

Helpdesk Research Report: Evidence about the effectiveness of child protection programmes in developing countries

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Query: Identify and summarise evidence about the effectiveness of child protection programmes in developing countries. Please highlight information on cost effectiveness, on effectiveness (cost or otherwise) of case management or of better integration of services for vulnerable children more generally.

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1. Overview

Child protection is defined as ‘measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children. [...] The goal of child protection is to promote, protect and fulfil children’s rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [...] and other human rights, humanitarian and refugee treaties and conventions, as well as national laws’ (Save the Children, n. d.).

Despite the importance of ensuring effective protection for children based on solid assessments of activities, **there is little evidence on the effectiveness of child protection programmes in developing countries.** Moreover, part of the available evidence on effectiveness is very descriptive and does not provide information on links between given development practices on the one hand and

improved outcomes and impact for children on the other. Despite the lack of robust evidence and limited consistent findings, there are some helpful targeted insights into what works and what does not work in improving and ensuring child protection in developing countries. These points are drawn mostly from **a small number high quality reviews**, in particular, UNICEF's comprehensive 2012 review of evaluations of its projects for protecting children from violence¹.

Overall, evidence shows that the **effectiveness of child protection programmes is very variable and seems to be only average**. For example, UNICEF's review found that 13 per cent of its projects for protecting children from violence were deemed not effective, 67 per cent partly effective, and 19 per cent effective² (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012).

A commonly cited finding about the effectiveness of child protection programmes is the **importance of contextualising action**: programming, programme implementation and programme assessment need to be tailored to local situations and practices in child protection. This means an approach that works well in one given country may not be as effective in another, depending on the possible differences in contexts.

It is also important to acknowledge that '**child protection is political** and cannot be understood outside the political context of governments and donors'. There is a 'politics of child protection, namely why governments and donors have particular preferences among policy options, and why there is more enthusiasm for certain child protection programmes (e.g. orphan and vulnerable children programmes) than others.' (Davis et al., 2012, 10)

This report will first identify and describe the state of available evidence. It will then present findings on the effectiveness of child protection programmes in developing countries, grouped around five selected areas on which significant evidence is available: general factors affecting the effectiveness of child protection programmes; different types of child protection measures; specific settings and contexts; specific categories of children; and cost effectiveness. Given the fragmentation of available literature and the limited space of this helpdesk report, each section will give selected highlights as a reflection of the evidence base.

2. The state of the evidence

Three general difficulties in determining the effectiveness of child protection

Overall, three issues stand out in the literature on child protection in both developed and developing countries: **effectiveness can be 1) hard to define, 2) hard to measure, and 3) hard to assess** (on 'hard to assess', see example of a challenge to interpretations of evidence that present formal systems in Kenya as a success story in child protection, in Cooper, 2012).

Problems specific to evidence on child protection programmes in developing countries

¹ This meta-synthesis covers child protection issues 'not strictly considered to be 'violence', but that cause harm to children. Accordingly, the evaluations in the sample (52 in total) look at a wide variety of interventions from the seven UNICEF programming regions. It is important to note, however, that many other aspects of UNICEF Child Protection work, were not included in this review, such as efforts to increase birth registration, capacity building of social welfare workers and legal reform initiatives that do not pertain to violence' (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012).

² The report emphasises, however, that these ratings were tempered by the variable quality of the evaluations. 'Further, some evaluation analyses were overly or under-critical toward the programmes, thereby skewing the results.'

Development actors have generally engaged in **limited monitoring and evaluation** in relation to child protection, resulting in a weak evidence base. This is partly due to challenges inherent in the topic, such as ethical issues in data gathering with children and practical obstacles in assessing some hidden violent practices. Other reasons are connected to the field of development itself, from general weakness in research to underfunding of child protection programmes, including in their monitoring and evaluation components (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012; expert comments).

Where evaluations are made, **effectiveness is often assessed in an input- or process-oriented manner, with little outcome- or impact-oriented work conducted**. However, effectiveness cannot be equated with project milestones or with the implementation of recommended mechanisms. Often, policy recommendations are made by child protection actors, and there is an assumption in many evaluation reports that putting those measures in place will contribute to or produce effectiveness. In contrast, effectiveness describes the actual implementation and results of given measures, and establishes a causality between the measures used and the outcomes and impact. When defined in this manner, there is little evidence about effectiveness in the literature about child protection (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012; Wessells, 2009).

As a result, the vast majority of the research surveyed and the experts consulted emphasise that there is a **lack of evidence on the effectiveness of child protection programmes**. As such, there are limited relevant materials to rely on for this report. In fact, major international actors in the field of child protection came together in 2010 and created the 'Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group' (CPMERG) precisely to respond to this widespread gap and to support the production of solid data and evidence³.

In this context, the evidence that is available can be described as follows.

Sources of evidence on the issues and/or countries: reports on assessments, monitoring and evaluation, and meta-reviews of those; case studies; guides to lessons learned and best practices; large research projects and findings; academic works.

Approaches to evidence production on effectiveness: diverse. Evidence in the literature was generated through a range of single or mixed methods, adult- or child-led. Assessments of programme effectiveness were made in a variety of ways, from asking child protection workers to rate effectiveness (Svevo-Cianci et al., 2010) to correlating outcomes to inputs, to mapping for assessment, to focused searches for causalities.

Substance of the evidence: diverse. The evidence base comprises both qualitative and quantitative findings, and both single cases and comparative studies. The level of analysis ranges from local to national to regional and international. The scope of the programmes examined ranges from very specialised (one type of protection measure in one type of context) to very broad (whole systems).

Geographical scope: most English language references found on the effectiveness of child protection in developing countries related to Africa. There were less on Asia and the Pacific region, few on Europe and very few on both the Americas and the Middle East and North Africa.

Quality of evidence: the quality of evidence on the effectiveness of child protection programmes appeared to be extremely uneven and generally just average, with regard to both methodology and contents. This was confirmed in readings made for this report, in experts' contributions and in reviews

³ Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group, <http://www.cpmerng.org/>

of the literature. For example, of the 52 reports reviewed in the UNICEF 2012 meta-synthesis, '27 per cent were classified as poor, 48 per cent as satisfactory, 23 per cent as very good and 2 per cent as excellent' with regard to evaluation quality (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012, i).

Given the lack of consistent quality, systematic approaches and comparisons in the evidence base, it may be **difficult to generalise** on what is effective and what is not in child protection programmes (Davis et al., 2012, 9; De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012).

3. General factors affecting effectiveness

Several cross-cutting themes emerge from the evidence about what makes child protection programmes in developing countries effective. Some of these factors are broader than child protection programmes, others directly connected to such programmes.

1. Broader factors affecting the effectiveness of child protection programmes

Save the Children documented the improvements in the wellbeing of children worldwide over the past two decades, including in child protection and identified the following factors influencing these outcomes (Marcus, 2012, 64-68).

- **Legal reform**, with international and national laws supporting child protection put into place. This has set a framework for action, but implementation has been 'patchy'.
- **Focused action on specific issues** such as child labour and the demobilisation of former child soldiers.
- **Active role of civil society**: progress 'has often been spearheaded by civil society organisations, partly reflecting gaps in governmental capacity or motivation'. This is the case with improved birth registration and with changing social attitudes, for example on early marriage and female genital mutilation [FGM].
- **Social mobilisation** for children's rights and against particular practices. This mattered especially in reducing FGM and early marriage.
- **Poverty reduction** has contributed to progress, in particular on child labour and early marriage, 'which are especially responsive to improvements in household incomes'. Likewise, improvements in social welfare, employment and education levels have been positive influences. However, anti-poverty action must be better integrated into child protection, 'potentially through stronger linkages between social protection programmes, such as cash transfers and child protection initiatives'.
- **Aid**: there are generally low donor allocations to social welfare, including child wellbeing. However, aid has contributed to improvements, for example in the decline in child labour.
- **Greater policy emphasis on and resources for child protection**: governmental child protection institutions are often 'grossly underfunded, and their allocations minimal compared with other sectors'. For example, four per cent of social protection budgets in the Asia Pacific region were dedicated to child protection. Among many donors, child protection is a lower priority than food and healthcare, including in emergencies. Donor responses have also lacked focus on programming. 'Successes have been driven by a few key agencies active in child protection, which accounts for their relatively small scale'.
- **Strengthening child protection systems**: child protection is fragmented, 'focused on individual forms of child maltreatment' and ignores children's need for support in several

areas simultaneously. Child protection systems need to be further strengthened to make prevention more effective and support more holistic.

- **'Action on entrenched cultural norms'** and sensitive issues: awareness-raising campaigns have been successful in creating social change.
- **Addressing powerful interests:** some militias and organised crime rings are involved in abuse such as enlistment into armed forces and child trafficking. Enhanced capacity in the police and criminal justice system is required, with attention paid to corruption problems.

Save the Children also listed six **general drivers of progress in children's wellbeing**, all of which are relevant to the effectiveness of child protection programmes: **a supportive political and policy environment; well-planned and implemented programmes (coherent policy frameworks and successful implementation); resourcing; role of economic growth; social change; increased availability of key technology and dissemination of ideas** (Marcus, 2012, 73-78).

These broader factors are important to keep in mind when analysing the effectiveness of child protection programmes: they may be key contributors to getting results and key obstacles if missing.

2. Factors related specifically to child protection that affect effectiveness

The 2012 UNICEF meta-synthesis points to programme-specific factors shaping effectiveness in child protection programmes⁴.

Sources of effectiveness:

- multi-sectoral approaches to capacity building and system strengthening that also target harmful social norms;
- integrating child protection into inter-sectoral programmes that combine longer term social change with short term tangible 'entry points';
- addressing both prevention and response in the continuum of services;
- understanding and considering underlying socio-economic, cultural and political determinants is critical in programme design.

Changes to be made for greater effectiveness:

- moving beyond advocacy and technical assistance to monitoring and oversight;
- strengthening systematic capacity and coordination mechanisms in order to improve the effectiveness of partnership and community mobilisation efforts;
- planning and implementing meaningful participation of children, families and communities more systematically;
- strengthening equity-based programming to address the gaps noted by past evaluations (e.g. with regard to girls, children with disabilities etc.);
- reviewing and improving child safeguarding and associated ethical policies.

Sources of ineffectiveness or problems:

- isolated and vertical programmatic responses, which are ineffective and inefficient as compared to more holistic interventions;
- weaknesses in applying results-based planning and management tools;
- lack of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks;
- lack of exit strategies and sustainability issues in programme planning.

⁴ http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_66192.html

4. Effectiveness of different types of measures

Child protection programmes can encompass a large number of sectors (from justice to social protection) and measures (from policies, frameworks and laws, to capacity-building, service delivery and care). The following case studies offer highlights on four types of measures: laws and protocols; case management; capacity-building for social workers; and systems approaches.

Laws and protocols – critical views on the Kenya ‘success story’ (Cooper, 2012)

This report finds that the existence of a legal framework for child protection is insufficient. The way in which it is implemented (or not implemented) is essential to the effectiveness of outcomes. It states that: **‘[A]n ostensibly child-centred system can fail to protect children. [...] despite adherence to a legislated framework and series of protocols, the Kenyan state proves unable or unwilling to ensure children’s care and protection’**. The state uses child-focused discourse and practice in its bureaucracy and judiciary but neglects children’s perspectives and the fundamental risks to children, families and communities (486).

This failure is due to a fundamental flaw in the organisation of the system, which **prioritises ‘bureaucratic efficiency’ over accountability to children’s experiences and perspectives, which are marginalised**. Practices and attitudes among childcare workers undermine adherence to children’s best interests and respect for their opinions. This results in **lost opportunities**. For example, social inquiry interviews with children are ‘well-conceived but poorly-implemented’. Further, new personnel ‘have been socialised into this **organisational culture**’ (490).

This systematic lack of care and accountability to children is due to: insufficient resources; limited options for alternative placements; bureaucratic indifference, fostered by job performance appraisals that value following procedure above all else; and most of all ‘institutionalised neglect’ of care for children (494). In the end, protocol is ‘used to eschew authentic responsibility for children’s wellbeing’ (494). Cooper details locally appropriate steps to improve children’s care and protection in Kenya.

Case management for child protection – best practices from Save the Children (McCormick, 2011)

This study provides evidence-based contributions on case management for child protection. It summarises the fundamental components of a good case management system/process: identification and assessment; individual support planning; referral and liaison with support services; monitoring and review. The study shows that these components can be successfully used in and adapted to development and emergency settings. For example, to identify children in need of protection in weakly institutionalised states, actors can develop context-relevant information channels for community members to use.

Key principles of effectiveness throughout the case management process are **the importance of looking at the children ‘within their environment rather than look solely at the immediate protection concern’ (7)**, **‘Do no harm’ practices in relation to both children and their wider social circle and accountability**. Competencies and training for effective case workers are also key and include awareness-raising, risk and need assessment, knowledge about mechanisms for discussing concerns and coordinating actions and further professional skills.

Many examples of ‘promising practice’ by Save the Children in African and Asian countries are given. Throughout the cases mentioned, best practices **always integrate local understandings of child protection and locally adapted practices into the general case management framework**.

Increased and improved resources are needed to improve the quality of case management at Save the Children. This includes providing a clear definition of case management, a minimum set of best practice standards created in consultation with local teams and communities, training and guidance for staff (especially through mentoring) and advocacy to secure increased resources for case management work.

Capacity-building for social workers in African countries – building on local strengths (Davis, 2009)

There is 'a **historically rich social work profession in Africa that was built on a community ideology and focused on meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families, especially those living in poverty**' (viii). But current situations are characterised by the loss of community in social work methods, the lack of indigenous knowledge, the underdevelopment of the profession and the need for capacity building.

Targeting both the practice environment and social work education and institutions is promising. Strengthening child welfare systems needs to connect laws, policies, the practice environment, workforce capacity (including education and training) and outcome measures and data collection. Building capacity on the ground requires a systematic approach that links several elements: models and standards; service demands and workforce needs; workforce gap analyses; and capacity building strategies.

In addition, **workforce constraints need to be addressed through a comprehensive strategy** and to use existing opportunities and good delivery models. The goal should be to develop child welfare human resources in a data-driven way. The experience of enhancing human resources for health is also helpful.

Integrating approaches through systems – insights from African countries (Davis et al., 2012)

This study points to the following best practices from the field, based on common trends and lessons learned in effectiveness.

- Acknowledging that the paths taken are different, reflecting national and local realities.
- **Linking the formal and informal structures and building on the strength and resilience of local communities, families and children.**
- Linking the work of secular and faith-based NGOs, community leaders, volunteers and advocacy groups with the broader political agendas.
- Adopting more inclusive and holistic approach to service, 'with an expanded vision of the 'workforce' linked with endogenous child protection' (9).
- Engaging in analytical thinking and research around monitoring and evaluation work, paired with coordinated, transparent and realistic budget and financing (9).
- Strengthening the systems for the **integration of services for vulnerable children** by starting with a more holistic approach to 'service' (68).

In a number of countries, reforms began when special attention was paid to a particularly vulnerable group. A range of responses was then developed, with services or support delivered within the family if possible, with increasing attention to prevention and mitigation of risk for the priority group. Over time, 'as capacity is built and experience is developed, system strengthening can fully be initiated by moving towards a more inclusive and holistic approach to "service"'.

5. Effectiveness in specific settings and contexts

1. Child care settings

Child protection takes place in a variety of environments. Settings for child protection programmes are numerous, ranging from homes to schools and care institutions for instance. There is key literature on the different **types of childcare (based within families or in institutions)**. This is an area where studies on effectiveness are somewhat more developed, as the advantages and disadvantages of different care options have been strongly debated in the field of child protection. The debate has centred on the relative merits of two interconnected types of responses: family-based vs. institutional/residential care; and community-based vs. state-based protection.

Children outside of family care

Maholmes et al. (2012)⁵ provide discussion of the evidence base and present various findings. There are several relevant sampling methods that can be relied on to identify and enumerate **children outside of family care**. There are methodological and practical challenges involved, however, with regard to the child population concerned and to state and social attitudes toward these children and toward sampling.

A study on **early response strategies and interventions ‘to assess and address the immediate needs of children outside of family care’** identified promising approaches (Maholmes et al., 2012, 687). **Key to effective interventions are coordinated, comprehensive short-term and long-term ‘assessments** of the holistic and developmental needs of children’, including family tracing and reunification, shelter, food and nutrition, health, psychosocial support, education and access to livelihood. Also, there is a need to contextualise the response culturally and integrate the approaches with longer-term interventions. Other promising interventions include the maintenance of family connectedness for street children, the use of community-based approaches that aid social integration, and approaches that enable meaningful child participation.

It is possible to identify **systems, strategies, and interventions for sustainable long-term care and protection of children with a history of living outside of family care**. Fluke et al (2012, 722-723) emphasise that the quality and duration of care are important regardless of setting. Child protection systems should provide appropriate, permanent family care (including reunification, adoption, kinship care, or *kafalah*). ‘The diversity of political, socioeconomic, historical, regional, community, and cultural contexts in which child protection systems operate need to be taken into account during programming and research design.’

Children in family-based care

Placing children directly in institutional care is considered problematic by some. Most studies found **advocate strongly for family-based care (within children’s families or with other families) except for very few well-defined cases**. One document title even describes residential care as ‘harmful institutions’ (Csáky, 2009). This report presents data on the harm caused by institutional care and explains why care institutions are still in use. It lays out recommendations on care for vulnerable children, backed up with success stories on family-based care in various developing countries such as Indonesia, Sierra Leone and Croatia. It also discusses evidence-based prescriptions for long-term commitment to high-quality family support services and family-based alternative care, and for ending the overuse and misuse of residential care.

⁵ Boothby et al. (2012) and Fluke et al. (2012) also form part of the same series of studies.

Several documents provide strong and relevant evidence on the effectiveness of **programmes of family- or community-based care** (Save the Children, 2008; Wessells, 2009). Wessells identifies seven **factors that influence the effectiveness of community-based child protection** groups: community ownership; building on existing resources; support from leaders; child participation; 'management of issues of power, diversity and inclusivity'; resources; and linkages between community-based systems and formal systems (Wessells, executive summary, 2009, 9-13).

On the particular issue of preventing sexual abuse and exploitation, Save the Children find that community groups are effective, particularly around the issues of child trafficking and child labour. Factors determining effectiveness in this area include support for community empowerment, sustainable and coordinated support, attention to representation and diversity, children's participation under good conditions, links with the national child protection system and the importance of long-term commitment.

Wessells (13-14) and Save the Children (12-13) also identify '**do no harm**' issues. For example, **in relation to unintended consequences**, Wessells notes challenges with 'excessive targeting of particular categories of vulnerable children', 'perverse incentives', inadequate training of community members and the imposition of external concepts and approaches (Wessells, 13-14).

2. Humanitarian and post-conflict settings

Not only the settings, but also the contexts in which child protection programmes operate vary. They include particularly difficult cases such as fragile states or situations of current or past mass violence. Due to limited space, specific references on child protection in such contexts will not be laid out in detail. On **effective child protection programming in humanitarian contexts**, see for example: Ager et al., 2011, on child protection assessment in humanitarian emergencies⁶; Eynon, Lilley, 2010, on community-based child protection in emergencies⁷; Save the Children, 2008, 62-63, for a case study on successful child protection in relation to the disaster risk reduction (DDR) in Sierra Leone.

6. Effectiveness for specific categories of children

The literature on the effectiveness of child protection programmes in developing countries also covers a number of specific categories of children in need of protection, notably: girls; children in poverty and extreme poverty; street children; rural children; working children; migrant children; refugee and displaced children; children outside of family care; orphans; children with health problems such as HIV/AIDS; children from discriminated racial, ethnic, cultural or religious groups; and children with disabilities.

Research findings in these areas are too diverse and numerous to lay out in this short section, but a general sense of the **strengths and weaknesses of child protection programmes in relation to**

⁶ Four cases are studied: Georgia, Gaza, Haiti and Yemen. Securing inter-agency coordination, preparation and capacity building, and means of ensuring timeliness of findings are key factors in all four cases (Ager et al., 2011).

⁷ Three cases are studied: Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territory and Timor Leste. Factors in the effective contribution of community-based mechanisms to child protection in emergencies seem to be: 1) quality assessment of what exists in communities; 2) strong community-based child protection mechanisms; 3) building on existing strengths; 4) engaging all stakeholders and planning for system-strengthening from the outset; 5) coordination across the child protection system; 6) ongoing and long-term monitoring and support.

specific categories of children can be gained from the 2012 UNICEF meta-review (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012, 305-317, quotes from 305-306).

- **More and better efforts are needed** to ensure that the most vulnerable, marginalised and 'hidden' children have access to services and protection.
- **Targeting is problematic.** In some programmes, those who were participating were not vulnerable or marginalised. Outreach was found to be more effective in identifying 'hidden' children but this is intensive in terms of labour, financial and material resources. This has provided a disincentive for some staff to seek out and encourage vulnerable children to participate. Other programmes failed to develop clear criteria to select vulnerable and marginalised children or failed to research which groups are the most vulnerable and marginalised.
- **Equity has been narrowly understood** as facilitating access to programmes, rather than addressing the root causes behind the marginalisation of certain children.
- At a strategic level, a move away from vertical emergency responses for identified categories of children towards **a more holistic approach to vulnerability is deemed useful.** It will support interventions that address underlying root causes.
- At the same time, particular risks and specific responses must remain part of child protection programmes, in connection with the specific social and cultural context.
- **Perceptions of injustice or unfairness by of nonbeneficiaries need to be taken into account** as they could hinder successful reintegration efforts for children.

7. Cost effectiveness

1. Key issues and lessons learned

Thinking about cost effectiveness in child protection requires movement beyond a cost-benefit calculation that only looks at the most visible costs and benefits. Some in fact argue that framing the thinking about effectiveness in child protection predominantly in terms of cost effectiveness is not an ethically or practically appropriate approach (expert comment).

In any case, there is **very little evidence** about cost effectiveness in child protection programmes (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012, 287; Larson, 2010). The 2012 UNICEF meta-review provides a window into **the issues and evidence** in this matter (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2012, 284-290).

Resources and expenses in child protection shaping the calculations on cost effectiveness

- **'Fundraising around broader prevention initiatives such as eliminating urban-rural and socio-economic disparity is more difficult than fundraising for specific and more tangible activities,** such as modifying the living environment to make it safer for children'. Social mobilisation components or behaviour change communication are, therefore, often inadequately funded and need to tap into participatory community development.
- Activities that involve **face-to-face interaction need greater resources** for staffing costs.
- **Salaries should be carefully considered,** particularly when there will be differences among workers. Use of international consultants and implementing agencies should be justified.
- **Partnerships also have cost implications** (time and resources spent on administration). Sustainability then requires cost sharing.
- **Some budgetary items often tend to be neglected in or excluded from planning,** causing disruptions or lowering quality in the programme down the road. This is frequently the case

with follow-up of cases and with programmes that involve identification, assistance, return and reintegration activities (there the budget must 'address limitations in logistics and facilities; for instance, short- and long-term reintegration activities are often neglected').

Making (hard) choices

- **Programmes make strategic decisions about which objectives to achieve. Trade-offs need to be made.** For example, to ensure quality services, a focus on selected larger activities may be necessary, as small activities tend to increase administrative costs. On the other hand, focusing only on a few interventions risks neglecting important priorities.
- **Equity and fairness should be considered when advocating for additional funds.** But in some cases, funding for programmes that reach few children could trigger accusations of unfairness. In response, the target group could be chosen to be as large as possible and the costs as low as possible relative to the impact. At the same time, if a programme helps build systems and contributes to future prevention and support, this can change the calculation.
- **Targeting the most vulnerable may increase the preventative impact, but is expensive:** it requires increased research and administration as well as investment in outreach activities to identify vulnerable and marginalised children. The relevance of outreach activities relative to the added value they provide in reaching the most vulnerable needs to be considered. If children in more remote communities are found to be more vulnerable, outreach must be sufficiently funded.

Different logics behind programmes and contradictions with cost effectiveness

Certain approaches are selected over more effective and sustainable strategies. The 2012 UNICEF review provides the example of child protection activities based in specialised centres in contrast with outreach: centre-based activities are more expensive and have limited coverage, but are easier to implement. This can lead to such approaches being favoured even though they can seriously limit effectiveness.

The unknowns of cost effectiveness in child protection

The cost efficiency of prevention versus direct assistance is debated. In some of the studied cases, it made sense from the point of view of both effectiveness and cost effectiveness to focus on the former; in other cases it was the opposite (cases p. 285).

2. Case study: cost effectiveness in care for orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa

A 2001 comparison of the cost effectiveness of six models of care for orphan and vulnerable children in South Africa draws attention to the **difference between purely financial calculations of cost effectiveness and more holistic ones: the most cost-effective way of caring for children is through community-based organisations**, but other issues need to be highlighted as relevant to policy makers, the main one being the differences in the quality of care between the different models (Desmond, Gow, 2001, 37-38).

Indeed, the **measure of cost effectiveness may not be comparable between cases studied**. First, even with the more comparable **cost of minimum standard of care**, critical analysis is required. For example, some of the cheaper projects failed to meet the minimum standard of cost equivalent to survival for the children. Further, there were **differences in the services offered**. Higher costs in some projects were thus due to budgets for supervision, and where relevant for placement.

Likewise, the results outline the expensive nature of the more formal models. But **additional issues** need consideration. For instance, more expensive places hosted children 'who were placed there because there was nowhere-else to go' (40). The high costs may in some circumstances be the only option to avert abandonment and life on the street. Furthermore, some high costs are associated with the care of sick and abused children.

The study details **four implications**:

- family-provided orphan care is clearly the most cost-effective solution, but the provision of adequate care is problematic due to lack of access to resources;
- many orphaned children are at risk of lacking adequate material care;
- extended families cannot always cope. Ways to identify vulnerable children and place them in alternative care are needed. Identification and placement programmes for orphans to home-based care structures are effective provisions of such a safety net and the associated cost is small;
- although expensive and apparently cost-ineffective, the more formal models represent the safety net care needed by some children.

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9. Additional Information

Key websites

UNICEF:

- UNICEF – Child protection

<http://www.unicef.org/protection/index.html>

- UNICEF – Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse – Publications

http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58022.html

- UNICEF – Evaluation database – Child Protection – Violence and Abuse

http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_23758.html

Save the Children:

- Save the Children – Online library – Child protection

[http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/search?f\[0\]=field_publication_topic%3A25](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/search?f[0]=field_publication_topic%3A25)

- Save the Children – Resource Centre on Child Protection and Child Rights Governance

<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/about-resource-centre>

Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group

<http://www.cpmerg.org/>

Conference on Child Protection Systems Strengthening in Sub-Saharan Africa (Dakar, Senegal; 7-9 May 2012)

<http://www.ncpsconferencedakar.org/?!lang=en>

CRIN (Child Rights Information Network). Publications.

<http://www.crin.org/resources/publications/>

NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Members and Partners.

<http://www.childrightsnet.org/NGOGroup/members/MemberOrganisations/>

Special issue of *Development in Practice* on Child Protection in Development, Volume 22, Issue 4, 2012

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cdip20/22/4>

Special issues of *Child Abuse & Neglect* relevant to the query topic

- Volume 35, Issue 12, Pages 967-1062 (December 2011): Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01452134/35/12>

- Volume 36, Issue 10, Pages 711–721 (October 2012): Findings from the U.S. Government Evidence Summit on Children Outside of Family Care
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01452134/36/10>

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About Helpdesk research reports: This helpdesk report is based on 2.5 days of desk-based research. Helpdesk reports are designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues, and a summary of some of the best literature available. Experts are contacted during the course of the research, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged