

Inter-Agency Review and Documentation

Child Protection Sub-Cluster Coordination in Uganda

26 May – 7 June 2008

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Executive Summary

The UNHCR-led global protection cluster is the only “dual mandated” cluster with a two-tiered leadership structure. In addition to the Cluster Lead Agency (UNHCR), designated Focal Point Agencies coordinate five speciality protection areas. Under this unique structure, UNICEF is the Focal Point Agency for Child Protection¹. According to current IASC guidance,² Focal Point Agencies are responsible for managing a cluster like response in each of their “areas of responsibility,” and should work to establish an appropriate coordination mechanism, develop area-specific needs assessment tools, build capacity of partners, establish benchmarks for response, and promote interagency standards within their areas of responsibility. They are also provider of last resort of their area of responsibility and required to work closely with the Protection Cluster coordinator to avoid duplication and address neglected protection concerns.⁴

Despite numerous cluster reviews and evaluations, little information exists about how the five areas of responsibility are coordinated and whether Focal Point Agencies have been successfully fulfilling their leadership commitment within the protection cluster.

Building on an initial interagency survey of child protection coordination mechanisms under the cluster approach in 8 countries, UNICEF offered support to the global Child Protection Working Group to better document how the child protection sub cluster in Uganda has affected interagency collaboration and response³. In particular, the mission was developed to better understand the model being developed in Uganda, with the aim of informing not only other child protection coordination mechanisms but also provide documentation to the PCWG as it develops a comprehensive coordination training program. The review focused on the broad issues of structure, partnership, gap-filling, predictability, and effectiveness. Documentation of emerging promising practice was also an underlying principle of the review.⁴

The review was not designed to evaluate the programmatic impact of the child protection response actors and coordination mechanism. Rather, it was designed to consider the elements of partnership, adapted structures, and collective activities with the working hypothesis that taken together these will create an enabling environment for more effective response. Key findings are listed below:

1) As compared to the pre-cluster child protection coordination structure, the sub-cluster resulted in a greater level of predictability and a more efficient, effective CP response in Northern Uganda.

¹ The PCWG is currently comprised of five functional speciality areas, each with a designated focal point agency: Child Protection (UNICEF), Gender Based Violence (UNFPA), Rule of Law (UNDP), Mine Action (UNMAS) and Land Housing and Property Rights (UNHABITAT).

² *Cluster Working Group on Protection Progress Report*, 12 December 2005.

³ At the global level, the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) conducted a survey in December 2007 to map the current coordination structures of child protection in eight cluster countries, finding that there were a wide range of mechanisms in place with varying perceptions of effectiveness.³

Uganda was identified as one of the countries which had made strong progress in improving coordination, and also represented one of the best-resourced child protection coordination mechanisms.

⁴ Mission terms of reference included in Annex I.

Prior to the cluster approach, the primary child protection coordination mechanism consisted of the National Psycho-social Support Core Team. This coordination body, however, faced a number of challenges: First, it took on a very narrow focus, limiting its mandate to promoting the psychosocial well-being of the affected population; second, it maintained limited connections with the field; and, lastly, it suffered from inconsistent leadership, resulting in its eventual collapse in 2005⁵.

Building on the strong child protection partnerships that existed in-country prior to the introduction of the cluster approach, the sub-cluster worked to revitalize agency collaboration via joint assessments, joint mapping and joint planning. Most significantly, the sub-cluster was able to agree upon and adopt a common approach, minimum standards for child protection committees, core competencies, and standard approaches for all affected areas, including introducing a systems approach at the sub-county level. These standards and guidelines and capacity building programme are now endorsed by the Government of Uganda, which is currently considering how to roll out some of the tools and approach devised by the sub-cluster in non-affected areas of the country.

Equally impressive, the sub-cluster succeeded in putting in place an extensive network of child protection actors – extending from the grassroots to the provincial level. The network maximized limited resources and built on the comparative advantage of respective agencies and communities. In brief, each sub-county was assigned a lead agency (an international or local NGO), which acted as the “port of first call” for child protection concerns in the area. Lead agencies trained child protection committees and provided technical support to the government focal point actors in each district. Furthermore, a comprehensive, standardized referral mechanism across agencies and provinces was established, allowing community members and service providers to effectively refer individual cases up and down the structure, and across regions.

Linkages between the five district sub-clusters and the national sub-cluster were also put in place, allowing the national sub-cluster to identify promising practices and develop evidence-based standards, policies, and tools for all affected areas. Field-based structures shared regular reports with the national sub-cluster, providing national actors with needed information to better identify common problems and gaps, and to develop more upstream advocacy campaigns.

Finally, the sub-cluster resulted in a more effective response because it adopted a progressive, systems approach in lieu of the traditional narrow focus on high risk groups of children. The strategic shift by the sub-cluster to building child protection systems resulted in a more holistic and efficient response. The current child protection committees and referral mechanism are designed to support *all* vulnerable children, regardless if they are formerly abducted children, survivors of sexual abuse, or orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDs.

2) Child Protection Committee Members and Government note an increased sense of national ownership over the child protection response and a renewed sense of responsibility towards vulnerable children in their communities.

One of the most striking changes associated with the sub-clusters is a remarkable shift away from NGO-centric ownership of child protection committees to a stronger sense of community ownership of committees. Child protection committees existed prior to the cluster – especially in camp settings – but were primarily viewed by the population as being NGO owned and supported. Often, parallel community-based child protection structures existed in sites, often resulting in competition or a duplication of services.

Under the sub-cluster strategy, child protection committees are now more community owned and directed. Although NGOs still play a major role in supporting grassroots’ structures and government

⁵ Although several meetings were organized post 2005, child protection actors in country generally considered the National PS Core team as a non-functional coordination mechanism after 2005.

actors, committee members reported that they are less likely to be seen as the extensions of their NGO partners, and more likely as community representatives working on behalf of children.

3) Government actors report that the sub-cluster has allowed them to better coordinate international and local actors, and that the new lead agency system introduced in June 2007 has enhanced the quality of their work.

Prior to the cluster system, government actors reported they had little knowledge about who was doing what, where. With the introduction of the sub-cluster, government actors are now more aware of NGO activities and interventions. In addition, the sub-cluster's common approach, network, and standards permit government actors to be more efficient and focused, allowing them to better respond to children's needs.

4) The Child Protection sub-cluster's "cluster-like" status has allowed Child Protection to remain fully visible within the OCHA led inter-cluster coordination structure.

In most clusterized countries, child protection actors complain that child protection is overshadowed by the broader protection agenda and often subsumed by the protection cluster. In Uganda, the child protection sub-cluster remains fully visible, especially in the inter-cluster coordination meetings. This can be attributed to its "cluster-like" status and the skilled leadership of the sub-cluster coordinator. In fact, child protection sits along side GBV and the UNHCR-led Protection Cluster as equal actors within the OCHA led monthly cluster coordination meetings and IASC team meetings. The Child protection coordination mechanism is referred to by OCHA and donors as a "cluster," not a sub-cluster. Despite this visibility, child protection is still not fully viewed as a cluster, and remains the step-child of Protection Cluster within UNICEF and the IASC country team.

5) The team identified a number of promising practices, including: the use of a dedicated coordinator for the sub-cluster's work; establishing an effective, two-way communication system between field-based and national coordination structures; and, establishing and managing a Lead Agency/Referral System across all affected areas.

UNICEF Uganda is one of the few UNICEF offices that supported a dedicated and highly experienced coordinator to lead the child protection response under the Protection Cluster. In addition, UNICEF also dedicated 25% of field coordinators' time to interagency collaboration. UNICEF has also succeed in firewalling the national sub-cluster coordinators' responsibilities from UNICEF programming, diminishing the risk of conflict of interest between the sectors interest and agency interest. UNICEF's decision to hire a neutral coordinator has allowed for more inclusive, less biased interagency leadership and resulted in a stronger sense of joint commitment to the success of the sub-cluster.

Furthermore, the two way communication system between the field and the national level should be examined in more depth and promoted in other countries. In many clusterized countries, field-based coordination structures operate independently from the national clusters. This leads to a more fragmented approach, duplication of efforts across affected areas, and missed opportunities for stronger advocacy. As in Uganda, the national coordination mechanism should focus on developing common positions, joint advocacy, and promoting common standards and approaches. Without a clear and mainstream communication architecture between the field and the nation level, this is impossible.

6) Members of the Protection Cluster have missed an opportunity to develop more integrated protection programming.

With the exception of Gender Based Violence and Child Protection, little effort has been made to capitalize on the rich membership of the Protection Cluster to promote more integrated protection programming. The Protection Cluster remains a collection of four independent structures: the UNHCR Lead Protection Cluster, which focuses on protection monitoring and advocacy, the GBV sub-cluster, the child protection sub-cluster and, most recently, the Human Rights and Rule of Law sub-cluster.

7) Although much progress has been made, the new Child Protection Network and structures developed and supported by sub-cluster members remain fragile, and have not yet resulted in better care and protection for all children identified by the system.

Although an extensive Child Protection Network and referral mechanism have been put in place, the system is still not fully functional, nor can it yet guarantee adequate follow-up and support for all children. Standard training programme to develop core competencies in child protection is underway⁶, but has not yet been fully implemented. The social service responses practices still remain inconsistent, and in some cases unreliable. Child Protection capacities remain uneven across districts, agencies and function.

Several partners cited examples of lead agencies not fulfilling their commitment to follow-up with children referred via the sub-cluster. Others expressed some level of frustration because they did not receive adequate information about referred cases. Although the overall collaboration between sub-cluster members remains strong, and standard terms of reference have been developed for lead agencies to clarify expectations, several sub-cluster members shared their concern that frustration and mistrust may undermine the significant gains made over the past 2 years. Mistrust is fueled by the lack of information sharing between agencies regarding how agencies have followed up on referred cases, non-delivery of services, and, in some instances, lead agencies perceived lack of commitment to fulfil their core responsibilities and functions outlined by the group.

⁶ At the time of the mission, the sub-cluster and GoU were conducting an intensive programme of ToT to prepare master child protection trainers. As of December 2008, over 2500 local officials, NGO workers and community-based protection actors have undergone training in at least one out of the 6 modules on child protection core competencies.

Introduction

Within the context of humanitarian reform and the enhanced coordination mechanisms endorsed by the IASC in 2005, the global protection cluster (Protection Cluster Working Group or PCWG) was established to facilitate a more predictable, accountable and effective response by humanitarian, human rights and development actors to protection concerns in humanitarian action. The PCWG represents the first systematic effort to bring together international protection actors from the human rights and humanitarian communities, with specialized as well as broad mandates, to develop an integrated protection response. As such, it was created with a unique structure, with the Cluster comprised of five distinct areas of responsibility with designated focal point agencies. This “dual mandate” to ensure predictable and accountable response in the areas of technical protection expertise, as well as develop comprehensive protection strategies, requires an especially strong capacity for and commitment to coordination among and between a diverse group of protection actors.

The UNHCR-led global protection cluster is currently comprised of five functional specialty areas, each with a designated focal point agency: Child Protection (UNICEF), Gender Based Violence (UNFPA), Rule of Law (UNDP), Mine Action (UNMAS) and Land Housing and Property Rights (UNHABITAT). According to current IASC guidance,⁷ focal point agencies are responsible for ensuring effective response within their technical area, establish appropriate coordination mechanism, develop area-specific needs assessment tools and contribute to cluster-wide mapping of protection priorities, build capacity of partners, establish benchmarks for response, and promote interagency standards within their areas of responsibility. They are designated as the provider of last resort in these specialized areas.

Generic terms of reference have been developed for cluster leadership at field level, but little attention has been given to the coordination of this particular protection structure. Recent evaluations of the cluster have, rather, tended to review the protection cluster as a homogenous group rather than noting the strategic and technically-focused elements of child protection, land and housing rights, rule of law, mine action, and gender-based violence.

At the global level, the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) conducted a survey in December 2007 to map the current coordination structures of child protection in eight cluster countries, finding that there were a wide range of mechanisms in place with varying perceptions of effectiveness.⁸ Uganda was identified as one of the countries which had made strong progress in improving coordination, and also represented one of the best-resourced child protection coordination mechanisms.

Aim of the Review and Documentation Project

UNICEF offered support to the global Child Protection Working Group to better document how the child protection sub cluster in Uganda has affected interagency collaboration and response. In particular, the mission was developed to better understand the model being developed in Uganda, with the aim of informing not only other child protection coordination mechanisms but also provide documentation to the PCWG as it develops a comprehensive coordination training program.

⁷ *Cluster Working Group on Protection Progress Report*, 12 December 2005.

⁸ See report on the global CPWG webpage under the protection cluster at www.humanitarianreform.org

The review focused on the broad issues of structure, partnership, gap-filling, predictability, and effectiveness. Documentation of emerging promising practice was also an underlying principle of the review.⁹

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Methodology

The review was designed and conducted by an inter-agency team which was established through a call for participation from the global CPWG. The team was composed of:

Brigitte De Lay, UNICEF
Christine Knudsen, OCHA
Martin Haynes, Christian Children's Fund

Regrettably, due to personal circumstances, Mr. Haynes was called away from the mission on the first day of field work and not able to participate in the interviews. He did, however, participate in developing the scope of the review and provided useful insights in the drafting process based on his previous experience working in Uganda.

The framework for the review was informed by the 2005 IASC Guidance Note, which notes that the aim of the cluster approach at country level is “to strengthen humanitarian response by demanding high standards of predictability, accountability, and partnership in all sectors or areas of activity. It is about achieving more strategic responses and better prioritization of available resources by clarifying the division of labor among organizations, better defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations within the sectors.” In addition, the review was informed by the 2005 PCWG Progress Note which first outlined the terms of reference for the areas of responsibility and the focal point agency role.

Development of the methodology was guided by key documents provided by the sub-cluster coordinator, including sub-cluster tools, monthly district reports, meeting minutes, strategy documents (child protection and protection), advocacy statements, and appeal documents (CAP and flash appeal).

Field work was facilitated by UNICEF and conducted in Kampala as well as three field sites: Gulu, Lira, and Kitgum. At each field site, a core group of key informants was interviewed at the district level and at one sub-county location¹⁰. This core group consisted of:

- CP sub-cluster coordinator
- Members of the Child protection Sub-Cluster
- District government counterparts (Senior Community Development Officers, Probation and Social Welfare Officers)
- District government counterparts at sub-county level (CDOs, ACDOs)
- NGO lead agencies at sub-county level
- Members of the child protection community structures.
- Protection cluster coordinator
- OHCHR coordinator of the rule of law/human rights sub-cluster

⁹ Mission terms of reference included in Annex I.

¹⁰ See Annex IV for guiding questions asked of key informants.

- UNFPA coordinator of the gender-based violence sub-cluster
- OCHA staff working on inter-cluster coordination

More than 150 individuals were consulted during the mission, through interviews and focus group discussions, including community members, government authorities, donors, and UN/NGO staff.

Focus Group Discussions

At all four locations (Kampala, Gulu, Kitgum, Lira), semi-structured focus group discussions were held with NGO and CBO members of the child protection sub-cluster, without participation of government or UNICEF members. These focus groups were conducted around two exercises to elicit frank opinions and deeper understanding of the motivations and perceived value of partnership within the group.

The first exercise was developed around a Venn diagram which asked members to identify the range of actors relevant to the sub-cluster, and then place circles in a way to represent levels of participation or engagement. From this, the focus group explored how engagement is gauged, evolution of the group's work, differences in local and international organizations' engagement, and the role of other potential actors.



The second exercise was framed by a survey based on the Principles of Partnership, which asked each individual to anonymously respond to the survey which was later mapped and used as the basis for the focus group. Issues of equality, transparency, responsibility, and results-based collaboration were discussed as related to the child protection sub-cluster's current and future partnership and work.¹¹

	NOT	SOME	SUBS.
EQUALITY			
1. Influence decision agenda		6 dots	4 dots
2. Influence decisions		4 dots	6 dots
3. Treated equal member		4 dots	6 dots
4. Can express dissent		4 dots	6 dots
COMPLEMENTARITY			
1. Diverse capacities considered		4 dots	4 dots
2. LINGOs contribute perspective + own capacities		4 dots	6 dots
3. Collaboration sub-clusters		4 dots	6 dots
4. Collaboration Prot. cluster		4 dots	6 dots
5. Collaboration other clusters		4 dots	6 dots

Questionnaire

At the end of each focus group, participants were also asked to complete a questionnaire to help the review team systematize their analysis across the different districts and to gather a maximum amount of information from a range of actors in limited time. Importantly, the questionnaires solicited concrete examples of the issues raised during focus group discussions.¹² In addition, other key informants were invited to complete these forms to complement the information received from the sub-cluster members.

Although respondents were assured of anonymity in the overall analysis, each was invited to provide their organization's contact information for additional follow-up from the review

¹¹ See Annex III for the full Principles of Partnership survey.

¹² See Annex II for the questionnaire.

team. Forty-eight questionnaires were received and selected individuals were contacted by telephone for additional information or clarity.

Limitations and Constraints

The review methodology was piloted during this mission and, as a result, some minor adjustments were made in terms of additional questions, additional informants, and facilitation of focus group discussions. The team was pleased that these modifications have resulted in a stronger approach for eventual replication in other countries with the CPWG and/or other cluster actors.

In particular, the team noticed some misinterpretation of terms in different districts. This was attributed to the range of participation (more/less experienced) and to the different terms used to explain “clusters”, “sub-clusters”, “working groups”, as well as a range of terminology used to describe the previous coordination structures. During interviews and focus group discussions these could be quickly corrected and understood, but did remain a potential limitation in the written questionnaire.

Although the team noted a very high degree of candor and confidence in sharing frank opinions during the focus groups and interviews, it is possible that the presence of UNICEF staff on the review team could have influenced some participants to temper their comments.

The review team also remained conscious of the challenge of focusing on a specific area of work (child protection) within a complex system of multi-sectoral coordination with government, UN, NGO, and other participants. For this reason, the review focuses on a descriptive analysis of the current structures and perception of how these structures have enabled a more effective response. In no way did the review aim to attribute specific cause or consequences to changes in the structures or aim to evaluate programmatic impact based on these structures.

Ugandan Context and Coordination Structures

From a child protection perspective, the 22 year old conflict in Northern Uganda represents one of the most notorious wars against children in recent history. It is estimated that over 25,000 children were abducted by the Lords Resistance Army and forced to kill and maim others. Displacement was widespread and community security in the North practically non-existent. In 2005 alone, it was estimated that as many as 40,000 children and youth were night commuting to city centers each night to escape the possibility of abduction.

Humanitarian access to the conflict affected areas remained limited at best and little assistance was provided until the mid 80s when numerous agencies established operations in the North. Save the Children, IRC World Vision, War Child and others made up the core of child protection. In the early years, they focused primarily on demobilizing children and reintegration.

The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of 26 August 2006 between the Government and the LRA offered the first tangible sign of peace in the region. Although the situation remains uncertain and no Peace Agreement has been signed, hopes of stability in the region sparked a

large return of IDPs to their homes and communities. By March 2008 in Acholi sub-region, 36 % of IDPs (402,316) were estimated to have moved out of camps and in transit sites, while 12% (132,066) of former IDPs had returned in their villages of origin. Furthermore, numerous schools and other basic services have been opened and some basic infrastructure put back in place.

As threats of abduction, forced recruitment, and mass displacement diminish, the risks of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect remains high. Recent studies also indicate that although the majority of formerly abducted children are doing well, a significant number still face stigma and isolation. At the time of the review, poverty –not conflict - represented the number one threat to children in Northern Uganda. Several assessments indicate that protection concerns have shifted from egregious rights violations directly associated with the conflict (i.e. recruitment) to indirect consequences of displacement and poverty, such as forced early marriages, transactional sex, domestic violence and rape¹³.

Previous coordination around child protection

Prior to the adoption of the cluster approach in Uganda, selected child protection agencies demonstrated a tradition of interagency collaboration. In 2005 under the leadership of the MGLSD and with the support of selected NGOs and UNICEF, the government established a Psychosocial National Core Team to better coordinate interventions across Uganda, including efforts in the North. Psychosocial work included non-humanitarian work and targeted the community and country as a whole. The national team remained active until 2006, when leadership faltered and the structure essentially collapsed.

The disbandment of the government-managed National Psycho-Social Core Team coincided with the establishment and rise of the child protection sub-cluster as the premiere child protection coordination forum. Although child protection actors considered merging the two structures, the group opted to create the new sub cluster. Unlike the Core Team, this new coordination structure limited its focus to children and humanitarian work in the North and expanded its focus beyond psychosocial care. Many of members of the two groups essentially remained the same, but the sub-cluster created a new vision supported by an injection of resources and interest.

Introduction of the IASC cluster approach in Uganda

Although formally introduced in November 2005, the cluster approach did not become fully functional in the country until the second half of 2006. 6 clusters were established, including the UNHCR led Protection Cluster. OCHA provided agencies and clusters with basic support, but it should be noted that as one of the first pilot countries, guidance and direction was not always available to Uganda's humanitarians.

Under the Protection Cluster, three sub-cluster, including Rule of Law, GBV and Child Protection, were eventually established. UNHCR as cluster lead agency and UNFPA, OHCHR and UNICEF as Focal Point Agencies work both together and independently to

¹³ Durable Solutions Pilot Assessment in Lalogy sub-county, Gulu district, April 2008; The State of Youth and Youth Protection in Northern Uganda: Findings from the Survey for War Affected Youth, UNICEF/AVSI, September 2006 (Phase II report April 2008)

ensure a more predictable, efficient and reliable response for protection as a whole, as well as for specialized protection responses within each of their specific areas of responsibility.

Child Protection sub-cluster

Throughout 2006, child protection issues in the North were primarily discussed within the broader protection cluster at the national level, with no separate sub-cluster. At the field level, however, coordination meetings co-chaired by the District authorities and UNICEF were organized on a monthly basis in the key districts of Lira, Gulu, Kitgum and Pader.

To address the child protection coordination gap between Kampala and the field, UNICEF with the endorsement of the IASC introduced a new national coordination position in December 2006 and the sub-cluster was established soon after in January 2007. Not only are resources dedicated to ensure a full time coordinator at the national level, but significant resources are earmarked to support leadership at the district level. The sub-cluster is also comprised of an active membership of local and international NGOs at both the national and District level, as well as government representatives at the District level. Early sub-cluster minutes indicate a conscious effort to establish a coordination mechanism that adopted the spirit and principles of the cluster approach, including a strong focus on equal partnership, results and supporting neutral, sector wide leadership.¹⁴

Once established, the national sub-cluster moved quickly to address a number of child protection gaps in the North. Several ambitious Child Protection sub-cluster and Government assessments, workshops and projects were initiated. In 18 months, the sub-cluster succeed in conducting a national review of the 130 child protection community based structures, organize planning workshops at the national and district level, develop minimum standards for community based structures, launch a national training program for child protection actors, establish a referral mechanism with standard ToRs for lead agencies in each of the districts, and develop a standard reporting mechanism. Interestingly, the sub-cluster decided to secure IASC endorsement for its work as well as the MGLSD (for most products), resulting in IASC (verses Child Protection Sub-cluster) and MGLSD sponsored work and projects. A detailed chronology of the key events and developments is provided below.

¹⁴ Kampala based Child Protection Sub-Cluster Minutes of the first meeting held on January 2007.

CHILD PROTECTION SUBCLUSTER (CPSC)

Chronology of Key Events and Developments

DATES	EVENT
February 2007	First National CPSC Meeting
March 2007	Contingency Plan
April 2007	CPSC develops Advocacy Note against the forced removal of children from the street – CPSC secures endorsement from IASC, resulting in an IASC statement
April-May 2007	CPSC commissions an interagency review of community based child protection committees in conflict affected areas - Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) endorses review
May 2007-December 2007	CPSC coordinator takes on leadership of the GBV subcluster
June 2007	First national Government/IASC workshop to discuss findings of the CPSC interagency Child Protection Committee Review - Key outcomes include a decision to develop minimum standards for community based Child Protection Committees and a national, standardized child protection training program for committee members, local officials and field staff.
July 2007	ToR for Lead Agency system at sub-county level – Modeled after the Pader experience
August 2007	CAP MYR and OPM launch of Parish Approach
September 2007	Standard Monthly CPC reporting format developed and endorsed.
	2008 CAP preparation – reflects a CP systems approach
	Issuance of draft IASC/MGLSD “Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles for the establishment and support of Child Protection Community Based Structures”
September - October 2007	Teso Flood Response (joint CP/GBV response) – Two NGOs, ABS and CCF, act as district CP subcluster coordinators

DATES	EVENT
September/October 2007	UNICEF announces termination of support to Livelihoods and Psychosocial Support programming in 2007
October 2007	First National CPSC consultation on Child Protection in Transition – Key output included the development of a standardized mapping tool to identify resources and contacts at the subcounty level.
November 2007	Field Consultation on IASC/MGLSD Minimum Standards on Child Protection Community Based Structures in Acholi, Lango and Teso.
December 2007	<p>Draft of IASC/MGLSD Child Protection Training Material Shared – included 5 training modules targeting community members, government and NGO child protection actors</p> <p>Draft of Peace Recovery Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) circulated</p>
February 2008	Multi-district Child Protection and GBV Workshops organized to outline a regional CP strategy and District Work Plans – workshops held in Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Lira, Soroti and Moroto
March 2008	Parish Approach and Cluster Standards outlined
April 2008	Karamoja Intergrated Disarmament and Development Plan
February-June 2008	<p>Joint IASC/MGLSD CP Capacity Building Program Launched – Ministy focal point appointed to support national capacity building efforts – Key results include: 10 day training program piloted, Master Training course piloted, guidance on how to conduct referrals, development of standard monthly CP reporting form, printing a standards and training modules.</p>

Transition Phase: moving from emergency to development in the North

At the time of the mission, the Government of Uganda and the humanitarian community were engaged in dialogue about how to best to phase out clusters and/or handover cluster coordination responsibilities to government counterparts¹⁵. Although it is too soon to adequately document how child protection coordination mechanisms would change as a result of transition, a number of issues and concerns were raised by child protection actors regarding how and when to fully “hand over” child protection sub-cluster activities to government counterparts on the national level.

Recovery plans appeared to follow two parallel processes – one lead by the government (commonly known as the Parish Approach) and one supported by OCHA with Clusters Partners.¹⁶ Although sub-national actors participated in decentralized planning that fed into the national plan, national clusters were only involved in national planning on a limited basis. Despite this, the Child Protection sub-cluster, along with their GBV counterparts, actively sought out opportunities to engage and influence the government led national recovery plan.

In addition to national recovery planning, the IASC country team pressed clusters to develop exit strategies. At the time of the visit, members of the protection cluster did not reach an agreement on the pace or method of cluster closure/phase out. Whereas the UNHCR-led Protection Cluster adopted a Framework for Durable Solutions – deactivating clusters when displacement caused by the LRA ends¹⁷, they did so without the full agreement of many of the Focal Point Agencies. The child protection sub-cluster did not sign on to this process as the final determination for cluster closure, nor did they participate in planned assessment exercise conducted at the time of the visit. In Lira, for example, UNHCR closed down the sub-national protection cluster based on the results of the durable solutions assessment, but the child protection sub-cluster continued to operation under the supervision of the National Sub-cluster. Many child protection sub-cluster members considered the Lira assessment a post-facto exercise to justify a pre-determined decisions to close down UNHCR operations.

Tensions between protection cluster members about how best to phase out the cluster as a whole – versus phasing down areas of responsibilities separately- stems from its unique structure and broad mandate. The Protection Cluster is made up of both *pure* humanitarian organizations that generally close up shop once a crisis is over and other organizations that take on both emergency and development mandates. Unlike emergency organizations, development agencies are committed to on-going partnership with government structures to ensure smooth transition on on-going support. In addition, child protection actors often have a clear government counterpart to handover to. Broader protection actors generally have no clear government counterpart. This has a number of implications for how organizations transition and opportunities for continued collaboration during the recovery phase. With such diverse institutional mandates, is unlikely that there will be one consolidated approach to protection cluster closure or handover in Uganda – or in any other cluster situation.

¹⁵ See “Adapting the Clusters During Transition in Uganda: Draft for Discussion”, IASC April 2008 Meeting

¹⁶ DHRPP

¹⁷ Draft Protection Cluster Strategy 2008: The Framework for Durable Solutions was developed by the Representative of the UN Secretary-general on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and differentiates between two consecutive phases: 1) the process to achieve durable solutions and 2) conditions to be met.

Challenges associated with representation of child protection within humanitarian coordination mechanisms

The initial 2007 global CPWG survey on child protection and the cluster approach highlighted that child protection – as an area of responsibility - is at risk of being overshadowed by the broader protection work and become invisible within the cluster system. Uganda, for the most part, offers an exception to this common concern. Although the sub-cluster coordinator must still advocate for recognition as an independent areas of responsibility with “cluster-like” leadership responsibilities within the IASC country team and UNICEF, the child protection sub-cluster is fully visible at the inter-cluster working level. The Sub-cluster coordinator standardly participates in inter-cluster meetings, along side the GBV sub-cluster coordinator. Furthermore, the sub-cluster is commonly referred to by senior OCHA staff and donors as a “cluster” and is considered on equal footing as the UNHCR-led protection cluster. Uganda’s cluster like status can be attributed to strong leadership by the sub-cluster coordinator, dynamic partnership among subcluster members and its clear focus on results

Partnership

Based on the result of focus groups and discussions with key actors in the child protection coordination structures (national, district, and sub-county) there has been a significant change in quality of partnership over the past year. This change can be seen to be linked to developing common or joint activities, shared vision and direction, better exchange of information, and clarified roles and responsibilities among actors.

The sub-cluster made a strategic decision to build partnership through functional cooperation and concrete joint activities. As one of their first activities, the group engaged partners in developing a comprehensive review of more than 130 existing child protection community structures in Acholi, Lango, and Teso in early 2007. The review, undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MGLSD), provided a common information base for considering a joint work strategy and establishing priorities. A workshop was held in June with 65 representatives of government, NGO, CBOs, and UN identifying two clear activities of agreed importance: minimum standards for all child protection structures and training materials which would build capacity to these minimum standards. The resulting document, *The Way Forward*¹⁸, summarized the process of review and consultations with multiple and diverse stakeholders, highlighting gaps in response and policy as well as potential assets, and outlined recommendations which effectively became the road map for the child protection sub-cluster. By ensuring both an inclusive process and a concrete output, the sub-cluster rapidly built a shared direction for the group.

In focus group discussions, the review team explored the idea of partnership and the degrees of engagement that various stakeholders demonstrated in the group. “Meaningful engagement” in the sub-cluster was most often seen by NGOs as not only sharing information with other members but in taking on additional activities on behalf of the group beyond organizational mandates and programs. Previously, simply attending meetings was seen to be a sufficient level of commitment. As an indication of perceived value in the partnership, most members indicate that they are spending about 2-3 days per month on sub-cluster work (meetings, reporting, common activities), a substantial time commitment, yet they wished that

¹⁸ www.ugandaclusters.ug/childprotection

they could in fact spend more time as they see a direct benefit from the improved coordination for their own work and that of their agency. Against a global assumption that too much time is taken in coordination meetings, this was a clear indication of the value which partners ascribe to the structures and their outputs. It is also, however, a clear reminder that inter-agency collaboration requires additional time and resources, above and beyond programmatic or management responsibilities, for partner organizations as well as designated coordinators. Regardless of the value of structures in place, this tension will always remain and the scope of partnership will, in part, continue to be defined as a function of both individual prioritization and institutional commitment.

Although partnership is clearly more than exchange of information, the improved communication of information was seen as one of the most significant and valued contributions which the coordination structures has made. Government and NGOs noted that the simple, systematic exchange of information via standard reporting formats from the *sub-county to district*, *district to national*, and *national back to districts* was a key improvement. The communication across levels allowed for innovations to be noted and taken to scale; a model of sub-county lead agencies emerged in Pader and was eventually standardized across districts. The information exchange allowed for stronger coordination at each level and increased the linkages between NGOs and government counterparts significantly. It was also noted that this information exchange allowed for more effective advocacy, both at central and district level, as messages were based on more accurate information and field realities were able to quickly inform policy discussions at the national level.

Government particularly noted that their communication has been improved between national and district levels, as well as district and sub-county levels, through a centralized exchange of information by lead agencies and CDOs jointly. The creation of standardized reporting forms for all actors (community committees, community development officers, and NGO/UN) have facilitated this process and allowed for easier analysis of common data sets.¹⁹

The less tangible effects are also significant, as partners noted that this exchange also fostered trust and collegiality, collective engagement, and clarity about roles and responsibilities. Accountability was seen to be enhanced at all levels, as action points were shared by all and therefore monitored by all.

Another element in fostering trust, transparency, and equality has been in the designation of lead agencies with clear responsibilities at the sub-county level.²⁰ It is clear, however, that this remains a rather tentative arrangement, as some members noted their frustration with some lead agencies not fulfilling those responsibilities. Members may not be willing to raise such “embarrassing” issues at a full sub-cluster meeting, but non-delivery is likely to negatively effect partnership as confidence wanes. Quality in services and reporting is essential for these partnerships to succeed in

Quality in services and reporting is essential for these partnerships to succeed in building stronger child protection systems and capacities; members and coordinators should jointly find means of addressing these issues of non-delivery on referrals or commitments in a systematic manner.

¹⁹ The standardized reporting formats are available on the group's website. Sub-county reporting tool at <http://www.ugandaclusters.ug/dwnlds/0309Protect/CP/SCRepTool.pdf>. District reporting tool at <http://www.ugandaclusters.ug/dwnlds/0309Protect/CP/DistRepTool.pdf>

²⁰ Terms of Reference for lead agencies at sub-county level at <http://www.ugandaclusters.ug/dwnlds/0309Protect/CP/SCRepTool.pdf>.

building stronger child protection systems and capacities; members and coordinators should jointly find means of addressing these issues of non-delivery on referrals or commitments in a systematic manner.

A certain tension remains in perceptions of how international and national NGOs are able to influence the partnership and joint decisions differently, although there has been some positive movement. At district level, many of the LNGOs are fully dependent upon UNICEF funding and find this funding to be a critical determinant of their participation. As such, they may await direction from UNICEF rather than feel free to contribute their own perspective in cases where they feel doing so could endanger their funding; the sub-cluster coordinator maintains responsibility for bilateral funding as well as coordination. Importantly, this was noted as less of a concern at national level, where the sub-cluster coordinator does not have a responsibility for UNICEF programming funding decisions.

At district level, a number of members noted that if they stopped receiving funding they would no longer participate in the forum. Some noted that they participated in the hopes that they would receive funding in the future. INGOs noted this as less of a determinant in their partnership, as they have more diversified funding bases. This perceived conflict of interest in UNICEF as donor and as coordinator at this level should be carefully considered as there is a risk of compromised engagement by LNGOs and CBOs in particular. Firewalling of the functions at the national level has clearly helped in that perception.

Influence over decisions was not, however, only linked to financial resources. As one LNGO member put it,

“Before, only the internationals decided what would be done. Now there is more respect for what we bring to the table. The weight at the table isn’t only about money. We earn the weight by bringing our knowledge of communities and approaches and years of experience.”

This complementarity, while not noted as strongly in all districts, seems to be a positive development which should be conscientiously fostered by coordinators. Concerns about funding and participation were most clearly highlighted in Lira, where many humanitarian agencies are beginning to withdraw funding and presence. As funding is reduced, these tensions are likely to be exacerbated across the region in the coming year and could lead to more fractious partnerships rather than building complementarity and strategic use of scarce resources.

Predictability

The generic terms of reference for cluster leads looks at several activities to enhance predictability through the cluster approach. By analogy and as guidance for sub-cluster focal points, these would typically include identifying gaps and ensuring means of response, developing strategies and action plans in an inclusive manner, development of standards and tools, responding to new needs, and ensuring consideration of a transition or exit strategy.

Partners noted a marked change in the level of predictability within the sub-cluster as a result of more systematic communication, joint mapping of services and gaps, development of specific tools and minimum standards, as well as capacity-building strategies. There is, however, a need to build more predictability in responding to identified gaps and to new

needs as they arise. A transition strategy is emerging as the child protection actors move more towards developing national systems rather than direct service delivery, and more articulation of this strategy will further strengthen predictable action for the next 12-18 months²¹.

Identifying and responding to gaps

One of the first tools introduced through the sub-cluster was a mapping of services, government structures and community mechanisms related to child protection at the sub-county level. The mapping represented a sort of specialized, more sophisticated “who does what where,” and provided service providers with a directory of services and contact persons. The tool not only identified under-served areas and duplication of efforts across agencies, partners also noted that the use of the tool itself served to build functional partnerships based on an understanding of different stakeholders’ capacities. Government partners, for instance, noted that the mapping allowed them to better recommend areas for new agencies to focus, illustrated where state resources could be better prioritized, and led to more transparent discussions with non-governmental actors.

The mapping clearly identified where these gaps lay and, in some cases, led to more strategic use of resources. A striking example was given in Lira where national NGOs had nearly finalized a funding arrangement with an international donor for a specific location, but when they presented this proposal at a sub-cluster meeting, the members encouraged the donor and the partners to reconsider the location of the project based on the geographic gaps highlighted in the mapping. The donor agreed to fund the same activities but agreed to change the location to an underserved area.

In Kitgum, the mapping and subsequent coordination meetings resulted in organizations agreeing to establish programs in “hard to reach” sub-counties, with new programs now underway in Lagoro and Amoro. As members of the cluster noted, the change in the security situation would have allowed this expansion to happen over time; they noted that the sub-cluster allowed it to happen much more quickly and in a more strategic fashion.

Likewise, the coordination structure and mapping exercise allowed the group to identify areas of programmatic duplication and gaps, or a need to adapt programming to an evolving context. In Gulu, for instance, child protection actors had focused extensively at the sub-county level to expand geographic coverage and then noted that the municipalities had been neglected to the benefit of rural areas. As security conditions allowed return and more freedom of movement throughout the north, demographics in these urban and peri-urban areas had changed significantly. In early 2008, a group of CBOs and local government authorities put forth to the sub-cluster a vulnerability assessment proposal which was funded by the group. As a result of the review²², the local NGO Charity for Peace, for instance, expanded from its traditional material support to night commuters to focus further on family tracing, peer counseling, and family mediation activities to facilitate children returning to their homes and families.

²¹ Refer to the CAP 2008 for more details on the the emerging strategy, including building more functional systems at the local level by setting minimum standards, outlining minimum structures needed in each locality and developing core competencies for child protection volunteers, NGOs and government staff..

²² *When will I Matter: An Assessment of Urban Vulnerability in Gulu Municipality*
(<http://www.ugandaclusters.ug/dwnlds/0309Protect/CP/UrbanVulnerabilityAssessmentGulu.doc>)

Although these examples illustrate how some key gaps have been identified and addressed, it should be noted that the majority of sub-cluster members, government, and coordinators agreed that while the group has made progress in identifying gaps, the capacity to respond to those gaps remains inconsistent and weak. To some degree this is a reflection of capacities and resources on the ground, as well as a delay in shifting resources to priority areas. Historically, these gaps can also be explained by the fact that many of the geographic areas have been almost completely inaccessible for years due to security concerns and therefore one could expect a lag in services and monitoring in those locations.

The review team did, however, note with concern that a small number of serious gaps in service were raised by partners, including management of individual child protection cases and referrals to lead agencies. When these cases were not acted upon by the lead agencies, there was little or no reporting back to the referring organization and limited recourse to follow the case. In at least one documented case, this had severe consequences which were due to gaps in this referral and management system. This type of gap in service and oversight requires rapid attention by the sub-cluster and its members.

Quality of services

Predictability does not refer only to geographic and programmatic scope, but also in developing standards for child protection work across agencies. The sub-cluster identified the variety of child protection community structures as a particular area of inconsistency, both in their structures and in the level of services being provided. This realization led to the assessment of the CPC structures in 2007 as a first step in identifying priorities.

The Guiding Principles and Minimum Standards for establishing and supporting Community-Based Child Protection Structures, the Terms of Reference for Lead Agencies as well as the concept note on child protection systems at sub-county level²³ have been developed and endorsed by the members of the sub-cluster and endorsed by the relevant government authorities to ensure that all committees have a minimum representative structure. This includes at a minimum: one Community Development Officer, one Lead Agency and one operational Child Protection Committee in each sub-county. As the first step, the sub-cluster focused on ensuring structure is in place and is taking additional steps now to build capacity to bring up to the expected standards. As indicated by the chart below, sub-clusters aim to establish basic structures in each sub-county resulted in a dramatic increase in geographic coverage.

Percentage of Sub-Counties with Child Protection Systems established according to agreed criteria

	October 2007	June 2008
Gulu	36%	47%
Amuru	25%	63%
Kitgum	42%	40%
Lira	21%	48%
Pader	36%	37%
Apac	0	14%
Oyam	0	14%
Katakwi	12%	12%
Amuria	11%	11%

²³ A fully functional system will have the capacity to adequately identify, support, refer, follow-up and report on CP cases. It is estimated that less than half of those in place are yet fully functional at mid-year.

Standards and tools

As already noted above, more effective information exchange and systematic communication about strategies and results led to enhanced partnership and learning across districts throughout the north. It is also of interest to see how this exchange has also led to more consistency and predictable levels of child protection work across the districts. Taking again the example of Pader, the tools that were developed there have been able to be brought to scale and will in fact now inform government policy for the entire national child welfare systems policy moving forward.

The district-level CPWG had initiated efforts to build more effective protection coordination and response at the sub-county level as populations began moving out of camps and as geographic coverage became increasingly difficult to coordinate. Within this context, the CPWG nominated a child protection focal point agency for each of the 19 sub-counties and drafted terms of reference for this role. Significantly, the primary task of these lead agencies would be to support the CDO, moving away from a substitution for government as in the camp settings and moving towards building the capacity of relevant authorities to undertake their statutory responsibilities as District Community Services Officials. These lead agencies support local authorities in building the capacity of community-based structures, as well as provide mapping of services, and coordination. They provide regular summary reports to both the CPWG as well as the relevant district-level authorities for information and analysis.

Although the terms of reference and the system of reporting, coordination and accountability are well understood by all parties interviewed by the review team, it was noted that concerns remain as the system has not yet found a functional way to address non-compliance with the terms of reference. In some cases, this has been done through a private discussion between the organization, the CPWG lead, and government authorities when an alternative lead agency can be proposed; in other cases where an alternative does not exist, the function of “lead” remains unfulfilled. This has implications for partnership within the groups, as noted above, but significantly also risks undermining the sense of predictability of services, including referrals, monitoring, and reporting.

As a complementary strategy to address predictable systems and services, the sub-cluster has also developed an inter-agency training program to develop core competencies for all staff, authorities, CPC members, and other stakeholders.²⁴ The training modules ensure common understanding of community-based approaches, referral systems, confidentiality, and participation among other issues. The program has been tested and is now in the phase of training district-level trainers to expand the scope of the capacity-building effort. Taken in conjunction with the establishment of child protection systems and effective reporting, this program demonstrates an important initial investment towards transition and recovery.

In addition to these, a number of tools and standards were developed to build consistency and predictability of action. It is helpful to note, however, that they also have reduced or mitigated harmful practices. For instance, one government partner noted that some agencies had previously targeted individual children for support without regard to their community or family, leading to “stigma through privilege,” social resentment. As a direct result of this practice, vulnerable children were seen as the responsibility of the NGO rather than the responsibility of the community. International good practice advocates for community-based

²⁴ The training modules and facilitators' guide are available: <http://www.ugandaclusters.ug/childprotection.htm>.

approaches and the sub-cluster's development of common principles has ensured that work is now brought in line with this community model. The government partner noted that she had seen a marked change in community engagement with vulnerable cases as a result. This observation was confirmed by the three child protection committees interviewed.

Response to new needs and changing contexts: the Teso flood

The 2007 Teso flood response can also be identified as a successful example of how the sub-cluster promoted the cluster goal of increased predictability. In collaboration with the GBV sub-cluster, the national sub-cluster responded immediately to the floods by conducting a joint assessment in the early days of the emergency and arranging regular coordination meetings to plan the initial response. A specific Child Protection and GBV sub-cluster strategy for the flood areas was outlined in September 2007 and included a detailed plan of action with clear tasks, roles and responsibilities of participating agencies. Key interventions included establishing a functional child protection coordination team under the leadership of two NGOs – Christian's Children's Fund (CCF) and Arbeiter Samilar Bund (ABS) - in Amuria and Katakwi districts, setting up a monitoring mechanism to better respond to emerging child protection concerns, identifying a lead agency at the sub-county level to mobilize and provide child protection and GBV support, expanding the GBV referral network to cover the affected area, and putting in place psychosocial programs for affected communities.²⁵ The ability of the sub-cluster to quickly address a new and distinct, non-conflict emergency in a completely different area of the country is an indication of improved predictability through strong leadership, functional partnerships, vision and adaptability.

Advocacy

In addition to improved predictability and partnership, the sub-cluster also acted as a more unified lobby for child protection at the national and district level. Interviewees cited several examples of successful sub-cluster advocacy campaigns, including the powerful IASC position paper issued in response to the government's forced removal of street children in March 2008²⁶ and work at the inter-cluster level to ensure that child protection was adequately integrated into food security initiatives and transition planning. At the district level, field clusters work together to promote the systems approach and improve coordination among government, NGOs and communities. These efforts are distinct from prior advocacy campaigns because they represented a more "unified child protection voice" within the protection cluster, across sectors, at the IASC level and in Uganda, and have resulted in increased visibility for child protection within the national context, as well as within the humanitarian community.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

The review's findings suggest that the sub-cluster facilitated a more effective and efficient child protection response. The significant investment to build consensus and partnership

²⁵ Child Protection and Gender Based Violence Sub-Clusters Strategy and Response for Teso Flood-Affected Districts September 2007.

²⁶ IASC Position Paper on the March 2008 Removal of Children Living and Working on the Streets of Kampala and their Confinement at Kampirigisa National Rehabilitation Centre

among a diverse group of child protection actors through joint assessments, planning and inter-agency projects resulted in a loose “social compact” among sub-cluster members. As a result, the overall child protection response was more coordinated and cohesive – with clear national standards and guidelines, and clearer mandates and accountability. This created a more dynamic network of government, NGOs and community committees that was able to reach more children and expand the scope of services.

One of the most significant changes that resulted from the new approach promoted by the sub-cluster was noted at sub-county level. Previously, NGOs would engage communities to establish their own projects with community committees. There was a sense that the NGO “owned” the committee. With the development of more systematized approaches, mapping, and identification of a “lead” agency with the district government fully engaged, several changes were noted. These include:

- Community felt that *they* now owned the child protection committee.
- Government had a clear idea of services available and accountable partners.
- Government was more empowered to note areas lacking coverage and encourage partners to expand.
- More efficient use of resources noted by the NGOs and UN partners in the CPWG.
- Group can (and has) directed donors to under served areas. For instance, the EU approached two local NGOs in Lira for funding of CP activities for specific sub-counties, but after consultation with the CPWG they shifted to different sub-counties lacking coverage.

Missed Opportunities

Although some examples of integrated protection work with Human Rights/ROL, GBV and others were cited²⁷, several interviewees mentioned missed opportunities to support more integrated protection work within the broader protection cluster and across other sectors. For instance, it was noted that the development of the HCR-led returns and protection monitoring framework could have been more inclusive and should have more thoroughly considered linkages to response. Both monitoring groups and those receiving referral information noted this disconnect. Other missed opportunities cited included child protection non-engagement in land tenure issues and RoL initiatives, as well poor referral networks between child protection and other protection actors.

Promising Practice

Although the purpose of the review was not to evaluate the clusters direct impact on children, several promising coordination practices were identified. These include:

Establishing a strong two-way information sharing mechanism: National and district level sub-clusters regularly exchanged information using standard reporting forms and benefited from each others areas of influence and experience. On the national level, the sub-cluster used information and innovations from the field to inform policy and advocacy efforts, while on the district level, sub-cluster coordinators acted as a conduit for information from the capital, as well as pilot sites for rolling out the national sub-cluster strategy. Field sub-

²⁷ The GBV and child protection collaboration under the protection cluster is very strong and includes joint planning and strategies.

clusters also actively participated in national decision making. This two way information stream promoted a strong field – national link and reinforced the overall child protection response.

Consistency of terms of reference for leadership at all levels: The ToR established for the global cluster coordinators was adopted by the national sub-cluster, as well as the district level coordination mechanisms. Child protection meetings reveal consistent reference to the core principles of cluster leadership and the neutral spirit of the coordination. This consistency clearly reinforced messages of coordination, effectiveness, and action.

Joint assessments, resource mapping and the establishment of clear referral pathways. One of the strengths of the Uganda sub-cluster was its ability to bring together a wide range of child protection actors and to create a common sense of purpose and way of working. Joint assessments and the resource mapping exercise, in essence, acted as a team building exercise. These joint initiatives helped to create a shared vision of how to best work together. This was reinforced by an agreement to establish a clear referral pathway and procedures and the availability of independent seed money to support small scale joint initiatives.

Dedicated child protection sub-cluster leadership: UNICEF’s decision to hire a full-time, senior child protection coordinator at the national level should be applauded. As noted by numerous global evaluations, a dedicated coordinator is required to support a strong and effective cluster response. Child protection is no exception. UNICEF also explicitly recognized the need to firewall the national coordinator from UNICEF programming responsibilities, allowing the coordinator to represent the sector’s interest over agency priorities. Despite the resource implications, in large scale emergencies such as Uganda, it is difficult to fulfill UNICEF’s IASC obligations as the global leader in child protection under the cluster approach without a dedicated, neutral coordinator.²⁸

Conclusion

Under the cluster approach and the child protection sub-cluster in Uganda, significant progress was made in systematizing and standardizing the national child protection response, expanding geographic coverage, and building new partnerships. Gains remain fragile, however, and although structures are in place there is a need for sustained support to address issues of quality and competency throughout the nascent system. All being equal, the review team estimated that 18 months to 2 years of support to build up these structures and address issues of capacity is required to ensure a smooth transition to recovery and fully-owned governmental/community child protection work. If clusters close prematurely, it is not clear how child protection will be coordinated at the national level and there is a risk that the two year investment in building a strong network of service providers, national standards and core competencies would collapse, having a direct impact on children and communities in the North and beyond.

²⁸ UNICEF Uganda’s representative estimated that it cost about \$450,000/year to support staffing and pooled resources to support effective cluster work.

Annex I: Terms of Reference

Child Protection Working Group of the Protection Cluster Review and Documentation of Child Protection Cluster/Coordination Mechanisms Uganda

Background

Under humanitarian reform and the cluster approach, the IASC principals endorsed the creation of the protection cluster, which consists of a diverse body of agencies with distinct protection mandates. The protection cluster represents the first systematic attempt by the humanitarian community to bring together protection actors across UN and non-UN organizations. The rationale behind this bold experiment is based on agencies desire to build a more comprehensive, integrated protection response, while at the same time ensuring an effective, predictable and accountable response within functional areas of protection expertise. This dual mandate distinguishes the protection cluster from the other ten clusters and required high level coordination and interagency collaboration.

The UNHCR-led global protection cluster is currently comprised of five functional specialty areas, each with a designated focal point agency: Child Protection (UNICEF), Gender Based Violence (UNFPA), Rule of Law (UNDP), Mine Action (UNMAS) and Land Housing and Property Rights (UNHABITAT). Similarly to cluster lead agencies, focal point agencies are responsible for establishing coordination mechanisms, leading needs assessments, capacity building, establishing benchmarks and developing and promoting interagency standards within their areas of responsibility. They are also the “first line” provider of last resort in these specialized areas.

Despite this critical role, it has not been well developed within the overall framework of the humanitarian reform agenda and the cluster system in particular. Child protection has not been defined as a separated and specialized field of protection, but has been assumed to be a constituent part of protection globally. In fact, the recent IASC cluster evaluation and the UNHCR-led RTEs of the protection cluster regarded the cluster as a homogenous group, tended to focus exclusively on comprehensive protection responses, rather than noting the strategic and technically focused elements of child protection, land and housing rights, rule of law, etc. This lack of attention to the areas of responsibility has resulted in poor awareness among humanitarian actors about the challenging dual mandate of the protection cluster to support development of coherent protection strategies while also recognizing specialized technical areas such as child protection which have a well-developed and differentiated practice to meet the needs of a large segment of an affected population.

To raise the child protection profile within the cluster approach, child protection agencies undertook a preliminary, interagency survey to document how child protection is organized, managed and coordinated within the protection cluster. Eight countries were selected, including Uganda, DRC, Somalia, Liberia, Lebanon, Philippines, Mozambique and Ivory Coast. The survey also aimed to provide child protection actors with baseline data on coordination structures under the cluster approach and to list key recommendations for global actors on how they could better support the field. Finally, the survey inventoried promising practices, tools and experiences at the country level to facilitate exchange across field operations.

Uganda represented one of the best resourced, most advanced child protection coordination mechanism among the eight countries surveyed. Not only are resources dedicated to ensure a full time coordinator at the national level, but significant resources are earmarked to support leadership at the district level. The sub-cluster is also comprised of an active membership of local and international NGOs, as well as government representatives. Furthermore, the sub cluster has mobilized significant funds for interagency work, which has led to the development and production of several interagency guidelines and tools. These results suggest that establishment of the sub-cluster in Uganda led to a more coordinated, effective emergency child protection response. As a result, in April 2008, UNICEF offered support to the global Child Protection Working Group to better document how the child protection sub cluster in Uganda has impacted interagency collaboration and response.

Objectives:

Building on the initial interagency child protection/cluster survey, the documentation project aims:

- 1) To document real and perceived changes in partnership (pre-cluster/cluster), including number of actors, diversity of membership and quality of partnership as reflected by the GHP Principles of Partnership.
- 2) To document real and perceived changes in geographical coverage in emergency impacted areas and the nature/scope of the response (pre-cluster/cluster);
- 3) To document whether the sub-cluster has resulted in more standardized, professional child protection responses according to national/international standards and guidelines;
- 4) To document members' perceptions about how initiation of the child protection sub-cluster has impacted their agencies' internal programming and child protection responses.
- 5) To document real and perceived changes in advocacy efforts (pre-cluster/cluster) at the sub-national/national levels.
- 6) To document new –and potential - partnerships created as a result of working within the broader protection cluster.
- 7) To document the perceived changes in status of child protection (pre-cluster/cluster) and representation within the IASC country team level.
- 8) To document lessons learned and promising practice related to effective and efficient child protection coordination under the cluster approach.

Sub-topics will also include: 1) Overview of the emergency context in Uganda, 2) Historical profile of child protection coordination mechanisms in Uganda at both the national and sub-national level; 3) Quality of partnership between child protection actors and the UNHCR led protection cluster (based on the POP), 4) Members' perceptions on minimum investment/resources required to be an effective sub-cluster partner, 5) Fund raising activities of the child protection sub-cluster; 6) Perceptions about how coordination structures have fostered or hindered more systematic, holistic child protection responses. (pre-cluster, cluster)

The document will not evaluate the actual impact of the interagency child protection response on beneficiaries, but will focus on the impact of triggering a child protection sub-cluster on partnerships and whether working as a sub-cluster has resulted identified and responded to gaps in programming and coverage. For a more detailed draft checklist to guide semi-structured interviews, please see Annex A.

Overview of Methodology:

The interagency team is composed of three child protection experts representing UNICEF, OCHA and CCF. The team will spend equal time in Kampala and the field, visiting at least three field sites (Proposed sites include Lira, Gulu and Kitgum). Key sources of information include government representatives, UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA and sub-cluster NGO partners. The team will also participate in a national child protection sub-cluster meeting on June 4th. If appropriate, the team will also meet with community representatives working in the child protection committees at the sub-district level.

Key information collection methods include: 1) Document review, 2) Semi-structured interviews with key informants, 3) Group discussions with child protection sub-cluster members using participatory tools; and 4) Observation

Schedule:

26 May	Arrival in Kampala and Briefings UNICEF, OCHA, UNHCR
27 May	Child Protection Sub-Cluster members Briefings with Government (MoGLS) and key NGOs
28-30 May	Travel to Gulu, meetings with key informants/groups
30 May – 2 June	Lira, meetings with key informants/groups
2-3 June	Kitgum, meetings with key informants/groups
3-6 June	Kampala: additional key informants, follow-up interviews Debriefings with CP Sub-Cluster, Contact Group Debriefing with HC and UNICEF representative
7 June	Departure

Annex II: Questionnaire for Partners

Child Protection Sub-Cluster Learning Review and Documentation, Uganda Questionnaire

- This form will only be seen by the review team, with any information provided compiled by site for a final report and not attributed to organizations or persons.
- **By providing your name and organization, the review team will be able to follow up on your comments directly but will *not* share your observations with others.**
- Your candor and frank reflection will be greatly appreciated!

Name and Organization _____

Involved in Child Protection Sub-Cluster since (approximate date) _____

Partnerships

To what extent do you find that you and your organization can meaningfully contribute to developing the direction and strategy of the Child Protection Sub-Cluster?

Not at all Somewhat Substantially

Explain? Example? _____

To what extent do you feel that the work of the CP Sub-Cluster effects the work of the Protection Cluster?

Not at all Somewhat Substantially

Explain? Example? _____

As a member of the CP Sub-Cluster do you feel adequately engaged in and informed about how the group decides how to seek or allocate resources (human, financial)?

Not at all Somewhat Substantially

Explain? Example? _____

For the Protection Cluster?

Not at all Somewhat Substantially

Explain? Example? _____

Scope of Work

Has the CP Sub-Cluster been effective identifying programming or geographical gaps?

Not at all Somewhat Substantially

Explain? Example? _____

Responding to those gaps?

Not at all Somewhat Substantially

Explain? Example? _____

Annex III: POP Survey

Child Protection Sub-Cluster Learning Review and Documentation in Uganda PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP SURVEY

Type of Organization: Government Local NGO International NGO Other _____

PRINCIPLE	Not at all	Somewhat	Substantially
EQUALITY			
Able to influence the items placed on the sub-cluster meetings' agendas			
Able to influence decisions and direction of the sub-cluster			
Treated as an equal member of the sub-cluster			
Able to comfortably express dissenting opinions within the sub-cluster			
COMPLEMENTARITY			
Diversity of members' mandates and capacities duly considered in developing strategies, responding to priorities and gaps			
Local NGO members can contribute own perspectives, experience and capacities to sub-cluster work			
Collaboration with other sub-clusters (GBV, Rule of Law, etc.) in strategy and response			
Collaboration with the Protection Cluster in strategy and response			
Collaboration with other clusters (CCCM, WASH, education, etc.) in strategy and response			
TRANSPARENCY			
Meetings open to all partners ("open door policy")			
Sub-cluster regularly shares information about with members			
Cost plans and financial reports on sub-cluster funding (funds raised for the cluster/sub-cluster specifically) openly shared with members.			
RESULTS ORIENTED			
Clear strategy and work plan exist, and developed jointly with members			
Work plan and strategy regularly reviewed to reflect priority areas and prevailing humanitarian concerns			
RESPONSIBILITY			
Members able to deliver on commitments to cluster work			
Members able to raise issues of non-delivery of commitments to find alternative response/solutions			
Agency has adopted a code of conduct to prevent abuse			

Annex IV: Questions for semi-structured interviews with key informants

Questions for core group of informants	NGO	Gov't	UNICEF/CP coordinator	UNHCR/Prot. coordinator	OCHA
Time line of the coordination mechanisms & cluster	X	X	X		
Mapping of activities			X		
Joint activities undertaken by members	X	X	X		
What is your level of participation in the sub-cluster?	X	X			
Does participation/collaboration in the sub-cluster structure help you in your work?	X	X			
Relationship between field and national levels, information flow		X	X		
What is the collaboration with other sub-clusters?			X	X	X
Collaboration with protection cluster?	X		X	X	X
CP can influence the work of the protection cluster? Integrated strategy?			X	X	
Is there a strategy for the structures to adapt during transition period?			X		X
Are the structures sufficiently inclusive?					X
Has being a member of the sub-cluster changed the way you work as an organization?	X				
Has the CP sub-cluster undertaken any local or national advocacy actions?	X		X		X
Is there a predictable interlocutor on CP at national, district, sub-county?					X
How can this group help you in the coming year?		X			
What is different about the coordination structures now and before 2005?	X	X			
What value, in terms of effective response, has been added by the CP sub-cluster?	X	X	X	X	X

Annex VI: Sample District Profile: Gulu

Gulu

Background

Since the signing of the Cessation of Hostility agreement, the security situation has improved greatly. As a result, a significant proportion of the population has begun returning to their areas of origin, although the majority remains in transition between the camps and full-time return to their areas of origin, some in transit sites. Given the history of displacement and conflict in the district, there is a very high presence of NGOs and a long history of humanitarian response, particularly in the area of child protection. The government has appointed a CDO or ACDO to all sub-counties and nearly half of these have a child protection system in place as of June 2008.

Structure

- Psychosocial Working Group was established as of 2004, with District Community Services chairing quarterly information-sharing meetings.
- In 2006, Child Protection sub-cluster established. Parallel structures, so decided to harmonize mid-year. District Psychosocial focal point as chair, UNICEF co-chair.
- UNICEF coordinator is allocated 20% of work time for these tasks but realistically estimates that she devotes 40% of her time to coordination and related tasks.
- Maintained technical reference groups working on nigh commuters, juvenile justice, etc.
- Interviewees noted that there is not one single “protection” body, despite existence of the District Protection Committee (DPC). Each sub-cluster proactively define and addresses issues under their mandate in an autonomous manner. Some note differing definitions of protection as having made coordination difficult; others note that the scope of the DPC is seen as IDP and camp-based only, while CP focuses more broadly.
- Great degree of overlap and informal coordination within DPC structure, as GBV coordinator attends DPC and CP groups; CP coordinator attends ROL and DPC groups for instance.
- In sub-county coordination meetings, CP and GBV routinely have combined.
- Proposed merging of DPC and DHRPP was unknown by several groups. Those who were aware noted concern about implications for CP and GBV as remaining sub-clusters. Very mixed perceptions of how consultative the decision to structurally change these groups had been. Government expressed concern strongly about capacity to manage all technical issues within single forum.

Partnership

- Government noted appreciation for changes in structures, as creates stronger base to implement national Children’s Act (and its current revision) as well as other obligations.
- Sub-cluster members and UNICEF noted that direct partnership with the district means can directly influence discussions and actions.
- NGO sub-cluster members note feel they “can address issues together.” One example was of a quarry with high child labor in Amuru. The group dispatched an inter-agency group to assess and inquire. The group had more weight than one single organization and provide more possibilities for response.
- UNICEF perception that there is substantively good partnership within the group; collaboration with the DPC and the other clusters has been limited.
- Although no budget for sub-cluster actively specifically, the group does take steps to allocate member organizations’ funds to address sub-cluster priorities.
- As another example in changed response, members noted the problem of children being left unaccompanied in the camps as family members return to homesteads. Previously, each agency would have engaged independently, and as each one saw fit. Now the sub-cluster group has tasked specific agencies to report to the WG on specific sites and report back to the group with recommendations or need for joint intervention.
- A few sub-cluster members noted that presence at the table and ability to influence decisions remains linked to financial resources. International NGOs appear to have more influence.
- On the other hand, one local NGO stated that they saw a change in the “weight” at the table now not just dependant on resources but also on approach and community knowledge. He saw a real respect for and maximization of the different capacities in the group: INGOs bring financial resources and access to power structures while LNGOs have deep knowledge and community-based approaches. Because of the need to bring these two together, sometimes opportunities are “delayed” but not “missed” to improve case. This reflects a significant change since sub-cluster introduced.
- Members noted differing opinions about the issue of partnership/collaboration with the protection cluster: some feel that there is an open opportunity to include child protection issues into their work; many others felt that there is a “silo” approach. There was agreement that the lack of a final protection strategy has hampered CP work to a degree.

PRINCIPLE	Not	Some	Very
EQUALITY			
Able to influence the items placed on the sub-cluster meetings’ agendas	-	2	6
Able to influence decisions and direction of the sub-cluster	-	4	4
Treated as an equal member of the sub-cluster	-	1	6
Able to comfortably express dissenting opinions within the sub-cluster	-	1	7
COMPLEMENTARITY			
Diversity of members’ mandates and capacities duly considered in developing strategies, responding to priorities and gaps	-	4	4

Local NGO members can contribute own perspectives, experience and capacities to sub-cluster work	-	2	7
Collaboration with other sub-clusters (GBV, Rule of Law, etc.) in strategy and response	-	4	4
Collaboration with the Protection Cluster in strategy and response	-	2	5
Collaboration with other clusters (CCCM, WASH, education, etc.) in strategy and response	-	4	4
TRANSPARENCY			
Meetings open to all partners (“open door policy”)	-	1	7
Sub-cluster regularly shares information about with members	-	-	8
Cost plans and financial reports on sub-cluster resources	1	5	2
RESULTS ORIENTED			
Clear strategy and work plan exist, and developed jointly with members	1	2	5
Work plan and strategy regularly reviewed to reflect priority areas and prevailing humanitarian concerns	-	3	5
RESPONSIBILITY			
Members able to deliver on commitments to cluster work	-	4	4
Members able to raise issues of non-delivery of commitments to find alternative response/solutions	-	4	3
Agency has adopted a code of conduct to prevent abuse	-	1	7

Programming and Advocacy Scope

- Phasing out of night commuter shelters was done inter-agency. Core group developed guidelines and plan. Shared with WG and others for feedback. Mobilized others, such as with Caritas to provide transition shelter for children returning back to village. Community structures for case monitoring, sensibilization program for parents to accept return of children. Worked with other clusters to integrate common messages in their IEC.
- Gap identified: CP agencies focus on sub-county areas but municipalities mostly overlooked. Conducted vulnerability assessment in 2007 to review, CBO led and tool reviewed by WG for inputs. Findings shared with WG and district. Result: Charity for Peace (LNGO) which had been focusing on street children in Gulu is now also working on tracing, counseling, and family mediation activities to get children back into their homes.
- Need a strong structure to support government in taking steps to realize national constitution, international commitments, national Children’s Act.

Value added/Effectiveness

- Standardization: facilitates continuity as projects or implementing agency changes.
- Response. Before, if CPC linked to Gusco, only Gusco could act. Now can look at nearest agency for support and response in more coherent web/network.
- CPC has previously reported to the hosting agency, now report to the CDO so much more government engagement and ownerships.
- Advocacy more effective as do at district. National advocacy necessarily more coherent.
- District level government is more informed by national MoG, the levels working together.
- Communication is better. Minutes regularly shared at national/district level for CP working groups.
- Referrals have been strengthened, but more to be done.
- Responsibilities shared across actors, members, communities, government.
- Working burden has been eased. Better follow-up. Communities and CP actors more aware of available services.

Challenges

- CPCs lack capacity to delivery effective response and provide access to legal aid services.
- Local Councils should be more involved as maintain significant role in family mediation, child protection at village level.
- Differing “definitions” of protection with UNHCR. When probed, seems more a difference in focus on populations, as UNHCR focuses exclusively on IDPs and camp-based populations while other actors focus on broader population.
- POLR scope. Uners
- Protection cluster referral pathway in draft form, requiring significant more work.
- Protection monitors provide reports for case follow-up but not linked to an effective response (information lacking, delays in timing, unclear pathways for information)
- Linkages to DPC. Does not seem to have interest in CP or GBV issues. For instance, raising lack of PEP kits for action at national level.
- Broader protection strategy is missing. Joint common approaches missing, so can find different strategies in same community among protection actors. For instance, CP uses volunteers in the CPCs and sometimes provides incentives. GBV does not provide incentives, and creates challenges at community level. Will take the issue to the DPC, raise to OCHA, raised already directly to IASC but not sure of any actions which have been/will be taken.
- PRDP seen as a Kampala product, not see as guiding work in Gulu. Needs an implementation plan and consultation at this level. Not sure when/how will be done.
- Strengthen referral mechanisms.
- UNHCR scheduling “rapprochement” meetings to explain merger.

Annex VII: Persons and Groups Interviewed

Name	Title	Organization	Location	Contacts
Keith McKenzie	Representative	UNICEF	Kampala	kmckenzie@unicef.org +256 772 222 600
Stephanie Schwarz	CP Sub-Cluster coordinator (national)	UNICEF	Kampala	
Cornelius Williams	Chief, Child Protection	UNICEF	Kampala	
Tim Pitt	Head of Office	UNOCHA	Kampala	
Giovanni Bosco	Deputy	UNOCHA	Kampala	
Rachel Scott-Leflaive	Inter-Cluster Coordinator	UNOCHA	Kampala	
Liesbeth Speelman	Program Development Manager	War Child Holland	Kampala	Liesbeth.speelman@warchild.nl +256 772 693 917
National CP Sub-Cluster members	NGOs/UN	TPO, OCHA World Vision Medair UNHCR ASB YSA CCF CPA, C&D ANPPCAN AVSI WCH (these are the ones that attended your debriefing)		
Karen Poore	Program Manager	IRC	Kampala	
Michele Cavinato	Protection Officer/Protection Cluster lead (national)	UNHCR	Kampala	cavinato@unhcr.org +256 41 23123
Morten R. Petersen	Head of Office,	European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) -	Kampala	
Marie Manyeh	Child Protection Specialist	UNICEF	Gulu	
Caroline Aloyo	Child Protection Office	UNICEF	Gulu	
Anna Mutavati	GBV coordinator and Head of Office	UNFPA	Gulu	+256 755 223 041
Stella Ajwang	NPO	OCHA	Gulu	ajwang@un.org +256 77 760 002
CP Sub-Cluster	NGO partners	WC/H, Gusco, CPF, CPA, WC/C, WV, SC	Gulu	
Joseph Kilama (+ 2 probation officers)	Senior Probation & Welfare Officer	GoU/District	Gulu	
Susan Loum	CDO	GoU	Bungatira sub-county	
Child Protection Committee			Bungatira sub-county (Gulu)	
Carmen	Ast. Protection	UNHCR	Gulu	

	Officer			
Margaret		UNHCR		
Lillian Kona	GBV District coordinator	UNFPA	Lira	kona@unfpa.org
Anthony Kerwegi	District coordinator	Concerned Parents Association	Lira	cpalirabranch@yahoo.com kerwegi53@yahoo.com +256 782 717 610
Abraham Gebretnsae	Ast. Protection Officer, DPC coordinator	UNHCR	Lira	gebretns@unhcr.org +256 774 699 576
Robert Kotchani	NPO	OHCHR	Lira	rkotchani@ohchr.org +256 772 775 792
Parwez Anis	Project manager	ASB		+256 774 623 007
Frank Velthuisen	Field Location Manager	War Child Holland	Lira	+256 782 667 206
Stella Jane Ogwang	Probation Officer & CP co-chair	GoU	Lira	
Christine Anono	Senior CDO & GBV co-chair	GoU	Lira	
Felix Acebo	Child Protection Specialist	UNICEF	Lira	+256 392 966 304
Fatuma Ongwen	Child Protection Officer	UNICEF		+256 772 590 245
ACDOs from Aloi, Apala, Ogur, Okwang			Aloi	
	Aloi Sub-county chief			
Dorcus Akello	War Child/H		Aloi	
	Head of CPC		Aloi	
Mikael Rasmussen	Ast. Protection Officer, DPC coordinator	UNHCR	Kitgum	rasmusmi@unhcr.org +256 774 551 066
Lucy Otto	Head, Community Services	GoU	Kitgum	lakotlucy@yahoo.co.uk +256 772 336 925
Sayiidi Bukenya	Child Protection Officer	UNICEF	Kitgum	
Olushola Ismail	Head of Office	UNICEF	Kitgum	
		OCHA	Kitgum	