

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a bright green polo shirt, is seated and writing in a large, open, lined notebook. She is holding a blue pen in her right hand. A young child with short dark hair, wearing a light blue shirt, is leaning in from the right, looking at the notebook. The background is slightly blurred, showing some outdoor structures and foliage.

Part 4

Working to Support Protective Systems

At ChildFund, we understand the importance of protecting children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence at every stage of childhood in order to maximize their development and ability to reach their full potential.

While our Life Stage Approach helps us to design programs tailored to the vulnerabilities of children, adolescents, and youth, the reality is, of course, more complex. There are many factors that converge to influence the childhood experience, including children's individual personalities and physical maturity, their cultural and social environment, economic and political situation, and access to life opportunities. However, there are strong points of continuity between life stages and certain forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence that cut across all age groups. Formal and community systems of support need to be sensitive to the needs of different groups (ages, gender, gender identity, ability, etc.), how the experience of violence at one stage of development may affect their development later in life, and the forms of violence which affect children throughout their lives.

Our programs and studies also confirm the importance of **working at all levels of the child protection system**. If we are to significantly reduce children's vulnerability to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, we must target our efforts to all of the people, policies, and services that can protect them. This means working at community, district and national levels, and with children, families, leaders, government, and civil society organizations.

Our learning about working to support protective systems

This section explores what we are learning as we deepen our protection work with children across their first decades of life – supporting their developmental trajectory as they grow from healthy and secure infants to educated and confident children, to skilled and involved youth. Already, our experience is beginning to show that:

- 1 Most communities have an informal mechanism in place to support children who experience violence, but these are not always functional.** We collected information on 219 community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) in a small sample of communities in which we work across 17 countries as part of our global monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data collection in 2017.ⁱ We found that only 38% of these mechanisms were **functional**.

While most country teams collected these data from only a few communities in 2017, **the Philippines** collected data from all 52 communities in which we work.

To meet the threshold for **functionality**, a CBCPM must have:

- formal recognition by a government agency,
- active participation of social service providers in its activities (i.e., meetings are attended by a member of the formal system), and
- an established protocol for referring incidents to at least one formal social service provider.

We found that:

- Out of 79 informal mechanisms identified in these communities, only 35 (44%) were functional.
- 66 (84%) of 79 informal mechanisms were being utilized, i.e. at least one type of harm was reported to the mechanism by the community in the past 12 months.

Functionality and Utilization of CBCPMs

	# (%) of functional CBCPMs	# (%) of CBCPMs being utilized	Total # of CBCPMs
Global	83 (38%)	186 (85%)	219
Philippines	35 (44%)	66 (84%)	79

In the Philippines, CBCPMs responded differently to reported harms; for example, some harms were handled internally, some harms were referred to social services, or both. In other cases, harms were neither handled internally nor referred to social services.

We found that:

- Most mechanisms handle sexual violence, but it is also frequently referred to social services.
- There were certain harms that were most frequently handled internally by the mechanisms – for example, reports of psychological abuse and demeaning and humiliating behavior – perhaps pointing to the capacity of these mechanisms.
- Child labor cases were not handled by many mechanisms, nor was it referred to social services when reported. Of the 34 mechanisms that received at least one report for child labor, 71% neither handled nor referred the case to social services.

How different reported harms were handled by the CBCPMs in the Philippines

	Sexual Violence	Psychological Abuse	Demeaning and Humiliating Behavior	Child Labor
Harm handled by CBCPM	71%	60%	59%	24%
Harm referred to Social Services	65%	16%	47%	12%
Both handled by the mechanism and referred to Social Services	47%	12%	8%	6%
Neither handled by the mechanism nor referred to Social Services	12%	36%	41%	71%

2 Violence is experienced differently by children depending on their age and gender. From the data we collected in the Philippines, we also found that while some types of violence affected most groups of children, there were certain types of violence that affected children differently based on age or gender. For example:

- Overall, CBCPMs received the fewest referrals for cases for infants and young children 0 to 5 years. Of the mechanisms that received referrals for this population, the majority received referrals for neglect and humiliating and demeaning behavior. Few mechanisms received referrals for other harms. As discussed in previous sections, many of the harms perpetrated against this age group may be hidden, due to young children's lack of interaction or visibility outside of the home, familial relations, or the lack of awareness or recognition of these types of harm.
- Neglect and humiliating and demeaning behavior were the most common harms reported to CBCPMs for children of all ages, and most frequently for children and young adolescents 6 to 14 years.
- Based on the number of mechanisms that received referrals for early marriage, child labor, and intimate partner violence, it appears that these harms are more of a risk for children as they enter late adolescence and early adulthood.
- Mechanisms received more referrals for early marriage, sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence for girls than for boys. On the other hand, mechanisms received more referrals for child labor and physical violence for boys than for girls.

3 We can be an effective bridge between children and the high-level decision-makers who have the power to introduce real reform:

- In **India**, ChildFund has been selected by the National Child Protection Commission to develop national Standard Operating Procedures to support police in responding to harm and violence against children.ⁱⁱ
- As a member of the National Partnership to End Violence Against Children in **Sri Lanka**, ChildFund has engaged in high-level discussions with the Ministry of Education to address violent discipline in schools.
- In **Indonesia**, ChildFund has been working to address illegal adoption and trafficking of children by advocating for stronger government commitment to preventing violence against children, anti-trafficking laws and policies, and improved family welfare services.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In the **USA**, ChildFund has joined World Vision and Save the Children in the *End Violence Against Children Taskforce* to work with Congress to advance policies that prevent and address violence against children worldwide.^{iv}

- At the global level, in 2017, ChildFund came together with other child-focused organizations to successfully advocate for the inclusion of Target 16.2, a specific goal to end violence against children in the new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Our response

Working across life stages, our goal is to contribute to broader social change by supporting the development of child protection systems that can provide seamless support to children as they grow; strengthening the interface between formal and informal protection systems; and influencing policy and implementation to the benefit of children, youth and families. We do this at different levels:

- **Locally**, we build the capacity of community members, including children and youth, supporting them to raise their concerns and share learning with local and sub-national level officials.
- **Nationally**, we use our evidence to work with governments to create, strengthen, implement, and fund policies that address concerns relevant to children's protection and well-being.
- **Globally**, ChildFund contributes to advocacy efforts as a member of the ChildFund Alliance, ensuring that commitments made in the Sustainable Development Goals become a reality.

Through the following case studies, we examine how our country offices in **Uganda** and the **Philippines** have targeted forms of violence that cut across all life stages and have successfully strengthened the child protection system through direct action at the community level and advocacy initiatives at the national level. They highlight how we are translating our deep knowledge of communities into broader systematic reform and social change, enabling us to have a lasting impact in the lives of children beyond our program communities and the tenure of our projects.



CASE STUDY: Combating child labor in the sugarcane industry in the Philippines

Since 2003, ChildFund has been an active member of a consortium to eliminate exploitative child labor in the sugarcane industry in 11 provinces of the **Philippines**. The most recent four-year phase of this program, *ABK3 LEAP*¹, reached 54,000 children and youth before it ended in 2016. The project led to a **substantial reduction in the percent of children in exploitative labor: from 94% in 2011 to 16% in 2016.**^v

Since our last Impact Report, we have evaluated the *ABK3 LEAP* program.^{vi} The evaluation indicates that our interventions have:

- **Provided a strong incentive for families to send their children to school.** We have improved learning environments, trained teachers, delivered school supplies, and provided opportunities for children who have been out of school to attend catch-up classes.

1. Formally titled *ABK3 Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy, and Protection Against Exploitative Child Labor in Sugarcane*, this project is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) through World Vision International

- **Dissuaded vulnerable families from sending children to work** in the sugarcane industry by diversifying their income sources and improving their food security. This focus on other economic opportunities resulted in a monthly increase of 72% for participating families.
- **Raised awareness about the hazards of child labor and engaged community child protection structures** such as Community Watch Groups and Child Rights Advocates to monitor, respond to and advocate on behalf of child victims of child labor.
- **Contributed to the widespread adoption of ordinances to prevent child labor** at district level, the adoption of voluntary codes of conduct with sugarcane producers, and the inclusion of provincial mechanisms to monitor child labor violations.

The evaluation identified several **good practices** that have contributed to *ABK3 LEAP*'s success, and which will be applied to other child labor initiatives:

- The program was founded upon a baseline study, which provided **critical evidence** regarding the causes and scale of child labor. The study provided a robust rationale for the program and allowed ChildFund to advocate with communities, government, and sugar industry employers from a position of strength.
- The program took an **integrated approach** that addressed the extreme poverty and lack of economic opportunities that force families to send their children to the sugarcane fields. This combined direct social protection, livelihood, and education support for families with awareness activities to help communities understand the implications of exploitative child labor.
- The program sought to strengthen the **wider system of protection for children** at all levels, through support for community child protection structures as well as government policy-makers.^{vii} According to the evaluation, the intervention leaves a legacy of improved policies, institutional capacity, and local community and government commitment to ending child labor.

KEY RESULTS

The ABK3 LEAP program successfully reached (and exceeded) a number of targets:

- Exploitative child labor in sugarcane fields reduced from 94% to 16%.
- Average monthly income in project households increased by 72%.
- 97% of covered barangays, municipalities and provinces have enacted local policies or ordinances to reduce child labor.
- 11 sugar industry partners and 45 government agencies now have an annual program of activities to address child labor.

- The program informed representatives of the sugarcane industry from the outset about the scale and impact of child labor. Using the evidence, ChildFund was able to achieve a broad **commitment toward eliminating** child labor from the industry and establishing ethical codes of conduct for the sector.

The evaluation cited the potential of using the *ABK3 LEAP* intervention model to tackle child labor in other sectors such as fishing, domestic work, and different agricultural industries. For future interventions, an area-based approach that addresses the specific forms of child labor in a particular geographic area was recommended, as this might decrease the likelihood of children shifting from one form of labor to another. ChildFund Philippines is now considering ways to apply *ABK3 LEAP*'s integrated model to find solutions to child labor in other industries and areas of the country.





CASE STUDY: Building a system of care for children in Uganda

We have long known that, in most cases, children are best cared for and protected within families. In 2013, Uganda had 57,000 children living in child-care institutions and 10,000 on the streets. Since then, ChildFund has been leading a consortium of agencies in an ambitious three-year initiative, *Deinstitutionalization of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (DOVCU)*,² to improve the safety and well-being of children outside of family care in 12 districts.

Working in close collaboration with the Government of Uganda, we have been implementing national reforms of the child-care system (guided by the Alternative Care Framework), which aim to keep **children with families and out of institutions**. The DOVCU project was the first of its kind in Uganda and involved a comprehensive package of interventions at household, community and government levels.

Prevention: Reducing the separation of children from their families

The DOVCU project aimed to tackle the social and economic challenges that cause children to be separated from their families. Recognizing that poverty, lack of opportunity, and conflict at home were driving children to the streets or to institutions, the DOVCU program designed an

integrated package of economic and social support for households. Families struggling to care for their children were helped through cash transfers, savings groups, and business/vocational training, while para-social workers and community volunteers conducted household visits to provide psychosocial support, promote positive parenting practices, and facilitate access to children's services.

Response: Placing children in families

The program also removed children from care institutions, **remand homes** and from the streets. Following an assessment of their situation, each child was then reintegrated within their own family or placed in family-based care. ChildFund and partners also worked closely with the Government of Uganda to: assess and improve living conditions in child-care institutions; establish a comprehensive case management system; and train social workers, government officers, and community volunteers to support and monitor children's reintegration into family care through Alternative Care Panels and Team Around the Child Committees.

Remand homes, also called detention homes, are institutions where courts may sentence juvenile offenders to temporary detention.

We introduced *DOVCU* in our last Impact Report, and now with the program recently ended we can reflect on some of the learning. Evaluation findings reveal positive outcomes for children and families: ^{viii}

- Over the course of three years **DOVCU has reintegrated 1,743 children into their families.** ^{ix} The majority (84%) were reintegrated from child care institutions, 12% were reintegrated from the streets, and 4% were reintegrated from remand homes.
- Through the program's economic and social interventions, almost a third of families assessed as being at high risk of separation are now in the **medium or low risk category.** ^x
- The program has **improved the way a critical mass of child care institutions provide care for children** by supporting them to develop new policies and standards, and by working toward children's reintegration into families.
- Interventions have contributed to a **change in mind-set** among families, communities, and government actors about the importance of family care. ^{xi}

"This was a learning experience for everyone including ourselves, the families and communities we worked with. The assumption was that children living in institutions were better off... Once we helped parents to appreciate that they had a lot of stability to offer their children even in the poorest homes, attitudes began to change."

-TPO Uganda Representative (ChildFund Partner in DOVCU)

Our experience from *DOVCU* has demonstrated how a combination of economic and social support interventions (preventative support) can effectively reduce families' vulnerability and increase their chances of staying together. At the same time, it has highlighted just how challenging and sensitive the process of children's reintegration can be, and how much time and follow-up support it requires. Given the complexity and scale of family separation in Uganda, we know that:

- If we want to stem the flow of children being placed in institutions in Uganda, **the number of sub-counties that receive preventative household support needs to be increased.**
- Alongside poverty, we need to **continue tackling the family dysfunction** that can drive the institutionalization of children: *DOVCU* revealed the benefits of helping families to access support for mental health issues and alcohol and drug misuse so that they could better care for their children.
- We need to **focus more energy on ensuring successful, long-term reintegration** of children into families. During *DOVCU*, children's experiences of reintegration were sometimes problematic, particularly in areas where families had not benefited from any household interventions and where social/community workers were not mobilized to provide ongoing support.
- We need to further **test which combinations of economic and social interventions offered by *DOVCU* are most effective** at keeping children with families.
- We need to advocate for increased **investment in the national social welfare workforce** to ensure that household visits, case management, and monitoring processes are consistently conducted by professionally trained social workers. Guaranteeing the number of social workers required for such intensive work across the country will be an ongoing challenge.
- We need to explore how **innovative technologies such as ChildLinks**, a mobile phone case management system introduced by *DOVCU*, can be harnessed to support other child protection initiatives in Uganda.

Right now, because of the *DOVCU* initiative, there are hundreds of children across Uganda who are at home with families rather than living in institutions. Moving forward, ChildFund Uganda hopes to build on this learning to continue building a system of care and protection for children across the country.^{xii}

As a follow-on to DOVCU, ChildFund Uganda implemented the *Economic Strengthening to Keep and Reintegrate Children into Families (ESFAM)* project.³ This initiative tested how different types of economic support packages for vulnerable households can prevent family separation and support reintegrating children.

ESFAM supported 700 families – 350 who were at high risk of family separation and 350 with children who had returned home – with four economic support packages: business and financial literacy training, cash transfers, village savings and loan groups and matched savings accounts. The goal was to create and implement a graduation model through decreasing levels of poverty and vulnerability. This was combined with psycho-social support and linkages to social services.

ESFAM's combination of social and economic support to vulnerable households yielded exciting results: at the end of the project, children and youth reporting positive adaptive capacity and resilience increased from 11% to 60%, for example. The Matched Savings Account intervention showed how households were able to meet the expenses required for children's development, with 63% of expenses being used for education. This resulted in increased educational outcomes for children – with children with positive educational outcomes growing from a baseline of 52% to 83%. Finally, the households participating in the Matched Savings Account intervention realized a 34% reduction in social and economic vulnerability scores.



3. Funded by USAID through FHI360

Endnotes

- i. ChildFund International. (2018). *M&E Level 2 CBCPM Data from the Philippines*.
- ii. ChildFund India. (2017). *Development of SOPs for Law Enforcement Agencies and Role Holders for Creating a Safe & Protective Environment for Children: Concept Note*.
- iii. , iv. ChildFund International. (2017). *Advocacy Day 2017: Brief to Congress to End Violence Against Children (VAC)*.
- v. Know Violence in Childhood. (2017). *Ending Violence in Childhood: Overview*. Global Report 2017. New Delhi: Know Violence in Childhood.
- iv. UNICEF. (2017). *A Familiar Face: Violence in the Lives of Children and Adolescents*. New York: UNICEF.
- v, vii. Del Rosario, B.P, Adaro C.E., Rolle, J.M., Clavero, C.S., & Del Rosario A.P.(2016). *ABK3 LEAP Endline Study December 2015- August 2016: A Report on the ABK3 LEAP (Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection) Project to Reduce Child Labor in Sugarcane Areas*.
- vi. Sistemas Familia y Sociedad (SFS). (2016). *Independent Final Evaluation ABK3 LEAP: Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection against Child Labor in the Philippines*
- viii. DOVCU Evaluation Team. (2018). *Debriefing Notes from Field Work for DOVCU Evaluation*.
- ix. JSI Research & Training Institute. (2018). *ChildFund Deinstitutionalization of Vulnerable Children in Uganda (DOVCU): Final Report from July 1 2014 through December 31 2017*.
- x. ChildFund International. (2018). *The effect of DOVCU's Integrated Package of Interventions on Children and Families at Risk of Separation: DOVCU Learning Brief 1*.
- xi. TPO Uganda. (2017). *Families First: The Deinstitutionalisation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Uganda (DOVCU)*
- xii. Asingwire, N., & Hall, J. (2018). *Economic Strengthening to Keep and Reintegrate Children into Families (ESFAM), Development of Learning Briefs on MSA and CYSGs: An Inception Report*.

