Protecting Our Children:

How African community organizations strengthen child protection systems

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Firelight Foundation believes in the power of African communities to create lasting change for children and families affected by poverty, HIV, and AIDS.

We identify, fund, and strengthen promising community organizations that support the health, resilience, and education of children in Africa.

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Introduction

The UN Secretary General's study on violence against children (Pinheiro, 2006) documented the widespread abuse of children, cutting across geography, class, and cultural boundaries. The study provided a global picture of what was happening to children in their homes, in schools, in workplaces, and in the wider community. It drew attention to the types of abuse against children and the underlying causes, as well as the impact of violence on children's development.

The key message of the study was that "violence against children is never justifiable. Nor is it inevitable. If its underlying causes are identified and addressed, violence against children is entirely preventable."[1]

In 2009, Firelight Foundation brought together a group of community-based organizations (CBOs) working across local, national, and regional levels to strengthen their linkages, create learning opportunities, and build partnerships to facilitate their role in the development and implementation of interventions, policies, and systems aimed at preventing and responding to violence against children. That initial gathering informed the development of a three-year child protection initiative funded by the Oak Foundation. The initiative focused on building the capacity of community-based organizations in child protection and documenting how CBOs act to prevent and mitigate the abuse of children.

Through this initiative, as we documented and analyzed the work of CBOs, we learned that preventing child abuse is at its core about community development. It is about the ongoing and challenging work of building

- Strong families, with empowered and educated children
- Healthy social-emotional ties, tapping into the strengths of the family's natural support networks
- Systems that support vulnerable families at community, district, and national government levels
- Mechanisms to deal with cases of abuse, both to deter abuse and to support children's wellbeing

We also gained insights about how grassroots organizations think about child protection and where they need support. This publication summarizes some of our insights.

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1 Annan, Kofi. Preface. World Report on Violence against Children. By Paulo Sergio Pinheiro. United Nations, 2006.

PART 1:

What kind of child abuse issues are African CBOs addressing?

The environments where our partners operate have a high prevalence of child marriage, child labor, sexual abuse, and corporal punishment. Our partners note varying degrees of prevalence of child trafficking, child prostitution, witchcraft, and initiation. Generally, our partners note that communities openly recognize child labor, child marriage, and sexual abuse as problems.

Our partners see that the underlying causes of abuse are inter-related. Key among them are poverty, orphanhood, harmful cultural practices, household structure (i.e., who is head of household), and poor family support systems. In addition, partners note lack of policies, or in some cases lack of enforcement, as a key issue to deter perpetrators. In many cases, insufficient resources at the local government level also prevent enforcement of policies. A lack of understanding of the formal justice system and a lack of knowledge of children's rights exacerbate this problem. The issue of power is also an area of concern. Lack of power of children, mothers, or poor families can make them targets for abuse.

These are complex issues that vary by family and community. Our partners work to understand the factors that cause abuse and change the reality for children in their community.

PART 2:
Systems that protect children or make children vulnerable

Local CBOs serve a unique role in a community. Initiated and led by the community, they have a depth of understanding of the needs and assets of their community that is not available to external actors. CBOs are adept at working with the key actors in a child's life: family, community members, local institutions, and government agencies.

Family, community, national, and international systems are embedded within each other. This is represented by the Ecological Model of Child Development, which shows the layers of actors who make up the ecology of a child's life. Originally developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner,[2] it is a highly intuitive model. Drawing upon insights from our partners, we expanded upon this model to more closely describe the layers of care that surround children in an African context.[3]

2 Bronfenbrenner, Urie. The ecology of human development: experiments by nature and design. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979.
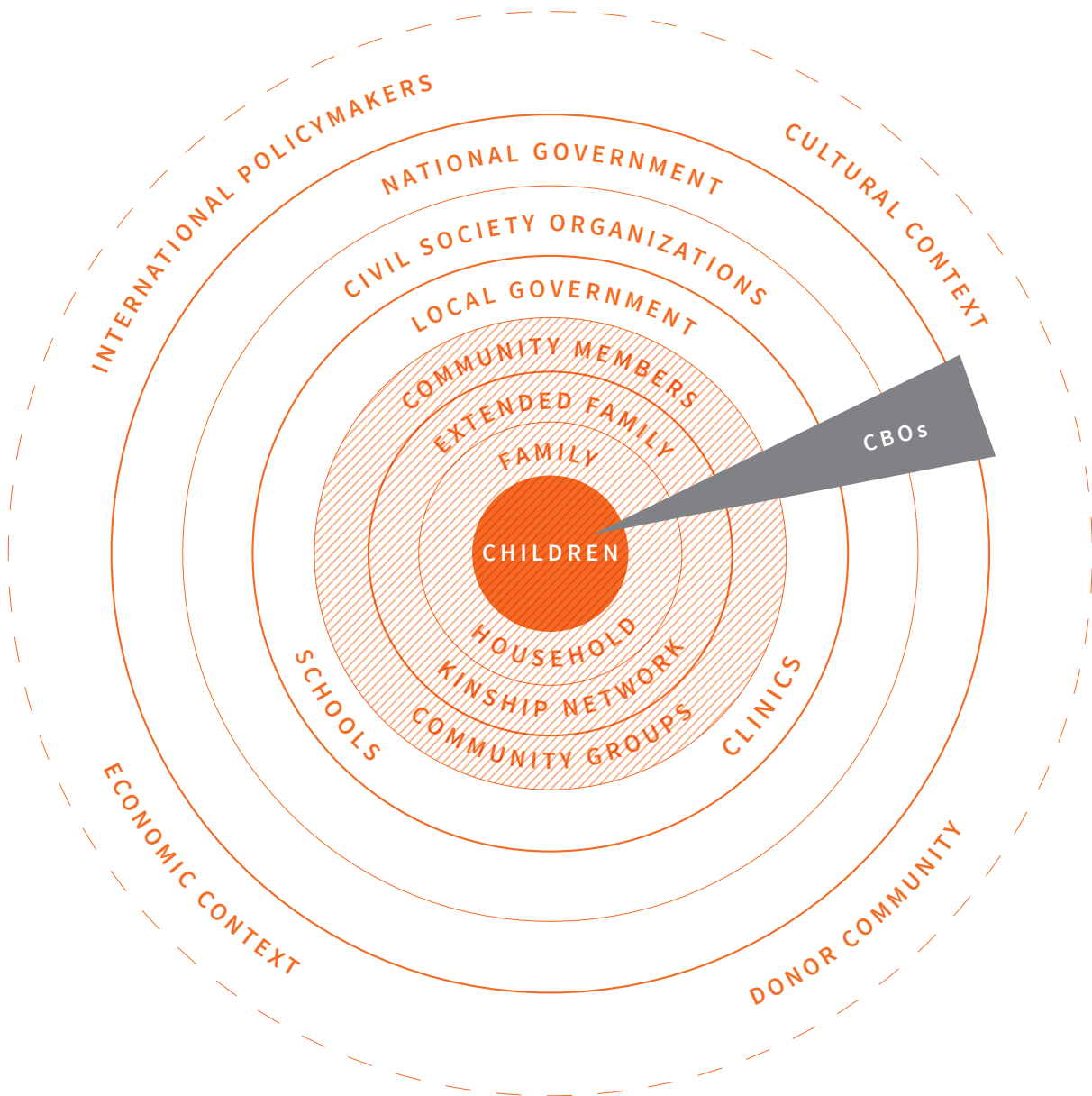3 We want to credit the work of Wairimu Mungai, the Executive Director of WEM Integrated Health Services (WEMIHS), for calling our attention to the role of the extended family in the ecological model, which she calls the "invisible family." The current form of the ecological model we use grew out of a case study Firelight did with youth participating in a WEMIHS program.

Ecology of care
for children in an African context

Violence, abuse, and neglect against children happen within layers of systems that interact to either protect the child or make the child vulnerable.

INTERNATIONAL POLICYMAKERS

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

CULTURAL CONTEXT

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

EXTENDED FAMILY

FAMILY

CBOs

CHILDREN

HOUSEHOLD

KINSHIP NETWORK

COMMUNITY GROUPS

SCHOOLS

CLINICS

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

DONOR COMMUNITY

Our partners consistently highlight the role that spirituality plays as a source of support for vulnerable children and families. This is depicted as shading in the layers of the model.

Child

Children depend on adults for their basic needs, as well as for their care and nurture. This dependency can also make them vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and violence. They need societal protection because they lack the ability to fully protect and defend themselves. CBOs support children as rights holders by helping them know and claim their rights. They achieve this by training children in child rights, engaging them in child rights clubs, and making sure they know whom to turn to when their rights are violated. Child participation is key to effectiveness in child protection. In many cases, children tell their peers rather than adults about abuse. When peers are trained on how to support each other and where to report abuse, more cases are identified and reported.

CBOs also work with children who have been abused, linking children to medical and legal services. They provide counseling for children and families to help survivors cope with trauma. Organizations also work to fulfill children's rights by facilitating access to essential services, like education.

Community in Development Activities (COIDA) — Malawi
COIDA trained local youth in child rights and child protection and supported them as they formed the Orphan Affairs Unit. In their first year of operation, the Orphan Affairs Unit intervened in 123 cases of maltreatment, reported 15 cases to the Department of Social Welfare, and took 3 cases to court. Today they report a reduction in child abuse.

Family

Families connect people through various relationships. In the African context, it is important to understand the extended family as a very active part of the child's family system. CBOs value the family as the key provider of basic needs, love, and nurturing and the teacher of life skills. They see the family as an important source of protection for children, but also recognize that the family frequently protects perpetrators who are also part of the family. CBOs see the high levels of stress experienced by families living in extreme poverty or struggling with health issues such as HIV or AIDS and try to build systems of support to help families develop positive coping skills.

Many CBOs focus on strengthening the family. They support families in understanding children's rights, enhancing their parenting skills, and building knowledge and skills to increase the household income so they can meet the basic needs of children. As families have the right social support, emotional wellbeing, and financial resources, they are better able to fulfill their duty to protect children.

Lupwa Lwambumi Trust (LLT) — Zambia
Meaningful neighborhood relationships are a testament to bonds borne of lives lived both in close physical proximity and in similar circumstances. A neighbor is often a de facto member of the extended family. LLT captures this notion in their "family circles of care" model. Bringing a small number of families into a circle, the circle then becomes a source of social and emotional support, enhancing the resilience of children and families. Family circles develop larger networks of care by forming self-help groups to strengthen the economic capacity of families through savings and loan strategies and by facilitating collective action in the larger community.

Community

Communities are made up of people and institutions. Some components of the community system are formal, while others are informal. Community has a strong influence on family, and a community's values often shape family attitudes about what constitutes acceptable treatment of children. In villages, this can be reinforced through social groups and the traditional authority system.

CBOs often challenge harmful cultural practices by holding community dialogues to build awareness and promote new social norms and perspectives. CBOs also work to influence traditional leaders to enforce child protection laws. Many mobilize and train child protection committees to take action to protect children. As the committee members better understand child rights and their duty to protect children, they influence the wider community to be part of the solution, becoming a very effective mechanism in prevention and mitigation of abuse, violence, and neglect.

Kwa Wazee — Tanzania
Some of the children's groups that Kwa Wazee worked with tried to report cases of abuse to the police but were not taken seriously. In response, Kwa Wazee trained child protection committees (CPCs) in three wards on community mapping, child rights, how to work with children, and identifying issues that affect children in the community. Kwa Wazee linked the CPCs with children and community leaders, police, NGOs, and other stakeholders. The three committees are now actively following and solving cases. Within a few months of Kwa Wazee mobilizing this community mechanism to protect children, 11 cases of abuse were sent to the police, and 23 were solved at the community level. Now children report cases of abuse directly to the CPCs, rather than to Kwa Wazee. This is a tremendous development for Kwa Wazee because it reduces the burden on their staff, but more importantly it relieves the children's groups from trying to handle cases of abuse on their own.

Government

District and national government are closely linked. The national system provides the framework, often through laws and policies, and defines the institutions responsible for enforcing them. Governments hold an important role in allocating the required resources to implement policies. The district is often where responsibility for implementation of the national policy or law is placed. Different districts within the same country may implement national policies very differently due to funding flows and the priorities of people occupying roles at the district level.

Schools, health centers, social welfare offices, police, and courts are parts of the government system that touch and affect children's lives. When they are child friendly, they provide support and services in ways that are responsive to children's needs. This makes a remarkable difference in the experience of a child once abused, as well as on families' decisions to report cases of abuse. Community organizations work at local and district levels to influence the provision of more child friendly services.

Justice for Children Trust (JCT) — Zimbabwe
In 2009 Zimbabwe began a constitutional revision process, and JCT saw this as an opportunity to establish comprehensive protection of children's rights. JCT advocated for the inclusion of child rights in the constitution and organized a children's national summit where a wide range of government officials heard children's hopes for the new constitution. JCT sees the adoption of the new constitution and related Sexual Abuse Protocol as milestones for children's rights.

To make the rights in the new constitution come alive for children, JCT is now training police, judicial officers, small organizations, community volunteers, and children on the specific provisions for children in the new constitution.

Preventing abuse calls for an understanding of the child, family, community, and government systems and how they interact with each other. To protect the child, the family must connect to the community, which must in turn connect to the district and national government systems. It is necessary for each of these systems to function well and have a strong connection to the next level in order to make a difference. Understanding the interaction of these systems helps to develop the right set of strategies for effecting change.

Analyzing systems to design strategies for change

When CBOs face large child protection issues in their communities, on the surface the issues can seem insurmountable. By dismantling and analyzing their component parts, organizations are able to develop insights and design strategies for change.

Three components appear repeatedly in cases that partners share. The components serve as enabling factors, stumbling blocks, or catalysts for change. These include the following:

Content: The written laws, policies, and resource allocation relevant to the issue that is being addressed in child protection. Laws are typically set at the national level, but can also be framed within an international framework. They play a key role in providing standards of protection for children and delineating responsibility for protection, as well as creating the mechanisms for enforcement of the laws and policies.

Structure: The state and non-state mechanisms that exist to facilitate implementation or enforcement of the laws and policies. State mechanisms include social workers, law enforcement, and the judicial system, but also health, education, and other services provided by government. Non-state mechanisms can be formal or informal. They include community groups and the traditional system, as well as other social institutions in the community, for example, child protection committees or village development committees.

Culture: Values, attitudes, and behaviors that shape how people understand, deal with, and act on an issue. These are often held by groups and actualized within both formal and informal systems. For example, if a police officer believes that corporal punishment is acceptable, he or she might be less responsive to a case of physical beating of a child.

Each of these three components plays a critical role in creating change. If one of the components is unaddressed, it can weaken an effort or strategy to create change. For example, without national laws to protect children, it becomes difficult to convince law enforcement to act in a particular case to protect a child from abuse. In another case, a law can be in place, but because no formal structures exist to enforce the laws, the culture and social norms dictate what happens in terms of both protecting children and responding to their abuse. Similarly, a law can be in place, but a community does not apply that law because their social or cultural norms are the rules that govern the behavior of families and communities. In many places, the traditional system operates outside the legal system. Without a process to integrate the two, the traditional system can reinforce violation of children's rights.

To be effective, an organization must understand all three components as they pertain to child protection issues. Once they analyze these components, organizations decide where they have the ability to take action, whether alone or with others. They can also make an honest assessment of what it will take to effect that change and what strategies they can use in the meantime to try to protect children even if all three components are not aligned.

Organizations need to carefully sequence their action. They may start with content, but the existence of the law or policy does not guarantee protection. The next step would focus on strengthening the structures, then a final step on addressing social norms. Shifting of social norms can happen within the same process of addressing content and building capacity of structures. Overall, we see that the process of protecting children is a long-term process. It requires multiple actors working collaboratively on multiple fronts to create change.

Examples of child protection issues
analyzed by Firelight partners

	Chiedza (Zimbabwe)	JCT (Zimbabwe)	LLT and YOCA (Zambia)
ISSUE	Children are dying due to lack of access to health services. In other cases, they lose their mothers because the mothers lack access to healthcare.	Children are often forced to beg or engage in petty trade or child labor to survive.	There are 120 pieces of legislation related to child rights. They are fragmented and held by different government ministries. As a result, there is a lack of a national framework to support child protection.
ANALYSIS	**Content:** New constitution now specifies right to life and right to healthcare. **Structure:** In rural communities, access to and use of health services is not consistent. Location of health services is a big factor requiring individuals to travel long distances when they need services. **Social norms and culture:** Social norms reinforce the use of traditional childbirth and healthcare methods that are often detrimental to the child.	**Content:** Legal framework exists in Zimbabwe to ensure that parents take responsibility, but laws are not often followed. **Structure:** Court system does exist to facilitate child maintenance orders. Court issues orders, but orders are not complied with. **Social norms and culture:** Parents are abdicating their responsibility to provide for children. The cultural expectations that worked in the past are no longer operational as families break apart.	**Content:** This fragmented system weakens the ability of state and non-state actors to coordinate and work together to protect children. **Structure:** Structures are not aligned or coordinated. There is no clear sense of where responsibility lies. Most people lack effective knowledge and capacity to respond to children or protect them. **Social norms and culture:** Cultural norms are shifting as families are strengthened. For example, if a community sees a case of child marriage, they intervene. They don't wait for someone to tell them. But they are often limited when they try to use the formal structure because it is fragmented.
INSIGHT	Shift needs to happen at the level of social norms as well as at the structural level.	Need to create content to frame alternative care of children abandoned by parents.	Need for a comprehensive and coordinated national child protection system. Once the law is in place, then work can be done to build the capacity of systems to work in a coordinated way.
ACTION	Campaign to shift **social norms**, as well as **structure**. Campaign to government to increase availability of clinics.	Policy reform on child social support so that when parents cannot meet needs, government provides social protection. **Focus is on content.**	**Focus is on content.** Conduct research to understand context. Raise awareness among partners and government. Work with key stakeholders to develop a system that aligns community, district, and national levels.

	Kwa Wazee (Tanzania)	COIDA (Malawi)	Empilweni (South Africa)	Touch Roots Africa (Lesotho)
ISSUE	Girls are experiencing high levels of violence, but they are not able to tell what is happening.	Children are showing up in bars — drinking and playing pool, or sometimes employed in the bars to sell alcohol.	Parental neglect of children. As a result, children are dropping out of school, committing suicide, or engaging in gang violence or sexually risky behavior.	Children are dropping out of school and as a result there is an increase in early marriage, child labor, and use of alcohol and drugs.
ANALYSIS	**Content:** Generally there are laws in Tanzania that provide for the protection of children. **Structure:** Enforcement of laws is dependent on the capacity of both state and non-state structures. Often, reaching down to girls requires non-state to work with state. The non-state structures have to have good knowledge in order to work effectively with the state. **Social norms and culture:** There is a culture of silence around abuse of girls. In addition, without action to deter perpetrators, men and boys continue to see this as acceptable behavior, especially when it remains hidden.	**Content:** Malawi recently passed a child protection act, but it is not widely known or consistently applied. **Structure:** Malawi has been decentralizing structures — strengthening district level structures as well as developing village level structures. While they exist, their capacity needs to be built, especially in enforcing child protection. **Social norms and culture:** Parental care plays a critical role. Neglect of children is increasing.	**Content:** Constitution is strong, with clear policies about responsibility for child protection. **Structure:** Poor and vulnerable communities often lack some of the formal systems that can support parents with challenges that cause high levels of stress. **Social norms and culture:** As parents become overwhelmed with social issues, they are finding it difficult to manage, and as a result, are not playing their parental role very effectively.	**Content:** There is recognition of the fact that there is a high rate of orphaning, which leaves many children without adults to pay their school fees or meet their basic needs. The government does provide for these children, but there are some gaps in the program that prevent many vulnerable children from benefiting. **Structure:** In some cases local structures don't know the mechanism for accessing the government support. In some cases they try, but they are not able to access support. **Social norms and culture:** Normally children are cared for in the extended family. But the level of orphaning and level of poverty are making it hard for extended families to cope. As a result, the traditional safety nets can no longer cope without additional support.
INSIGHT	Social norms around violence need to be addressed. In addition, local structures for protecting children do not exist or are not functioning to protect girls. State actors also need greater sensitization on why they should act on cases that are reported to them.	Need to strengthen parental care. Also need to mobilize police to enforce the law that prohibits children being in the bar.	Solution lies in parental care and protection of children.	Need to strengthen social welfare support for vulnerable children.
ACTION	Provide girls with skills to protect themselves and provide boys with knowledge to make different choices. Also, build capacity of community and police to support girls. **Focus is on structure as well as social norms and culture.**	Lobby the judiciary, create awareness among families, and build up parenting skills. Also, build capacity of local structures. **Focus is on content, structures, and social norms.**	Focus on behavioral change at the family level. This may start with understanding the ways that parents feel challenges in their roles and ways to help them increase their self-efficacy, and then building their parenting skills. **Focus is on social norms and culture.**	Advocate for government to reform child social support system. **Focus is on structure and content.**

PART 4:

Strengthening organizational child protection systems

One of the key objectives of our child protection initiative was building the capacity of community organizations to protect children. To understand their capacity building needs, we used a multistep process to assess organizational capacity. Specifically,

- In April 2012, each grantee-partner completed a child protection program mapping tool (see tools for strengthening child protection systems in annex) to document the situation of child abuse in their community.

- During a workshop in Zambia, the organizations were introduced to examples of various aspects of high quality child protection programming. With that knowledge in mind, each organization further assessed their strengths and weaknesses and also had the opportunity to develop an initial plan.

- Finally, we adapted a child protection organizational assessment tool from the Civil Society Challenge Fund.[4] The tool is used to assess an organization's existing policies and practices. The findings surfaced each organization's strengths (good practices) and weaknesses (poor practices, service gaps, and risks) in protecting children. The results of the assessment tool informed a capacity-building plan for each organization.

The supportive environment and the objectives of the assessment — to inform capacity building — created a space that allowed organizations to be honest. The assessment helped us to understand that many community organizations with child protection programs have significant weaknesses on child protection within their own organizations.

Overall, our assessment found the following key strengths of community-based organizations:

- Engaging with families and communities to develop a protective environment.
- Building the capacity of community structures and mechanisms to respond to child abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Challenging harmful cultural practices that violate children's rights and lead to abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Facilitating skills and knowledge to build positive familial relationships that place protection of children at the center.
- Increasing children's involvement in reporting cases of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

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4 "Child Protection Self Audit Tool." Civil Society Challenge Fund. Web. 15 May 2014. <https://www.gov.uk/civil-society-challenge-fund>.

Areas of challenge included gaps or weaknesses in the following areas:

- Child protection policy with supporting tools that facilitate adherence to the policy.
- Case management systems with supporting tools and referral systems.
- Understanding of child-related laws and effectively utilizing them.
- Providing safe spaces where children can be cared for to prevent further abuse.
- Knowledge of effective approaches to complex issues such as child trafficking.

Focus: Child protection policy, case management system, and referral network

Based on what we had learned in the assessments, we prioritized support for organizations to understand the laws in their countries and develop child protection policies, effective case management systems, and referral networks. These three elements are interlinked. As partners began to work on the child protection policies, it set them up to make gains in their referral networks and case management systems.

We conducted capacity building in a three-step process:

- Weeklong learning exchange visits with an organization that has well-developed systems and procedures around child protection.

- Combination of training and mentoring to support organizations to develop the following:

  - Sound understanding of the laws related to child protection
  - Community systems mapping of key stakeholders and institutions engaged in child protection
  - A child protection policy and tools to facilitate its implementation
  - Case management system to protect children
  - Formal relationships to support a strong referral system

- Ongoing mentoring as the organizations put the elements into place and support as organizations run into areas where they have challenges.

Child protection policy

Most organizations either did not have a child protection policy or were using a generic policy, adopted from another organization that they did not engage their own stakeholders in developing. The process of working with community members and leaders, organization and government stakeholders, and often children to develop child protection policies was transformative for these groups. It mobilized their communities and activated dormant child protection networks. It seemed to change the DNA of the organizations. Rather than having child protection as one program among many, it seemed to make child protection the organizing principle behind all their work.

Case management

This was a big gap for many organizations, resulting in the possibility of further victimizing or harming children. Part of the reason for this gap is that organizations often had not had the benefit of exposure to a well-developed case management system. Through this project they were able to visit organizations that had strong case management systems and see firsthand how they worked.

Case management is not just about how the organization manages the case of abuse, but it is in fact how they support the child through a process to get him or her to safety, provide care and support, and facilitate recovery and healing. Once systems are working effectively and are linked to work together well, case management plays an important role in the child's movement through the system. An important benefit of an effective case management process is that it helps the organization to document the case effectively, which helps them in prosecution and in reviewing the effectiveness of their strategies.

Referral networks

Community organizations recognize that they can be successful in protecting children only if the systems in the community work for children's protection. The process of both creating a protective environment and responding to abuse requires strong relationships between the different actors and systems. No single organization can do everything that needs to be done when a child has experienced abuse. Organizations that try to do it all often stretch their staff thin and in the end fail the child.

Our partners involved local community and government leaders in the process of developing their child protection policies. This helped to strengthen the relationships our partners needed to build their referral networks. At the conclusion of the project, our partners are able to provide more specifics about which government entities they are partnering with and how. Based on scores from the endline assessment, we know that the capacity to make effective use of their relationships is now 64 percent higher.

Though our partners see these relationships as vitally important for their child protection work, they still struggle with the commitment and cooperation of some of their government counterparts. These challenges include weaknesses in the justice system, lack of national case management systems, fragmented data collection, and government departments with insufficient resources (such as transportation) to reach the communities they are responsible to serve.

Conclusion

At the start of the initiative, most CBOs saw child protection as important, and some were ahead of others in championing child rights and child protection. At the conclusion of the initiative, it is clear that our partners now have practices, policies, and strategies for building child protection into the organization in more specific ways. Organizations that came in as generalists moved from responsively addressing cases of child protection as they arose to a more systematic child protection structure. Organizations that came in at a higher-capacity level for child protection found and strengthened the weak points in their systems.

Our partners told us the greatest value they found in the initiative was developing child protection policies, case management systems, and strong referral networks. They also appreciated the linkages and relationships they formed with each other as they learned how other organizations are working to protect children in their own communities.

At the conclusion of the child protection initiative, an evaluator visited each organization to again complete the child protection capacity assessment tool. At endline, each partner had gained capacity, with an average gain of 47 percentage points — a large gain in a short time period. While organizations came into the project at varying capacity levels, each organization showed significant capacity gains between baseline and endline.

This initiative has also informed our program design going forward:

- We focused this initiative on strengthening our partners' capacity in child protection. For some of our partners, but not all, we also provided capacity building support in organizational management. These partners are really thriving. Moving forward, we would put an equal focus on building organizational and child protection capacity.

- Eight partners in six countries were included in this initiative. The distance between them did not allow us to bring them together as frequently as we, and they, would have liked. Due to connectivity and time constraints, we were unable to establish an online community. Learning from other projects at Firelight, in the future we intend to work with a cohort of organizations in a close geographic cluster around a Lead Partner, so that they can be in frequent contact, for learning, sharing, and potential joint advocacy.

- As we examine our methods, we see the opportunity to expand our child protection focus to include advocacy and counseling. To increase their effectiveness, organizations need to strengthen their skills in advocacy as they branch out, build their referral networks, and challenge harmful norms and practices around children. Counseling is a necessary component, as children often need more intensive support beyond having their case handled through proper procedures. They and their families need social and emotional support as part of building skills for resilience.

- We know what changed for organizations, how many children were reached through these organizations, and how they were reached. However, we need to better understand child protection outcomes for children. We will learn from some of our colleagues who are making progress in this area as we move into the next stage of our work.

PART 5:
What we learned

This three-year initiative has shown us that CBOs play a central role in activating and strengthening local efforts to protect children from violence. Some things stood out in the course of the initiative:

- **Child protection is an organizing principle.** The process of working with CBOs began with engaging them and their local stakeholders to develop strong, explicit child protection policies and systems. This transformed how CBOs understood child protection. Organizations that formerly saw child protection as one among a set of programs now see child protection as a mandate behind all their work, part of their DNA. Rather than integrating child protection into other programs, child protection became the organizing principle for their work as a whole.

- **Strategies must be responsive to local context.** While there are key priority issues and strategies that are common across organizations, the variability in the activities of organizations shows that most organizations work in ways that are appropriate to the specific needs in their communities. There is no one standard approach to protecting children from abuse, neglect, and violence, but networking and learning from each other leads to an increasingly holistic response.

- **Effective child protection systems must link the formal and informal.** Responding to violence against children is facilitated by local action within informal community systems. But it is not effective unless it is connected to the formal systems of law enforcement, social welfare, and health. For Firelight, this initiative has been a confirmation of the central role that CBOs play in mobilizing community and government structures to support children. They build the capacity of each of those systems, for example, they often activate dormant child protection committees or can help district governments create databases to track cases of child abuse. More importantly, they link the local community stakeholder system and the formal government system to work together more effectively.

CHILD PROTECTION CASE STUDY
Chiedza Community Welfare Trust

"A safe environment for children has been created within Chiedza as an organization."

Location: Bonda Mission, Mutasa District, Zimbabwe Founded: 2005

Through initiating community-run income-generating activities and creating linkages with local government services, Chiedza ensures that those most vulnerable in the community receive support and care.

At the start of the initiative, Chiedza wanted to strengthen their child protection systems at an organizational and community level. They took every opportunity to learn about child rights and mechanisms for child protection. By the end of the initiative, Chiedza had developed a comprehensive set of child protection systems and strengthened their linkages with the community and government stakeholders responsible for protecting children.

Child protection programming at the start of the initiative

Chiedza grew out of a women's batik-making cooperative. When members of the cooperative started dying from AIDS-related diseases, they decided to invest 25 percent of their profits in providing support for former members' children, who were now orphaned. They later expanded to serve children from the whole community. In their words, "Programming OVC [orphans and vulnerable children] without child protection is meaningless." Chiedza's programming included educational and nutritional support, wills and inheritance awareness, establishing child protection committees, birth registration, and responding to cases of abuse.

In Chiedza's area, child protection committees, police, hospitals, and clinics were not well coordinated when responding to cases of abuse. Many cases fell through the cracks. Chiedza themselves did not have a child protection policy, case management system or tools, case referral system, or referral register. Their paper-based monitoring and evaluation system made it difficult to make sense of all the information coming in from their community volunteers. They saw their child protection programs as fragmented and wanted to achieve "an integrated, effective community based child protection."

Involvement in the child protection initiative

In the first year of the initiative, Chiedza visited a Firelight partner in Zambia to learn about using legal frameworks to organize child protection programming. Two Chiedza staff then visited a Firelight partner in Malawi where they received training in development of internal and external systems for child protection. An expert in child protection then visited Chiedza to assist them in developing a child protection policy, case management system, and tools. They received support in systems mapping to work with the community to develop a case referral system.

At the same time, Firelight's country consultant for Zimbabwe trained Chiedza's staff and volunteers on monitoring and evaluation systems and assisted them in setting up a database. Participation of community volunteers in this process helped Chiedza to develop tools that could easily be used and understood by the volunteers. As Chiedza was nearing the final year of its seven-year Firelight partnership, they wanted to launch a business whose profits would support the organization in the long term. Firelight supported training in business management, and once the group had developed a strong plan for a chicken-raising business, Firelight provided start-up funds.

Changes resulting from the initiative

Chiedza now has a child protection policy, case management system and tools, and a referral system, as well as a referral register. The training and mentoring process, which was part of the development of the documents, was rigorous to the extent that it instilled a sense of commitment and responsibility in staff who now feel very confident when handling child protection cases.

In addition, monitoring and evaluation tools for all Chiedza's programs are in place, and staff are entering data into a database for the first time. Chiedza says that through looking at the data this way, "objectivity is now very vivid in the organization."

Firelight's evaluation noted changes in Chiedza's organizational development and capacity for child protection. Using a tool we developed to look at eight areas of organizational development, we noted a slight overall uptick in Chiedza's already high organizational development scores. Using another tool adapted from the Civil Society Challenge Fund to look at six aspects of a child safe organization, we see tremendous gains in Chiedza's capacity for child protection.
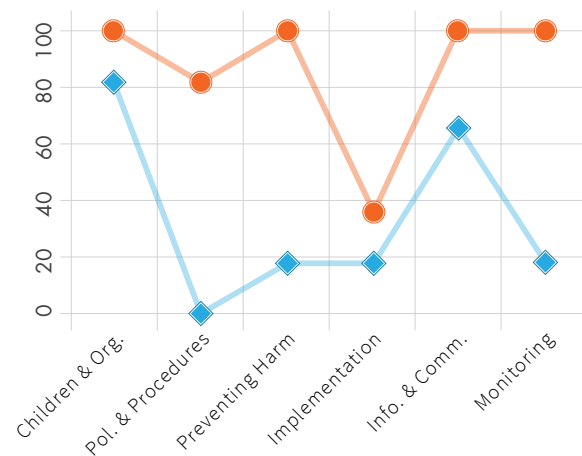
Organizational Development Tool
Each area scored on a scale of 1-5
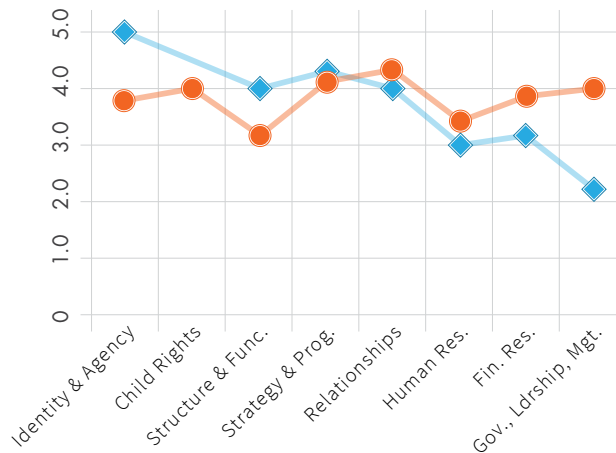
Child Protection Assessment*
% of capacities in place

◆ Baseline   ● Endline

Adapted from the CSCF Child Protection Guidance and Self Audit Tool

Chiedza recorded the most significant change in the area of policies and procedures. The process was more than just adopting policies; it was about both practical and actionable change. For example, in working on their policies and procedures to become child safe, Chiedza noticed things that could be a danger to children within their center. They realized that an unfinished wall posed physical danger to children, and the community donated materials and their labor to finish up the wall so that it would not be a hazard.

At child level, Chiedza has seen an increase in child protection cases reported. They attribute this to their awareness-raising activities in the community on child rights, abuse, and neglect. Chiedza's new case management and referral system ensures that all cases are being pursued and linked to appropriate support systems. Community and government stakeholders now work together during case conferences, resulting in children receiving integrated support from all responsible actors.

Next steps

Chiedza's work is hampered by the lack of a vehicle to transport staff to the communities. With a vehicle they would be able to visit more frequently. Law enforcement agents have the same difficulty, which at times prevents them from following up on cases of child abuse. Chiedza is still working to resolve this issue.

Chiedza established child protection committees over the last three years, but the committees have not yet been trained in their roles and responsibilities. Chiedza would like their staff to become trainers on child rights and child protection. Firelight's country consultant will lead this training for Chiedza's staff so that they are able to mobilize, train, and monitor child protection committees.

CHILD PROTECTION CASE STUDY
Kwa Wazee

> *"Even if we can't make 'un-happen' what happened to [girls who have been sexually abused], it certainly helps to reduce the self-stigma, to open a door for the until now unspoken secrets."*

**Location:
Nshamba, Muleba District, Tanzania
Founded: 2003
Website:
www.kwawazee.ch**

Kwa Wazee works to mitigate the increased caregiving burden borne by grandmothers as a result of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, simultaneously ensuring that children are cared for and safe.

Community-based organization Kwa Wazee joined the three-year child protection initiative in the second year to improve the effectiveness of their child protection systems and programming. Although this organization did not have the advantage of benefitting from all three years of the initiative, they saw significant gains in their ability to promote children's safety and resilience. Operating as a catalyst for change, Kwa Wazee further mobilized community members to be active stakeholders in the improvement of children's psychosocial wellbeing, as well as the prevention and mitigation of various forms of child abuse.

Child protection programming at the start of the initiative

Prior to their involvement in the initiative, Kwa Wazee viewed child protection as a priority, evidenced by their unique and thoughtfully developed programs aimed at building the capacity of families and communities to keep children safe. Kwa Wazee's initial programs stemmed from their recognition of the unique vulnerability of children who are raised by grandparents after losing their parents to the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The organization provides grandparent-headed households with monthly pensions to help them meet their basic needs. Kwa Wazee initiates income-generating opportunities with grandparent-headed households, such as small-scale farming, ultimately mitigating children's vulnerability caused by economic instability at the family level.

Additionally, Kwa Wazee provides direct support to children in the form of children's support groups, where they benefit from social-emotional support from their peers, participate in opportunities for building skills, enjoy sports and recreational activities, and receive educational support. The organization's flagship child protection program is a set of self-defense trainings for girls, complemented by a program called Peace is a Decision for their male counterparts. Kwa Wazee notes that this combination of programming has served to redefine gender identities, at the same time helping girls and boys see each other as allies and partners in their efforts to promote safety. It is notable that the self-defense program has had the unintended result of providing girls with much-needed social and emotional support. The organization has found that girls become comfortable in their self-defense groups and are often able to speak, for the first time, about past cases of abuse.

In the course of implementing these child protection–focused activities, Kwa Wazee faced a number of challenges, including lack of commitment from community leaders to tackle child protection issues, delays in reporting cases of abuse, and insufficient knowledge of child protection laws and policies. Additionally, sporadic networking among stakeholders in the community has led to fragmented responses to issues affecting children's safety.

Involvement in the initiative

Firelight awarded Kwa Wazee grant funds to strengthen their child protection–focused programming. With this funding, the organization prioritized building the capacity of community-based child protection committees (CPCs), who play a crucial role of keeping children safe within the community. Kwa Wazee trained eighty-two committee members on abuse prevention and appropriately responding to cases of abuse. Training included orientation to national child protection policies and guidance on use of case management forms to assist them in their work. In an effort to enhance their referral networks, Kwa Wazee introduced members of the CPCs to other stakeholders, including police and government social welfare officers.

Kwa Wazee also received organizational capacity building in child protection. During a visit to a child protection–focused organization in Malawi, Kwa Wazee learned about a variety of systems and tools used to track child abuse cases and also gained skills and knowledge in the area of child protection advocacy. Their participation in an advocacy-focused workshop in South Africa, along with seven peer organizations, furthered their expertise in this area.

Changes resulting from the initiative

The transfer of skills and knowledge, as well as the provision of tools, empowered CPCs to take action on cases of abuse where they might not have previously. Kwa Wazee notes that other community members feel empowered to take increased action toward protecting children as well.

Significant changes have also been observed at the child level. With increased confidence in the CPCs, children are more actively seeking out the assistance of these community structures, effectively breaking the culture of silence around abuse. Children are also taking an increasingly proactive position in the effort toward their own protection. Catalyzed by the integration of Kwa Wazee's self-defense courses into secondary schools, school children formed committees that follow up on cases of abuse occurring within the school setting. This is an instrumental step in decreasing child sexual abuse, as relevant literature indicates that secondary schools in Africa are a high-risk site for forced and coerced sex (Andersson et al. 2012 [5], Antonowicz 2010 [6]).

Firelight's evaluation of this child protection initiative looked at changes in organizational development and child protection capacity. Using a tool developed to look at eight areas of organizational development, we noted a slight decrease in Kwa Wazee's organizational development scores, particularly around human and financial resources. This could be attributed to the fact that Kwa Wazee did not benefit from organizational development support during the course of the initiative. Over the coming months, a Firelight program consultant will work with them to address the identified organizational gaps.

Looking at Kwa Wazee's scores in the child protection assessment, we see significant gains in every area. For example, their score in Policies and Procedures jumped from 40 percent to 80 percent. This strengthening of policies and procedures includes having tools in place to ensure proper follow-up on child protection cases. As a result, Kwa Wazee has seen an increase in the number of cases reported and resolved both with or without police involvement. This kind of change leads to tangible results for children.

5 Andersson, Neil et al. "Prevalence and risk factors for forced or coerced sex among school-going youth: national cross-sectional studies in 10 southern African countries in 2003 and 2007." BMJ Open 2.2 (2012): e000754-e000754.

6 Antonowicz, Laetitia. "Too often in silence: A report on school-based violence in West and Central Africa". For UNICEF, Plan West Africa, Save the Children Sweden West Africa, and ActionAid (2010).
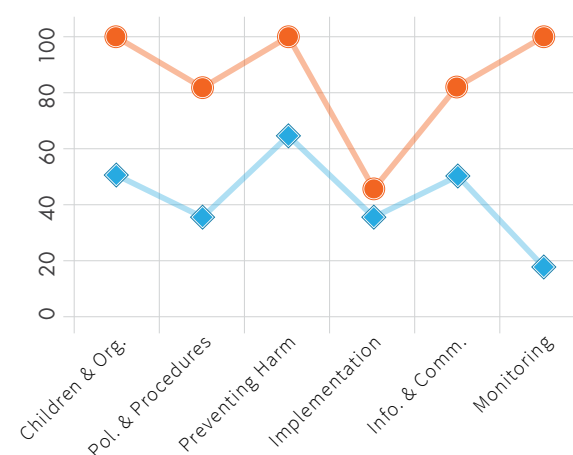
Organizational Development Tool
Each area scored on a scale of 1-5
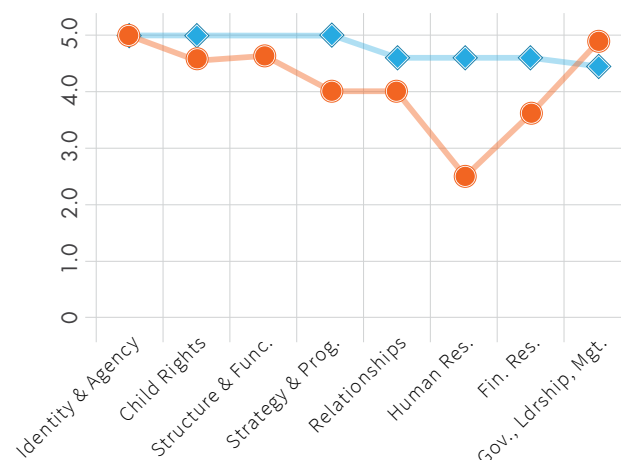
Child Protection Assessment*
% of capacities in place

◆ Baseline   ● Endline

Adapted from the CSCF Child Protection Guidance and Self Audit Tool

Next steps

Kwa Wazee recognizes an urgent need to expand their programs for primary school–aged children. This recognition came out of recent primary school training conducted by the organization, during which 45 percent of the children in attendance reported having been sexually abused. An additional 25 percent of the children reported attempted sexual abuse. Kwa Wazee staff are currently seeking out tools to appropriately and effectively work with children in this age range on preventing sexual abuse and providing aftercare to those children who have been abused.

The organization also expressed a desire to set up an electronic database, as they are currently tracking abuse cases on paper forms. They recognize that a more efficient information management system would increase their ability to track individual cases, as well as recognize trends. Finally, Kwa Wazee sees a gap in their ability to convey the impact of their work. They intend to work on more effectively packaging and sharing the stories of change that come about as a result of their tireless work with children.

Firelight's Program Consultant continues to work with Kwa Wazee on strategic planning and resource mobilization skills to help to ensure that Kwa Wazee's programs are sustained in the long term.

CHILD PROTECTION MAPPING TOOL

Introduction

Abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children exist at all levels of society. As stated by the UN Secretary General's study on violence against children, no violence against children is justifiable, and all violence against children is preventable. This violation of children's right to feel safe and protected persists because of various social and cultural beliefs. The culture of secrecy, stigma, and silence around child neglect, exploitation, and physical and sexual abuse helps perpetrators continue undeterred. The fact that children are treated as minors with fewer rights than their adult perpetrators poses challenges to prevention, reporting, care, and management. Timely management of a child rights violation is hindered by a number of factors. Some of these include absence or lack of understanding of the laws and procedures for mandatory reporting; weak child witness protection mechanisms; and lack of child friendly services within the police, health, and judicial systems. In some countries, inadequate legal systems fail to criminalize child sexual and physical abuse. The referral and reporting systems and linkages between the various professionals working with abused children are usually not well established. Efforts to improve these systems are often fragmented and inadequate, given the scale and depth of the issue.

This tool is offered as a first step in a process to understand the current state of child protection within a particular community and from the perspective of a particular organization. The objective is to help the organization explore the key issues that are contributing to abuse, neglect, and exploitation by tracing the underlying causes, how they are defined and known, and who helps to continue the violation against children. The tool also helps an organization begin to visually identify stakeholders and how they are working together.

The intent is that the outcome of the process will help an organization to develop capacity, develop a stronger response, and increase linkages. The tool should be filled out by a group, including leadership, staff, and volunteers. The tool can facilitate a process of increasing awareness of strengths and gaps in current action, knowledge, and skills. If participants do not know the answer to a question, they should note that they do not know. Honesty in responses will ultimately lead to improved organizational capacity and effective programming. Please note that the issues that are listed on the left column serve as the range of issues that we know to be affecting children. If your organization does not work on a particular issue, you can leave that row blank or you can simply delete it. You may also add an issue that is not listed but that is a key problem in the community that you serve.

I. Attitudes, customs, and beliefs

Section I explores the underlying attitudes, beliefs, and customs that contribute to and perpetuate abuse, neglect, exploitation, and overall violence against children.

- **UNDERLYING CAUSE:** Is there an existing custom or belief in the community that contributes to the problem? Is it based on culture or religion, unquestioned tradition, or status of the child in society?

- **CUSTODIAN:** How is this practice protected and justified and by whom? This can be a single individual, an institution, or a social entity. For example if the belief is traditional, the Chief may be the custodian. If it is religious, it may be that the Church is the source of justifying the practice. In other cases, it may be the family, such as when a child is married off so that the family can get cattle for *lobola* (usually translated as bride price) or reduce the number of people to feed in the home.

- **PREVALENCE:** How widespread is this as a problem in the community that you serve? Is the prevalence high, medium, or low?

- **LEVEL OF PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEM:** Is this issue seen as a problem in the community, is it a problem that is hidden, or is it a problem that people know exists but no one will speak about? Is it is openly discussed? Is there is wide community participation in solving the problem? Provide simple statements about whether there is recognition of the problem.

Issue	Deeper Causes That Fuel The Harmful Practice	Custodian Of Practice	Prevalence (Choose One) • Low • Medium • High	Level Of Public Recognition Of Problem (Choose One) • Low • Medium • High
Child Marriage				
Initiation Ceremonies				
Child Labor				
Child Trafficking				
Child Sexual Abuse				
Corporal Punishment				
Witchcraft				
Child Prostitution				

II. Child participation

- **CURRENT STATE AND WHY:** What is the current reality for children's status, their safety and protection, and their rights? What contributes to that condition?

- **WHO IS WORKING TO CHANGE THIS?** Is anyone trying to improve that reality?

- **HOW ARE THEY DOING IT?** What key actions or approaches are they using?

- **HOW ARE THINGS CHANGING?** Is there change that is evident as a result of the action?

Issue	What Is Current State And Why?	Who Is Working To Change This?	How Are They Doing It?	How Are Things Changing? (Choose One) • They are not changing. • They are changing but only a little. • They are changing for the better. • There have been a lot of positive changes in this area.
Knowledge of their rights				
Respect for their voice and participation				
Mechanisms for supporting their empowerment				
Participation in developing response to child abuse, neglect, and violence				
Who is helping adults to learn and adopt child rights? How?				
Is there a local mechanism for children to report abuse, neglect, or violence?				

III. Roles and responsibilities

- **FAMILY:** What are the duties of the family in addressing this issue? What challenges or limitations do they face in protecting children? Is there an incentive for them to enable or perpetrate the abuse?

- **COMMUNITY:** What are the duties of the community in addressing this issue? Is there a community mechanism that facilitates that action? Is the mechanism effective? If not, why?

- **GOVERNMENT PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTIONS:** What are the key government or public service institutions that have a role in this issue and what is that role? Are they fulfilling their duty effectively? What are the main problems?

- **CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS:** What is the role of civil society? Is there an active response? Is it effective? What are the limitations?

Issue	Family	Community	Government Public Service Institutions	Civil Society Actors
Child Marriage				
Initiation Ceremonies				
Child Labor				
Child Trafficking				
Child Sexual Abuse				
Corporal Punishment				
Witchcraft				
Child Prostitution				

IV. Community level systems of support and child-friendly services

- **SUPPORT AND SERVICES:** What kinds of support and services exist to respond to violence against children? What action exists to build a protective environment?

- **KEY ACTORS:** Who are the main actors responding at the community level? Is it an individual, a community group such as a child protection committee, an organization, or a public institution like the police?

- **FOCUS:** Is the focus of the entity on prevention or mitigation or on changing policies and systems? Name the focus and give an example of the action taken.

- **GAPS AND LIMITATIONS:** What is missing at the level of support and services, systems, policies, or procedures in any of these categories that would help to improve the prevention as well as mitigation of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children?

Issue	Specific Support & Services	Key Actors: Individuals, Community Groups, Organizations, Or Public Institutions	Focus: Prevention, Mitigation, Or Policy Level And Systems	Gaps And Limitations
Child Marriage				
Initiation Ceremonies				
Child Labor				
Child Trafficking				
Child Sexual Abuse				
Corporal Punishment				
Witchcraft				
Child Prostitution				

V. Actors, linkages, and collaboration

- **LEAD ACTOR:** Is there an organization or a group of organizations that is serving as a leader or main champion in addressing this issue?

- **OTHER COLLABORATORS:** What other organizations also work on it, even if they are not taking a lead role?

- **MECHANISM FOR LINKING:** How do the lead and supporting organizations work together? What forum or mechanism exists to link their work? Please state if it is formal or informal. If one does not exist, simply state that none exists.

- **GAPS AND LIMITATIONS:** What are the limitations in collaboration on this issue? What is the reason for those challenges?

Issue	Lead Actor(s)	Other Collaborators	Mechanism For Linking And Referral	Gaps And Limitations
Child Marriage				
Initiation Ceremonies				
Child Labor				
Child Trafficking				
Child Sexual Abuse				
Corporal Punishment				
Witchcraft				
Child Prostitution				

VI. Enforcing laws, policies, and practices for child protection

- **COMMUNITY LEVEL:** Who or what entity is responsible for enforcing laws and policies for protecting children at the community level? Is it working effectively? Does it link to national systems?

- **NATIONAL:** Who or what is responsible for enforcing laws and policies for protecting children at the national level? Is it working effectively? Does it link to regional systems or a continental system?

- **REGIONAL, CONTINENTAL, INTERNATIONAL:** What are the relevant protocols that guide child protection in Africa? In the region (Southern African Development Community or East African Community)? At the international level? Are they respected and applied?

- **MECHANISM FOR LINKING:** How do systems at the different levels work together? Where are there gaps or missed connections?

Issue	Community Level	National	Region Or Continent	Mechanism For Linking Between Community And National Level
Child Marriage				
Initiation Ceremonies				
Child Labor				
Child Trafficking				
Child Sexual Abuse				
Corporal Punishment				
Witchcraft				
Child Prostitution				

VII. Organizational response

- **TOOLS, SUPPORT, SERVICES:** What tools are you using? What support are you providing? What services are you helping children to access?
- **LINKAGE OR REFERRAL SYSTEM:** Is your organization part of a referral system? Is it formal or informal? How well is it working and how do you work with the other systems and service providers to improve its effectiveness?
- **LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCE:** How confident are you in your knowledge base, your skills and competence in addressing this issue, and your ability to make a difference? You can also state in which part you have high confidence.
- **LEVEL OF ACTIVITY IN THIS AREA:** Do you address this area in your work? If so, indicate whether you are just starting to work on it, or if it is one of your core programs.
- **CHALLENGES AND GAPS:** What are the existing challenges and gaps in what you are doing and how you are doing it? Are there challenges or gaps in your knowledge, skills, information, linkages, or resources?

Issue	Tools, Support, Services	Linkage Or Referral System	Level Of Knowledge & Competence :	Level Of Activity In This Area:	Challenges And Gaps
			(Choose One) • This is an area we need to learn more about before we can be confident about our work in this area. • We have a basic level of knowledge but need to learn more before we can act. • We are learning and becoming more competent as we work in this area. • We feel like we know enough about this area that we can teach others, and it is one of our areas of strength and expertise.	(Choose One) • This is not an area we address in our work. • We are starting to work in this area. • We are building on our work in this area. • This is one of our core programs.	
Child Marriage					
Initiation Ceremonies					
Child Labor					
Child Trafficking					
Child Sexual Abuse					
Corporal Punishment					
Witchcraft					
Child Prostitution					

PROGRAM MODEL TOOL

Section One:
What you are doing to create change

What Change Do You Want To Create?	What Is The Program Component That Will Create Change?	Who Is The Target Of The Action?	Who Else Will Benefit?	Who Else Facilitates The Change?	How Are You Documenting The Change?	What Recent Modifications Have You Made?
Example: Improve skills and knowledge of parents to support children's development	Skillful parenting training	Parents	Children	Department of Social Welfare	Parent observation Parent survey	Involving grandparent caregivers in the training

Section Two:
Understanding challenges and gaps in your programs

Challenge Or Gap	Why It Matters	Current Limitations And Support Needed

CHILD PROTECTION INITIATIVE
Participating Firelight Partners

Chiedza Community Welfare Trust
Located in Bonda, Zimbabwe
Founded in 2005

Founded by teachers, health care workers, and members of a women's cooperative, Chiedza Community Welfare Trust strives to empower communities to care for the increasing number of orphans and vulnerable children in their community. Communities conduct awareness-raising campaigns on HIV, voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), nutrition, child abuse, children's rights, and reproductive health. Chiedza also runs artisan income-generating activities, trains foster parents, supports school fees and feeding programs, and runs counseling and support groups in each of the five villages they serve.

Communities in Development Activities (COIDA)
Located in Mzimba, Malawi
Founded in 2004

Communities in Development Activities (COIDA) reaches out to groups of community members, community and opinion leaders, children, and youth in rural Mzimba. Working together, they mobilize community action on issues of child rights and child protection to enable children to take up their rightful role and responsibilities on such issues.

Empilweni
Located in Khyelitsha, South Africa
Founded in 1994

Empilweni provides mental health care through community-driven interventions, including individual and family crisis counseling, support groups, advocacy, and lobbying on mental health issues. Empilweni is located in Khayelitsha, one of Cape Town's largest, poorest, and most violent townships, where the group serves as the primary mental health referral source for area schools and clinics.

Justice for Children Trust (JCT)
Located in Harare, Zimbabwe
Founded in 2002

A group of Zimbabwean lawyers founded Justice for Children Trust (JCT) to provide free legal services to minors. They were motivated by escalating legal fees, rising levels of poverty, the denial of children's rights, increasing cases of child sexual abuse, and the HIV and AIDS pandemic, which has multiplied the numbers of orphaned children and child-headed households. In response, JCT prosecutes cases of abuse, educates the public on children's rights, conducts research on children's legal issues, and advocates for legal and policy reform.

Lupwa Lwabumi Trust (LLT)
Located in Lusaka, Zambia
Founded in 2004

Lupwa Lwabumi Trust (LLT) facilitates the formation and support of Family Circles and self-help groups to strengthen vulnerable families and enhance care and support for children. Clusters of families living in close proximity develop solutions to local problems via cross-family dialogue and community-based savings and loan groups.

Kwa Wazee
Located in Nshamba,
Muleba, Tanzania
Founded in 2003

Kwa Wazee — the Granny Project mitigates the increased care-giving burden on grandmothers as a result of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Kwa Wazee reduces isolation through support groups while improving the health and wellbeing of grandmother-headed households by providing them with monthly pension payments. They also engage grandchildren in peer-led support groups.

Touch Roots Africa (TRA)
Located in Maseru,
Lesotho
Founded in 2004

Touch Roots Africa (TRA) believes that when communities are strong, vibrant, and informed, they can improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children and uphold their rights. Their strategy is to empower all stakeholders that impact children's lives through training in child rights, protection, and psychosocial support. TRA also builds the organizational capacity of community structures that respond to the needs of children.

Youth for Change (YOCA)
Located in Lusaka, Zambia
Founded in 2002

In 2002 a dynamic and focused group of young individuals started Youth for Change (YOCA) to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and youth located in the most populated and poorest compound of Lusaka. YOCA focuses on child-headed households and child prostitutes, both extremely vulnerable groups. YOCA also develops programs that raise awareness of children's issues and mobilize local support to build stronger families. The group is working closely with community members to address education, malnutrition, child protection, and economic empowerment of families.

Firelight Foundation believes in the power of African communities to create lasting change for children and families affected by poverty, HIV, and AIDS. We identify, fund, and strengthen promising community organizations that support the health, resilience, and education of children in Africa.

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