

Evaluation of War Child Holland's Community-Based Programmes in
Sierra Leone

2006-2012



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Useful Acronyms

CAG – Community Action Group

CBP – Community Based Programme

CD – Country Director

CRA – Child Rights Act

CWC – Child Welfare Committee

CYSS – Child Youth Support Structure

FSU – Family Support Unit

GNA – General Needs Assessment

MAFFS – Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security

MSWGCA – Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

PDM – Programme Development Manager

PNA – Participatory Needs Assessment

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s

WCH– War Child Holland

WCH-SL – War Child Holland, Sierra Leone

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation examined WCH's programming on the organisational level, community level and district and national levels through two central approaches: evaluation of quality and evaluation of outcomes. In this context, quality means *how* and *how well* the community based methodology was implemented, and how effective it was at facilitating the programme. The evaluation of outcomes assesses the *impact* of programming (including in relation to expected results identified by War Child), the *effectiveness* and *relevance* of programmes, and the *sustainability* of outcomes. *Impact*, *effectiveness* and *relevance* were assessed within the context of post-conflict Sierra Leone in order to understand results, meaningfully identify best practice and formulate recommendations.

The Child Rights Act (CRA), an ambitious national law, was passed in Sierra Leone in 2007. The implementation of the law has however been limited, as the central government only reaches about 20% of the population, while the remaining population relies on community-based governance structures and occasionally on NGOs for support.¹ Further, the MSWGCA, the government body responsible for the delivery of services and roll out of the CRA, is severely underfunded and under-capacitated and in the process of undergoing reform. Meanwhile, Sierra Leone is moving from a context of humanitarian intervention to development intervention and NGOs play a key role supporting government and communities. Three critical tensions emerge from this context, which have had critical implications for WCH programming: cultural resistance to the concept of child rights; law versus social norms as an impetus for change; and creating new structures versus working with existing structures.

Key Findings and Recommendations at Organisational Level: Programme Quality

Staff received effective **training** (and refresher training) in the community-based approach and exhibited a strong understanding of methodologies, and the justifications for those methodologies, a good practice essential to programme outcomes.

Community selection was done through a sensitive, transparent process based on a thorough assessment of seven criteria. A tension emerged between choosing communities that were challenging and costly to work in, and communities with the highest level of risk factors for children. However staff demonstrated a commitment to working in more challenging communities and as a result WCH-SL often operated in communities less likely to receive support from other NGOs. Generally, programmes' impact was more likely to be limited in communities with a low willingness for the programme than in communities exhibiting other "challenges."

Navigating existing power structures within communities proved to be a challenge when **selecting community members** who would coordinate and implement the programme; for instance where support of community chiefs was not achieved this affected programming. A tension emerged between introducing inclusive, representative structures in the community and achieving the leadership (and leadership support) necessary to effectively implement the programme.

- **Schools should be targeted**, not avoided, where they present risk factors for children. In communities included in the evaluation, many of the most persistent rights violations (i.e. flogging and sexual abuse) occurred in schools.

Community Action Plans were developed through a **participatory needs assessment**, which effectively involved community members in a discussion that identified needs. These needs were not the needs initially identified by communities. However, the process proved sustainable in that it served as a nuanced way for the community to commit to addressing children's welfare and psychosocial health, and

¹ "An Ethnographic Study of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms and their Linkage with the National Child Protection System of Sierra Leone," The Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, 25 July (2011).

involved community members in an active exploration of “risk factors” facing their community.

Organisational practice generally facilitated the success of the programmes. Several good practices emerged from the WCH-SL experience. Creating a positive office environment and team mentality among staff is critical to achieving the level of commitment among staff that is necessary to implement a demanding programme well. Providing staff with competitive remuneration also helped the development of this commitment. WCH invested in building the capacity of staff, which bolstered commitment, and gave staff the skills to implement programmes well.² For instance, WCH was known for its particularly skilled trainers in SL, which is a reflection of both WCH methodologies, and investment in the capacity of trainers. Finally, it proved to be important that *all* staff, including non-programme staff, were engaged in the community-based programming. This provided staff with the motivation and contextual knowledge to provide the strong support necessary for the programme.

Monitoring and evaluation should be undertaken systematically, both at the community level and organisational level. Within communities, this process was an integral part of programming, however outcomes were not used at the institutional level. All staff should be involved in M&E, to ensure learning occurs over the course of the programme. Monitoring and evaluation can also increase financial effectiveness and efficiency by determining how programme costs relate to impact in order to make cuts where possible. For instance, while the intense investment in the community-based approach is necessary for effective impact (this approach absolutely must be implemented well to achieve desired outcomes); a larger investment in more difficult communities might not be cost effective, particularly where interventions strengthen resistance. Robust comparative evaluation over time could give guidance on these issues.

Key Findings at Community Level: Programme Outcomes

Result One: Sustainable community structures that involve and support children and youth are created and functional

1. The community centre played an important role in the programme, although maintenance of the centres is a challenge in communities after WCH-SL’s exit.
 2. CYSS structures were generally well recognised within communities, but several problems emerged: CYSS meetings and activities were difficult to sustain; control of resources by the CYSS caused conflict with chiefs; resource issues caused resentment in the community (particularly when resources were not distributed fairly); and only 12.5% of children and young people considered the CYSS to be a strong source of support.
 3. Opportunities for play have improved according to both adults and children in the communities. Children could also be observed engaging in cooperative group play within the communities.
- The introduction of new and sustainable **structures** is very difficult (on the community and national level). Focus should be placed on introducing **models** that can be replicated through other structures or adopted by existing structures.

Result Two: Increased awareness of and support for child rights and psychosocial development of children and youth in communities

² International exposures provided particularly great growth opportunities for programme staff and should be made available where possible.

1. Knowledge of child rights has increased dramatically among children and adults and community members express support for child rights with few exceptions. Most adults are familiar with children's psychosocial needs. Due to effective methodology employed by WCH-SL in introducing child rights by building upon the concept of 'welfare,' adults and children alike express support for the *concept* of child rights. This is a strong achievement given the context of resistance that has developed.
 2. **Broadly, according to research participants, support for rights associated with care for the child have improved while rights associated with empowerment of the child have not.** While both adult and child respondents report an increase in school enrolment and a decrease in child labour, which has sustained (this was also observed by evaluators), corporal punishment remains prevalent. Children are allowed to be present in community gatherings and to "*come among adults*" but they do not play an active role in decision making. According to participants, girls face discrimination and their participation in activities is restricted due to household responsibilities. Girls are also restricted "to prevent early pregnancy."
 3. Violations of child rights continue to be prevalent in schools.
- WCH-SL gained the trust of communities and introduced the idea of child rights in a pragmatic and progressive way. This method proved effective, and while it may be the best way to introduce the concept in a hostile context, it is important that staff members are vigilant in ensuring that the concept of a "right" is not lost through the intervention. WCH should reflect on when and how rights language is useful.
 - Even where communities recognise the importance of care for children, it is more difficult to achieve their recognition of children as **empowered** agents: while WCH-SL programming was designed specifically to empower children, given a strong cultural context in this regard, this is an area where the programme had limited impact.

Result Three: Increased positive dynamics/cohesion within the communities

1. 'Unity' and reduction in 'quarrels' were the biggest changes described by participants in the research. Many participants described how models of dispute resolution and decision-making within families and the community have changed, although children's agency in this is limited.
2. Community members describe going to friends and family members for support when they experience stress or sadness where this did not occur in the past.
3. While respondents said that discrimination had been reduced, discrimination against girls, younger children, children without parents and children with disabilities still occurred (*particularly in some communities*).

Result Four: Children and youth have gained life skills / Improved learning opportunities for young people

1. Children, young people and adults show improved life skills. In particular, participatory and creative methodologies increased children's confidence and ability to express themselves. Children and youth exhibited the ability to think and plan with direction and express hopes for the future.
2. Numeracy and literacy programmes were effective, but did not expand beyond the learning groups formed by WCH-SL. They may require extra follow-up in order to be made sustainable.

3. Livelihoods were strongly valued in communities and functioned to complement the psychosocial programme, but have not been sustainable.

Sustainability:

1. Activities and materials were difficult to sustain. However changes in norms and models of community engagement proved easier to sustain than activities, perhaps because they were not perceived as being dependent on materials.
 2. Behaviour change was also found to be somewhat sustainable, especially where old behaviours have been replaced by new behaviours and new norms about acceptable behaviours have developed.
- Present communities with an **alternative model of engagement** where possible. This is necessary to achieve sustainable behaviour change, for instance: child labour was replaced with school enrolment; however communities did not have alternative models of discipline to draw upon, and corporal punishment remains prevalent (“flogging” was reported by both adult and child respondents, and interestingly some respondents reported *threatening* to flog children or to deny them food as punishment as alternatives to actually engaging in these practices).
 - Where possible develop methods that involve communities in maintenance and sharing of resources early, as these are difficult to sustain. Programmes must be sensitive to ensure conflict within and among communities is not created, particularly by the introduction of materials, and mediate where it occurs. Material resources tend to bring out existing conflicts particularly in very poor contexts where resources are scarce. While WCH does not mediate political conflict (and sought to avoid intervening where this was an issue), at some level political conflict is inevitable, and tools to address it should be available.
 - **Gender norms** may be the most difficult to approach and the most difficult to change. In different contexts these issues may need to be addressed more or less gradually depending on community resistance; however progress towards children’s rights and empowerment may be limited where gender norms are not addressed. Approaches must be adopted cautiously to avoid unintended consequences.
 - The formation of the national NGO, Action for Advocacy and Development Sierra Leone (AAD-SL), will also promote the sustainability of programming by building upon War Child’s work adding both breadth and depth (through continuing advocacy and capacity building activities and working in new communities and conduct follow up work in War Child communities).

Key Findings at District/National Level: Programme Outcomes

WCH-SL introduced national and district level programming in 2009 as part of the broader exit strategy in order to increase sustainability of the programme. Its most important impacts through **advocacy** work include:

1. Conducting participatory, child-led campaigns
2. Creating a strong network of child rights organisations in Freetown, Makeni and Port Loko;
3. Providing leadership and capacity-building to the coalition
4. Submitting reports to the UN Human Rights Council and Committee on the Rights of the Child;
5. The participatory ‘Wait ‘till I’m 18’ campaign.

- Advocacy complemented the community-based programme, particularly by introducing community voices into national and district level advocacy, and giving community members (and particularly children) the tools to engage in advocacy themselves. Where possible an advocacy strategy should be introduced prior to the “exit strategy” phase, however it is useful to wait to introduce advocacy until the WPA has a strong understanding of the operations of child rights and protections in local context.
- Child-led advocacy is very important for empowering children, and where in the short term it may be difficult to promote children’s active participation in communities, empowering children to act as leaders may lay the groundwork for changes in the long run.

Support to the roll out of the Child Rights Act (CRA) in Sierra Leone: WCH-SL’s Support to CWCs in Bombali and Port Loko strengthened these bodies, and made them semi-operational. This was part of a larger national strategy, and given the problematic function of CWCs (due largely to lack of resources) this is unlikely to be a sustainable investment, through no fault of WCH’s.

- **Engage** with partners on strategy taken at the level of national or district policy (by Government, INGOs and NGOs or UNICEF) **based on evidence** of its impact at the community level.

Capacity building was highly appreciated by all partners, many of whom have incorporated WCH’s creative, participatory and psychosocial methodologies into their work. WCH-SL staff members were particularly known for their skills as trainers.

- Pre-training and post-training assessments conducted by WCH-SL proved to be a very good practice, and facilitated capacity-building that was targeted and suited to each partner’s organisational needs.
- WCH-SL’s training for trainer’s model added to sustainability. However this will only be effective if trainers who reproduce it are able to train well. It is important to ensure that capacity building includes training methods so that training can effectively be reproduced by partners.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Methodology	2
Organisational Level	2
Community Level	2
Community Selection	4
District/National Level	5
Good practices and Recommendations	5
Analytical framework	5
Organisational Level Findings	6
Implementation of the Community Based Methodology	6
Training	6
Community Selection	6
Development of Community Action Plans.....	7
Working with existing structures versus creating new structures.....	9
The Mandate of the Community Based Programme	10
The Value of the Community Based Approach	11
A Challenging Programme	12
Organisational Set-up	13
Operations.....	13
Monitoring and Evaluation.....	13
Office environment.....	14
Community Level Findings	14
Result 1	15
Result 2	17
Result 3	23
Result 4	26
Sustainability	27
National/District Level Findings	29
National Advocacy	30
International Advocacy	31
Child Support Structures I	31
Child Support Structures II	32
Capacity Building	33
Conclusion	34
Annex	

Introduction

War Child Holland (WCH) began operations in Sierra Leone in 2001, as a ten-year civil conflict in the country came to a close. The conflict had a devastating impact on Sierra Leone; over 50,000 died, millions were displaced, infrastructure was destroyed and the economy collapsed, leaving Sierra Leone ranked last on UNDP's human development index (HDI) in 2005 (the country is now at 180/187 on the HDI).³ This ranking reflects the breakdown the conflict caused in all areas of human life. The war interrupted systems and processes at all levels, causing collapse of governmental structures and harming socialisation and psychosocial development. At an individual level, much of the population endured the trauma of violence and personal loss, with lasting effects. However, the disruption of community bonds and loss of trust in all spheres - from central government to family levels - is perhaps even more devastating.

The communities in north-western Sierra Leone, where WCH operated from 2006-2012, were affected most severely by the final phase of the conflict – many were displaced by rebel armies, forcing community members to flee. When WCH began work in these communities, staff and volunteers found the communities to be fragmented; individuals were isolated, social trust was low and disputes often led to aggression and even physical violence.⁴ In this context, War Child Holland (WCH)⁵ began work providing psychosocial support to vulnerable children including former child soldiers, sexually abused children, war-wounded children, orphans, street children and IDPs. In 2003, War Child piloted its Community Based Psychosocial Programme (CBPP), which was rolled out three years later in the north of the country. This intervention was designed to focus on “getting stakeholders within the communities to recognise the role, rights and needs of children and youth in their community and to act accordingly.”⁶ It aimed both to empower children and youth to play a positive role in the community, and to enable the community to provide them with necessary support and care. The programming included “life skills training” which used participatory and creative methodologies to develop the communities' psychosocial resources and address risk factors for children living in each community. In 2008, literacy and numeracy, and agriculture training components were introduced to the programming. Finally, in 2009 as part of its exit strategy, WCH introduced a district and national level advocacy and capacity building component to the programme; this more comprehensive programming (delivered by WCH in Sierra Leone) sought to expand the reach of programming and contribute to its sustainability.

This evaluation was designed to assess the quality and outcomes of War Child Holland's community-based programs in Sierra Leone during the period 2006-2012, and identify good practices within the integrated advocacy and community based programme that can be shared with other War Child Programme Areas (WPAs), and guide further development of community-based programming by War Child Holland. This report presents findings on the quality of programmes at the organisational level, and the outcome of programmes at the community, national and district levels. It then analyses these findings within the broader context of child rights and child protection in Sierra Leone in order to determine the effectiveness of programmes in a contextual environment, before presenting good practices and recommendations based on the findings and analysis.

³ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

⁴ WCH General Needs Assessments (2006-2012)

⁵ I will refer to War Child Holland as WCH. WCH's Sierra Leone programme will be referred to as War Child (rather than WCH-SL), as this is the way the programme is referred to in Sierra Leone by partners and in the communities.

⁶ Baseline Report, 2012

II. Methodology

This evaluation examined WCH's programming on the organisational level, community level and district and national levels through two central approaches: evaluation of quality and evaluation of outcomes. In this context, quality means *how* and *how well* the community based methodology was implemented, and how effective it was at facilitating the programme. The evaluation of outcomes assesses the *impact* of programming (with a focus on impact relating to the expected results identified by War Child), the *effectiveness* and *relevance* of programmes, and the *sustainability* of outcomes. Finally *impact*, *effectiveness* and *relevance* were assessed, within the context of post-conflict Sierra Leone in order to understand results, meaningfully identify best practice and formulate recommendations. A full list of research questions and indicators is included in annex 2 to this document.

Organisational level

The first phase of the evaluation assessed War Child Holland's community based programming on an organisational level. The aim was to review the quality of programming, how the community-based approach was implemented and how organisational practice facilitated or inhibited outcomes. This portion of the evaluation included a thorough review of programming and reporting documents and interviews with War Child Holland staff in Sierra Leone, former staff and WCH staff in the head office.⁷ Staff involved in operations were interviewed, as well as staff involved in programming. This part of the evaluation attempted to answer the following questions:

- *To what extent was the War Child Holland staff sufficiently trained to facilitate the community-based approach in a quality and participatory way?*
- *To what extent was the selection of the communities participating in the community-based programs and the selection of community members coordinating and implementing the programme in their community done in a qualitative, transparent and sensitive way?*
- *To what extent was the training and guidance of the community structures (responsible for coordinating and implementing the programme in a community) provided in a qualitative way by War Child Holland Staff? What was the added value of creative methods using the training and facilitation?*
- *To what extent were the community action plans addressing priority needs (agreed upon by the community) in a sustainable way?*
- *To what extent were the community members participating in the community-based program leading and owning the planning, coordination, implementation and M&E of the programme?*
- *Were the community-based programmes cost-efficient and cost-effective? Were the investments in the programmes reasonable compared to the effects of the programme?*

Community Level

In determining outcomes at the community level, the evaluation focussed on identifying War Child's direct and indirect impact according to each of the programme's four expected results. Indicators developed by War Child were drawn upon to measure specific programme outcomes within each result where possible (see annex 2).⁸ The effectiveness of programmes at achieving the results was assessed with a focus on identifying good practice and barriers to the achievement of the expected results. Finally, the community level evaluation contributes to an understanding of how well programmes were implemented, which will be presented as part of the organisational level evaluation. Where possible, indicators were compared to baseline data from previous evaluations, including ongoing community led monitoring and evaluation, which was part of programming in communities. Because this data is descriptive and

⁷ Interviews with head office were conducted over Skype; all other interviews were conducted in the field.

⁸ War Child Log Frame Analysis

qualitative, it does not allow for specific or robust comparisons, but can give a sense of the starting point, which is necessary to understand impact.

Specifically, the community level portion of the evaluation answers the following research questions:

- *How was the community-based approach appreciated by the communities? To what extent was the approach appropriate for local culture and different age and gender groups?*
- *Were the theories of change behind the community-based programs appropriate, did they work?*
- *To what extent were the community-based programs effective and were the objectives achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?*
- *Were the community-based activities and outputs relevant to achieve the expected outcomes for the programmes? To what extent are these outcomes expected to be sustainable? What are major factors, which influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the community-based programmes?*

Data used to answer these questions was collected through individual interviews with adult stakeholders, small focus group discussions (of 4-6 participants) with children and young people, and participatory activities. Focus group discussions were designed to be child friendly, and included games and active participation wherever possible. Participants were chosen in communities with the help of War Child staff to ensure that the sample included participants with different levels of engagement in programming so that both key stakeholders and community members more broadly were represented. Data collection tools, and focus group/activity guides will be referred to in more detail in the findings section of the evaluation. A full list of all interviews conducted and documents assessed in the evaluation are included in annex 1. All data collection was conducted according to WCH child protection policy and Coram Children’s Legal Centre’s child protection policy, and a “do no harm” principle guided researchers. Methodology, child protection policy and data collection tools are included in annexes 2, 3 and 4 to this report.

Crossing the River Activity:

One example of a participatory methodology used by researchers was the crossing the river activity, which was designed to observe interaction between adults and children. Participants were split into family units and assigned the roles of “father, mother, son and daughter.” They were then given a scenario to respond to:

The family is living on the low side of a riverbank when a very heavy rainy season causes flooding in the river (see image below, which was used to present the activity). The family must cross to the other side to escape flooding, but they only have one boat, which can carry two people - one is a passenger, the other rows. How will each group bring all of the family members and their belongings across the river before the water gets too high?

Family units were instructed to decide as a group how they would cross the river, and to choose a representative to present the solution to the larger group. Researchers observed the groups’ interactions and decision-making process. When each group presented their solution, researchers probed to determine their justification. Results will be described together with other community level findings.

Community Selection

- 1) WCH implemented programming in 32 communities in Sierra Leone from 2006-2012. A representative sample of communities was selected, drawing on sampling criteria developed by the evaluator with feedback from War Child programme staff. Given that a random sample of 32 communities was unlikely to ensure that these criteria were met, the evaluator employed a cluster sampling technique whereby a community was selected to represent each cluster, or "community type." Community types were determined based on the two most influential sampling criteria: 1) geographic diversity and 2) different waves of programming (diversity over time).

1. Geographic diversity: It was critical to choose a sample of communities that represented the geographic diversity of WCH programmes to ensure that factors that vary according to location did not confound the results of the programme sample. For instance, communities in different locations face different experiences of conflict, mining activity and, perhaps most importantly, accessibility due to distance and roads. Communities are more likely to be marginalised if they are difficult to reach, whereas communities located at or near Chiefdom headquarters⁹ have greater access to certain resources. Previously identified differences in governance between Port Loko and Bombali could also impact programming.¹⁰ Thus communities were chosen to represent the distribution of communities across Port Loko and Bombali provinces, as well as their distance from each provincial capital (the sample was determined so that the average distance of it would match the average distance from capital of sample). The evaluation included 4 communities in Port Loko and 4 communities in Bombali. The average distance from communities to the War Child office in Makeni was 2.26 hours and ranged from 4 hours to 30 minutes.

2. Diversity over time: It was equally critical to choose a sample that represented the different "waves" of WCH programming over time. This criterion was particularly important because programming evolved over time and the evaluation must include all projects and approaches employed by WCH in Sierra Leone. It was also useful to highlight how programming evolved as staff (and the organisation) gained experience. Visiting communities where different amounts of time had passed since War Child's exit was also important in order to assess the *sustainability* of programming. Finally, over time, communities' experiences of conflict recovery and development are likely to have changed. During the period covered by the evaluation, 4 waves of community programming occurred, beginning in 2006, 2007, 2008 & 2009. 2 communities from each wave were included in the evaluation.

In accordance with this selection methodology, the following sample of communities was selected:

Port Loko community selection: Benkia (2009), Melekuray (2008), Kagbanthama (2007) and Kareneh (2006)

Bombali community selection: Royema (2009), Robat (2008), Kagbere (2007) and Makneh Bana (2006)

⁹ Chiefdom is an area governed by a single chief, and usually includes around 10 communities.

¹⁰ For instance, the 2010 Programme Evaluation found that local government support is easier to achieve in Port Loko, which has impacted the effectiveness of programming.

District/national level

The district/national portion of the evaluation determined the impact and effectiveness of War Child Holland's advocacy and capacity building programmes at district and national levels. The evaluation included targeted individual interviews with War Child Holland's government and organisational partners, including MSWGCA (Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs), MAFFS (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security), District Councils in Bombali and Port Loko, Child Welfare Committees in Bombali and Port Loko, UNICEF, GOAL, AmNet, Child Right Coalition- Sierra Leone (CRC-SL, Plan, Kids Arise, Pikin-to-Pikin, Children's Forum Network, Action for Advocacy and Development-Sierra Leone (AAD-SL) and others (see annex 1 to this report). The evaluator also reviewed WCH's annual reports and 2012 baseline strategy. Indicators for this part of the evaluation were based on the Advocacy and Capacity Building Programme Strategy (2009).

The district/national level evaluation contributed to the evaluators' understanding of the social and political context for child rights and child protection in Sierra Leone. This understanding was critical in assessing the effectiveness of War Child programmes and understanding the implications of its outcomes.

Good Practices and Recommendations

The methodology also included a critical and contextual analysis of data to determine the implications of impact and outcomes, and to understand the relationships between programming, and impact and outcomes. This analysis is integrated throughout the report and feeds directly into the development of good practices and recommendations. Analysis revealed three tensions, which provide useful frames for analysis and interpretation of findings. These are presented in the following section and will be referred to throughout the report.

III. Analytical frames for understanding impact of programmes and their relevance and effectiveness

It is impossible to understand War Child's impact in Sierra Leone without considering the context of child rights and child protection more broadly. The Child Rights Act (CRA), an ambitious national law drawn largely from the Ghanaian law, was passed in 2007.¹¹ Functionally, however, the implementation of the law has been extremely limited. This is largely due to the fact that central government only reaches about 20% of the population; the remaining population relies on community-based governance structures, and occasionally NGOs, for support.¹² The MSWGCA, the government body responsible for the delivery of services and roll out of the CRA, is severely underfunded and under-capacitated and in the process of undergoing reform. Meanwhile, Sierra Leone is moving from a context of humanitarian intervention to development intervention and NGOs play a key role supporting government and communities. Three critical tensions emerge from this context: cultural resistance to the concept of child rights; law versus social norms as an impetus for change; and creating new structures versus working with existing structures. These themes, which have critical implications for programming, will be drawn upon throughout analysis of the findings in order to interpret the impact of War Child's programmes in Sierra Leone, understand their effectiveness, and imagine how effective programming might be designed in future contexts.

¹¹ MSWGCA Interview

¹² "An Ethnographic Study of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms and their Linkage with the National Child Protection System of Sierra Leone," The Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, 25 July (2011).

IV. Organisational Level Findings

This section assesses the quality of programmes based on findings at the organisational level of the evaluation. It will assess, first, the implementation of the community-based methodology, particularly the training of the WCH staff, selection of communities, the set up of programming within communities, the evolution of the mandate, and strengths and challenges associated with the approach; second, the organisational set up and how it facilitated the community based programme; and finally cost efficiency and effectiveness of the programme. Understanding the ‘quality’ of programming is critical to understanding the relationship between the programme and its impacts in order to learn from programming and develop recommendations and good practice.

Implementation of the Community Based Methodology

Training

All War Child staff reported receiving training in the community based methodology, including child protection training as part of their orientation. Staff roles at the organisation demonstrated a strong understanding of the methodology and justifications behind the community based approach, and attributed this to training. In fact, staff’s explanations of programming sometimes suggested that completion of the methodology necessarily led to the achievement of outcomes. While this indicates a high level of understanding of the relationship between activities and outcomes, it might obscure unexpected outcomes or the failure to achieve expected outcomes.

Community Selection

Communities were selected for intervention based on seven criteria, which were determined through a General Situation Analysis (consultation with local stakeholders) and General Needs Assessment (initial visits to assess communities). The criteria were: accessibility (an analysis of the road network, etc.); distance from the office (more distant communities required a greater time commitment); population size (between 1,500 – 4,000); the political situation (including security challenges); the willingness of the community; duplication of activities by other NGOs; and, prevailing risk factors for children in the community. These criteria demonstrate a tension between communities that exhibit a high level of ‘need’, but would be more challenging to work in based on other criteria. Programme staff described long and intense debates about the community selection process. Debates seem to have hinged on maximising War Child’s impact given existing resources - while taking on distant communities is a greater cost to the organisation, these communities tend to have the greatest need for intervention.¹³ Another source of debate was the fact that communities with the highest level of need often had the lowest level of willingness to participate in the programme. One programme staff member described how he approached this tension:¹⁴

WC Staff: The NGOs that come only follow the main routes. Of course War Child is an exception to that. We leave the communities on the main way and go deeper because the deeper you go the more vulnerable you find communities.

Researcher: Did you find there would be a conflict between looking at the willingness of the communities to cooperate and the need of the communities, so that the communities that were the most needy were the communities that were the least willing to cooperate?

¹³ This tension also existed within the evaluation process.

¹⁴ Interview w Programme Staff

WC Staff: Yea, if I get you right, you have some communities who are most needy of the programme. Maybe they are so needy about the programme but they are not as cooperative as the other communities – they are less willing. We have experienced that and we have also tried that challenge. There are some communities that fulfil all of the criteria, but the willingness there is low. That is a challenge for us, but it doesn't mean that we are going to kick against that community because they are not willing. Maybe they are nervous to development things, so that is left to the expertise of the staff to mobilise these people and try to see if we can get them to work with us... So actually we have to look at the balance. So that was a challenge for project staff to actually go to the communities and support these people.

Programme staff displayed a high level of commitment and eagerness to work where the need was greatest, even if this meant being flexible on other criteria and taking on a harder work load; “The ruggedness of the road, the distance...you are a field worker: these are some of the things you need to overcome!”¹⁵ Staff also described feeling stress and worry over not being able to include communities with a high level of need in the programme.

In the initial years, programming began in more accessible communities, but, as the country stabilised, it was possible to move into the interior. Programme staff also attributed this to the development of skills among the team; “As the years went by, the team grew confident and selected more communities where the need was higher and support structures did not exist. In 2008/2009 the team took on more challenging communities. There are no communities where there is no need at all [for this type of programming.”¹⁶

Development of Community Action Plans

The Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA) – a participatory process conducted in selected communities to determine programme priorities – was the community based process by which War Child developed Action Plans in each community. In theory the PNA functions as a way of tailoring War Child’s programming to the preferences and needs of different communities, however, in practice the PNA became a negotiation between the community and War Child about what WC’s role was to be. Initially, community members in all 8 communities reported presenting War Child with material needs – “*we asked for a school, a hospital, a wharf for our boat*” – and listening as War Child explained that “*they did not do those things.*”¹⁷ It is a positive finding that War Child did not raise expectations that they could meet material needs and, when asked, not a single participant in the research reported having unfulfilled expectations or being disappointed by the programme. This was clearly a priority for staff. In the words of one staff member: “When you raise hopes, you might as well start counting yourself as a failure.”¹⁸

A Programme Development Manager’s (PDM) interpretation of the PNA may illustrate its function more realistically; “Sometimes communities really do not know what they want. It is like eating chocolate. If you have never tasted chocolate you will not know how to describe the taste of chocolate. So it is in one way, they probably didn’t even know they needed the psychosocial intervention in the children. But if this is all War Child is offering, then they will negotiate to accept it in a way because they didn’t want to say no.”¹⁹ Even if the PNA was more about introducing War Child’s programming to the community than developing a programme based on the needs presented by the community, this process was still empowering for communities; “it makes the programme concrete, and they believe that they own the programme, by involving them in this stage of the programming.”²⁰

¹⁵ Programme Staff Interview

¹⁶ PDM (2) Interview

¹⁷ Key Stakeholder Interviews, Communities

¹⁸ Programme Staff Interview

¹⁹ PDM Interview

²⁰ Programme Staff Interview

Through the PNA, programme staff assisted communities in developing their own Action Plan by identifying five protective factors (or corresponding risk factors) for children, the problems associated with these factors, root causes of the problems and the effect on the community. As explained by the Country Director, “Based on information on protective factors we would introduce a discussion so focussed on the 6 areas that the community members could not just identify material needs. We would ask about how the children interacted with adults, and the problem areas would come out.”²¹ This process was open to all community members, though programme staff worked with children, youth and adults, and men/boys and women/girls separately, in order to ensure a safe space for all community members to raise challenges and concerns. Once the five protective factors were identified, the community participated in the development of an action plan to address these areas. War Child’s creative, participatory methods contributed to the effectiveness of the process: War Child staff brought the “PNA board,” commonly called GROW WELL, which helped community members identify issues affecting children and young people at peer level, adult level, family level and community level.

Observation of programme records and interviews with WC staff revealed that the reporting process varied somewhat between communities; which makes comparative analysis difficult, but may have allowed staff to be flexible in each community. For instance, in some communities, positive effects of each “risk factor” were identified as well as negative effects. This allowed War Child to impact on these risk factors more effectively: staff did not make assumptions that the community only interpreted “risk factors” in a negative way, and also provided WC staff with an understanding of the positive roles these factors may have been attributed in the community (for instance early marriage was seen by parents as a form of protection). The decision to work on the five protective factors was a negotiation process, as demonstrated by one programme staff’s notes:

*Though excessive child labour had the lowest score, the children insisted for its inclusion as one of the five main problems to be addressed in their community. The adults and youths had to yield down since the children continue to insist. The acceptance by adults and youths of children in decision-making is a positive indicator and good methodology by War Child in terms of influencing children in deciding the problems to be addressed in each community.*²²

The GNA and PNA established a crucial foundation on which War Child could begin programming. The intensive nature of the process was critical to ensuring that all community members’ voices were included (particularly given the exclusive nature of decision making in communities when War Child arrived). Programme staff also said this intensity was necessary to ensure that community leadership would not interfere with programming. However, some staff expressed concern that the GNA/PNA process was too invasive given the amount of time it required community members to commit; this made it difficult to “engage the community.”²³ Staff were sensitive to the impact of their intervention on community members’ lives – this was even apparent during preparation of the evaluation plan, where programme staff and leadership accounted for community needs in planning, for instance by consulting their “social calendar,” and the children’s school schedule in order to ensure the work was in line with the “do no harm” principle. However more frequent (re)assessment of the impact of interventions, and recognition that communities are active and complex contexts (rather than neutral, passive contexts waiting to receive support), would have been useful to ensure this principle was met.

As part of the CB methodology, community members played leadership roles in the implementation of the community based programming. According to War Child programme staff, the selection of the

²¹ Country Director Interview

²² Kareneh, PNA

²³ PDM (1) Interview

implementation structures within communities began from existing community structures – “we would see how they are, what they do, the potential they have and determine whether they are fit.”²⁴ Based on this assessment, War Child would facilitate the formation of Community Action Groups (CAG), who were trained by War Child to lead activities including games, traditional song and dance, and participatory training in “life skills” (particularly around the risk factors identified by the community in the PNA). A “Child Youth Support Structure” (CYSS) was formed composed of four children, four youth and four adults to be the community focal point on War Child’s programmes and provide a source of support to children and young people. This group was selected based on input from children: staff observed children’s behaviour to see who they would go to in the community, and also asked children who they felt comfortable with in order to choose adult members.

Working with existing structures versus creating new structures

While community members’ perceptions of the role of the CAG and CYSS varied somewhat across communities, a critical difference between the two groups is that the CAG took existing structures, supported them and used them to transfer norms,²⁵ while the CYSS was a group *created* by War Child. Creating new structures in the communities was both problematic and necessary: newly established structures can be inclusive and unbiased, but are likely meet with resistance or even create conflict, and are also more difficult to sustain. As one War Child Programme Development Manager, stated, “this is a tension point,” though it is perhaps inevitable in programming that seeks to achieve strong community ownership and to change norms and power balances. This tension, one of the three elements of the analytical framework, also arises at the district and national level.

This friction also manifested itself in the selection of CYSS members. War Child aimed to create the CYSS out of individuals in the community who already played a supportive role for children and had their trust. It is interesting and symptomatic of the non-prioritisation of child support in the communities that power holders and those with knowledge and skills were not the individuals most trusted by children. For instance, War Child tried to operate outside of schools due to the high levels of child abuse that reportedly took place in some schools, but this made it difficult to find literate CYSS members in some communities. War Child staff was sensitive to this tension and explained in interviews how they navigated it, for example by choosing a teacher to serve as a secretary while the chairman role was filled by someone who had children’s trust. Yet, as the community level findings of the evaluation will demonstrate, in some communities low levels of children reported viewing the CYSS as a strong source of support, indicating that War Child did not always succeed in forming a CYSS trusted by children.

Creating new structures also involved navigating existing power structures. According to reports, community leaders, or ‘Chiefs,’ often hindered War Child programming. Determining how to work with Chiefs was a challenge raised by several staff. Chiefs who felt threatened by War Child’s presence could inhibit the community’s participation in activities and make any impact War Child achieved unsustainable. Programme staff explained that they would assure the Chief that War Child recognised his authority and that he would have the highest oversight over activities, but often Chiefs were not happy playing a passive role. In particular,

When [the chiefs] see War Child begin to drop in with materials, they want the materials to be brought directly to them, to be dropped with them and controlled by them. And this is not our own mandate – the materials have to be in the hands of the structures we created. Some community authorities wanted to use influence to have total

²⁴ Programme Staff Interview

²⁵ This also involved the formation of a ‘Children’s Club,’ which, where possible, would draw on existing groups.

*control...We know how this would create inequality and feed into existing dominance. But sometimes this would create a stalemate between chief the CYSS and the community.*²⁶

War Child staff were able to stand firm, particularly because they could refer to an agreement signed with Chiefs at the beginning of programming agreeing to a common understanding on roles. Because the Chiefs wanted the intervention to occur, they accepted the principles War Child was committed to. The staff showed a strong commitment to working in communities posing this (and other challenges):

*Staff 1: No, we have never abandoned any community. Obviously there are some communities that are difficult to work with. Now, some of the communities from 2006-2007, they no longer have our feel anymore. We work with them. We force them. We spend the night in the community to get them involved. But we have never left a community because of them [the chiefs].*²⁷

However an agreement from the Chief to War Child's terms while they were present in the community meant little about the operations of programmes *after* War Child's departure. In Kagbere, a community where the Chief was particularly determined to control War Child's intervention, the evaluation had less impact on child rights indicators (participation in decision making, discrimination, child labour) and sustainability of results were limited.

The Mandate of the Community Based Programme

Over the course of programming, WCH adjusted the mandate of its operations in Sierra Leone. The decision to shift from targeting children affected by war to targeting entire communities was made in 2003 as people began to return to the communities from the camps. According to a Country Director (CD), "We need to target all of the community so caregivers can give full support to the children when the children move home. A child cannot be developed by his or herself without involving the entire community, the family members or even the nation."²⁸ This approach is consistent with broader consensus among practitioners that in order for psychosocial support to be effective (in the long term), "children's development must be considered holistically in order to include this process of social integration and of becoming connected within their wider social world."²⁹

The livelihoods component was introduced in 2008 to strengthen the impact of the psychosocial intervention;

*All the time in the PNA the young people would always raise the point of education being their problem - livelihood was their problem. They would ask us how they could support their children without something in their pocket. They would have the awareness – they would know all about child rights. But they would not have the means to send their child to school, for example, or take care of health needs.*³⁰

Initially, War Child did not address this issue because delivering education did not fall within the mandate, but as pointed out by a former programme staff it could be justified based on War Child's mandate,

These children [whose education had been interrupted], were affected by the war but they are no longer children, they are young adults, so we asked - what can we do? Normally, we would leave them out because we are just focussing on children and psychosocial. But the issue continued to come in the PNA that their education was interrupted and they were shy to go back to school. That led us to have basic numeracy and literacy.

²⁶ Programme Staff Interview

²⁷ Programme Staff Interview

²⁸ Country Director Interview

²⁹ Joan Duncan and Laura Arntson, "Children in Crisis: Good Practices in Evaluating Psychosocial Programming," Save the Children Federation (2004).

³⁰ Country Director Interview

War Child developed literacy and numeracy training, and, based on community feedback that education needed to be practicable, added agriculture training in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security. Materials (such as a rice milling machine and drying floor) were delivered to the communities by War Child to support this activity.

The failure to introduce livelihoods – which the evaluation found made interventions more sustainable – at an earlier point was based on perceptions by a former CD that the mandate was not flexible, however when it was raised with Head Office, they responded that introducing a new element is not a problem as long as it relates to WCH’s three thematic areas; child protection, education and psychosocial. Staff reported that the process of changing the mandate were time consuming and involved intensive assessments, but that time spent provided an opportunity for learning and reflection by both national and international staff. The evaluation revealed a need for more consistent reflection and learning *throughout* the programme. This would have resulted in smoother planning, and earlier identification of changes based on results reducing the need for large scale and costly assessments.

While there is not a specific time frame which WCH considers to be “post-conflict,” the decision to exit Sierra Leone had two justifications; 1) war affected children were older and 2) the country had been peaceful since the 2007 elections were held.³¹ This decision was made 5 years before the final exit, and a country strategy was developed for that period to introduce capacity building and advocacy to promote sustainability of War Child’s district and national level work (for instance War Child had become the focal agency for the roll out the Child Rights Act in Port Loko and Bombali).

Nearly all staff and partner respondents felt there was still a need for the programme in Sierra Leone; “With this programme, it could continue to work: it is not only beneficial to children directly affected by war. The decision to phase out was an extremely difficult decision...when I left I saw a million things I wanted to improve.”³² However, it was agreed that one or two more years of programme would not alleviate this need. And, as pointed out by one staff member, it would be difficult for WCH to justify extending programming in Sierra Leone but not elsewhere.³³ The exit strategy was thorough and well designed, and War Child demonstrated greater planning and intention than at any other point of the programme. Ironically, the new elements introduced as part of the exit strategy to increase sustainability (namely capacity building and advocacy) created a new demand for War Child’s presence in Sierra Leone.

The Value of the Community Based Approach (Investment v. Effects)

Interviews with staff and partners, and community findings suggested that the intensity of the intervention was an essential part of achieving impact. As one staff member put it, “if you do not live with them, the communities will not trust you. They will see you as a foreigner. You need to live there to be seen as legitimate. It is necessary to understand the community dynamics.”³⁴

Staff emphasised the need for constant follow up and intensive intervention in order to successfully mobilise the community. As demonstrated by the PNA process, War Child involved communities in every level of programming. What was valuable about this process was that not only that it shifted behaviour or norms, but created a different model of engagement, problem solving and conflict resolution within the communities: “what we have been able to start is a structure where communities can work together on any issue.”³⁵ This presents greater opportunity for sustainability than other forms of

³¹ PDM Interview

³² PDM Interview

³³ Advocacy Programme Manager

³⁴ Programme Staff Interview

³⁵ PDM Interview

programming that do not achieve the same level of community involvement, particularly given that as the evaluator found that sustainability was easier to achieve in terms of models of behaviour and decision-making. Finally, it empowers communities through positive engagement that builds on what exists: as a Programme Development Manager explained, the programme begins from the premise that people know about children's issues and care about them, and empowers them to address those issues themselves.³⁶ One community respondent told researchers, "Before War Child we had heard of child rights but it was never put into practice. The way we were taught has changed our thinking and we got benefits out of that."³⁷

Institutional programme partners reported that they felt War Child's approach was unique. War Child's presence in the north of Sierra Leone, and in marginalised communities unreached by other organisations, allowed them to understand the situation in these parts of the country; War Child was able to make contributions on the national level by clarifying misperceptions.³⁸ The quality of the approach was also recognised:

The community level structures laid the roots for transition. War child uses a method of direct implementation (Plan works through partners). They are more effective because they are based in the communities...they can conduct monitoring, evaluation, and follow up. They have a small portfolio and a dedicated staff.³⁹

My impression is that there is a stronger model of community engagement; they wanted to move less fast, and go more in depth and stay more in the community. The fact that they leave behind training – these people actually work on skills and not on knowledge - is a huge change from what I see in other NGOs.⁴⁰

The community-based methodology was an ideal and necessary approach to take in the context of Sierra Leone, research by the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity demonstrated how a failure to achieve trust in institutions had contributed to the failure of various child protection mechanisms at the community level.⁴¹ For communities, sending a child protection concern outside of the community is like sending it into a black box that they do not understand or trust; they do not know what will happen and when, and have vague perceptions about a risk of punishment. War Child was able to achieve a greater understanding of their issues and their trust. This would not have been possible without direct implementation of the programme.

A Challenging Programme

"Community based is ... no matter the angle you look at it you face a whole lot of challenges. You start to face the challenges right from the time you do the assessment..."⁴²

The characteristics that made the community-based programme effective also made it extremely demanding and costly. The programming required a huge commitment in terms of time and personnel per beneficiary; the Sierra Leone programme cost about ten times more per beneficiary than other War

³⁶ PDM (1) Interview

³⁷ Key Stakeholder Interview, Kabanthama

³⁸ UNICEF Interview

³⁹ Plan Interview

⁴⁰ UNICEF Interview

⁴¹ "An Ethnographic Study of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms and their Linkage with the National Child Protection System of Sierra Leone," The Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, 25 July (2011).

⁴² Programme staff interview

Child programmes.⁴³ It also required a huge personal commitment from staff, who worked in difficult conditions and often spent the night in communities; “Mobilising the communities is very difficult, so staff needed to stay in the communities. They need to understand their social calendar for example, and some activities need to be done at night.”⁴⁴ This placed a huge demand on staff, especially staff with families, and is a reason it was difficult for War Child to maintain female programme staff.

The community-based programme was also demanding on the communities but community members were reportedly still willing to be involved; “The programme is premised on the expectation that people will volunteer and invest a lot of time in activities. I was surprised that we managed to get so many people to volunteer.”⁴⁵

Organisational Set-up

Operations

Staff reported that operations functioned well, as long as they gave proper notice regarding their logistical needs – a big accomplishment in a challenging logistical environment. Concerns that did arise related to staff requesting emergency needs without being able to give proper notice. However, overall logistics were able to effectively support the programme;

We were lucky with our operational staff and field location managers. Maybe it was because it was one big programme we were implementing...it is very clear what we were all working towards. Everyone was very much involved in the programme. Drivers, logistics staff, everyone was involved in the training – everyone knew the process. Of course there were issues, but in terms of commitment and attempts everyone really was supporting the programme.⁴⁶

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was built into the community methodology; CYSSs were required to submit regular reports on the implementation of the action plan and progress towards the five ideal situations. However the main value of this was the process itself, its outcomes and results were not used to feedback into the programmes, which was a missed opportunity.

M&E on the organisational level was not systematic.⁴⁷ When it did occur, it was implemented by an M&E officer, who reported back to their Field Location Manager, who fed back to the Programme Development Manager in charge of programming changes. However, most staff interviewed were not familiar with the result of M&E processes and M&E was not used as a tool for programme learning and development. M&E also could have served to reflect on the relationship between costs and impact in order to ensure cost effectiveness of the programme. Given the high cost per beneficiary of the programme, this ought to have been a priority. Instead, budgeting was activity based, and although according to staff this facilitated programming (programme staff were always able to get the support they needed to implement activities which is a positive finding), it is likely that more rigorous budgeting would have made the programme more cost effective by determining what costs were necessary for impact and eliminating unnecessary costs.

⁴³ Deputy Programme Director Interview

⁴⁴ Country Director Interview

⁴⁵ PDM Interview

⁴⁶ PDM Interview

⁴⁷ PDM Interview(s)

Office Environment

The office environment at War Child in Sierra Leone was reportedly very supportive with a strong sense of team spirit, or even, as put by many staff, “family.” This was absolutely essential for the success of the programme, given its demanding nature, and contributed to staff’s strong motivation to carry out the programme well; a less supportive environment could easily have had a negative effect on programming. The programming was also facilitated by a management style based on strong respect, but open to input from staff at all levels. Staff reported that while leadership was important, at lunchtime you “cannot tell who is who.”

It is good, it is like a family. Everyone thinks that the others are interesting, I love it. I am happy to continue working here. The rapport with your supervisor is motivated. This family thing – I always feel this family thing. It is hard to think of difficulties. Everyone respects each other’s culture. Other War Child Programme Areas should have this form of teambuilding – they should have lunch together and play table tennis... I think that is part of War Child’s methodology – you always want to be part of the family. Each Country Director has their own style and policy. Now there is a horizontal management structure even with expat staff...People are free to give their views.⁴⁸

After bearing stories from other organisations, it is the best place on earth. You can never find a team spirit like in War Child. We are considered to be one family. The staff are very supportive of each other. I don’t know where I would find a team like this again. There is so much collaboration, fun and learning. The motivation for the staff goes a long way toward our peaceful coexistence. We implement the policies correctly...The leadership style does not just focus on implementation of the job, but also on the interests of the staff. All management focuses both on the staff and on the programme. Saidu is the first Country Director who is a national – this is unique because Saidu started from grassroots so he knows what is affecting staff.⁴⁹

They are accessible; they are less bureaucratic than other NGOs; the heads support initiatives, they come to meetings – WCH’s director has come! This is good because they can make decisions at that moment; they are involved in the community work.

It is clear from the evaluation that War Child also took good care of its staff in Sierra Leone, and salary levels were considered to be reasonable or even generous. This also affected the success of programming; in other organisations in Sierra Leone it was often a point of contention between staff and management, which inhibited their motivation to do the work, and occasionally resulted in picketing.⁵⁰ War Child’s support for staff is demonstrated through the handling of a large redundancy that occurred when War Child scaled down operations in 2011 as part of preparation for departure. Staff were notified well in advance and given support in developing their future career plans, including targeted capacity building. They were also given a generous redundancy package that many were able to use to start a business or otherwise facilitate their next step.

V. Community Level Findings

This section assesses the expected results of community-based programmes based on the findings of the community level portion of the evaluation.

⁴⁸ Programme Staff Interview

⁴⁹ Programme Staff Interview

⁵⁰ Programme Staff Interview

Result 1: Sustainable community structures that involve and support children and youth are created and functional

When WCH began work in Sierra Leone, community structures to support children were weak or non-existent: “Children were impacted by the conflict. Not only did they face psychosocial problems, but also they were denied play and their education was interrupted. There were not functional structures to support children and young people.”⁵¹ In order to achieve result 1, War Child together with the community established the CYSS and CAG to lead activities and provide skills training to children and young people, change community attitudes and approaches towards children, and provide support for children. A community centre was also built in each community, separately to the CYSSs and CAGs, in order to give children a space in which to play.

Play facilities and materials for children: The community centres play an integral role in communities; just the presence of a central gathering place affected community dynamics and opportunities for play for children. This was observed in all communities with few exceptions. The physical structure facilitated many of the outcomes of War Child’s programming by providing a space for collective decision making and community gathering, and for children to play. Interestingly, many cited the community centre as a way to locate and keep track of children – in this way it may have played a protective role. In interviews, participants also explained that the community centres continue to serve as symbols, reminding the community of the messages of War Child. However, this has had a reverse effect in one community, where a dispute over War Child property was projected onto the community centre and community stopped using it.

Materials for children, including costumes, instruments and games, were highly appreciated in the communities and were frequently mentioned in an exercise where participants were asked to name activities and changes they appreciated. Materials provided by War Child facilitated community activities while War Child was present and resources were maintained, but of course led to concerns over sustainability (see below). Interestingly, as the following responses indicate, the concept of “shared materials” also led to the development of relationships and trust between children:

We never played, now we have a common place. We play under a roof. Nobody stops us from playing here... We play different kinds of games now. We have enough games. There is no need to fight over them. We used to distribute items according to groups. If I share with someone today, they will share with me tomorrow. Before this time there were quarrels. Now there are no quarrels and if we have one we call the elders. - FGD (13-14), Royema

They begin to make friends. Because they know that after play that ball is not going back to Abdul’s house or Usman’s house. It is going back to the coffers of the CYSS. And tomorrow when they want to use it again nobody will say no, I am not in the mood today. So they begin to form groups of friends. Gradually the rate of aggression reduces.⁵²

Sustainability of materials proved challenging, however. In all communities, the majority of broken toys and materials were not replaced and, often, materials were taken over by community members, creating conflict. The idea of sharing of resources was particularly hard to transfer in Kagbere:

I wish people would take proper care of play things in the centre. We want to pass laws to prevent people from taking and using supplies as their own – they should be fined if a law is broken. – FGD, (13-18)

⁵¹ Programme Staff Interview

⁵² Programme Staff Interview

Awareness and function of CYSS and CAG: Research found that knowledge of support structures for children is one of the more variable indicators, both among and within communities; while CYSS members in the communities, and chiefs or community leaders often demonstrated strong understanding of the knowledge and function of the CYSS, awareness among those who had not engaged directly with the CYSS tended to be much lower. Only 12.7% of children and young people who participated in research reported that they see the CYSS as a strong source of support and 20.6% did not recognise the CYSS (a problematic result for War Child). According to War Child staff, this could also be due to a perception that the CYSS is like a “policeman for children,” or fear that reporting child protection issues to the CYSS might lead to conflict in the community.

Generally the CYSS was reported to be more active in livelihood communities; this is likely because programming was more recent in these communities. Problematically, this served to create conflict in some communities where the CYSS was not seen as distributing resources evenly. Knowledge of the CYSS was particularly strong and it was reported to be more functional where it had effective and committed leadership.

The CYSS continues because the leader was very involved. The CAG would mobilise youths for community work. They advise the CYSS, conduct sensitisation on child rights and settle conflict. These activities have reduced because of the drop in War Child support and Community Action group members are older and act mainly as an advisory group. – M Kamara, Melekuray

Among participants in the evaluation, recognition of the CAG as an established group was lower than of the CYSS; most community members were confused about the “role” of the CAG. However, respondents did recognise the activities lead by the CAG. Interestingly, a former WC Programme Development Manager pointed out that while the “CYSS was set up as the main structure, the implementing groups played the leading role [in activities and meetings].”⁵³ In all communities, adults and respondents reported that CAG meetings and activities had reduced since War Child left the community. This was attributed to work pressure, particularly due to seasonal farming activities (research was carried out during the rainy season). In several communities, we were also told that groups were “not very effective now [since War Child’s departure] because they have no incentives.”⁵⁴

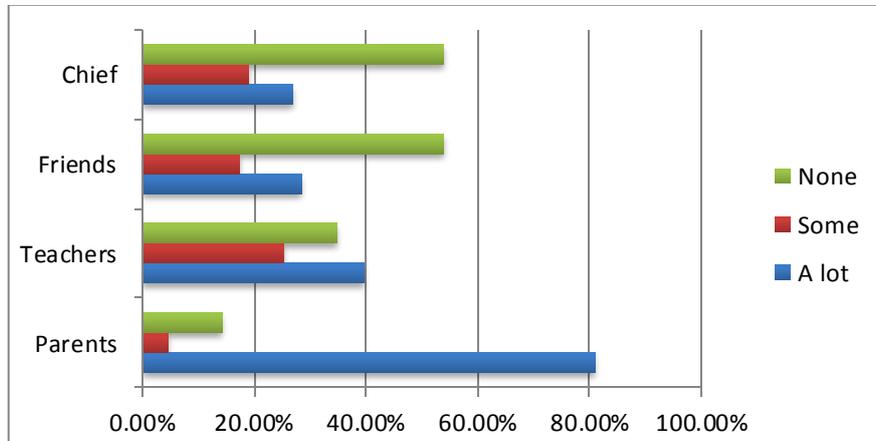
Support for children:

During the evaluation, Chiefs and CYSS leaders presented the function of support mechanisms very differently: each claimed to be the main point of contact when an issue arose. Adults, and particularly Chiefs, demonstrated a strong resistance to taking child protection concerns outside of the community due to financial incentives to keep money within the community (Chiefs used fines as the main accountability mechanism) and lack of trust in a highly dysfunctional, slow and unreliable system. Respondents credited War Child’s intervention with the creation of bylaws on child rights within the community, but increase in trust in the Child Rights Act was mixed.

⁵³ PDM (2) Interview

⁵⁴ Interview w Key Stakeholder, Kareneh (Fata Sesay)

Table: Source of Support for Children and Young People



Children and young people participating in focus group discussion were asked about the level of support they get from different sources in the community. Parents were considered to be a strong source of support by 81% of participants. Friends were not considered to be a source of strong support particularly by younger children, perhaps due to high cultural value placed on wisdom achieved with age. Interestingly, the category of friends was the only category where there was a significant difference between responses from boys and girls- 15.63% of male respondents and 41.92% of female respondents acknowledged friends as a form of support.

In Melekuray, a community where child rights indicators seemed particularly strong no children reported going to their parents or to the chief as a source of support. Conversely, in Kagbere, the community showed low willingness for the intervention, and where children seemed to have been instructed to respond a certain way, all children reported receiving ‘a lot’ of support from teachers – this may have skewed results. Unusually in Kareneh, all respondents reported receiving high levels of support from the chief. This may be attributed to the particular chief in Kareneh, as according to programme staff, since the inception of the programme the chief placed high priority on children’s issue. Interestingly, children interviewed explained that this was because he would “*intervene to protect us from the police,*” which is indicative of a generally low level of trust in government or law enforcement.

Result 2:

Increased awareness of and support for child rights and psychosocial development of children and youth in communities

“Child rights” has become a loaded concept in Sierra Leone – there is a deep-seated resistance to the idea within communities. Respondents attributed this largely to an imposing strategy adopted by NGOs promoting the concept, but it is also likely related to cultural norms, such as forms of discipline, children being “seen and not heard”, and taboos surrounding discussion of sex, sexuality and sexual health. In communities in Sierra Leone, child rights are equated with children “running wild” or “taking their parents to court” and with “Western” or “white man” law. One interesting interpretation by a UNICEF employee is that the concept of child rights was used by adults in communities to explain the fact that they are powerless over children; something that is actually rooted in social dislocation caused by the war

(for example, the fact that children had seen their parents powerless before the rebels).⁵⁵ But, whatever the reason, as put by one NGO worker with experience in the communities: “the moment you mention child rights in the communities, people close their ears.”⁵⁶

Prior to War Child’s intervention, community members had little knowledge of child rights.⁵⁷ Where there was knowledge of child rights, respondents reported having been sceptical or having negative perceptions about the idea. Weak knowledge of and support for child rights was associated with a low performance on human rights indicators; low levels of school enrolment (many children were assisting in farming and other forms of labour), early marriage and teen pregnancy (including resulting from early marriage or sexual abuse), corporal punishment, exclusion from decision making and community life more broadly, discrimination against orphans or “wards,” and children with disabilities, and neglect.

War Child’s programming was sensitive to the fact that rights based language was resisted and ‘decided’ that it was more useful to discuss how to promote child welfare – according to staff in most communities they did not introduce the concept of right until later in the intervention. Instead, they would begin a conversation with community members about what they want for their children, and discuss what is good and what is bad. This approach allowed War Child to gain the trust of the community without building animosity; their messages were seen as legitimate by the time the idea of rights was introduced. In this way, communities that had not accepted the idea of child rights from other NGOs were open to the concept when it came from War Child. In the words of one staff member; “We broke the silence on child rights.”⁵⁸ According to evaluation results, in the communities where War Child intervened, both children and adult respondents demonstrate a very high level of awareness on child rights (not a single respondent was unfamiliar with the concept) and voice support for child rights. War Child’s impact is indicated not only by the change within communities but also by comparisons with other communities; interviews with child rights and protection NGOs, MSWGCA and UNICEF reported generally negative perceptions of child rights in communities.

The following table represents results from a participatory activity in which children were asked whether or not they had certain rights (children were asked to close their eyes and raise their hand so as not to be influenced by peer responses). The results demonstrate a high level of recognition of basic rights, and indicate that War Child’s messages reached the majority of community members.

Table 2: Children and Young People’s Recognition of Child Rights

Right	Support from parents	Play	Participate in decision making	Fight with other children	Go to school
Yes	90.6%	93.8%	87.5%	0%	98.4%
No	9.4%	6.2%	12.5%	100%	1.6%

“As a result of War Child”: When asked if they had knowledge of child rights prior to War Child’s intervention, most community members responded that the idea of child rights came “as a result of War Child” and, where prior awareness of child rights existed, there was little to no understanding of the

⁵⁵ UNICEF Interview

⁵⁶ Amnet Interview

⁵⁷ Interviews and focus group discussions in communities, General Needs Assessment records

⁵⁸ Programme Staff Interview

concept. The only exception to this was one focus group where young people reported having learned of child rights through radio programmes and other NGOs as well as WC. The evaluation findings are consistent with a comparative quantitative study done to evaluate the community-based psychosocial pilot over 2005-2006: prior to War Child's intervention 39.8% of respondents reported having heard of child rights. After the intervention this rose to 95.1%.⁵⁹ Both evaluations reveal that War Child's impact in increasing awareness of rights was very strong.

Psychosocial development was understood by adult respondents for the evaluation in a very basic way, with many respondents noting that psychosocial problems "are not a good thing." However, many respondents showed greater understanding, and mentioned the importance of being sensitive or providing support to individuals exhibiting behavioural symptoms of psychosocial difficulties, one of the messages from War Child's life skills training.

The psychological impact is not good. When someone is in that situation they lose focus, someone addresses you and you do not get the message. – Adult, Robot

This psychosocial development is very important to us. It helps us to make children who have problems of that nature – we meet with them and ask them to know what is affecting them. The community is aware of children's rights and psychosocial development. – Abu Y. Conteh, CYSS leader, Melekuray

If I fail to build a child his rights, he will become troubled. He will go alone and stand in isolation. He will go away from the group. We try to cure that kind of situation through WCH strategies. We ask the children to explain to us and give advice to the child. – Chief Abu Mania, Kareneh

Child Rights in Practice

Researcher: Do your parents believe in these rights?

Boy, 15: No, they never listen to the radio.

Girl, 15: Some say it's a lie.

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Researcher: And do you support these rights?

Adult respondents: Yes, it is good. Yes, we support. Yes, we are pleased.

--

Adult respondent: Flogging has not stopped completely, but we fear if we are seen the CYSS will take the child. So you have to do it behind closed doors.

But did increased awareness and knowledge of child rights translate to greater understanding of child rights and observance to these rights in practice? The majority of both adult and children respondents considered the right to education to be "the most important right," and reported that an increase in school enrolment was War Child's greatest impact. Children were reported to understand the benefit of school and described the importance of studying.⁶⁰ The reduction in child labour - children "going to the farm" or "carrying heavy loads" - was also frequently mentioned across communities, often in connection with education: children used to "go to the farm," and now they "go to school". However, in several

⁵⁹ 2005-2006 WCH Evaluation

⁶⁰ Though fees for secondary school remain a challenge for most families and few children are able to go to secondary school.

communities, children described being forced to work on teachers' farms, or being forced to work on parents' farms in a way that disrupts their schooling (and results in flogging as punishment for school). Children reported that care for children improved due to War Child's intervention, and particularly that their parents give them food. Interestingly, many adult respondents credited WCH with teaching them how to take care of children and prioritise the child's needs: the phrase, "*War Child taught us of the value of our children*" was often used.

When asked why they observe child rights, adults respondents referred to the benefits of sending the child to school in particular; "*If I give my child his rights he will fulfil his responsibility... he will obey ... he will take care of me when I am old.*" Both children and adults described rights as conditional upon responsibilities (and vice versa):

These rights are important to the community because with good behaviour and training the children will be helpful to parents and take on the responsibility to study. - S. Kamara, Benkia

Children have the right to education for development. We also have responsibilities – the right to education comes with the responsibility to study hard, attend regularly and pass classes. We have the right to go to school so that we can become educated, be the light of the family, give respect to our family and community and bring jobs and development. – FGD (10-12) Benkia

Indeed, according to evaluation findings on the district and national levels, the idea of child responsibilities served as a way to mitigate resistance to child rights in Sierra Leone, or make it seem friendly to the "African context."⁶¹ This created room to discuss child rights, with rights and responsibilities often described as a contract (if I fulfil my responsibility I will receive my right). While this may conceptualise positive and mutually beneficial relationships within families and communities, it is contradictory to the actual concept of 'right,' which should not be conditional.

Furthermore, the evaluation found that rights language has been inflated to express everything that is socially desirable or empowering. In one community, Kagbanthama, when asked about his rights a 12-year old boy told the evaluator confidently that he has the right to be president (the most extreme, and endearing of many examples). This is also indicative of confusion about the concept of the State or Government as duty bearer, perhaps not surprising given the limited reach of Government in Sierra Leone.

Not all "child rights" targeted by War Child show improvement. Corporal punishment is still prevalent in all communities, though respondents reported that it had "*reduced due to the coming of War Child.*" As with other areas of child rights, it is difficult to say how much reported change is about knowledge of a norm and a real change in behaviour, especially given that probing by researchers revealed that 'flogging' is still commonplace. The practice may vary among families; in a FGD in Makneh Bana one of the five children participating reported that his parents had stopped flogging him because of War Child, while three reported that they are still flogged. In the same community, a researcher observed that an older boy had a cane in the centre, which he used to 'control' the children. Flogging appeared to be extremely prevalent in schools and used to extort children. In some communities, children mentioned "improvements" due to a rule introduced by War Child: a child may only be flogged three times and the armpit of whoever is administering the punishment must not be visible.

⁶¹ The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child contains a section on duties

Girl (14): Before this time they would flog us more often. Even the neighbour would beat us. Now punishment is more minimal.

Girl (15): They do continue to flog us. They will give us 3-6 strokes

Boy (15): But they do continue to flog us in school, especially persistent latecomers. There are times when teachers ask for contribution and if the child fails to give the contribution you are still flogged. When you do contribute they may accuse you of being the one to encourage the others not to contribute! They will flog you and deny you food.

– FGD (14-15), Royema.

The issue of corporal punishment provides a useful case study through which to examine War Child's approach to promoting children's rights. Programme staff adopted a very pragmatic approach, which emphasised the *reasons* behind the rights, based on an understanding of (the reasons behind) current practice. A programme staff member describes one technique:

There is an exercise that is part of our creative psychosocial methodology, we call "look back." This exercise will tell you about when you were a child, the difficulties you faced, the challenges, the opportunities you have and how that has influenced your life today. Whenever we have this exercise we find it isn't a surprise when people beat children, it isn't a surprise when people maltreat children or subject them to child labour or abuses, because people continue along the way they were brought up: they think this is the best way to treat children... This allows us to reasons with them. You need to bring people the practical things. Otherwise, if you just bring your own concept and say "stop beating children," the CRA says you must not beat the child, you will be brought before the FSU...come on, we are setting a challenge between the child and the family. Tell the family why the Child Rights Act says this.⁶²

Another programme staff explained how he would approach a parent who used corporal punishment after a child had broken something:

Does beating the child repair what was broken? No. So beating him is just inflicting another pain on him, and when he gets sick he has to pull for your pocket when you take him to the hospital. Next time try being friendly with him. When you beat your children they won't know what you like and don't like.⁶³

War Child's pragmatism was an appropriate approach in context; given the lack of knowledge or legitimacy of law in Sierra Leone using pragmatic persuasion to support norm transfer was a more effective technique. This has been recognised by UNICEF and other partners, who are now promoting a progressive approach, which focuses on child welfare, and building on current practice in communities, rather than a rights based approach based on implementation of the CRA.⁶⁴ Furthermore, rights are more likely to be sustainable when the reasoning behind them is understood. However, War Child's introduction of norms such as the "3 strokes rule" could serve to legitimise a practice that is still a violation of child-rights. An organisation such as War Child, promoting a rights based approach must ensure that pragmatism does not justify deviating from letting rights principles guide process, as well as outcomes. This reveals an inevitable tension between an approach that is community based, and seeks to achieve community ownership and leadership of an intervention and an approach that is rights based, and committed to respecting a set of inviolable norms.

⁶² Programme Staff Interview

⁶³ Programme Staff Interview

⁶⁴ Programme Staff Interview

The right to participate in decision-making was another area where War Child's impact was limited: evaluation results indicated that decision-making was widely recognised but has not been substantively realised. This is perhaps not surprising given strong traditional norms that children should be seen and not heard. In many communities, children reported being permitted to be present when decisions are made, but said that adults did not readily listen or actively seek out children's views. Adult respondents explained their inclusion as an opportunity to listen and learn. Children themselves reported not being consulted or having their views heard by adults. Few respondents were able to demonstrate a strong understanding of what active participation in decision-making means; in Kagbere children showed little to no understanding of what decision-making meant beyond being informed of the fact of a decision. For them, expressing an opinion or showing a sign of disagreement is disrespectful or parents, elders and teachers.

We allow them to come amongst us. (A child climbs onto his lap). Before this time, I would've asked him away. But the children are learning from what I say. War Child has trained them this way. – Chief Abu Mania, Kareneh

No, I don't involve children in decision-making. If a child is called he may make mention of things that I cannot provide. If I allow the child to speak, he will contradict me. – Y Bangura, Royema

They used to drive us away from gatherings. Now we know our right to voice and we can go to any gathering. – FDG (15-19), Melekuray

This is indicative of a pattern in changing community norms that emerged from the evaluation: while War Child's messages about "caring" for children had an impact on behaviour, messages about "empowering" children did not change behaviour and were not as meaningfully understood. This was also demonstrated in the "crossing the river" activity. The majority of families crossed with the girl child first, justifying their choice because "the girl child is most vulnerable", "she will take care of the family someday," or even "the education of the girl child is the future of Sierra Leone." However the girl child was never given the task of presenting to the group (nearly always take by the father), and rarely played an active role in decision-making herself.

Finally, the occurrence of early marriage reportedly decreased in all communities; whereas, previously early marriage was seen as a protective factor for girls,⁶⁵ now, as demonstrated by research, adults and children express the view that early marriage is harmful, particularly because it can interrupt education. Early marriage may still occur as a 'solution' to early pregnancy, but due to War Child's intervention this is reportedly changing in most communities – in most communities respondents explained that in the event of pregnancy the father or mother's parents would take responsibility for the child. Participants in the research reported that early pregnancies "have minimised", but responses on this were contradictory with adults tending to deny the presence of an issue while young people mentioned it as a problem for girls in their community. War Child's message that girls should avoid pregnancy in order to further their education was accepted, but the issue has not been dealt with effectively. Discussing sex or reproductive health appears very taboo; solutions are restricted to protecting the girl child by restricting her freedoms, and punishing the "perpetrator". Adult respondents circumvented the issue, approaching it in other ways, or equating "marriage" and "sexual activity"; "early marriage is less encouraged by parents now, but girls themselves are opting for it."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ General Needs Assessments, PDM (1) Interview

⁶⁶ Interview w Community Member, Kabanthama

This last comment is indicative of general confusion on issues of consent and choice with regard to sexual activity. This may be due to the fact that sexual abuse was normalised during the conflict, and, as conversations with War Child staff revealed, this continues to be a problem. Both child and adult respondents tended to refer to any sex before marriage as a criminal act, and as prohibited for religious reasons. It is clear that War Child was not able to engage openly with communities on the issue, but, by focussing on the less taboo issue of early marriage, War Child failed to address a root cause of both early marriage and early pregnancy. While there are high rates of sexual activity among children and young people in the communities, access to (and understanding of) contraception is very limited,⁶⁷ and unhealthy attitudes about sex (particularly which promote double standards for men and women) are persistent. This is an area where focus on attitudes towards gender, sexual behaviour, sex education and contraceptives could have created greater impact. While evaluation findings revealed immense difficulties in addressing this topic, they also revealed the failure to address it can affect other impacts of the programme (i.e. on education).

Result 3: Increase positive dynamics/cohesion within the communities⁶⁸

Community members saw the strength of children. They saw their children more as people. Children's issues became more important and taken more seriously. Children and youth became a greater part of the community – previously they had been viewed negatively by the community, particularly the youth. Relations improved. It was the positive dynamics that we created that were sustained.

– A PDM on the greatest impact of programming.

In each community included in the evaluation, adults and children described the greatest change in the community as a “reduction in quarrels.” According to respondents, prior to the intervention of War Child, children in the communities experienced isolation and used to quarrel and fight when they interacted with each other. Quarrels between adults occurred about land and other material goods or social relationships. These disputes were often resolved by the community Chief. By contrast, community members described how war child “brought unity” among them. A stronger sense of cohesion was reported to exist within the communities and the value of play, socialising and recreation was recognised.

I was quarrelsome amongst others but due the intervention of War Child I have changed greatly. We are not exposed. We can meet with others and do things in common. – Boy, 15

We play together, dance, sing and pray in whichever way we were taught to pray. We gather 2-3 times a month this way. Both boys and girls come in huge numbers. Youths and adults also come in huge numbers. We dance. Even people from the next village, Zbansor, come. We speak the same voice now. – Area Chief, Adikalie Bangura, Benkia

Adult respondents in all communities mentioned improved relationships between husbands and wives, and most adult respondents (both women and men) reported reductions in domestic violence. While it is

⁶⁷ Focus group discussion with young people revealed strong misperceptions about contraception being dangerous.

⁶⁸ This result is challenging to measure, but WCH developed the following indicators to represent the ideal situation: All children/community members are accepted and treated equally and respectfully (and interact together peacefully); Children/young adults and engaged in games, sports, cultural and recreational activities and have positive coping mechanisms; Family members sit and settle their disputes peacefully at home; All children and young adults take active roles in community structures and participate actively in community meetings and other activities.

difficult to assess how often domestic violence occurs in reality, and it is likely that domestic violence continues, adults demonstrated a shift from seeing violence as an effective solution to conflict, toward seeing it as a cause of conflict. Respondents also showed an understanding of peaceful problem solving within the home, and the importance of attending to and understanding their spouses needs.

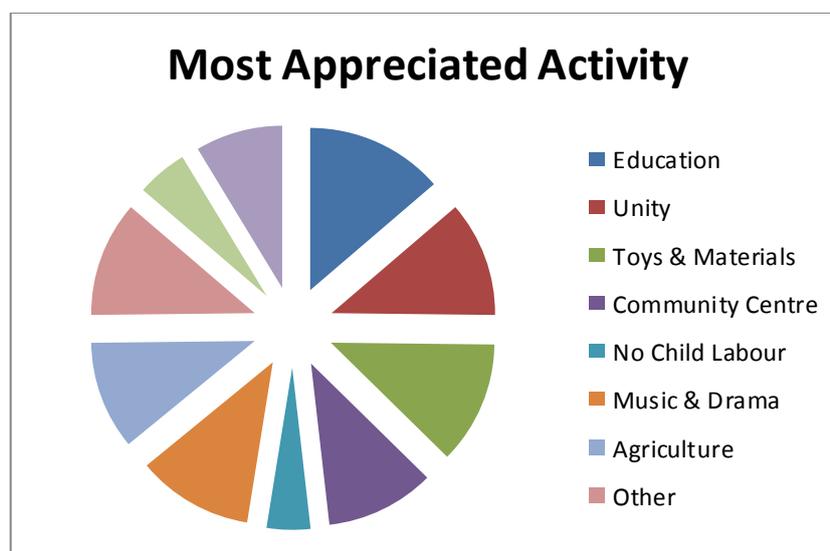
We were more or less trained by War Child to avoid conflict. We were in a conflict situation before. They trained the children and the husbands and wives. With the coming of War Child we have seen a change. Now everything is good. Before the coming of war child there was no unity at home. There was no relationship between the mother and the husband, but they have done a great deal to move us from that situation. We stand strong even now. Because it is now that we see what WC was trying to tell us. - Usman Conteh (former combatant), Kareneh

Signs of healthy psychosocial development were also present in the communities. Young children described increased feelings of happiness, which they express by dancing, jumping, playing and bouncing around. “We can talk about our problems now freely,” stated a 12-year old boy in Royema and others in the group agreed. This ability to recognise problems and express them is a significant change reported by children. Older children and adults describe going to friends for support or to be consoled where this has not happened in the past.

Some fought before, but now are friends...If a member of a friend’s family dies, you go here [to the centre] and sympathise. It can console and encourage that person. – FGD (13-14), Royema

Improvements in community cohesion increased in relationships between family members and community members, social interactions and decision-making; this was a significant impact, and achievement of the programme. However it was a challenge to achieve cooperative distribution of resources, and ownership often became a source of conflict. Where possible develop methods that involve communities in maintenance and sharing of resources early, as these are difficult to sustain.

Activities Appreciated by Children and Adults



Inclusion, acceptance and equality did improve in all communities, largely due to Community Action Group activities, which War Child emphasised as being inclusive to all. The CAGs were often created from existing groups that had social clout, such as football clubs; their association with War Child gave them special authority, which made the introduction of norms about equality and inclusion socially desirable among children and young people. This was an effective technique, but challenges remain.

Gender roles are very strong in the communities; this was demonstrated by the crossing the river activity where not once did a woman or girl row the boat, a “man’s job.” Girls face significant restrictions: in many of the communities they are restricted from playing in the centre and elsewhere because they are vulnerable to pregnancy or are required to help with housework. Bullying by older children was also mentioned as an issue by younger children in several communities, who told us that older children tended to control resources, such as the toys War Child brought.

The playing time is more for boys because girls have to help their mothers to cook, and spend time learning the household activities. The girls are not allowed to mix with the boys to protect them from violence games. There are restrictions at night because older girls will visit or go to see their boyfriend. – FGD (12), Royema

There was discrimination, especially among disabled. Now we do not need to be separate from them. I used to feel if someone touches me I would also become deformed. Now it is clear that this is untrue.” – Boy, 15, Melekuray

Children in foster care work a lot; they are not allowed to play. If children are not doing well in school they will not be able to play. We are too tired from too much work at home. Children are not allowed to practice at the centre. When there is confusion within families the children are restricted. The parents are afraid of bad company. Very shy children keep to themselves. – FGD (13-18), Kagbere

Furthermore, as previously noted, increased “support” for children does not equate to their “empowerment.” While communities demonstrated a marked increase in support for children, they were still treated as passive recipients rather than active agents. It seems it was easier for War Child to shift norms through sensitisation than to rearrange power distribution within relationships. Adults expressed an understanding of how to care for children, but also emphasised that children are better behaved, and obey – the model child is quiet and obedient. When asked about children’s participation in settling disputes or making decisions:

When there is a problem I sit with the mother. The child will be present as well. If she has anything to say, we can allow her to say it. If the idea is good, then we can proceed. – Francis Kanu, Makneh Bana

When asked whether adults ever seek out a child’s view on something, Zaina Bangura, Benkia, (laughs as though I have said something quite silly): “*That hardly happens.*”

Even in Melekuray, where WCH was successful in achieving outcomes in most expected results, it was difficult to achieve change in decision-making (though interestingly, in this community where problems did exist, adult respondents were more willing to acknowledge it).

Children very seldom are involved in making decisions that are important to their lives. When this does happen, these decisions might be about choosing a school or marriage for girls who no longer attend school. There has not been a great impact of War Child here. – Chief Abu Y. Conteh, Melekuray

Some accept, others don’t. They feel – this is a little boy. Why should I listen to him? – Boy, 19, Melekuray

War Child did not succeed on empowering children so that they became active participants in decision making, though they were at least allowed to play a passive role, by being present and hearing discussions. This finding may come as a disappointment to War Child, but in light of current cultural norms may not be a surprise.

Results 4:

Children and youth have gained life skills, Improved learning opportunities for young people

According to the evaluation, children and youth in all communities developed life-skills, which helped them to cope with their difficulties and discover their identity and personhood: these are largely indicated by the findings presented under results two and three.

Communication: The participatory nature of WCH activities, and particularly the performance and public speaking opportunities developed children and young peoples' confidence, ability to express themselves. Social skills and interpersonal relationships also improved:

War child made me to speak at the radio station. We discussed the Child Rights Act. They made me handle paper in front of people and read. In the Performing for Peace programme they would train us, we moved all the way to Port Loko to perform a drama about the rights for the child in front of over 1,000 (?). This has built our confidence building; now we can speak publicly. – Boy, 18, Melekuray

I am not bold enough to speak because of the drama we created on child abuse and teen pregnancy. I was not popular – now I am popular. I used to be anti-social. Now I am social. I was a proud man, with no time for anyone. Now we play games – Boy, 19, Melekuray

They used to come with big books. They taught about understanding, about life, child rights, child protection. Their help cut across the community – all adults and children were part of the programme. – Zaina Bagura, Benkia

Children also linked these ideas with reduced isolation and overcoming a feeling of powerlessness in facing their problems. They showed the ability to think and make decisions with direction.

Now there is relation between us. We see ourselves as members of a family: we sit and talk and joke. I decide how I want to behave. I have will power. I have to sit and decide and move to do things. – Girl, 17, Kagbantama

Children's ability to recognise their own agency and developed capacity to articulate and express that agency is an extremely important outcome of programmes, and may pave the way for continued progress in areas where War Child's impact was more limited (decision making in communities). The fact that this impact in single area is limited without an impact on the broader community demonstrates the importance of WCH's decision to implement a community-based psychosocial programme, rather than targeting vulnerable children.

Numeracy and literacy: In communities where the literacy and numeracy components were mentioned, youth and adults most frequently cited reduced illiteracy as the biggest change brought by War Child. Participants' experiences have motivated them to engage in independent learning; several respondents described how people are learning to write and speak English.

"We learned about numbers [she begins to count to 100]. We use the numbers to call someone. Before this time I had a phone, but I never learned how to use it! After the numbers, we learned the alphabet. We spell, we begin to read books. I am teaching these things now, even to the children I have at home; I teach my children and grandchildren all I learned." – K Turray, Child Lady⁶⁹

⁶⁹ This woman would not have been chosen for the original literacy, numeracy training as she would have been out of the age range, so she must have received this training in an informal arrangement, which indicated the programme is spreading throughout the community.

Participants also applied their numeracy and literacy skills through the Village Savings and Loans Programme; they were able to understand and utilise the booking system. However, in most communities sustainability of the courses themselves remains a challenge, as does expanding outside of the original group established by War Child.

Livelihoods training had a big impact in communities while the training was being implemented. All communities where the programme was implemented demonstrated improved knowledge of farming techniques, and emphasised having experienced better yields of crops cassava, ground nuts and rice. Respondents also described making collective decisions about how to handle the produce/use it to sustain WC's contributions and to support children by pooling farming proceeds to pay for school fees. Sustainability is a particular challenge here. Most communities reported lack of success with yields in the years following War Child's departure (due to lack of fertilizer and other problems). It is interesting that participants in the research were very enthusiastic about the farming techniques that they learned, but did not seem to feel they could be sustained without assistance.

Hunger used to be a problem and this has subsided to some extent due to the intervention of War Child. People quarrel because they were hungry. There was a basic needs failure. – Chief, Benkia

The introduction of the livelihoods component served to facilitate the life skills programmes; as noted by Benkia's chief, above, hunger places a strain on human relationships. It was also recognised broadly in communities that children could not study and learn while they were hungry:

The milling machine [provided by War Child as part of the livelihoods programme] has reduced the labour of pounding and allowed for more free time for women and children. – Fatmata Bangura

According to War Child staff, MAFFS follow up in livelihood communities, has not been implemented successfully.⁷⁰ This may account for the difficulty sustaining farming techniques in some of the livelihood communities, and reinforces the need for follow up emphasised by the community-based approach. In future programmes, capacity-building should be extended past other programming cycles and phased out gradually to increase sustainability.

Sustainability: Community Level Outcomes

While the community based programming is designed to be sustainable by achieving community leadership and ownership of all activities, sustainability of outcomes in the communities was mixed, and generally difficult to achieve. Since War Child's departure, activities have reduced across the board. This was largely attributed to CYSS and CAG activity subsiding as group members left the community for mining jobs, education or other reasons – the changing nature of communities and urbanisation may be a larger challenge for a community-based programme in post-conflict/developing contexts, and should be taken into account during future planning. While according to staff, community members were introduced to a recruitment process to replace CYSS members; this did not become effective in most communities.

It is also notable that when researchers probed as to why activities that have been valuable to the community have discontinued, respondents described activities as dependent on materials. Many

⁷⁰ Country Director Interview

respondents reported that attendance at meetings and activities has subsided because there are “no incentives” for community members to attend (War Child had provided food at these meetings). The lack of incentives was also used to explain the reduction in literacy and numeracy training, and reduced farming yields were attributed to a lack of materials (such as fertiliser).

Materials were not effectively maintained or replaced, in a sort of tragedy of the commons phenomenon. While several respondents mentioned intentions to repair materials, this had not happened in many communities with the exception of the Makneh Bana community centre, which were unusually well cared for. It was also difficult to maintain cooperative sharing of materials, and in some communities individuals or groups took control of materials left by War Child actually *causing* conflict. Other materials were rented or sold to neighbouring communities.

The things [are not sustainable], for instance the television was taken by some person in one of the communities, and ... So these are all things. So who has the ownership over this stuff, who maintains it, who repairs it, who sets the rules around it: these are the things that I think are not sustainable.⁷¹

The struggle to achieve sustainability of activities was acknowledged by staff in interviews; one programme staff predicted that 20-30% of activities would be sustainable, but noted that the CYSS was less sustainable in practice than originally hoped.⁷² Another staff member raised an important question that future WPA’s should consider:

I think we need to be honest with ourselves: what kind of sustainability are we talking about? Is it the right question that a [programme’s activities] should be sustainable? When asking people to volunteer sustainability is not what we are looking for. What we are looking for is replicable models that should (and have!) been taken over by other NGOs. For instance, the Freetown Players is a theatre group that is leading summer camps for the children...⁷³

Changes in norms and behaviour proved easier to sustain than activities, perhaps because they were not perceived as being dependent on materials that require maintenance, or perhaps more likely because it was these areas that actual change occurred. According to findings, War Child’s activities were a tool by which sustainable behaviour change could be achieved: “One visible thing I think we would say when coming is that the communities look diverse. Children are no longer beaten on the street. People know that is not done. In that sense you can see the impact on children.”

The zeal/enthusiasm to attend school has still been maintained. Cultural items are damaged and not repaired; some dancing is still ongoing with local items. The games, like ludo and draft have been spoiled, but not replaced. More children are still in the community centre, playing amongst themselves. – Salby Kanu, Makneh Bana

Some issues are coming back to continue the way they were, such as teenage pregnancy and early marriage. The knowledge of child rights and our confidence will sustain. – FGD, Melekuray (15-19)

The behavioural change that seemed to be the most sustainable based on interviews and observation in the communities was the model of collective decision-making. As put by a former PDM, “it is the *approach* people are positive about and less about the details. I believe in the approach.”⁷⁴ It seems where community mobilisation around activities was not maintained in communities, the potential for

⁷¹ PDM (1) Interview

⁷² Programme Staff Interview

⁷³ Advocacy Programme Manager Interview

⁷⁴ PDM (2) Interview

mobilisation remained, and was drawn upon by other NGOs. For example, according to many respondents, including Kagbere CYSS Chairmen Bockarie Conteh:

War child paved the way for other NGOs to enter this community. After their departure the skills we learnt, we used to help other NGOs to build a school. – Adult, Kareneh

The CYSS only has five remaining members, 3 female and 5 male. They played a lead role in WCH activities (mobilisation, preparation and receiving visitors). The facilities handed over to the CYSS chairman for caretaking. The CYSS is currently supporting another NGO working with the community. – A Bangura, Royema

The formation of the national NGO Action for Advocacy and Development Sierra Leone (AAD-SL) will also promote the sustainability of programming by building upon War Child’s work adding both breadth and depth (through continuing advocacy and capacity building activities and working in new communities) and conducting follow up work in War Child communities.⁷⁵ AAD-SL is committed to continue working with community-based methodologies, leading to perceptions among partners that War Child is not leaving Sierra Leone; they are referred to by partners and in the communities as “*the new War Child.*” Staff at WCH’s head office emphasise that the sustainability of this programme has been a particular success; “It is the first time a phase out has felt positive.”⁷⁶

Sustainability was built into the War Child methodology. The approach addressed dependency by ensuring that programming was community led and community owned, however,; communities War Child has left exhibited strong hopes that that War Child or another NGO would return to help them. When asked about War Child’s departure from the community, respondents in all communities expressed that they felt sorry to see War Child go. When asked why the community needs WC when they should be capable to doing all activities themselves, respondents remained un-convinced:

(Laughs merrily) We became used to them. They appear to be part of us. – Woman, Kagbanthama.

While this is a rave review for a community based programme, it also raises the question of whether intensive community based interventions in communities emerging from an emergency period may create dependency. In Sierra Leone, where the only child protection services delivered in the communities come from NGOs, this raises questions about how effective War Child’s model of sustainability will be in the longer term. It is critical that the “models” War Child left behind are picked up by communities themselves [and ideally government] as well as other organisations.

VI. National and District Level Findings

War Child’s national and district level programming was introduced in 2009 as part of the broader exit strategy in order to increase sustainability through the introduction of advocacy and capacity building components. According to its Director of Advocacy, War Child Holland includes advocacy in its various programmes in order “to reach more children with just a little bit more money.”⁷⁷ But the advocacy also served to strengthen the impact of contemporary community based programming where advocacy efforts were based on War Child’s experience in communities. Outcomes at the national and district level were assessed according to the expected outcomes for programmes developed as part of the 2009-2013

⁷⁵ AAD-SL Interview

⁷⁶ PDM (2) Interview

⁷⁷ Advocacy Programme Manager Interview

Strategic Plan.⁷⁸ Detailed outputs of War Child's advocacy programme can be accessed in the 2012 baseline report. The following analysis will assess the impact of War Child's advocacy.

Improving government policies and regulations to protect children and young people's rights

War Child's advocacy efforts contributed to the establishment of a strong child rights advocacy network in Sierra Leone through both formal and informal network building. War Child facilitated the establishment of CRC-SL, a coalition of CBOs, INGOs and NGOs dedicated to monitoring the government's implementation of the CRC and African Charter and supporting the government in achieving its operations. War Child emerged as a leader in the coalition, and strengthened CRC-SL through capacity building in advocacy and creative methodologies, leading on coalition activity such as reporting to the UNCRC. According to the current chairmen, CRC-SL "relied on War Child's expertise when developing their advocacy programme."⁷⁹ War Child expanded the network by mobilising organisations and established branches of the coalition outside of Freetown. These activities will be difficult to sustain as at present another NGO with an equal capacity to provide leadership to the coalition (particularly outside of Freetown) has not emerged.⁸⁰ Sustainability is a serious concern, though coalition members report that War Child's example set a standard that they will strive to maintain. It will be critical that commitment and leadership is taken by NGOs (including local NGOs and CBOs) so that progress made by War Child is not lost.

Part of the value of War Child's advocacy initiatives, is that advocacy initiatives at district level were able to feed into national level initiatives and vice versa. This strengthened child rights advocacy in Sierra Leone by ensuring that national and international advocacy efforts reflected community needs. For instance in 2009 when advocacy was launched, War Child's community programmes had succeeded in increasing school enrolment. Schools quickly became over crowded as a result, creating a need for local authorities to provide children with educational facilities. Through conducting advocacy at the district level, War Child was able to achieve this in several Port Loko communities, where more teaching staff and equipment was provided by District Council. The fact that War Child's advocacy programmes operate outside of Freetown is unique: as a result War Child has played a critical role in presenting the reality of problems faced 'up-country' to International NGOs (such as Defence for Children International and Save the Children) who base advocacy efforts on the perception that the situation there is comparable to Freetown.⁸¹ For instance, War Child clarified misperceptions that CWCs were functional across the country, before large scale research by UNICEF confirmed that fact years later.

War Child also empowered community members to conduct advocacy at district and national levels themselves. As put by one local partner, "War Child is training children to become advocates,"⁸² which contributed to War Child's overall aim of empowering children. The 2011 campaign for legislation restricting FGM, 'Waiting Till I'm 18,' launched to coincide with Sierra Leone's Universal Period Review, is the most recent example of this. The campaign was widely referenced by stakeholders during the evaluation conducted in Freetown, Port Loko and Makeni, and was implemented by five of War Child's local partners who were trained in War Child creative methods including Performing for Peace (advocacy through drama), online petitions, radio campaigning, a thumb print drive (thumb prints were collected like signatures on a petition), and other methods. Thumb print collection was led by the Children's

⁷⁸ 2009-2013 Strategic Plan

⁷⁹ Plan Interview

⁸⁰ CRC-SL Interview

⁸¹ Advocacy Programme Manager Interview

⁸² Amnet Interview

Forum Network⁸³: 11,580 thumbprints were collected across the country. At the close of the campaign, children led and performed a provocative drama on the issue to the Government Ministers, INGOs, media, Gender adviser to the President in Sierra Leone, where the Gender advisor to the president and FGM practitioners (Sowes) made commitments to work towards a law prohibiting FGM for girls under-18. A piece of draft legislation on gender issues has been developed that addresses FGM.

The issue of FGM reveals some of the limits of War Child's approach to promoting rights through gaining legitimacy within the communities. War Child did not raise the issue in communities because this would create barriers to the programme; "we could not touch it. If we touch it they would push us away," said one staff member.⁸⁴ In this sense, raising the issue through national advocacy was an important step, though the decision to advocate for "under 18" demonstrates how War Child's pragmatic approach to child rights may be problematic. Advocating for a law restricting FGM below 18 approaches the issue from the perspective of a child's right to choose; this approach, which is thought to have a positive impact in Senegal and Burkino Faso, is seen as a compromise, a first step that can move norms on a culturally sensitive topic without pushing too far. This may facilitate a cultural shift because positioning FGM as a choice (rather than a bad practice) facilitates normative change that is already occurring in the country⁸⁵ without taking an absolute position against the topic, which would threaten existing institutions. On the other hand, the strategy displaces the serious health and social problems caused by the practice, with a discussion of when the practice occurs and fails to address FGM as a serious human rights violation in itself. War Child staff felt strongly that this was the appropriate approach in Sierra Leone, but it raises the question of the tension between a rights based approach and a community based approach that may be more likely to achieve social change.

Increasing Government support towards promoting and protecting child rights as specified in the Child Rights Act and the UN Convention on the Right of the Child and the Optional Protocols on the Sale of Children in Armed Conflict and the Universal Period Review

At the international level, the main impact of War Child's advocacy work has been writing and submitting shadow reports to the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Period Review on behalf of the CRC-SL network, and travelling to Geneva to participate in Sierra Leone's UPR. This marked the first time civil society from Sierra Leone had participated in these mechanisms. In Geneva, War Child's advocacy staff was able to obtain a record of Sierra Leone's Attorney General's commitment to develop protective legislation on FGM. This commitment has been used as an advocacy tool at the national level. Participatory methodologies were used even at this level, including a video recording of a 'Performing 4 Peace' drama, which was submitted as part of the OPAC report.

Advocacy complements a community-based programme and where possible should be introduced prior to the "exit strategy" phase, however it is useful to wait to introduce advocacy until the WPA has a strong understanding of the operations of child rights and protections in local context.

Establishing and training semi-government child support mechanisms at the district and community levels.

As part of the MSWGCA strategy to coordinate implementation of the Child Rights Act, War Child was charged with coordinating child protection activities in Port Loko and Bombali districts. The CWCs are particularly strong in these areas due to War Child's interventions, as compared to other areas of the

⁸³ A national child run organisation established by the Ministry of Social Welfare.

⁸⁴ Programme Staff Interview

⁸⁵ MSWGCA Interview

country. According to PLAN Programme Director in the district, “After NGOs left the function of the CWCs is not perfect, but they have a reference point. They are linked to the local councils, which is more sustainable.”⁸⁶ War Child also developed the training for CWCs, which has been used by UNICEF across the country. The quality of the training was appreciated by UNICEF: “War Child has real trainers – they are versed in methodology and know how to train. This is something you don’t find here, and as a result the trainings implemented by partners suffered.”⁸⁷

We are using the WCH modules in training the CWCs. We are using the sensitisation techniques through children’s drawings that are interpreted by adults to prevent abuses. I know about War Child, they are focussing on vulnerable children... WCH believes in partnering with other NGOs, believes in working with the ministry and works with the council to work for children. - MSWGCA, North (Makeni)

As the community findings indicate, the strategy of strengthening CWCs was largely ineffective (only 17.5% of respondents reported seeing the CWC as source of support and 74.6% didn’t recognise it). Furthermore CWCs are only functional when receiving NGO support.⁸⁸ As put by UNICEF’s Chief of Child Protection, “it is not owned by the community... when they leave it goes.”⁸⁹ The strategy of working with CWCs may add some value: it is possible that some specific child protection concerns were addressed by CWCs and, perhaps most importantly, lessons have been learned that can be put towards developing a more effective national level strategy. Introducing communities to a model that may be used in the future is potentially useful, but in Sierra Leone it created negative perceptions that will serve as an obstacle. UNICEF and other War Child partners acknowledged that the idea of establishing a “perfect system” in Sierra Leone and failing to work with the existing community based system has been harmful, and are adopting a new strategy.⁹⁰ It is difficult to suggest that War Child should have taken a different approach to supporting the development of CWCs, given that their work is part of a wider national strategy. War Child did make an effort to understand existing systems in their own programming. It is interesting that in a way the national level strategy may itself be moving towards a strategy that shares some principles with War Child’s community-based approach, however instead of putting energy towards counter-productive initiatives, perhaps War Child could have encouraged this from an earlier point.

Creating understanding and support for child support mechanisms like the child welfare committees, family courts and child panels

Awareness-raising on child support mechanisms fell largely within War Child’s Community based programming and is addressed within community level findings of the evaluation. War Child also ran radio campaigns to increase awareness at the district level.

We run children’s programs – children get information on issues affecting them and other children; people use the phone lines’ they advocate on the children’s behalf; we do sensitization on children’s issues; children talk to their peers and caregivers on issues...this is creating changes in the treatment of children. Gambling in the treatment of children is reducing... Awareness is raised. Phone calls demonstrate changes and children report abuses themselves to police and Child Protection Agencies.

– Makenew Radio Station Manager, Mohammed Sankoh

⁸⁶ Plan Interview

⁸⁷ MSWGCA Interview

⁸⁸ CWC Interview

⁸⁹ UNICEF Interview

⁹⁰ UNICEF, MSWGCA Interview

Training (I)NGOs/CBOs staff in applying War Child Specific methodologies and approaches

Boy, 16: They taught us in advocacy skills and lobbying. They taught us about community lobbying and how to use community structures. They taught us the technical approach to lobbying government and how to tackle issues.

Boy, 17: The staff is very good. They know how to handle issues, how to identify problems, analyze problems and find solutions.

Girl, 17: No staff ever hurt people. They are different from other NGOs because of the staff. They have children in their hearts and they are supportive of children and their views.

– *Children’s Forum Network*

War Child has an excellent reputation as trainers – the evaluation at the national and district levels revealed that this is what they are most known for. War Child was particularly appreciated for the following unique approaches reported by partners:

- War Child always conducted training for trainers (TOTs) and left materials at organisations, which increased sustainability and, perhaps more importantly, planted the idea and intention of sustainability. Future programmes should ensure that training techniques and methodologies are included in TOTs, as this is necessary to make trainings effective.
- “They use a play methodology so in trainings, workshops and meetings people’s attention is kept. The methodology of training is good for children and adults.”⁹¹
- “War child delivers capacity building to partners, rather than just funding them. They look at strengths and weakness and build upon it.”⁹²

One staff member involved in capacity building questioned the strategy for selecting partners to train, reporting that War Child prioritised stronger partners, rather than investing in those with the greatest need.⁹³ While investing in stronger partners may be justified by its potential to have a greater impact on issues, it is important to acknowledge that capacity building partners with greater need requires more follow up, and a greater investment generally to be effective (and not to be a wasted investment in itself).

A final issue in capacity building brings us back to the question of whether the rule of law or changing social norms has a greater impact on behaviour. As Sierra Leone moved from an emergency period to a development period, an active civil society emerged that can play a critical role in advocating for good governance and legal change, and provide a voice to a population not accustomed to an accountable government. One concern that emerged from the district/national level evaluation was that the capacity of these organisations is built based on an abstract ideal situation, rather than the reality of their country context. National organisations come to understand ideal models of governance and focus their energies on advocating hard for a system based on accountability and punishment and a strong rule of law. As discussed, in the context of child rights in Sierra Leone, this approach did more harm than good.

In Sierra Leone, strengthening accountability alone is not a useful strategy for promoting child rights, especially given the government’s lack of capacity and resources to either implement accountability mechanisms or fulfil rights in the first place.⁹⁴ Yet many NGOs who promote child rights developed an advocacy strategy based on the full implementation of the Child Rights Act. Their approach tends to be based purely on the Government of Sierra Leone’s legal obligations, not on will, capacity, resources, or

⁹¹ Goal Interview

⁹² Pikin-to-Pikin Interview

⁹³ PDM (1) Interview

⁹⁴ Many parents would happily send their children to secondary school if they had the resources necessary to do so.

the social context. The manifestation of this approach was demonstrated by community members' understanding of many child rights issues based heavily on the concepts of "perpetration" and "punishment."

While War Child's approach was sensitive in this regard, strategies adopted by partner organisations varied. It is important that this practice is strengthened, applied consistently, and emphasised in training of other NGOs. Some partners exhibited an understanding of War Child's approach:

People are preaching child rights and the community becomes confused. Through WCH capacity building staff has learned how to analyse child rights, how to tell what is a child rights and how to communicate it so the community can understand.

Yes, the lawmakers need to be targeted. If you want to implement the law it must be legal. Authorities need to be targeted. Activists find the CRA helpful, but it is not justiciable. But we focus on the community for them to see the reason.⁹⁵

Others were focussed on strengthening the rule of law: *The answer to child rights in Sierra Leone is to make the law stronger. To create the institutions so people are held accountable.⁹⁶*

VII. Conclusion

I believe in the approach. The approach is something we will apply elsewhere. Of course every country context is different, and we may think there is a lot that we cannot use but I actually think there is a lot you can use. I think that Sierra Leone has proven themselves."

- War Child Staff

All three levels of the evaluation demonstrated that War Child's programming in Sierra Leone touched a great many lives. It is not an overstatement to say the organisation is beloved in communities and among partners, and has played a unique role in the recovery and development of children in Sierra Leone. Conducting a critical evaluation was a challenge given the overwhelming support for the programme in-country and criticisms of War Child were not forthcoming from evaluation participants. Yet a thorough examination of the outcomes and quality of War Child's intervention in the Sierra Leonean context reveals difficult tension points that affect the impact of War Child's intervention. Generally, War Child's community-based methodology was well suited to navigating these tensions, particularly compared to the approaches taken by peer organisations. However as the evaluation demonstrates, War Child's achievement of outcomes was limited. Lessons can be learned taken from Sierra Leone that may contribute to stronger programming in future WCH Project Areas.

An unavoidable contradiction within the community-based programme emerges from the findings and analysis in this report: community based programming is based on the concept of ownership and leadership by the community, but is also a method of promoting change of behaviour and norms. This change is likely to conflict with the status quo in communities, both in terms of tradition and power structures. There is no clear answer to the question of how an organisation should navigate this tension. The balance must be determined based on a strong analysis of social, political and legal context and ultimately an organisation's philosophical approach. Yet an awareness of the implications of various choices, based on War Child's experience in Sierra Leone experience, may provide useful guidance for future planning.

⁹⁵ Pikin-to-Pikin Interview

⁹⁶ Kids Arise Interview

Lessons learned in Sierra Leone will provide a useful guide to future WCH programmes, particularly those following the community-based approach. Best practices and recommendations have been included throughout the findings and analysis presented in this report. Several key thematic areas are presented in greater depth below:

Monitoring and Evaluation: Monitoring and evaluation should be made more systematic, both at the community level and organisational level. This could also facilitate a more robust understanding of different community selection choices. All staff should be involved in this process, to ensure learning occurs over the course of the programme. Monitoring and evaluation can also increase financial effectiveness and efficiency by determining how programme costs related to impact in order to make cuts where possible. While the intense investment in the community-based approach is necessary for effective impact (this approach absolutely must be done well to achieve its outcomes), a larger investment in more difficult communities might not be cost effective, particularly where interventions strengthen resistance. Robust comparative evaluation over time could give guidance on these issues.

Gender and Sexual Health: Gender norms may be the most difficult to approach and the most difficult to change. In different contexts these issues may need to be addressed more or less gradually depending on community resistance; however “non-engagement” can also create impact and approaches must be adopted cautiously to avoid unintended consequences. For instance, advocating against early pregnancy but failing to provide preventative options may result in oppression of girls. Overall, failure to address gender and sexual health issues head on, particularly early pregnancy and FGM may impact other children’s rights. Special groups for girls and young women (and boys and young men) should be created to address these issues and provide sexual education. War Child successfully promoted messages on children’s rights (a controversial and resisted topic) in communities; this ought to be possible on gender issues also.

Abuse in schools: Schools should be targeted, not avoided, where they present risk factors for children – because schools are pre-existing and permanent structures, this is an area where WCH has the potential to make sustainable change. In communities included in the evaluation, many of the most persistent rights violations took place in schools (ie flogging and sexual abuse of girls). Teachers (and parents) should be taught alternative discipline techniques. Student government structures could provide an opportunity for children to exhibit sustainable leadership in the school context.

Empowerment to what end? Even where communities recognise importance of care for children, due to imbedded cultural norms, it is more difficult to achieve their recognition of children as empowered agents. WCH should consider what empowerment means, and develop programming designed to address achieving this normative shift. While empowerment of individual children is necessary in building towards community recognition of children’s agency in the future, how can this be facilitated? Creating active, substantive leadership roles is critical to empowering children within communities, along with sending messages about empowerment. WCH-SL exhibited several good practices in this regard, particularly related to advocacy activities. This may have the potential to

What form of sustainability? It is important to consider what form of sustainability programming is meant to achieve. In Sierra Leone, changes in behaviour proved to be sustainable than activities or structures. It is useful to present communities with an **alternative model of engagement**. This is necessary to achieve sustainable behaviour change, for instance: child labour was replaced with school enrolment; however corporal punishment remain prevalent, perhaps because communities did not have alternative models of discipline to draw upon: “flogging” was reported by both adult and child respondents, and interestingly some respondents reported *threatening* to flog children or to deny them food as punishment as alternatives to actually engaging in these practices.

Annex 1

List of Data and Sources

Interviews at National and District Level:

Freetown

1. Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
2. Advocacy Movement Network
3. Child Rights Coalition, Sierra Leone
4. United Nations Children's Education Fund
5. Children's Empowerment Network
6. Pikin-to-Pikin

Makeni

1. Child Welfare Committee
2. City & District Council
3. Children's Forum Network
4. Children's Empowerment Forum Network
5. Action for Advocacy and Development, Sierra Leone
6. Child Rights Coalition, Sierra Leone
7. Family Support Unit
8. Ministry of Agriculture
9. Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
10. Radio Mankneh

Port Loko

1. Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
2. Kids Arise, Sierra Leone
3. PLAN, Sierra Leone
4. Family Support Union
5. Child Welfare Committee
6. Ministry of Agriculture
7. District Council

Interviews at Community Level:

1. 6 individual interviews were conducted with adults in each of the 8 communities included in the evaluation: Benkia, Kagbanthama, Melekuray, Kareneh, Royema, Robot, Kagbere and Makneh Bana.
2. In-depth focus group discussions were held with two groups of 4-5 children in each community.
3. Larger groups (of 8-10 children (under 18), and 8-10 adults) participated in activities and surveys in each community.

Interviews at Organisational Level:

War Child Holland Sierra Leone Staff:

1. Country Director
2. Programme Development Manager (2)
3. Programme Staff (8 were interviewed, including staff who have filled the following roles):
 - a. Programme Development Officer
 - b. Field Location Manager
 - c. Programme Officer, Capacity Building Unit
 - d. Advocacy Officer
4. Advocacy Programme Manager
5. Operations Support Manager
6. Finance Officer

War Child Holland Staff at Head Office:

1. Deputy Director of Programmes
2. Global Advocacy Coordinator
3. Psychosocial Programme Coordinator

War Child Resources

1. Programme logframes
2. Annual Plans 2009, 2010, 2011 & 2012
3. Bi-monthly reports, 4M, 8M reports
4. Annual Reports 2009, 2010, 2011 & 2012; 2012
5. Country strategies 2005-2010, 2009-2013 and 2012-2013
6. Exit strategy
7. Country evaluations 2006 & 2010
8. General Needs Assessment Reports
9. Participatory Needs Assessment Reports
10. Quarterly (community) assessment tools
11. Other WCH-SL monitoring tools considered by the evaluator include:
 - Activity feedback questionnaire- used for 2007, 2008 and 2009 communities
 - Activity observation list
 - Community structure awareness tool by M&E
 - Community transition guide
 - Implementation material tracking by CYSS
 - Material and Centre checklist by M&E
 - Observation check list for individuals and groups
 - Observation check list for trainers and trainees
12. Advocacy strategy

Secondary sources:

“An Ethnographic Study of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms and their Linkage with the National Child Protection System of Sierra Leone,” The Columbia Group for Children In Adversity, 25 July (2011).

Duncan, Joan and Laura Arntson, “Children in Crisis: Good Practices in Evaluating Psychosocial Programming,” Save the Children Federation (2004).

Rossi, Andrea, “Developing Evidence-based Child Protection Policy in Sierra Leone: Building evidence, engaging policy makers,” December (2009).

Annex 2

Evaluation of War Child Holland Community-based Programming in Sierra Leone: Indicators and data sources

Through our evaluation of War Child Holland's Community-based Programming in Sierra Leone, CCLC will:

1. Assess the **impact and outcomes** of programmes, the **effectiveness and relevance** of programmes in achieving these outcomes, and the **sustainability** of outcomes.
2. Assess the **quality** of programmes and in particular whether they successfully followed a community-based methodology.
3. Develop **conclusions**, identify **good practices** and make **recommendations** that can be shared with other War Child Programme Areas and guide the development of community-based programmes in War Child Holland.

We will utilise the following tools in our collection of primary data. Data will also be collected from reports, work plans and evaluations provided by War Child Holland.

Quantitative surveys: These will be used (in conjunction with previous War Child baseline studies and evaluations) to measure quantifiable indicators, (ie the number of children participating in programmes, measurable improvements in knowledge of children's rights). Data will be collected through existing data sources, ie surveys distributed among training participants.

Qualitative Individual interviews: The international and national consultant will conduct individual interviews in order to gather in-depth qualitative information on War Child Holland programmes and the experiences of programme participants, partners and staff (i.e. in-depth assessments of knowledge of child rights, the impact of programmes on participants and communities, the impact of advocacy efforts on government policy and programmes etc).

Focus group discussions and group interviews: Both consultants will also lead focus group discussions with children and adults in communities where programmes were implemented. Focus group discussions provide participants with the opportunity to share ideas in a group setting and can be stimulating in that each participant has the chance to respond to others' ideas. In our long experience of interviewing children and encouraging participation, we would recommend that children are mainly interviewed in groups, with just a small number of children being interviewed individually. Group interviews will involve ice-breakers, games, quizzes, and child friendly methods suited to the age of participants.

Data collection tools will be designed to answer questions and determine indicators with respect to War Child Holland's programming on the **community, organisational** and **national/district** level.

I. Community Level Evaluation

Focus group discussions and individual interviews conducted in a representative sample of communities where War Child Holland conducted programmes will be designed to answer the five main research questions in accordance with the evaluation TOR.

Question 1: How was the community-based approach appreciated by the communities? To what extent was the approach appropriate for local culture and different age and gender groups?

Question 2: Were the theories of change behind the community-based programmes appropriate, did they work?

In order to answer questions 1 and 2, tools will be designed to access answers to the following questions⁹⁷:

1. How do community members perceive War Child Holland? How do they perceive the programming War Child Holland (WCH) initiated?
2. What role have members of the community played in activities WCH brought to the community?
3. Do community members know about the Community Youth Support Service (CYSS)? What has been the role of the CYSS in the community?
4. Do community members know about the Community Action Group (CAG)? What has been the role of the CAG in the community?
5. What were the problems, needs and actions determined in the General Needs Assessment (GNA) and Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA) in each community? How did programmes in the community respond to these needs?
6. Was programming inclusive of, and accessible to, all groups within the communities?
7. Did community members feel engaged in programming at all stages?
8. Did programme and advocacy work reach a broader community than WCH participants and key stakeholders through knowledge sharing by direct participants?

Data source: Answers to these questions will be determined through focus group discussions and targeted individual interviews in a selection of communities where programmes operated. They will also be addressed in interviews with War Child staff. Responses will be disaggregated according to gender, age and culture/ethnicity (?).

Question 3: To what extent were the community-based programmes effective and were the objectives achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?⁹⁸

Question 4: Were the community-based activities and outputs relevant to achieve the expected outcomes for the programmes?

Tools will be designed to measure the following results and indicators:

Result 1: Sustainable community structures that involve and support children and youth are created and functional.

Indicator: Increased access of children and youth to play facilities and participation in community activities.

(it may be possible to measure the following indicators, which were identified in General Needs Assessments conducted by communities and previous evaluations):

- Play facilities and materials for children are in place

⁹⁷ Indicators have not been developed for these questions as they are broad and open-ended, and do not correspond to specific outputs.

⁹⁸ Indicators are based on indicators included in WCH's TOR, CCLC's proposal and a logframe of WCH activities.

- All CAGs organise monthly structured play and recreational activities
- CYSS and all CAG carry out TORs in a satisfactory manner
- CYSS and all CAGs, and their roles, are widely recognised by the communities

Data source: Focus group discussions, interviews in communities (baseline comparison with M&E reports conducted in communities and previous evaluations may be made), visits to sites in communities.

Result 2: Increased awareness of, and support for, child rights and psychosocial development of children and youth in the communities as well as at district and national levels.

Indicator: Increased awareness of children and adults of child rights and responsibilities in government and with partners where WCH conducted training or programmes.

Indicators identified by communities:

- Equal treatment of girls, orphans, foster/step children, disabled children at home and by caregivers
- Increased awareness about importance of education and play
- Children and young people are allowed to express opinions, involved in decision making and are listened to
- Parental care improves: children's basic needs are met and their protection, education, play and time with parents improves
- Children experience a balanced daily routine between school, play, work and rest
- There is a reduction in early marriages and teen pregnancies

Data source: Focus group discussions, individual interviews (baseline comparison with data from 2006 and 2010 evaluation may be made). **District, national government:** targeted individual interviews with District Councils, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MEYS). **Organisational partners:** Targeted individual interviews and surveys with (this portion of the evaluation will also fall under the district/national portion of the evaluation).

Result 3: Increased positive dynamics within communities.

Indicators:

- Increased awareness of community members of psychosocial problems/needs of children and youth.
- Experiences of mutual respect and support within a community. Development of stronger community ties.
- Positive perceptions of War Child Holland's programming and involvement of the community in programming.

Indicators identified by communities in GNA/PNA:

- Positive interaction between children/young people – peaceful play
- Increased participation of children in community activities
- Inclusion of marginalised children in community activities and play
- Settling of disputes peacefully
- Adults and children interact in community and play activities
- All community members take an active part in planning and decision making concerning child/young people issues in the community
- Community shows love, peace and concern for each other, and live in peace at home

Result 4: Children and youth have gained life skills and improved learning opportunities for young people (i.e. literacy, numeracy, livelihood and life skills training).

Indicator: Improvement in life skills, literacy and numeracy of children and youth, and an increased number of young people have access to learning opportunities.

Indicators identified by communities:

- Community facilitators/trainers have the capacity to teach literacy/numeracy, life and livelihood skills to children and young people in the target communities.
- Community facilitators/trainers express motivation to sustain training activities when WCH-SL has exited the community.
- Increased retention in formal education (especially vulnerable groups of children)
- Increased number of (qualified) teachers in formal education.
- 80% of young people participating in literacy and numeracy classes pass the assessments.⁹⁹
- 80% of young people participating in the livelihood skills training have proven ability to carry out livelihood methods.
- Peaceful interaction (positive peer relations) and influence between children and young people who participated in life skills workshops.
- Children and young people who participated in life skills workshop portray positive skills to cope with their problems.

Data source: Interviews, focus group discussions, comparison with baseline in communities.

Question 5: To what extent are these outcomes expected to be sustainable? What are major factors, which influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the community-based programmes?¹⁰⁰

The sustainability of outcomes will be tested through focus group discussions and targeted individual interviews in communities. Data collected from interviews with WCH staff as part of the organisational level portion of the evaluation will also contribute to answering this question.

In communities where WCH has concluded its activities:

1. How have the outcomes/achievements of WCH been sustained since WCH exited the community?
2. Have CYSS, CAG and other programmes continued to be run by communities where WCH has concluded programming?

In all communities and at district and national levels:

3. How will WCH's work be continued through the work of partners and other organisations, and how will it be sustained when WCH departs? What are the needs that may not be met? Is there community confidence that the work will be continued?
4. Did programmes implemented after the 2010 Programme Evaluation incorporate identified "elements needed to promote sustainability"?
5. Have CTF (community facilitators) received WCH training, and do they demonstrate an understanding of their roles and responsibilities in WCH programming?
6. More broadly, have training and advocacy efforts been effective? How will they impact policies and practices of key stake holders after WCH departs?

⁹⁹ This information may be obtained through assessments carried out by WCH. While interviews and FGDs [what is an FGD?] held at the local level will not determine exact figures they can get a sense of the results of these programmes.

¹⁰⁰ Questions about sustainability will also be assessed in the organisational portion of the evaluation.

II. Organisational Level Evaluation

CCLC will also evaluate War Child Holland's community based programming on an organisational level. On this level we will aim to review the quality of programming and how the community-based approach was implemented from within the organisation. This portion of the evaluation will include both a thorough review of programming and reporting documents and interviews with War Child Holland staff in Sierra Leone including community facilitators and WCH staff in the head office (these interviews will be conducted over Skype). We will also develop a survey to distribute to community facilitators. Staff will be included from Programme Teams at the Makeni Office, the former Port Loko and Freetown staff more broadly, and will include the Capacity Unit, Finance and Logistics departments as well as programming.

Question 1: To what extent were the War Child Holland staff sufficiently trained to facilitate the community-based approach in a qualitative and participatory way?

Question 2: To what extent was the selection of the communities participating in the community-based programmes and the selection of community members coordinating and implementing the programme in their community done in a qualitative, transparent and sensitive way.

Question 3: To what extent was there an appropriate organisational set-up in place to facilitate the community-based programmes at all institutional levels?

Question 4: Were the community-based programmes cost-efficient and cost-effective? Were the investments in the programmes reasonable compared to the effects of the programme?

Question 5: Did WCH invest in national staff? Were national staff recognised and appointed to higher positions within the organisation? What training and capacity development did staff receive? Were staff motivated? Did they want to stay with WCH?

Question 6: Did programming comply with WCH policies/ frameworks, principles and strategic objectives? Did it follow rights-based strategies and approaches? Did programming contribute to the development of WCH expertise?

Question 7: How effectively did WCH review its work and make informed decisions based on lessons learned?

Question 8: What did staff perceive as the main challenges and most important achievements of WCH programming?

III. Stakeholders at district and national level

This portion of the evaluation will determine the impact and effectiveness of War Child Holland's advocacy and capacity building programmes at district and national levels. It will include high-level interviews with War Child Holland's organisational partners, including GOAL, AmNet, COOPI, Save the Children (SC), Plan, etc. Surveys will also be distributed to participants in training programmes to determine the effectiveness of these programmes.

This evaluation will also include high-level interviews with government ministries with whom WCH has conducted advocacy work, including MSWGCA (Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs), MEYS (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) and MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security).

Indicators are based on objectives expressed in the evaluation TOR and in the WCH logframe (logframe indicators may be compared against baseline measurements presented in the 2010 Evaluation).

Objective 1: Improving government policies and regulations to protect children and young people's rights.

Indicators:

- Improvements in government policy and regulations to protect children and young people's rights as a result of WCH advocacy efforts.
- Importance of establishing village Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) recognised by stakeholders.
- Mechanisms in place to report on child rights violations on village and chiefdom level.

Objective 2: Establishing and training semi-government child support mechanisms at the district and community levels.

Indicators:

- Effective child support mechanisms are established as a result of WCH advocacy efforts.
- Practitioners participate in training and demonstrate knowledge of child rights and protection.
- Increased number of CWCs that function according to the CRA (Child Rights Act) guidelines and other CP structures established in WCH targeted districts.
- CWCs in all WCH targeted communities and chiefdoms carry out tasks in line with TOR and in a satisfactory manner.
- CWCs in all WCH targeted programmes and communities are recognised in programmes and communities.

Objective 3: Creating understanding and support for child support mechanisms like the child welfare committees, family courts and child panels.

Result 3: Trained programme staff of selected (I)NGOs /CBOs are able to apply WCH specific methodologies and approaches.

Indicator:

- Government demonstrates knowledge of, and support for, child support mechanisms.
- Organisational partners demonstrate knowledge of, and support for, child support mechanisms.
- Trained project staff express knowledge and understanding of WCH methodologies and approaches.
- WCH-SL project staff observe sufficient capacity of trained staff of NGOs/CBOs.

Objective 4: Increasing Government support towards promoting and protecting child rights as specified in the Child Rights Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Optional Protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography as well as on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Universal Periodic Review.

Indicator:

- Government understanding of rights in CRC and Optional Protocols.
- Reference to War Child Holland Programmes in reports to UN Monitoring Bodies.
- Introduction of policies relevant to children's rights.

Objective 5: Training (I)NGOs/CBOs staff in applying War Child specific methodologies and approaches.

Indicator: I(NGO) and CBO staff received training in War Child methodologies and approaches, demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of these methodologies and approaches and have applied them in their own work.

Indicator: Strong networking and interpersonal relationships between War Child and the communities where they work and with District Councils, MWSGCA and other key stakeholders.

Annex 3

Data Collection Tools

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONAL AND GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS AT DISTRICT AND NATIONAL LEVEL: ADVOCACY AND CAPACITY BUILDING¹⁰¹

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Date
2. Name of Interviewer
3. Location/District
4. Job Title and Position Description of Interviewee
5. Organisation/Government department
6. Name (only where comfortable)

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

I am here to conduct an evaluation of War Child Holland's Programmes in Sierra Leone. I am interested in discussing the impact and effectiveness of War Child Holland's programmes, and particularly advocacy and capacity building activities and partnerships with other organisations. If you are comfortable I am going to record our conversation. I may draw on your comments in my evaluation report, but will keep all of this information confidential and will not use your name unless you would like me to do so. Are you happy to go ahead with the interview?

Promotion and protection of Child Rights:

1. To begin will you tell me a bit about your position in [name organisation]? How are your responsibilities relevant to children and children's rights?
2. What child support mechanisms exist in Sierra Leone? How do they work and why are they important?
3. How has this (2. and 3.) changed over time? Do you agree with these changes? What would you have done differently?
4. Sierra Leone has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. What are the rights enshrined in these documents? Which are most important to Sierra Leone?
5. What are the greatest problems/challenges for children's rights and welfare in Sierra Leone? What work is being done to respond to these challenges?
6. What would you like to happen for child rights and child support mechanisms in Sierra Leone in the future?

WCH Advocacy:

1. Are you familiar with War Child Holland's Programming in Sierra Leone? In what context have you interacted/ worked with War Child?
 - *Follow up questions to determine outcomes of WCH work with the organization and the existence/ nature of networking relationships between WCH and organization.*
2. Are you aware of advocacy activities conducted by War Child Holland? What impact did these efforts have on policies and regulations meant to protect children and young people's rights?

¹⁰¹ This interview schedule was adapted significantly for each particular interview.

3. Can you tell me about War Child’s methodologies and approaches? How do they work? Would you ever consider applying them in your own work?
4. (Where possible) How do they do their work? How successful do you consider their work to be?
5. [If CWCs have not been mentioned] Are you familiar with Child Welfare Committees? Will you tell me about them? What is their function and (why) are they important?
6. Are there mechanisms in Sierra Leone to report on child rights at local (chiefdom, village) levels? How was War Child’s work been relevant to this?

WCH Programming:

7. What has worked well in the WCH CBP and why do you think this is the case?
8. What areas need improvement?
9. What are the challenges to making the work more sustainable in the communities?
10. How are WCH’s programmes different than other NGOs?

WCH Capacity Building

11. (Where relevant) Have you received training or other technical support from War Child Holland? If so, what was the content of this training?
12. How did this training contribute to your knowledge and expertise?
13. Was the training useful? How have you applied it through your work?
14. Are there any suggestion you would make if the training were to be replicated?
15. [In targeted districts] Do you have the impression that CWCs function according Child Rights Act guidelines and other CP structures?

16. How do the CWCs work? What works well? What is problematic?
17. Are CWCs, family courts and other child protection mechanisms understood in the districts where war child worked?
18. Are you aware of capacity building WCH has conducted in government? Have WCH trainings had an impact on Government’s understanding of child rights and child protection?
 - o What about understanding of international human rights mechanisms like the UNCRC, its Optional Protocols and the Universal Periodic Review?

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WAR CHILD HOLLAND STAFF¹⁰²:

GENERAL INFORMATION

7. Date
8. Name of Interviewer
9. Location / District
10. Job Title and Position Description of Interviewee
11. Name (only where comfortable)

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

I am here to conduct an evaluation of War Child Holland’s Programmes in Sierra Leone. I am interested in discussing the quality of the programming, and particularly how the community based approach was implemented from within the organisation. If you are comfortable I am going to record our conversation. I may draw on your comments in my evaluation report, but will keep all of this information confidential

¹⁰² This schedule will be amended depending on the person’s role and responsibilities at War Child.

and will not use your name unless you would like me to do so. Are you happy to go ahead with the interview?

Program Activities:

1. What does it mean that WCH's programming was 'community-based'?
2. In your view, what were the main goals of WCH's programming?

Programming:

3. How would you assess the project activities you were involved in, according to:
 - a. Connection between results and impact?
 - b. Impact/behavior change resulting from programme?
 - c. Sustainability of programme?
 - d. Are there any particular parts of the programme which were not effective and which will be difficult to sustain?
4. What do you think was unique about WCH operations and activities?
5. What were the main achievements of WCH programmes in your view?
6. What were the main challenges? Were they addressed? If so, how?

Community-based programming

7. How were communities selected for inclusion in the community-based programming? Do you feel these decisions were made well?
8. How were community members selected to coordinate and implement programmes? Do you feel these decisions were made well?
9. Were these decisions recorded anywhere?
10. What were the problems, needs and actions determined in the General Needs Assessment and Participatory Needs Assessment in each community? How did programmes in the communities respond to these needs?
11. Do you think the link between *needs identified by communities* and programmes was strong? How could it have been stronger?
12. Overall, how has WCH been accountable to beneficiaries? What was difficult about this? Is there anything that could've been done better?
13. Were the community-based programmes cost-efficient and cost-effective? Were the investments in the programs reasonable compared to the effects of the programme?

Capacity building for WCH staff:

14. What type of capacity building/training have you received?
 - a. What other skills do you feel you need to do your job?
15. Did you receive training in participatory and community-based programming?

16. Did you feel that WCH invested in you, your abilities and career development?
 - a. How did your role progress within the organization?
17. Did you feel motivated by the work environment?
18. Were there any difficulties with being employed by War Child?

Operations

19. How effective are logistical systems? What has worked well? Were you ever faced with logistical problems that inhibited your work? What kinds of problems?
20. How effective are WCH's financial systems? Do you feel that finances were well managed? Was funding a challenge for WCH-SL? Do you feel money was spent effectively and efficiently?
21. Do you feel WCH's human resources and administrative systems are effective? Why?

Monitoring and evaluation:

22. How did WCH monitor and evaluate its activities? Do you feel this contributed to WCH projects? Why or why not?
23. Do you think programme indicators are appropriate for assessing programmes and impact?
24. Have progress and results been well recorded? How have these been used?
25. Did WCH review its work and make informed about future programming based on lessons learned?

Sustainability:

26. Will partnerships developed during WCH's programmes be used to sustain the work? What are these partnerships?
27. Do you feel that NGOs and CBOs have achieved sufficient capacity through training?
28. How WCH prepare for departure? Do you think this was effective? How could it be more effective?
29. Was capacity building done with local partners, government or other organisations? Was this effective? What more capacity building could have been done?
30. Do you think communities will continue activities initiated by WCH?
31. What are the advantages and disadvantages to WCH's departure? Do you think the end of 2012 is a good time for WCH to leave Sierra Leone?

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDER INDIVIDUALS AT COMMUNITY LEVEL (60 MINUTES)

GENERAL INFORMATION

12. Date
13. Name of Interviewer
14. District/Community
15. "Role" of Interviewee in WCH Programming
16. Age
17. Name (only where comfortable)

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

I am here to conduct an evaluation of War Child Holland's Programmes in Sierra Leone. I am interested in discussing the impact of WCH programmes, and particularly the role of the community in the programmes, whether the programmes met community needs and how programmes have lasted (will last) in communities after the programme has ended. If you are comfortable I am going to record our conversation. Please feel free to express any of your thoughts and feelings about both good things and bad things. I may draw on your comments in my evaluation report, but will keep all of this information confidential and will not use your name unless you would like me to do so. Are you happy to go ahead with the interview?

1. Tell me about War Child. What happened during the two years WCH was involved with the community?
2. What has happened since War Child left?
3. What activities and projects did War Child lead in the community?
4. What is the current state of these activities? Have they been sustained and continued? What will happen to them in the future?
5. Tell me about the programme. What activities did you do? What did you like? What didn't you like?
6. How often did these activities take place?
7. Who attended the activities? Were there mostly girls or boys? Did the same children come every time? Did new children join?
8. What did you learn from the activities? What did your friends learn?
9. Did you share what you learned with anyone?
10. Do community members know about the CYSS (group war child left here)? What has been the role of the CYSS in the community? Has the CYSS continued to be active since WCH ended its involvement in the community? (Try and get a sense of how wide/universal this knowledge is).

11. Do community members know about the CAG (big group meetings set up by war child)? What has been the role of the CAG? Has the CAG continued to be active since WCH ended its involvement in the community?
12. What were the needs and goals identified in the general needs assessment and participatory needs assessment. Were these needs addressed by programmes?
13. What were the community's expectations when programming began? How did this differ from outcomes?
14. What has changed due to War Child programming? What do you think are the most important changes? How are they linked to specific activities? *Probe to identify changes within the family, community and peers.*
15. What are the positive things you have to say about the programming? Are there any negative things?
16. Which play activities/opportunities and community activities do children participate in, in the community?
17. Has this changed since War Child came to the community? How did they change/not change? How do you wish they would change in the future? Give examples where possible.
18. Do children participate in cultural or religious activities? How so? What is their role?
19. Do you feel that adults in the community are aware of child rights and psychosocial development?
20. Do they support these rights? Which rights are the most important in the community?
21. [If so] has this changed? Can you give examples of how it has changed?
22. What are the main difficulties facing children in the community?
23. What would help children to deal with these difficulties?
24. Have these problems changed because of WCH activities? How did they change? What activities were the most important in helping to deal with these difficulties.
25. If children have a problem is there someone they can go to for support? Is this different for different children?
26. Are children involved in making decisions that are important for their daily life? Do adults ask their opinion and listen to what they have to say?
27. What types of decisions do you get to help make? Has this changed because of WCH activities?

28. Do you think adults and children listen to each other in your community? How has this changed [insert time period of WCH activities]? How has it stayed the same?

Focus Group Discussion Guide - Communities

Phase 1: Adults and children together 1.5 hours

Introduction – 15 minutes:

“Hello my name is X (your name) and this is my partner (name) who is going to interpret from English to Themne so that we can understand each other. I am here to learn about War Child Holland’s Programmes in Sierra Leone. I am interested in learning about War Child’s role in your community and to hear your thoughts about War Child Holland’s programmes here. I am also interested in learning about how life is for children in your community and if that has changed since War Child’s programmes began in the community. We are going to begin with some activities all together and then we will split up into smaller groups of about 8 people – a group of adults, a group of children (8-14), and a group of youth (14-25) to talk about some more specific questions.

“Are you happy to be involved in the group’s discussion today? If you do not want to be involved, that is absolutely fine, you are free to leave now. I won’t mind at all if you choose to leave. It is completely up to you.”

“Would you like to talk to me?” *You must wait for them to respond. If they say “no”, thank them for their time and tell them they are free to go. If they say “yes” continue as below.*

“Thank you. Just to let you know, if you change your mind at any point during the focus group, please feel free to leave. If you don’t want to answer any or all of the questions I ask you, that is fine too.”

“We would like to include some of the things you tell us in your report. But we will never tell anyone your name, or any other information that could help them to identify you. In fact, we will never tell anyone that you talked to us today. Do you understand?” *Wait for their response.*

“I am going to ask you some questions for the group to debate and discuss. Would it be ok for my partner here to write down some of the things that you tell us? (S)he will not write down your name.” *Wait for their response.*

“Before we start, I just want to let you know that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to these questions. People in the group are likely to have different opinions and ideas about things. We are interested in all your different views. Please respect each other’s opinions and make sure that you listen to each other, but also say what you personally think or believe.”

“Is there anything you would like to ask me before we start?”

Activity one: Game -- Communication between adults and children – 20 minutes

Aim: to witness how adults and children and community members interact with each other. In particular, this activity should demonstrate communication, levels of respect and understanding between adults and children.

1. Divide the participants into small groups (6 people) with a mix of adults, youth and children, boys and girls.
2. Explain that participants are stuck on one side of the river. They need to cross the river to get to a village on higher ground because of an oncoming flood. (Demonstrate by pointing to poster). Unfortunately, they only have one boat that can fit two people. Ask each group to decide together how they are going to cross the river. Who goes in the boat first? How do the children get across? Each group has 10 minutes to do this.
3. Ask the groups to display their work in turn and to discuss why they designed their village as they did. The facilitator should ask, in particular, why the groups prioritised certain aspects, and how they made their decisions (i.e. did they appoint a leader or did everyone get involved in discussions). There should be an additional 10 minutes for these discussions.

Activity two: What happened? – 45 minutes

Aim: to hear from community members what the project was like in their community, how it happened and how it has been sustained.

1. Stand in a circle
2. Ask participants to think about what happened during the two years WCH was involved with the community and what has happened since then. What activities and projects have taken place?
3. Go around the circle and ask participants to name activities/projects. We will pass a ball from person to person. The person who holds the ball gets to speak.
4. Ask further questions (where relevant) to develop an understanding of the following:
 - Do community members know about the CYSS (Community Youth Support Service)? What has been the role of the CYSS in the community? Has the CYSS continued to be active since WCH ended its involvement in the community? (Try and get a sense of how wide/universal this knowledge is).
 - Do community members know about the CAG (Community Action Group)? What has been the role of the CAG? Has the CAG continued to be active since WCH ended its involvement in the community?
 - Which play activities/opportunities and community activities do children participate in, in the community?
 - What is the current state of these activities? Have they been sustained and continued? What will happen to them in the future?
5. What has changed due to War Child programming? Now go around the circle again and ask each participant to express through a word what is the biggest change that has happened in the community to benefit children. Each participant will show the size of the change with their hands. Was the change small

(hands close together)? Was it medium (hands further apart)? Or was it large (hands stretched wide)? After each participant makes a gesture, ask for an explanation.

- Focus in on identifying changes within the family, community and peers
- (Where possible) ask about the needs and goals identified in the general needs assessments and participatory needs assessment. Were these needs addressed by programmes? What were the community's expectations when programming began? How did this differ from outcomes?

6. Ask participants if they can draw/explain a link between activities and the effect of the activities (benefits for children). If need be prompt participants by asking about the benefits mentioned and if and how those activities are connected to certain outcomes.

Activity three: Conclusions – 10 minutes

This is an opportunity for less structured discussion on any of the issues which were raised during the “what happened” activity. The researcher may lead or probe these points where appropriate.

Focus Group Discussion Guide - Communities

Phase 2: 1 - 1.5 hours

Introduction – 15 minutes:

“Now that we have had a little break I would like to talk specifically about some of the things that may have changed in community and family life over the past two years. Please feel free to express any of your thoughts and feelings about both good things and bad things. Everything you say will be anonymous and will never be attached to your name.”

Fill in the attendance sheet: record the name, age and gender of participants, whether they go to school, whether they do any kind of work, if they are a member of CYSS / CAG, have they participated in particular War Child activities.

Activities (Inclusiveness, access and engagement):

1. In the previous discussion we talked about certain War Child Activities and the changes they made in the community. Before I ask you some more questions, would anyone like to say anything about the discussion we had?

Access to play facilities and opportunities for play:

Aim: To gain information on play opportunities and activities in the community at present.

2. Do you have opportunities to play? When/where can you play?
3. What kind of community / cultural / religious activities take place in your community?
 - Do you yourself take part in those activities?
 - If yes, which ones?
 - If yes, what is your role?
4. Did your play opportunities change when WCH came to the community?
 - a. How did they change?
 - b. How do you wish they would be in the future?
5. How did the different WCH activities lead to these changes?

Now I am going to name four topics. For each topic, please tell a story that shows how things have changed.

6. Time/permission to play; what keeps children from playing?
7. How you interact with your friends;
8. Your feelings and happiness, how you behave;

Awareness and support for child rights and psychosocial development:

9. Have you heard of child rights? If so, please raise your hand.
10. Can anyone name some child rights?
11. Have you heard about child responsibilities? *If so please raise your hand.*

“Now would everyone please stand up. First, see this line that I have drawn in the sand. I am going to name something. If you think this is a child right jump over to this side of the line (demonstrate). If you don't, you will stay on this side.”

- Play
- Support of parents/caregivers
- Express their opinion
- Fight with other children
- Go to school

After each right is listed and the children split in a group, ask children why they think the option IS or IS NOT a right.

Increased positive dynamics in communities:

12. What are the main difficulties that you, or children you know, experience? *Once the discussion is complete or if it does not take off show images with the following and ask children to describe what they see and whether they think it is a difficulty in the community: school drop-out, aggression, early marriage, fear (anxiety), drug abuse, discrimination, other.*
13. What would help you, or the children you know to deal with these difficulties?
14. Have these problems changed because of WCH activities? How did they change? What activities were the most important in helping with these difficulties?
15. If you have a problem, is there someone you can go to for support? Who would you go to?
16. Now I am going to name some different places you might get support. I will ask you to raise your hand if you get: 1. A lot of support / 2. A little support / 3. No support (In child friendly version instead of raising hands we will show 3 figures, a sad face, a neutral face and a happy face.)
 - a. Parents and caregivers
 - b. Teachers
 - c. Friends/peers
 - d. Chief
 - e. CYSS (Group war child left)
 - f. CWC
17. When adults are making decisions that are important for your daily life (for example about school, things that happen at home, playing, or school) do they ask your opinion? Do they listen to what you have to say?
18. What types of decisions do you get to help make?
 - a. Has this changed because of WCH activities?
19. Can anyone tell me about a time you got to help make a decision? What was the decision about?
20. Do you think adults and children listen to each other in your community? How has this changed [insert time period of WCH activities]? How has it stayed the same?
21. Do you think adults and children respect each other? How has this changed [insert time period of WCH activities]? How has it stayed the same?

Activities:

Let's return for a moment to the WCH activities that happened in your community, and your views on those activities.

22. What did you like about the activities? What were the parts that were important to you?
23. Were there any parts you didn't like?
24. How often did these activities take place?
25. Who attended the activities? Were there mostly girls or boys? Did the same children come every time? Did new children join?

26. What did you learn from the activities? What did your friends learn?

27. Did you share what you learned with anyone?

Sustainability and knowledge sharing:

28. What has happened to the activities since WCH left in [insert relevant date]?

Annex 4



**CHILD PROTECTION
POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Contents

	Page
1. Policy Statement	2
2. Child Protection Policy	2
3. Code of Practice	3
4. Child Protection Procedures and Systems	4
4.1 Introduction	4
4.2 Definitions of child abuse and neglect	4
4.3 Recognising child abuse – signs and symptoms	5
4.4 Child Protection Liaison Officer	5
4.5 Notification of abuse to a solicitor	6
4.6 Procedures for handling suspected abuse	6
4.7 Recording procedure	7
4.8 Complaint from child/parents of abuse carried out by a member of the Children's Legal Centre staff or volunteer	7
4.9 Complaint from child/parent on how the Child Protection Policy and Procedures were applied	8
5. Recruitment and Induction of staff, volunteers and trustee	9
5.1 Recruitment of staff and volunteers	9
5.2 Recruitment of trustees	9
5.3 Use of approved suppliers by the Children's Legal Centre	9
5.4 Induction and training	9
5.5 Monitoring and supervision	10
6. Notes on young people under 13 years old who are sexually active	10
7. Notes on disabled children	10
8. Appendix A- Suspected Child Abuse Referral Form	

Last Updated	14/04/11
To be Reviewed	14/04/12

1. Policy Statement

The Children's Legal Centre (the Centre) is a unique, independent national charity concerned with law and policy affecting children and young people. The Centre has many years of experience in providing legal advice and representation to children, their carers and professionals throughout the UK.

The Centre endeavours to safeguard children and takes its responsibilities to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people extremely seriously. The Centre recognises that children and young people need protecting and safeguarding not only from abuse, but also from the effects of poverty, economic, social and political problems.

Safeguarding is defined as

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health and development and
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

(Statutory Guidance on Making Arrangements to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children under s. 11 Children Act 2004, HMG 2005).

The Centre acknowledges its duty as an organisation working with children and young people to prevent them from suffering harm and abuse of every kind. The Centre accepts the responsibility for reporting any abuse disclosures, whether discovered or suspected.

In the day to day running of all its services, including those not directly involving children, the Centre promotes the principles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The Centre will have particular regard to Article 19, which requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to protect children '*...from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has the care of the child*'.

For the purpose of this policy, **employees** at the Children's Legal Centre includes not only all its employees but also all volunteers, trustees and anyone else having a formal role in the furtherance of the aims of the charity.

2. Child Protection Policy

2.1 In any case in which it becomes known to the Centre that a child or children appear likely to be subject to abuse, the safety and welfare of that child or those children will be regarded as of paramount importance in any decisions taken by the Centre in respect of them.

2.2 The Centre recognises that all children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs and therefore adheres to its Equal Opportunities Policy.

2.3 All policies and procedures, having particular regard to the Child Protection Policy, are endorsed and approved by the Trustee Board.

2.4 The Children's Legal Centre's Child Protection Policy applies to all trustees, **employees** and volunteers and any person from the Centre who comes in direct or indirect contact with children.

2.5 Therefore, all concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by trustees, **employees** and volunteers and responded to appropriately - This may involve the disclosure of confidential information/referral to children's services and in emergencies, the police. – *see Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policies and Procedures as well as Child Protection Procedures.*

2.6 The Children's Legal Centre receives substantial amounts of confidential information which is only disclosed with the consent of the client, even if that client is a child. The Centre applies the principles of confidentiality in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

As a general rule, the Children's Legal Centre should inform the child and /or parents of the Centre's Child Protection Policy and Procedures as appropriate. A child and/or parents should be informed that, in the event of information being provided, which indicates that the child is at risk of significant harm or that other children may be similarly at risk, the Centre will ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect the child or children concerned.

2.7 In order to minimise the risks of child abuse, The Children's Legal Centre is committed to ensure that all **employee** are appropriately recruited and supervised, even when not directly involved with children.

2.8 The Children's Legal Centre will monitor, evaluate and review its Child Protection Policy on a yearly basis to reflect any changes in the legislation and guidance.

2.9 The Child Protection Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Centre's relevant associated policies and procedures, which all have the objective of promoting children's safety and welfare.

- Health and Safety Policies and Procedures
- Employee and Clients Harassment and Bullying Policies and Procedures
- Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policies and Procedures.
- Suicide and Risk of Harm Policy and Procedures.
- Code of Conduct and Acceptable Behaviour Policy
- Law Society Guidelines on Child Protection (for solicitors only)
- Complaints Policy and Procedures
- Equal Opportunities Policy

3. Code of Practice

3.1 This Code of Practice is based on the following principles which are derived from current Health and Safety legislation (which places reporting and action obligations on all members of the Children's Legal Centre) and the Children's Act 1989.

Note: this is not exhaustive and this Code of Conduct must be read in conjunction with the Centre's Code of Conduct and Acceptable Behaviour Policy. This Code of Practice relates to good practice when working with children only.

3.2 The Children's Legal Centre expects that all **employees**, volunteers and trustees will be aware of this Code of Practice and adhere to its principles in their approach to all children:

- 3.2.1 Work in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication. Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- 3.2.2 It is important not to have physical contact with children and this should be avoided.
- 3.2.3 It is not good practice to take children alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- 3.2.4 Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.
- 3.2.5 It is important not to deter children from making a 'disclosure' of abuse through fear of not being believed, and to listen to what they have to say.

- 3.2.6 If this gives rise to a child protection concern it is important to follow the Centre's procedure for reporting such concerns, and not to attempt to investigate the concern yourself.
- 3.2.7 Remember that those who abuse children can be of any age (even other children), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.
- 3.2.8 Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals, and the adult modelling of appropriate conduct - which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism.
- 3.2.9 Do not deliberately reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- 3.2.10 Do not allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- 3.2.11 Do not invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- 3.2.12 Always put the welfare of the child first.

4. Child Protection Procedures and Systems

4.1 The Centre's Child Protection Policy provides a procedure, which enables employees to raise concerns. Information held by the Children's Legal Centre about children and families is subject to a legal duty of confidence and, where possible should not normally be disclosed without the consent of the individual. However, the law permits disclosure of confidential information necessary to safeguard a child or children. The public interest in child protection may override the public interest in maintaining client's confidentiality. Disclosure should be justifiable in each case.

The Children's Legal Centre Guidance for this section of the Policy is based on the *NSPCC's Child Protection Policy 'Every Child'*. The Children's Legal Centre also follows the guidance provided by the HM Government '*What to do if you're worried a child is being abused*' *Every Child Matters 2006*.

4.2 Defining child abuse is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family, institution or community setting, by those known and trusted to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

In England and Wales there are four categories of abuse in general use:

Physical Abuse: may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child including fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing, ill health to a child.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development, such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Emotional Abuse: persistent or emotional ill treatment of a child that adversely affects their development. May involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate, that they are only there to meet the needs of another, or where inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. In addition it includes children who are regulatory frightened, exploited or corrupted.

Sexual Abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. This may also include involving children

in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

If an employee or client is in any doubt as to what is abuse then they should contact the Child Protection Liaison Officer or any senior member of staff.

4.3 The following signs and symptoms may be helpful in recognising possible child abuse:

- Unexplained bites, burns, bruises, broken bones.
- Injuries or bruises that are unexplained or have no obvious cause, or tend to be repeatedly appearing after a weekend or explained absence from school.
- Fear or anxiety about going home.
- Fear of adults.
- A child may exhibit the effects of abuse unwittingly – they may be extremely anxious and shy away from adult contact.
- They may show fear, anger or loss of control.
- They may distance themselves from others indirectly or directly.
- They may show visible physical signs of abuse.
- Indicators of abuse may be shown by reactions to parent/legal guardian/carers/teachers. These could possibly include:-

Increased physical contact
Decreased physical contact
Rejection
Frequency of GP, Hospital visits
Abuse of alcohol or drugs
Self harming
Poor levels of basic care
High levels of stress
Poor attendance at school
Social isolation
Lack of support
Lack of understanding of needs
High dependence on/or lack of any established routine
Challenging and extreme behaviours

4.4 The Child Protection Liaison Officer.

4.4.1 The Children's Legal Centre shall name a 'Child Protection Liaison Officer' (CPLO) and a 'Deputy Child Protection Liaison Officer'. All serious child protection concerns should be referred to the Child Protection Liaison Officer(s) who will decide if further action should be taken.

4.4.2 In the absence of the CPLO or Deputy CPLOs, child protection concerns should be referred to the most senior employee present at the Centre.

4.4.3 The duties of the CPLO will include:

- Ensuring overall appropriate vetting procedures are in place and followed.
- Inducting staff on child protection issues and procedures.
- Ensuring that employees have read, understood and carry out this policy.
- Organising training for staff on child protection issues.

- Deciding when to refer cases to children's services, and supporting staff in the referral process.
- Establishing and maintaining the Centre's Child Protection Files in accordance with organisational policy including confidentiality.
- Establishing protocols with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), including changes in, and confirmation of, this policy.

4.4.4 The CPLO will decide whether there is a child protection issue and if so make a referral to the local children's services or police department. The best interests of the child are paramount and any referral must be made without delay.

4.5 Notification of abuse to a solicitor.

4.5.1 In the event of a child who is a client of the Children's Legal Centre advising or disclosing to a solicitor that he or she is being abused, solicitors will comply fully with '*The Guide to the Professional Conduct of Solicitors' Paragraph 16.02 (4) 'Circumstances which override confidentiality' – 'exceptional circumstances involving children at risk of physical or sexual abuse'*.

4.5.2 The solicitor will make arrangements to discuss the abuse as set out in the Child Protection Policy and Procedures with a view of determining whether or not immediate action is required.

4.5.3 A judgment will be made as to whether or not to advise the child that further action may be taken. This will be dependent on the child's wishes and safety, and the level of anxiety that such information might cause to the child.

4.5.4 As a general rule, the solicitor will seek consent from the child to disclose the allegation. In the event that the child does not agree to such disclosure, a decision will be made by the solicitor following discussion with the Child Protection Liaison Officers on whether this information should be disclosed without consent.

4.6 Procedures for handling allegations or concerns of abuse.

4.6.1 When an employee or volunteer suspects child abuse or has concerns about the safety of the child, he or she must refer the matter to the Child Protection Liaison Officer as specified above. In the absence of the CPLO, all concerns should be reported to the Deputy CPLO.

4.6.2 Details about the child's allegations should not be discussed with anyone other than the CPLO at this point: Children have a right to a degree of confidentiality and information should only be passed to those who really need to know. Confidentiality is an important issue both for young people, **employees** and the organisation- *see Confidentiality Policy*

4.6.3 **Employees and volunteers must follow the Centre's procedures for reporting child protection concerns, and must not attempt to investigate the concern themselves.** An allegation of child abuse or neglect may lead to criminal investigation, so nothing must be done to jeopardise a police investigation, such as asking the child leading questions about what has happened. (*Para 10.2 What to do if You're Worried that a Child is Being Abused 2006*).

4.6.4 The CPLO or Deputy CPLO shall make a decision on whether disclosure of information is necessary in order to safeguard a child by way of referral to the police, NSPCC or children's services. The best interests of the child are paramount and any referral must be made without delay.

- 4.6.5 If the concerns are about a child who is already known to children's services, the allocated social worker should be informed of the Centre's concerns. This can be done in addition to contacting children's services, the police or the NSPCC.
- 4.6.6 In general, the Centre should seek to discuss the concerns with the child, as appropriate to their age and understanding, and with their parents and seek their agreement in making a referral to children's services, unless the Centre considers that such a discussion would place the child at an increased risk of significant harm – see *Confidentiality and Sharing Information Policy and Procedures*.
- 4.6.7 When the Centre makes a referral, it must agree with the recipient of the referral what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when.

If a referral is deemed to be the appropriate action, the Child Protection Liaison Officer will phone the relevant local authority's children's services or the local police.

If the child is in immediate risk of harm the police should be called using 999 and/or children's services, or if out of hours, the emergency duty social work team.

NSPCC telephone number 0808 800 5000

4.7 Recording Procedure

- 4.7.1 When abuse is suspected or proven, a **Child At Risk Referral Form** should be completed by the employee and passed to the CPLO. The Suspected Child Abuse Form will contain the details of any incidents or disclosure. It must be signed and dated and must be completed within 24 hours of the incident.
- 4.7.2 Notes should be made of any discussion between the employee and the CPLO. All notes must be signed and dated.
- 4.7.3 If the CPLO (or another member of staff in real emergency) makes a referral by telephone, it must be immediately followed up in writing. The CPLO or employee should note the name of the person on duty who they have contacted and the date and time when the referral was made.
- 4.7.4 The Children's Legal Centre must also confirm the referral in writing within 48 hours. Children's services should acknowledge the Centre's written referral within 1 working day of receiving it. If the Centre has not heard back within 3 working days, the Children's Legal Centre should contact children's Services again.
- 4.7.5 Information relating to individuals and child protection is strictly confidential. Records should be kept secure and separate from other Children's Legal Centre documents. Copies of letters should not be put in 'files copies' but stored immediately in a Child Protection File. Only the CPLO and Deputy CPLO are able to access these files to ensure confidentiality.
- 4.7.6 Records of child protection concerns or abuse are to be kept for 6 years following a child's 18th birthday.

4.8 Complaint of abuse by a member of the Children's Legal Centre employee or volunteer

- 4.8.1 In the event of a complaint by a child or parent(s) that he or she has been abused by an employee of Children's Legal Centre staff or a volunteer, the Director will be notified immediately.

Note – where a member of staff is raising a concern relating to another employee the concern is subject to the Whistle-blowing Policy or the Grievance Procedures as appropriate, and will be treated as such.

- 4.8.2 In the absence of the Director, the most senior employee will deal with the complaint.
- 4.8.3 If the complaint relates to/involves the most senior employee or the Director of the Centre, then the matter should be referred to the Trustees for investigation.
- 4.8.4 Employees and children/parent(s) should be aware that by reporting matters anonymously, it will be more difficult for the Centre to investigate them, to protect the child and to give feedback. Accordingly, whilst the Centre will consider anonymous reports, this policy does not cover matters raised anonymously.
- 4.8.5 If the complaint made by the child/parents is of a child protection nature and/or concerns abuse, **the Children's Legal Centre will follow the Centre's Disciplinary Procedures and the Centre's Code of conduct and Policy on Acceptable Behaviour.**
- 4.8.6 If the matter reported is of a serious child protection nature, the police will be contacted immediately to investigate the matter. Immediate suspension or relocation may take place at the discretion of the Line Manager in accordance with the ACAS Codes of Practice. The employee will receive his or her full wages. This IS NOT a punishment, but a necessary precaution against prejudicing an enquiry, and to ensure children are protected during the investigation process.
- 4.8.7 The complaint may therefore be dealt with as part of an internal investigation and external investigation (i.e. police, children's services.)
- 4.8.8 In the event of a decision by the police to charge the employee, the Director will review the matter and may decide on one of the following:
- Suspension/further suspension pending the outcome of the criminal proceedings; or
 - The implementation of Disciplinary Proceedings as outlined in the Staff Manual
- 4.8.9 If there is no action by the police, but the internal disciplinary investigation confirms that the actions of the employee or volunteer were inappropriate, the Children's Legal Centre may decide to take disciplinary action or implement the Disciplinary Proceedings, if the view is reached that this is necessary.

4.9 Complaint from a child or parent on how the complaint of abuse was handled by the Children's Legal Centre.

- 4.9.1 The Children's Legal Centre has a Complaints Procedure which is open and well published. If a child or parent(s) wishes to complain about the Centre's practices, staff and volunteers will ensure that the child and/or parent(s) be made aware of the Centre's Complaints Procedure.
- 4.9.2 Solicitors will also ensure as part of their client care letter that a child and/or parent(s) are informed of the Centre's Complaint Policy and Procedures, how to access it and who to contact if they wish to complain.

- 4.9.3 If a child wishes to complain about the way the Children’s Legal Centre has dealt with his or her disclosure of information of a child protection nature, the child will be informed of who will be handling the complaint and how the child can contact that person.
- 4.9.4 The child should be provided with the Centre’s ‘child friendly’ Complaint Policy and Procedures
- 4.9.5 The matter will be handled under the Centre’s Complaints Procedures.
- 4.9.6 If a parent wishes to complain about the way the Children’s Legal Centre has handled the disclosure of information, the parent should be provided with the Centre’s Complaint Policy and Procedures, and the matter will be handled under the Centre’s Complaints Procedures.

5. Recruitment and Induction of Staff, Volunteers and Trustees

5.1 In order to minimise the risks of child abuse, proper vetting procedures should be in place when staff are recruited. *Note: This section is only intended as far as it is relevant to the Child Protection Policy. Please refer to the Centre’s Recruitment Procedures and Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.*

- 5.1.1 As a minimum, all Centre employees and volunteers will be required to provide two references and fill an application form or provide a CV and covering letter before an appointment is made.
- 5.1.2 All trustees, staff and volunteers are subject to an enhanced CRB check on employment and the Centre reserves the right to request checks at intervals during employment, ordinarily every three years.
- 5.1.3 No-one shall work or volunteer within or on behalf of the Children’s Legal Centre who:
 - has been convicted of or has received a formal police caution concerning an offence against children as listed in the First Schedule of the Children and Young Person’s Act 1933; or
 - has been convicted of or has received a formal police caution concerning sexual offences against children and young people.
- 5.1.4 The Children’s Legal Centre complies with the requirements of:
 - The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
 - The protection of Child 1999
 - The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2002
 - The Criminal Records Bureau Code of Practice.
 - The Data Protection Act 1998

5.2 The recruitment and selection of charity trustees will operate in accordance with the Guidance provided by the Charity Commission “*Finding New Trustees (CC30)*”. This describes the various checks and safeguards that will be appropriate for charities working with children (or other vulnerable beneficiaries) when recruiting trustees.

5.3 Use of Approved Suppliers by the Children’s Legal Centre

In certain circumstances, the Children’s Legal Centre will need to hire experts (whether it is counsels, expert psychologists, independent specialists etc..) who will come in direct or indirect contact with children.

In order to avoid any risk of harm or abuse, the Children's Legal Centre should be pro-active and ensure that the experts who will come in direct or indirect contact with the Centre's clients are subject to an enhanced CRB check so as to confirm their suitability to work with children.

Direct contact should be understood as any face-to-face and/or one to one with a child. This could be visiting the child in a home or the child going to a practitioner's or expert's office.

Indirect contact should be understood as telephone conversations with a child, letters and emails.

However, there will be no automatic enhanced CRB check requirement if the expert does not come in direct or indirect contact with the child – e.g. only advising on documents.

5.4 Upon appointment, explaining the Child Protection Policy and Procedure will form part of the induction programme for new employees and volunteers at the Centre. The CPLO should ensure that they are aware of and conversant with the Child Protection Policies and Procedures. Regular refresher courses on child protection issues should also be made available.

It is imperative that all staff, including volunteers, should receive training on the prevention of child abuse. The training should encompass awareness raising and confidentiality.

5.5 Monitoring and Supervision

5.5.1 The Children's Legal Centre will ensure that all employees and volunteers working with children are monitored and supervised.

5.5.2 The Children's Legal Centre will put in place yearly appraisals and monthly supervision of staff. At any other times between appraisals and supervision, the Children's Legal Centre will promote a listening culture so as to ensure that staff have opportunities to discuss any concerns or questions of a child protection nature.

5.5.3 The CPLO will ensure that employees have opportunities to learn about child protection in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.

5.5.4 The Supervisors will ensure through file/case reviews that the work of employees and volunteers are monitored and will refer to the CPLO as appropriate if there are any concerns of a child protection nature.

6. Notes on young people under 13 who are sexually active

6.1 Under most circumstances where employees have knowledge of a young person's sexual relationships this should be considered to be a normal part of a young person's development.

6.2 The age of the young people involved should only be an issue where there is concern about a young person's ability to give genuine consent or where there appears to be an imbalance of power within that relationship.

6.3 However, where a worker becomes aware that a young person aged under 13 has been involved in penetrative sex or other intimate sexual activity, the CPLO should be informed.

Working together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2006) states that there is a presumption that professionals should make a referral to children's services in such a case. There needs to be careful consideration by the CPLO whether a referral needs to be made to children's services.

7. Notes on disabled children

7.1 Children's Legal Centre recognises that disabled children are at increased risk of abuse. Children and young people with learning difficulties may have greater difficulty in being heard when trying to disclose situations of abuse.

7.2 *Working Together to safeguard Children* (paragraph 11.29) states that 'expertise in both safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and in disability has to be brought together to ensure that disabled children receive the same levels of protection from harm as other children (see *Safeguarding Disabled Children* on www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/safeguarding.)

7.3 Although the safeguards for disabled children are essentially the same as for non- disabled children, The Children's Legal Centre is committed to pay particular attention to promoting high stand.