

2015 - 2016
IMPACT REPORT
A Focus on Child Protection





WELCOME

Dear Readers:

Early in my career as a social worker in Massachusetts, I routinely handled cases of child abuse and neglect. It was a hard job emotionally, and a question used to run through my head. What is the parent's first responsibility? Is it to love the child, or to protect the child? I know it's not an either/or question, but it is something I thought about a lot in those days. I concluded it was a parent's first responsibility to protect the child.

When I became a parent, a second question formed in my head: What is a parent's deepest fear? If protecting the child is the greatest responsibility, then being helpless to protect the child from harm is a parent's worst nightmare.

Today, as I lead ChildFund International's global work on behalf of children, I still feel that way. I also recognize that most parents I met back in Massachusetts are like the great majority with whom ChildFund works around the world: they love their children and want to do what is best. But their own circumstances are so difficult that, without help, they are unable to be good, protective parents.

Yet I also know that all children need—and indeed have the right—to grow in an environment of care and safety. Children's need for protection is parallel to their need for food, shelter and education. The development and wellbeing of children who are abused, neglected or exploited can be as fundamentally compromised as those who lack adequate nutrition, health care and clothing.

ChildFund knows that a threat to a child anywhere is a threat to our future everywhere, and that effectively protecting children from harm is not a solitary effort. It does not rest with one person, at one time, or with one government agency. Rather, protecting children—whether an infant born to a poor family in rural Ecuador, a boy laboring on cotton plantations in western India, or a girl in Kenya desperate to avoid marriage to a grown man—starts in families, extends to communities, and engages all levels of government. We all work together to protect all children from harm.

This is the second in ChildFund International's series of biannual Impact Reports, and our special topic is child protection. To me and to ChildFund, protecting children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence is not an abstract concept. It must be embedded in all we do to improve the lives of children, their families and communities. We welcome you to learn more about our work, and are gratified that you join us in our global commitment to the protection of children.

Anne Lynam Goddard
President and CEO of ChildFund International

SUMMARY

ChildFund International's *Impact Report 2015-2016* deals with the tough topic of harms perpetrated against children, and explores our growing expertise in programming that protects children from those harms: abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. We chose child protection as our topic because it is essential to child wellbeing, and because ChildFund has both the opportunity and the responsibility to do child protection well.

It is our conviction that that all forms of violence against children are preventable, and that all are unacceptable. All children have the right, codified in global accords, to be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. Yet the extent of harms committed against children worldwide is massive. Violations to children's right to protection are a grievous impediment to their individual development, and evidence suggests¹ that persistent, unaddressed harms committed against children are eroding global gains in their collective wellbeing.

As difficult as the topic may be, ChildFund is pleased to invite our constituents into an exploration of the work we are doing and the work we have yet to do. In this report, we describe where, how and with what results we are implementing child protection around the world, and begin to answer the vital question, *how can we do better?*

Our *Impact Report 2015-2016* gathers our learnings about child protection, and presents evidence that:

- **Children's healthy development is inextricable from their protection.** Optimum physical, cognitive and emotional growth cannot occur when a child is exposed to abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence. For ChildFund and other child-focused agencies, working for child protection is not optional.
- **Developing, with communities, a shared understanding of harms against children is a prerequisite for taking effective action.** Some child protection violations are overt and widely recognized, but many are more subtle. They are committed not by strangers but by those closest to children, and their intent is not to inflict damage but to raise children according to tradition and custom.
- **Preventing harm works best when we understand that children are at the center of a system, with formal and informal elements, that encompasses family, community, social services and institutions, national and global laws and policies.** ChildFund takes a *systems approach* to protection that engages multiple actors, and supports collaboration among and across them, for the comprehensive protection and wellbeing of children.
- A systems approach also demands that we consider the social, cultural, economic and physical environment around children, because **sustained protection can only be achieved when we address the root causes of child harms.** These may include chronic poverty and inadequate or absent policy, but also deeply ingrained socialization processes—including those governing how societies raise boys and girls to become men and women.
- **Measuring child protection, when we take a systems approach, is not straightforward.** We are getting better at connecting, in our measurement and analyses, child protection and wellbeing outcomes, and at measuring and understanding how well child protection mechanisms work. But we know, too, that a protective environment for children, viewed through a systems approach, is the outcome of complex interactions among numerous factors and actors, and that measurement is likewise complex. ChildFund is still learning what must be measured, and how, in the realm of child protection.

This report is a celebration of achievement, and it is a learning document. ChildFund is doing good and important child protection work around the world. But we cannot yet claim that our child protection work is cohesive and consistent across all our daily efforts for children's wellbeing. We cannot yet claim that we are capturing—systematically and deliberately—the lessons from our own and others' child protection work, absorbing them, and replicating them across our programs. Our *Impact Report 2015-2016* informs ChildFund's constituents, allies and peers, even as it helps us reflect on what we are learning, what we are doing right, and what we can do better in the crucial realm of protecting children from harm.



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1

THE NEED FOR CHILD PROTECTION

PROTECTED FROM WHAT?

The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children and youth have the specific, unassailable right to protection from harms including 'all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.'ⁱⁱ

In contrast to their rights to education, health care, a decent standard of living and many more, children's right to protection has a distinct inflection.

It is the right to be protected from the harms that other humans cause to children, individually or in the context of institutions and structures. Global rights instruments delineate four categories of harm from which children have the right to be protected: **abuse, neglect¹, exploitation²** and violence. Around the world and in every culture, violations of children's fundamental right to protection are massive, under-recognized and under-reported (box).

THE PERSISTENCE OF HARMS AGAINST CHILDREN

As we explore, in this report, ChildFund's response to violations against children, we will also discuss several aspects of child harms that not only contribute to their persistence and extent, but shape how ChildFund and all child protection actors can approach their elimination:

Poor and at Risk: Any child may experience harm, but children who are deprived, excluded and vulnerable are at heightened and ongoing risk. Poverty, social stress, and weak protective factors can combine to create continual conditions for harm, and can compound or concentrate these conditions over time and throughout the child's environment. Supportive factors that may be present, such as a child's own resilience or the care of her family, are easily overwhelmed in the face of repeated or multiple forms of harm.

The Global Scope of Harms against Children

What can we know about the extent of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence committed against children? Global experts agree that most child protection violations go unreported and unaddressed. Still, these facts and estimates help frame our discussion:

- Between 500 million and 1.5 billion children worldwide endure some form of violence every year.ⁱⁱⁱ This represents between 21 and 64 percent of all human beings aged 18 and younger.^{3,iv} The sheer scope of these numbers is alarming, even as the estimate's wide range underscores the absence of precise data on the problem.
- Among children aged 2 to 14, up to 86 percent may have experienced violent discipline (physical punishment or psychological aggression) by a parent or caregiver.^v Around the globe, parents' and caregivers' physical discipline of children remains the norm.
- In 2012, about one in five of all homicides was of children aged 0 to 19. Almost four in five murdered children were either very young (20 percent were 0 to 4 years old, almost all killed by family members) or approaching adulthood (57 percent were 15 to 19, killed by other adolescents or young adults, often gang members).^{vi}
- In any single year, 150 million girls and 73 million boys may experience sexual violence.^{vii} A conservative estimate is that 20 percent of all women, and five to ten percent of all men, endured some form of sexual abuse as children.
- An estimated 168 million children around the globe are engaged in child labor, for pay or in service of a family debt; half of these children work in particularly hazardous conditions.^{viii}
- A 2000 study estimated that 1.8 million children were being exploited in prostitution, sex tourism and pornography. A global study in the mid-2000s estimated that 980,000 to 1.23 million girls and boys were in a situation of exploitation as a result of trafficking.^{ix}
- Child marriage—typically involving a girl's forced union with an adult man—remains widespread, due largely to persistent poverty and gender inequality. In developing countries, one in three girls is married before the age of 18, and one in nine before 15.^x

1 Neglect is a caregiver's failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs despite having the means, knowledge and access to services to do so.

2 Exploitation is the use of a child for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit.

3 Calculated using 2015 mid-year population estimates by age.

Private and Hidden: The nature of many harms committed against children makes them hard to detect, even in countries with systematic means, in the judicial, health, education or social work arenas, of doing so. Much of infants' and children's experience, good and bad, occurs within the domestic sphere, which all societies guard as private. Perpetrators of many harms to children, especially sexual abuse and violence, enforce secrecy with threats. The very nature of childhood favors under-reporting: infants and young children lack the capacity, knowledge, skills and social status to act for their own protection. Older children and youth may fear the social consequences of speaking out, especially when (as is almost always the case) perpetrators are members of their families or social circles.^{xi}

Normalized and Unseen: Parents, families, and institutions (educational and religious, for example) are charged with socializing children to become productive adults according to their culture's norms. Humans tend to absorb social and cultural norms as 'the way things are,' and reproduce them in their own children without critical thought. And while most social norms may be beneficial or neutral, some inflict damage. Among the latter, many are linked to gender, or the expected behaviors, roles, privileges, responsibilities and relative power that a society assigns to its members according to their sex as male or female. From the moment of birth, boys and girls are socialized differently to fit their culture's gender norms. Gendered socialization may prepare children for future violence (by enforcing notions of aggressive masculinity and submissive femininity, for example), and may be violent in its own right (such as female genital mutilation).



THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF HARMS

Exposure to psychological or physical violence, or chronic neglect, causes stress. When strong, frequent or prolonged, and unmitigated by factors such as supportive relationships with caring adults, such stress can change the architecture of a child's developing brain.^{xii} Children who survive abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence may endure lifelong effects that range from behavioral problems to mental illness, from cognitive dysfunction and developmental delays to lasting disability from physical injury.^{xiii} And evidence consistently tells us that the effects of harm may be self-perpetuating. Children exposed to violence are more likely to become adults who are violent to others, including their own children.^{xiv}

The ChildFund Alliance's⁴ 2012 study on *The Costs and Economic Impact of Violence against Children*^{xv} clarifies that violence against children also imposes financial penalties on societies as a whole: aggregate productivity losses, erosion of human and social capital, and the cost of responsive services combine to slow economic development. The global costs linked to physical, psychological and sexual violence are equal to *between three*

and eight percent of the world's gross domestic product. This massive cost is many times higher than the amount needed to build and maintain coherent systems for preventing and responding to the harms inflicted on the world's children.

Children's *vulnerability to harm* is universal, and is indeed the very reason that all cultures aspire to protect their children, and all modern nations have created measures to do so. But *children's risk of harm* varies greatly, and is conditioned by the physical, social, cultural and economic environment surrounding them. As we shall see in our next chapters, much of the devastating human and financial toll of child harm can be forestalled, and the cycle interrupted,^{xvi} by coherent, protective systems that link and support the people and structures whose responsibility it is to protect children.

4 ChildFund International, based in the U.S., is a member of the ChildFund Alliance, a coalition of 12 children's development organizations working to improve the lives of deprived, excluded and vulnerable children in 58 countries around the world.

2

CHILDFUND AND CHILD PROTECTION: LEARNING TO FOSTER PROTECTIVE SYSTEMS

OUR PURPOSE DEFINES OUR POSITION

ChildFund’s very organizational purpose encompasses child protection. *We exist to help deprived, excluded and vulnerable children improve their lives and become adults who bring positive change to their communities. We exist to promote societies that value, protect and advance the worth and rights of children.*

Who we are as an organization—historically and today—positions us to take on the challenges of effective child protection work at both depth and scale. Consider:

- ChildFund takes meaningful action on deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability as children experience them: we understand that violations against children may be linked to accumulated and interconnected disadvantages in their lives. And we tailor our interventions to the very different developmental needs and tasks of children as they age. For child protection, this means we can address the differing types of harm that children face at different ages, engage the adults who feature most prominently in children’s lives, and foster children’s developing capacity to act for their own protection as they grow.
- ChildFund’s strength in systematically addressing child protection derives from our deep and sustained work at the community level. We and those we serve have a decades-long history of collaboration: we are a trusted insider whose work extends deeply into communities to reach children within their family environments.
- ChildFund’s firm relationships with communities are supported by our work with and through hundreds of local partner organizations, rooted in the cultures we serve. On this foundation of legitimacy, ChildFund builds networks of stakeholders—local, national and international actors—dedicated to child protection. We are skilled at engaging with institutions, service structures and, increasingly, policymakers to foster a social and political environment in which children can thrive.

ChildFund’s global reach provides us enormous opportunity to address child protection systemically and have lasting impact on millions of children, their families and communities.

Figure 2: ChildFund International’s Global Reach



A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO CHILD PROTECTION

ChildFund joins other child-focused groups in taking a *systems approach* to child protection: we view children within their entire sociocultural and physical context, consider all the factors that promote or hinder protection, and collaborate with all actors with a duty to protect children from harm. Collectively, the first aim of a systems approach is to prevent violations against children. The second is to ensure responsive services when violations have occurred.

A systems approach differs from child protection work in previous decades, which tended to focus on single issues—corporal punishment, for example, or sexual abuse—in isolation from one another. Successes were often offset by the weaknesses of this narrow focus: a reactive rather than preventive stance, fragmented responses, inefficiencies, and treatment only of the harms without attention to the deeper causes of those harms.^{xvii}

Years of practice and learning have led us to understand that children are best protected when they are surrounded by people, services and policies^{xviii} that cooperate for their protection and positive development. By understanding child protection as a multi-layered system—the child surrounded by family, community, social services, national and international policies—we can define and support each layer’s actors and functions. We can examine the social, cultural, political and economic forces that surround each layer (and the system as a whole) and how they may promote or hinder protection. We can support collaboration within and across layers, for the comprehensive protection and wellbeing of children.

Figure 3 below shows the layers of a holistic child protection system, and introduces some of the evidence-based practices that ChildFund commonly uses in our work.

In this report’s next chapters, we will illustrate how ChildFund is translating a systems approach from theory to action, using the practices introduced above and many more. But first, we discuss our commitment to measurement and continuous learning, and how they are informing our child protection work.

Figure 3: Layers of the Child Protection System and Examples of How ChildFund Works with Each

- At the innermost layers—**THE CHILD** within the private **FAMILY** domain where most violence, abuse and neglect occur—we provide responsive parenting education, promote positive discipline, and link families to other protective services. As children grow, we help them understand their rights, take action with peers for positive change, and undertake self-protection commensurate with their age and capacity. When disasters occur, we provide safe spaces where affected children can engage in normalizing activities.
- We work with **COMMUNITIES** to reach a shared definition of child harms, including those that may be caused by social norms surrounding child-rearing and socialization. We help community-based child protection mechanisms prevent and respond to harms, and engage local leaders to promote child protection and demand that their higher-ups do the same.
- We collaborate locally and nationally with **INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICE STRUCTURES**—health, education, justice and more—to prevent harms and provide response services. We link services and service workers to community actors, and support them to identify and pursue their common protection interests.
- At **NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL** levels, ChildFund uses evidence to advocate for policies that protect children. Coming full circle, we amplify the voices of children to the highest levels so their needs and concerns are represented to their own government and global rights and development bodies.



LEARNING TO SUPPORT CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

ChildFund holds ourselves accountable not only for high-quality child protection work, but for carefully measuring all we do in this important realm. We hold ourselves accountable for reflecting on, learning from and consistently applying our learnings so that we and our peers can improve how we prevent and respond to child harms. We have progressed considerably in the realms of measuring and learning over the past several years.

To stake our ongoing commitment to learning and improved programming, we made child protection the subject of this biannual impact report. The very process of creating this report contributed to our learning; we examined ChildFund project designs, assessments and evaluations; we explored multiple data sets; we interviewed staff and read reports and papers from all 28 countries where we work to distill the impact stories presented on the following pages.

Learning: Measuring Harms out of Context

Between 2009 and 2013, ChildFund administered household surveys in about 20 of the 28 countries where we work. This broad research effort gathered data on a handful of child wellbeing indicators such as nutritional status, scholastic achievement and teen pregnancy.⁵ Our aim, as we described in the [ChildFund Impact Report 2013](#),^{xix} was to make periodic checks of conditions in the communities we serve, and detect change over time.

These surveys were not designed to measure child protection directly, but since protection is bound up in child wellbeing and development, they did include some related indicators. As part of our ongoing learning about child protection, we examined the survey data to see what insights it might support.

To cite just one of our analyses, ChildFund examined our data on early pregnancy (known to be linked to common violations including sexual abuse, intimate partner violence and child marriage) and on factors that support girls *not* to get pregnant, to determine what more we could deduce. Interpretation of our data from India, for example, was made complex by law and local custom that put girls in a double bind when it comes to age of marriage and first pregnancy. The government has increased enforcement of laws designed to prevent early marriage so, when surveyed, girls and young women are unlikely to report being married before legal age. At the same time, deeply ingrained social custom frowns upon pregnancy out of wedlock so, when surveyed, they are unlikely to report being pregnant outside of wedlock before the legal age of marriage. Women who did become pregnant before age 18 are unlikely to reveal this fact—regardless of their marital status at the time—for fear of legal or social consequences. Measurement of early pregnancy *alone* proved neither fruitful nor informative for our programmatic response, and we arrived at similar conclusions for other outcome indicators.

ChildFund next constructed regression models that allowed us to identify factors that have a *protective effect* against early pregnancy. We sought relationships between early pregnancy on one hand, and education, confidence, employment, youth engagement and leadership on the other. We found that child protection outcomes such as those related to early pregnancy are, in fact, linked to several factors that serve a protective function in young people’s lives.

For instance, education can be a protective factor as Table 1 shows.^{xx} Girls in Kenya, Mexico and Uganda who stayed in school longer and completed a higher grade were significantly less likely to have an early pregnancy. The same proved true for girls whose reading ability was better (India, Zambia).

Table 1: Protective Factors with Significant Effects on Early Pregnancy

	ATTAINING HIGHER GRADE IN SCHOOL	BETTER ABILITY TO READ	PARTICIPATION / LEADERSHIP IN YOUTH CLUB
INDIA	no significant effect	Significantly lowers the likelihood of early pregnancy	no significant effect
KENYA	Significantly lowers the likelihood of early pregnancy	insufficient data	no significant effect
MEXICO	Significantly lowers the likelihood of early pregnancy	no significant effect	no significant effect
UGANDA	Significantly lowers the likelihood of early pregnancy	insufficient data	no significant effect
ZAMBIA	no significant effect	Significantly lowers the likelihood of early pregnancy	Significantly lowers the likelihood of early pregnancy

5 ChildFund’s extensive analyses of data generated by this broad monitoring program is well documented; reports are available to interested parties.

Our analyses underscored that, if ChildFund is to be effective in child protection (including from harms that increase the risk of early pregnancy) we must strive for a *comprehensive protective environment* and not limit ourselves to responding to specific violations. Preventing child harms requires attention to protective factors in the realms of social services (including but not limited to education), social networks, strengthened opportunities, and re-examination of social norms and customs.

At this stage of analysis, ChildFund concluded that we must further integrate our measurement of protection outcomes with measurement of other child development outcomes. The opposite was also true: we must become more focused, deliberate, and sophisticated in our measurement of child protection outcomes and mechanisms themselves. In these ways, we increase our ability to have greater effect, at larger scale, when it comes to child protection.

Learning: Measuring Harms in the Context of Protective Mechanisms

Community-based child protection mechanisms, commonly mandated by governments, are meant to extend child protection into communities. They typically are a group consisting of local leaders, parents and service providers. These mechanisms can be effective at preventing and responding to harms, and indeed at changing attitudes and behaviors vis-à-vis child rights and harms, when they are community-owned, community-driven and connected to other actors in the child protection system. In this report, we mention these mechanisms in many of our project examples: see especially Chapter 5's [Kenya](#) and [Gambia](#) stories.

ChildFund routinely supports community-based protection mechanisms (box). To this end, we instituted a new system for measuring child protection outcomes and community-based child protection mechanisms. This shift also reflected ChildFund's use of theories of change to conceptualize the holistic development and protection of children as they grow from infancy to young adulthood. Our measurement system now tracks outcomes related to both development and protection, and allows us to examine the community-based mechanisms that can prevent and respond to risks and harms.

On the quantitative or numeric side, we track outcomes such as children's access to health care and early childhood education; children's literacy and numeracy; parents' and caregivers' empowerment to make decisions on behalf of children; youth's work readiness, civic engagement and leadership, and more.

On the qualitative side, we engage communities in assessing their community-based child protection mechanisms. We discuss with them whether, and in what circumstances, communities use these mechanisms and/or the social services available to them to refer cases of child harms. These discussions serve a dual purpose. They allow us to collect some data on how community-based child protection mechanisms function and interact with other layers of the child protection system. And, crucially, they allow ChildFund to engage community members in discussion and reflection on how they collectively define child protection violations, how they understand practices that may be harmful to children, and how they respond when children are at risk or experience harm.

While our current outcome measurement system is still new and being refined, our measurement processes in countries as varied as Honduras, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and the Gambia have netted some important learnings:

- We learned that we must define more precisely **what makes a community-based child protection mechanism 'functional.'** ChildFund is bringing best-practice definitions of what makes for a strong, functional, child protection mechanism, both to our community engagement and to our outcome measurement. An important element of this definition is an established link, through referral pathways, between community-based bodies and formal statutory services with child protection functions and mandates. As a systems approach to child protection indicates, all parts of a system must be linked and cooperating if they are to be effective.
- We learned that any measurement of—and indeed any programming for—child protection must begin with careful discussion and negotiation that leads to **a collective understanding of what constitutes child harm.** Discussion by staff (our own and our local partners') and community members must encompass accepted, commonly practiced behaviors, linked to child rearing, socialization and gender norms, that may be harmful to children though harm is not their intent. Without this investment in a collective definition of child harm and child protection, neither our programming nor our measurement will be effective.
- We learned that we must carefully balance the *collective* nature of reaching shared understanding against the need to **guard the privacy of individual children** who have experienced harms. We find that, universally, community members arrive at understanding child protection by

discussing and analyzing specific cases of harm. This, of course, can violate privacy and open the door to children's further risk. We are learning how to facilitate collective processes while upholding the principle of 'do no harm.'

- Finally, we learned that **a central challenge in child protection programming and measurement is about adults**. Adults care what other adults think, and strong social norms affect their decisions to confront violators and report violations—or not. They may be swayed by the (perceived or real) risks for reporting violations, such as the stigma that reported adults are likely to experience, and the conflict that is likely to ensue. ChildFund is paying close attention to the implications for our programming and measurement of child protection.

Learning: Measuring the Absence of Harm

ChildFund's work for child protection has advanced greatly in recent years, aided by our commitment to measuring and learning from what we do. But we cannot yet claim that our interventions or our learning are systematic and consistently applied. We advance toward this goal with clear understanding that, by its nature, child protection is extremely difficult to measure.

On the response side of child protection, measurement of violations after they have occurred has historically captured only a fraction of actual harms. The statistics on abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence are staggering, as we saw in [Chapter 1](#), yet every actor in the child protection realm agrees that most violations go unreported, unaddressed and undetected by current measurement systems.

On the prevention side, we are striving to measure and explain an absence of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, and to tease out the causal factors for that absence. We understand that a protective environment is composed of numerous factors and actors, linked in complex ways. Thus we also understand how difficult it is to demonstrate which elements, alone or in some combination, are responsible for an absence of child harm.

As we continue our transition to a systems approach to child protection, the way we think about our measurement and evidence is also shifting, becoming more nuanced and complex. Collectively, we—ChildFund and the numerous others working for child protection—are still learning how to do this. In the remainder of this report, we share some specific examples of how ChildFund is putting our learning to work and refining how we address social dynamics, norms, collective definitions and practices that have implications for both doing and measuring child protection.

A COMMITMENT TO CHILD PROTECTION

ChildFund's past, and our present-day purpose, position us to take on the challenges of effective child protection work at both depth and scale. Our new organizational strategy, beginning in 2017, centers on child protection: we look forward to continued, intensive learning, and application of what we and others have learned. We will more deliberately weave child protection into all we do; and help constituents build protective systems around children. Our **Impact Report 2015-2016** is a marker of the onset of this journey, and of our commitment to protection as inextricable from child development and wellbeing.

6 Our Free from Violence advocacy campaign amplified the children's voices all the way to the outermost layer of the child protection system: the United Nations. In September 2015, the United Nations presented its 17 *Sustainable Development Goals* to the world. Five of the 17 goals contain targets that deal specifically with child protection. The Sustainable Development Goals, in effect from 2017 through 2030, will be accompanied by a very public scorecard: each nation's progress will be measured and held up for comparison and critique. More so than the *Millennium Development Goals* that preceded them, the *Sustainable Development Goals* dig toward the root causes of poverty, inequality (especially between men and women) and failure to respect human rights, and they apply equally to all nations, poor and wealthy alike.

Children Speak Out about Harms and Protection

What do children have to say about child protection? Children are at the center of protection systems, but they are not merely the objects of others' attention. Children have the right to participate in decisions affecting their own lives,⁶ and ChildFund is committed to understanding harms as children experience them.

So, we ask them. Our own and our partners' staff routinely speak with children about their concerns, and consider their views as we design and implement our programs and country-level strategies. And in our global **Free from Violence** campaign⁷ during the lead-up to formulation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, ChildFund Alliance asked more than 16,000 children and youth in 50 countries about the problems that concern them most, including abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

Children's responses are clear: **protecting children from harm** is consistently among their most pressing concerns. Children want an end to violence in the home, bullying, child labor, child marriage, child trafficking, corporal punishment, female genital mutilation and recruitment of children by armed forces.

And the children we consult want to be part of the solution.

Look for children's own words, at the start and end of following chapters, about harms and protection: they speak of personal experiences, and of their hopes for the future.

I WANT A NEW WORLD WHERE CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.

15-year-old girl, Zambia

3

OUR WORK WITH INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN (0 – 5 YEARS)

SOMETIMES PARENTS DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY HAD A CHANCE TO BE FREE BECAUSE THEY HAD CHILDREN. I THINK THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS THEY MISTREAT CHILDREN.

10-year-old girl, Mexico

MY MOM IS TAKING DRUGS AND NOT COMING HOME. I WANT MY MOMMY HOME. I CRY FOR HER A LOT. SHE HURTS ME. DRUGS ARE BAD.

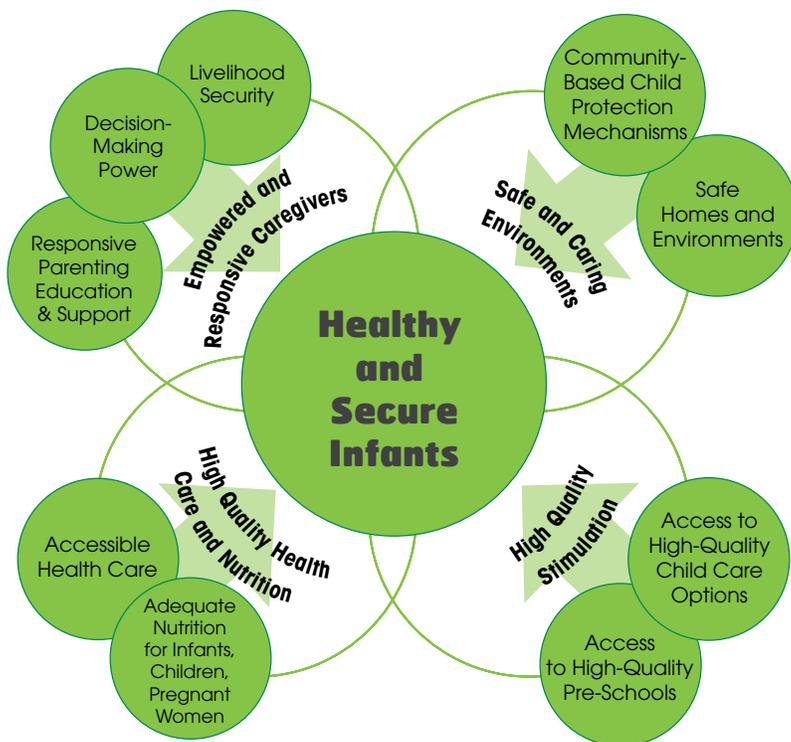
5-year-old girl, United States

Infants and very young children are vulnerable to the full range of child harms, typically at the hands of parents or others in the extended family and close social circle. Children may be neglected or abandoned, may witness violence in the home, or may be subject to traditional practices that cause trauma. The second-greatest number of all murders perpetrated against children is committed against those aged 0 to 4 years, almost always by someone in charge of their care.^{xxii} Some infants exhibit behaviors, such as incessant crying and poor sleeping habits, that correlate to a greater likelihood of being abused.

ChildFund's programming for infants and young children mediates risks by strengthening protective factors in infants' lives, centering on the crucial relationship between child and parent or caregiver. Protective, responsive parenting is a strong foundation for children's lifelong development and wellbeing. Parenting education,^{xxiii} structured on knowledge of children's developmental milestones and capacities, is known to prevent harm^{xxiv,xxv} and replace

harsh practices with nurturing interactions appropriate to a child's age and needs.^{xxvi} We build parents' and caregivers' knowledge of children's physical, mental and emotional development, and that certain practices (such as violent discipline) can hinder development. We help parents and caregivers adopt new skills, including resilience and coping mechanisms, and form supportive networks with their peers. ChildFund typically combines ongoing parenting support with home visits where children's protection, development and growth are monitored.

Figure 4: ChildFund's Program for Infants and Young Children Delineates Several Pathways toward the Outcome of *Healthy and Secure Infants*.



From this strong foundation in the parent-child bond, illustrated in this chapter's Ecuador story, our work with infants and children moves outward to encompass other layers of the protection system. ChildFund engages communities to achieve a shared understanding of, and act on, child protection matters in their midst (our Liberia and Ethiopia stories), helps parents advocate with government to fulfill its duties in child protection (Kenya), and recognizes children's need for family and community even in the midst of crisis (Sierra Leone and Liberia). Our Belarus story tells of ChildFund's deep engagement in forming all layers of a modern, state-wide protection system after the fall of the Soviet Union.

KENYA: BIRTH REGISTRATION IS A LIFELONG PASSPORT TO RIGHTS

More than 138 million children are born each year. Maybe. An accurate count of this most fundamental human event is made difficult because an estimated 51 million,^{xxvii} or up to 37 percent of all infants born in a given year, are not registered at birth.

Every child has the right to be registered.^{xxviii} A birth certificate is a lifelong passport for many other rights,^{xxix} including access to the education, health care and even legal systems. A child without certifiable proof of age may be barred from school, and cannot be protected *as a child* by the law. An unregistered orphan risks losing inherited home and possessions.^{xxx} As unregistered children age, they find they cannot legally marry, own certain types of property, access the banking system and formal labor market, vote, or even register their own children at birth.



In Kenya, ChildFund and our local partners worked with more than 160,000 children affected by HIV and AIDS⁷ in several coastal communities and Nairobi slums. Whether they were themselves infected, or their parents were infected, ill or had died of AIDS, these children constituted a substantial and vulnerable portion of the population. A large majority of them were rendered more vulnerable because they were not registered at birth.

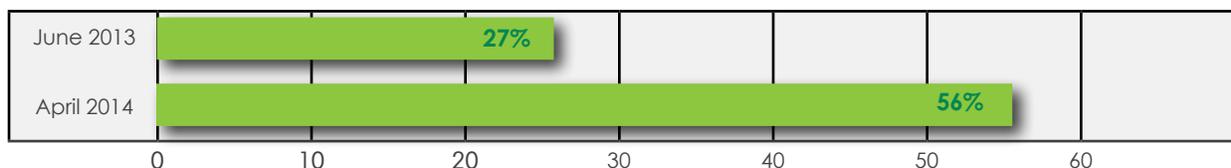
When parents and caregivers tried to register their children retroactively, they encountered obstacle after obstacle. Travel to the nearest registration office was costly and grueling; the office might be closed or the registrar might require additional documentation. Even the nominal fees for the certificate could be insurmountable. Given the competing claims on caregivers' time and meager resources, these hurdles could derail their attempts to obtain certification.

Yet when ChildFund approached the government to find resolution, authorities insisted that parents bore responsibility for initiating the registration process. This impasse was breached in the remote village of Njukini on Kenya's Indian Ocean coast. A group of concerned caregivers, local partner staff, and health and education workers, who had been striving for several years to register local children, brainstormed with ChildFund, then approached the government with a specific proposition. The department responsible for registration agreed to travel to the communities, bringing officers and registration materials right to the people. These 'mobile registration centers,' supported by ChildFund, were a relief for overburdened caregivers, who were able to deal with paperwork in a fraction of the time and money it would otherwise take. The registrars returned to their offices to process the registrations, then traveled back to communities to present certificates in public ceremonies.

Several communities imitated the Njukini model, while others improvised to suit their needs. In coastal Dabasu, for instance, ChildFund's local partner brought registration forms to the community, then guided caregivers to fill the forms and collect supporting documentation. A designated team carried the applications to the nearest registration office where, as previously negotiated, more than 1,000 birth certificates were issued on the spot.

In coastal communities, the proportion of properly registered children aged 0 to 5 years more than doubled in less than a year. In all, ChildFund and our local partners helped over 77,000 vulnerable children—some infants, some as old as 14—obtain birth certificates and thus lifelong access to their civil rights (Figure 5).^{xxxi}

Figure 5: Proportion of Children 0-5 with Birth Certificates (Participating Communities, Kenya Coast Region)



ChildFund is now applying these interventions in all our projects for children aged 0 to 5 years in Kenya. And, because universal birth registration cannot be achieved without overhauling bureaucracy, we are advocating for policy change with county and national government actors at the outer layers of Kenya's child protection system.

7 Funded by USAID, AphiaPlus (2011-2015) was implemented via a consortium of organizations led by Pathfinder. ChildFund implemented one component of the project.

LIBERIA: REACHING A SHARED DEFINITION OF CHILD HARMS



In all our child protection work, ChildFund starts from the premise that all societies strive to do what is best for their children. But we also know that definitions of what benefits a child and what harms a child can vary enormously from place to place. Communities have the need and the right to examine child harms in light of their own values and traditions. Coming to a shared definition of harms is both a prerequisite for making appropriate change, and a crucial result in itself.

How does ChildFund orchestrate achievement of this first, crucial result? In Liberia's Gbarpolu County, we and communities undertook a deeply participatory assessment⁸ of child protection needs. Over ten days, researchers used several methods to help residents identify and analyze where, when and how children were at risk of harm, and elicit information on existing protection mechanisms within the communities.^{xxxii}

The problems people identified most frequently were child labor, excessive physical punishment, and rape. Virtually everyone agreed that when an adult male had 'man business' with a 'small-small girl' (under the age of 5 years), he had committed rape. But the concept of violation became highly contested when it came to girls older than 5, and adolescents were assumed to be willing participants even if they reported coercion.

Responsibility for sexual assault is, of course, debated the world over along gender lines: women and girls are widely held accountable for the violence committed against them, while men and boys are assumed incapable of resisting the alleged provocation to rape. The essential concern for ChildFund was to prevent erroneous problem analysis from driving misguided solutions.

Our next steps in Liberia, therefore, were to facilitate several public forums in which community members gained and applied information on human rights, child rights, gender norms and their implications in rights violations. They learned about their own national laws surrounding child violations including sexual assault. After reaching a shared understanding of child harms—not quickly, and not without spirited debate—communities could confidently proceed to defining and enacting solutions. This shared understanding of harms against children, through participatory research, knowledge-building and debates, was our first essential result in these communities. It activated the chain in which increased awareness led to acceptance which led to collective action.

ECUADOR: CHILD PROTECTION IS INEXTRICABLE FROM CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Child protection and healthy child development are inextricably linked: a child who is subject to abuse, neglect or violence is less likely to achieve optimum physical, emotional and cognitive development. What then is the formula for promoting protection and development together? ChildFund's answer is a *responsive parenting model* that surrounds infants and very young children with confident, skilled parents and caregivers, who are themselves surrounded by supportive communities.

During the first months and years of life, a child's brain forms neural pathways at an astonishing pace, laying the foundations for all future learning, behavior and health.^{xxxiii} The strength or weakness of these foundations is mediated by both genes and environment: in the latter, a child's interaction with parents or caregivers is the single most important ingredient for healthy development.^{xxxiv} Extensive research in laboratory, academic and community settings confirms that knowledgeable and confident parents are more likely to provide appropriate child care and stimulation, and less likely to abuse their children.^{xxxv} It

8 With the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, Columbia University. In Liberia, ChildFund hosts the *Child Protection in Crisis Network*, of Columbia University's Program on Forced Migration and Health.

confirms that less violence in the home reduces children’s stress and maladaptive behavior.^{xxxvi} It confirms that building social capital—the social networks and relationships surrounding children and their families—is protective for children.^{xxxvii} Finally, research confirms that more equal gender norms^{xxxviii} and respect for children as rights-holders can lead to greater recognition of the human rights of *all* members of a community.^{xxxix}



ChildFund and our local partners in Ecuador have worked for three decades with hundreds of remote and poor communities to improve children’s developmental outcomes, and we have collaborated with the national government on its comprehensive framework for and services in support of children’s protection and wellbeing. Our *responsive parenting model* aims to link the national with the local by extending protection, health and other services into remote communities. It aims to link the local to the national by educating parents and others to demand and use those services. At the nexus of these national-local pathways are community groups, already active in the child protection system, who are ChildFund’s partners in delivering our responsive parenting model via trained volunteers called Mother Guides.

Our responsive parenting model (Figure 6) promotes child protection *directly*: parents and caregivers learn how to stimulate their children’s physical, cognitive and emotional development in a healthy way. They learn what hinders development, ranging from the overt (such as harsh corporal punishment, verbal abuse and toxic stress in the home) to the more subtle (such as failure to seek services for the child and lack of safe places to play in home and community).

Our responsive parenting model also promotes child protection *indirectly*: parenting education builds parents’ and caregivers’ sense of agency, which social scientists define as the inherent capacity of each person to gain awareness, skills and knowledge; to analyze and make their own decisions; and take self-directed actions. With greater agency, the parent or caregiver is more apt to seek and demand services for her child, more likely to take independent action to meet her child’s needs, less apt to tolerate discord and violence in the home, and generally more able to champion her child’s rights, including that to protection.

Figure 6: Responsive Parenting Model



In short, by investing in responsive parenting, ChildFund is *de facto* investing in child protection. In 2014, we pursued this notion of investment further, by hiring an independent evaluation firm⁹ to analyze our responsive parenting model via a method known as *social return on investment* (SROI). SROI can help us understand the relationship between the value of investments made in our parenting model and the *value of the social change that resulted from this model* according to those who experienced it.^{xi}

9 nef (New Economics Foundation) Consulting, Limited, of London, England.

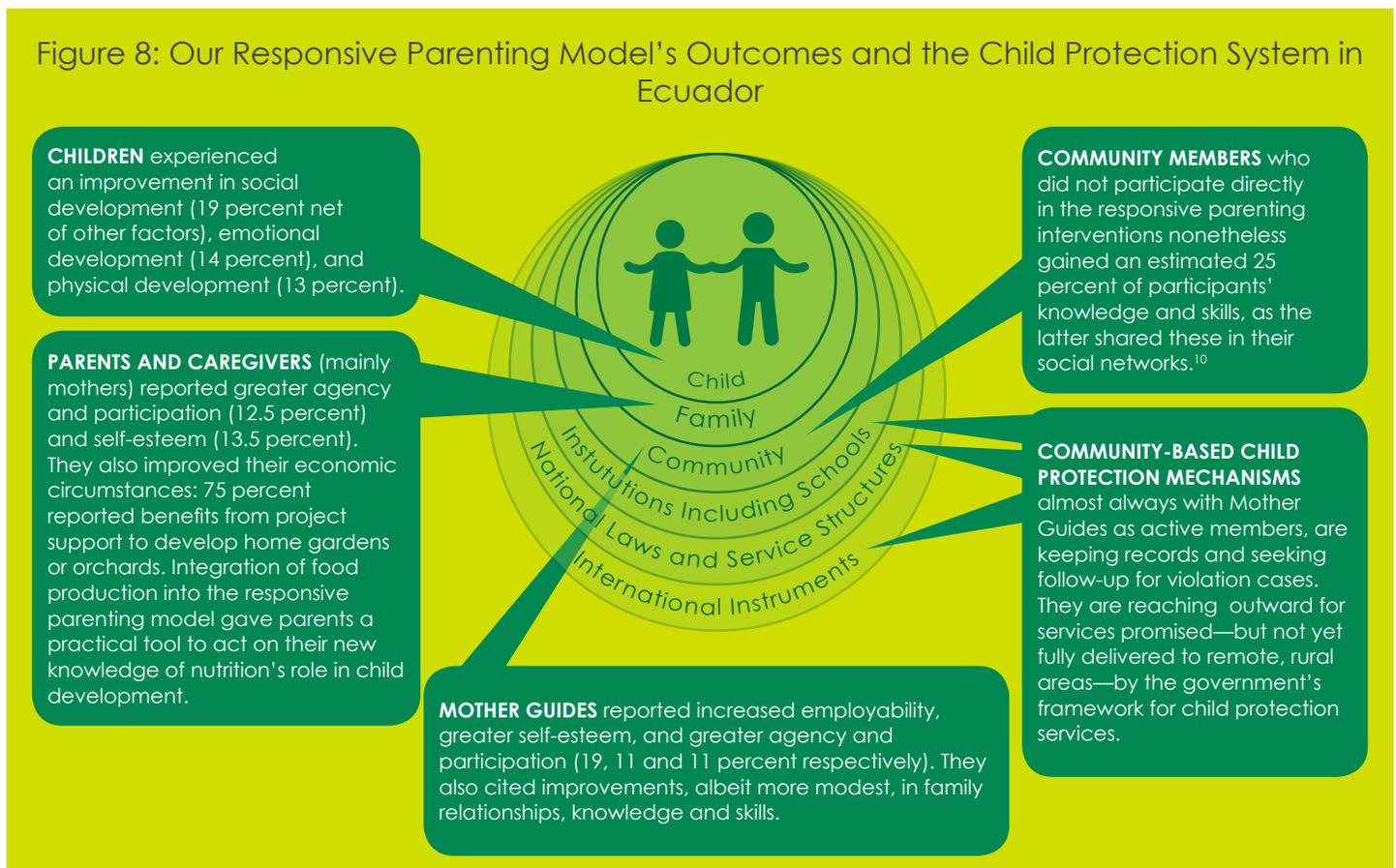
In Ecuador's Carchi Province, evaluators first examined the overall effectiveness of the model in delivering positive outcomes for children by empowering parents to be responsive caregivers, and by supporting Mother Guides and communities to provide a protective environment. In this first step, we were interested in the *proportion of positive social change directly attributed to the responsive parenting model*. The model is itself part of the protective environment for children in the communities we support; it engages with actors (such as parents, caregivers, community members) and factors (such as social services) of the child protection system. We wanted to learn how much positive change this particular model alone—net of the other actors and factors in the child protection system—is able to produce.

What evaluators found was clear evidence that the responsive parenting model is effective at producing positive outcomes for children and for other stakeholders – parents, communities – in the child protection system as shown in Figure 7. Figure 8 reprises the child protection system image that we introduced in Chapter 2, and specifies how the outcomes in Ecuador played out across multiple layers of the system.

Figure 7: Positive Impact (%) Attributable to ChildFund's Responsive Parenting Model, Net of Other Factors



Figure 8: Our Responsive Parenting Model's Outcomes and the Child Protection System in Ecuador



¹⁰ Only those families most in need participate directly in the responsive parenting model, but their communities benefit in several ways—and are in fact an intended end-beneficiary of the skills, knowledge and confidence gained by parents and Mother Guides. The community organizations that coordinate and facilitate the model see it as a way to increase the knowledge and skills of community members, and to promote child rights within all families. The organizations are embedded in tight-knit communities where knowledge is easily shared, and classes are held in central locations where all residents are aware of them.

In sum, ChildFund’s responsive parenting model proved effective in producing positive outcomes not only for children, but for the adults who surround children in the child protection system, and for the community surrounding adults. As designed, the bulk of benefits, at 38 percent, go to children (Figure 9). The benefits to parents and caregivers, at 35 percent, are nearly as important and there are, of course, important links between outcomes for the two groups.

As a second step in the SROI, evaluators calculated the costs of delivering the responsive parenting model in relation to the benefits experienced by children and others, as described above. The research elicited participants’ experiences of the social changes that have resulted from the model, and assigned monetary values to those changes. It compared the investment to the return, and forecast the value of likely change in the near future. The SROI evaluation’s findings, expressed in ratios, are shown in Figure 10.

We highlight ChildFund’s SROI research in Ecuador because it brought two worthy innovations to the field of return-on-investment analysis. Firstly, while similar analyses of early childhood development programs have calculated only economic benefits, the research in Ecuador added *social value* to the analysis. It accounted for the many valuable yet non-financial outcomes created by responsive parenting education and related early childhood interventions. Secondly, where other return-on-investment analyses have focused on the long-term, making assumptions about children’s health and productivity as they become adults decades in the future,^{xii} our SROI measured the benefits and positive social change that children, parents and caregivers are experiencing now, in the present.

Figure 9: Distribution of Value of Responsive Parenting Model (Net of Costs) among Stakeholders

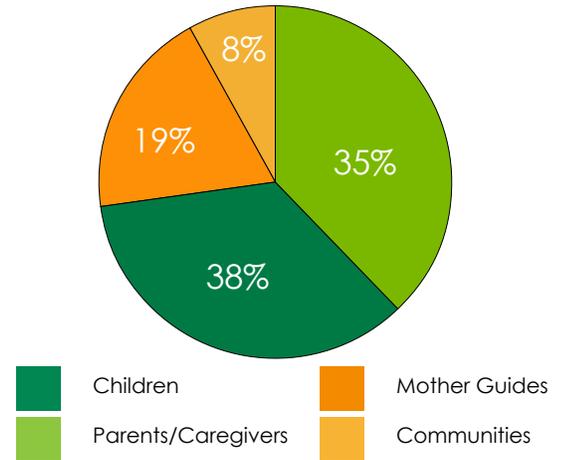


Figure 10: Cost-Benefit of Responsive Parenting Model

\$2.00 : \$1	The responsive parenting model has already netted two dollars' worth of social value for each dollar invested.
\$3.50 : \$1	The responsive parenting model is forecasted, over the coming two years, to generate about \$3.50 worth of social value for each dollar invested.

ChildFund continues our responsive parenting model in Ecuador, buoyed by this evidence of the model’s economic and social value for all key stakeholders. We also acknowledge several important learnings:

- We must be more deliberate about engaging men alongside women, fathers alongside mothers, Father Guides as well as Mother Guides. The evidence is clear:^{xiii} father-child relationships have deep and lasting impacts on children, and this is true whether the relationships are positive or negative (or indeed, wholly absent). Men’s participation and engagement as caregivers are linked to reduced toxic stress in the home, whether caused by aggression against children or domestic partners or both.^{xiii}
- Economic empowerment may be a key lever for child wellbeing and, by extension, child protection. The SROI examined the relationship between household income, child nutrition, and establishment of orchards or gardens. It found a strong correlation between orchard/garden development and improved child nutrition, showing that investments in food production are an effective way to improve nutrition. But it also clarified that households with the lowest incomes and without land would be unable to apply their new knowledge of nutrition. Some form of income generation (land-based or not) may be crucial for the effectiveness of the responsive parenting model.



BELARUS: THE STATE DOES NOT REPLACE THE FAMILY

ChildFund’s story in Belarus begins in social and economic conditions vastly different from Kenya, Liberia and Ecuador: those of a former soviet republic in the post-USSR era.

During its seven decades under the soviet wing, the Belarus government (like all states in the Soviet Union) promoted *institutionalization of children* as the dominant alternative to family care. While the family’s legal responsibility for children was codified by law, the state took the role of enforcer: it determined families’ suitability to raise children, and decided the fate of children whose families were deemed unable to provide care.^{xiv} The rise of the ‘medical model’ of child care—based on standards rather than

individual needs—helped entrench the state view that troubled families and children required ‘corrective’ approaches to achieve ‘normal’ behaviors. Government policies, programs and structures evolved to support institutionalization as the most commonly prescribed correction.

In the post-soviet transition, the Belarus economy declined sharply, as did spending on social services. Millions of families—45 percent of all households—lived in poverty by the mid-1990s.^{xv} Some parents coped by emigrating to find work; others turned to alcohol or drugs. Children were abandoned or left in the care of relatives.

Lacking any capacity to provide modern child protection services, the Belarusian government accelerated the institutionalization of neglected and abandoned children. Up to 90 percent of children arriving in state-run orphanages and boarding schools between the early 1990s and 2005 were ‘social orphans:’ one or both parents were alive, but had lost or relinquished custody to the state. The number of social or actual orphans more than doubled during this period, from about 12,500 to 28,000,^{xvi} and the population in institutions tripled to nearly 12,000 children.

This large-scale institutionalization occurred throughout the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, and research during the post-soviet era confirmed the devastating harms that institutionalization can cause to infants and children. Even in well-regulated facilities (and many were not), the dearth of social interaction stunted their emotional, intellectual and physical development. Standardized tests of cognition, language, social skills, motor skills, and adaptive behaviors found that infants and children raised in institutions across eastern Europe scored, on average, more than a standard deviation below their non-institutionalized peers. Many institutionalized children fared much worse,^{xvii} and the effects may be lifelong.

In 2005, ChildFund in Belarus embarked on a ten-year set of projects to deinstitutionalize children, and to replace institutionalization with a child protection structure that championed families as children’s best allies for healthy development.¹¹ We collaborated with communities, and upward with *oblast* (regional) and the national government—in other words, with all layers of the child protection system that we helped to build—to reconfigure services and policies that once defined struggling parents as the enemy of the child, and institutionalization as rescue.

ChildFund’s overarching aim was to re-orient government systems and community capacities to help families raise their children safely at home. In effect, we supported the creation of a modern child protection system in Belarus where none had existed. And, in collaboration with state agencies, citizens’ groups, professional networks and other child-focused organizations, we succeeded. Over ten years, our major achievements included:

11 This information was produced by ChildFund Belarus through the “Community Services to Vulnerable Groups” USAID Cooperative Agreement Number: 121-A-00-05-00703-00

Restoring the family as the optimal environment for child-rearing

Building local child protection structures, and fostering their capacity to detect and assist families at risk, was a cornerstone of ChildFund’s work. We drew on global best practices to design a family-centered and community-based model of care,^{xviii} shifting from the uncoordinated work of various specialists to trained, *multidisciplinary teams* that make evidence-based decisions using objective measures of abuse and neglect. A *case management system* encompasses early detection and assessment, intensive rehabilitation for families whose children are temporarily removed, and tracking of children and parents over time. *Parenting skills courses* help mothers and fathers understand child development, gain coping skills, learn positive disciplinary approaches, and access resources such as substance abuse treatment. A *home visiting program* sees social workers helping families practice their new skills to provide a safe home environment. This intensive support for at-risk families contrasts sharply with the earlier, oppositional relationship between state and parents. A specialist in Belarus’ Ministry of Education reflected, “Ten years ago we went out to reprimand families. Now we go out to support them.”

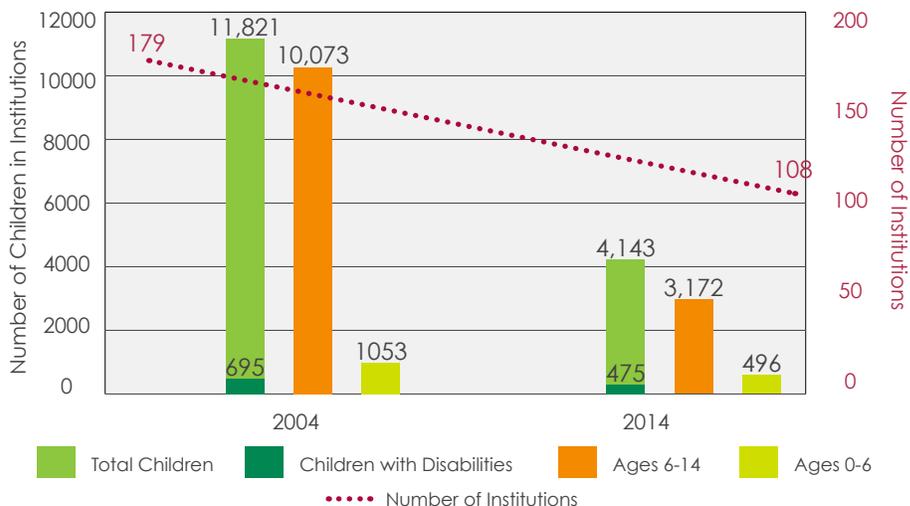
Establishing alternative forms of care where needed

For the rare cases when it is necessary to remove a child from parental care, ChildFund and partners developed *networks of foster and adoptive families*, and provided initial and ongoing training in parenting, protection and the basics of child development. Foster parents learned to support relationships between children and their biological families, in preparation for reunification wherever possible. Rosters of trained, emergency foster families ensure that no child aged 0 to 3 years is ever institutionalized, even overnight. Importantly, child protection workers learned to treat foster parents as members of the local protection team, thereby reinforcing the principle that child services are best positioned on a solid, community base.

Reformulating national policies and programs to align with global best practices in child protection

It was essential that the family- and community-based work described above be surrounded by supportive, sustainable national systems. Policy advocacy was, therefore, a major and continuous feature of our work in Belarus. Specifically, our tactic was to *build national capacity for quality child protection policy*. We trained and supported task forces of Belarusian child protection actors (from the arenas of civil society, justice, education, health, protection and more) to research and pinpoint policy needs, propose policy content, and ensure policy implementation at *oblast* and national levels. Belarus now has state-of-the-art standards for investigating abuse and neglect, rehabilitating at-risk families, managing cases, training foster and adoptive parents, and training protection workers to address domestic violence. Protection actors now truly own their child protection policies, and have the skills and experience to ensure that sound policy drives high-quality protection work—and vice-versa.

Figure 11: Number of Children in Institutions and Number of Institutions in Belarus, 2004 and 2014



Over our **ten-year program** (2005-2015) to support de-institutionalization and create a modern child protection system in Belarus...

...ChildFund and partners meaningfully served some **16,800 children** and **19,300 parents**, via **718 new or improved community-based services**, in **168 geographic locations**.

Of those we served...

...Almost **3,200** participated in **inclusive activities for children and youth with disabilities** (see [Chapter 5](#))

...About **3,000** were **youth making the transition** from institutions to independent adulthood (see [Chapter 5](#))

The impact of ChildFund’s decade-long child protection work in Belarus is dramatic. Between 2004 and 2014, the number of children in institutions nationally decreased by 65 percent, from about 11,800 to fewer than 4,150 (Figure 11). The number of functioning institutions dropped by 40 percent, from 179 to 108. UNICEF data showed that 36 percent of all communities in Belarus had stopped sending children to institutions by 2013. Of these, 80 percent were communities participating in ChildFund’s protection programming.^{xlix}

At the close of 2015, more than half (53 percent) of districts in five of Belarus’ six *oblasts* were practicing the full de-institutionalization model. All layers of the national child protection system, from the family to the community-based services and organizations to the *oblast* and national governments, were linked and cooperating for the protection of Belarusian children.

SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA: PROTECTING CHILDREN DURING THE EBOLA CRISIS

Child-Centered Spaces

For decades, and in contexts as varied as camps for the war-displaced in northern Uganda and tsunami-ravaged communities in Indonesia, our child-centered spaces are the protected site of organized activities that provide children the opportunity to play, learn new skills, and receive social support. They are often the site where children’s physical and emotional needs are assessed, specialized care is provided (by ChildFund or others), and referrals to other services are made. Child-centered spaces also serve as rallying points for parents and community members: by attending to their children’s wellbeing, they begin to rebuild their sense of common purpose.

Our research into the effects of child-centered spaces in Uganda and Indonesia (Figure 12), found that participating children gained in social wellbeing. They interacted more with their peers, and were less likely to remain solitary. The spaces offered them protection from abuse (including sexual) and from accidents. Participating children acquired important life skills, ranging from personal hygiene to basic numeracy. They reported less emotional distress such as worries and sadness, and fewer behavioral problems such as fighting and use of drugs and alcohol.



With the rarest exceptions, infants and children do best in the care of family. During West Africa’s 2014-15 Ebola crisis, the rarest exception prevailed: when parents were exposed to the Ebola virus, their infants and children had to be removed from home and quarantined. ChildFund managed Interim Care Centers for separated children in parts of Sierra Leone and Liberia while the epidemic raged.

When it comes to emergencies—epidemics, natural disasters, famines or war—ChildFund works with vulnerable communities to prevent crisis and recover from its effects. We respond to affected populations with food, clean water, basic supplies and other goods and services. But some of our core capabilities in emergency response lie in child protection, and a core intervention is to create *child-centered spaces* where children’s and youth’s safety, wellbeing, and recovery from the emotional effects of the disaster

are paramount (box). The child-centered spaces are designed to meet children’s requirements for protection, resilience, and regaining a sense of ‘normal.’

The 2014-2015 Ebola crisis in West Africa presented ChildFund unprecedented challenges in creating safe spaces for children affected by the devastating epidemic,¹² not least because the first requirement was to upend the standard goal of keeping families together. Our **Interim Care Centers** became temporary homes for children known to have been in contact with someone diagnosed with Ebola. Those who showed symptoms of the disease during the required, 21-day observation period were rushed to the nearest emergency treatment unit. And, while our centers served children of all ages, we knew that the psychological trauma to infants and the very young was likely to be the most acute, and that their care and protection were thus of particular importance.

¹² The U.S. Government’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and several private donors funded our Ebola response work in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In the Interim Care Centers, special staff worked to make life as safe and normal for children as was possible. We trained social workers, nurses and caregivers in infection prevention, safe isolation methods and rapid referrals should a child show signs of infection. These courageous workers surrounded the children with opportunities for structured play, psychosocial support and other normalizing activities—all while adhering to a ‘no touch’ protocol. We facilitated regular communications between children and their families, via text messaging and other means, to minimize the distress of separation.

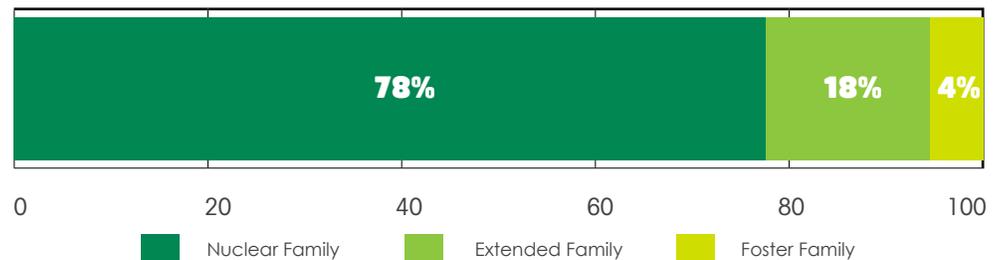
When children were cleared to return to their communities, they faced one of two scenarios (Figure 13). The fortunate ones went back to a healthy parent or parents. But others were newly orphaned, and needed new families and homes, ideally with their extended kin. ChildFund was deeply involved in locating and vetting kin and foster families; we also helped them create a safe environment and comforting routine, while counteracting any social stigma directed at Ebola-affected children. We provided all children and families with food, clothing and non-food necessities. In many cases, ChildFund added a cash grant that helped biological families recover from the loss of crops or earnings during the period of illness, and foster families care for one or more new members. Also important, we decommissioned the Interim Care Centers, thereby eliminating the possibility that any child would remain institutionalized.



ChildFund and partner staff made regular wellbeing visits to children after their return from our Interim Care Centers. And we trained adults to coordinate, via a specially designed SMS platform, with the larger, multi-sectoral body of services available to Ebola-affected communities, including ongoing support for orphaned or separated children.

All told, ChildFund’s Interim Care Centers served over 430 children in Liberia and Sierra Leone. (Of these, only eight developed Ebola; all eight died.) As both countries achieved ‘Ebola-free’ status, ChildFund joined citizens and the multi-organizational response structure in celebrating the end to the crisis.¹³

Figure 13: After Release from Interim Care Centers, Children Went to...(%, Liberia)



¹³ The Clinton Global Initiative awarded ChildFund International its Clinton Global Citizens Award for the work we describe here, and for our rapid action at the onset of the epidemic to airlift medical supplies to West Africa.

ETHIOPIA: A HARMFUL PRACTICE MAY BE DIMINISHING



All cultures socialize boys and girls differently to fit within prevailing gender norms. Female genital mutilation—a violent procedure with no medical justification—is perhaps the clearest example of how gendered socialization can itself constitute child harm. Genital mutilation, like other acts of gender-based violence, enforces a given society's normative expectations of females and males, and the unequal power relations between them.

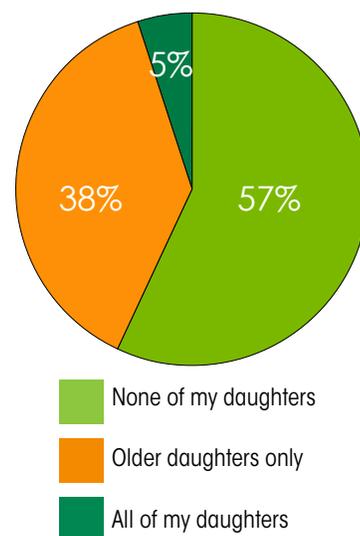
In the 29 African and Middle Eastern countries where female genital mutilation is concentrated, more than 125 million girls and women alive today have been cut.¹⁴ In Ethiopia, UNICEF reports that 74 percent of all girls and women had endured the procedure as of 2013, even though the government criminalized it in 2004. About two-thirds of all Ethiopian girls were mutilated between birth and 5 years.¹⁵

ChildFund addressed the practice of female genital mutilation, and other harmful traditions including child marriage and harsh physical punishment, in Ethiopia's Silte *woreda* (district).¹⁴ We and local partners held community dialogues with elders, religious leaders, fathers and mothers; we prepared messages and media on the damaging consequences of mutilation and other forms of gender-based violence. Influential social figures and religious leaders discussed and debated human rights and their application to children and women; many became core advocates against female circumcision. Volunteers were screened and trained to conduct home visits and counsel parents, and to monitor cases of harm. Religious leaders reached consensus and publicly confirmed that the Quran does not call for female circumcision, nor does it bar uncircumcised girls from religious rituals including marriage. All actors were supported by Ethiopia's legal framework which, as noted, had criminalized female genital mutilation a decade prior to our project. Over several months, participating communities developed a culture of open discussion on the once-taboo topic of mutilation, and mothers started to play a lead role in the community dialogues. Religious leaders, volunteers and parents forged linkages with concerned government structures including *woreda* administration, the district Women's Affairs Office, and the police.

When we surveyed parents at the close of our project in 2015 (Figure 14), 57 percent said that none of their daughters had undergone female genital mutilation. Another 38 percent stated that their older daughters had been cut, but that they would not subject their younger daughters to the procedure. Only five percent of respondents stated that they would continue to have all their daughters circumcised.

ChildFund is one of many actors—social, governmental, non-profit, religious—who have strived over several decades to eradicate the practice of female genital mutilation in Ethiopia and elsewhere. We thus claim contribution to, rather than sole credit for, the important outcomes in Silte. But we are optimistic that, by addressing and challenging the social norms that underlie this deep-rooted form of gender-based violence, communities and individuals may be changing their attitudes toward and practice of genital mutilation.

Figure 14: Parents' Response (%) to 'Which of Your Daughters Have Undergone Female Genital Mutilation?'



WE HAVE CONCERNS WHICH WE FEEL ARE IMPORTANT, PRIMARILY ON HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES. GIRLS ARE FACING GENITAL MUTILATION, EARLY MARRIAGE, ABDUCTION, AND MARRIAGE BY INHERITANCE. IT IS A ROOT CAUSE OF ALL PROBLEMS IN OUR LOCALITY AND HAS IMPACT ON EDUCATION, MATERNAL HEALTH, CHILD MORTALITY, HIV AND AIDS, GENDER EQUALITY AS WELL AS ON POVERTY AND HUNGER.

Children of Silte's Petition to Ethiopian Government and the United Nations

14 Our work was funded by Barnfonden.

4

OUR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND VERY YOUNG ADOLESCENTS (6 – 14 YEARS)

From the ages of 6 to 14 years, children enlarge their sphere from the home to the community—and especially to the school—while building competencies and skills ranging from literacy and numeracy, to participation and voice, identity and confidence.

As children grow and interact in this larger sphere, the harms they encounter change in type and degree. Those aged 5 to 9 years are more likely to endure violent punishment in the home than older children.ⁱⁱⁱ Sexual abuse by a relative or family friend is more likely. Schools are often the site of bullying or corporal punishment, and children may encounter sexual or physical harassment at or on their way to school—at the hands of peers, older children or adults. Conversely, the millions of primary and secondary school-age children who do not attend school miss the protective benefits that it can offer.^{iii,iv} In many places, children in this age range take on a greater burden of household and farm chores, and some are engaged in labor to earn money for the family.^{iv} During these years, peers and adults become more concerned about children’s alignment with gender norms, and enforce alignment through social pressure or violence.

ChildFund’s programming for children and very young adolescents centers on supporting their continued learning and healthy development—in the home, in the community and in the school—and fostering their growing capacity to claim and act for their own protection. We take interest in children’s acquisition of the knowledge, life skills and social competencies that will form a foundation for life-long learning, and clear a path for their safe transition through adolescence and onward to productive, fulfilling adult lives. Our extensive history of working for improved education is matched by our deep involvement with parents and communities to act for the wellbeing and protection of children in their midst.

In this chapter, we provide two examples of our protection work with schools and parents (Mexico, East Timor), and two more that describe the multiple layers of the child protection system involved in protecting children from child labor (the Philippines, India). We also update readers on our ongoing work in Uganda to promote and implement sound national policies on behalf of children.

PARENTS SHOULD TREAT CHILDREN'S BIG MISTAKES AS SMALL, AND THEIR SMALL MISTAKES AS NONE.

11-year-old boy, Vietnam

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT ALL GIRLS AND BOYS LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE AND THAT THE RIGHTS OF EVERYONE ARE RESPECTED, SO THEY CAN MAKE OUR COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE IN THE FUTURE.

12-year-old boy, Ecuador

Figure 15: ChildFund’s Program for Children and Very Young Adolescents Delineates Several Pathways toward the Outcome of *Educated and Confident Children*.



MEXICO: THE *GROWING WITHOUT VIOLENCE* TOOLKIT

In recent years, ChildFund in Mexico has turned an ever-brighter spotlight on the need to protect children from violence and exploitation of all kinds: domestic violence, bullying, interpersonal and gender-based violence, and trafficking. Adults and children alike are acutely conscious of violence in their lives. In 2013, when a ChildFund community diagnostic elicited children’s and adolescents’ worries and perceived problems, fully 69 percent of all spontaneous responses were about the violence they experienced in their schools and homes.

Our several child protection projects in Mexico have reached **55,500 children** since 2012 (Table 2). Today **38 of our own and our local partners’ staff** are fully trained and have earned professional certification in breaking the cycle of violence and helping victims heal; 28 staff attended trainings on the theoretical basis of helping children affected by violence.

ChildFund recently consolidated most of our child protection projects under a single *Growing without Violence* initiative that equips our 35 local partner organizations to address all types of violence affecting children. *Growing without Violence* is akin to a toolbox, which ChildFund and partners are filling with piloted innovations, documented processes, and effective approaches that we and others can replicate. As we create and test these tools, we are building our own and our partners’ abilities to help children, youth, parents and teachers

prevent violence, recover from violence, and establish relationships based on affection and respect. Our aim is a cohesive, systematic, violence prevention program in southern Mexico in which our multiple stakeholders use these tools effectively, across all stages of children’s lives. In 2015 alone, **almost 9,800 children benefited from protection activities** using the *Growing without Violence* toolkit; that number will grow rapidly as the initiative progresses.

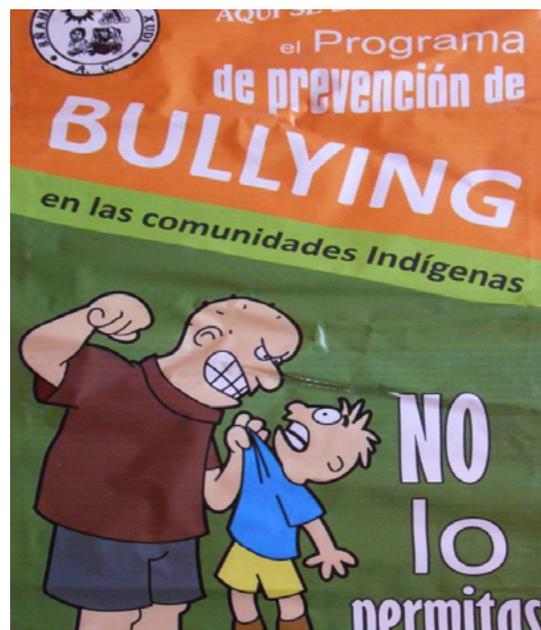
One tool in the kit deals with the common problem of bullying among schoolchildren. In Hidalgo State, our partner *Desarrollo Infantil Taxado* led **almost 1,000 children, parents and teachers**—three key layers of the child protection system—through creative, participatory steps to understand and act on bullying in their midst:

- **Diagnose.** Participants used several methods to dig more deeply into the extent and nature of bullying in their communities.
- **Learn.** Children’s workshops helped them understand what bullying is, why it happens, and what they can do when encountering it. Parents’ and teachers’ workshops helped them identify the signs of bullying, and apply non-violent means to resolve it. Teachers learned skills for the psychosocial support of children affected by violence.
- **Act.** Parents, teachers and students devised and implemented several practical (albeit small-scope) strategies for preventing and intervening in bullying: an anti-bullying mailbox where students could anonymously report problems, an ‘anger corner’ in each classroom equipped so that children could safely vent emotions, school vigilance committees, risk mapping and prevention campaigns.

Table 2: Number of Children Reached by Child Protection Projects, Mexico

2012	2013	2014	2015	GRAND TOTAL
Violence and Mistreatment Prevention 4,542	Violence and Mistreatment Prevention 4,493	Growing without Violence 8,650	Growing without Violence 9,799	
Safe and Secure Environments 5,554	Safe and Secure Environments 6,944	Other child protection projects 1,926	Other child protection projects 1,347	
Children’s Rights 6,975	Children’s Rights 5,278			
17,071	16,715	10,576	11,146	

Some double-counting may be present: some of the same children may have participated in projects in more than one year.



Desarrollo Infantil Taxado documented its research-to-action project, and published *Violence and Community: A Guide to Preventing, Detecting and Intervening in Cases of Bullying*.^M The guide allows others—our local partners, schools, and any other interested party—to replicate the work, and add their own learnings and innovations to the body of experience as they do so.

By dissecting the bullying problem, children gained a broader perspective on why some children bully, and began to develop skills to prevent and stand up to bullying. But it was parents and teachers who acquired what was arguably the most important insight: that *bullying among children was an outgrowth of the violence children saw enacted and normalized by adults in their homes and by society at large*. This insight points directly to the need to dig more deeply to the roots of violence, and to invest in more complex, longer-term action on the part of community members, social services providers, ChildFund and our local partners.

EAST TIMOR: CHILDREN SAY ‘NO’ TO HARSH DISCIPLINE

As we saw in our [Ecuador story](#), parents who gain knowledge of child development are generally eager to replace violent punishment with nonviolent guidance that promotes their children’s healthy growth. How can these ideas translate to other adults who play a disciplinary role in children’s lives?

In East Timor, discipline at home is physical and often violent. Corporal punishment in schools is likewise common, despite the Ministry of Education’s zero tolerance stance against it. ChildFund hastens to state that parents and teachers in East Timor are neither cruel nor callous. Rather, they are repeating the punishments they experienced as children, and that their culture indicates are appropriate for the management of children.

Our ongoing *Children against Violence* project, whose pilot or learning phase we describe here, engages primary school students in several rural communities to promote positive alternatives to violence as a disciplinary tool. The children do research on violence, and on child development. They raise awareness in their communities and schools of alternatives to violence, and they use drama and other arts to express their experiences and newfound knowledge. The students engage their peers and teachers on the topic of harsh corporal punishment.

At the same time, parents and teachers learn why and how positive discipline is more effective than physical punishment. In joint, participatory trainings, parents and teachers not only build their knowledge and skills, they pledge to collaborate for mutual support and accountability as they practice new disciplinary techniques.

At the close of its pilot phase, *Children against Violence* was able to detect change among the children, parents and teachers who participated (Figure 16). We found that parents were less likely to report using physical punishment, and more likely to state that such punishment is harmful to children. And children were transforming their skills and knowledge into the confidence to advocate against violent



discipline, at home and in school. As ChildFund expands the project to other communities, we do so with evidence that cultural shifts are underway and that more meaningful, deeper change is possible. At the same time, we are casting a critical eye on how we promote that change.

We know, of course, that child protection works best when more than one layer of the protective system is activated. In East Timor, we engaged parents and school staff in similar (and often the same) activities, reasoning that violence in the home and in the school were interrelated, and changes in one sphere could have a reciprocal effect on the other. While this reasoning is sound, our methodology—what we did, how we did it, and the time and effort we allotted—failed to differentiate between how change is best promoted in the public sphere in contrast to the private sphere.

In public, policy guides and can enforce the behavior of teachers and school staff. Behavioral change in schools can happen relatively quickly. By contrast, the disciplinary behavior of parents derives from personal experience and social norms, and behavior in the home is not (except in extreme cases) enforced by outside actors. Behavior change in the private realm occurs more slowly than in the public sphere. It is influenced by gains in individual skills and knowledge, supported by shifts in community awareness and, ultimately, sustained by changes in social norms and values. As the *Children against Violence* project moves forward in East Timor, ChildFund is striving to understand and differentiate our results in the public and private spheres, and use that finer understanding to create more effective programming for child protection.

THE PHILIPPINES: REALISTIC ALTERNATIVES TO CHILD LABOR



Definitions of appropriate child work vary across cultures and national legal frameworks. But the term ‘child labor’ connotes a form of exploitation: work that is harmful to children’s physical, mental, social and moral development, and that deprives them of their childhood, dignity and potential (including their opportunity to attend school).^{lvii} In its worst forms, child labor may involve exposure to severe hazard, enslavement, or sexual exploitation. Of the estimated 168 million children engaged in child labor around the globe,^{15, lviii} about 3 million are in the Philippines.^{lix}

Since 2003, ChildFund has worked in consortium to end child labor in the Philippines via a large-scale project whose current phase, discussed here, bears the name ABK.¹⁶ We lead implementation of activities in five of ABK’s 11 provinces, and we reach more than 21,000 children.

For participating households, the \$3 to \$4 that a child can earn daily in the sugarcane fields are a significant contribution to survival. When ABK began, most working children were 12 to 14 years old, though some were as young as five. A substantial proportion did hazardous work: applying fertilizers and insecticides, and burning plant matter. Typically, child laborers worked on weekends and school holidays. They attended school but struggled to balance homework, chores and labor, and had no time for leisure and play.

ChildFund knows that child labor is one outcome of a web of poverty-related problems. Poor parents put their children to labor because they lack livelihood alternatives. Governments fall short of supporting the social services and healthy economies that would give citizens better options. Employers benefit from cheap labor, and seek child workers for tasks that require small stature or nimble fingers. ABK illustrates that solving for child labor means addressing the interwoven problems that cause it. To that end, we work across several sectors and with multiple layers—families, communities, employers, local and national governments—to build a strong and connected system devoted to the protection of children, and to provide families realistic alternatives to sending their children to the sugar plantations.

To support **livelihoods**, ABK helps thousands of families diversify their income sources through savings and loan groups, communal gardens and skills training. We provide small livestock to hundreds of families, and successfully petitioned the Philippines government to fund improvements in agricultural production. To keep children in **school**, we provide school materials to the neediest families, teacher training, and a flexible curriculum and tutoring for students who fell behind while working in the sugarcane fields. And to change policies, practices and acceptance of child labor, ChildFund and consortium partners work at the outer layers of the child protection system by **advocating for protection**: we advocate with the national government to enforce its own policies on child labor, and with *barangay* (districts) to make and activate plans to prevent harms and promote children’s wellbeing. Child protection committees in each *barangay* now bring parents, government and educators together to monitor and act on protection breaches.

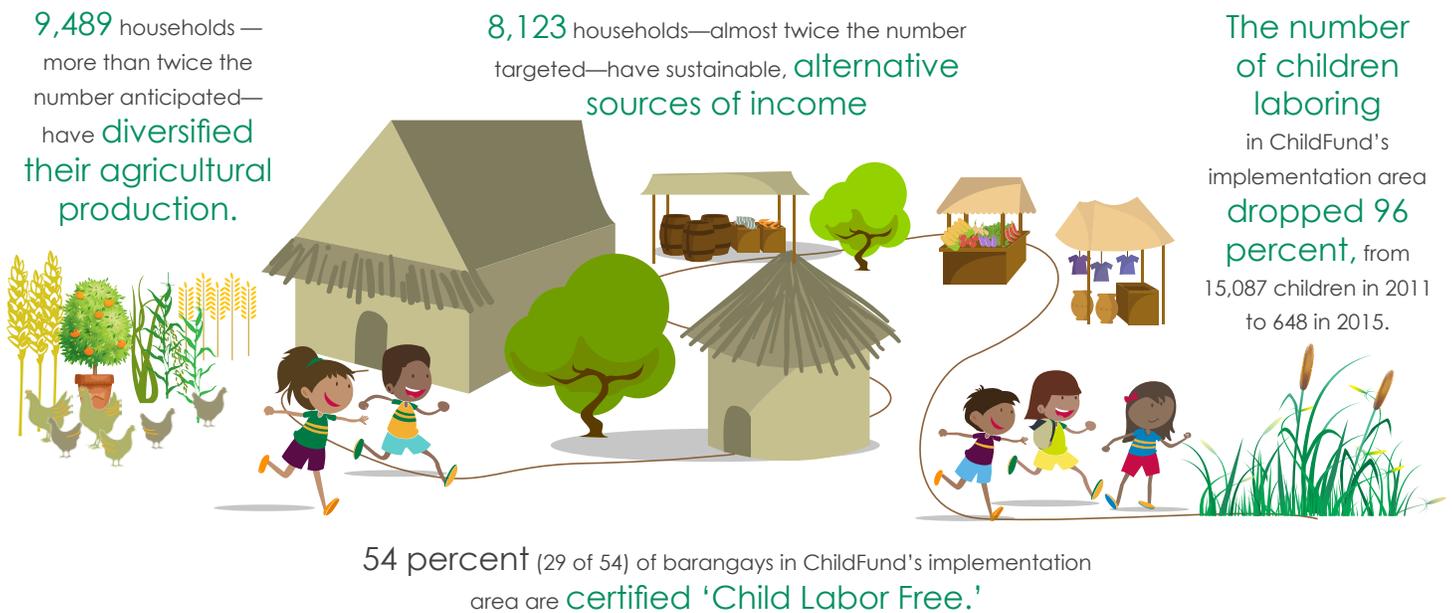
Importantly, ChildFund, parents, children and government actors negotiated with the sugar industry to honor voluntary codes of conduct on child labor: plantation owners agreed that, in accordance with national law, they will hire no children under 15, and will ensure that those aged 15 to 17 do not perform dangerous tasks.

Just months before the close of the ABK project, ChildFund finds substantial achievements in the five provinces where we implement activities:

15 Children aged 5 to 17 years; this figure from 2012 is a 22 percent drop from 2008 estimates of 215 million children.

16 Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, ABK is implemented via a consortium of organizations led by World Vision. Its current phase continues through June 2016. The acronym is drawn from *Pag-Aaral ng Bata para sa Kinabukasan*, or Education for Children’s Future.

Figure 17: Realistic Alternatives to Child Labor in the Sugarcane Fields



INDIA: INTERRUPTING TRAFFICKING FOR CHILD LABOR

Up to 28 million children in India are engaged in harmful labor,^{17, 18} and of this vast number, as many as 100,000 are trafficked each year from their homes in Rajasthan to cotton plantations in Gujarat. Middlemen, hired by plantation owners, lure boys and girls to the distant fields where the children live in subhuman conditions, are paid less than they are led to expect, and labor as many as 12 hours a day. Far from home, boys often suffer physical abuse, and girls sexual harassment and assault. In many cases, their parents do not know where their children have gone.

ChildFund's initial response¹⁸ emphasized knowledge and attitudinal change, on the premise that greater awareness of risks and consequences would lead children and parents—a substantial proportion of whom did not know that child labor was illegal—to say 'no' to middlemen. Over several years beginning in 2009, our widespread information campaigns reached some 20,000 people in 50 remote, impoverished villages. In parallel, we and our local partners built the capacities of existing groups—village-based child protection committees called 'vigilance squads,' police forces, social organizations, youth groups, children's clubs and more—to network with each other to detect, report and interrupt trafficking attempts by middlemen.



Our project was punctuated by many dramatic cases in which traffickers were identified and apprehended, and their child charges freed and accompanied home. The impact on these children was clear: they were saved, at least temporarily, from hard labor and exposure to abuse.

But broader and sustained impact on child labor requires that we do more. Moving towards a systems approach to protecting children, ChildFund is an active member of the *Bal Suraksha* network, which strives to end child labor across western India. Vigilance squads, meanwhile, are thinking more systematically about the futures of children in their villages and tribes. Our own and local partner staff plan to advocate with the government to improve and enforce its own child labor policies, and we have launched economic strengthening and skills training activities for parents and youth. All these activities and actors—and more—are needed to uproot the poverty and inequality that underlie the problem of child labor. ChildFund's initial steps of raising awareness, building knowledge and even arresting middlemen were important and necessary. But alone, they were insufficient to dismantle the social and economic structures that make child labor an all too common phenomenon in this part of the world.

17 Children aged 5 to 14 years; includes non-domestic and excessive domestic labor.

18 The work described here was funded in large part by the U.S. Department of State and BMZ Germany.

UGANDA: COMMITTED LEADERSHIP FOR CHILD PROTECTION



Our [2013 Impact Report](#) presented our child protection work in Uganda as among the most comprehensive in the ChildFund world. In northern districts, our deep and sensitive work with communities helped them prevent child harms even as they recovered from the traumas of war. Nationally, we collaborated with dozens of stakeholders to generate evidence-based advocacy for child protection policy and law. ChildFund continues our committed leadership of child protection in Uganda, as these recent achievements attest:

Establish a research and policy hub: Uganda's prestigious Makerere University opened the *Centre of Excellence for the Study of the African Child* in late 2014, with vital leadership and support from ChildFund. The mandate of this multidisciplinary research

center is to build evidence, knowledge and skills to influence policy, and improve programmatic capacity and practice, for the wellbeing of all African children.

Implement child care reform: ChildFund and several local partners are implementing the Ugandan government's recent reforms of the child care system.¹⁹ An immediate goal is to reintegrate the estimated 10,000 children living on the street, and the 57,000 children in alternative care institutions, with their own families or to place them in other family-based care. Alternative care institutions, including orphanages and boarding houses, proliferated in the 1990s and 2000s as many of Uganda's families became unable to care for their children during the AIDS epidemic and prolonged war. Many alternative care institutions were run with good intentions (and some were not), but all were unregulated and unstandardized.

Our first step was to organize participatory appraisals to examine why and how children leave or are expelled from their families: as we saw in [Liberia](#), communities must gain consensus on the nature of a problem if they are to play an effective role in its resolution. In Uganda, participants collected and analyzed data to find that the top risk factors for separation are poverty, loss of one or both parents, family violence, and lack of support for the child's education. Other common factors are poor parenting, alcohol and drug abuse, depression and early pregnancy.

This collective meaning-making formed a solid basis for appropriate action. ChildFund and our partners are now mobilizing community and local governments to help vulnerable families address these precipitating issues. We have established mechanisms for safe reintegration, and developed measures to prevent the separation of children from home in the first place. Finally, we are helping the government set up gatekeeping measures to deter institutions from enrolling more children in their care.

IF WE ARE LOVED BY PARENTS AND OTHERS, WE WILL DO NO HARM.

10-year-old boy, Sri Lanka

MY UNCLE TOOK ME TO A NEARBY VILLAGE TO ENROLL ME IN SCHOOL, BUT TO MY DISMAY HE SOLD ME THERE FOR SOME MONEY. I WORKED THERE FOR TWO YEARS BEFORE I FLED AWAY. MY UNCLE SAID, 'WHAT CAN I DO IF NO ONE CARES ABOUT YOU?'

15-year-old boy, India

THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF OUR FELLOW FILIPINO CHILDREN WHOSE RIGHTS CONTINUE TO BE VIOLATED. MANY OF US CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, DISCRIMINATION, AND ALL OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE. MORE CHILDREN REMAIN IN THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR.

Children of Cagayan de Oro Petition to Philippines Government and the United Nations

¹⁹ Through Advancing Partners & Communities (APC), a five-year cooperative agreement funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development under Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-12-00047, beginning in 2012

5 OUR WORK WITH YOUTH (15 - 24 YEARS)

ChildFund works with youth (aged 15 through 24) to help them become young adults who enjoy economic, physical and social wellbeing, and who bring lasting and positive change to their families and communities.

This age span, and the transitions it encompasses, are rife with opportunity but also with risk. Youth's rapid physical and emotional development parallels their expanding interactions with their widening worlds, and the growing responsibilities and expectations placed upon them.^{ixi} A successful journey to adulthood includes growth in self-sufficiency and agency, meaningful intergenerational relationships, engagement in purposeful learning, and preparation

for an adult occupation.^{ixii} Yet millions of youth lack avenues for positive development in these arenas, and may be more likely to turn instead to high-risk behavior: drug and alcohol use, irresponsible sexual activity, crime and violence.^{ixiii} Youth are often the targets of adult, peer and intimate partner violence, and may still be subject to abuse in the home. When adversities in early childhood are compounded by a lack of healthy opportunities in adolescence and early adulthood, youth may become depressed or engage in self-harm. They may be entrapped in child marriage, forced labor or trafficking. They may have early or unintended pregnancies, and be more likely to parent their future children poorly.

In our programming for youth, ChildFund continues to engage parents, schools, communities and other layers of the child protection system to meet youth's needs for guidance and protection. We strive to strengthen young people's competencies to make informed decisions for their own wellbeing, to advance their rights and assume responsibilities. We endeavor to build youth's capacities to act as agents of positive change for themselves, their families and their communities, in line with their right to participate in affairs affecting their own lives.^{ixiv} But ChildFund acknowledges that our work with youth forms the smallest portion of our programming. Here we find the largest gap between our ideal and our actual impact.

In this chapter, we discuss several cases in which ChildFund projects helped community-based child protection groups—with and without youth participation—prevent child marriage and child trafficking (Kenya and the Gambia). We return to ChildFund's extensive support to a child protection system in Belarus, with a focus this time on helping youth transition from institutional to independent living. Finally, we discuss ChildFund's work with children and youth with disabilities, promoting their right to protection and participation, including in decisions for their own wellbeing.

WHEN I WAS 14, MY FATHER TOLD ME A MAN WANTED TO MARRY ME. HE WAS MUCH OLDER, 30 OR MORE YEARS OLDER, AND ALREADY HAD A WIFE AND CHILD. MY FATHER SAID THE MAN WOULD PAY FOR MY SCHOOL AND, IF I SAID NO, I WOULD NO LONGER BE HIS DAUGHTER. IT WAS WITH THE SUPPORT OF MY TEACHERS THAT I FINISHED SIXTH GRADE, AND CHILDFUND SPONSORED ME TO GO INTO UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL. MY FATHER IS HAPPY BECAUSE HE COULDN'T PAY SCHOOL FEES FOR ME. HE IS A POOR MAN, NOT A BAD MAN, AND HE THOUGHT MARRYING ME OFF WAS THE ONLY WAY I COULD BE TAKEN CARE OF.

17-year-old girl, The Gambia

Figure 18: ChildFund's Program for Youth Delineates Several Pathways toward the Outcome of *Skilled and Involved Youth*.



KENYA: PROTECTING GIRLS' RIGHTS SYSTEMICALLY...AND CASE BY CASE

As noted throughout this report, ChildFund supports *community-based child protection mechanisms* or groups in many of the countries where we work. (The box below shows a typical group's mandate.) The form that such groups take differs by location, culture, religion and governance systems. But our work on several continents over many years makes clear, and is backed by research,^{lxv} that these mechanisms succeed when they are community-owned and community-driven, and when they are firmly linked to other actors and services in the child protection system.

A key task of any community-based child protection group is to break the silence that typically shrouds the topic of child harms. Talking about the harms that people inflict on children and youth, and how violated children react to harm: these are important outcomes in their own right, and essential steps towards preventing abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. When child harms remain in the shadows, it is easy for families, communities and authorities to believe that the problem is one of isolated cases, rather than to understand that violations are a part of the social and cultural context surrounding them.

Not in Our Community

The community-based child protection group plays a vital role in creating a culture that says, in effect, *violence against children is not tolerated here, and the rights of children are respected in accordance with our traditions and customs*. To create such a culture, the mandate of a protection group—the one here is from our work in Kenya—includes:

- raising awareness, publicly discussing the often-taboo topic of child harms.
- transforming or eliminating attitudes, traditions, customs, behavior and practices that constitute, or directly or indirectly promote, any form of abuse or violence against children.
- facilitating community dialogue on protection, monitoring and reporting violations against children.
- providing an outlet for parents and caregivers to discuss the stresses of raising children amid deep poverty.
- linking and referring to relevant services such as health and law enforcement.
- representing the community at the next highest (such as municipal, district or state) body that attends to child protection.

In Kenya, our *Jicho Pevu* (or 'watchful eye') project establishes child protection committees in deeply rural communities and in Nairobi's slums. We and our local partners build committees' capacities to recognize, prevent and respond to threats to children's wellbeing and protection. Together, we work towards a shared understanding of child harms, and of sociocultural factors that may support them. We strive to provide community-based child protection groups the skills to tackle child harms from the roots, rather than merely respond to the symptoms.

To help these groups monitor their own progress, ChildFund chose a methodology called *most significant change*,^{lxvi} which captures complex stories about shifts in participants' perceptions, behaviors and values over time. Indeed, the methodology is an apt extension of the committees' task of breaking silence and talking about child harms publicly and in the context of local norms and traditions. The story below is culled from dozens of recent reflections by members of the protection

committees—mothers, fathers, local authorities, teachers and more—about how they see their purpose, and what they find important in the work they do.

Despite Kenyan law prohibiting child marriage and mandating stiff penalties for perpetrators, underage girls are still forced into unwanted unions—a clear violation of their rights and a threat to their wellbeing. Some parents may view their daughters' marriages as pathways out of poverty, and exchange them for a dowry before loss of virginity diminishes their 'value.' Some traditional leaders concur that early pregnancy outside wedlock brings bad luck to the community, and marrying girls early saves face.

In a village in coastal Kilifi county, Kadzo's father started negotiations to sell off his daughter just before she took her primary national examinations. "He claimed to see no point in wasting time and money educating her as she will soon come home pregnant like other girls in the neighborhood," explained a member of the village child protection committee. A Jicho Pevu staff member observed that this committee and others like it "have been fundamental in increasing the reach and effectiveness of child protection in Kilifi," which has the greatest number of underage marriages recorded in Kenya. "In Kadzo's case," she said, "heavy community lobbying led the chief to summon the parties. He warned them not to repeat the offence. Kadzo's father returned the 15,000 shillings and mnazi (home brew) that the groom had advanced on the dowry." Kadzo went on to enroll in a girls' high school. "I am happy that I don't have to be somebody's wife right now. I want to work hard in school and become a lawyer so that I can help other girls like me and make my father proud," she said.

Where ChildFund's *Jicho Pevu* strives to support culturally rooted, community-managed responses to child harms including but not limited to child marriage, another ChildFund project in Kenya takes a narrower view. In Maasai communities, girls are committed to marriage while they are still *in utero*: in an unbreakable social contract or 'booking,' a father promises his unborn child, if a girl, to a man of his own generation in exchange for a dowry of cattle. The man takes possession of the 'booked' girl 10 to 15 years later, after she endures genital mutilation.

ChildFund and local partners introduced a scheme in which girls are 'booked' for education rather than marriage: our local partners make contracts with parents to send their girls to school. Our partners provide school fees and materials, and have even established boarding schools to ensure girls' access to and safety in school.

Thousands of Maasai girls have completed primary and even secondary schooling because ChildFund and our partners 'booked' them for education. By this measure, the approach is a success. But by the ideal of addressing root causes, success is less clear. The 'booking' scheme posits two indirect paths to deeper social change: first, communities might shift their ideas of girls' value as they see ChildFund invest in girls' schooling. Second, educated girls themselves might lead social change upon returning to their communities. More direct routes to social change will be to address, with parents and communities, the gender norms that define females as commodities to be sold and bought, and the role of poverty in maintaining the 'booking' tradition.

THE GAMBIA: A SYSTEM GROWS TO PREVENT CHILD TRAFFICKING AND OTHER HARMS

The Gambia in West Africa is known to be the site of child trafficking origin, transit and destination: girls and boys are trafficked for sexual exploitation, labor, forced begging and domestic servitude. In the Gambia's Western Province, ChildFund's PROTECT project,²⁰ like *Jicho Pevu* in Kenya, emphasized community-based groups as vital actors in preventing child trafficking.

PROTECT had many components, but its core was training communities, including youth, to understand the *factors that propelled child trafficking* and act to prevent it. When our work began, all stakeholders expected to uncover trafficking for child labor and sex tourism. Yet as community groups detected cases, they found most were for child marriage. This was unexpected, and we were concerned that we were missing the 'real' trafficking cases.

Illegal in the Gambia today, child marriage—forcing girls to marry men—still occurs, albeit more covertly than in earlier times. Because of ongoing cultural acceptance of child marriage in spite of its illegality, communities did not perceive it as trafficking. But as PROTECT stakeholders detected more and more child marriage cases, we collectively traced the commonalities between the two phenomena.

We found that those engaged in coercing children into marriage were using the channels and methods of child traffickers to achieve their aims: deception, lack of consent, negotiation, exchange of money. We examined the web of social issues that underlies the persistence of child marriage, and found many in common with child trafficking including poverty, power and gender norms. Participants saw that a single set of norms and behaviors had been deemed culturally acceptable when labeled 'traditional marriage,' but culturally unacceptable when labeled 'trafficking.' This was a breakthrough. It led to new levels of critical awareness, and brought the topic out of the shadows for public debate and counteraction, particularly by youth.

A total of 82 potential child trafficking cases were detected in the project area over 18 months (Figure 19). Thirty of these cases were further investigated as trafficking crimes. Of the 52 deemed non-trafficking violations (green segments, Figure 19), most involved girls who were being moved from their home communities to the villages of would-be husbands. (It was also common to find that pregnant girls were sequestered in relatives' villages until giving birth.)



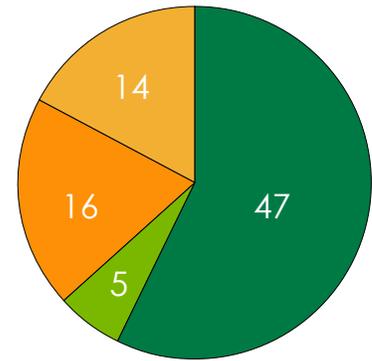
20 PROTECT (2011-2013) was funded by the US Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Grant S-SGTIP-11-GR-0038.

Community-based child protection groups detected more than three-quarters of the child protection cases (dark green and dark orange segments, Figure 19). And while only about one-third of cases went on to be investigated as trafficking offenses, all stakeholders gained a broader understanding of child protection matters and the need to prevent the common types of harm that befall children in the Gambia. The PROTECT project made way for new attitudes and actions on what constitutes and underlies child harms.

Several of the community-based child protection groups in the PROTECT area spontaneously helped other communities—20 in all—to form their own protection groups. And in one village, youth spontaneously formed their own group and collaborated with the adult group already in place. The youth cited their deep interest in protecting themselves and other children, and their unique ability, by virtue of their age, to communicate effectively with their peers.

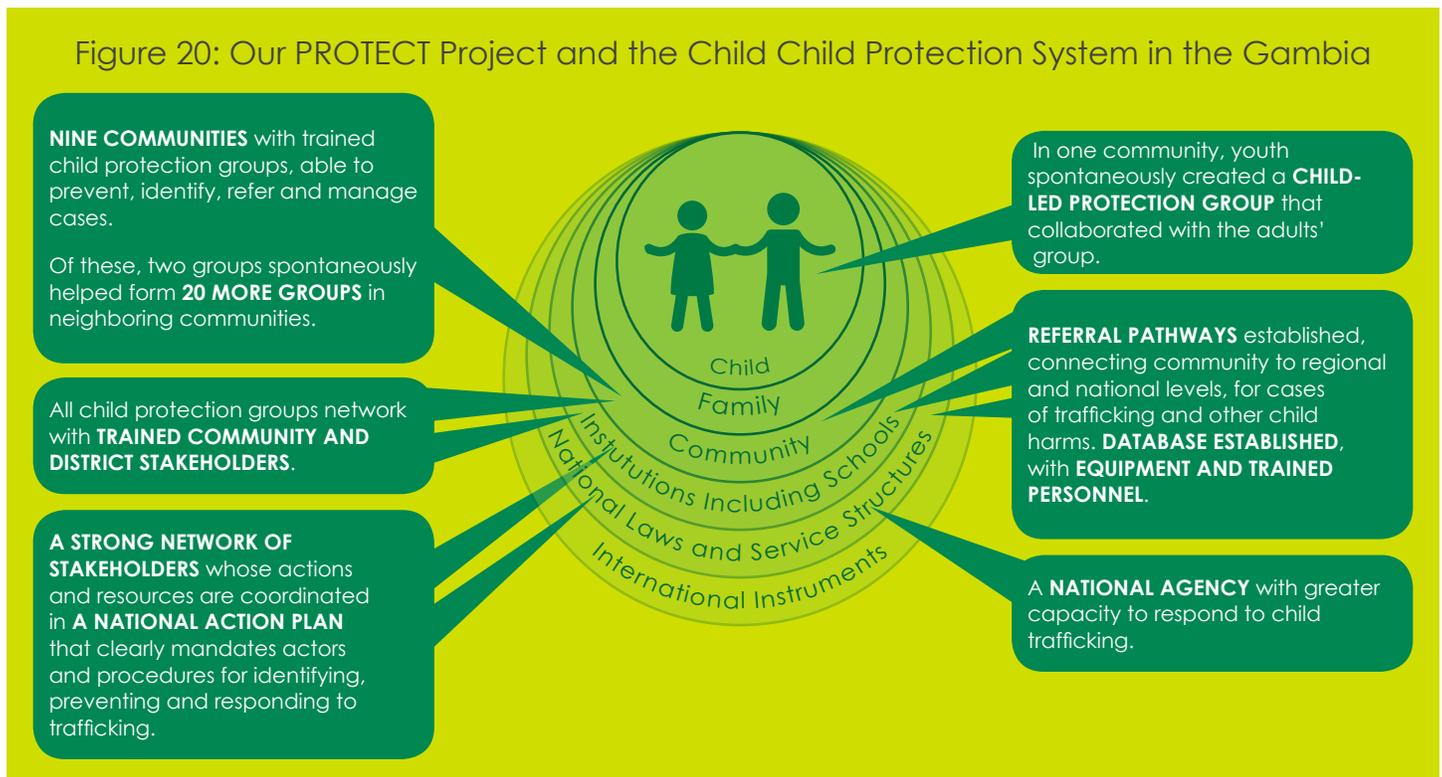
At the close of the project, PROTECT had equipped communities in the Gambia’s Western Province to prevent and address harms perpetrated against children, including but not limited to trafficking. These groups were linked, through clear referral pathways, to other actors in the child protection system, including the police force, the Department of Social Work, the Department of Justice and its National Agency against Trafficking in Persons. That latter organization, with ChildFund’s support, had far greater capacity to fulfill its mandate, and indeed had developed—with other child protection actors—a national plan to identify, prevent and respond to child trafficking and other protection violations. Figure 20 below again reprises our *child protection system illustration*, and shows PROTECT’s outcomes within and across layers of the system in the Gambia.

Figure 19: Trafficking or Not? Number of Protection Cases Identified by Actors in the PROTECT Project



- Not trafficking, identified by community
- Not trafficking, identified by police, local government or PROTECT
- Potential trafficking, identified by community
- Potential trafficking, identified by police, local government, PROTECT

Figure 20: Our PROTECT Project and the Child Child Protection System in the Gambia



BELARUS: THE PRECARIOUS TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

ChildFund's ten-year program in Belarus was devoted to formulating lasting alternatives to the institutionalization of children. As described in [Chapter 3](#), we helped build a protective system of families, community networks and government services, guided by evidence-based policy, whose aim was to prevent institutionalization and support safe home environments for child-rearing. For thousands of children already in institutions, the goal was reunification with family where possible, and fostering and adoption where not. But for institutionalized children on the brink of adulthood, specialized interventions were needed.

Among the almost 17,000 children whom ChildFund meaningfully assisted in our Belarusian de-institutionalization program from 2005 through 2015, at least **3,000 were youth** who participated in one or more activities to ease their **transition to independent adulthood.**

Child protection specialists know that the transition from care systems to independence can present a host of new risks to youth who may already be troubled. In Belarus, institutionalized children had been isolated from the daily routines of family and community, and had not developed self-care or basic life skills. A substantial proportion of youth leaving institutions ended up in criminal activity and/or substance abuse, because they had no knowledge of self-protection or how to deal with peer pressure.

Our project provided several services to older children: two services dealt with preparation for transition, and one with support in the community as transition occurred.

- **Social Apartments:** In these interim residences between institution and independence, youth learned practical living skills such as cooking, cleaning, and maintenance of personal and home hygiene.
- **Financial and Social Literacy:** ChildFund introduced the internationally acclaimed resource *Aflateen*^{lxvii} to the Belarus child protection system. Tailored for older adolescents, the program teaches financial skills accompanied by life skills—notably, analyzing and negotiating the world around them through prisms such as gender, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic status and religion.
- **Guest Parenting:** Linked to the foster parent networks in each community (and frequently involving the same adults), 'guest parents' hosted older children for weekends and holidays, often forging strong attachments and acting as a safe resource should the youth encounter difficulties in independent living.

For ChildFund, this investment in youth was also an investment in infants and children: many of the Belarusian youth we served will become parents soon enough. And as we have seen, parents who understand children's needs and rights, and who are skilled in matters of protection and parenting, apply these to raising their own sons and daughters.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: A HIGHER RISK OF HARM

At the core of ChildFund's purpose is helping deprived, excluded and vulnerable children and youth improve their lives. We know that many of those we seek to engage—especially those who are excluded and vulnerable—are difficult to identify, precisely because of their exclusion and vulnerability. In the development realm, we often speak of especially 'hidden' populations of children and youth who live outside the even marginal

Around the world, an estimated 200 million children have one or more disabilities. Up to 80 percent of them live in developing countries, and have little or no access to services or to social participation.^{lxviii} The Convention on the Rights of the Child clarifies that children shall not be discriminated against on the basis of disability, and provides that all children have equal rights to enjoy a full and decent life in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation.^{lxix}

protection afforded by the public eye, and who are often unknown to outer layers of the protection system. Married girls whose movement is restricted by husbands or in-laws, drug users and prostituted children, girls and boys hired as domestic labor: all live outside society's range of vision. Those who do



not align with their cultures' accepted gender norms, including LGBTQ²¹ children and youth, typically conceal whole aspects of their lives. All these hidden groups are at tremendous risk of violence, especially sexual and gender-based violence.

Children with disabilities may also be hidden, and they are likewise at heightened risk of harm. A study in several high-income countries found children with disabilities almost four times more likely to experience violence of any sort than children without disabilities. Those whose impairments were mental or intellectual, rather than physical, were at 4.6 times the risk of sexual violence.^{lxviii} Research with children with disabilities in five African countries found that 54 percent had experienced physical violence, and 77 percent reported routine humiliation and ridicule.

ChildFund promotes the rights of children with disabilities to participate in charting their own life course to the greatest extent possible in accordance with their capacities. Our presence in communities allows us to build awareness and skills among children, families and communities to uphold the rights of children and youth with disabilities, to prevent and eliminate discrimination, and to transform social norms that condone exclusion, stigmatization and harm. Here we discuss just a handful of our current projects with and for children and youth with disabilities.

In northern **Sri Lanka** communities recovering from years of conflict, ChildFund found that 30 percent of children with disabilities had been disabled by shooting, shelling or landmines. Almost half of school-aged children with disabilities were not in school, and nearly two-thirds of those old enough to work were unemployed. Today, we work with 330 children and youth with disabilities, their 330 primary caregivers, and members of their surrounding communities to enact community-based rehabilitation,

a suite of activities that strives for the full inclusion of those with disabilities in community life.²² Notably, our work takes place in a physical environment damaged by war, with a population scarred by violence and displacement, and with families who are living in the most extreme poverty. Using participatory methods and appropriate technology, we are building awareness of the children's needs and capacities; increasing their access to health services, schooling and social spaces; and improving accessibility in homes, schools and public.

ChildFund's EMBRACE project²³ engages 1,000 children in the **Philippines**, their parents and local service providers, to become effective advocates for the rights of children and youth with disabilities. In just the first year of activities, children with and without disabilities participated in the *Whistle for Protection* initiative that raises awareness of the risks that children with disabilities face, and equips them with skills and tools for self-protection—including the referenced whistle. (Explains a stakeholder from the Philippines Institute of Disability and Public Policy, "How can a person shout if he cannot speak? How can he express himself if he cannot hear?"^{lxix}) Children and their parents are gaining access to counseling and disability-management skills—many for the first time—and parents are collaborating with *barangay* officials to develop reporting and referral mechanisms for incidents of child abuse. A greater number of children and youth with disabilities is now attending school and, with other children and school staff, formulating anti-bullying activities to prevent the harassment so commonly experienced by children with disabilities. Next year, EMBRACE participants will host the first-ever national conference for the protection and inclusion of children with disabilities.

21 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer.

22 Funded via ChildFund Deutschland with support from the German government.

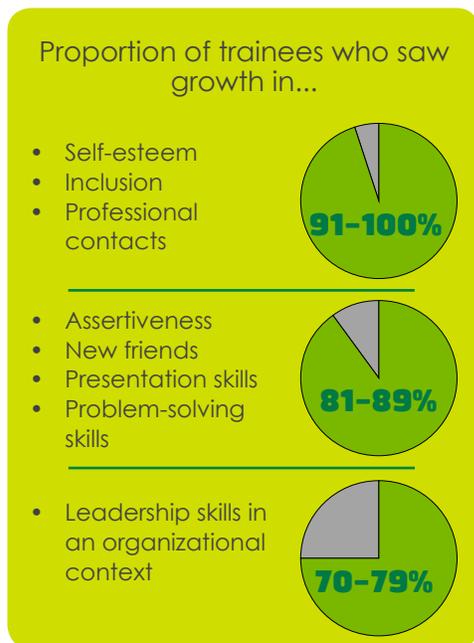
23 Funded via ChildFund Australia with support from the Australian government.

Our decade-long work in **Belarus** to replace institutionalization with family care and a modern child protection system did not overlook the needs and interests of children and youth with disabilities. ChildFund’s simultaneous engagement with multiple stakeholders worked successfully across all layers of the child protection system:

- **Organizations for People with Disabilities**, led by or focused on those with disabilities, benefited from our Leadership without Limitations training (Figure 21) whose goal was to improve the quality of services for people with disabilities. Topics included planning, project management, evaluation, fundraising and human resources management. Advocacy training led to initiatives to reduce discrimination, create barrier-free environments, form community councils on disability, and promote the rights of children with disabilities in communities.
- **Communities** were the site of new, accessible services for children and youth with disabilities when the above organizations used grants from ChildFund to implement self-help groups, training and job placement, and the promotion of independent living. For parents of children with disabilities, services included respite care and psychological support. Youth with disabilities implemented many of these initiatives themselves.
- At the **national** level, ChildFund supported a task force on advocacy to promote legislative changes, and the above-noted organizations formed The National Advocacy Alliance on Inclusion to amplify the influence of their civic action and to affect policy change.

Children and youth with disabilities have both the right and the need to steer their own life courses and to participate in the lives of their communities. They have the right and the need to live free of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. Their greater skills and knowledge, greater mobility and greater visibility, in accordance with their capacities, not only improve the quality of their lives, but increase their ability to self-protect and create stronger social protections around them.

Figure 21: ChildFund’s *Leadership without Limitations* Training for Belarusian Youth with Disabilities



MY BIG SISTER WAS RAPED BY OUR UNCLE. HE WAS DRUNK. THEY TOOK MY UNCLE AWAY TO PRISON. MY SISTER IS GIVING THE BABY AWAY. SHE IS VERY SAD. I AM SAD ABOUT THE BABY, TOO. THE BABY IS NOT EVEN HERE YET BUT IT HAS TO GO AWAY BECAUSE OF MY UNCLE.

10-year-old boy, United States

EVERY CHILD SHOULD BE EQUALLY TREATED REGARDLESS OF THEIR CASTE, RELIGION AND AGE BY ENDING GENDER DISCRIMINATION. CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT AFFECT THEM SHOULD BE ENSURED, AND CHILDREN SHOULD BE TREATED RESPECTFULLY.

Children of Sindupalchok’s Petition to the Nepal Government and the United Nations

6 CONCLUSION



When ChildFund was founded more than 75 years ago, we reached out to children where war and revolution had destroyed the systems and structures around them. In China, and later in Korea, this meant removing infants and children from the war-damaged ecosystems of their extended families, homes and communities. We placed them and cared for them in the most modern, efficient orphanages we could design.

In ensuing decades, ChildFund has gone on to help millions of children around the globe enjoy greater wellbeing—better health, early childhood development, education and much more—*within* their families and communities. We have invested in the vital relationship between the child and the caregivers in the family, and in the important role that community plays in child welfare. We have learned the tough lesson that gaps and failures in the environment surrounding a child can allow harms to befall that child, in the form of abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence. We have learned that without protection from harm, other advances for the child may be for naught. And we have learned, alongside the global child development community, that *comprehensive child protection must occur within a system* of interconnected, interdependent layers stretching outward from the child and family to the national government and global conventions—and inward again to the child.

Thus our child protection work begins where protection itself begins: with children and their families, and the communities where they live. We involve leaders, from the very local to the national, whose decisions affect children, and influence them to do the right thing. We promote policies and laws to codify social change and protective

practice, so that protection becomes systemic rather than subject to the choices of individuals. ChildFund’s age-tailored approach to child development helps us focus on children’s crucial developmental outcomes, and on their interactions with the protection system, as they grow.

Today, ChildFund helps **families** prevent harms: we provide responsive parenting education, promote positive discipline, and support learning environments. We guide **children and youth** to understand their rights, join together for positive change, and enact self-protection commensurate with their age-capacities. We work with **communities** to define protection problems and ideals, create community-based child protection mechanisms, and link them to services and resources. We engage **local leaders** to promote the protection of children and demand that their higher-ups do the same. We collaborate with **service providers** and their institutions to offer quality protective care. And ChildFund advocates with **national and global decision-makers** for sound policies, laws and procedures for child protection.

Child protection is not an endeavor separate from children’s healthy development. The two are meshed, and ChildFund’s programming must fully reflect this: gains in children’s wellbeing will be eroded if not supported by a coherent system of protection. By any measure, ChildFund has made considerable progress in infusing child protection and child rights into all our work with and on behalf of children. And we will continue to improve—in our programming, our partnerships and our advocacy—towards the end that comprehensive, coherent protection systems surround all children.

We—ChildFund—are part of the very child protection systems that we promote. We thus have a special opportunity to foster the linkages that connect the layers of protection systems, from the child through the family to the community, to institutions and national government, and all the way to the international stage of the United Nations. This opportunity derives from our experience hearing and channeling the voices of children. It arises from our bonds and our long history with local partners and communities. It comes from our ability to mobilize across multiple partners and communities, and to make national governments take notice. This opportunity derives from ChildFund's position as an international organization for child wellbeing, present in 28 countries: we can amplify problems and solutions, connect with like-minded organizations and groups, and make children's wellbeing *including child protection* a matter for global action.



Among the many successes highlighted in this Impact Report, ChildFund:

- **Builds on and supports protective factors in children's environment** (for example, responsive parenting in Ecuador).
- Makes sure to **work with formal and informal elements in the protection system** as an effective means of addressing the social and cultural norms related to child harms (for example, eliminating female genital mutilation in Ethiopia).
- **Helps formal structures** think creatively to fulfill their roles (for example, birth registration in Kenya).
- **Engages children and youth in accordance with their ability**, need and right to act for their own protection (for example, anti-trafficking activities in the Gambia).
- **Addresses underlying causes of harms** as an essential element of sustained solutions (for example, attention to economic and livelihoods opportunities for Filipino families as an alternative to sending their children to work).
- **Invests in a systems approach**, and interacts with multiple layers of the system, to promote real and sustainable change for child protection (for example, our decade-long work to create a modern protective system in Belarus).

Our local roots give us legitimacy, and our global branches give us stature to advocate for child rights and child protection. Both, however, give us great responsibility. ChildFund must continue to learn, to collaborate, to test—all to the end of knowing more and doing better.

Thus ChildFund embarks, in 2017, on a new organizational strategy that centers on child protection. Guided by this new strategy, we will continue our journey toward addressing root causes of child harms, even as we continue to hold ourselves accountable for the wellbeing of every child with whom we work. With communities, we will facilitate the often-difficult conversations about the deep causes of harms, including traditions and local notions of gender and power. We will engage multiple layers of the protective system, building capacities, skills and linkages, and we will strive for greater coherency and sophistication in our advocacy in the countries where we work. ChildFund will continue to monitor, speak out and focus international attention on the vital topic of child protection. Overarching all, ChildFund redoubles our commitment to measuring, learning from and applying effective child protection approaches in all we do: emergency response and non-emergency programming, in depth and at scale across the 28 countries where we work. We do this because protecting children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence is not optional. It is inextricable from their wellbeing and healthy development.

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CREDITS

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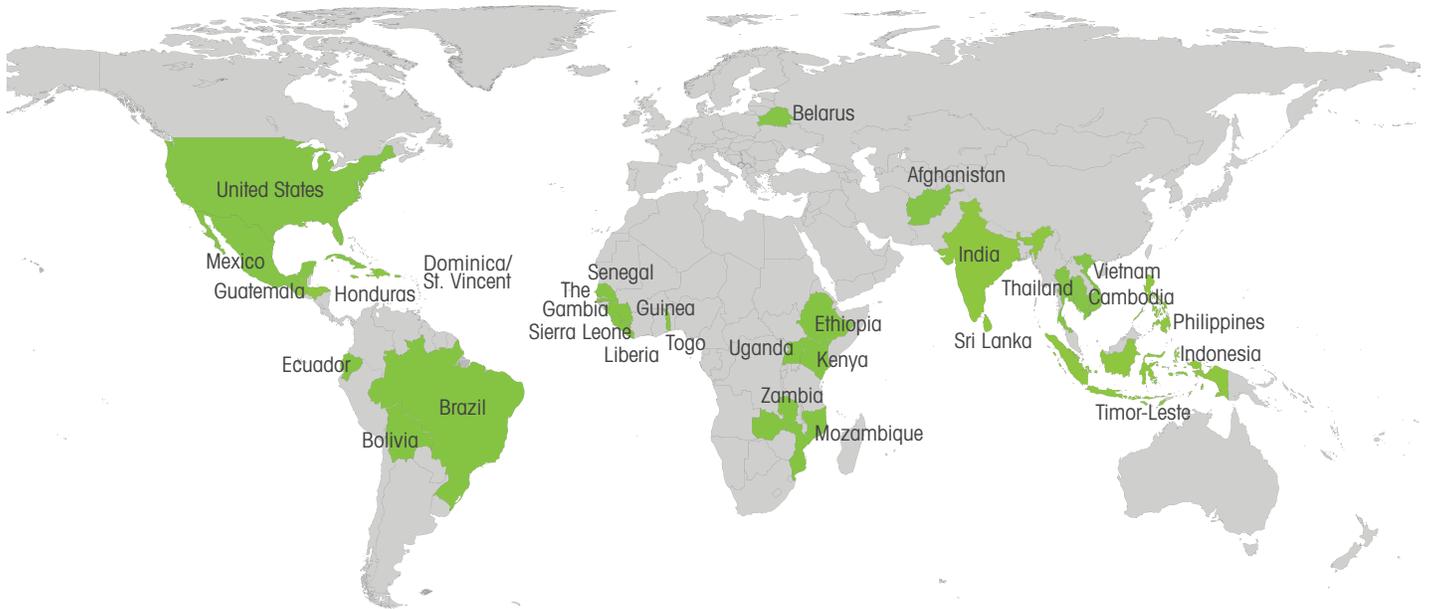
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WHERE CHILDFUND WORKS



- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|---------------|---------|
| Afghanistan | Cambodia | The Gambia | India | Mexico | Sierra Leone | Timor Leste | Vietnam |
| Belarus | Dominica | Guatemala | Indonesia | Mozambique | Sri Lanka | Togo | Zambia |
| Bolivia | Ecuador | Guinea | Kenya | Philippines | St. Vincent | Uganda | |
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