take responsibility for those children who are out of school. The process adopted by the MV Foundation to identify children out of school and addressing their barriers to attendance was described in Section 5.2.1.

[57] UNESCO. (2005). Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All.
[58] Myers, R. (1995). The Twelve who Survive. High Scope Press. Seen in ECCD Briefs – Ways in which ECCD [58] Programme can address Inequalities. The Consultative Group on ECCD. World Bank.

Some barriers to school attendance

- cost
- distance
- language
- lack of the necessary documents such as birth registration
- the lack of flexibility of the timetable for children who work
- lack of relevance of the school curriculum
- lack of opportunities for school graduates
- poor quality of teaching which makes it difficult for children to keep up unless their parents can help them or they can access private tutoring

- negative attitudes of parents to schooling, particularly for girls and children with disabilities
- lack of provision for the inclusion of children with disabilities
- negative attitudes and discrimination against children from different castes, ethnic groups, religions and against children from very poor families
- bullying and abuse of children in school, particularly girls

Some examples of how the barriers to school attendance are being overcome

Cost The MV Foundation activates government provisions for the waiving of school fees for the poorest families.

Distance In Sierra Leone, the government in partnership with UNICEF runs community schools for grades 1 – 3 in communities that are far from the formal primary school.

School failure and drop out due to the poor quality of teaching Plan Bangladesh developed its Community Learning Assistance Programme in response to the poor quality of teaching in primary schools and the high failure and drop out rates among children who could not afford private tuition. Young people were trained to provide tutoring 'camps' using active teaching learning methods. The performance of the children improved dramatically as a result of the camps and their success prompted district education authorities to ask for training for their teachers in these methods.

Lack of physical access for children with disabilities Plan Egypt is working with the local education authorities to construct schools with ramps, hand rails and accessible toilets to facilitate the access of children with physical disabilities into school and is lobbying for the training of teachers.

One of the biggest challenges in low income countries is that many parents are reluctant to send their children to school and many children are reluctant to attend because they do not regard what they learn as being relevant to their lives. These children may not see school graduation as improving their chances of work. In Senegal a group of boys told us that they would prefer just to achieve basic literacy and numeracy and then go on to vocational training courses, rather than attend formal education. In Senegal where the adult literacy rate is still only 39% there is a clear case for the diversification of the educational offer.

Access of youth to learning and livelihood opportunities

Learning opportunities are very important for reducing the risks to young people. Secondary schooling improves employment opportunities for young people and contributes to the reduction of high risk behaviour such as drug use, smoking and drinking and the incidence of HIV[59].

The main focus of the international development community through the Education for All campaign has been on expanding the access and quality of primary education. However, the situation of youth in many countries is critical. The gross secondary school attendance ratio for all developing countries is 57% for girls and 61% for boys, and 26% and 32% respectively in the least developed countries[60]. There are therefore very large numbers of young people out of school in poor communities.

In many countries there are concerns about out of school, out of work youth who have become estranged from their families and communities, are living their lives outside the mainstream, and who are also seen as posing a risk to society. In Guatemala, for example, organised gangs of youth that practice extortion rackets are now present in both urban and rural areas.

In Sierra Leone there are large numbers of unemployed youth on the streets due to the inability of many young people who were associated with the armed forces to reintegrate back into their families after the civil war, and due to the loss of economic opportunities as a result of the war. Youth unemployment was felt to be a contributory factor to the civil war and there are fears again for the future if this problem is not now tackled. In addition, the communities that we visited were concerned that children who had completed primary school but did not have the opportunity to attend secondary school were no longer willing to work on the family farm and were spending their time on the street of the nearest towns looking for work which was very hard to find.
Because of their traditional focus on the younger age group and on those more

[59] Meyers, C. et al. (2005). Adolescent Development: Realising their Potential. Discussion Paper. 7th East Asia and Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Children.
[60] UNICEF. (2005). Excluded and Invisible. The State of the Worlds Children 2006.

*Young boy in a camp for internally displaced people,
in the Tsunami aftermath, Banda Aceh, Indonesia (January 2005)*

active and articulate young people who participate in their programmes, child-focused organisations often have a limited awareness of what happens to the large numbers of young people from the communities in which they work who are out of school. Reasons for the relocation of children such as 'gone to relatives in the city' have been taken at face value, though it is known that the tradition of children going to live with wealthier relatives is often abused and can be a front for the trafficking and exploitation of children.

However, the realisation of the need to work with adolescents is growing within many organisations. For example, in India, Plan's partner, Dr Reddy's Foundation, has developed a programme called Teen Channel that assists young people aged 13 - 21 who have dropped out of school. Community Learning Centres help young people to address the barriers that they experience to participating in formal school and in finding work. This takes place through the development of individual learning plans with each student, providing courses to help the young people catch up with their studies so that they can re-enter secondary school, vocational training courses and life skills training.

Vocational training is commonly viewed by young people themselves and by development workers as the solution to their problem of unemployment. This is difficult to do well, particularly in stagnant economies. Young people are often unable to use the skills that they have been taught due to the lack of demand or to difficulties in finding employment or setting up in business. This leads to further disillusionment. Courses should be designed to be responsive to the skills market.

The Livelihoods Advancement Business School (LABS) model developed by Dr Reddy's Foundation is a good example of vocational training courses that are based on market surveys, include training in life skills and are followed by job placement and the provision of necessary tools and materials. In addition, in low income countries the corner stone to most people's survival is the cultivation of their land. Agricultural training courses can be useful to young people to help them maximise the productivity of their family farms.

In its latest World Development Report, the World Bank also focuses on the dilemma faced by developing country governments of meeting the needs of youth for education and employment in an environment in which the quality of education is poor but there is a demand by the globalised economy for higher level skills. It points to the need for improvements in the quality of primary education, universalisation of lower secondary education, more flexible education systems and reducing the barriers to mobility and employment[61].

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[61] World Bank (2007). World Development Report. Development and the Next Generation.

Livelihood programmes with the poorest families

The poorest families are unable to participate in most livelihood programmes because of barriers such as distance to the village centre, lack of time to participate in meetings, lack of cash with which to initiate savings and social barriers due to caste, ethnicity, language and religion. In Nepal, a study conducted by Plan found that 30% of families did not have access to the credit and savings programme that it supports and that this rose to 35-50% among discriminated castes and tribes who represent the poorest groups[62].

The main focus of Plan's microfinance programme over the last two years has been to deepen its poverty outreach and develop models that can reach the extremely poor. These include the Safe Save model used by Plan's partner in urban slum communities in Bangladesh which provides flexible arrangements to families to save and borrow small sums. Plan Nepal is developing a 'Special Inclusion Strategy' in which a detailed assessment is made of the assets of very poor families and projects set up to build on these. The projects contain an initial element of subsidy, but also link them over time to the mainstream microfinance programme. Plan Nepal also implements a Leasehold Vegetable Scheme for poor landless families in which the agro-inputs and support that is provided are scaled down over five years and the families are linked to microfinance services.

The lessons learnt by Plan Nepal from these programmes for the poorest families include:
• Methods need to be developed of identifying the poorest that are more sensitive than the standard wealth ranking in which a large proportion of the families end up in the poorest group. This may entail working with smaller groups of households and checking the results through household visits.
• Transparency of the selection process is key to avoid jealousy and further stigmatisation of the participating families.
• Detailed discussions need to be held with families to understand their situation. Assistance should build as much as possible on what few assets they have.
• Counselling and social development activities need to accompany livelihood activities to build confidence and change mind sets.
• If subsidies are provided then these should be for a limited period and should not undermine the regular microfinance programme.
• A means of graduating families into the regular livelihood activities should be built into the programme.
• Programmes need to be monitored for their impact on children. Home-based livelihood activities may increase the likelihood that children will be kept out of school to work.

[62] Gurung, Y., Subedi, G,. (2005). Social Exclusion, Vulnerability and Deprivation among Plan Nepal Communities. Plan Nepal

5.2.6. Social protection

Article 22 of the 1945 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has a right to social security. It sets a minimum standard of social and economic security that protects citizens from vulnerability and deprivation. As a result of state level commitments, the right to social security has largely been realised in developing countries. However, it is only since the mid 1990s that there has been interest on the part of the international development community in the potential of both community based and national social protection policies to reduce the vulnerability of poor families in developing countries and protect them from severe deprivation. It is an area of increasing support to developing country governments by the World Bank and other donors and was one of the measures proposed in the report by the Commission for Africa to combat poverty in Africa[63].

Dominant approaches to social protection, evolved from the idea of putting safety nets in place, such as free basic health and education to protect poor families from economic shocks in the context of structural adjustment programmes. However, it is increasingly recognised that a more holistic and transformative approach must also include promotive 'spring boards' designed to support people's own efforts to emerge from situations of poverty[64].

Social protection aims to:
- enhance the ability of poor people to cope and recover from risks and shocks such as famine
- contribute to poor people's ability to emerge from poverty and deprivation
- enable those who are unable to be economically active to live lives of dignity, helping to break intergenerational cycles of poverty[65].

Social protection tools include:
- cash transfers:
  – child allowances, contributory and non-contributory pensions, disability allowances
- in-kind transfers
  – waiver of fees for health and education, nutrition supplementation, food aid, school feeding programmes
- livelihood support
  – microfinance, employment schemes
- birth registration
- legal aid
- community insurance mechanisms such as burial societies and health insurance schemes

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[63] Commission for Africa. (2005) Our Common Interest. Report of the Commission for Africa.
[64] World Bank Group. The Human Development Network. (2001). Social Protection Sector Strategy. From Safety Net to Springboard.
[65] Thomas, P. (2005). Ending Child Poverty and Securing Child Rights: The Role of Social Protection. Plan.

A particular area of discussion is the potential of cash transfers, such as children's allowances and non-contributory pensions, for alleviating the severe deprivation experienced by children and the elderly in the context of chronic poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Southern and East Africa[66]. Pilot programmes implemented by both governments and NGOs have had positive impacts. The challenge is now to align international development partners with domestic political priorities and capacities to enable the effective, sustainable and rights-based provision of cash transfers on the scale required.

Child-focused organisations can contribute to the development of social protection tools and models in areas such as microfinance, birth registration, legal aid and community insurance mechanisms and use this experience to influence national policy and programme development. They can also work with local and national government health and education departments to promote free access to and quality of basic health and education services. They can support communities to generate political pressure for policy reform, to know what their entitlements are and to access them, and to help monitor and feed back the impact of ongoing government-run social protection schemes at the community level.

Civil society organisations also have a key role to play in the development of social protection policy by governments. The Grow Free From Poverty Coalition in the UK recommends that children living in extreme poverty should be targeted with direct measures, in addition to sectoral expenditure (health and education), and indirect measures aimed at poverty reduction. Members of the coalition, Plan International, Save the Children and Help Age International, among others, have demonstrated clearly how social protection measures, in addition to being rights in themselves, can contribute to children's rights to survival, development and protection. The coalition believes that all governments can afford to take the first steps towards this by instituting child benefits, social pensions and disability benefits. It is working in a number of countries to promote discussion at community and national level about forms of social protection in order to inform and shape government plans as they are developed. Its aim is to assist local communities to interact with and shape national policy debates on social protection.

5.3. EMPOWERMENT, SUPPORT AND PROTECTION

It is not always possible, or in their best interests, for children in the poorest and most difficult situations to be 'rescued', despite the fact that their rights may have been violated in multiple ways. For example, children living in child headed households in communities affected by HIV and AIDS may face discrimination, threats to their safety and security, difficulties in finding enough food to

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[66] Save the Children UK, HelpAge International, Institute of Development Studies. (2005). Making Cash Count. Lessons learnt from cash transfer schemes in east and southern Africa for supporting the most vulnerable children and households.

eat and in attending school, but this may be the best available option for them and preferable to being separated from their siblings and fostered. These children need to be supported by their families, communities and the government and helped to improve the quality of their lives within their actual situation.

Assistance to children living in the poorest and most difficult situations needs to focus on building their own positive coping strategies and the support of those around them, helping them to protect themselves and access basic needs and services. A rights-based approach in which duty bearers are encouraged to take up their responsibilities in relation to these children is very important. The misconceived provision of help by external organisations may undermine children's own coping capacities and diminish the fragile support that they receive from the people with whom they engage in their every day lives.

5.3.1. Promoting resilience and solidarity

Promoting the resilience of children in the poorest and most difficult situations can be achieved through strengthening children's capacity to understand and act on their situation, both as individuals and collectively. Children find different ways of coping with their situations. Care should be taken to understand these and respect them. For example, child domestic workers learn to internalise their feelings and not complain because this provokes punishment from their employers. Organisations working with child domestic workers need to anticipate the problems that may arise if children start to speak out as a result of new found confidence from participating in their activities and should also work with the employers to discuss children's rights and how child domestic workers should be treated.

In disaster situations it has been found that only a few children have long term psychological problems that need individual attention and that measures to promote a sense of safety and normality help most children to recover from the trauma that they have received. These measures include the setting up of 'Child Friendly Spaces' in which children can play and express themselves in a safe environment and the re-establishment of education and other routines such as regular meals, washing clothes, and sports[67]. A study conducted by Plan after the Asian tsunami revealed that children and young people also want to participate in relief efforts and their skills and energies should be put to good use[68]. They can help with many tasks such as caring for younger children and the elderly, collecting rations and helping to clean and cook.

The working children's movement is a good example of how children in difficult situations can work together with the support of adults to improve the quality

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[67] Jabry, A. (2003). After the Cameras Have Gone. Children in Disasters. Plan UK
[68] Plan. (2005). Children and the Tsunami. Engaging with children in disaster response, recovery and risk reduction: Learning from children's participation in the tsunami response.

of their lives. Concern, Plan's partner in Nepal, supports clubs for children working in the worst forms of child labour, such as in brick kilns and stone quarries. The children told us that as a result of participating in these clubs they have developed personally, have more confidence and are better able to express themselves. Their relationships with their parents and employers have improved and they are now involved in community activities.

> **The difference that clubs for child workers supported by Concern Nepal has made to the members**
> - I have more confidence and can express my feelings
> - I have learnt many things and now understand what is right and wrong
> - There is a change in my whole family. Now my parents have stopped smoking and drinking
> - My parents used to drink and quarrel but after I spoke to them they do it less
> - I have learnt to help other people in the village and to talk to them
> - I have learnt about the CRC and the law concerning working children
> - We have realised that we can participate in community activities and can do our own activities

5.3.2. Promoting child protection

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations may live in non-supportive family and community environments with inadequate or absent parental care, or in situations in which the normal functioning of society has broken down due to conflict, disaster or displacement. These children are therefore at high risk of the violation of their protection rights.

Children can be taught to protect themselves through the discussion of the potential risks that they face, how to deal with them and how to access help from the police and health service providers when they need it. Children are also able to protect themselves more easily when they look out for each other. CHETNA, an NGO working with street children in Delhi, forms children into groups that support each other, report violations and lobby for the rights of street children.

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations interact with a range of people including peers, gang leaders, employers, traffickers, the police and teachers. Mapping exercises can be done with children to explore their social networks and determine which relationships are harmful and those that provide protection. White provides an example of such a tool[69]. On the basis of the mapping, decisions can be made with children about how to involve different

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[69] White, S. (2002). Being, Becoming and Relationship. Conceptual Challenges of a Child Rights Approach in Development. University of Bath.

groups of people in activities to reduce their risks and promote their protection. For example, child domestic workers experience very difficult and often abusive relationships with the children of their employers. CWISH, an organisation working with child domestic workers in Nepal, works with the schools that these children attend to create understanding of the rights of all children including their own domestic servants.

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations are more likely to be in conflict with the law than other children and are vulnerable to abuse by the judicial system due to their lack of parental support. Many judicial systems in developing countries are not equipped to deal with juveniles who are often held in cells with adults and tried in open court. Probationary systems also provide inadequate support to children. The Lawyer Centre for Legal Action (LAW-CLA) in Sierra Leone has been working to improve the juvenile justice system by holding workshops with the law enforcement agencies and by identifying gaps in the legal framework. They have succeeded in getting a separate juvenile court established.

Child Helplines have proved themselves to be an effective means of linking children at times of crisis with the services that they need and of stimulating the development of more effective and comprehensive child protection services. The child help line movement has grown rapidly. In 2003 Child Helpline International (CHI) was established as a global network of child helplines with the aims of responding to the needs of children for protection and care, voicing their concerns to policy makers and providing support to individual helplines[70]. CHI has established principles and standards of practice and works with the telecommunications sector to channel new technology for use by child helplines.
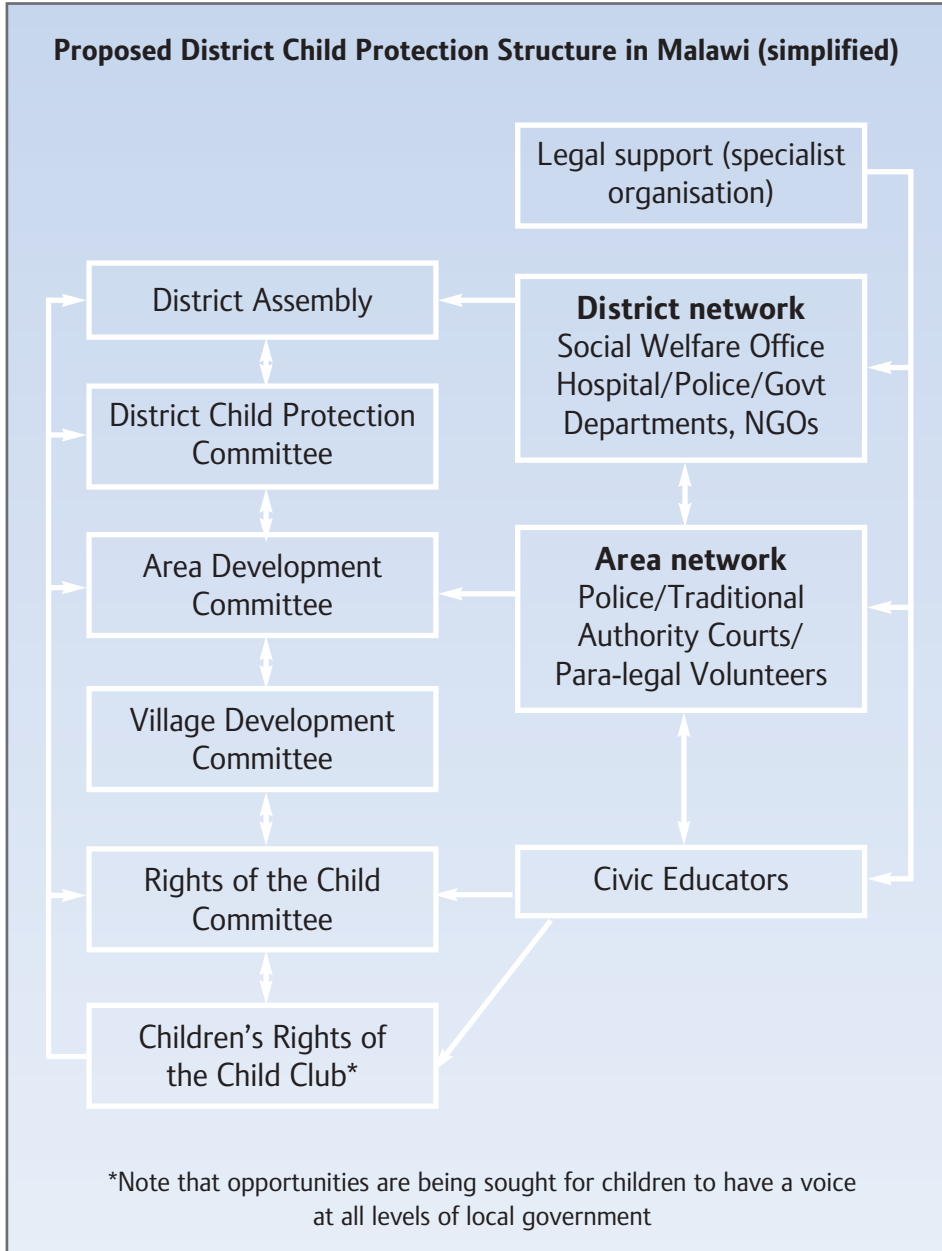
Community-based child protection programmes

Most child-focused organisations working on child protection are concerned with the needs and rights of 'children in special need of protection', for example, street children, children in conflict with the law and children affected by armed conflict. However, most child protection violations take place in the context of homes, schools and communities. Although there are some national specialist organisations working on community child protection programming, this is a neglected area and as yet has received little support from the international child-focused NGOs.

Plan is piloting community child protection programmes in several countries. These programmes involve the development of coherent child protection structures at community, district and national levels and the strengthening and

coordination of all stakeholders at these levels. The diagram shows a simplified version of the district child protection structure that is being proposed in Malawi. This structure will be linked to a National Technical Working Group on Child Protection that coordinates child protection activities by different government departments, UN organisations and NGOs and proposes policy to government.

Proposed District Child Protection Structure in Malawi (simplified)

Legal support (specialist organisation)

District Assembly

District network
Social Welfare Office
Hospital/Police/Govt
Departments, NGOs

District Child Protection Committee

Area Development Committee

Area network
Police/Traditional
Authority Courts/
Para-legal Volunteers

Village Development Committee

Rights of the Child Committee

Civic Educators

Children's Rights of the Child Club*

*Note that opportunities are being sought for children to have a voice at all levels of local government

Health centre in a camp for internally displaced people, in the Tsunami aftermath, Banda Aceh, Indonesia (January 2005)

In order to successfully assist children whose right to protection has been violated the following conditions need to be put in place through the child protection system:
• An environment in which children can disclosure abuse and responsible adults are trained to detect it
• Facilities for securing the health and safety of the child
• Structures for reporting minor and civil cases to community volunteers or leaders and criminal cases to the police
• Mediation and counselling services and social support
• Investigation and prosecution, legal support
• Support for rehabilitation and reintegration
• Positive use of the media to raise awareness in a responsible manner
• Monitoring and recording outcomes

Due to the inadequacies of legal systems, the process of filing cases against people who have abused children is long and difficult and can be very stressful for the children involved. In Guatemala, Plan is supporting Casa Alianza, an organisation that works with street and commercially sexually exploited children to file and support cases through the judicial system and to monitor and
document how the system functions in order to identify gaps and bottlenecks. A key outcome is expected to be information that can be used to pressure the government to improve the way in which the judicial and health systems address the problem of child abuse and an analysis of the costs of providing integrated care, to children affected by violence.

In most countries child protection services such as emergency shelters, health services, counselling and rehabilitation are either entirely absent or ineffective. When governments are either unable or unwilling to provide them civil society organisations often step in to fill the gap, usually with the support of overseas donors. Ultimately, however, both national and international NGOs need to advocate and strengthen local and national governments to ensure provision of the protection services that children need. One barrier is that social welfare departments are relatively weak within government and have very small budgets. In the aftermath of the UN Study on Violence Against Children, there is a clear case for lobbying for the strengthening of social service departments in order that countries are able to meet their responsibilities to fulfil children's protection rights.

5.3.3. Access to basic needs and services

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations have great difficulty in accessing basic needs and services due to their lack of adult care and the exploitation and exclusion that they experience.

Meeting immediate needs

Meeting the immediate needs of children is a priority in terms of their growth and development but there are many challenges to achieving this in ways that empower children, are sustainable and encourage duty bearers to meet their responsibilities.

Appropriate ways of working with children to meet their immediate needs also vary depending on the context and the nature of their situation, from the humanitarian responses required in the immediate after-math of a sudden onset disaster to the sustained support needed by orphans and vulnerable children in the context of the AIDS pandemic in East and Southern Africa.

Children affected by HIV and AIDS

The Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS agreed by the Global Partners Forum convened by UNICEF in 2003 provides useful guidance on real-ising the rights of children affected by HIV and AIDS[71]. The guiding principles of the Framework are similar to many of the themes discussed in this paper, such as the need to involve children and young people as active participants and to assist communities to identify those children who are particularly vulnerable and to understand their concerns so that responses can be tailored to the local situation. Some countries have put together national plans of action for support to orphans and vulnerable children based on the Framework.

As discussed in Section 5.2.5., social protection programmes are increasingly recognised as a priority option for supporting the poorest children and their families through such methods as the provision of children's allowances, disabili-ty support, and pensions for the elderly[72]. Projects piloting cash transfers have a proven positive impact on the wellbeing of children, although the challenges involved in securing political consensus for scale up and resourcing remain.

There are, however, very real and practical difficulties in extending assistance to children in communities seriously affected by HIV and AIDS. These are reflected

[71] UNICEF/Global Partners Forum (2004). The framework for the protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS.

[72] Save the Children UK, HelpAge International, Institute of Development Studies. (2005). Making Cash Count. Lessons learnt from cash transfer schemes in east and southern Africa for supporting the most vulnerable children and households.

in the experience of Plan Uganda in working with child headed households. In 2001, Plan, in common with many other organisations, began to support child headed households by providing them with food and school materials, vocational training and constructing houses and latrines for them. Recently Plan Uganda has been reflecting on this experiences and has realised that the support that it provided did not always respond to the specific needs of the individual households and that, as a result of Plan's assistance, community support to the children diminished because it was felt that Plan was taking care of the children[73].

As a result of this reflection two important principles have emerged. These are the need to base support on an understanding of children's own coping mechanisms and the need to support sustainable community responses. Plan Uganda is now training community volunteers as child counsellors to provide emotional support and to help the children express their concerns. It is also a means of deepening the understanding by communities of the realities of these children's lives. Plan is also discussing with the community councils what they themselves can do to take responsibility for the child headed households and other children at risk in their villages.

Street Children

The organisations working with street children with which we met felt that the empowerment of street children was a priority and that a narrow welfare approach to meeting the basic needs of street children should not used. The proliferation of drop in centres that provide food and shelter in many cities has led to street children 'shopping around' for the best deal, and fails to help them consider their situation on the streets and what the alternatives might be. The preferred approach goes beyond the short term provision of material support to children on the streets. Children are trained to protect themselves and deal with the risks that they face, while being provided with non-formal learning opportunities and encouragement to attend rehabilitation centres with the aim of finding less harmful alternative ways of life and reintegrating them into society.

Health care

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations experience particular health problems. Studies show that exposure in the work place to toxic chemicals, heavy burdens and dangerous machinery has a deleterious impact on the health of child workers[74]. Commercial sex workers and street children have a higher incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV than the general population. Children who are physically and sexually abused experience physical trauma such as head wounds, fractures and genital infections and lacerations. Children who are neglected may be malnourished.

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[73] Plan 2005. Helping AIDS Orphans in Child Headed Households in Uganda. From relief interventions to supporting child-centred community coping strategies.
[74] Myers, W., Boyden, J. (1998). Child Labour. Promoting the best interests of working children. Save the Children

Children with disabilities are often denied routine preventive health care by their parents, such as immunisation, and the physical rehabilitation services that they require may be absent, of poor quality or only available in the major cities. Like all children, children in the poorest and most difficult situations need access to routine preventive and curative health care and in adolescence to sexual and reproductive health care. Specialist attention is needed for children who are HIV positive, children who have been abused and children with disabilities. However, health facilities often discriminate against children, particularly if they are on their own and look unkempt.

Some organisations work with health services to improve the attitude of staff and the facilities that are available to children in the poorest and most difficult situations. For example, Plan Uganda is working in a partnership with the Tororo District Department of Health and several other specialist organisations on a pilot project to provide ARV treatment to adults and to children in a resource poor environment. The treatment of children is particularly challenging because of the lack of appropriate formulations for children, difficulties of compliance and the need for paediatric expertise.

Learning opportunities for children in the poorest and most difficult situations

Learning opportunities for children in the most difficult situations are particularly important in promoting their resilience and empowering them to cope positively with their situation. Education provides them with an opportunity to meet together with their peers and develop a sense of hope for the future. However, children in the poorest and most difficult situations experience great difficulties in accessing school due to the lack of flexibility and lack of diversification of the basic education programmes that are on offer. For example, in Guatemela there is a very high drop out rate from primary school and only 50% of children survive to the final year[75]. One of the main reasons for this is that poor families migrate seasonally for agricultural work and the school programme does not take account to this.

According to UNESCO only 2% of disabled children attend school. Many countries have a policy of inclusion of disabled children in school but most do not put it into practice. Teacher time, lack of training and the poor quality of education are the most common impediments. Child-focused organisations should promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in school where possible. Access to school for children with motor disability can be relatively easily facilitated through the provision of ramps and handrails and organisations should ensure that the school construction projects that they support are disabled child-friendly.

[75] UNESCO (2005), EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005

Non-formal education systems that are linked to formal schooling are important for children in difficult situations. For example, the Complimentary Rapid Education Programme (CREP) in Sierra Leone provided access to education for children who dropped out during the war and who entered school late. Primary schooling was condensed into 3 years and children could then proceed to formal secondary education.

Dr Reddy's Foundation, a partner of Plan India based in Hyderabad, works with children working in hazardous conditions through its Children and Police project. The police are trained in children's rights, how child labour affects children's well-being and in the legislation for the protection of children. They then help to mobilise parents, employers, community leaders and schools in efforts to release children from work, provide bridging schools and facilitate their entry into the formal school system.

A camp for internally displaced people, in the Tsunami aftermath, Banda Aceh, Indonesia (January 2005)

The inclusion of marginalised children in school requires flexibility within the school system, such as help for children who have a different first language from the one in which lessons are taught, a timetable that accommodates the needs of working children and special classes for those who have had to drop out to enable them to catch up to their age level. Child-focused organisations have a useful role to play in lobbying for the required changes in the school system and supporting the training of teachers in flexible, child centred teaching methods.

Livelihood opportunities

Children in the poorest and most difficult situations have limited opportunities to develop the skills that will equip them for employment other than low paid and unskilled work in the informal sector. When child domestic workers in Nepal reach adolescence and start to rebel against their conditions, they are kicked out of the houses where they work. Due to their seclusion, lack of education and inability to even develop social skills, they are very ill-equipped for life in the outside world. Girls usually end up in prostitution and boys in lives of criminality. The provision of basic numeracy and literacy and assistance in finding non-exploitative employment is therefore crucial in the rehabilitation of such children.

In Senegal, for example, under the time bound programme of the ILO, Plan and other NGOs are working to provide education support and vocational training opportunities to child domestic workers. Children are persuaded to return to their villages where educational support is provided for the younger children and vocational training for adolescents.

5.4. REHABILITATION & REINTEGRATION

The empowerment, support and protection of children living in the poorest and most difficult situations helps them to cope and live positively with the challenges that they experience and in itself is a step towards their reintegration back into society. This may be all that some children require to enable them to move on and find more satisfactory living situations. However, some children require more specific rehabilitation services to help them deal with and recover from the difficulties that they have experienced and to assist them to reintegrate back into society.

Processes of rehabilitation and reintegration usually follow these steps:
• Removing children from harm
• Rehabilitation and the resumption of a more normal life

• Planning the future and preparing children and families for reintegration
Rehabilitation and reintegration processes require specialist skills and time to
provide individual attention.

5.4.1. Removing children from harm

It is very difficult to help children to plan for their future when they are in situations of extreme deprivation and risk, or sometimes even to have access to them. Child helplines can play an important role in connecting children in a crisis situation with emergency services which can then pass them on to services that provide longer term support. Some specialist organisations are involved in the interception and rescue of victims of trafficking and the worst forms of child labour. They rescue children from brothels and places of forced labour. However, this area of work is fraught with difficulties and is difficult to do in a manner that preserves the dignity, privacy and agency of the women and children concerned[76].

Street children are often under the control of gang leaders and employers who resist their efforts to find other ways of living. Programmes for the rehabilitation of street children therefore usually provide centres in which children can stay while they are helped to recover from life on the streets and begin the rehabilitation process. This often includes the need to come off the drugs on which they have been dependent.

Dimi Ali, 18 years, at the offices of the Disability Rights Movement in Moyamba, Sierra Leone

FABIO DE PAOLA

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[76] Thapa, P., Chishti, K., (2003). Nepal: Resisting trafficking in Women: Auditing Testimonies and Restoration Approaches. HimRights and Action Aid Nepal.

The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process following the cessation of armed conflict takes place in camps where rehabilitation services like counselling are available.

The safety of children who are being seriously abused needs to be secured, especially if the perpetrator is a family member. All possible options should be considered such as the child going to live with another family member or the removal of the perpetrator. The decision to remove the child from home is a serious one and should only be taken in the last resort, and on the basis of a transparent and accountable decision-making mechanism. The best interests of the child should be paramount in the decision-making process but often it is a case of choosing the least worst option. Emergency centres for women and children provide temporary respite, but are rarely provided by the state and it is usually NGOs that fill the gap.

5.4.2. Rehabilitation and the resumption of normal life

Rehabilitation activities usually include such services as the provision of health care, help to come off drugs, good nutrition and individual and group counselling. They also include activities to start the resumption of normal life such as non-formal education, sports, play and cultural events to help children to relax and gain confidence.

5.4.3. Planning the future and preparing children and families for reintegration

Once children have had a chance to recuperate and stabilise, the process of planning the future can start. An understanding of the views and perspectives of each child on their own lives are very important. If disregarded, solutions are unlikely to be sustained. In fact the instinct of most street children is to resist the idea of reunification with their families and the issue needs to be raised with sensitivity.

Marie Wernham identifies a 3 Stage Choice Process to guide those who work with children[77]. The three stages are:

- **Understanding choices:** Staff need to understand children's own perspective on the choices that they have made. Often children have chosen life on the street as preferable to a life of abuse at home.

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[77] Wernham, M. (2004). An Outside Chance. Street Children and Juvenile Justice – an International Perspective. Consortium for Street Children.

Young boy in a camp for internally displaced people,
in the Tsunami aftermath, Banda Aceh, Indonesia (January 2005)

- **Expanding choices:** Staff then help children to expand the range of choices that are open to them, such as reunification with their families, living in a group home or taking up a job that is less hazardous
.
- **Empowering children to make choices:** Children are helped to think through their options and make the choices themselves.

Reintegration does not necessarily mean that children will return to live with their parents, which may not be feasible or appropriate. Options to stay with other members of the family are also explored. As well as family reintegration, the CWIN Transit Centre in Kathmandu offers the possibility of being placed in residential schools or taking up a vocational training course and finding a job. In Dakar, L'Avenir des Enfants (ADE) has a family home where children can stay for as long as they need until they are either reunited with their families or can become independent. Feeny argues that ultimately children have the right to remain street children if they feel that is the only option
to them[78].

The process of reunification is very important and Feeny provides concrete and detailed guidelines on the reunification process. CWIN has rural field workers who identify and prepare the family and community for the return of the child. ADE staff make as many visits as are necessary, often with the child, to prepare both the child and the family for his or her return.

Children who have been trafficked or return home after being involved in the

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THE FAILURE OF THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS FOR MANY YOUNG PEOPLE IN SIERRA LEONE

The disarmament and demobilisation process was successfully completed by 2002 but reintegration has been less successful. There are still many young ex-combatants who have not reintegrated back into their societies. In addition little attention was given to the need for psychosocial support by girls who were involved with the armed forces, many of whom endured sexual violence. These girls and their children are often not accepted back into their communities and have no prospects of marriage.

As a consequence there are many young men and women who were involved with the armed forces who now live on the streets, often engaged in criminal activity and commercial sex work. They live hazardous lives and are also viewed as posing a threat to future security and stability in the country.

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[78] Feeny, T. (2005). In Best or Vested Interests. An Exploration of the Concept and Practice of Family Reunification for Street Children. The Consortium for Street Children.

worst forms of child labour often have great difficulties in being accepted back into their families and communities. This was true of many of the children and young people associated with the armed forces during the civil war in Sierra Leone and also of children who returned home to Nepal after being trafficked to India, particularly if they were HIV positive.

Community-based organisations have an important role to play in raising awareness and helping to change mind sets and attitudes towards children who wish to reintegrate back into their communities. In Makwanpur, Nepal, a national NGO called HimRights supports a group of women and girls who include victims
of domestic violence and returned migrants, some of whom are HIV positive. These women and girls are assisted to deal with their own problems, but they are also involved in awareness raising and community outreach on the wider problem of trafficking.

5.4.4. Holding governments accountable for their responsibilities towards children in the poorest and most difficult situations

The CRC commits governments to provide for the care and rehabilitation of children in the poorest and most difficult situations. Following a child centred and rights-based model, children should be given opportunities to participate in activities to hold duty bearers accountable and the organisations assisting them should undertake to support and follow through their concerns.

HOW CHILDREN FROM UGANDA INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID) IN THE UK

A group of children from communities affected by AIDS in Uganda gave evidence through a video link to a UK Parliamentary Committee that was reviewing policy on orphans and vulnerable children. This was the first time that a UK government committee had taken evidence directly from children in developing countries and it served to deepen their understanding of the issues affecting orphans and vulnerable children.

A group of organisations affiliated to the UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development successfully lobbied the UK government to recognise orphans and vulnerable children in its policies on AIDS. In addition, following its policy review in 2004, the government earmarked a fund for the support of orphans and vulnerable children.

The National Forum of Working Children in Nepal conducts grassroots campaigns to advocate for the rights, improved conditions and participation of working children and aims to unite the estimated 2.2 million child labourers in Nepal to speak with one voice. The Forum is working on such issues as advocating for the strengthening of Nepal's Child Labour Prohibition Act, for action against the economic and sexual exploitation of working children and is lobbying for flexible education that working children can access.

Children can also help to influence the policy of donor organisations. Some child helpline organisations are active in lobbying for improvements in child protection services at the local and national level. Childline India documents the outcome of the calls that it receives to pressure for improved services and to provide evidence to support advocacy work at national level to improve the legislative framework and child protection policy and programmes.

CWIN in Nepal conducts 'advocacy through activism'. It files and supports child abuse cases through the courts and has been successful in forcing landmark judgements that create precedents and will make prosecution easier in the future.

NGOs also have an important role to play in the monitoring of the CRC within countries. They can participate in the production of alternative reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that will be considered when States Parties report to them.

6 months after the earthquake, Siran Valley, Pakistan (March 2006)

LORNA ROACH

5.5. CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted some of the problems with the way that children in the poorest and most difficult situations have been regarded by the development community and how programmes to assist them have been organised. Working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations should not be the domain only of specialist organisations. The paper challenges child-focused organisations to understand and address the common root causes that result in children finding themselves in very poor and difficult situations. Key to prevention is the identification and inclusion of marginalised groups in community development activities and the promotion of inclusion through social policy.

Programmes to address the rights of children in the poorest and most difficult situations are more effective when programmes of prevention are integrated with those of the support and protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of children already in difficult situations. The key interventions identified by this paper are as follows:

Identification and research
- Identification of children in the poorest and most difficult situations at the country level to inform the decision of where and with which populations of children to work
- Support to communities to identify and track the progress of marginalised children and families
- Research of issues to understand the nature and scale of the problem and the perceptions of children and other stakeholders

Prevention
- The inclusion of marginalised groups in community development activities
- Promoting inclusion through public policy
- The participation of children and adults in the promotion of children's rights
- Children's participation in governance
- Mainstreaming child protection
- Promoting the access of poor and marginalised groups to basic services
- Social protection

Empowerment support and protection
- Promoting the understanding of their situation and action by children
- Protection of children in very difficult situations through their own agency and that of the adults with whom they have contact
- Community based child protection
- Facilitating access by children in the poorest and most difficult situations to basic needs and services

Rehabilitation and reintegration
- Removal of children from harm
- Resumption of normal life and access to services
- Planning the future and preparing for reintegration
- Supporting reintegration into communities
- Holding governments accountable for the delivery of the social services that children in difficult situations need

ANNEX 1

Lists of Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances and Vulnerable Children

Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances	Children in different circumstances for priority attention
World Summit for Children 1990	UNICEF Fast Facts Child Protection Programme 2005
Victims of apartheid and foreign occupation	Children in forced and bonded labour
Orphans and street children	Children without primary caregivers
Children of migrant workers	Children who are trafficked
Displaced children and victims of natural and man-made disaster	Children who are sexually exploited
The disabled and the abused	Children who are used as soldiers
The socially disadvantaged and the exploited The working child	Children subjected to violence outside of armed conflict
Child victims of illicit drugs	

Ali, 14 years, has been working in the diamond mines since the age of 9, in Dumba, Sierra Leone

FABIO DE PAOLA

The Vulnerable Children
In 'Orphans and Vulnerable Children'

Vulnerable children in Botswana policy documents on OVCs	Main categories of vulnerable children as defined by the World Bank
Street children	Street children
Child labourers	Children in the worst forms of child labour
Children who are sexually exploited	Children affected by armed conflict
Children who are neglected	Children affected by HIV/AIDS
Children with handicaps	Children living with disability
Children in remote areas from indigenous groups	Nationally and locally defined groups of vulnerable children

James, an amputee victim, in the Kailihuu region of Sierra Leone – he was attacked by rebels during the civil war

ANNEX 2
Results of the Children's Consultations

During the study we met with 29 groups of children in eight different countries. Below is a summary of the information we received from them. The numbers in brackets indicates the number of times this example was given by a group.

1. What makes life good for children?
• Receiving love and affection from your family (10)
• Receiving a good quality education (8)
• When you have a full stomach (7)
• Having supporting friends around you (4)
• Jobs are easier to find (4)
• A community where equality and respect are encouraged (3)
• Being healthy (3)
• A community where children are recognized and listened to (2)
• Being secure and protected (1)
• Belonging to a children's club (1)
• Having a home (1)
• A community that is clean and hygienic (1)

2. What makes life difficult for children?

• Being discriminated against (13)
• Bad cultural practices (e.g. early marriage) (9)
• Abuse at home, school or work (8)
• Parents who display bad behaviour (e.g. use bad language, are aggressive) (7)
• Unemployment within the family (7)
• Needing to work (6)
• Lack of food (6)
• Lack of quality education (6)
• A community that is violent or dangerous (5)
• Lack of support and encouragement (5)
• Drugs and alcohol (5)
• Illness or injury within the family (4)
• Sexual exploitation (4)
• Not living with both parents (3)
• When it is hard to study at home (e.g. because it is too noisy or there is not enough room) (3)
• When things are always changing and life is unpredictable (1)
• Needing to migrate (1)

3. Which children have the most difficult lives in your community?

• Child workers (15)
• Disabled children (14)
• Orphans(11)
• Children from discriminated castes and ethnic groups (8)
• Children affected by sexual exploitation or trafficking (8)
• Children from the poorest families (7)
• Children working or living on the street (6)
• Children who cannot go to school (5)
• Children whose parents do not have land or are living on illegal land (4)
• Female children (4)
• Children whose father or mother no longer lives with them (4)
• Children who suffer abuse and violence at home (4)
• Children who have parents who drink a lot of alcohol or take drugs (4)
• Children living in areas of conflict (4)
• Children who are "invisible" or "excluded" in the community (3)
• Children whose parents have had to move to cities to find employment (3)
• Children who are not cared for properly by their parents (3)
• Children affected by HIV/AIDS (3)
• Children whose parents are sick (3)
• Children whose parents do not have a job (3)
• Children living in rural areas that are hard to reach (2)
• Children who have been abandoned (1)
• Children who have no spare time to relax or play (1)

4. What can children do to improve their situation?

• Encourage fair social interaction among your friends and community (5)
• Fulfil their responsibilities (e.g. working hard at school) (4)
• Respond to problems as a group (4)
• Teach other people what they have learned (3)
• Don't isolate others (2)
• Become organised in children's clubs (2)
• Act with boldness and courage (1)
• Empathise with and understand those in more difficult circumstances (1)

5. What can adults do to support children?

• Offer love and advice to children (6)
• Offer encouragement to children (3)
• Be educated (3)
• Develop a more positive attitude to girls and women (2)
• Eliminate discriminatory cultural practice (2)
• Stop all abuse (2)
• Understand children's problems (1)
• Encourage equality in the community (1)
• Include children in decision-making (1)
• Reduce alcohol and drug use in families (1)

6. What can NGOs do to support children?

• Raise awareness about important issues (6)
• Provide educational support to communities (4)
• Offer vocational training for the community (3)
• Help the poorest and worst affected in a community and work in difficult
  areas (3)
• Assist youth as well as children (3)
• Focus less on the number of children entering a programme and more on the
  quality of the programme (2)
• Run programmes to support livelihood (2)
• Do not provide direct financial assistance (2)
• Consult children and offer feedback on participation sessions (2)
• Provide support that is long term (e.g. teach communities to grow food rather
  than only providing food packages) (2)
• Identify and locate people in the community who are excluded (1)
• Encourage the community to participate in community life (1)
• Offer support and encouragement to the community (1)
• Be more transparent about their agendas and reasons for doing things (1)
• Offer support that takes the pressure of children (1)
• Provide counselling (1)
• Assist in establishing a united voice for children (1)

ANNEX 3

Mainstreaming of child protection measures within community development programmes

Health
Promotion of father-mother-child bonding through parenting classes and promotion of breast feeding
Child and youth friendly health centres and services
Life skills training

Education
Parenting classes for parents of children of different ages, starting with the pre-school age
Addressing and preventing bullying and sexual harassment
Prevention of corporal punishment
Privacy and separate toilets for girls
Peace building in schools in areas affected by conflict
Flexible learning opportunities that meet the needs of working children
Measures to ensure that marginalised groups are reached – children with disabilities, children with a different language

Livelihood
Monitoring livelihood programmes for their impact on child labour
Developing educational and livelihood opportunities for young people

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Habitat	Latrines and water taps in situations where girls and women will not be at risk Women, children and youth represented on community decision-making bodies
Children's Rights	Birth registration Awareness raising of children's and human rights and child protection issues Promoting the participation of children in family and community decision-making Prevention of domestic violence Peace building Teaching children and young people to protect themselves. Village and district committees trained to promote child protection Training professionals and service providers to be child friendly. Child helplines and the support of child protection services
Disasters and emergencies	Incorporating child protection into disaster prevention and response programmes
Advocacy	Monitoring of violations of child protection rights and participation in CRC reporting Advocacy for the promotion of legal frameworks and policy at local and national levels that are consistent with the CRC Enforcement of existing legislation Advocating for national and local budgets for child protection services

ANNEX 4

UNICEF'S PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT

UNICEF has adopted an integrated approach to child protection called the 'protective environment'. This approach acknowledges that similar actions are needed to achieve child protection regardless of the issue. Following consultation with child protection specialists, UNICEF identified eight elements that constitute a protective environment

- Government commitment to fulfilling protection rights – assigning adequate budget
- Attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviour and practices
- Open discussion of, and engagement with, child protection issues
- Legislation and enforcement
- Capacity – of parents and those who come into contact with children to identify and respond to child protection issues
- Children's life skills, knowledge and participation
- Monitoring and reporting – of the incidence and nature of child abuse and an informed response
- Services for recovery and reintegration

Figure: UNICEF's Protective Environment
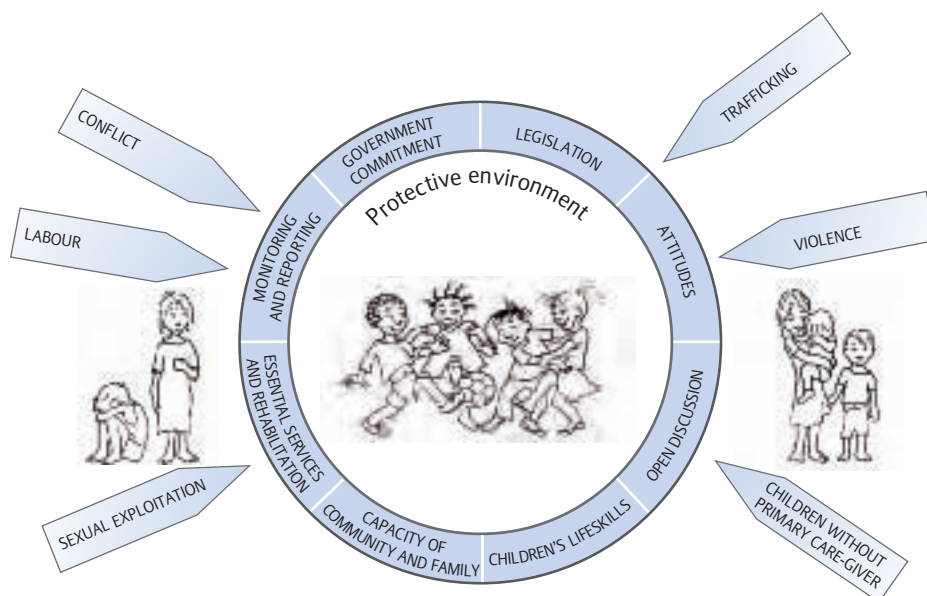
Patricia Ray is a medical doctor who started her professional life working in hospitals in the UK and Mozambique during the civil war of the 1980s. She then worked as a general practitioner in an inner city area of Leeds where she developed an interest in child protection.

Following a Masters Degree in Community Health for Developing Countries from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 1991, she worked on an urban health and nutrition programme run by Enfants Et Developpement in a slum area of Manila, Philippines.

She joined Plan Philippines as a health advisor in 1995 and then worked for Plan in a variety of roles in programme management and strategic planning at country, regional and international levels and in the UK. In Plan UK she established the advocacy and development education units and supported the setting up of Plan's representational office to the EU.

In 2004 Patricia became an independent consultant and led and coordinated this project to review Plan's work with children in the poorest and most difficult situations. In subsequent consultancy work she has provided technical support to child-focused programmes in Africa and Asia and retains a particular interest in child protection and work with marginal groups.

Sarah Carter graduated with a degree in Psychology in 2001 and her research was later published in the academic journal of Motivation and Emotion.

Following an MA in International Studies, Sarah worked for the United Nations Association UK (UNA-UK) as a Research Associate on security related research and advocacy, specialising in nuclear non-proliferation issues. She then managed the National Engagement Process on UN reform, conducted by UNA-UK on behalf of the Foreign Office and co-edited the final report 'In Larger Freedom in the UK: An agenda for action following the 2005 UN World Summit'.

Sarah worked for Plan UK on a project to raise awareness amongst UK policy makers of the importance of child-centred participation in health development and was then recruited to work on the research for this project.

Since January 2006, Sarah has been working towards a PhD. Her research is focused on the UN Peace Operations Reform Agenda and the challenges posed by uniting development and security approaches.

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