STRENGTHENING
FAMILIES

Save the Children programs in support of child care and parenting policies.

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Introduction

In all countries and regions, parents and families have an important role in providing care and protection for children and they are often supported in this role by the local communities as well as public and private services. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child governments are held to support parents and guardians in their child-rearing role through appropriate laws, policies and programs. This support is vital, particularly when children and families live in precarious situations and when they are exposed to or at risk of violence and separation. Policies and programs in support of children, parents and families are therefore essential for building effective child protection systems. This report explores the linkages between family support and child protection policies, from the perspective of Save the Children's programming and advocacy work across the world.

Whereas many direct and extended families provide an environment in which children are protected and develop their capacities, there are numerous risks to children's safety and well-being within families. They include violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, family dysfunction or separation. Family support policies hold an important potential to prevent violence within the family, unnecessary family separation and children's placement in residential care institutions.

Research has shown that violence against children within families is related to a diversity of causes and contributing factors that are often closely inter-linked. Parental violence against children may reflect limited knowledge about positive parenting and non-violent methods of disciplining children. It often occurs in non-child friendly or harmful living environments and where attitudes condone the use of physical and humiliating punishment. Social isolation and marginalisation of parents and families, poverty, violence between parents, substance abuse and mental health problems of parents all contribute to maintaining or exacerbating these conditions.[1] Social and economic policies and programs that support parents and strengthen families can make a difference to redress these causes and contributing factors and help protecting children from all forms of violence in the home.

Children are at risk of being separated from their parents for many different reasons, including family-internal and external ones. Separation may occur, for instance, due to violence within the family or due to poverty, which might result in the child's placement in alternative care or prompt a child to leave the family environment. Family separation is often a result of emergencies, armed conflict and climate change as well as migration as a survival strategy and in search of education or work. Families may decide that children should leave for reasons of kinship fostering and education. Children and parents are also separated as a result of the detention of parents or children, when a parent dies, or when children decide to leave their homes to pursue new opportunities elsewhere.[2]

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The global estimates of how many children are living in institutional care around the world differ.[3] The 2006 UN Study on Violence Against Children, for instance, estimated that eight million children were living in institutions globally the vast majority of whom have one or both parents alive.[4] UNICEF reported in 2010 that over 2 million children are in institutional care, although this figure was considered to not reflect the full reality due to under-reporting, the use of licensed and un-licensed institutions, and a general lack of reliable data in many countries.[5]

A solid body of research has evidenced that children risk being exposed to comparatively poor standards of care in residential institutions. Institutional care is likely to have a negative impact on the well-being and development of children and children living in institutions are often exposed to, or at risk of, violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. Children under three are especially vulnerable to suffering from permanent developmental damage, injuries and trauma when they lack family-based care. Children growing up in institutions are known to attain lower educational qualifications and they may be at a higher risk of remaining socially and emotionally underdeveloped and of experiencing stigmatisation.[6] In consultation with the regional organisation Council of Europe, children expressed concerns about insufficient preparation for their placement in institutions. Many children felt upset as the institutional care system had not succeeded to ensure continuity of care, to monitor the child's personal situation and to give due consideration to family ties.[7]

Considering children's right to protection and care from a socio-political development perspective, it is evident that family support policies and programs have a potential impact beyond the individual child and his or her family. Eurochild, for instance, promotes the understanding that "supporting and strengthening families most in need is crucial for tackling child poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty".[8] The Save the Children (SC) policy brief on strengthening and supporting families affirms that "[f]inancial and social support is ... vital to enable immediate and extended families to provide adequate care and protection for their children, and to avoid family separation and abandonment. Not only is it essential for the well-being and potential of millions of children, it is also vital for national economic and social development." [9]

Against this background, family support policies are relevant for governmental policy plans and strategies for national development. Yet, studies have shown that governments often attach less priority to child care within families than to alternative care in residential institutions, as reflected by decisions on budget allocation. Responsive and remediating interventions are often prioritised over proactive prevention and support measures although there is wide consensus that the latter will be more cost effective in the longer term.[10]

Since 2011, the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 have generated renewed commitment to the development of stronger family support policies. The UN General Assembly noted that there was a dearth of research

analysing family-oriented policies, especially in developing countries, and encouraged the sharing of good practice examples. It recommended that more attention be given to addressing family poverty and social exclusion, ensuring work-life balance, and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity.[11]

The policies and programs that make a difference in children's lives by affording protection in the home, supporting parents and strengthening families are cut across many different sectors and institutional responsibilities. They relate to the area of social services and social security, child protection services, health care, education, labour market and employment policies, and many more. The institutional responsibilities for developing and implementing parenting and family support policies are shared between government authorities and institutions at the central and local levels as well as public and private service providers. Communities also play a key role in supporting families and providing child care locally.[12] Considering the complexity of policies related to parenting, child protection and family support, their coordination and integration into broader policy strategies and planning processes is essential.

This report presents measures to strengthen and support families in policy and practice, in line with relevant international standards, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the guidance for its interpretation and implementation offered by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The report is based on a review of research reports, organisational strategies and other publications from international, regional and national organisations.

The general discussion of family support policies and programs is complemented by a documentation of selected programs and initiatives that Save the Children has supported and implemented with partners. The selection and documentation process involved consultations with SC offices and staff, including the Child Protection Initiative, and SC partners. It aimed to achieve a selection from diverse national and regional backgrounds and thematic areas. The study aims to document and not to evaluate the selected examples while existing evaluations were taken into account wherever possible. A glossary of key terms related to child care and protection is provided in the Annex.

In light of the discussion of international standards and the documentation of SC programming experience, the report concludes with selected recommendations for policy, advocacy and programming. The recommendations focus on measures for strengthening and supporting families within national child protection systems, in line with broader strategies for promoting social protection and children's rights.

International standards and their application for child care and parenting policies and programs

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

With regard to child care, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affords rights to children, defines parental responsibilities, and provides for legal obligations of governments.[13] Most of the rights under the Convention that refer to child protection, care and family relations are considered programmatic rights, which means that States parties have some flexibility to develop appropriate implementation measures and programs. Governments need to ensure that these rights are implemented progressively through appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures, and to the maximum extent of their available resources (CRC Article 4).

The child has the right to be cared for by his or her parents and not to be separated from the family, except where this would be in the best interests of the child. In situations where the child and one or both parents live apart, the CRC affords the right of the child to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents (CRC Articles 7, 8 and 9). The Convention affords these rights also specifically for transnational situations of family separation (CRC Article 10).

The primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of a child rests with both parents. Where the parents are not alive or not able to provide for their children, this responsibility is passed to a legal guardian (CRC Article 18). Parents or legal guardians are also responsible to provide for living conditions that are adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development, within their abilities and financial capacities (CRC Article 27).

Under the Convention, governments have a legal obligation to assist parents fulfilling their child care and child-rearing responsibilities. The articles setting out parental responsibilities provide for parallel obligations of the State to support parents through social and financial assistance, child care facilities and services, and other support programs (CRC Articles 18 and 27). Article 19, for instance, provides for the development of social support programs for children and their caregivers to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect of children. Article 26 establishes the child's right to benefit from social security. Under Article 37, the use of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against children is prohibited, which applies to all situations and contexts, including in the home, in schools and institutions.

The general principles of the Convention are of cross-cutting relevance for all matters concerning children. They include the right to non-discrimination, the best interests of the child as a primary consideration, the right to life, survival and development, and the right of the child to have his or her views heard and taken into account (see Glossary in the Annex). They are applicable in relation to all other articles of the Convention and need to be given due consideration by Government, Parliament and the judiciary, in all matters affecting children, including in law, policy, programs and procedures.[14]

Interpreting the rights afforded under the CRC for the context of child care: The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children

The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children[15] elaborate extensively on the CRC and interpret its provisions for the specific context of child care and family support policies. They offer comprehensive guidance for the 'continuum' of child care from monitoring children's safety and well-being within families, preventing family separation and supporting parents in caring for their children, through to the referral of children to alternative care, quality standards of care, and family reintegration.

The UN Guidelines emphasise the importance of preventing family separation and call upon States to "... pursue policies that ensure support for families in meeting their responsibilities towards the child and promote the right of the child to have a relationship with both parents. These policies should address the root causes of child abandonment, relinquishment and separation of the child from his/her family by ensuring, inter alia, the right to birth registration, access to adequate housing and to basic health, education and social welfare services, as well as by promoting measures to combat poverty, discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization, violence, child maltreatment and sexual abuse, and substance abuse." [16]

Social protection policies and programs are promoted essentially to empower families. They should provide for social assistance and family services such as training on positive parenting and conflict resolution skills, employment opportunities and income generation. Supportive social services such as child day care, substance abuse treatment, financial assistance and services for parents and children with disabilities are also important in that regard. Skills, attitudes, and tools for child care should be developed and promoted and should ideally be accessible at the community level, building upon the local resources and actively involving the parents and children.[17]

Preventing institutional care and promoting family reintegration

Alternative care for children is available in different forms and contexts, such as residential child care institutions and family based care in extended or foster families. Children are referred to alternative care not only when they have lost their parents but often due to economic issues, child protection concerns, or simply due to the opportunities for the child's development that institutions might offer, such as access to education.[18]

Children living in residential child care institutions are often affected by a range of negative factors that hinder their full development and well-being. Research on and with children living in institutional forms of alternative care revealed that children experience discrimination and may feel excluded. They miss the close personal relationship to a caregiver and attention for their personal needs, including physical and psychological needs. Children living in institutions have limited opportunities to learn about the roles of parents in traditional family life, and there are risks of violence and abuse within the institution. Children who have spent many years in child care institutions may also find it difficult to adjust to an independent life when they leave the institution.[19] Save the Children's programs in Georgia and Indonesia, for instance, have both pursued a systematic and comprehensive approach to supporting the national governments' child care reforms with a view to reducing the strong reliance on institutional care. These programs and their achievements are discussed in the second part of this report.

For the duration of alternative care arrangements, supporting the child and his or her family to remain in contact is vital to the child's emotional and psychological well-being, development and identity. The possibility for the child and parents to maintain contact and relations helps them to build or regain a trustful and caring relationship, which is a first step towards family reunification.

Parenting skills training for parents whose children are in institutional care [20]

Parenting training is considered a powerful tool to prevent violence, abuse and neglect of children in the home and to prevent the placement of children in alternative care.[21] Parents whose children are in alternative care may find it stigmatising, however, to participate in mainstream parenting courses, or it may be unsuitable due to the parents' specific situations and challenges, including social exclusion, substance abuse, or a history of child neglect or abuse. In 2009, the Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia conducted a review of programs for parents whose children are in out-of-home care in Australia, the UK and the U.S. It identified common elements among these initiatives that were considered to promise a positive impact on the participating parents: The provision of a supportive and non-judgemental atmosphere favoured the building of trust among the participants and helped them to open up and share their feelings and thoughts. The parents were involved actively in decisions about the topics of discussion and the rules for the group work and thus related

more actively to the group and the purpose of the training. Participating parents appreciated the neutral and non-judgemental behaviour of the professional group facilitators who created possibilities for parents to gradually take on more responsibility for their children, if and as appropriate.

Positive experiences have been made with programs that combine parenting skills training with supervised playgroups for parents and their children. In this context, the parents are encouraged to immediately apply the theoretical knowledge in practice. In addition to discussing the parent-child relationship, parenting training programs might also address the parents' own problems to make the courses more effective. This includes offering assistance to handle social problems, substance abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence and housing issues, as well as parents' feelings about the removal of their children and the assistance available from child protection and social services.

Parental leave and day care support for working parents

Support for parents to balance work and family life is a basic precondition to enable families to create a caring and protective family environment. It is particularly important for parents who are struggling to make a living and when both parents' incomes are needed to sustain the family. Traditionally, States tend to legislate primarily for granting maternity leave to mothers directly after child birth. More recent experience shows that flexible leave allowances over a longer period of time are useful. In addition, the involvement of fathers in child-rearing and care is beneficial in many regards, as evidenced in the program example from Latin America presented in the second part of the report.

The Northern European countries are particularly renowned for their parental leave and care policies. In Norway, working parents are entitled to a total of 42 weeks of paid parental leave, which can be shared between the parents. Since 1993, the law provides that 4 weeks of parental leave are for the exclusive use of the father. This policy has led to an increase of fathers taking their leave allowances.[22] In Sweden, parents have the possibility to take 16 months of parental leave, of which one is not transferrable between the parents. There are however disparities in how fathers make use of this option: fathers from higher income backgrounds are more likely to take parental leave than fathers with a lower income who may not be able to afford the 20% reduction of income during parental leave.[23]

The parental leave regulations in Sweden are flexible to accommodate the child's and parents' needs. The parental leave can be taken at any time before the child turns eight years old. In addition, parents are entitled to reduce their working hours by 25% until the youngest child enters school, and they can take up to 60 days off from work per child and year in order to care for their young children under 13 years of age when they are ill.[24] The law also guarantees day care for each child in order to create opportunities for combining work and family life. Pre-schooling is provided by professionals who hold a relevant university degree and with a

ratio of no more than five children per teacher. The fee for day care depends on the parents' income (1-3% with a maximum rate) and decreases for each sibling that parents give into day care. The day care policies in Sweden were evaluated positive, since they "… support parents' efforts to integrate work and family, recognise parents' needs to be with their children when they are ill or at special school days, and reduce the stress that so often tips families' emotional balance at the end of a long working day. By reducing family stress, they are likely to have an indirect impact on the amount of violence that children experience in their homes." [25] The parental leave program in Sweden is complemented by parental training before and after child birth and a helpline where parents can call anonymously and seek advice on how to care for and rear their children.[26]

The role of the private sector

The private sector's role in child protection and family support is increasingly being recognised at the national and international levels. Since 2010, the UN Global Compact[27] has collaborated with Save the Children and UNICEF to draft the Children's Rights and Business Principles Initiative (CRBPI), which were launched on 12 March 2012. Rooted in international standards, the Children's Rights and Business Principles are "… the first comprehensive set of principles to guide companies on the full range of actions they can take in the workplace, marketplace and community to respect and support children's rights." [28]

Beyond the direct responsibility to prevent and eliminate child labour, the Principles note that a commitment to children can help companies to recruit and maintain a motivated workforce and that support to employees in their roles as parents and caregivers is critical in this regard. Supporting workers – both women and men – in their roles as parents or caregivers implies that business "… pay particular attention [beyond legal compliance] to working conditions such as the payment of a living wage, length and flexibility of working hours, provisions for pregnant and breastfeeding women, need for parental leave, supporting migrant and seasonal workers with distance parenting, and facilitating access to good quality child care, health care and education for dependants." [29] The Principles promote a broad understanding of the 'best interests of the child' that includes measures to support and assist parents and caregivers in translating children's rights into practice.[30]

The Principles provide a basis on which national and international organisations can advocate with the public and private sector for the development, adoption and implementation of standards for corporate social responsibility that promote children's rights and support parents and families. An innovative example from China is presented in the second part of this report of how the private sector is involved in training migrant workers to become better distant parents.

Community-based care for children

Care and support services for children and families are primarily delivered at the local level and the formal and informal structures within communities offer critical support for parents

and families. The UN Guidelines on Alternative Care emphasise the importance of prioritising family- and community-based care for children without parental care.[31] The Better Care Network noted that "... research and decades of program experience throughout the world have shown that, when implemented well, [alternative] care provided by a family in a child's own community is generally the best option. The fact that family-based care options may not yet exist in a particular setting does not make institutional care an acceptable, long-term alternative. It simply means that better forms of care need to be developed." [32] Examples of community-based care include kinship care, foster care and supported child-headed households.[33]

Community-based care offers children the possibility to remain within a familiar environment with extended family members or other adults whom they know. These can help children to develop a sense of belonging and identity and to remain connected to their social support networks. Community-based care is likely to be more cost-effective and sustainable than institutional care.[34] In order to strengthen community-based care and family support, it is important to identify and activate the protective mechanisms that are inherent in the community, including the role that traditional and religious leaders may play, as well as prevailing customs and bye-laws for child protection and social support. Communities have therefore also an important role in supporting parents and caregivers in their child care and child-rearing roles, identifying violence within families and responding to it, and preventing family separation. Many of the SC program examples presented in the second part of the report involve the local communities in strengthening families and child care.

The role of communities needs to be understood also in light of the continued urbanisation trend, especially in developing countries. With the urbanisation comes a transition of traditional community-based child protection mechanisms and social support networks from the rural to the urban contexts. Urbanisation bears opportunities and risks for children and families at the same time and it is important that urban development policies take into account the special needs of children and families and offer targeted family support services to empower and protect them.[35]

Reaching the particularly marginalised and excluded

The most vulnerable children and families include migrant, refugee or asylum seeking families, families living in situations of undocumented migration, children and parents with disabilities, children and parents affected by HIV and AIDS or other serious illnesses, and families living in extreme socio-economic marginalisation or exclusion. Children who do not live in conventional family unions, such as child-headed households, or who have been separated from their families are particularly vulnerable. Ensuring that child protection and social protection measures reach these children and their direct or extended families remains a challenge.[36]

In many countries, cash transfers and other social schemes are available for all and yet children and families in need may not be aware of it. The access to services, especially in rural areas, may be limited by obstacles such as transportation costs, the need for valid identity documents and the hurdles of bureaucracy.[37] Although family support services are considered 'universal services' that all families are entitled to, special measures may still be needed to reach the most marginalised and excluded and to ensure equal access for all. In practice, 'progressive universalism' has been recommended as a strategy to ensure access for all while also providing special access support to the most vulnerable.[38]

Among the country and program case studies presented in the second part of this report, many include special services for the most marginalised and excluded. SC's program in Nigeria, for instance, offers a comprehensive set of community-based support for vulnerable children and families, including those affected by HIV and AIDS. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, SC has made a difference for children living and working on the streets by offering a drop-in centre, life skills training and counselling for children and their parents. The child care reform program supported by Save the Children in Georgia gives special attention to children and parents affected by disabilities. In South Africa, Save the Children supports a national alliance to facilitate and enhance the accessibility of social grants for families, especially in rural areas.

Family tracing in emergencies

For children who are separated or unaccompanied within their own country or abroad, family tracing is often one of the first steps that authorities take as part of a broader case assessment for the child. It is also a precondition for establishing whether it is in the best interest of the child to be reunified with his or her parents. International guidance on the timing and procedure of family tracing is available mainly for cases of children who were displaced due to emergencies or conflict, migrant children, including asylum seeking children and refugees, as well as children who were exposed to trafficking or other situations of exploitation away from their families. Tools, guidelines and recommendations on family tracing for children are available from the UNHCR, UNICEF, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, among others.[39]

The tracing process should be initiated as soon as possible and be conducted with due consideration to the best interests of the child. It aims primarily to assess whether the child has an appropriate caregiver or if there is a government agency in the child's place or country of origin that can receive the child and provide care. For the duration of the family tracing and assessment, the child should be placed in family-based or institutional care.[40] Research reveals that children who are separated during an emergency situation are often referred to institutional care as a standard response. There is a high risk of harm for children given up for adoption, before a thorough tracing process has been carried out. Careful case assessments, due consideration to the child's views and best interests, and a prioritisation of community-based care are therefore imperative also in emergency situations.[41]

Parenting policies within broader strategies for social protection and child protection

A broad set of coordinated policy measures is needed to offer an effective continuum of care in practice that prevents family separation, offers alternative care for children, and supports family reunification where this is in the best interests of the child. These measures cut across all relevant policy sectors that affect parents and children, including social and economic policies, child protection, health-care sector and education, labour market and migration policies, juvenile justice and the penal system, as well as government finance and budget allocation policies. The number of actors involved is likewise diverse; they include the children, parents and extended families themselves, communities and social support networks, religious and traditional leaders, government institutions and authorities at the local, regional and central levels, as well as the civil society, service providers, the private sector and the media.[42] Considering the diversity of the different sectors and actors involved, the integration of policies and strategies on parenting and family support, social protection, child rights and protection is essential.

In practice, child rights and protection are however rarely considered as a distinct component for the design, implementation and evaluation of national social protection mechanisms. Save the Children explored the linkages between child protection and social protection in more detail and concluded that the mutual support between child protection and social protection mechanisms should be strengthened. To achieve this, "... social protection programs should become much more sensitive to child protection issues by including elements which strengthen and support families and identify and respond to children at risk. Such services should not be viewed as an 'add-on' to social protection but rather an integral component which helps to ensure that social protection interventions reach their maximum impact."[43]

Save the Children affirms the importance of parenting policies for building national child protection systems: "A functioning child protection system is informed by children's views and experiences and strengthens families in the care and protection of their children. It connects child and family support mechanisms in the community with child-friendly services at all levels, regulated by quality standards and delivered by the government or accredited social agencies."[44] The relevance of parenting and family support services for national child protection systems has been recognised by other organisations as well and is promoted in strategies for policy and programming.

Relating family support to policies and programs on child protection

As Save the Children, other international and regional organisations leading in the area of child rights and protection promote the understanding that family support and child protection are inherently linked and mutually reinforcing. UNICEF addresses family support within its Child

Protection Strategy and the concept of a 'protective environment for children'. Supporting and strengthening families to reduce social exclusion, and to lower the risk of separation, violence and exploitation of children is one of the key measures for building national protection systems. The linkages between social protection and child protection are emphasised in this regard and one of the strategic objectives is to promote preventive child protection services through child-sensitive social protection measures.[45] The prevention and response to family separation is considered an important entry point for strengthening national child protection systems. Accordingly, UNICEF has observed a move towards more integrated and comprehensive approaches to family support and alternative care for children and is promoting this in its own programs.[46]

For the wide European region, the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2012-2015) notes that "service provision for children and their families does not always match their needs" and that certain groups of children in Europe still have limited access to services that are vital for their development.[47] The Strategy was developed as part of the program 'Building a Europe with and for Children' and integrates existing recommendations in the area of child care and family support policies.[48] The strategic objectives emphasise the importance of promoting the legal, social and economic protection of families, giving due consideration to the best interests of the child, the development of positive parenting policies, and the prohibition of physical punishment of children in all settings.[49] With regard to children in institutions, the Council of Europe commits to promoting the implementation of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children, while focusing on the empowerment of children in care institutions and the monitoring of their situation, as well as the deinstitutionalisation of children. It specifically calls for more attention to the special situation of children of imprisoned parents.[50]

SC's global strategies in the area of child protection include consistent reference to family support measures. The SC Child Protection Initiative (CPI) facilitates the development and coordinated implementation of these strategies.[51] The SC strategies on children without appropriate care and on child protection in emergencies both provide for measures to strengthen and support families in a development and emergency programming context. They relate specifically to the prevention of children's placement in alternative care, family reunification and the provision of quality care within and outside of families. The strategic objectives were developed as part of SC's overarching priority to strengthen national child protection systems. The two thematic child protection strategies are complemented by an advocacy strategy that supports the achievement of the thematic objectives through targeted and coordinated advocacy.[52] Together, these strategies inform and guide the development of annual plans and strategies in the area of child protection programming and advocacy in SC offices globally so that family support measures will be given due consideration.

Save the Children's support to parenting policies: National and regional program examples

The country examples presented in the following chapter reflect many of the strategic objectives and approaches defined by the SC Strategies, including research and analysis; awareness raising, advocacy and media campaigns; support to law and policy reform; development of quality standards and monitoring systems; prevention of family separation and children's institutionalisation; support to family tracing and reintegration; development of support services for parents and families; promoting the collaboration and coordination within and across all relevant sectors and supporting coalitions of children's organisations and institutions; and training and capacity building for social workers, SC staff, parents and other relevant target groups.[53] The selected program examples incorporate activities in several of these areas and many combine action in the social and child protection sector. They are strategic in that they contribute to strengthening child protection systems and creating linkages with the national social protection agendas.

The examples all contribute to supporting children and parents and to strengthening families. They have some important factors in common, namely that they are implemented in partnership with Governments and public authorities, non-state actors and civil society, and attach great priority to the coordination and cooperation of the different stakeholders across the relevant sectors. The programs and initiatives are rooted in the CRC and encourage the participation and active engagement of children, parents, extended families and communities. They are informed by evidence and research, often conducted directly by Save the Children, and inspired by the voices of the children concerned. They also attach priority to training and capacity building, systematic data collection, monitoring and evaluation. Due to these characteristics, the programs and initiatives presented hereunder reflect many elements of a systemic approach. They clearly illustrate the importance of designing parenting policies and programs within broader strategies for social protection and national child protection systems.

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

Protecting children living and working on the streets: Coordinated child and family support services for vulnerable children and families[54]

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Save the Children partnered with the Centre for Social Work of the Canton Sarajevo (CSW CS) to develop and implement a comprehensive program for the protection of vulnerable children and their parents. Entitled the 'Child Trafficking Response Program' (CTRP), the program responds specifically to the situation of children who are considered to be at risk of becoming 'street children' as well as children who are already living on the streets, partially or fully. Many of these children experience abuse or neglect at home and are growing up in dysfunctional families, but are not reached by the existing child protection and social welfare structures. Among the children that the CTRP program reaches out to, many are of Roma ethnicity. They are considered to be at a direct risk of exploitation and abuse, including in the context of trafficking. Save the Children and its partners designed the program to offer a broad continuum of prevention and protection services for children and their families as well as technical support and capacity building for service providers. The program is implemented by Save the Children Norway as part of a regional program in South-Eastern Europe.[55]

The CTRP program in Bosnia and Herzegovina was launched in the Canton of Sarajevo, where the number of children living or working on the streets is particularly high. Since many of these children left their home villages in remote and rural areas in order to come to Sarajevo, the program seeks to establish contacts also to the children's home communities.

Considering the diversity of the children's situations and the risks that they face, the CTRP program involves all relevant local authorities and service providers and seeks to facilitate the coordination of services for the children and their families. It has supported the development of a Protocol on Interagency Coordination and Cooperation, a legally binding framework for their collaboration that was signed by the relevant ministries of the Canton of Sarajevo. The Protocol regulates information exchange and strengthens the continuity of service provision across the provincial government departments and authorities. It provides for regular meetings and networking activities of all the relevant state and non-state agencies. By institutionalising the cooperation of all these different sectors and actors, the program has helped to develop a more stable and integrated policy framework for the service provision in the Canton of Sarajevo.[56]

A key component of the CTRP program is the drop-in centre operated in Sarajevo, which has a capacity to care for approximately 25 children per day.[57] The drop-in centre provides a safe place and a warm shelter in the winter and offers a range of services for the children. As

a particular added value, the centres seek to actively engage the children's parents and families and to facilitate family reunification wherever this is in the best interests of the child.

Identity documents: The centre supports children in obtaining identity documents and to register with the local authorities, in order to facilitate their access to social services.

Education: The centre enrols children into schools, supports their alphabetisation and seeks to prevent that children drop out of schools.

Healthcare: Children are offered basic healthcare and medical services and are registered in the health insurance scheme. Psycho-social counselling and substance abuse programs are also available.

Social security: The centre supports children and their parents in accessing social services, welfare benefits and social housing.

Family counselling: The drop-in centre staff organise joint meetings with the child and his or her parents, in order to engage the parents directly in the support program and to help the parents understand the risks that the child is facing. Through training on positive parenting skills and methods, the centre supports the child's parents in living up to their child care obligations. In addition, they contact the family's home community, facilitate the family reunification where appropriate and seek to mobilise community support for the family.

Life skills training: Children are trained in life skills through workshops, recreational and other participatory activities.

From the launch of the CTRP program in June 2009 up to December 2011, the drop-in centre provided services to a total of 459 children and 130 parents. In addition, the program trained child protection professionals, including the staff of the drop-in centre. The training focused on child rights and protection, gender issues and the prevention of gender discrimination, including specifically with regard to children and ethnic minorities. Professionals were also trained on the laws and policies that guide the centre's work and how to involve children and encourage their active participation.[58]

An evaluation of the program in 2011 revealed that the child protection professionals and other staff involved in the drop-in centre had increased their knowledge and capacity of how to assist the children and families concerned, and that they appreciated and applied this knowledge in their daily work. The boys and girls who had been assisted by the centre gave positive feedback on the services offered and demonstrated a stronger confidence in themselves and their future. Many of the children stated that they had learned to perceive the street as a negative environment that they wanted to get away from. They were eager to learn

a profession that would allow them to sustain themselves and to build their future. The boys and girls had acquired or strengthened their social skills and communication competence. Many had gained a better understanding of violence and abuse against children and they felt confident to turn to the drop-in centre to seek help and protection, as well as to the police or social services. Changes in attitudes were visible among some children and parents, to the effect that the majority of them were aware that children should not be involved in street begging and some children in fact stopped begging.[59]

The operation of the drop-in centre is being documented. A documentation strategy guides the systematic collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data concerning the beneficiaries of the centre and case management. The data collection and case documentation facilitate the continued monitoring of the centre's work, as well as the information exchange and coordination between different authorities and service providers.[60]

Since the children, parents, and the local authorities had all responded positively to the drop-in centre in Sarajevo, the model was subsequently adopted also in three other locations in the country.[61] In consultation with the Centre for Social Work and local NGOs, Save the Children initiated the development of quality standards for drop-in centres and the connection between drop-in centres in South Eastern Europe through a regional network. Defining minimum standards is considered a first step for promoting the sustainability of the model and its operation in all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond.

In order to communicate the achievements and lessons learned from the CTRP program, Save the Children Norway worked with a local film production studio to produce a documentary film on the drop-in centre and the children and families whom it had assisted thus far. The video is used for advocacy purposes to support information sharing and knowledge building on the scope and functions of the drop-in centres. The main target group are professionals and officials involved in child protection and social welfare as well as the general public. The video supports the national advocacy for making the drop-in centres sustainable and expanding their reach.[62]

China

Corporate social responsibility and children's rights: Supporting and training parents in the work place to become better distant parents[63]

In China, the Centre for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR) has developed a training program for parents who have migrated for work within the country and left their children behind. The training program provides basic information, knowledge and advice on how to be a better distant parent. It is innovative in that it reaches the parents at their work place and creates opportunities for companies to support the employees in their parenting roles.

The Centre was established upon an initiative of Save the Children Sweden (SCS) and through a Memorandum of Understanding on Corporate Social Responsibility signed by the Governments of China and Sweden. SCS led the preparatory work for the establishment of the Centre with the support from the Swedish Embassy, SC in China and the Boston Consulting Group. The preparations included a feasibility study and consultations to explore the specific context in China and the expectations from the corporate sector. The Centre's vision is to act as an advocate and a source of knowledge and information on child rights and corporate social responsibility. The Centre offers technical advice, research and analysis, consulting services, as well as training and capacity building activities. It functions as a meeting point for exchange and networking and supports its partners in attaining a sustainable business growth. The overall objective of the Centre is to assist the corporate sector to respect and promote children's rights, and it aspires to gradually expand its reach beyond China to the wider East Asian region. In addition to financial support from SCS, the Centre is funded through contributions from its strategic partners and income generated from the training, consultation and advisory services to clients. The development of the parenting training program was partly funded by European retail companies, which also facilitated the access to Chinese supplier factories for pre-studies and piloting.[64]

The Centre's parenting program aims to reach migrant workers who have left their children behind in their home towns or villages. It aims primarily to help distant parents understand how to improve their communication skills and bridge the distance to their children. A 'train the trainers' manual was developed that takes the trainees through a wide range of themes and scenarios of parent-child communication: "Each section starts with a story or a dialog that has happened in their daily life, inspiring the migrant parents to think about themselves and the relationships with their children. A series of activities and exercises then facilitates the parents to find a practical way to deal with their problems and how to communicate with their children."[65]

In a total of ten sections, the manual addresses the following themes:

Leaving Home is My Choice helps parents gaining a positive attitude of their family situation by recognising that they took an active decision to migrate for work possibly motivated by the wish to find better employment conditions elsewhere and to support their children at home.

Handling Conflicts in Relations deals with the relationships within the family and raises awareness of the importance to cherish these relations and to invest in them with care, respect and tolerance, empathy and love. This section also helps parents to understand their own role and responsibilities as a member of the family.

Children Have the Right to Know refers to the rights of the child to receive and impart information and to have their views heard and taken into account. The section discusses the evolving capacities of the child and the importance of involving children in decision making processes that affect them. Parents are encouraged to inform their child when they think about the option of labour migration and to listen to the child's views. Guidance on transparent decision making processes is offered to help parents make their child feel respected and considered in the process, and to grow trust in relationships within and beyond the family.

Respect Ourselves and Each Other applies participatory activities to train on methods of showing respect towards others and oneself and raises the parents' awareness of how important this is within the family relations and the community.

What Children Expect from Their Parents focuses on the needs and expectations of children at different ages and how their evolving personalities, feelings and thoughts are best considered in parent-to-child communication.

Build a Harmonious Family offers advice on the role of parents in creating and sustaining a positive and enabling family environment for their children. It also discusses the role of temporary guardians who care for the children during the parents' absence.

Effective Long Distance Communication presents practical advice on how to remain in close contact with the children through communication skills and techniques.

Understand the Emotions of Your Children helps parents to understand their children's emotions and the means and ways by which children express them. Parents are also guided in how to support their children to handle and cope with their emotions in a positive and constructive way.

Help Children to Foster a Sense of Responsibility informs parents about methods of how to guide and support their children to become responsible persons.

Advice for Parent-Child Communication concludes the manual with general guidance and advice for the skilful communication between parents and children.

The training manual is available in Chinese language and is used primarily as a resource book for trainers who meet the parents in the factory environment. The complete training can be taught in three full days and is composed in such a way that individual components can be selected for shorter training seminars targeted to the specific context and needs of the participants. The manual can also be used as a basis for discussions or consultations with individuals or groups.[66]

On the basis of the training manual, an information booklet for parents was developed entitled "Distant and yet close". The booklet is available in Chinese and is divided into three sections covering the period before leaving home, while being separated from the children, and the return. The booklet can be used in the training program or as standalone information for parents.

The training manual and the booklet were piloted and finalised based on the feedback received directly from migrant parents, which was mainly positive. They appreciated that the training was relevant to their situation and needs as distant parents. Most of the participants had never come into contact with parenting information or training before and had not talked about these issues to their colleagues in the factory. The training brought the working colleagues closer together and strengthened their relationship to the management, since many of them are in the same situation of being separated from their children. Following the pilot courses, the Centre started training a core group of ten trainers and a certification training course is planned for autumn 2012. The manual and booklet will be a core element of this training.

Georgia

Child care reform: Preventing institutionalisation and supporting family reintegration [67]

In Georgia, institutional care for children used to be a common form of alternative care, although many of the children who lived in residential institutions did have parents or extended families. In 2010, Save the Children, in collaboration with the Georgian Social Service Agency (SSA) conducted an assessment of the institutions, which revealed that the services they offered were often of limited quality. Individual case assessments, care planning and case reviews were not conducted consistently. As a result, children remained in institutions for extended periods of time and the chances for them to return to their immediate or extended families were minimal.

The assessment affirmed that it was often the weak family support services and children's limited access to schools that caused children's referral to child care institutions or prevented family reunification. Families were vulnerable to separation due to social and economic difficulties, although grants and poverty allowances were, to some extent, available. Parents were, however, not always aware of these possibilities to obtain support or how to apply for them, or they were lacking the documents required for the applications. Community-based family support services were available only to a limited extent and often inadequate. These factors all created obstacles for the deinstitutionalisation and family reunification of children, especially in the rural areas of Georgia that were generally less serviced. [68]

The Government of Georgia had launched a major reform of its child welfare system in 2008. The reform aimed to develop a system for the identification and reporting of child abuse cases and response. It was to support families who are struggling to meet their children's needs, including with regard to child protection and education. As a central aspect of the reform, the large residential child care institutions were to be closed and replaced through community-based forms of alternative care for children.

In 2009, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MLHSA) adopted the Children's Action Plan for the period 2008 to 2011, which was complemented by the Child Care Reform Directions for 2011 to 2012 developed jointly by the Ministry and the Government. Together, these policies commit the Government to address family and child poverty and the protection of children from abuse and neglect. A key objective is to support and accelerate the deinstitutionalisation of children and the creation of alternative care arrangements, by engaging the children's families and communities. Save the Children is supporting this reform process in collaboration with national and international partners. In June 2011, this collaboration was formalised through the Memorandum of Understanding on reintegration and prevention mechanisms to support the child welfare reform, which was signed by the MLHSA, SSA, UNICEF, the organisation Children of Georgia, and Save the Children. [69]

It was in this context that Save the Children launched the program 'Strengthening Child Care Services and Systems in Georgia'. Through this program, SC supports the Governments' efforts to prevent institutionalisation and to support children's reintegration with their families, by strengthening the capacity of the social welfare and child protection services to care for vulnerable children. The project aims to support the Social Services Agency to carry out a comprehensive case assessment, planning and management for each child in care, to monitor residential child care institutions and to provide durable solutions for children in institutional care through family reunification, guardianship or family-based alternative care. The project seeks to ensure that these services are available and accessible also for children with disabilities and their families. Outreach services are offered specifically to identify children with disabilities and to develop home-based care services to support their development and well-being.[70] The program comprises also primary prevention measures. Funding was provided for pre-crisis intervention and support services for families, including assistance with food and clothing supplies, household items and repair works.[71]

The SC program comprises a number of measures that aim to raise the chances for sustainable family reintegration. One component of the program focuses on the development of work skills for the older children in institutional care and their parents in order to help them integrating into the labour market and achieving economic stability. Save the Children supports the participation of selected children and parents in vocational training for instance, by mobilising tuition support and funding to cover transportation costs. Save the Children's support to vocational training was formalised in a Memorandum of Cooperation signed by the Ministry of Education and Science, SSA, UNICEF and SC in June 2011. The Memorandum foresees that a total of 100 children and parents who are beneficiaries of the family reintegration support receive vocational training.[72]

An important element of the SC child care program is its training component. Training is offered for the staff of residential institutions to carry out case assessments, to develop individual care plans for children and to monitor their implementation, including for children with disabilities. The positive results of the training prompted the Georgian Association of Social Workers to continue strengthening the supervision of social workers. Together with the organisations Every Child, Save the Children and UNICEF, the Association developed a formal supervision framework for social workers within the Social Services Agency, including a performance evaluation tool for social workers. This is one of the key achievements of the program visible in sustainable policy change. SC and Every Child hired additional 50 social workers to support SSA with the implementation of the reform. Thus not only the capacity of social workers providing services for children and family has been strengthened but also their number.[73]

Several social workers have supported the Social Service Agency in assessing residential child care institutions as a mobile team since 2011. The mobile team visited institutions and assessed the children's cases in order to issue recommendations for their care arrangements.

The case assessments aimed also to identify which children might be reunified with their families. The mobile social workers held two review sessions for each case together with SSA staff and consulted the responsible social workers for the cases under review. These assessments took into consideration the child's case documentation and face to face meetings, observations and consultations with the child and his or her family. The preliminary results of each case assessment were then discussed in more depth with the child's social worker in order to develop a recommendation on the child's possible family reunification or placement in foster care. Where the assessments resulted in a recommendation for family reintegration, SC staff reviewed the case again in order to determine the amount of in kind assistance for the family from the prevention and reintegration fund of its child care program. In the period of June to October 2011, a total of 177 cases were assessed and a recommendation for family reunification was issued for 120 of the children.[74]

A lesson learned from this comprehensive case review initiative suggests that the collaboration of mobile social workers and SSA staff was fruitful and facilitated successful case assessments and family reintegration. It will be critical to ensure that the involvement of the mobile social workers continues beyond the short-term case assessments so that they can follow through until the reintegration is completed and assessed as durable. In addition, community support for the children and families was also considered important to ensure sustainable reintegration.[75]

In order to consult with the children concerned, SC organised a two-day 'Effective Writing' workshop with 15 adolescents who had returned to their families. The boys and girls were consulted about their views and emotions about family reunification. The interactive workshop encouraged the children to express themselves through photography, writing, drawing or other creative work. Save the Children sought the participants' consent to publish their products in a booklet, which is used for public awareness raising campaigns to stimulate a debate on the opportunities and challenges of family reunification. Save the Children also consulted with some of the reintegrated children on the development of a social video clip to raise awareness about the importance of growing up in families.[76]

The outcomes of the workshop with the children were complemented by a small study that investigated the experiences of family reintegration with or without social welfare assistance and presented a comparative analysis. The study collected information – mainly qualitative data – on children who had been reunified with their parents from six child care institutions during the period of March to December 2011. While the case analysis revealed that reintegration was possible regardless of whether social welfare assistance was provided or not, it remained inconclusive as to the type of social welfare assistance that is needed to support and enable sustainable family reunification. More qualitative analysis is required in this regard. The findings reaffirm, however, that it is critical to consider the reintegration as a complex and multi-dimensional process that requires longer-term family support services and monitoring.[77]

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The SC program in Georgia has thus far contributed significantly to increasing the number of children reunified with their families. It has helped bringing about a change of mindset to the effect that the importance of family support measures is now better understood and acknowledged. The program has also supported the Government of Georgia in strengthening the capacity of social workers to provide services for children and families, as well as the capacity of day care centres to work with children with disabilities. The challenges that continue limiting the impact of the program relate mainly to the availability of resources, including at the community level, and specifically for children with disabilities. The support provided to families has not yet become sustainable to ensure that the services and support are provided with continuity and for longer terms.

Many things have happened in my life – good and bad. One of the happiest and most unforgettable days in my life was when I left the orphanage and returned to my beloved family.[78]

Indonesia

The development of National Standards of Care: Promoting the shift from residential child care to supporting family based care[79]

When the Committee on the Rights of the Child reviewed Indonesia's second periodic report on the implementation of the CRC in 2004, it issued a series of recommendations in relation to child care institutions and services. The Committee called upon the Government of Indonesia to assess the situation of children living in institutions and to develop policies and programs that support vulnerable families, prevent children's placement in residential institutions, and enable family reunification wherever possible. The Committee recommended also that national standards of care be developed.[80]

In follow-up to these recommendations, Save the Children worked closely with the Ministry of Social Affairs to develop and implement a 'Child Protection and Care Program'. SC's key partners in this process are the government departments at the central, provincial and district levels, UNICEF, as well as universities, NGOs, FBOs and childcare institutions.

The overall objective of the program and the related measures initiated by the Government of Indonesia was to promote a paradigm shift from the strong reliance on institutional care to the prioritisation of family based care for children. A milestone achievement in this process, the Government of Indonesia acknowledged that safeguarding children's rights implies ensuring children's access to family based and institutional care. The Government also committed to national law and policy reform in order to develop care and quality standards.[81] The process to achieve this paradigm shift in child care policies involved the following main steps:

- **Research to generate evidence and analysis to inform the reform process**
- **The development of a regulatory system for child care institutions**
- **Law and policy reform to strengthen family based care**
- **A reform of the social welfare sector**
- **Addressing child protection themes in the training curriculum for social workers**
- **Piloting good practice initiatives and models.**[82]

In preparation for the reform process, Save the Children rolled out a comprehensive research program to assess current standards of care in different types of institutions, including children's homes, boarding schools, and child protection institutions for children who had been exposed to violence, exploitation or abuse. The research program ventured to define in detail what constitutes quality in childcare in Indonesia, and provided evidence and analysis to inform

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the development of a law and policy framework for child protection and care. Save the Children implemented the research program partly in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF and conducted child-led research to solicit the views of children living in institutions.[83]

The research revealed that 90% of the children living in institutions had both parents alive and had been sent to the institutions primarily for the purpose of accessing education. Although most children remained in the institutions until they graduated from school, the staff of institutions demonstrated limited knowledge of child care and provided little direct care for the children. The study concluded with recommendations that called for a range of measures to strengthen child care in Indonesia, including the following: a) a stronger law and policy framework for the social protection of families and for family based alternative care; b) a national mechanism for data collection on children in alternative care; c) national standards for child care institutions; and d) the independent monitoring of these institutions.[84]

Informed by these findings, the Government of Indonesia embarked on a process to develop National Standards of Care. The National Standards were to regulate the provision of alternative care for children and the operation of child care centres and institutions. The objective of the National Standards is to promote children's rights to receive care in their families, to provide services to families in order to support them in their care giving role, to offer family-based forms of alternative care and to strengthen the Child Welfare Institutions and related state authorities in offering institutional care according to national and international standards.[85]

The National Standards of Care for Child Welfare Institutions were developed on the basis of international standards, in particular the CRC and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, and the relevant national laws of Indonesia, such as the Child Welfare Law and the Child Protection Law. In addition, standards and good practice from other countries informed the process. A drafting team was appointed and worked closely with a Task Group involving policy makers, practitioners and academics, including managers of childcare institutions and local NGOs, and a broader Reference Group of experts. The drafting process was guided by a psycho-social and ecological approach that focused on the strengths and resources of children and their families.[86]

The child protection and care reform introduced also the accreditation of social welfare organisations and childcare institutions, the setting up of databases on the number of children serviced by these institutions, and the certification of professional social workers. Components on child protection, permanency planning and good parenting were introduced into the training curricula for social work, lecturers and government staff. The training modules were developed and rolled out in collaboration with national schools of social work, foreign Universities, and the Government of Indonesia. Since 2009, social work graduates have been placed strategically throughout the country in order to disseminate the new approach and to raise the quality of care offered. The Indonesia Consortium of Social Work was established and tasked to promote the continuous development and reform of social work in professional training and practice. [87]

With the development and roll-out of the National Standards of Care, a transformation process was set in motion that changed the role of child care institutions and promoted an understanding of the 'continuum of care' from support services and social protection for families, family-based alternative care models in kinship care and fostering, through to the placement of children in residential care institutions as a last resort. The childcare institutions were thus transformed into centres that provide a comprehensive set of services for children and families, along this continuum of care, and their name was changed accordingly to 'Child Welfare Institutions'.[88]

In light of this new approach, the relevant laws, policies and regulations were reviewed with a view to ensure that family based care and support services are given a stronger priority. The national standards of care for childcare institutions were adopted into law in March 2011. According to the new law, a National Monitoring Team was established to monitor the implementation of the national standards, and relevant monitoring tools were developed.[89]

The shift in approach was reflected also in the Government's budget allocation. As of 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs uses the newly established database of childcare institutions to provide stronger subsidies to registered institutions and those that provide family based services in addition to residential care. Government funding was earmarked to support family based care with 60% of the allocated funds and residential care for children with 40%. In the following years, the percentage of funding earmarked for family based care is to increase gradually to 90%.[90] In addition, the Government initiated programs for conditional cash transfers to families in need, in order to enable them to meet basic needs, access health services and education.[91]

As a pilot project for applying the new approach in practice, Save the Children established a Child and Family Support Centre in Bandung in 2010. The pilot aimed to demonstrate how to strengthen families through an individualised case management approach and how to organise child care without relying exclusively on residential institutions. Social workers were deployed to the communities to work closely with local agencies, including local governments. The overall objective of this initiative was to reunify children from institutions with their direct or extended families, including in settings of kinship care or foster care. The program also included a component for vulnerable families that specifically sought to prevent family separation and children's placement in institutions. In 2011, the Government of Indonesia began piloting the roll-out of the National Standards of Care for child care institutions in two provinces, West Java and Yogyakarta. As part of the pilot, the accreditation of social welfare organization was launched and training programs for their staff as well as a training of trainers for the monitoring team were developed.[92]

In order to raise knowledge and awareness of the National Standards of Care, they are disseminated each year at the National Children's Day, combined with a national awareness raising campaign on the importance of family based care. The national campaign is linked to an initiative to select and promote new 'champions' in family based care and over 50 champions have been appointed since 2006. They participate in public campaigns to raise awareness and provide technical advice to policy development and training.[93]

Latin America and the Caribbean

Applied research on fatherhood: Strengthening men's participation as fathers[94]

In the Latin American and Caribbean (LAM) region, Save the Children and the regional NGO Promundo commissioned a literature review on the role of fatherhood. The literature review aimed to assess existing knowledge of the scope and quality of men's participation in families and their impact on the development and well-being of children and families. Findings from the literature review were used to inform the development of policy and program measures that positively influence fatherhood in the region, as well as the conceptualisation and development of a global fatherhood campaign.

The literature review found that the role of men as fathers has been addressed in research, programs and policies particularly in Western Europe and Northern America. In these regions, studies revealed that fathers' participation in child care and child-rearing has a positive impact on the well-being of children, mothers, and the fathers themselves. The positive impact had been observed with regard to children's health, social and emotional development, school completion rates, and a more flexible understanding of gender norms, among others.[95] Research findings noted also that although a father's involvement is important, it is not inherently necessary for the child's development: "The consensus ... is that having two or more caregivers, regardless of the sex of the caregiver, is generally better than one, and that the quality of interaction with the caregiver ... is more important than time per se. ... multiple caregivers serve as a kind of safety net or backup for children, as well as providing support for each other as caregivers."[96]

Less attention has been given to men's roles as fathers in other regions, although existing studies affirm the trends observed in Europe and Northern America also for Latin America and the Caribbean. Over the past decades, the region has undergone significant change, including with regard to employment structures and family formation. Women are more and more actively involved in the formal labour market while men's economic activity has slightly declined, and there are an increasing number of female headed households. Both men and women tend to work longer hours in order to make a living and families are being separated as a result of divorce or due to labour migration. Due to these changes, men's involvement in families and child care has gained increasing attention in the public debates in the region.[97]

Research on fatherhood distinguishes the so-called 'social fathers' from 'biological fathers'. The former refers to men who take on a care giving role for a child, within a family or from the outside, for instance as a step-father, family friend or uncle. The role of 'social fathers' becomes more and more relevant in contexts where children grow up in other than the traditional nuclear families.

The literature review emphasises the importance of considering men's roles in child care and child-rearing not only as biological fathers but other relations and contexts as well. Fatherhood needs to be understood also in relation to the concept of 'masculinity', since it is closely intertwined with the social construction of men's roles in society and the context in which boys and young men are being socialised. The perceptions of policy makers and program staff involved in family support measures are also relevant in this regard. The literature review revealed that there are many assumptions that still prevail to some degree in policy, programming and the societies, including that fathers are less interested in their children and less competent as caregivers. Research has demonstrated, however, that fathers are able to act as sensitive caregivers as well as mothers.[98]

Overall, the literature review helped to affirm that men do have a significant impact on children's well-being and development. A father's participation in child care and domestic chores has also a positive impact on the mother and her relationship to the child, and, finally, a positive and meaningful engagement in child care is good for the father himself.[99] Considering the positive impact of meaningful fatherhood, policy and program support to fatherhood can make an important contribution to the well-being and development of children and families and strengthen the cohesion and development of societies at large.

Fathers' participation in families and child development is impacted by many factors, some of which depend on the father and mother themselves or relate to the relationship within the family, others are subject to external influences. They include social expectations of fathers and views about gender norms; educational attainment; employment and income; the relationship with the mother and the child; the age and sex of the child; the age and developmental stage of the father, his own family background and the relationship he had with his own father. National laws and policies related to child support and contact in cases of separation of parents or children born to single mothers, and the right of the child to have contact with the father, also play a critical role.[100] Studies have further revealed that men's attitudes to sexuality, family planning and reproductive health influence also their attitudes towards fatherhood.[101]

Measuring fathers' impact on child development is therefore complex and relates to numerous indicators that are mutually inter-related, including the following:

- **The father's presence in the child's life and mutual accessibility**
- **The amount and quality of time during which fathers take on the role of caregivers**
- **The father's material support to the child and family, both financially and in kind**
- **The degree to which mother and father cooperate in child care and support each other; and**
- **The degree to which fathers engage actively with the child in order to build and impart social competence and to support the child's school performance.**

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These indicators need to be interpreted with regard to the father as an individual and in his relationship with the mother or other caregivers. In addition, children's own views need to be accounted for when measuring the quality and impact of fatherhood.[102]

Against this background, it is important to identify the mechanisms that trigger positive change in attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of fathers, and to understand how a process towards more engaged fatherhood might be actively promoted. Existing studies suggest that knowledge and awareness of gender roles and equity are important as is men's exposure to positive role models. The change happens gradually over the life-cycle of men and generations.[103]

In different regions of the world, experience has demonstrated that targeted policies and programs can positively impact men's engagement as fathers. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, men are often prohibited from accompanying women at child birth, for instance. Ensuring that public and private hospitals allow and promote men's presence and support at child birth may therefore be an important first step to strengthening family cohesion and men's participation from the very beginning. Awareness raising on gender equity, the roles of men and the social construction of masculinity, should be integrated in school curricula and youth programs. It is likewise important to develop messages and programs that reach boys specifically and that address their specific needs, including with regard to sexual health.[104]

Information and knowledge for fathers can also be promoted through group education, media campaigns and community-based education strategies. Where income support programs for families are in place, their conditionality might be linked not only to indicators concerning the mother and child, such as the child's age, health checks, or school attendance, but also to the father's involvement. Special support programs from employers are essential in this regard. Employment or job training policies and programs can play an important role in promoting engaged fatherhood when they take into account the special needs of fathers, including very young fathers who are only just entering the labour market and those with low-incomes. Finally, legal frameworks that enable and support fathers' active participation are important, for instance by establishing fathers' entitlement to paternity leave, or joint custody as a standard rule when parents divorce.[105]

The findings of the comprehensive literature review supported by Save the Children in the Latin American and Caribbean region informed the development of the global campaign 'MenCare', which was launched in November 2011. The campaign is coordinated by Promundo and the Sonke Gender Justice Network, an NGO that is based in South Africa and active throughout the African continent. Other partners include the Men Engage Alliance, UN Agencies, Vital Voices Global Partnership, human rights-based foundations and SIDA, which all promote the campaign globally within their own networks and activities. Save the Children supports the Campaign as a member of the Advisory Board.[106]

The Campaign 'MenCare' aims to "promote men's involvement as equitable, responsive and non-violent fathers and caregivers". It provides communication messages for communities and the media, technical assistance, training, as well as recommendations for targeted policy and program measures and evidence to support organizations, governments and UN Agencies in their efforts to support the engagement of boys and men in care giving for children. The Campaign emphasises that beyond father's impact on the development and well-being of children, their active involvement in their children's lives is also key to promoting gender equality and respect, including respect for sexual diversity and reducing homophobia.

The Campaign recognises the diversity of men's roles as fathers. It is constructed around the slogan "You are my father" and offers ten key messages that can be adapted to the national and local contexts in which it is applied. NGOs, UN Agencies and other relevant organisations and institutions are invited to join the campaign and to use and work with the material it offers.[107]

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New Zealand

Law reform to ban the physical punishment of children: A documentation of the process, lessons learned and success factors[108]

In New Zealand, Save the Children and other organisations and institutions have advocated actively and campaigned for positive parenting and non-violent child-rearing for many years.[109] The national debate on this matter was intense and resulted eventually in the legal ban of physical punishment in 2007. In 2009, Save the Children New Zealand documented the process leading up to the law reform and identified the factors and measures that played a key role in bringing about the change. The documentation aims to raise awareness of the law, to advocate for the non-violent upbringing of children and to share the lessons learned with child rights advocates and policy makers in other countries that are embarking on a similar 'journey'.[110]

New Zealand's population is composed of different ethnic and religious groups, and each of these groups has their own set of traditions that influence child-rearing and methods of disciplining children. Before the law was changed, physical discipline had been common in New Zealand, although there were different trends and practices between the population groups. Research had evidenced that there was a significant level of violence within families, i.e. against partners and children, and a high rate of child deaths related to parents' use of violence.[111]

The debate prior to the law reform had been informed significantly by the experience of other countries, including Sweden, which had banned physical punishment in 1979 and provided therefore a long history of experience with follow-up monitoring and impact evaluation. In New Zealand, achieving the law reform was a long process. The milestones along this process were set by both, governmental and non-governmental actors. In 2004, for instance, the Ministry of Social Development demonstrated strong commitment to support positive parenting as it launched the SKIP Initiative ('Strategies with Kids – Information for Parents'). The initiative promotes positive parenting and the use of non-physical discipline. It is funded by the Government and builds on comprehensive, community-based approaches.[112]

In 2005, Save the Children brought children's views more strongly into the public debate. It published a report on child discipline, which was based on participatory research with children and reflected the children's views on discipline and the use of physical punishment (see REF _Ref332360863 \h * MERGEFORMAT Box 4). The participating children said that being hit by their parents made them feel "angry, upset and fearful". They also suggested that using physical punishment was not an effective form of discipline and that parents should instead talk to the children and explain what they had done wrong. The children also suggested that "... using 'time-out', having privileges removed or being grounded were more effective means of discipline." [113]

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The key factors that stimulated the national debate and supported the process towards law reform included the following:

Research and evidence

Research conducted by the academia and the Children's Commissioner of New Zealand demonstrated the negative impact of physical disciplining on the child's development, whereas it also showed the positive impact of non-violent parenting. Providing robust evidence and analysis on these complex matters, backed up by international research, helped building credibility and gaining the attention of many different stakeholders, convincing them that the debate and process towards banning physical punishment was relevant and valid.[114]

Recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Following its review of New Zealand's State party reports of 1995 and 2000, the Committee urged both times that the national law be amended to prohibit physical punishment against children. The Committee's recommendations put pressure upon the Government of New Zealand to take the matter more seriously.[115]

Support from the Human Rights Committee

When the Human Rights Committee of New Zealand developed a national action plan on human rights, it called for a ban of physical punishment of children. This position was grounded in the rights of the child and the non-discrimination principle.[116]

Support from the Children's Commissioner

The Commissioner's mandate and the CRC offered a solid basis for the Commissioner's public advocacy for the law reform. It backed up the draft law with rights-based arguments and brought the issue to the attention of the media and the general public.[117]

Coordinated advocacy of children's organisations

There was an increasing trend of organisations working with and for children to coordinate their advocacy in favour of the law reform. The 'Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA)' is a coalition of organisations, families and individuals active in the area of child rights and child protection in New Zealand. The coalition has been handing in alternative reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and has consistently advocated for the legal ban of physical punishment of children. As a result of policy advocacy and messages targeted at the media and the general public, there was a growing public awareness and concern about violence within families and its effects on the well-being of children, families, and the society at large.[118]

The UN Study on Violence Against Children

The process that informed the development of the UN Study included a regional consultation

You feel real upset because they are hurting you and you love them so much and then all of a sudden they hit you and hurt you and you feel like as though they don't care about you because they are hurting you.[119]

- 13-year-old girl

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on violence against children in Bangkok in 2005. The New Zealand delegation to the consultation was comprised of Government officials, representatives of ACYA, Save the Children and UNICEF, and two youth representatives. The delegation was particularly impressed by the strong representation of young people from the region and their call upon governments to end physical punishment against children.[120]

Following an intense national debate, the Parliament eventually passed the Crimes Amendment Bill into law in 2007. The new law included a revised Section 59 that introduced the prohibition of physical punishment against children. In June of the same year, the law entered into force. Previously, the law had endorsed parents' use of force as a means of correction towards a child, when the force was reasonable in the given circumstances. What exactly constituted 'reasonable' force in a specific case was, however, subject to the interpretation and discretion of the judge or jury. The law reform process therefore had to address both, the statutory law, i.e. the wording of the Act, as well as the common law as reflected in the law's interpretation and court jurisprudence.[121]

The new law resulted in an 'elevation of status' for children, in that it considers children as citizens of New Zealand who are entitled to enjoy their human rights to the same effect as adults. This implies that they enjoy the same legal protection against assault as adults. As a result of the law reform, all physical punishment of children is now prohibited. When investigating a case, the police have the discretion to not prosecute parents when the use of force was 'minor' and 'inconsequential'. The law provides that parents are entitled to use 'reasonable force' for purposes other than correcting their children. This means that parents have a right to use force in exceptional circumstances related to their responsibility to restrain, remove or rear children for purposes of care or safety. The law further includes a provision to ensure that its impact will be assessed and monitored.[122]

As there had been much concern and resistance against the possibility that parents be prosecuted under the new law, Save the Children emphasised that the "... criminal law is more than just an instrument of punishment. It is an important symbol which sets minimum standards of acceptable behaviour. The law, therefore, has a part to play in changing adult attitudes towards children and their rights and needs." In addition, the "... prosecutorial discretion will be exercised sensibly. In those cases where prosecution is deemed appropriate, because of the circumstances and nature of the assault, the use of sentences that facilitate improved parenting practices are likely to be in the child's best interests." [123]

Since the law has entered into force, only few cases of 'minor discipline' were reported to the New Zealand Police. These cases have hardly resulted in prosecution but rather in more supportive interventions. On the other hand there has been an increase in reports of more violent assaults against children, which might be interpreted to indicate a decreased tolerance of violence against children.[124] Although the adoption of the law was not followed

by a Government-led public information campaign, a study conducted by the Children's Commissioner in 2008, one year after the law reform, suggested that the law was well known and that the attitudes about physical punishment of children are changing.[125]

> **I think it makes them (children) do it again because they get angry with their parents for doing it (smacking), so they do it again.**
>
> - 12-year-old girl

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Nigeria

Comprehensive services for vulnerable children and their caregivers: Linking a community-based approach with state and national policies[126]

In Nigeria, Save the Children UK (SCUK) is implementing the 'Links for Children' (LFC) program to enhance the access of children and families affected by HIV and AIDS to treatment, care and other support services. The overall objective is to improve the quality of life of vulnerable children and their families. Rolled out in three states of Nigeria over a period of five years, the program is targeting a total of 11,950 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in 30 communities. It works with local community groups such as the 'Child Protection Committees' (CPCs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) active at the national and state level.[127]

The program has three main objectives: capacity building of the partner CSOs; provision of comprehensive quality care to orphans and vulnerable children; and the strengthening of policies in support of orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers. The children and caregivers enrolled in the program are living in particularly vulnerable situations, due to extreme social and economic challenges and health risks, including HIV and AIDS. In each of the three states covered by the program, the population is struggling with economic instability and food insecurity. Since each of the states is also affected by conflict, the LFC program aims to prepare the communities and state authorities to empower children and caregivers to respond to and cope with situations of conflict and other emergencies.

Organisational development and capacity building

Upon initiating the LFC program, SC conducted an organisational assessment for each of its partner CSOs in this program, including one national and six State-level organisations. Based on the assessment, a strategy for organisational development was elaborated for each partner. The strategies aim to strengthen the organisations' technical and administrative capacity to design, implement and manage programs for OVC and HIV affected families and to attract and manage funding from major bilateral and other donors. The national partner organisation is prepared for a handover of the program to continue working with OVC and HIV affected families in a sustainable manner and to provide support to other CSO partners. All the CSO partner organisations were trained on how to recruit and manage specialised staff for programming, monitoring and evaluation, and accounting. They were supported in setting up new offices within the communities and reaching out to more communities in order to assess and monitor the roll-out of the program activities. The SC staff provide training and mentorship for the CSOs throughout this process.[128]

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Comprehensive quality care

A major focus of the LFC program is the provision of community-based services, with enhanced access for orphans and vulnerable children and families including those who are affected by HIV and AIDS. In order to achieve this, the close collaboration and partnership with CSOs at the state level and Child Protection Committees (CPCs) within the communities is critical. Child Protection Committees play a key role in the local referral mechanisms for child abuse cases. They receive reports of cases, offer counselling to the child and family concerned, and support them in filing a report to the authorities. By bringing all the different actors together who are involved in the prevention, referral and response of child abuse cases, the LFC program aims to strengthen the cooperation between the CPC, the police and the social welfare services. First results in this regard were achieved in some of the participating communities. Throughout the program, there is an ongoing consultation with the girls and boys, men and women in the communities to allow for safe and confidential reporting of child abuse cases and to strengthen the referral and response within the communities.[129] A mapping of the referral mechanism is underway and will inform the development of a capacity building plan to strengthen the system.

At the outset of the program implementation, focus group discussions were held with CPC members, caregivers and children to discuss what they considered as 'child abuse'. As a result, consensus was reached on an understanding of abuse as "'those things done to children as a way of maltreatment that cause them harm', e.g. beating, failure to send a child to school, rape, ... depriving a child of food as a way of punishment, sending children hawking with the warning not to come back home until they finish selling the wares. A girl succinctly summarised it as, 'things people do to you to hurt you because they are older or more privileged than you'." [130]

The focus groups also discussed whom the participants felt confident with to disclose and report child abuse cases. Important points of reference in this regard were identified within the community or family, including village heads and local child protection committees, or the police. Social workers were considered to a lesser degree since they are usually not based within the community. This affirms the importance of strengthening referral and response mechanisms within the communities, while also linking them to the more formal structures and mechanisms operated by the state.[131]

Against this background, the program creates linkages between CPCs and the Child Protection Networks in the state, as well as the national networks for child protection and OVC. In one state, the program has succeeded to strengthen the linkages between the local CPCs and the State Child Protection Network. Guidance and lessons learned from this experience shall inform the stronger integration of the local and state level child protection services also in the other states.[132]

In addition to its strong focus on child protection, the program offers a comprehensive set of services with social, economic and administrative components and combining protection, prevention and empowerment for building the resilience of children, caregivers and families.

Kids' clubs were formed at the community level and offer psychosocial support for boys and girls while also creating opportunities for the children to discuss and consult amongst themselves. The children meet regularly in the kids' clubs and talk about child rights and protection themes. The kids' clubs engage boys and girls of all ages in leisure time activities, reading and creative writing, arts, crafts, drama and sports. The older children aged 12-17 years old receive life skills training and information on how to better protect themselves from abuse and from HIV and AIDS. The clubs offer an opportunity for children to jointly express their views in the communities on themes such as child abuse and protection, matters concerning their communities, and children have through the clubs provided inputs and feedback on the LFC program. Gradually, the children are being trained and encouraged to take on more and more responsibility for organising and facilitating the kids' clubs meetings and activities. Initial feedback from the children has been positive and suggests that the clubs have helped them in developing self-esteem, a sense of belonging and a better understanding of how to participate in the matters that affect them.[133]

Parallel to the kids' clubs, caregivers' forums were organised to engage the parents and other caregivers in discussions on child care and protection, nutrition, HIV and AIDS, hygiene and sanitation. The feedback from these forums collected by the CSOs suggests that they have helped to improve the relationships between caregivers and children. The children in the kids' clubs raise issues that they want to be addressed by the caregivers' forums, either concerning individual children or the entire group. In response to these issues, the caregivers' forums seek to come to a conclusion. If they do not succeed in that, they forward the issue to the local Child Protection Committee for consultation in their monthly meetings. One of the issues was the observation that children were often missing from schools on market days because they were sent hawking on the markets. The CPC took this issue up for discussion and raised awareness within the community that children should attend school regularly. In some communities, the caregivers' forums have set up a social fund, which is used to cover costs arising from emergency health care or other social needs of their members.[134]

Save the Children's partner CSOs and the CPCs visit the homes of children enrolled in the project, keep files and monitor their situations. The home visits aim to assess the living situation of the child and his or her family or caregivers. They also provide an opportunity to offer counselling for the caregivers on child care and how to increase the child's well-being. The home visits initiate the identification of vulnerable children and families and their enrolment into the program. Subsequently, the visits help monitoring the child's attendance at school or vocational training, health and nutrition, and provide in-kind support such as mosquito nets, household items and food. The Child Protection Committees also pay direct

I now understand better how best to interact with my children and to find out things concerning them. They now open up and share their concerns with me. Before, when I got food for them, I was okay. ... Let us try and bring out children closer to us. It is only through this that we can understand them and provide care and protection to them.

- Participant in a caregivers' group

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visits to schools in order to monitor the children's attendance and performance. During the first years of the program, this measure demonstrated that the attendance rate had increased and was overall very high. In addition, all children who are enrolled into the program and who were not registered at birth are registered retroactively. The Child Protection Committees are also supporting families through health and nutrition education. They raise awareness of the importance of breastfeeding. Donations of food items for families in need were organised through the program and managed by the CPCs.[135]

Economic stability and food security remain a challenge in the three participating states, and caregivers tend to withdraw their children from school when there is a food shortage. In order to strengthen the economic situation of the communities, the program comprises therefore a village savings and loan scheme. In a pilot initiative, village savings and loan groups were set up in some communities. This model was widely accepted and soon adopted also in non-pilot communities, upon the initiative of the community members, through peer support and exchange. These groups manage caregivers' contributions to a joint saving scheme, which is highly accessible for community members and supports them in setting up small business and trading activities.[136]

The program further provides training on vocational and business skills and income generation, including training targeted specifically at girls. Other vital services that are not offered directly by Save the Children and its partner organisations are integrated into the program through a network of agencies to which children and caregivers can be referred for HIV testing, paediatric treatment, PMTCT, general health care and nutritional support.[137]

Policy development for orphans and vulnerable children

In addition to the service delivery, the LFC program has established and strengthened the collaboration of Save the Children and its partners with government authorities at the national and state levels. Save the Children is represented in the OVC Technical Working Group and donor coordination activities at the national level, and encourages such inter-agency collaboration also at the state level. The program implementation process provides a wealth of data and lessons learned to inform the policy development at all levels. In particular, the program team contributes to strengthening the policies, strategies and action plans for care and protection of OVCs in the three participating states. By supporting and facilitating the development of state-level operational plans and the allocation of funds, the program has promoted the implementation of the 2011-2016 National Action Plan on OVC within the states. In order to achieve an impact at the policy level, the program conducts training workshops, meetings and field visits with communities and the Child Protection Committees, and facilitates the close collaboration and engagement of the relevant governmental agencies in the project activities. It brings state and non-state actors together and supports their cross-sectoral collaboration and the setting up of state-level child protection networks with the engagement of state authorities, the police, child protection and other service providers.[138] A mid-term review of the program was launched in April 2012 and the findings will inform the implementation of the second phase.

South Africa

Building a strong network for social protection and family support: A comprehensive inter-agency strategy[139]

In South Africa, Save the Children supports the Alliance for Children's Entitlements to Social Security (ACESS) in promoting social protection policies for children and families. Established in 2001, the Alliance is today comprised of 1,223 organisations and institutions that collectively work to realise their "vision of a comprehensive social security package that respects the dignity of all and gives practical substance to children's rights" in South Africa. The members of ACESS represent different types of organisations from diverse disciplines and thematic areas of specialisation, including health, early childhood development, education, poverty alleviation, nutrition, housing, gender issues, the protection of vulnerable children such as orphans and children affected by HIV or AIDS, children living on the streets, refugee children, and the promotion of children's rights in general. They include small and larger organisations, community- and faith-based organisations, social security and other service providers, academic and research institutions, paralegal services, and care and drop-in centres. Notwithstanding the diversity of its members and the wide range of professional expertise represented, the Alliance has succeeded to reach consensus over a multi-year strategy with joint objectives. Speaking with one voice renders the Alliance a particularly strong body to advocate for change for children and families in South Africa.[140]

SC has been working with ACESS since 2007 and supports the Alliance in many ways, including through funding, capacity building and organisational development initiatives, by offering technical support and advice, and by supporting ACESS' advocacy and awareness raising programs.

One of the main added values of the Alliance is its role in promoting the coordinated action of its members in all provinces of the country: ACESS facilitates the coordination among civil society organisations, between civil society and the Government of South Africa and its governance structures, and it supports the coordination among different government departments. The overall objective of ACESS is thus to strengthen coordinated, multi-sectoral advocacy and service delivery in South Africa. In addition to its role as a coordinator and facilitator, ACESS monitors the implementation of national laws and policies and the quality of services. To this end, it gathers evidence and information, and engages in consultations within and beyond the Alliance. Where gaps in national laws and policies leave children and families vulnerable or excluded, ACESS supports strategic litigation in order to promote children's rights and family support in the country.[141]

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In order to achieve its objectives, ACESS is working mainly through five projects areas for which it has defined strategic objectives to be reached by 2015:

Building and managing the strategic alliance of ACESS

ACESS aims to create effective and transparent management structures, to enhance technical expertise and capacity among its member organisations, and to become financially sustainable. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and follow-up to the resulting findings and recommendations, are to ensure that the Alliance remains dynamic and close to children's realities.[142]

Promoting comprehensive social security schemes for children

The Alliance aims to contribute, through its coordinated advocacy and other activities, to the development of policies and programs for comprehensive social security services. The services shall guarantee each child's access to grants, health care, food and nutrition, education, basic services such as water and electricity, and the identity documents that are required for grant applications.[143]

Expanding the reach of social services and assistance

A main concern identified by ACESS is that some children and families are excluded from social services and cash grants. The Alliance works therefore to promote equal access for all and pays specific attention to vulnerable children in this regard. Concrete objectives include the extension of cash grants to all children up to the age of 18 years of age, the introduction of caregivers' grants for children living with extended families; the extension of the care dependency grant to all families with children affected by disabilities; and a specific grant for children living with chronic illnesses, including HIV and AIDS.[144]

Challenging the barriers to service delivery

ACESS has identified concrete barriers that prevent some children and families from applying for social grants and related services. A key factor in this regard is the need of valid identity documents for filing a grant application and the applicants' related transportation costs. ACESS aims to achieve that the Department of Home Affairs, which issues the identity documents required for the applications, is accessible for remote and poor communities and that multiple services are available and accessible at the same sites. Community-based support networks are mobilised to assist applicants in the application process. ACESS also seeks to achieve that children are automatically registered at birth, free of charge, and that children who were not registered at birth are offered better access to social grants. In addition, it advocates for a national transportation policy that removes transportation costs as barrier for accessing services.[145]

Ensuring access to education for all

ACESS is advocating for improved policies and stronger implementation to make school education more accessible for all children in South Africa, including those who are affected by poverty or by HIV and AIDS and who are therefore confronted with obstacles in accessing education. Communities are considered to play a key role in this regard and their participation in school governance shall be encouraged.[146]

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In addition to having advanced with the organisational development and strategic planning of ACESS, the Alliance has achieved concrete progress for children through its coordinating, advocacy and service delivery role. ACESS has strongly promoted the Grants Awareness Campaign in South Africa, for instance, which aims to disseminate information on access to birth points. In this context, ACESS collaborates closely with the Departments of Social Development and Home Affairs to integrate service delivery into 'one-stop-shops' for grants. In public and popular one-day events, the so-called 'Jamborees', ACESS and its partners offer comprehensive information about social security rights and how to access grants. The presence of both Departments makes it possible to apply for grants and for the required identity documents in cases where these are incomplete. The first round of 23 jamborees held nationwide resulted in 33,500 applications for child support grants, 10,000 for birth certificates, and 13,500 for identity documents. ACESS encourages other agencies and organisations to replicate the Jamboree model and advocates for the Government's formal endorsement of the model. In the Western Cape, the provincial Government has in fact endorsed the model for roll-out in 19 districts.[147]

Another major achievement, ACESS has won a court case against the Ministry of Social Development, which denied child support grants to caregivers and children who did not possess the required identity documents. Some South African citizens and non-nationals residing in South Africa have had difficulties obtaining these papers from the Department of Home Affairs and could therefore not apply for grants. As a result of ACESS' intervention, a number of alternatives to prove the applicant's identity are now admissible and the related regulations were amended to instruct the authorities accordingly. Through its lobbying work, ACESS has further achieved that the payment of child support grants has gradually been scaled up from covering children up to the age of 9 years in 2003 to children up to the age of 18 years in 2010.[148] Due to the wide range of thematic areas covered by its members, the Alliance is thus particularly well placed to develop, implement and monitor more strategic and systemic approaches to child and family support

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Conclusions and recommendations

Save the Children's program experience demonstrates that the vulnerabilities of children and families are often linked to a multitude of social and economic risks as well as structural factors. A combination of social and economic policies that link child protection, parenting support and social security services is therefore well placed to address the complexity and inter-relatedness of the risks facing children and families and help mitigating them in a sustainable way.

In some of the countries where Save the Children works, child and family support services have been weak or absent altogether, whereas in other countries, such services exist and are guaranteed by the law. Even where the entitlements are universal, certain groups of the population risk to remain restricted or excluded from accessing services in practice. Barriers to accessing services include limited information and awareness of their existence or how to apply for them, lack of the required documentation and status, including birth registration and a regular immigration status, or inability to cover transportation costs to reach the location where applications are handed in.

Save the Children has pursued different strategies to address the gaps in the national systems that leave children and families unprotected or prevent them from accessing support services. Each of the program responses documented in this report includes key elements of systemic approaches, in line with SC's guidance on strengthening national child protection systems: From research and data collection, to supporting comprehensive social sector and child care reform, the provision of technical advice, training, awareness raising and capacity building, monitoring of implementation and evaluation of impact, through to consultations with children and parents about their views and recommendations. Many initiatives build on multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination as a key to ensuring successful child and family support services, and are linked with national strategic policy planning processes. The importance and added value of engaging parents, children, and their communities, as well as policy makers, service providers, employers and communities, has been demonstrated by each of the program examples.

The experience from Save the Children's national and regional initiatives in the area of parenting policies and programs reaffirms the validity of SC's previous recommendations for family strengthening and support.

Governments should make long-term commitment to family support services and family-based alternative care, in line with international standards and commitments, in particular the CRC and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. Governments' support should be visible through laws and policies, targeted budget allocation, national strategies and

policy plans that provide not only for supportive or rehabilitative services but prioritise the prevention of family separation, of socio-economic marginalisation and exclusion of families, and violence in families. The development and implementation of such preventive family support policies and programs should receive more attention from donors. Programs should be designed to be rights-based, sustainable and integrated into broader, systemic approaches. Research strategies are important to monitor and evaluate the impact of such programs and to inform their continuous development.[149]

Many different measures in law, policy and practice are needed to ensure that children are cared for and protected in a family environment and to prevent that children without appropriate parental care are placed in residential institutions. As afforded by international standards, these measures need to always give due consideration to the specific situation of the individual child and his or her family, the child's views and best interests. Special efforts are further required to ensure that all policy measures and programs strengthen the child's and parents' right to non-discrimination, through services with universal reach, equal access, removing barriers for particularly marginalised groups and actively promoting their inclusion. Birth registration of all children is the most fundamental prerequisite in this regard. Specific measures may be required to reach children and parents with disabilities and to promote the gender equality among boys and girls and among male and female care takers.

What must and can be done?[150]

Poverty alleviation and social services are essential to strengthen children and families at risk. Such services and support include:

Universal services and resources available for all families, such as healthcare, education and community-based care.

Social services for families at risk or in need, including preventative, supportive and rehabilitative services. These services should be based on an individual assessment of the child and his or her family situation and should build on the coping abilities and the social and economic resources of the individuals and the community concerned. Services should include community based support such as child and respite care, as well as parenting education programmes, vocational training, in-home services where workers or volunteers provide guidance and support, and family-centred community building, which brings together community leaders, families, and others to coordinate services that support and strengthen families.

Income generation and economic support programmes that have significant direct or indirect benefits for children. They include cash transfers, childcare grants, social pensions, tax benefits, subsidised food, fee waivers, microfinance, savings schemes, skills training and other livelihood opportunities.

The success of these services depends on key factors such as the degree to which children, parents, and other caregivers are consulted; their ability to target the children and families most in need; a supportive and coherent legal and policy framework; trained staff and volunteers capable of supporting children and families and delivering programmes; and effective coordination across government departments and professions.

On the basis of the discussion and documentation of parenting programs and policies in this report, the following concluding recommendations are offered for continued consideration in policy making, programming and practice:

Preventive and proactive approaches in social policies that strengthen and support families are considered to have a stronger impact and to be more cost-effective than responsive and remediating approaches. Community awareness raising and mobilisation to create strong support networks for children and families at the local level is critical to prevent family separation and children's placement in alternative care. Experience suggests that when children, parents and communities are actively involved in shaping and implementing support services to promote child care and protection, the results for children's well-being and development and family cohesion are better and more sustainable.[151]

Information on child care and child-rearing for new parents, parental education and training on positive parenting skills as well as non-didactic discussion groups and meeting points for parents can all make an important contribution to support parents to care for their children and to prevent violence, abuse and neglect in the home.[152] Parenting training has proven to be particularly effective when the participating parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the planning and directions of the sessions and when there are opportunities for parents to immediately apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills with their children, in a supervised setting. The children's views of their relationship with their parents should also be heard and taken into account for developing and monitoring parenting training initiatives. Existing parental education and support programs often focus on the new-born children and the child's first years of life. Programs to support parents and children in later stages, especially during the child's puberty, are equally important and should be further promoted. In designing parental education and training programs, it is particularly important to ensure a universal reach and that the particularly vulnerable and marginalised families are included, and to ensure that mothers and fathers participate. To complement the educational programs, parental help-lines that offer information and advice, including in an anonymous form, should be in place and widely publicised.

Financial assistance is important to help families achieving economic stability, including through social grants, child welfare grants, and social security schemes, as well as vocational training, tuition support for higher education, and micro-credits to support the integration into the labour market of parents and adolescent children. Families benefit from financial and in kind

support for covering daily expenses such as commuting to schools and work places, or to the state offices where to apply for identity documents, grants and social assistance. Often very basic and hands-on support can make a difference for families' lives, including from the community, schools and social workers. Funding for renovation work on houses to improve the living conditions, providing household utensils and school support for the transition from institutional schools to community schools, helping parents to find employment, have all proved to have an important impact for family cohesion and can help making family reintegration sustainable.

Parental leave should be available for an appropriate period of time that allows mothers to breast-feed their child for a minimum of the first six months after child birth.[153] **Parental leave and care arrangements** should be available and flexible for mothers and fathers. In addition, **day care facilities and early childhood development programs**, including for children with disabilities, have proved successful to help parents balancing work and family lives, to unburden working parents and help thereby to reduce the risk of conflicts and violence in the home.

Fathers are still often not participating in the family life to the same extent as mothers, for different reasons connected to social attitudes, traditions and perceptions of gender roles in relation to child care and child-rearing, working hours and employment. Fathers are often still unaware of the importance of their involvement for the well-being and protection of their children, the mothers, and their own. **Supporting fathers' active involvement in child care and child-rearing** is considered important therefore to strengthen families, prevent violence and inappropriate care and to promote gender equality.

Strengthening social work is a key strategy to support parents and families. At the local levels, within communities and families, social workers are the ones who can make a real difference in supporting parents, strengthening families and protecting children. In many places, the recruitment of social workers could be scaled up, their training should include child rights and protection themes and prepare them to support parents and families. Community-based social work, child-focused social work and strengthening the role of male social workers to work with fathers and boys are all areas that would benefit from further attention in policy and programming.

Awareness raising and advocacy with the general public, policy makers, parents and children should make information available and accessible to all, in particular information on the rights of the child, on the use of non-violent methods of disciplining children and positive parenting skills, and the positive role of fathers.

Advocacy and awareness raising initiatives have been particularly strong and resulted in lasting progress for children when **all relevant national organisations and institutions that are actively working for children's rights in a country collaborate to coordinate their activities and messages.** Consultations with children and children's advocates have made

significant contributions to the national debates on child care, parenting policies and the banning of physical violence. In addition, international partners, such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child, have taken up recommendations from national networks and put pressure on governments to engage in a process for change.

Evidence and research provide a basis for national reform. Evidence, data and analysis, as well as research with and by children have informed the national and regional debates, law and policy reform, and the design of awareness raising campaigns. It is important to continue conducting new research, including ongoing monitoring, review, assessments and evaluations of laws, policies, programs, their implementation and impact, with a view to ensuring that the findings and recommendations keep informing the public debate and reform processes in policy, programming and practice. Initiatives and programs that have been evaluated positively, should receive further support and be scaled up and replicated within and across countries.

Data collection and analysis on child protection and social welfare issues should be supported by the systemic collection of anonymous, linked and population-based data from all relevant sectors, including child protection, social welfare and health care, in order to provide a data base for the analysis and monitoring of the impact of policies on child safety, well-being and protection.[154]

The private sector plays a key role in supporting their staff and employees in their parenting roles. **Promoting corporate social responsibility and private sector engagement** to improve working conditions, to offer or support child care and child-rearing arrangements at the work place, and training and career development opportunities for parents are all important measures to strengthen families and should be promoted further. The newly adopted Children's Rights and Business Principles offer an important basis on which to advocate for stronger private sector engagement.

Policies related to parenting, child protection and family support cut across very diverse sectors and institutional responsibilities. Considering this complexity, their coordination and integration into broader policy strategies is essential. **Parenting policies should be developed and implemented in coherence with broader strategies for social protection, children's rights and child protection, including existing national child protection systems.**

Policies and programs for strengthening and supporting families are thus essential for fulfilling children's right to development and protection. They constitute not only an important element of social welfare and child protection obligations that governments have committed to under international law, but they are also a key strategy to strengthen social cohesion and integration and to promote social cohesion and the stability and development of countries.

Recommendations for Save the Children's programming and advocacy:

In addition to providing continued support to Governments, public and private partners in family support, Save the Children can strengthen its own programming and advocacy work in this area. The documentation of selected program examples in this report offers inspiration and opportunities to learn from the experience made in different regions and countries.

A central recommendation is that Save the Children continues its important advocacy work with governments and the general public for a ban of corporal punishment and the ongoing child protection and care sector reform in line with international standards and guidelines. Save the Children might strengthen the existing evidence base and gather new evidence of positive discipline and parental education practices to support its national and global advocacy work with robust analysis, evidence and data. Advocacy might specifically call for the establishment of help-lines that provide information, guidance and advice for parents, children and families, as well as professionals working with and for children.

It will be important that the advocacy in this area continues to push for the inclusion of key child protection and care themes into relevant professional training curricula, including for teachers, social workers, mid-wives and other health professionals, as well as policy makers. In addition to child protection and the CRC, professional training curricula should address themes related to child development, positive parenting and family support. The training should discuss strategies to ensure that social services benefit children within families and how to measure and evaluate the impact of these services on children specifically. All these themes would also constitute valuable components in the induction training for SC staff.

Save the Children programs might specifically look at including a stronger focus on the role of fathers and explore possibilities of establishing links with the 'Men Care' global campaign on the role of men as caregivers. In addition, Save the Children might seek to expand existing and new relations with the private sector to include initiatives in support of children, parents and care givers. To this end, Save the Children might explore jointly with companies how they can benefit from having parental support programmes for their staff and to support family and parenting programs as part of their CSR.

In order to enhance the global dialogue within the organisation, Save the Children might consider organising exchange visits between countries and regions. These visits would offer an opportunity for SC staff and their partners, including government officials and local service providers, to exchange experience and lessons learned from programs, policies and practice, including those documented in this report, and to inspire and develop the debate further. An area where more documentation, research and programming experience may be needed is the integration of family support components into the programming for emergency situations.

Annex

Acronyms

ACESS	Alliance for Children's Entitlements to Social Security (South Africa)
CCR CSR	Centre for Child-Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (China)
CPI	Child Protection Initiative
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRGI	Child Rights Governance Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW CS	Centre for Social Work, Canton Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
LAM	Latin America
LFC	'Links for Children'
MLHSA	Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (Georgia)
NCPS	National Child Protection Systems
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OCV	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PHP	Physical and humiliating punishment
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
SC	Save the Children
SCI	Save the Children International
SCS	Save the Children Sweden
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SSA	Social Service Agency (Georgia)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

Glossary of selected key terms

Alternative care

The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children describe 'alternative care' as follows:

"Alternative care may take the form of:
(i) Informal care: any private arrangement provided in a family environment, whereby the child is looked after on an ongoing or indefinite basis by relatives or friends (informal kinship care) or by others in their individual capacity, at the initiative of the child, his/her parents or other person without this arrangement having been ordered by an administrative or judicial authority or a duly accredited body;
(ii) Formal care: all care provided in a family environment which has been ordered by a competent administrative body or judicial authority, and all care provided in a residential environment, including in private facilities, whether or not as a result of administrative or judicial measures. ...

"With respect to the environment where it is provided, alternative care may be:
(i) Kinship care: family-based care within the child's extended family or with close friends of the family known to the child, whether formal or informal in nature;
(ii) Foster care: situations where children are placed by a competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family other than the children's own family, that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care;
(iii) Other forms of family-based or family-like care placements;
(iv) Residential care: care provided in any non-family-based group setting, such as places of safety for emergency care, transit centres in emergency situations, and all other short and long-term residential care facilities including group homes;
(v) Supervised independent living arrangements for children." [155]

Child

A 'child' is any person under 18 years of age, as provided for under Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Child protection

Save the Children defines child protection as the "measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children." [156]

Child rights

'Child rights' are the human rights of the child as afforded under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is complemented by two Optional Protocols and other relevant international standards.

Children without appropriate care

Save the Children considers 'children without appropriate care' to refer to "children who are not receiving suitable, continuous and quality care, nurture and guidance at a physical, emotional, social and psychological level from either their families or from other primary carers that are meant to replace the family environment and are responsible for their well being and development." [157]

Corporal punishment / Physical and humiliating punishment

The Committee on the Rights of the Child "... defines 'corporal' or 'physical' punishment as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting ('smacking', 'slapping', 'spanking') children, with the hand or with an implement - a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion (for example, washing children's mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices). In the view of the Committee, corporal punishment is invariably degrading. In addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment that are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the Convention. These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child." [158]

This report uses the terminology 'physical and humiliating punishment' (PHP) to refer to 'corporal or physical punishment and other forms of humiliating and degrading punishment.[159]

Institutional / residential care[160]

Care provided in any non-family-based group setting. This includes orphanages, small group homes, transit/interim care centres, children's homes, children's villages/cottage complexes, and boarding schools used primarily for care purposes and as an alternative to a children's home.

Family-based care[161]

A form of alternative care that involves a child living with a family other than his/her birth parents. This includes kinship care, foster care, adoption, kafala (an Islamic form of adoption), and supported child-headed households.

National child protection system

Save the Children describes a national child protection system as follows:
"A rights-based national child protection system recognises the State's responsibility and human rights obligations to children and provides governments with a coordinated and sustainable way to protect children. A good system is made up of a set of laws and policies;

a central government coordination mechanism with a clear mandate; effective regulation and monitoring at all levels; a committed, competent workforce; and child-friendly, non-discriminatory services, accessible to all children. Children and other members of society should be involved in developing and monitoring the system. And it must be connected with and support informal community mechanisms that are better placed to recognise problems and respond to them quickly, such as extended family, friends and neighbours, and religious and cultural networks." [162]

Positive parenting

The Council of Europe understands positive parenting as "... the upbringing of children in an environment that is respectful of the rights of the child and free from violence, while encouraging the equal involvement of both parents".[163]

Social protection

Save the Children has noted that there is no unified definition of 'social protection'. A review of existing definitions suggests however, that there is a common theme in these definitions: They all consider social protection measures to be concerned with the ways in which the resilience of individuals, households, or communities can be strengthened.[164]

The CRC General Principles: Articles 2, 3, 6, and 12

The right to non-discrimination: CRC Article 2 provides that: "States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the ... Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status." (CRC Article 2.1). The prohibition of discrimination does, however, not necessarily imply equal treatment for all children. Affirmative action, i.e. the "legitimate differentiation in treatment of individual children" is important to prevent and address marginalisation and exclusion. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has "consistently underlined the need to give special attention to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups".[165]

The best interests of the child: The general principle of the 'best interests of the child' under CRC Article 3 is a central and all-embracing principle: "... in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration". The right to non-discrimination, survival and development, and the respect for the child's views are all considered relevant when the best interests of the child are being assessed and determined.[166] The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that the principle of the best interests of the child be introduced into all legal provisions, projects and services relevant for children as well as judicial and administrative procedures and

decision making processes affecting children, including in the context of parental custody and alternative care. In order to ensure implementation of this general principle and its application in practice, professionals should be trained on how to conduct a best interest determination, and guidelines on how to make the principle operational should be developed. Thus far, international operational guidelines on best interests determinations have been developed by UNHCR for the specific situation of refugee children, although many aspects of the methodology and procedures described are relevant for other contexts as well.[167]

The right of the child to life, survival and development: The Committee on the Rights of the Child stated that Article 6 "…can only be implemented in a holistic manner, through the enforcement of all the other provisions of the Convention, including rights to health, adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living, a healthy and safe environment, education and play." [168] In this context, the Committee emphasised specifically that all the rights afforded under the CRC are inter-related and indivisible. In consequence, safeguarding children's economic and social rights is equally important for a child's survival and development, as is the enjoyment of the civil, cultural and political rights of the child.[169] Policies to strengthen and support families are therefore of critical relevance to ensure that children's right to life, survival and development is safeguarded from the very beginning.

The right of the child to have his or her views heard and taken into account: States have to assure that a child who is capable of forming his or her views has the right to express those views in all matters affecting her or him, and that these views be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (CRC Article 12). Children's right to be heard applies to social and political matters (Article 12.1) as well as judicial and administrative proceedings (Article 12.2). As a general principle, the child's right to be heard reflects the concept of children's 'agency' and a perception of children as informed decision makers and active members of society.

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[139] Save the Children, *Links for Children, Quarterly Progress Report for January – March 2012*, 20 April 2012, pp. 2-4, 9. The positive experience with strengthening the linkages between the local CPC and the State Child Protection Network were made in the Kaduna State.

[130] Save the Children, *Links for Children, Quarterly Progress Report for October – December 2011*, 20 January 2012, p. 6.

[131] Save the Children, *Links for Children, Quarterly Progress Report for October – December 2011*, 20 January 2012, pp. 6-7.

[132] Save the Children, *Links for Children, Quarterly Progress Report for October – December 2011*, 20 January 2012, pp. 6-7. Save the Children, *Links for Children, Quarterly Progress Report for January – March 2012*, 20 April 2012, pp. 2-4, 9. The positive experience with strengthening the linkages between the local CPC and the State Child Protection Network were made in the Kaduna State.

[133] Save the Children, *Links for Children, Quarterly Progress Report for January – March 2012,* 20 April 2012, pp. 4-5, 6, 15. Save the Children, *Links for Children, Quarterly Progress Report for October – December 2011*, 20 January 2012, pp. 7-9.

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