



**PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE  
RIGHTS OF CHILDREN: A FORMATIVE  
EVALUATION OF UNICEF'S CHILD  
PROTECTION PROGRAMME IN  
CAMBODIA**

**Final Report – Volume I**

**August 2017 – September 2018**

**Cambodia**



**EVALUATION REPORT  
SEPTEMBER 2018**



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Submitted to UNICEF Cambodia Country Office on 28  
September 2018

## **PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN: A FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF UNICEF'S CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMME IN CAMBODIA – Final Report (Volume I)**

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September 2018

The United Nations Children's Fund in Cambodia (hereafter referred to as UNICEF) produces and publishes evaluation reports to fulfil a corporate commitment to transparency. The reports are designed to stimulate the free exchange of ideas among those interested in the study topic and to assure those supporting UNICEF work that it rigorously examines its strategies, results and overall effectiveness.

This report was prepared by Coram International at Coram Children's Legal Centre, a United Kingdom non-governmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to the promotion and protection of children's rights. Further information can be found at [www.coraminternational.org](http://www.coraminternational.org).

The formative evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF, and was managed by Erica Mattellone, Evaluation Specialist for UNICEF Cambodia, Malaysia and Myanmar, together with Miho Yoshikawa, Chhaya Plong, Phaloeuk Kong, Monique Rao, Cody Minnich and Elizabeth Fisher (UNICEF). Editing was provided by Elizabeth Fisher.

It was supported by a Reference Group that included H.E. Khiev Bory (MoSVY), Bruce Grant (UNICEF), H.E. Touch Channy (MoSVY), Phi No (MoSVY), Chhour Sopannha (MoSVY), John Williamson (USAID), Katherine Neidorf (USAID), Michael Sayre (USAID, Family Care First), Maggie Bango (UNICEF UK), Adrian De Giovanni (UNICEF Australia), Ton Vong (OHCHR), Robert Common (Save the Children, Family Care First), Sebastien Marot (Friends International, 3PC), Chetra Khieu (Friends International), Aimyleen Gabriel (World Vision, NGO Network for Child Protection), Chivith Rottanak (UNICEF), Stephen Blight (UNICEF EAPRO), Roger Pearson (UNICEF Headquarters), and representatives of the Adolescent and Youth Reference Group. Riccardo Polastro and Hiroaki Yagami (UNICEF EAPRO) provided guidance and oversight on the evaluation process.

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<b>Title:</b>	PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN: A FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF UNICEF'S CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMME IN CAMBODIA (2016-2018)
<b>Geographic Region of the Programme:</b>	Nationwide, with a focus on five target provinces (Phnom Penh, Kandal, Preah Sihanouk, Siem Reap and Battambang)
<b>Timeline of the Evaluation:</b>	August 2017 – September 2018
<b>Date of the Report:</b>	28 September 2018
<b>Country:</b>	Cambodia
<b>Evaluators:</b>	Professor Dame Carolyn Hamilton (Team Leader), Kara Apland, Elizabeth Yarrow and Dr Anna Mackin, with support provided by Soksan Tem and Phally Keo, on behalf of Coram International
<b>Name of the Organization Commissioning the Evaluation:</b>	UNICEF Cambodia

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Coram International would like to thank Erica Mattellone, Phaloeuk Kong, Elizabeth Fisher, Cody Minnich and Monique Rao from the evaluation team based in UNICEF Cambodia for their invaluable help in obtaining reports and arranging meetings and to Elizabeth Fisher for editing the report. We would also like to thank all the staff in the UNICEF Cambodia office for finding time to meet with us and answer our questions about the Child Protection Programme, and particularly Bruce Grant, Lucia Soleti, Miho Yoshikawa and Chhaya Plong of the Child Protection Section.

Our thanks also go to the many members of staff of MoSVY, DoSVY, OSVY, the CCWC, WCCC and commune and provincial council members as well as primary school staff for their input into this study, and to those who arranged meetings for us with stakeholders, caregivers and reintegrated children. We are also grateful to Robert Common and John Statham of Save the Children for information about the work of Family Care First and Sebastien Marot of Friends International for information about the work of 3PC.

Thanks also go to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Services, the Cambodian National Police, UNFPA, UN Women, World Vision, Plan International, Hagar, the Open Institute, the Coalition on the Rights of the Child, UNFPA and the Child Protection Network. We would also like to thank the youth representatives from the Adolescent and Youth Reference Group and all the members of the reference group: H.E. Khiev Bory (MoSVY), Bruce Grant (UNICEF), H.E. Touch Channy (MoSVY), Phi No (MoSVY), Chhour Sopannha (MoSVY), John Williamson (USAID), Katherine Neidorf (USAID), Michael Sayre (USAID, Family Care First), Maggie Bango (UNICEF UK), Adrian De Giovanni (UNICEF Australia), Ton Vong (OHCHR), Robert Common (Save the Children, Family Care First), Sebastien Marot (Friends International, 3PC), Chetra Khieu (Friends International), Aimyleen Gabriel (World Vision, NGO Network for Child Protection), Chivith Rottanak (UNICEF), Stephen Blight (UNICEF EAPRO), Roger Pearson (UNICEF Headquarters), and representatives of the Adolescent and Youth Reference Group.

Last, but by no means least, we would like to thank the children who took part in the survey and in individual and group interviews and their caretakers. Their views underpinned the findings in this study and the recommendations that resulted.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

3PC: Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children

ASEAN: Association of South East Asian Nations

CBC: community-based care

CBO: community-based organisation

CCWC: Commune Committee for Women and Children

CNCC: Cambodian National Council for Children

CNP: Cambodia National Police

CPAP: Country Programme Action Plan

CPiE: child protection in emergencies

CPIMS: Child Protection Information Management System

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

CSO: civil society organisation

CVACS: Cambodia Violence against Children Survey

CWD: children with disabilities

DFAT: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DoSVY: Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (Provincial/Municipal level)

EMIS: Education Management Information System

FBO: faith-based organisation

FCF: Family Care First

FGD: focus group discussion

ICS: Investing in Children and their Societies

ICS-SP: Improving Cambodia's Society through Skilful Parenting

IECD: Integrated Early Childhood Development

KII: key informant interview

HRF: Humanitarian Response Forum

LGBT+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

MoCR: Ministry of Cults and Religion

MoEYS: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

MoH: Ministry of Health

Mol: Ministry of Interior

MoJ: Ministry of Justice

MoSVY: Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (national level)

MoWA: Ministry of Women's Affairs

NGO: non-governmental organisation

NGO-CRC: NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child

NIS: National Institute of Statistics

OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSVY: Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (District level)

OECD/DAC: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee

PDECM: Positive Discipline and Effective Classroom Management

PDoWA: Provincial Department of Women's Affairs

RCI: residential care institution

RGC: Royal Government of Cambodia

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

SOP: standard operating procedure

ToC: theory of change

ToR: terms of reference

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UN-SWAP: United Nations System Wide Action Plan

UNEG: United Nations Evaluation Group

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNICEF EAPRO: United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

VAC: violence against children

WASH: water, sanitation and hygiene

WCCC: Women and Children Consultative Committee



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This independent, formative evaluation was commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Cambodia in August 2017. The purpose was to generate evidence on the 2016-2018 Country Programme's anticipated outcome that *"by 2018, girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence and those separated from their family, or at risk of separation, are increasingly protected by the institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services, and a supportive community environment."* To achieve this outcome, the Child Protection Programme has taken a system-strengthening approach, mainly at three levels: national and sub-national institutions; service providers; as well as children, families and communities.

**Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Intended Users:** The evaluation is intended to help strengthen performance and accountability with respect to UNICEF's work with the Royal Government of Cambodia, national and sub-national institutions, provincial authorities, social service providers, commune councils, development partners, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, religious leaders, the media and other duty bearers. This evaluation has also informed the development of a new theory of change to measure progress and contribute to the design of Cambodia's new Country Programme 2019-2023. The objectives of the evaluation were to validate and reconstruct the theory of change, review the results achieved by UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, assess UNICEF leadership in leveraging resources and partnerships and examine the linkages between the outputs of the Child Protection Programme. The primary users of the evaluation are mainly the Government and UNICEF.

**Evaluation Methodology:** This evaluation used a theory-based approach to analyse UNICEF's Child Protection Programme's achievements and areas for improvement against the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, incorporating cross-cutting issues of gender equality, equity and human rights. Impact was not evaluated given that this is a formative evaluation and it is too early to assess impact. The evaluation employed a mixed-methodology of quantitative and qualitative data collection of rich, accurate and measurable data that has been triangulated and analysed to produce high-quality conclusions and recommendations. Quantitative data analysis was performed using case management and monitoring data as well as case file reviews (10) and a beneficiary survey for those undergoing reintegration (143 with children, 45 per cent female; 73 with caregivers, 92 per cent female). Qualitative data analysis looked at a document review, key informant interviews (219 participants; 46 per cent female), case study interviews with support recipients (12 with children, 67 per cent female; 10 with parents, 90 per cent female) and focus group discussions with community members and parents (18 with 88 total participants; 77 per cent female).

Data collection occurred in five target provinces (Phnom Penh, Kandal, Preah Sihanouk, Siem Reap and Battambang) as well as in four comparable 'non-intervention' provinces (Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu and Kampot) in order to illustrate how UNICEF's support contributed to different aspects of child protection prevention and response. A tailored ethical protocol was developed to guide the evaluation in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines (2016), UNICEF Procedures for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (2015), and Coram International's own Ethical Guidelines.

**Main Evaluation Findings and Conclusions:** The Programme has ambitious goals and has made a good start, but there is still work to be done. Evidence shows that there remains a risk that implementation of the various action plans, the safe reintegration of 30 per cent of children from residential care institutions and child protection system-strengthening generally are likely to be impeded by ongoing political, economic and socio-cultural barriers.

**Relevance:** This evaluation has found that there is consensus amongst stakeholders of the relevance of the Programme. The Programme is also consistent with UNICEF's Global Strategic Plan, which promotes **system-strengthening and development of capacity of the national protection system**, and it is aligned with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. These priorities are especially important in the Cambodian context where there has historically been a lack of

coordination between the many entities involved in child protection. Despite the issuance of Sub-Decree 34, **the legislative framework is incomplete, with no comprehensive child protection law or secondary legislation.**

Additionally, **the decision to focus the Programme in Cambodia on the reintegration of children out of institutional care and into family and community-based care was found to be particularly relevant** given the high numbers of children in (unsafe and unregulated) institutional care, and reliance on residential care institutions to meet child protection needs.

*Effectiveness:* UNICEF's Child Protection Programme has mobilised relevant authorities at all levels to begin to build a strong system. **There is significant buy-in from the Government regarding family and community-based care for the children living in residential care institutions, with clear evidence of the Programme promoting children's safety and well-being.** Of the 1,065 children and youth being of reintegrated, 740 were reunified with family or placed in a community-based placement. 582 were under the age of 18 at the time of their first placement. In general, evaluation findings evidenced the **protective benefits of the reintegration programme for promoting children's safety and well-being.** However, according to UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, social workers were unable to locate approximately 6.5 per cent of children who had been placed. Also, case files show that there is very limited assessment and that follow-up and support services were limited and lacked contingency plans. **Lack of budget at commune level and the lack of skilled staff has prevented the creation of a supportive environment for child protection.**

In addition to reintegration support, UNICEF has provided input to the Government's places to operationalise services for children found to be at-risk of or exposed to violence. However, there is **no effective institutional framework which delineates the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of each body,** leading to duplication in some cases and inadequate service delivery in others. There are also **no referral mechanisms in place,** leaving those who have identified a child in need of protection with no clear instruction or information on what to do with the case. Further, there is insufficient clarity as to which level — provincial, district or commune — should intervene to protect a child.

Another main component of UNICEF's Programme has been **service delivery through the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC) network for those children and families that are viewed as at-risk** in the target provinces. 3PC monitoring **data suggests that prevention support has been effective in addressing underlying risk factors:** 78 per cent of family businesses that received livelihood support in 2016 were still open after a year of operation and participants in alcohol support groups reported both reduced drinking (58 per cent) and reduced violence in their families (78 per cent) in an end-of-year survey (2017).

The Child Protection Programme has also addressed violence in schools through a Positive Discipline Programme in schools, known as Positive Discipline and Effective Classroom Management. This has been implemented in 409 primary schools with baseline and end-line surveys showing that the Programme has been effective and that there has been a **measurable drop in the levels of violence being used against children, contributing to a far safer community environment for children while at school.**

Beneficiaries expressed appreciation for these services and support, which in many, but not all, cases seem to have reduced the likelihood of violence and separation. However, the support was often pre-formulated and had not been customized to the needs of the beneficiary. Furthermore, and crucially, **important forms of prevention support, such as social protection services or support to address a lack of free and accessible health and education services, were not provided.**

*Efficiency:* **Overall decision-making about where to direct funds and invest money were found to be strategic and efficient.** This evaluation found that **the partnerships mobilised within the Child Protection Programme were particularly efficient.** Additionally, the placement of 31 social

workers in the Department Offices of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (provincial level) has increased capacity and freed up more experienced social workers to focus on where they are most needed. **Mobilisation of on-the-ground support by councillors from the Commune Committees for Women and Children** was also efficient given that they have close ties to the community and a mandate to support vulnerable women and children and can therefore provide monitoring assistance and follow-ups. However, overall **there continues to be a lack of trained, skilled and experienced social workers in the government service to manage the complex child protection problems that arise, and an inadequate budget to meet the needs of children and families.**

*Sustainability:* Although the Programme is in its early stages, the contributions to capacity building within social work at sub-national levels has allowed for the creation of basic case management. Constraints to sustainability may, however, come from the Government's **over-reliance on NGOs for the delivery of child protection services and insufficient investment in services.** Reintegration efforts are undermined by the lack of family support services and community-based alternative care. Reintegration is currently absorbing the bulk of social work capacity, preventing any other child protection response work.

**Lessons Learned:** A number of lessons were learned in this evaluation of the Child Protection Programme. First and foremost, there is no comprehensive legislation and there is a lack of coordination in response to child protection issues. There is a lack of working protocols for cooperation and coordination between sub-national bodies. Moreover, the experience of children undergoing reintegration can provide insights to ensure reintegration is safer for future cases. There were a number of children who could not be located following their placement out of the institution, indicating a need for greater assessment and monitoring. This requires a greater level of skill amongst staff involved in the assessment of families and children and greater practice, supervision and more regular monitoring visits. In addition, social workers' training needs to be both theoretical and practical, and further investment in community-based care is needed to meet reintegration targets. Without greater provision for community-based alternative care, reaching the target of reintegration of 30 per cent of children is unlikely.

**Main Recommendations:** The following recommendations for UNICEF's Child Protection Programme were validated and clustered by the key stakeholders in the evaluation and are presented herein in order of priority. For the full recommendations and proposed timeline for implementation see p. 70.

*1. Legal framework:* It is recommended that UNICEF continue to prioritise legal and organisational reform to develop either detailed **working protocols or standard operating procedures** for the delivery of child protection with clear roles and responsibilities for each body. There should also be a **statutory duty on all bodies and professionals to whom a referral must be made;** the body with responsibility for investigating and assessing the potential risk to the child; the body responsible for determining which services, if any, are to be provided to the child and the family; and which body is responsible for making an application to the Court for a transfer of parental power under the Law on Marriage and the Family.

*2. Organisational framework for the delivery of child protection:* It is recommended that **the Commune Committee for Women and Children should be the front-line service for child protection** receiving local level allegations that a child is being abused, at risk of abuse or in need of support to prevent family separation. Also, the Commune Committee for Women and Children should support children and families who are in need of family support where a child protection intervention is not required. In all cases where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is being, or is at risk of being abused, neglected or exploited or the subject of violence, or there is a very real risk of family separation, a referral should be made to the provincial level (or district level if the number and capacity of social workers can be increased and improved), who should be responsible for the child protection investigation, assessment, risk analysis and decision-making on the support and services that should be offered, review of cases, etc.

3. *Organisational framework for the Cambodian National Police:* It is recommended that crimes involving child abuse should be **referred immediately to the Anti-Trafficking Police Unit**, who will function as a specialist unit for child protection cases and who will refer any crimes involving child abuse to the Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation at provincial and district levels. When crimes involving domestic violence against women occur in households with children, a referral should be made to the Commune Committee for Women and Children, who will refer on to the Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation where child protection intervention is required.

4. *The Positive Discipline Programme:* The results of the Positive Discipline Programme are encouraging, and it is recommended that **this Programme be continued into the next Country Programme, and be expanded to cover all provinces**, if possible. It is also recommended that Level 1 (universal 'light' parenting support) of the Positive Parenting Programme should be offered and delivered to parents, etc., at the same time as the Positive Discipline Programme.

5. *Social work case management:* It is recommended that a **social work case management system should be introduced** as a matter of urgency, and that case files should be opened and kept by the body responsible. Where a child is being offered a service by an NGO, a government social worker should remain the lead body, responsible for coordinating case management; and UNICEF should use its best endeavours to continue funding existing and new social workers in the short-term and continue to advocate for their employment by Government.

6. *Reintegration:* Rather than setting a target figure for reintegration, it is recommended that there should be a change of approach in the new Country Programme, with an emphasis on building up family support services and the expansion and use of family and community-based, alternative care settings (especially foster care), with placement in a residential care institution being treated as an exception. It is recommended that all children still resident in residential care institutions at the end of 2018 should be subject to a **rapid assessment early in 2019, to determine whether reintegration is feasible**. The process of reintegration needs to be revisited as too many children undergoing reintegration were unable to be located or were the subject of concern. It is recommended that the draft **Guidelines for the Reunification and Reintegration of Children from Residential Care in Cambodia should be implemented and that social workers should receive further training on the procedures contained within the Guidelines and that a more rigorous monitoring system should be put in place with regular visits from a social worker together with contingency plans**.

7. *Training:* It is recommended that the government **social workers receive more practice-based training** and coaching to professionalise the child protection service as well as training on family assessment and risk analysis. Training on recognising and identifying child abuse should be offered to Commune Committee for Women and Children staff, and training is also needed for NGOs working with street children and for health and education professionals.

8. *Budget:* It is recommended that UNICEF use its influence and leverage with Government to **set a dedicated budget and increase funding for child protection services over the next Country Programme** in accordance with the Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child following Cambodia's second and third periodic report.

9. *Planning:* It is recommended that UNICEF encourage the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation in the five target provinces to engage with NGOs to **draft a bi-annual Child Protection Services Plan**. This should set out the needs of children in the different provinces, the existing services capable of meeting those needs, the needs which remain unmet, and how the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, NGOs and other bodies are planning to fill the gap in services highlighted in the report.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This independent, formative evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF Cambodia in August 2017, and it was undertaken in the course of the last year of the 2016-2018 Country Programme. The main aim of the evaluation is to contribute towards meeting UNICEF's knowledge-generation and lessons learning needs (learning) by providing evidence on what works, what does not work, how and why. The evaluation is expected to help strengthen performance (accountability) of UNICEF's work with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) at all levels, including national and sub-national institutions, provincial authorities, social service providers and commune councils, as well as development partners, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), religious leaders, the media and other duty bearers. The aim of this work is on improving care and keeping vulnerable girls and boys (rights holders) in families and protecting them from violence and unnecessary separation.

A further aim of the formative evaluation is to inform decision-making processes, especially UNICEF's future strategies and programme development in child protection. More specifically, it has provided an evidence-based contribution to UNICEF Cambodia's new Country Programme 2019-2023, and child protection programming in East Asia and the Pacific region, through the identification of good practices, lessons learned and innovations in the course of the evaluation process.

The total budget for the UNICEF Cambodia Child Protection Programme over the period 2016-2018 was US\$ 11.8 million. The major geographical focus of activity within the Child Protection Programme is centred on the Government's five priority provinces: Phnom Penh, Kandal, Preah Sihanouk, Siem Reap and Battambang where the majority of the population are located, but some of the activities were delivered in other provinces as well or will have an effect nationwide. The activities contained within the Child Protection Programme were at varying stages of implementation at the time of this evaluation. All activities had been started, but some were awaiting full implementation.

The intended beneficiaries of the Child Protection Programme are first and foremost children who are at risk of suffering violence in all its forms, children at risk of family separation and children deprived of parental care. Parents, guardians and care givers should also be regarded as beneficiaries, as should the main duty bearers and secondary duty bearers (government authorities, social service providers, commune councils and religious leaders) involved in the delivery of children protection.

The evaluation report is intended for the use of the senior management and child protection section within UNICEF and the RGC, and in particular the main duty bearers in the field of children's rights: the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), Ministry of Justice (MoJ); Cambodian National Police (CNP); Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA); Ministry of Cults and Religion (MoCR); Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS); Ministry of Health (MoH); Cambodian National Council for Children; as well as secondary duty bearers: UNICEF's main development partners (in particular, Friends International, the Partnership for the Protection of Children (3PC) and the organisations that make up Family Care First) and child protection actors working across Cambodia.

This evaluation was managed by UNICEF's evaluation team, with regular discussions and reviews of the process of evaluation. A Reference Group was established, co-chaired by MoSVY and UNICEF, and included representatives from MoSVY, the Chief of Child Protection of UNICEF Cambodia, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Family Care First, Save the Children, Friends International, World Vision, 3PC, NGO Network for Child Protection, members of the Adolescent and Youth Reference Group, representatives of the UNICEF National Committee of Australia and the United Kingdom, as well as representatives from UNICEF Headquarters and the Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific. The Reference Group met on three occasions during the evaluation and were updated on progress. The first Reference Group meeting dealt with the terms of reference (ToR) of the evaluation and the methodology to be employed and the initial results of the inception visit. The

second Reference Group meeting reviewed the evaluability assessment and the draft inception report. The third focused on the validity of the findings of the formative evaluation.

In addition to the meetings with the Reference Group, two consultations were held with a wider group of stakeholders, including NGOs and government stakeholders, at national, provincial, district and commune levels. The first consultation meeting, which took place in March 2018, was intended to validate the findings. The second consultation meeting took place in July 2018 and focussed on the conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations. Both consultations took a highly participative form. The list of participants for both consultation workshops can be found in Annex 11. It is worth noting that in the second workshop, Her Excellency Chann Haranvadey, Under Secretary of State at MoSVY, gave a presentation in which she accepted all the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report.

The Child Protection Programme is a major programme for UNICEF both in terms of financial input and influence. UNICEF Cambodia is regarded as the most influential partner in the development of child protection by key informant interviewees, both within Government and externally amongst donor bodies and international NGOs involved in child protection.

## **2. BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION**

*This section sets out the context in which UNICEF works and chronicles the development of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme 2016-2018 and the reasoning behind UNICEF's approach to child protection in Cambodia.*

### **2.1 Context**

UNICEF has been working in Cambodia since 1952, but its ability to work was seriously hampered by armed conflict and political instability, including a four-year period, between 1975 and 1979 when it was expelled from the country. It was not until 1993, 25 years ago, that UNICEF was able to start developing a partnership with the Government following the election of a democratic Government.

Cambodia became an independent country in 1953 following colonisation by the French in the nineteenth century and occupation by the Japanese during the Second World War. The armed conflict between the United States of America and North Vietnam, as it then was, spilled over into Cambodia and led to political instability, a civil war, and ultimately to the Khmer Rouge coming to power from 1975 to 1979. Genocide under the Khmer Rouge, leading to the death of an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians, armed conflict and political instability continued up until the late 1990s. The legacy of three decades of internal conflict has left Cambodia with explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnances contamination, which has not only killed and injured 64,000 Cambodian people but has also created protracted challenges and threats to the efforts of development in Cambodia.

Cambodia's history of armed conflict and political instability has had a heavy impact on children and their families, with many having lost family members, livelihoods and homes. Many survivors from that generation remain traumatized or victimised by this legacy. Services, including education and health care, were severely affected and much of the country's infrastructures was destroyed. While there have been improvements and gains over the last two decades, this has not been equally spread across the country and inequities remain, particularly amongst the minority population areas in the Northeast of the country, and rural populations, where the struggle to access basic services continues. The lack of opportunity in rural areas, particularly in relation to education and livelihood, has led to migration for labour in garment factories both within the country and abroad, with elderly people and children left behind in villages, often living in poverty or near poverty or with children ending up in residential care institutions (RCIs).

Cambodia now has a predominantly young population. According to the latest United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Populations Division statistics, out of a population of around sixteen million, 31.2 per cent, approximately five million people, are estimated to be under the

age of 14, while another 19 per cent are aged 15-24, meaning over 50 per cent of the population under the age of 25.<sup>1</sup>

The economic situation of the country has improved significantly over the last two decades. There has been an annual average GDP growth of more than seven per cent since 2011 (the sixth highest in the world), resulting in Cambodia reaching middle-income status in 2015 and full economic integration into the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). This in turn has led to a steep decline in poverty, from 47.2 per cent in 2007 to 18.6 per cent in 2012 and 13.5 per cent in 2014. The World Bank notes, however, that while Cambodia achieved the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty in 2009, the vast majority of families who have escaped poverty have only been able to do so by a small amount, and that around 4.5 million, around 30 per cent of the population remain 'near poor.'<sup>2</sup> The inequality of income and the number of families living just above the poverty level have had a serious impact on children's nutrition, with 32 per cent of children under five recorded as stunted.

Health and education services have not yet met the desired standard, with school enrolment and completion rates still significantly below the average for middle income countries. Girls are less likely to attend school than boys: the 2008 census showed that the ratio of literate females to males in the 15-24 years old age group is 95.7 per cent. The Summary Statistics detailed in the Education Management Information System (EMIS)<sup>3</sup> for 2016-2017 show that the ratio of girls to boys in both primary and secondary school is still lagging, with 1,047,830 boys enrolled but only 974,830 girls, despite almost identical numbers of boys and girls in pre-school. Only around 14 per cent of Cambodian children complete upper secondary school education (grades 10-12), with slightly more girls than boys achieving this level of education (9,573 girls and 9,139 boys in 2016-2017).

## 2.2 The Child Protection Context in Cambodia

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1992. Under Article 19 of the CRC, the Government is under an obligation to provide child protection services to protect children from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage. The Government is also obliged under Article 20 to provide special protection and assistance to children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment or who cannot be allowed to remain in that environment.

Most children in Cambodia live with their biological parents. In 2014, 89 per cent of children lived with at least one parent, and three-quarters lived with both parents. The 11 per cent of children who are not living with their biological parents are to be found in a range of alternative forms of care. Cambodian families traditionally used immediate and extended kinship networks as a means of caring for orphans and vulnerable children, with a fall-back reliance on pagodas for orphaned and destitute boys.<sup>4</sup> However, the traditions of kinship care and pagoda-based care suffered significant rupture during the Khmer Rouge era, with a devastating impact on immediate and extended kinship ties,<sup>5</sup> which have proved hard to repair. A further challenge facing kinship carers in the present day, and especially grandparents, is the lack of any government financial support. This lack has resulted, in a not insignificant number of cases, in an inability to feed, clothe and educate children who are in need of an alternative to parental care.

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<sup>1</sup> Index Mundi, Cambodia Demographics Profile 2017, [www.indexmundi.com](http://www.indexmundi.com) based on 2016 estimated figures. The child dependency rate, according to Country Meters is 50.2 per cent (i.e., the ratio of children under the age of 15 to the workforce of the country).

<sup>2</sup> World Bank October 2017 available at [www.worldbank.org/en.country/cambodia](http://www.worldbank.org/en.country/cambodia). For further information on the economic situation see Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Cambodia, UNICEF 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Kingdom of Cambodia Summary Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Westering, J. (2010). Changing Social Norms on Alternative Care for Children in Cambodia. UNICEF Final Paper.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. See also UNICEF, Study on Alternative Care Community Practices for Children in Cambodia, including Pagoda-based Care, 2017, p.11.

The breakdown of traditional methods of child protection resulted in a reliance on institutional care. Although there are state children's homes, the majority of residential placements are provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs). A mapping report produced by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) in 2016,<sup>6</sup> found that there were 406 RCIs or orphanages. Those RCIs accommodated 16,579 children with a preponderance of boys over girls (8,803 to 7,776 girls). There were also a further 9,608 children reported to be living in another 233 care facilities, including transit homes and temporary emergency accommodation, group homes, pagodas and other religious buildings and boarding schools, making a combined total of 26,187 children.

The RCIs are spread unevenly across the country, with the provinces of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap accounting for 49 per cent of the total. Of these children in RCIs, as many as 79 per cent had at least one living parent. The vast majority of the children in RCIs are of school age with only two per cent of children under the age of four. Many of the mapped RCIs were operating outside of the Ministry's regulatory framework. Almost one in eight of the RCIs were not registered with any branch of the Government and one in five did not have a memorandum of understanding with the Government.<sup>7</sup> The lack of state oversight of such a large number of children in unregulated RCIs presents a risk to children, in terms of inadequate standards within the RCI, lack of education and health care, and potential risks to their safety and well-being.

As a result of the mapping exercise, which was initiated in 2014, significant attention has been paid by the RGC to reducing the use of RCIs, an approach that is reflected in the 2016-2018 UNICEF Child Protection Programme. The Government has recognised that institutionalisation is not the best option for children and has committed to reducing both the number of RCIs and the number of children resident in them, as well as preventing new RCIs from opening. Under Sub-Decree 119, The Management of Residential Care (2015), residential care is stated to be the last and temporary option of placement for children without parental care and only where the possibility of placement with the parents, a relative, guardian or foster carer has been exhausted. The UNICEF Programme for 2016-2018, which mirrors the provisions in Sub-Decree 119, also focusses on the reintegration<sup>8</sup> of children in RCIs by reunification of some children with parents or kinship carers, and the development of community-based alternative care provision, including foster care, small group homes and independent living within the community for those who cannot return to their birth family.

A further issue facing Cambodian children is the use of violence. According to the Cambodia Violence against Children Survey (CVACS) conducted in 2013,<sup>9</sup> more than half of Cambodian girls and boys have experienced at least one form of violence in childhood, with physical violence as the most prevalent. CVACS also found that one quarter of Cambodian children have been emotionally abused by a parent, caregiver or other adult relative; and approximately one in 20 boys and girls reported at least one experience of sexual abuse. Parents, caregivers, teachers, family members, neighbours or friends are often the perpetrators.

In general, victims of violence do not disclose abuse, especially sexual abuse, and the study reveals that few children seek help following an incident due to fear of what others will think of them, fear of being admonished, the belief that they were responsible for the violence, the belief that no one could help or mistrust of the law enforcement and justice system.

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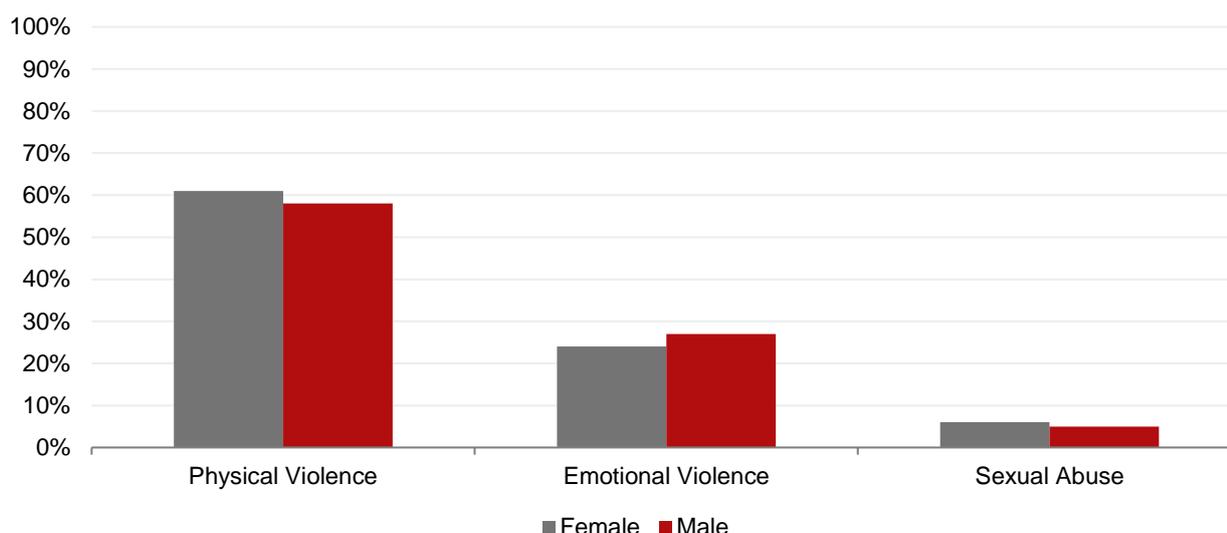
<sup>6</sup> An enumeration study undertaken was also undertaken by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and Columbia University in 2015. The NIS study puts this figure even higher, estimating that there are 1,658 RCIs in Cambodia. The definition refers to all types of facilities that provide residential care as RCIs. The mapping supported by UNICEF was completed within the 2016-2018 UNICEF Country Programme.

<sup>7</sup> See Mapping of Residential Care Facilities in the Capital and 24 Provinces of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, 2017. A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, UNICEF 2017, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Reintegration refers to the process of children resident in institutional care being placed back into living situations that are intended to be permanent and nurturing.

<sup>9</sup> Cambodia's Violence Against Children Survey, 2013; UNICEF Cambodia, 2014.

**Figure 1: Types of lifetime violence experienced by 13 to 17-year olds**



The protection needs of children in Cambodia are complex and include poverty; family breakdown and re-marriage, with low acceptance of step-children; children living on the street; parental migration; alcoholism; drug use; and physical, sexual and emotional abuse.<sup>10</sup>

Despite ratifying the CRC 26 years ago, the Government has yet to develop a fully functioning child protection system. The 2016-2018 Country Programme notes that Cambodia's child protection system remains under-funded and under-staffed.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the Government has yet to pass primary legislation on child protection and, as a result, there continues to be a reliance on secondary legislation in the form of various Sub-Decrees<sup>12</sup>.

### 2.3 Legal and institutional framework

The Government has passed a number of laws relating to child protection in the past two decades,<sup>13</sup> including the Juvenile Justice Law (2016), the Inter-Country Adoption Law (2009), the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (1986) and its Explanatory Note, the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2009) and the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims (2005).<sup>14</sup> However, there would appear to be a low level of implementation of these new laws, partly due to the lack of secondary legislation on implementation and the procedures to be followed, and partly due to a lack of technical knowledge and training on the new laws.

Despite the introduction of these new laws, Cambodia does not have a law that provides for the comprehensive protection of children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation as required by Article 19 of the CRC. Rather, there are a number of laws which give protection to particular children in particular situations. At present, protection for children against acts of physical and mental violence and sexual aggression, are covered by the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims. The law applies equally to adults and children. However, the

<sup>10</sup> See Study on Alternative Care Community Practices for Children in Cambodia, including Pagoda-based Care, UNICEF 2018, chapter 7 for a more detailed description of the protection needs of children.

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF, Country Programme Document 2016-2018, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Sub-Decrees are secondary legislation, equivalent to regulations.

<sup>13</sup> Several other relevant pieces of legislation exist, but the most important are analysed here – due to constraints in the length of this report, a comprehensive analysis of all relevant provisions is beyond the scope of this report.

<sup>14</sup> The Government has also explicitly prohibited corporal punishment in Cambodian schools, see the Education Law 2004 and Article 12 of the Sub-Decree on the Teachers Professional Code.

law does not apply to all children, but only to 'dependent' children.<sup>15</sup> A further major drawback of the law is that Article 8 provides that traditional discipline of children should not be considered as violence or domestic violence. In addition, Article 1045 of the Civil Code continues to permit corporal punishment as a mode of discipline in the home: "*the parental power holder may personally discipline the child to the extent necessary.*"

The protections offered by the Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims Laws are classic domestic violence protections and are aimed at removing either the perpetrator or victim of violence out of their normal residence and preventing further contact between the perpetrator and the victim. Such measures cannot be considered sufficient to ensure protection of children in its full sense. There are no provisions requiring an investigation of the situation of the child or an assessment of the care provided to the child to determine whether the child is safe or at risk of suffering significant harm, and neither is there a requirement on any government body to monitor the situation. Responsibility under this law appears to fall upon the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). Evidence from this evaluation indicates that the Domestic Violence Law is not regularly used, and that the Courts deal with only a small number of cases, usually where an NGO is representing an applicant.

The second piece of legislation covering children (and adults) is the Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (2008), which covers trafficking, abduction, forced marriage, prostitution, commercial sex, forced labour and practices that amount to modern day slavery. The Law criminalises these acts and provides civil remedies in the form of damages. However, again, it does not require that a referral be made to determine whether there is a need for additional measures to protect the child from further harm.

Article 35 of the Education Act (2007) provides that every child has the right to be free of physical and mental punishment at school and this is reinforced by the Sub-Decree on Ethics Code for the Teaching Profession (2008). Complaints relating to a breach of this right are to be made to the ministry responsible for education or to the Court. There does not appear to be a requirement that use of such discipline should be considered a child protection issue.

The last major piece of legislation affecting children is the Law on Marriage and the Family (1989). Article 119 of this law permits the Court to revoke parental 'power' and transfer it to any organisation or relative by blood, from a parent who is at fault.<sup>16</sup> It does not place responsibility for making an application onto any one particular body but allows a complaint against the parents to be lodged by a state organisation, a mass organisation, the authorities attached to the People's Court or any relatives of the parents. There is no indication as to whether there needs to be an investigation or assessment of the child and family first before a complaint is made, or if there are alternative measures of support offered to the family prior to removal of a child by the court.

As a result of the Prakas on Procedures to Implement the Policy on Alternative Care for Children (2011), delivery of child protection services has, up until 2017, been primarily the responsibility of MoSVY, with assistance from the Women and Children Consultative Committee (WCCC) at the sub-national level. Departments of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (DoSVYs), Offices of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (OSVYs), provincial/municipal councils, district councils and commune councils were all responsible for implementing the Prakas.<sup>17</sup> A new Sub-

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<sup>15</sup> Thus, for instance, a step-child abused by his step-father might not be covered, nor a child who is physically or sexually abused by an uncle living in the house, as the child is not 'dependent' upon them.

<sup>16</sup> When the parents fail to educate the child, the parents use improper power in violation of the child's rights or forcing him to commit crimes or acts against society, the parents treat their children badly or the parents behave against moral standards which have a bad influence over their children.

<sup>17</sup> Article 7 of the Prakas sets out the duties of the commune councils with the CCWC, which includes, "*identifying and assessing children and families in situations of risk, establish a Service Plan for necessary services, follow up the family's progress to preserve the child in the family, and make decisions on alternative care placement with kin in the same commune if necessary; or make a temporary placement in a safe setting with relatives of community-based foster care, in collaboration with the city, khan/district OSVY, for children abandoned in the community. As a last resort, refer the child to the*

Decree, No. 34, issued in March 2017 changes responsibility for the delivery of child protection services. Management of state child care centres (i.e., state children's homes), is moved from MoSVY to the capital and provincial administrations (i.e., DoSVY); while responsibility for inspection of NGO children's homes is moved to OSVY. Management of community-based victim and vulnerable child care services are moved away from DoSVY to the capital, city and commune administrations, with funding and staff to be reallocated accordingly, while MoSVY retains its role in setting policy, service standards and legislation and for setting guidelines and for monitoring and quality control.

At present, communes do not have any professional social workers. However, Sub-Decree 34 envisages a transitional period during which communes will be required to develop proposals on needs for social workers and professional training (Article 22) and the recently released Guidelines on Social Service Expenditures propose a budget allocation for a commune assistant to support social work in the communes.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that it will take some years to get professional social workers trained and employed in the communes, but there are questions as to how commune responsibilities will be managed in the short and medium-term, given the lack of financial resources and the small size of many communes. Further, it is not clear from the Sub-Decree whether responsibility for children who cannot stay with their parents or wider family stays with the commune or with DoSVY.

Although lacking in operational and procedural detail, the Prakas from 2011 and Sub-Decree 34 puts in place a basic child protection system. However, it is clear from key informant interviews (KIIs), that MoSVY, DoSVY and OSVY see their role primarily as involving the provision of support services to families who are in poverty and whose children, as a result, are likely to be placed in an RCI, and with reunifying or reintegrating children who have already been placed in an RCI. Key informants did not see the parameters of their role as including the protection of children from physical, emotional or sexual abuse where this does not occur within the context of poverty.

Child protection is not seen as falling entirely to MoSVY, its delegated bodies and the communes. The National Action Plan on Violence against Women managed by MoWA, aims to reduce violence against both women and girls. In addition, the referral guidelines for Women and Girl Survivors of Gender-Based Violence issued by MoWA envisage that girls who are victims of gender-based violence should be case managed by the Provincial Department of Women's Affairs (PDoWA). PDoWAs are given responsibility for coordinating both state and non-state services in order to ensure an effective referral system. There is no mention in the Guidelines that cases involving girls should be regarded as a child protection case.

In addition to these two systems, the Cambodian National Police (CNP) at provincial level operate anti-human trafficking and juvenile protection units under the Secretariat for Anti-Human Trafficking at provincial level. Children are referred to these units when they are identified by commune level police or district level police officers as having been trafficked, as having been a victim of rape (or lesser sexual offence), as having experienced domestic violence or as having been a victim in a case that is being prosecuted before the court. Where the anti-trafficking unit believes that the child needs to be removed from the family for his or her own safety, they will contact DoSVY. If, however, that is not deemed necessary, it would appear that the police deal directly with the commune to take safeguarding measures and do not inform DoSVY.

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*provincial/municipal DoSVY if no placements are found with relatives or community-based care.*" The role of OSVY is to provide support to the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) in collaboration with the district WCCC, and to manage cases not covered by the communes including non-kin foster placements, children placed in institutions, cross-city, khan/district cases, placement of children in institutions or at risk of being placed and permanency planning. WCCC's role is to assist the CCWC in identifying and assessing children who are facing situations of risk when the CCWC are not able to do so. DoSVY's role is to support and guide the work of the district bodies, WCCC and commune councils. The duties of MoSVY at national government level are set out in Article 12. They do not include any direct service delivery, but rather the maintenance of data bases for children in need of protective services and adoption, technical support to DoSVY, raising awareness, setting policy and monitoring implementation of policies, laws and regulations.

<sup>18</sup> Manual on Sangkat/Commune Social Service Implementation, Ministry of the Interior, February 2018.

## 2.4 The Development of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme

The RGC and UNICEF Cambodia officially signed the new Country Programme covering the period from January 2016 to December 2018 on 10 February 2016. The 2016-2018 Country Programme consists of four programmatic components: Integrated Early Childhood Survival, Care and Development; Inclusive Quality Education; Social Inclusion and Governance and Child Protection. This evaluation addresses just one component, that of child protection.

The Child Protection Programme is being implemented in collaboration with government institutions at the national and sub-national level, NGOs, development partners, the private sector, academic institutions, the media and other UN agencies.

Under the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), the outcome for child protection is that *“by 2018, girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence and those separated from their family, or at risk of separation, are increasingly protected by the institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services, and a supportive community environment.”* To achieve this outcome, the Child Protection Programme adopts a system-strengthening approach to overcome the major barriers that exist to the functioning of a comprehensive child protection system in Cambodia. With a specific focus on preventing and responding to violence against children and reducing unnecessary family separation, including de-institutionalisation, UNICEF supports five major strategies, as follows:

- a. Strengthening the capacities of children, families and communities to develop positive, secure and nurturing practices and behaviours;
- b. Improving the quality of, and access to, child protection services at sub-national levels (service delivery);
- c. Strengthening national and sub-national capacities to plan, monitor and budget for scaling-up preventive and responsive child protection interventions;
- d. Strengthening capacity and service delivery to ensure that children's right to protection from violence and unnecessary family separation are sustained and promoted in humanitarian situations; and
- e. Enhancing the abilities of adolescents to adopt safe practices that reduce their risks and vulnerabilities.

The target groups for the programme are children who fall within a number of different categories, including:

- Children who are living in RCIs;
- Children who are in alternative care placements;
- Children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm;
- Children at risk of family separation; and
- Children in schools.

The second target group are social services providers at national level (health, education, justice and child protection) and in the target provinces of the different aspects of the programme working with children, including:

- Teachers;
- Police and justice officials;
- Medical staff;
- Those responsible for providing protection to children at commune, district and provincial level; and
- Religious leaders.

The Child Protection Programme involves a large number of stakeholders who fall into a number of different categories. These include primary stakeholders and beneficiaries, national and sub-national counterparts, implementing partners who have signed partnership agreements with UNICEF (mostly

national NGOs to implement projects of programmes), development partners (where there is a large degree of higher-level strategic collaboration and partnership with the common goal of child protection), child protection networks and other strategic partnerships and donors.

The Child Protection Programme has a budget of US\$ 11.8 million. The total funds for 2016 amounted to US\$ 2,740,824 against a planned budget of US\$ 4,940,616. The major donors in 2016 were the Canadian Government (US\$ 676,875), German National Committee (US\$ 177,948), Australian National Committee (US\$ 94,579), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (US\$ 535,216), Japanese National Committee (US\$ 92,593) and UNICEF (US\$ 1,163,513).<sup>19</sup> In 2017 the total funds raised were US\$ 3,354,611 against planned funding of US\$ 4,409,610 with US\$ 13,271 from Canada; US\$ 1,396,856 from USAID; US\$ 1,824,484 from UNICEF<sup>20</sup> and US\$ 120,000 from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). UNICEF has used this budget to fund a highly diverse and broad range of activities, all of which constitute important pillars of a comprehensive child protection system.

Funding was provided by UNICEF to a range of different international and national NGOs to ensure delivery of the Programme. The largest amount of funding, US\$ 1,889,089.80 between May 2016 and December 2017 was provided to Friends International who manage the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC) coalition. 3PC involves 56 organisations in all with 10 implementing partners, 40 network partners and 6 technical partners who provide counselling and other specialist services.<sup>21</sup> For additional details on funding allocations, see Annex 5.

### **3. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE**

#### **3.1 Purpose and objectives**

As noted above, the purpose of this evaluation is to increase knowledge generation and lessons learning needs by gathering sound and credible evidence on the Child Protection Programme, including what works, what does not work, how and why (learning). The evaluation's objectives are to help strengthen performance (accountability) of UNICEF's work with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), national and sub-national institutions, provincial authorities, social service providers, commune councils, development partners, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), religious leaders, the media and other duty bearers on improving care and keeping vulnerable girls and boys (rights holders) in families and protecting them from violence and unnecessary separation.

The primary users of this evaluation are the main duty bearers for children: the Government in the form of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY); the Ministry of Justice (MoJ); the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS); the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA); the Ministry of Cults and Religion (MoCR); the Cambodian National Police (CNP), the Cambodian National Council for Children and UNICEF. Secondary duty bearers are also likely to use this evaluation, particularly those organisations involved in the delivery of the programme, including Children's Rights International, Hagar, Child Helpline Cambodia, One World UK, World Vision, Child Protection Unit, KYA, Friends International, the Partnership for the Protection of Children (3PC), Improving Cambodia's Society through Skilful Parenting (ICS-SP), NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (NGO-CRC) and the Open Institute, but also donors and other UN agencies.

The evaluation has also informed UNICEF's decision-making processes, especially future strategies and programme development in child protection. More broadly, it has underpinned evidence-based contributions to UNICEF Cambodia's new Country Programme 2019-2023, and child protection

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<sup>19</sup> This included thematic child protection funds, thematic education funds, and regular resources. HQ innovation Funds.

<sup>20</sup> From thematic global, thematic Norway, thematic regional, thematic DB7, UNICEF UK, German Natcom; Japan Natcom; Australia Natcom; Netherlands Natcom; and regular resources.

<sup>21</sup> Information from Friends International.

programming in the East Asia and the Pacific region through the identification of good practices, lessons learned and innovations.

The main objectives of the evaluation include:

- Validate and reconstruct the theory of change (ToC) of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme in keeping vulnerable girls and boys in families and protecting them from violence, as well as the interlinkages among the Programme outputs, and provide an assessment of how far along they are based on evidence from programme experiences and approaches that have proven effective in protecting girls and boys in the current country context;
- Examine the results achieved by UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, enabling and disabling factors, considering aspects of both prevention and response, including capacity development of government institutions at national and sub-national levels, international and national NGOs, development partners as well as the voices of children, adolescents, families and communities;
- Assess UNICEF's leadership, ability to leverage resources and partnerships and towards strengthening the RGC child protection system at national and sub-national levels through advocacy and policy influencing, including knowledge management and evidence-generation to inform policy decisions; and
- Examine the existing linkages between the outputs of the Child Protection Programme, as well as linkages with Social Governance and Inclusion, Inclusive Quality Education and Integrated Early Childhood Survival, Care and Development through joint work such as positive discipline in schools, child protection service delivery in the health system and communication for development.

The evaluation provides reasonable conclusions based on the findings and substantiated by evidence, and clear, specific and actionable recommendations for strengthening UNICEF's strategies, programme interventions and building greater partnerships for protecting children in Cambodia.

### 3.2 Scope

This evaluation was preceded by an evaluability assessment (Annex 2) and considered all aspects of the Child Protection Programme implemented during the period 1 January 2016 through to end of March 2018 (and in some instances took into account evidence and documents produced after that date). The evaluation used the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability but did not assess impact as it is too early to do so and because this evaluation was formative. The evaluation focussed on UNICEF's five priority provinces, but evaluators also considered work undertaken in other provinces where relevant, and data was also collected in 'non-intervention' sites for comparative purposes. UNICEF's five target provinces include: **Phnom Penh, Kandal, Preah Sihanouk, Siem Reap and Battambang**. The four comparison non-intervention provinces, which were selected to ensure comparable geography and demographics, include: **Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu and Kampot**.

The Child Protection Programme is operationalised through four outputs, which include:

- **Output 1:** By 2018, strengthened capacity of national Government and five provincial authorities to formulate and implement the institutional and legal framework and costed plans for the scaling-up of child protection prevention and response interventions, including deinstitutionalisation and reintegration services;
- **Output 2:** By 2018, strengthened capacity of social service providers (health, education, justice and child protection) to provide quality services that protect girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence, those separated from their family, or at risk of separation, and those being deinstitutionalised and reintegrated;

- **Output 3:** By 2018, strengthened capacity of commune councils and religious leaders to protect girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence and those separated from their family, or at risk of separation; and
- **Output 4:** By 2018, strengthened capacity of at least 20 adolescent and youth-focused organisations to work with and for adolescents (10-19 years old) and implement age and gender-appropriate interventions to promote safe and protective behaviours and practices.

The terms of reference (ToR) required the evaluation to examine all four outputs. However, further to discussions with UNICEF, it was decided not to include Output 4 in the main scope of the evaluation, except where it relates to the other three outputs. This decision was made primarily because Output 4 relates less directly to the Child Protection Programme outcome than the other three outputs, and whilst it is relevant to child protection, it is not an integral part of a child protection system-strengthening approach. However, there are linkages between the work with adolescents and the work of the child protection team, and these are referred to below in relation to cross-sectoral working. This has also resulted in the refinement of the number of evaluation questions and the extent to which these have been revised is addressed below.

**Table 1: Child Protection Programme: Key results**

Further to the initial evaluability assessment, the key results in green are all included within the evaluation. However, it was not possible to evaluate the key results coloured red (because they had not been implemented at the time of the evaluation), while the outputs coloured in yellow had only been implemented to a limited extent (and thus could only be evaluated to some extent).

<b>Key result 1.1:</b> Child protection system strengthened to develop and implement a child care reform action plan in the five targeted provinces to promote family preservation, deinstitutionalisation, reintegration and alternatives to institutional care.	<b>Key result 2.1:</b> Community-based rehabilitation and 3PC strengthened to provide child protection prevention and response services, including in emergencies and to reintegrate children in the five targeted provinces and integrated early childhood development (IECD) focal districts.	<b>Key result 3.1:</b> A behavioural change campaign to prevent and respond to violence against children and unnecessary family separation designed and implemented in the five target provinces and IECD focal districts.
<b>Key result 1.2:</b> A costed inter-ministerial action plan to prevent and respond to violence against girls and boys, operational in the five targeted provinces.	<b>Key result 2.2:</b> At least 800 primary schools in the six education target provinces are implementing positive discipline and protecting girls and boys from abuse.	<b>Key result 3.2:</b> Key duty bearers promote the protection of children from violence and unnecessary family separation, including in emergencies in the five target provinces and IECD focal districts.
<b>Key result 1.3:</b> A national child protection information management system (CPIMS) established and rolled out in the five targeted provinces.	<b>Key result 2.3:</b> At least 45 health facilities in the IECD districts are implementing the Clinical Handbook on Healthcare for Children Subjected to Violence or Sexual Abuse for screening, treating, reporting and referral for children subjected to violence and sexual abuse.	<b>Key result 3.3:</b> National strategic framework on positive parenting to prevent violence and unnecessary family separation implemented in the five target provinces and IECD focal districts, linked to parenting education programmes by sectors.
<b>Key result 1.4:</b> Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC) and key Ministries assisted to prepare the Juvenile Justice Law for final submission and to update three child protection laws and associated regulations under the 2014 Legislative Reform Agenda for Child Protection. <sup>22</sup>	<b>Key result 2.4:</b> Child-friendly justice mechanisms for reporting, referral and response to child survivors of violence and children in conflict with the law developed and implemented.	<b>Key result 3.4:</b> The Child Protection Pagoda Programme established and rolled out to five provinces.
<b>Key result 1.5:</b> Disaster risk reduction, resilience, and mine risk education	<b>Key result 2.5:</b> Social work strengthened to support effective	

<sup>22</sup> Because progress under key result 1.4 (juvenile justice) has been limited during the evaluation period, it is not addressed in this evaluation report to its full extent.

incorporated into the National Child Protection in Emergency Plan and implemented annually.	case management, family preservation approaches and alternatives to institutional care in the five targeted provinces.	
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### 3.3 The Theory of Change

A ToC for the Child Protection Programme had not been explicitly articulated,<sup>23</sup> but it is embedded in the programme's results framework and programme strategy and is partly articulated in the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) through UNICEF's five strategies for improving the protective environment for children in Cambodia. The reconstructed ToC and the assumptions that underlie it are annexed to this report (Annex 3). In essence, the ToC provides that:

- *If* the capacities of children, families and communities to develop positive, secure and nurturing practices and behaviours are strengthened;
- *and* quality of and access to child protection services at sub-national level are improved;
- *and* relevant national and sub-national authorities have improved capacities to plan, monitor and budget for scaling-up preventive and responsive child protection interventions;
- *and* service delivery is strengthened to ensure that children's right to protection from violence and unnecessary family separation are sustained;
- *then* girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence, and those separated from their family or at risk of separation will be increasingly protected (by institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services and a supportive community environment).

There are a certain number of assumptions that are required for the logic model to hold. It is a useful exercise for evaluators to identify the assumptions that are necessary for the theory to hold in order to establish a conceptual basis for assessing the programme (design). For example, the theory assumes that:

- Capacity for recognising and referring child protection cases exists at the local level;
- Commune councils, religious leaders, parents and other community members hold attitudes that are supportive of protecting girls and boys from violence and unnecessary family separation and support reintegration;
- Available services are comprehensive and address a full range of child protection needs and services are of high quality and meet beneficiaries' needs;
- Target groups are able to access these services including through systems of assessment and referral (no external barriers to accessing services); and
- Plans for scaling-up child protection prevention and response interventions are implemented at national and sub-national level and address the child protection needs of the entire target population (including particular contextual challenges and barriers at the sub-national level).

The Child Protection Programme has been designed to address many of these assumptions. For instance, behavioural change campaigns at commune level have been developed to address the first and second assumptions listed above, and the 3PC partnership has been developed primarily to address the fourth assumption (that services are comprehensive and address a range of child protection needs).

<sup>23</sup> UNICEF has developed several theories of change on relevant topics (e.g., reducing Violence Against Children (VAC) and preventing unnecessary family separation).

**Table 2: Theory of change assumptions**

Assumption	Relevant programme strategy / component <sup>24</sup>
Capacity for recognising and referring child protection cases exists at local level	Key results 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4
Community leaders hold attitudes supportive of protecting boys and girls from violence against children (VAC) and unnecessary family separation	Key results 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4
Services are comprehensive, high quality and meet beneficiaries' needs	Key results 2.1, 2.4 and 2.5
Target groups are able to access services and systems of identification, referral, assessment are in place	Key results 2.5, 2.2, 2.3 and 3.4
Plans for scaling up prevention and response are implemented and address relevant needs	Key results 1.1, 1.2 and 3.1

In addition, the Child Protection Programme has identified several risks with the potential to undermine the change pathways set out above, namely: the continuation of sex tourism, trafficking and orphanage tourism; floods; conflict; explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnances; slowdown of government reform programmes; and, significantly, the potential uncontrolled growth of unregulated residential care institutions (RCIs), which would dominate the child protection agenda and threaten to undermine the outcomes of the Programme.

### 3.4 Evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions are set out in Table 3 below. Full details of the sub-questions are contained in Annex 6.

**Table 3: Evaluation questions**

Criteria	Evaluation questions	No. of sub-questions
Relevance	How relevant and consistent has the Child Protection Programme been to national priorities and commitments of UNICEF in considering aspects of violence prevention and response as well as to the needs of the most vulnerable girls and boys in Cambodia?	5
Effectiveness	To what degree has UNICEF's Child Protection Programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for keeping vulnerable girls and boys in families, supporting the process of their safe reintegration into family care, and protecting them from violence through institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services and a supportive community environment?	7
Efficiency	To what extent and how has UNICEF mobilized and used its resources (human, technical and financial) and improved coordination to achieve its planned results for Child Protection?	3
Sustainability	To what extent are the benefits and achievements of the UNICEF-supported programmes likely to continue after the programme has ended through national ownership, changes at family and community level, and scalability and use of partnerships for sustainability?	3

<sup>24</sup> Whilst the key results indicators are cross cutting, and many address all assumptions, the most relevant examples are listed here.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Overall approach

The methodology was framed around the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, though impact was not evaluated because this evaluation is formative and not enough time has passed to analyse impact. The evaluation methodology was developed according to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016). It also incorporates UNICEF's general guiding principles on gender equality, equity, human rights and considers the degree to which the programme integrates concepts of resilience. A list of relevant international instruments and policies on human rights, and in particular child rights, equity and gender equality guided the evaluation process.

The analytical framework for the evaluation was driven by the evaluation criteria and questions set out above. The evaluation team developed an **evaluation matrix** (Annex 6) which sets out the specific information (indicators and sub-questions) which is necessary to answer the evaluation questions, as well as sources of information and methods of verification for measuring and answering these.

The methodology and approach for the evaluation were also informed by an evaluability assessment of the Child Protection Programme (contained in Annex 2). The exercise, which considered the evaluability of UNICEF's programme design; the availability of information for conducting the evaluation; and the conduciveness of the Cambodian context to the evaluation, allowed evaluators to ensure that the methodology would yield meaningful evidence on the Programme's approach and identified any barriers to doing so. The evaluability assessment also supported consultants to articulate the Programme's theory of change (ToC) in line with evaluation objectives.

#### 4.1.1. Theory-based approach

A critical component of the evaluation was the (re)construction of the ToC implicitly embedded within UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, which reflects UNICEF's approach to child protection systems-building in the current programme cycle (2016-2018). Drawing on the results framework, the reconstructed ToC (articulated in Section 3.3 above) sets out a logic model for the Programme (namely how programme interventions and strategies are expected to achieve outputs and outcomes, and ultimately contribute to a broader vision for change in line with the overall outcome: that *"girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence, and those separated from their family or at risk of separation, are increasingly protected by institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services and a supportive community environment,"* and identifies assumptions that are necessary for the logic model to hold).

The purpose of articulating this ToC was to enable the evaluation team to apply a **theory-based approach** to the evaluation. This approach was designed to gather evidence to determine whether, how, and why UNICEF's Child Protection Programme is (or is not) on track to achieve its vision for change. Focusing on the logic model set out in the ToC helped the evaluation team to examine causal links between programme strategies and consequent outputs and outcomes; interrogating the mechanisms, assumptions, risks and (changes in) context that may have supported or hindered progress; and verifying the relevance and coherence of the theory itself. The evaluation also applied an outcome-harvesting approach in order to identify the contributions of UNICEF's Programme to changes and developments in child protection in Cambodia.

#### 4.1.2. Mixed-methods design

The evaluation employed a **mixed-methods approach** to data collection, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, in order to gather rich, accurate and measurable data; and to improve the validity of results through triangulation. A mixed-methods approach enabled the evaluation team to collect high quality, in-depth and comprehensive data and conduct meaningful analysis making the study of greater use for informing future programming developments.

Quantitative data was used to provide an overall description and numerical measure of programme characteristics and results, as well as the context in which the programme operates. The qualitative data collected provided a more in-depth understanding of the evaluation results and also helped with the interpretation of the quantitative findings through triangulation. The qualitative data collected was particularly useful for exploring subjective and contextual issues, and for explaining why certain interventions and programme approaches have turned out to be more or less effective.

#### 4.1.3. Comparison study

The data sources set out above were collected in both UNICEF intervention and non-intervention sites. This enabled a comparison study across different sites, depending on whether or not they received an intervention. The comparison process helped to identify those areas where UNICEF's support has contributed to different aspects of child protection prevention and response and to measure its effectiveness.

The geographical area covered by the evaluation included national and sub-national levels in the Child Protection Programme's five target provinces: **Phnom Penh, Kandal, Preah Sihanouk, Siem Reap** and **Battambang**, as well as in four comparison non-intervention provinces with comparable geography and demographics: **Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu** and **Kampot**.

Within each of the nine provinces the team visited one urban district and commune, and one rural district and commune. Four working days of data collection were carried out in each of the five intervention provinces (two days of meetings at provincial level, one day of meetings at urban district and commune, and one day of meetings at rural district and commune). Two working days (one day at Province level, and one day of meetings in rural and commune sites) were spent in each of the non-intervention sites.

## 4.2 Data sources

The evaluation draws upon a range of data sources and data collection methods to ensure the reliability of results, promote impartiality, reduce bias, and ensure that the evaluation is based on the most comprehensive and relevant information possible.

Data sources and methods were identified to ensure that evaluators were able to obtain in-depth and accurate information on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of programming, as well as to address cross-cutting issues (i.e., equity, gender equality and human rights sensitivity and considerations of resilience).

### 4.2.1 Quantitative data sources

#### *Collation and secondary analysis of existing statistical data*

The team collated and compiled a number of existing databases that contained data on indicators relevant to child protection in Cambodia. These data sources included survey datasets (Demographic and Health Survey, 2014; the National Violence Against Women Survey, 2014; and the Council for the Development of Cambodia Violence Against Children Survey, 2013); child protection case data from local non-governmental organisations (NGO) service providers (Damnok Toek, Kaliyan Mith Siem Reap, Mith Samlanh, and Childsafe Cambodia); and reintegration case data from provincial Departments of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth (DoSVY).

#### *Beneficiary survey*

Primary quantitative data was collected through the distribution of a structured survey (Annex 7) to a selection of children undergoing reintegration into a permanent living situation to gather quantitative data on their experiences and perceptions of the service or support they received, how their case had been handled and outcomes of reintegration cases. This enabled the evaluation team to obtain standardised and objective information in relation to quantifiable indicators included in the evaluation

framework. The results of the beneficiary survey were particularly helpful for answering questions related to the effectiveness of the reintegration programme.

Researchers applied a census methodology for the distribution of the survey to reintegrated children. Lists of children undergoing reintegration were obtained from DoSVY offices, together with contact information for these children (where available).

Out of a total population of 570 children who had been placed in family or community-based care at the time of selection, **143 reintegrated children** were contacted for survey interview, including 66 boys (46 per cent male) and 77 girls (54 per cent female) with a response rate of 25.1 per cent.

In addition to the main beneficiary survey, a survey was distributed to caregivers where they were available to obtain complementary information about children's circumstances during reintegration, and the services they received. **A total of 73 caregivers were surveyed**, including 67 women (91.7 per cent), and 6 men (8.3 per cent).

#### *File reviews*

The evaluation triangulated information gathered from child protection practitioners, and clients, through reviewing a sample of files kept by the Government and NGO partners concerning individual child protection cases that have been serviced by the child protection system, involved in child protection proceedings or reunified with their families and communities. This data gave researchers a sense of the types of cases which are being brought to and picked up by the case management system and the response.

A standardised check-list (Annex 7) has been developed to guide the review of case files, to facilitate the gathering of information about the case, the nature of the child protection response, and its outcomes.

A total of **10 file reviews** were carried out during the course of the evaluation.

#### 4.2.2 Qualitative data sources

##### *Desk review*

Throughout the inception stage of the evaluation, the evaluation team reviewed 832 documents made available by UNICEF (Annex 9). These documents included: programme design documents and the results framework; policies and strategic plans; relevant legislation; advocacy and technical reports; guidance notes; stakeholder engagement, mappings and contact lists; programming monitoring and data reports and financial and donor information.

This information was critical to the design of the evaluation framework, the reconstruction of the ToC, the evaluation assessment, and the methodology more broadly; it was also useful for answering the evaluation research objectives and questions set out above.

##### *Literature review*

In addition to the programme document review the evaluation team conducted a desk-based literature review (see Annex 9) of existing research concerning child protection in Cambodia, to establish a deeper understanding of the context, and evidence, research and analysis that is currently available. This literature also includes information concerning child protection legislation and policy in Cambodia.

##### *Key informant interviews*

Much of the data collection was conducted through qualitative, semi-standardised key informant interviews (KIIs). The aim of these interviews was to obtain detailed and specific information in relation to indicators in the evaluation framework, from stakeholders with in-depth knowledge of child protection, including stakeholders in relevant government agencies at national, provincial, district and

commune levels, as well as NGO and community-based organisation (CBO) partners. Selection of key informants aimed to reflect the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. KIIs were conducted in both comparison non-intervention and intervention sites.

A structured tool (Annex 7) was developed to guide these interviews, but it was designed to be implemented flexibly, to allow for a participant and response-directed interaction.

Selection of key informants aimed to reflect the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. The following stakeholders were selected for key informant interviews:

- **National level (completed during inception visit):** *Government partners:* Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY); Ministry of Health (MoH) (National Maternal and Child Health Centre); Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC); Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA); Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS); General Commissariat of National Police. *UN and NGO partners:* UNICEF (evaluation management team, and child protection team); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Children in Adversity; Save the Children; Hagar International; Open Institute; Plan International; World Vision; NGO Network for Child Protection. *Donors:* United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Kingdom National Committee and Australian National Committee.
- **Province level:** DoSVY; Provincial Department of Women's Affairs (PDoWA); Office of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection; Provincial Commissariat; provincial police; residential care institution (RCI) directors; social workers.
- **District level:** Women and Children's Consultative Committee (WCCC); Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (OSVY); social workers (when available).
- **Commune level:** Commune Council for Women and Children (CCWC); commune police.

**A total of 157 KIIs were carried out during the course of the evaluation**, including 38 at national level, 90 in intervention sites, and 29 in comparison sites. KIIs were held either with a single informant or a group of informants. These interviews were conducted with **100 women (46 per cent female) and 119 men (54 per cent male)**.

#### *Case studies with in-depth interviews with children and their caregivers*

Qualitative, in-depth case study interviews were carried out with children, and the caregivers of children, who had received interventions under UNICEF's Child Protection Programme. In each intervention province, researchers aimed to interview at least one child and caregiver supported by the reintegration programme, at least one child and caregiver receiving prevention services, and at least one child and caregiver subject to a child protection response intervention.

The purpose of the case study interviews was to learn about beneficiaries' direct experiences of child protection interventions and services, their outcomes, and their satisfaction with services delivered.

These interviews were triangulated with evidence from interviews with practitioners, and file reviews (discussed below), to develop a series of in-depth case studies that provide clear, concrete and multi-perspective understandings of how the child protection system and child protection services are functioning in practice, as well as their effectiveness and outcomes.

Qualitative interview tools were developed to guide these discussions (see Annex 7); these tools were designed to be implemented flexibly.

**A total of 12 children (eight girls, 66.7 per cent; and four boys, 33.3 per cent), and 10 caregivers (nine women, 90 per cent; and one man; 10 per cent) were interviewed during the course of the evaluation.**

### *Focus group discussions*

Another source of qualitative data for the evaluation was focus group discussions (FGDs) which were carried out with community members and leaders in communities where UNICEF is working in order to understand community perceptions of child protection issues, and to ascertain whether the mechanisms for prevention and response are available and appropriate. FGDs provided a useful method for exploring prevalent attitudes and norms and exploring the reasons behind them.

A topic guide was developed to structure the FGDs (Annex 7).

**A total of 18 FGDs were conducted during the evaluation. 68 women (77.3 per cent) and 20 men (22.7 per cent) participated in the discussions.**

## **4.3 Data analysis**

### *Analysis of quantitative data*

Survey and case management data was uploaded into STATA software, and basic statistical techniques were used to create a basic, descriptive profile of the results. In addition, for the beneficiary survey, regression analysis was used,<sup>25</sup> which allowed the researchers to identify statistically significant relationships between survey variables while controlling for the influence of other potentially confounding variables.

### *Analysis of qualitative data*

All qualitative data was transcribed, uploaded into Nvivo software and coded to identify key themes, patterns and relationships relevant to the research questions.

### *Triangulation*

Qualitative and quantitative data findings were triangulated in light of one another in order to identify any inconsistencies in information. This helped evaluators overcome any biases or weaknesses. Where findings seemed incompatible or inconsistent, this was evaluated to indicate whether it might be a bias or inaccuracy in the interpretation of data, or a complexity that required further exploration and analysis of the data.

### *Consultation*

The analytic process was highly consultative, engaging key stakeholders including the evaluation management team, the members of the Reference Group, UNICEF's Child Protection Section and government partners. Evaluators' findings, conclusions and recommendations were shared with the broader partners in two consultations. Inputs and feedback were incorporated into the final report to refine and validate the accuracy and relevance of the evaluation results.

## **4.4 Gender, equity and human rights**

The evaluation applied a human rights lens to data analysis and considered all evaluation findings from a conceptual framework which was normatively based on human rights standards and laws. This entailed the consideration of inequalities and structural forms of discrimination, and the power dynamics that drive these, within the analysis of people's ideas and experiences of the child protection system. All data generated has been disaggregated, including by sex, ethnicity, age and disability (where this data is available), and a gender and equity sensitive analytical lens has been applied to all evidence. The evaluation team referred to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation (2014) and United Nations System Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) Evaluation Performance Indicator Criteria (2014).

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<sup>25</sup> Given that many of the survey items were categorical or nominal, rather than cardinal, a standard Linear OLS regression model was not appropriate. Consequently, ordered probit and multinomial logit regression specifications were used instead.

#### **4.5 Limitations and mitigation measures**

It is important to identify a number of limitations that the evaluation encountered when implementing the methodology. Several of these were identified in the evaluability assessment, which also considered the conduciveness of the context in Cambodia to the evaluation. Limitations are set out below, along with the mitigation strategies developed by the evaluation team for overcoming these.

Firstly, given the sensitive nature of the evaluation subject matter (which deals with child protection, violence against children), it is likely that the evidence gathered is affected by reporting bias. Respondents may be reluctant or unwilling to share sensitive and personal information about traumatic and deeply personal events in their lives (both children and adults). Further, respondents may be resistant to engaging critically on aspects of their professional experiences, which they may fear will reflect badly on themselves, government agencies, UNICEF, or other stakeholders. To mitigate against reporting bias, evaluators took care to carefully explain to all respondents that the evaluation was learning-oriented and was focussed on evaluating UNICEF's programme, rather than evaluating the work of Government or NGO partners. Evaluators also emphasised that anonymity would be protected, and that no negative personal or professional consequences would result from sharing open and honest information. Questions were asked sensitively, and interactions were flexible and participatory to allow for the most authentic, spontaneous and participant-led exchange.

Secondly, the evaluation required respondents to reflect on past experiences, which may have led to some inaccuracies. Respondents are likely to have forgotten or misremembered past events, and their particular ideas about when, where, how and why such events took place may have been influenced by subsequent events and experiences. Evaluators were careful to consider the impact of recall bias in the analysis and interpretation of research data. Wherever possible, evaluators sought to triangulate objective information through the assistance of other sources of information and documentation (e.g., files, reports, etc.). Furthermore, in many cases, respondents' subjective ideas contained findings and learning which were relevant to the research questions in its own right, even if the objective truth of their statements could not be verified.

Thirdly, there was risk that the accuracy of data would be compromised by linguistic and cultural barriers. Interviews and FGDs were led by Coram International evaluators, with the assistance of two national consultants in translation and interpretation. Inevitably, this meant that some information will be lost in the translation process particularly with regard to complex, detailed and highly context-specific information. Nevertheless, measures were put in place to guard against this limitation. Notably, national consultants who had strong English language skills, as well as expert technical knowledge in child protection were selected. Data collection tools were developed to guide discussions, and the translators familiarised themselves with the tools in advance. In addition, the evaluation team carried out a one-day pilot prior to commencing the main data collection, to familiarise themselves with the process of interpretation, and to address any issues or concerns that arose.

Fourthly, baseline information relevant to the Programme was available in some areas, but was not available on several important topics, particularly on community behaviour and attitudes in relation to child protection. This made it difficult for evaluators to isolate the impact of the Programme or identify changes that have results directly from the Programme. Researchers mitigated this limitation by asking respondents to reflect on changes in community behaviour and attitudes, and to describe their experiences of past situations.

Fifthly, due to the time of day that data collection took place, the demographics of the FGDs were skewed towards older participants and participants who were women. Researchers mitigated this by making every effort to ensure that during the FGDs minority views were heard.

Sixthly, the final sample of beneficiaries in the quantitative survey was 143. As this number is substantially over 100 this allowed the researchers to perform meaningful statistical tests with the data; however, there are some limitations to the survey data. The children who the evaluation team were unable to reach to participate in the quantitative survey were largely children who were undergoing reintegration to provinces outside the RCI where they had been resident. Consequently,

the report notes that we should be cautious in generalising the survey findings to all children who are in the process of reintegration, as the findings are largely reflective of the experience of children who were undergoing reintegration close to the institution where they were previously resident.

Finally, the diffusive nature of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme poses a challenge for designing and implementing a comprehensive evaluation methodology. UNICEF's Child Protection Programme involves a wide range of activities and interventions delivered through numerous partners to a broad target population; it would require a detailed and complex methodology to evaluate each of these with great detail and depth. Furthermore, doing so would be costly, requiring significant resource investment. Given this, the evaluation team has designed the methodology to balance obtaining data about the range of programme interventions and achieving an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of these interventions, and the degree to which they meet the needs of the target population. The evaluation team has equally drawn upon existing data sources provided by UNICEF and partners to supplement primary data collected by the team.

#### 4.6 Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (2015), with UNEG Norms and Standards (2016) and Coram International's own Ethical Guidelines. A tailored ethical protocol was developed to guide the evaluation (Annex 8) and implemented the following practices:

**Integrity, independence and impartiality:** The absence of conflict of interest was duly checked prior to the start of the evaluation. Reasons for evaluative judgments and acceptance or rejection of comments on evaluation products were provided in written comment trails for each version of evaluation deliverables. All findings were triangulated.

**Privacy and respect of rights:** Stakeholders consulted were duly informed about the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of findings. The evaluation was conducted in full respect of the stakeholders' right to provide information in confidence. All information was used and represented only to the extent agreed to by its contributor.

**Fair representation and avoidance of harm:** The evaluation team ensured that participatory processes and evaluation questions were responsive to the needs and sensitivities of participants. Facilitators set a tone of informality and openness while building rapport in all meetings, interviews, and FGDs as appropriate to the individuals participating.

**Accuracy, completeness and reliability:** The evaluation ensured that all evidence was tracked from its source to its use and interpretation. All evaluation questions were answered through triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources and processed using multiple analytical tools. All findings and conclusions are explicitly justified and substantiated, and the recommendations are based on findings and not bias.

**Meetings with children:** Individual interviews were conducted with children who were undergoing reintegration and were under the age of 18. During these meetings, the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (2015) involving children was followed. The children were asked to participate on a voluntary basis and their participation was strictly confidential. In two cases, a child protection referral was made following the interviews.

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1 Relevance

*This section evaluates the relevance of UNICEF Cambodia's Child Protection Programme to the Cambodian context, including to the priorities of the Government, donors and other key stakeholders, and, importantly, to the needs of Cambodian children, including the most vulnerable.*

**How relevant and consistent has the Child Protection Programme been to national priorities and commitments of UNICEF in considering violence against children (VAC) prevention and response as well as to the needs of the most vulnerable girls and boys in Cambodia?**

*How relevant and appropriate has the Child Protection Programme been to the Agenda 2030 and should it have been adjusted to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?*

*How relevant and appropriate has the Child Protection Programme been to the priority and conditions set by development partners, especially donors?*

*To what degree is the Child Protection Programme aligned with UNICEF's new Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021?*

*To what extent has the design of the Child Protection Programme taken into account girls' and boys' different needs according to age, gender, ethnicity and other social identities, especially the most vulnerable?*

*How has the Child Protection Programme ensured that the voices of girls and boys are heard and reflected throughout?*

**Summary of main findings:** The evaluation found that the Child Protection Programme is highly relevant to the Cambodian child protection context, particularly the multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral design and approach. The Programme is relevant to the SDGs set out in Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular, Goals 16.2 and 17.8. There is no need to adjust the Programme as it is already well aligned with the relevant goals. The Programme is also highly relevant and in line with UNICEF's Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021, by ways of taking a system-strengthening approach to child protection and focussing on developing the capacity of the national child protection system.

The decision to focus the Programme in Cambodia on the reintegration of children out of institutional care and into family and community-based care was found to be particularly relevant given the high numbers of children in (unsafe and unregulated) institutional care, and reliance on residential care institutions to meet child protection needs.

There was insufficient evidence to determine whether the Child Protection Programme has met the priorities and conditions set by development partners, especially donors, as UNICEF National Committee donors do not set conditions.

By consulting with the Adolescent and Youth Reference Group and by conducting the survey of children undergoing reintegration, the evaluation was able to include insights on the perspectives of girls and boys. Overall, the consensus is that children do not have the opportunity to inform programme design and monitoring frameworks within the Child Protection Programme.

### *Relevance of system-strengthening approach*

The evaluation findings demonstrate a strong consensus amongst key stakeholders on the relevance of the Child Protection Programme's aims and design, which reflect the priorities of development partners and are in line with UNICEF's current strategic approach. Taking a system-strengthening approach to child protection, focussed on developing the capacity of the national child protection system, was highly consistent with the SDG goals 16.2 and 17.8<sup>26</sup> and with UNICEF's Global Strategic Plan 2014-2017 (with its specific focus on system-strengthening in Outcome 6) and remains highly relevant under the new Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021, which identifies system-strengthening amongst its eight change strategies. The Child Protection Programme's design, which aims to strengthen the capacity of the education, health and justice sectors, also reflects the Global Strategic Plan's emphasis on the importance of engaging allied systems, including health and education, in responding to child protection concerns.<sup>27</sup>

Working with the Government to strengthen the effectiveness of the national child protection system was recognised by stakeholders as particularly important in the Cambodian context, given the many different players involved in child protection and, historically, the lack of any coordination between them. UNICEF's investment in the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC) was particularly useful in this regard, as it was designed to promote *"the coordination of child protection*

<sup>26</sup> Goal 16.2 requires States to "[e]nd abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children while SDG 17.8 requires states to "[f]ully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology."

<sup>27</sup> UN Doc. E/ICEF/2013/21, 11 July 2013, para. 19.

work — to have a more systemic approach in order to build the entire child protection system in Cambodia<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, government representatives, key donors and local authorities alike emphasised the need for the establishment of a coordinated child protection system led by the Government, and several recognised that progress had been made since UNICEF's Programme began in 2016. A representative from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) acknowledged the importance of UNICEF's contributions to strengthening coordination within a systems framework, noting that: *“Three years ago there was a disjointed approach in Cambodia [...]”*<sup>29</sup>

### *Relevance of reintegration*

Since 2016, the UNICEF Child Protection Programme in Cambodia has focussed on the reintegration of children from institutional care through reunification and family or community-based placements. This focus was found to be highly relevant to the Cambodian context and national priorities. A mapping report undertaken by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) during 2014-2015 found that 11,171 children were resident in residential care institutions (RCIs) in the five priority provinces,<sup>30</sup> and that the majority of these children had at least one living parent. The study also found that, due to a lack of registration and oversight, many of these institutions fell short in their ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care. In addition, in a number of unregulated RCIs, concerning practices have emerged, such as overcrowding or exploitation, and, in some cases, there is even a concern that poor living conditions may have been deliberately orchestrated to attract donor funding.

Whilst there will always be children who, for a multiplicity of reasons, are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment and, as a result, are in need of special protection and alternative care, there has been evidence since the 1960s that long-term placement in residential care institutions is not in the best interests of children, and more recently research has shown that it results in less optimal cognitive development outcomes for children when compared to alternative family-based options such as foster care.<sup>31</sup> There is international consensus that family-based alternative care, such as kinship care, foster care or even adoption should be prioritised, and that institutional care should be regarded as a placement of last resort, to be used only where it is not possible to place a child in a family setting or it is not in the best interests of the child to do so.<sup>32</sup> This is also reflected in the Preamble to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which notes that *“the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment.”*

The CRC Committee recommended in its Concluding Observations in 2011 in response to the Government's last periodic report under the CRC, that the Government implement mechanisms to reintegrate institutionalised children into their families; and that the number of children in RCIs be reduced.<sup>33</sup> UNICEF's decision to focus the Programme on reducing the number of children, and its engagement with the Government to reunify or place children in family-based alternative care was, therefore, highly relevant to the national context and to the building of a CRC-compliant child protection system. Indeed, until the issue of using RCIs as a first response rather than last resort when family problems or child protection issues arise was tackled, any attempts to build a fully functioning and effective child protection system were likely to be undermined.

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<sup>28</sup> Group interview, key stakeholders and implementing partners, 12 May 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Individual interview, USAID, 28 September 2017.

<sup>30</sup> MoSVY, Mapping of Residential Care Institutions: Preliminary data compilation and findings, February 2017. The survey work for this report was undertaken in 2014 and 2015. The exact number of children in RCIs was unclear, but for the purposes of this evaluation, the figure provided by MoSVY is relied upon.

<sup>31</sup> Greenberg A., and Williamson J., Families not Orphanages, Better Care Network, September 2010. Available from [www.bettercarenetwork.org/library](http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/library).

<sup>32</sup> See Preamble and Article 20 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. See also Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, A/RES/64/142, 24 February 2010.

<sup>33</sup> CRC/C/KHM/CO/2-3, 3 August 2015, para. 46.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has strongly endorsed the approach taken by the Child Protection Programme, as demonstrated both by government commitments to deinstitutionalisation as a general concept and by setting a target: 30 per cent of the children who were resident in RCIs in the five priority provinces at the time of the mapping to be reintegrated by the end of 2018 (either through reunification or an alternative community-based placement). This target is contained in the RGC's Action Plan on Reforming Child Care as well as UNICEF's 2016-2018 Country Programme. Evaluation findings suggest that the need to reintegrate children with their families and communities is increasingly recognised by local Government and by Cambodian communities.

Finally, strengthening of families and communities and the prevention of separation and reunification of families is a clear focus of both the UNICEF's Global Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and the Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021. It is relevant under Goal Area 5 of the Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021: *"Every child has an equitable chance in life."* The rate of children in residential care is treated as an impact indicator for Goal Area 5.

As discussed in the effectiveness section of the report below, however, some stakeholders expressed concern that the focus of the Child Protection Programme on reintegration served to detract attention from other child protection issues. As one of UNICEF's implementing partners explained, *"the shift went totally off of children on the streets, off of children in communities, just to orphanages, and it was all anyone was talking about [...] this is one part of our work, maybe three or four per cent of our work, or less [...] but, because of this great positive change that Government have taken, it is the only thing that matters anymore and it's something we've struggled with."*<sup>34</sup>

#### *Relevance of focus on violence against children*

Preventing and responding to VAC is a second key focus of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme. Following the Cambodia Violence against Children Survey<sup>35</sup> (CVACS) report in 2013, which recorded high levels of all forms of VAC, a decision was made to include *"girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence"* alongside the Child Protection Programme's original target group: *"those separated from their family, or at risk of separation."* The decision to incorporate VAC in the programme design, and to support the development of a costed inter-ministerial VAC action plan is highly relevant, particularly given the high rates of VAC recorded in the CVACS report, much of which goes unreported and is not addressed.<sup>36</sup> The decision to incorporate VAC as a programme focus is also one that aligns with global development priorities as set out in the SDGs and, in particular, SDG 5.1 and SDG 16.2. The focus of the programme on VAC is also aligned with UNICEF's Global Strategic Plans 2014-2017 and 2018-2021, both of which identify VAC prevention and response as priority areas, and in particular, Goal Area 3 of the Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021: *"Every child is protected from violence and exploitation."*<sup>37</sup>

#### *Relevance of programme design to children's needs*

The Child Protection Programme was designed to strengthen the capacity of the child protection system to provide prevention and response services across demographic groups. UNICEF's reporting disaggregates beneficiaries according to age, gender, and other vulnerabilities, demonstrating an awareness of the need to consider whether programme interventions are reaching particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups of children. As will be discussed further in the effectiveness section of the evaluation, outcomes for children who received services were found to vary across groups in some cases; in particular, girls who have received reintegration support do not appear to be doing as well as boys, indicating a need to revisit programme interventions and ensure that they are meeting the particular needs of vulnerable girls.

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<sup>34</sup> Individual interview with key stakeholder and implementing partner, 15 May 2018.

<sup>35</sup> See section 2.2 above.

<sup>36</sup> See section 2.2 above.

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2018-2021.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Strategic_Plan_2018-2021.pdf).

The needs of particularly vulnerable groups of children were prioritised in certain aspects of programme design, for instance, the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children identifies addressing gendered dimensions of VAC and supporting children who are at increased risk or particularly vulnerable amongst its priorities. Priority groups identified in the plan include: children with disabilities; children living in residential care; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) children; children working on the street and out of school; child migrants and children of migrant families; children living in remote or rural areas; children from minority religious and ethnic backgrounds and children in conflict with the law or whose mothers are incarcerated. Furthermore, the Plan's prevention strategy calls for the implementation of gender equity approaches through the media and in schools, the development and implementation of a child marriage and teenage pregnancy framework for ethnic minority children; and the incorporation of a special section on children with disabilities into the Positive Parenting toolkit. The Clinical Handbook on Healthcare for Children Subjected to Violence or Sexual Abuse, one of the activities contained in the VAC Plan, also includes guidance for practitioners on the gendered aspects of VAC and VAC response and contains a section on disability. Finally, there is significant emphasis on child-friendly law enforcement in the multi-sectoral child protection response strategy to respond to the needs of children in conflict with the law.<sup>38</sup>

Notably, respondents identified street children as among the most vulnerable groups in their communities in all the research locations, and as a group who pose a particular challenge to child protection services.<sup>39</sup> In light of this, several 3PC partners are delivering prevention services, such as basic assistance or vocational training to this group of children. These services admit that they struggle to address underlying child protection concerns that cause children to be working or living in the street and to have a meaningful impact on children's circumstances. As one stakeholder explained: "*M'Lop Tapang (a 3PC partner providing services in Sihanoukville) not only provides them with food but also education. The children want to go back to the street, and the parents are not happy. They claim that their children return to the street because they would earn more than in the centre. M'Lop Tapang even rents rooms for them, but they are not happy with it. Even we try our best to get them to return to home villages — we did everything for them! [...] But they did not stay and returned to the street.*"<sup>40</sup>

Given the difficulty of designing interventions which effectively meet the needs of street children, and the fact that this is a particularly vulnerable group of children in Cambodia, UNICEF should consider how adequate support can be provided to address the particular problems faced by street children in future programming.

As set out in the methodology, the evaluation only addressed Output 4 in relation to the other outputs. It deals with "*strengthened capacity of at least 20 adolescent and youth-focused organizations to work with and for adolescents (10-19 years old) and implement age and gender-appropriate interventions to promote safe and protective behaviours and practices.*" However, the evaluators were able to meet with representatives of the Adolescent and Youth Reference Group, who provided information on how boys' and girls' voices have been heard and reflected as part of the Programme, including through the making of a video. It is important to note that this Reference Group, who are UNICEF's primary source of young people's perspectives, consists largely of people who are now aged between 18 and 24 years old. Although individual children have opportunities to express their views about the services they have received during UNICEF field visits, there is little evidence that children have the opportunity to provide input to the programme design, or that their perspectives have been integrated into the programmes' monitoring frameworks in a systematic way. The inclusion in the evaluation of a survey

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<sup>38</sup> See the material produced by Hagar under the Child Protection Programme, including the Curriculum for a Court Preparation Programme booklet for care-givers to understand the court process and, in particular Bona goes to Court at [www.hagarinternational.org](http://www.hagarinternational.org).

<sup>39</sup> The CRC Committee noted in their Concluding Observations in 2011 (CRC/C/KHM/CO/2-3, 3 August 1011 Para. 69) that street children remain an issue that needs to be addressed by Government.

<sup>40</sup> Group interview with Provincial Women and Children Consultative Committee (WCCC), 8 December 2017.

of children undergoing the process of reintegration increased available evidence on children's voices and perspectives. The survey provided individual children with opportunities to express their views about the services. The need to incorporate children's perspectives in programme monitoring was recognised by multiple stakeholders, who identified this as an area where improvement is needed going forward.

## 5.2 Effectiveness

Given the breadth of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, which is comprised of numerous interventions designed to build the child protection system at multiple levels, and to respond to a range of child protection risks and vulnerabilities, analysis of its effectiveness will be presented in four parts:

1. **Effectiveness of programming designed to promote child protection response:** This section will assess UNICEF's contributions to the child protection system's ability to identify and respond to cases where children have suffered, or are at-risk of suffering serious harm;
2. **Effectiveness of programming designed to promote children's reintegration into family care:** This section will assess UNICEF's work to support children undergoing the process of reintegration;
3. **Effectiveness of programming designed to prevent violence against children (VAC) and unnecessary family separation:** This section will assess UNICEF's work to reduce risk of VAC and unnecessary family separation, including through delivering prevention services to children and families, and through building capacity of key stakeholders to prevent VAC and unnecessary family separation in their own communities; and
4. **Effectiveness of programme monitoring:** This section will assess UNICEF's contributions to measuring, monitoring and reporting results.

### 5.2.1. Effectiveness of the child protection response

*This section explores the degree to which, and how effectively, the national child protection system has been able to identify and respond to the needs of at-risk children, drawing out the contributions of UNICEF's programme. It considers UNICEF's ability to mobilise partnerships to strengthen the delivery of child protection response services and identifies some of the main outputs and results of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, which relate to strengthening the child protection response in Cambodia.*

***To what degree has UNICEF's Child Protection Programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for keeping vulnerable girls and boys in families, supporting their safe reintegration into family care, and protecting them from violence through institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services and a supportive community environment?***

*To what degree and how appropriately have partnerships been mobilized in a manner that contributes effectively to the Child Protection Programme?*

*To what degree has the national child protection system<sup>41</sup> been able to respond to the needs of vulnerable girls and boys, especially the most marginalized, that were at risk of being separated or being exposed to violence?*

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<sup>41</sup> Please refer to UNICEF's understanding of national child protection system put forward in Wulczyn, F., Daro, D., Fluke, J., Feldman, S., Glodek, C. and Lifanda, K. 2010, Adapting a systems approach to child protection: Key concepts and considerations, New York, UNICEF; and presented as: "Every family, community, and nation has a child protection system in place that reflects the underlying cultural value base and diversity within that context. As such, a particular child protection system manifests a combination of cultural norms, standards of behavior, history, resources and external influences that over time reflect the choices participants have made regarding their system."

**Summary of main findings:** Since 2016, UNICEF's Child Protection Programme has successfully mobilised relevant government authorities to make actionable commitments toward the development of a national child protection system with significant buy-in from the Government and the delivery of child protection response (services) for both at-risk and separated children. UNICEF's advocacy work with the Government to achieve institutional commitments from key duty bearers has added significant value.

The Programme has taken a number of extremely important steps towards responding to child protection cases by putting a child protection infrastructure in place. Child protection services for the reintegration of children from institutional care and basic prevention services for vulnerable families, (including the most marginalised) to prevent separation are in place in the five priority provinces. However, response services for children exposed to violence still require further development.

Major bottlenecks remain, and these have a significant impact on the effectiveness of child protection system-strengthening. The first is the lack of detailed government instruction on how the child protection system should function, setting out which body is to take responsibility in cases of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The second is the lack of a developed child protection case-management system, and the third the lack of awareness and engagement in child protection by health and education professionals. In addition, there needs to be a strengthening of collaboration and coordination between social service providers and the police, who often appear unaware of the role of social service providers in a child protection response.

### *National commitments to strengthen child protection response (systems)*

Since 2016, UNICEF's Child Protection Programme has successfully mobilised relevant government authorities, and, in particular, supported MoSVY to make actionable commitments toward the development of a national child protection system, capable of identifying and responding to child protection risk. Key stakeholders consistently identified the RGC's increased recognition of the importance of child protection as a key achievement of the Child Protection Programme, emphasising that UNICEF's role in mobilising partners has made a major contribution in a challenging environment. Given the lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities between agencies with responsibility for child protection in Cambodia, UNICEF's advocacy work with Government to achieve institutional commitments from key duty bearers has added significant value.

These efforts have also resulted in a number of policy achievements, which have laid the groundwork for meaningful change. For instance, the mapping exercise of registered and unregistered residential care facilities in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, along with 24 other provinces resulted in the Government's commitment to a reintegration programme for children in RCIs. A further example is the costed Action Plan on VAC launched by MoSVY in December 2017. The Action Plan contains commitments to the "*strengthening and expansion of an integrated child protection system to prevent and respond to violence against children.*" It sets out a number of outputs and activities related to the above, as well as indicators for their delivery, and assigns responsibility to relevant duty bearers. These commitments are reiterated in the National Action Plan for Improving Child Care (2017), which focuses on operationalising de-institutionalisation and the process of reintegration of children living in RCIs, but also includes a strategic action relevant to child protection response: the commitment to "*strengthen social work to support effective case management, family preservation approaches and broader child protection intervention.*" Commitments to operationalise the plan have also been made at province level; Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (DoSVY) authorities in each of UNICEF's five target provinces have adopted provincial child care action plans to guide its implementation.

Finally, UNICEF has provided significant input to the Government's plans to operationalise child protection services. In early 2016, UNICEF developed a paper, Observations and Recommendations: Creating an effective and efficient child protection structure within MoSVY, which provided helpful and important guidance to MoSVY on the possible structure and functions of a proposed Child Protection Technical Unit within the Ministry, and the strengthening of child protection response more broadly. MoSVY has submitted a restructure request to the Council of Ministers which includes UNICEF's recommendations.<sup>42,43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> At the time of writing, the outcome of the request to the Council of Ministers is still pending.

<sup>43</sup> We understand that UNICEF has contributed to the development of guidelines for the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Law; however, to the best of our knowledge these have yet to be finalised, adopted or implemented.

### *National child protection response in practice*

Evaluation findings reveal that whilst UNICEF has contributed to the establishment of an institutional framework for child protection response, this institutional framework has yet to translate into a coordinated child protection system, which is systematically identifying and responding to children at risk. Evaluation findings suggest that the proportion of cases receiving child protection response services (as opposed to prevention services) is likely to be quite low, as the child protection system is predominately focussed on the process of reintegration of children from institutional care and delivery of basic prevention and response services to vulnerable families.

Social workers from both DoSVY and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of 3PC and across both priority and non-priority provinces, consistently emphasised that their case work is dominated by reintegration cases. In addition, though to a much lesser extent, social workers reported responding to cases where children were without care, such as cases involving abandoned children or street children and, occasionally, children involved in drug use or light offending.

#### **Box 1: 3PC and the delivery of child protection response**

3PC is a network comprised of MoSVY, UNICEF, Friends International (who manage a number of civil society organisations (CSOs)), and a number of other implementing and technical partners, who provide specialised services on a contracted basis. The network's objectives include the development and coordination of social work services in Cambodia; the facilitation of cooperation between Government and NGOs, and contribution to the creation of a national child protection system. Government authorities provide leadership, monitoring and oversight of the network, Friends International provides capacity building to NGO and community-based organisation (CBO) service providers while UNICEF provides technical and financial support.

Through 3PC, UNICEF has supported the recruitment of 17 social workers (nine women, 52.9 per cent) who have been recruited by MoSVY and DoSVY in UNICEF's five provinces (five in Battambang, three in Siem Reap, five in Phnom Penh, two in Kandal and two in Preah Sihanouk) and 14 (seven women; 50 per cent) into NGOs. Gradually, MoSVY will take on responsibility for funding their salaries.<sup>44</sup> As discussed below, and in line with UNICEF and 3PC planning, the majority of social work capacity has been absorbed by the reintegration initiative.

By contrast, evaluators came across very few cases where social workers were engaged in the provision of child protection response services to children exposed to abuse or violence in the home. These findings are supported by case data presented in UNICEF's quarterly progress reports from 2017, which list the types of vulnerabilities faced by programme beneficiaries.<sup>45</sup> The data suggests that cases of poverty, marginalisation, truancy, children living on the streets and children who have witnessed violence comprise the vast majority of the 3PC caseload, with less than three per cent of vulnerabilities involving some form of violence, abuse or neglect within the home. Because multiple vulnerabilities are counted for individual cases, it is unclear exactly what proportion of the 18,104 children reportedly provided with targeted child protection prevention and response services since the start of the 2016 programme were cases where children had been exposed to violence and the proportion subject to other child protection risks.

The finding is also supported by 3PC case data from 2017: the data, which includes referrals received by all 3PC partners (including those reported through the Child Safe Hotline) included 300 cases of physical violence, 152 cases of emotional violence, 81 cases of sexual violence and 15 cases of neglect. This suggests that cases of abuse occurring within the home comprise a small proportion of the 8,764 child protection prevention and response services delivered by 3PC in 2017.<sup>46</sup> Notably, whilst the child's age was not provided in all cases, of the 135 cases where the child's age was provided, over 80 per cent involved children aged 12 and over, suggesting that cases of young children are being missed by child protection service providers.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, and as is explored

<sup>44</sup> At the time of writing three social workers had been placed on the MoSVY payroll.

<sup>45</sup> UNICEF Cambodia Quarterly Progress Reports to the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, Q1-Q4, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> UNICEF Cambodia Quarterly Progress Reports to the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, Q1-Q4, 2017.

<sup>47</sup> 12 of these 135 cases involved children aged 18 and over.

below, few of the services delivered by implementing partners constitute comprehensive child protection response services.

DoSVY social workers were not found to play an active role in responding to cases of violence and abuse. Rather, and as will be discussed in the following section, respondents tended to identify the police as the relevant government authority for responding to cases of VAC. DoSVY is engaged where it is necessary to make alternative care arrangements for the child but is not routinely notified where there are potential child protection issues. As one DoSVY representative explained, *“we might receive information about a case [of VAC] but normally we receive the report at the end of the case. In terms of a case where social welfare would be engaged — an example would be a case involving an orphan child who is found by the police — the police would report that kind of case to us.”*<sup>48</sup>

The low level of identification and response to violence against children and other cases where children are at risk of serious harm relates to a number of factors which indicate a still immature child protection system. These include: ineffective identification and referral pathways, lack of understanding of family dynamics and risk, persistent stigma around sexual violence, acceptance of physical violence as a cultural norm, lack of clarity amongst stakeholders of their roles and responsibilities and limited social work capacity and underdeveloped services for responding to VAC and other child protection cases. The dominance of institutional care in Cambodia, both regulated and unregulated, also serves as a barrier to the establishment of an effective child protection response as it provides a ‘ready’ solution where there are child protection issues and addressing the use of RCIs has absorbed much of the existing and limited human capacity within the current child protection system.

#### *Effectiveness of identification and referral*

Evaluation findings suggest that identification and referral of child protection cases is often inadequate, including in cases where children are known to have been exposed to violence. Respondents gave several examples where cases had only been referred to appropriate authorities after the child had experienced significant or on-going harm, or where authorities learned about a case but failed to respond appropriately. Delayed identification and referral are compounded by a lack of clarity around referral pathways, and the roles and responsibilities of relevant authorities, as well as a weak understanding of how to assess children and families and evaluate risk.

#### **Box 2: Child Safe Hotline referrals**

Whilst evaluation findings demonstrate significant barriers to identification and referral, the Child Safe Hotline run by 3PC, and supported by UNICEF’s programme, does appear to be functioning as an effective referral mechanism. The hotline received 2,404 reports in 2017. Whilst the vast majority of these cases related to the need for services (such as health and medical services or educational support) or children at risk of separation, there were 268 reports of physical violence, 162 reports of emotional violence, 49 reports of sexual violence, and 12 reports of trafficking. Hotline referrals comprise the majority of 3PC’s referrals of cases of physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence and neglect, indicating that the hotline is an important tool for identification and referral. 74 per cent of cases reported to the helpline came from members of the community (including children and foreigners).<sup>49</sup> In addition to the hotline, several NGO partners in UNICEF priority provinces explained that the majority of their referrals come from their own networks of community and street-based outreach workers.<sup>50</sup>

Qualitative findings suggest that where cases of violence against children are referred to authorities, these tend to be initially reported by neighbours or community members, who inform the police or the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC). The CCWC explained that they often resolve cases themselves together with local police, through delivering mediation or educational counselling, sometimes requiring a commitment from the perpetrator to change his or her behaviour. As one commune level police officer explained; *“I was at a training yesterday provided by the Ministry*

<sup>48</sup> Individual interview with DoSVY, 11 December 2017.

<sup>49</sup> 3PC Child Helpline Data set, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Individual interview with key stakeholder and implementing partner, 15 May 2018.

*of Interior National Police Department, and at that training they advised us not to crack down on the domestic violence cases [...] not to arrest the perpetrator, but to go in and give counselling to the family if there is an injury.”<sup>51</sup>*

The following interaction with a commune level CCWC representative, illustrates a typical response to a report of domestic violence:

*“Have you had any cases of serious violence against children in your commune? Yes, there are cases.*

***Can you tell me about a recent case?*** *There was a domestic violence case where the wife was beaten up by the husband. He beat his wife and then finally he left his wife. I tried my best to help the children of the family [...].*

***Did you learn through your investigation with the children whether they were also victims of violence?*** *Yes, all three [...] whenever he was drunk. The family rented a room and I went to provide advice and counselling to the family and the father in particular. When I was there he said 'I won't do it any more'. I visited four times before the father finally left – we expected that he would change, but there were no changes.*

***How did you learn about the case in the first place?*** *The neighbour came to us and reported the case and the Sangkat authority sent staff to the house, to the family.”<sup>52</sup>*

Notably in the case above, local authorities and police did not at any point refer the case to social welfare authorities, even after the father abandoned the family (at which point the children were placed in residential care by an NGO). The responses of both the CCWC and the police indicate a lack of awareness of the likely repetition of domestic violence, especially when linked with the use of alcohol, the potential risk to children of witnessing violence and the even greater risk of being the subject of violence themselves. No effective action was taken to either stop the violence or ensure the mother and children were supported and thus lessen the chance of separation of children from the mother if the father left.

While this is just one case example, the difficulties with effective identification and referral were found across virtually all the localities included in the study, including both priority and non-priority provinces. While domestic violence was recognised as a prevalent problem, the police, the CCWC and commune council members interviewed for the evaluation demonstrated an inability to identify or assess the risk associated with violence and have little understanding of how and when to refer a case to DoSVY, where the social workers are to be found. Where a decision was made to refer a child protection case to a higher-level authority, the referral was almost exclusively made first to the anti-trafficking police at provincial level, who take responsibility for responding to domestic violence. As one DoSVY representative explained: *“We [DoSVY] miss these cases – although sometimes we do hear about the case later.”<sup>53</sup>*

The police, at present, see their role as relating to the safety of the population and to the investigation of crime and not as a constituent part of a child protection service engaged in prevention and response to VAC. UNICEF has funded the development of training for the administrative post and commune police officers on identification and understanding of child protection and on referral and response. At the inception of the evaluation, however, the training had not been started,<sup>54</sup> due to bureaucratic issues, but two training sessions were held in March 2018, the first for Kandal, Preah Sihanouk and Siem Reap police officers from provincial and commune level, and members of the CCWC, and the second for police officers in Battambang and Phnom Penh (with the same composition of officers).

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<sup>51</sup> Individual interview with Commune Police (rural), 14 December 2017. This is in direct contrast to the view of a judge interviewed for the evaluation who regarded domestic violence as an issue not suitable for mediation.

<sup>52</sup> Individual interview with CWCC, urban commune, 23 November 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Individual interview with DoSVY, 11 December 2017.

<sup>54</sup> This appeared to be largely due to bureaucratic problems on the side of the Royal Cambodian Police, Department of Administrative Police Force Affairs.

In one of the Government priority provinces, DoSVY reported that there had been no direct referrals of child protection cases – the social worker's view was that people reported child protection cases to the commune council or the commune police with whom they felt they had a connection rather than to the provincial level where they did not know the people involved.

Health and education service providers included in the study also demonstrated an inability to identify and assess risk and a lack of knowledge about referral pathways. Indeed, in the absence of an established and known referral mechanism, health and education practitioners do not appear to be actively engaged in the referral of child protection cases. When asked about child protection, medical professionals explained that they responded to cases of physical and sexual violence by, in particular, conducting examinations of alleged rape victims and providing treatment. In addition to a lack of awareness of child protection risk and a clear referral mechanism, evaluation findings suggest that the stigma surrounding (sexual) violence and a failure to respect victims' confidentiality, or take cases of violence seriously, are significant barriers to an effective child protection response. Several medical professionals reported that they were unlikely to inform social welfare or law enforcement authorities, even in a case where a child has been a victim of rape. As one respondent explained:

*“Some victims [of sexual violence] are seven or eight years old and the family doesn't want it to be revealed because of the reputation of the family. Then we don't ask the NGO to help [...] frankly speaking, we would just give the child back to the family because they prefer it that way. We only examine the child and take the child and if the girl is already at child-bearing age we just give birth spacing pills.”<sup>55</sup>*

Overall, medical professionals did not see it as their role to refer cases to DoSVY. In Battambang province, a group of provincial hospital representatives stated that they had never referred a case to DoSVY or the Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (OSVY) despite dealing with around 100 cases of child rape per year.

Similarly, education professionals interviewed demonstrated low awareness of child protection, and do not appear to play an active role in identification and referral; none reported having referred a case where a child was at risk of or exposed to violence to relevant authorities. Indeed, it was not clear that teachers interviewed for this evaluation really understood what was meant by the term 'child protection'.

Several components of the Child Protection Programme have been specifically designed to address lack of awareness about child protection, and low levels of identification and risk assessment by health and education professionals, as well as religious leaders. For instance, UNICEF has contributed to the development of a child protection policy for schools, which was approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in 2016, and supported MoEYS to develop a five-year action plan (the Child Protection in Schools Policy Action Plan 2019-2023) for the implementation of the policy, which is currently in draft form.<sup>56</sup> Following recommendations in the Study on Alternative Care Community Practices for Children in Cambodia, including Pagoda-based Care (2017) commissioned by UNICEF,<sup>57</sup> the Child Protection in Pagodas Programme has included the development of a Child Protection Policy,<sup>58</sup> which addresses identification and referral, and has incorporated training materials on identification and referral into the Buddhist Education Institute Curriculum. In addition, UNICEF has supported the development of a Clinical Handbook on Healthcare for Children Subjected to Violence or Sexual Abuse, designed to increase the capacity of health providers to identify and respond to child protection risk, which will be rolled out through a national training of trainers across

<sup>55</sup> Individual interview with Chief of Maternity Ward, Provincial Hospital, 27 November 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Part of the Draft Child Protection in Schools Policy Action Plan 2019-2023 is to establish child protection officers in primary and lower secondary schools in line with the Child Protection in Schools Operational Manual. However, the Action Plan does not envisage making referrals to DoSVY but instead plans for the establishment of yet another body — child protection committees — to be established at national and sub-national levels to oversee implementation of the Action Plan. See also the Child Protection in Schools Policy Action Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Framework which sets out actions and time periods for achievement and indicators.

<sup>57</sup> UNICEF, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Ministry of Cults and Religion, June 2018.

UNICEF's target provinces for integrated early childhood development (IECD) programming. However, at the time of the evaluation, the training materials still had to be developed.

Given that these elements of the programme have not as yet been fully implemented, it is difficult to comment on their effectiveness. However, evaluation findings clearly demonstrate their relevance and importance to ensuring that child protection stakeholders have the skills and knowledge necessary to identify and respond to child protection concerns. But critically, whilst the Clinical Handbook on Healthcare for Children Subjected to Violence or Sexual Abuse, the Pagoda Programme and the draft Child Protection in Schools Policy Action Plan include information on reporting and support, none of these documents provides clear referral mechanisms for children who require a child protection intervention. The lack of clarity as to which government authority is responsible for responding to cases where children are at-risk of, or suffering violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation to an extent that requires intervention remains a barrier to the effective delivery of child protection services and is an issue which requires urgent attention if all the initiatives to improve child protection are to be effective.

In sum, identification and referral of cases that require a child protection response are weak at present, due to practitioners' lack of awareness and inability to assess risk, and the lack of mechanisms that clearly establish when and to whom cases should be referred. The Child Protection Programme has supported the development of much needed tools to improve identification and referral, but these have yet to be fully implemented and embedded. Once training has been delivered it is likely to address lack of awareness and inability to assess risk. UNICEF has taken steps to address this in a paper on observations and recommendations on Sub-Decree 54 in 2016. In addition, MoSVY has taken steps to address the issue of responsibility by presenting a written submission to the Council of Ministers requesting a restructure. At the time of writing, the response of the Council of Ministers is unknown.

#### *Effectiveness of child protection response services*

The previous section has illustrated several important barriers to the effective identification and referral of cases that require a child protection response in the Cambodian context. These 'demand side' barriers help to explain why the child protection system appears to respond to relatively few cases where children have been exposed to violence, and why many of the cases that enter the system do so only after they have already reached crisis point.

Evaluation findings suggest that when a case is identified and receives a 'formal' child protection response, this is almost always provided by an NGO service provider, including 3PC partners and others. The nature of services is variable and ad hoc, but they often include (temporary) placement within an institution, the delivery of basic psychosocial support, educational counselling to parents and caretakers, and in some cases, measures to address emergency-level risk such as hospitalisation or arrangement of other medical services.<sup>59</sup> In cases of serious violence, response services may involve a criminal investigation led by the police. In addition, local government authorities such as the CCWC described that they occasionally provide basic material support to the case, often drawing on donations from generous individuals. However, the nature of this support also tends to be ad hoc and highly dependent upon the capacity and resources of the individual member of the CCWC, the local police and the village chief.

Findings suggest a number of important gaps in child protection response services. Very few cases were found to receive a comprehensive assessment of child protection risk or an individualised and ongoing response designed to mitigate that risk. No government authorities were found to be engaged in standardised case management of child protection cases, where abuse, neglect or exploitation had occurred. Furthermore, very few family-based individualised child protection response services were found to be available.

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<sup>59</sup> Friends International and 3PC partners' data on responses to cases of abuse.

Through UNICEF support, the 3PC partnership has delivered a range of community-based services in the five priority provinces. Qualitative data collection in the comparison provinces (Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu and Kampot) indicates that there are very few child protection response services available there, and where such services are needed, children are referred by authorities to NGO services in one of the five priority provinces. This demonstrates that despite their limitations, 3PC services, supported by the Child Protection Programme, are filling an important gap in the Cambodian child protection system.

The dependence of the national child protection system on NGOs in responding to cases where children are exposed or at-risk is clearly demonstrated by qualitative data. When asked to explain their process for responding to a child protection case, government authorities, including DoSVY, OSVY and CCWC authorities across provinces, consistently described referring cases to NGOs. After having made a referral, it is reported that government bodies do not follow up on the case. This approach is consistent with the division of responsibilities across the 3PC partnership but is one that needs to be addressed. While in the short-term collaboration with NGOs or referral to an NGO service may contribute to the development and strengthening of the national child protection system, having many different NGOs running different programmes in an unplanned manner is unlikely to lead to a comprehensive child protection system that meets current understandings of good practice. As one key stakeholder noted: *“how do we get to a stage where NGOs are commissioned to provide the services we need, rather than acting on their own?”*<sup>60</sup>

At present, respondents suggested that relying on NGO capacity may be necessary given the lack of sufficient government resources (human and financial) allocated to respond to child protection needs. As one OSVY representative told evaluators: *“when we meet people in the field they are very poor and I go during the visit empty handed, so if possible, I would like the donors to give us a package or kit to provide to people who are in bad need of help.”*<sup>61</sup> And a DoSVY social worker explained, *“at DoSVY our staff do not work 24 hours – we only have time to do the coordination work [...] so we try our best to refer to an NGO partner.”*<sup>62</sup>

Reliance on NGO capacity may also be necessary given the lack of clarity across government services about responsibility for child protection. However, there are limits to the ability of NGOs to fill this gap in authority. In particular, they do not have authority to remove a child from his or her home, regardless of the risk posed to the child. Several NGO representatives raised this as a major challenge, noting the need for a clear legal standard and the identification of a competent authority in government who can take such action.

*“You know it is really, really problematic [...] We have been begging for a system where we can safely remove [a child] for even seven days, because sometimes a child needs massive nutrition, IV fluids, whatever it is, or the child is being hurt badly by a parent and even seven days can help us get the ball rolling [...] So even though NGOs are filling the gap, we're kind of not, because we still can't do it properly.”*<sup>63</sup>

The lack of a designated responsible authority for delivering a comprehensive child protection response, the lack of a government social work response to child protection cases and the unclear division of responsibility between various government authorities, and particularly the Ministry of Interior (Mol) and MoSVY, emerged as important gaps in the Cambodian system, which is currently heavily reliant on individual services provided by NGO actors. Children get passed from one organisation to another, with some falling through the gaps. As one key stakeholder observed: *“social work case management is an essential part of a child protection system, so the challenge is to transform what they have into a system for protecting children in communities. That is the central challenge of the Child Protection Programme: building social work capacity”*.<sup>64</sup> This was echoed by several respondents, including a number of service providers themselves, who identified lack of

<sup>60</sup> Individual interview with UNICEF Cambodia Country representative, 7 October 2017.

<sup>61</sup> Group interview with OSVY, 30 November 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Individual interview with DoSVY social worker, 22 November 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Individual interview with key stakeholder and implementing partner, 15 May 2018.

<sup>64</sup> Individual interview with UNICEF EAPRO, 7 October 2017.

practical social work and counselling skills as a capacity gap, which limits the ability of child protection response services to meet clients' needs effectively.

### 5.2.2. Effectiveness of the reintegration programme

*This section looks specifically at the effectiveness of reintegration and specifically at Outcome Indicator 1: the safe reunification of 30 per cent of children living in RCIs with their families or in family-type placements by the end of 2018.*

*In the context of this evaluation, 'reunification' is defined as the physical return of the child to the household where she or he was living prior to entering institutional care. Placement within the community, whether with kinship carers (who did not previously care for the family); foster carers; within a small group home or in supported independent living is referred to as a 'placement'. While being reunified or 'placed' back in the community, the children are going through 'reintegration' – which refers to the process of a child making what is hoped to be a permanent transition from care in a RCI back to parents, family or community-based care. Where both groups of children are referred to, the term children who are 'being reintegrated' or 'undergoing reintegration' is used.*

*To what degree and how appropriately have partnerships been mobilized in a manner that contributes effectively to the reintegration programme?*

*How satisfied have children, adolescents and their carers been with the quality of prevention and response services they have received?*

*How effective have behavioural change campaigns been designed to prevent and respond to violence and unnecessary family separation?*

*To what degree has UNICEF's Child Protection Programme contributed to supporting the safe reintegration of children into family care, and protecting them from violence?*

*To what degree has the reintegration programme integrated UNICEF's commitment to equity, gender equality, resilience and human rights?*

**Summary of main findings:** UNICEF's mobilisation of partnerships to promote the reintegration of children out of RCIs was found to be highly effective. In particular, UNICEF has achieved significant buy-in and commitment from the RGC towards the goal of promoting family-based care for the thousands of children living in RCIs across Cambodia, including the setting of a target to reintegrate 30 per cent of children living in RCIs into family-based care by 2018. Once the Government made this commitment, UNICEF then mobilised partnerships and resources, and provided technical support to Government to achieve these goals and to do so safely. This is evidenced by a number of key policy achievements at the national level.

Overall, the evaluation findings support the position that deinstitutionalisation of children, and the promotion of reunification and placements in the community, is a vital component of strengthening child protection in Cambodia. The majority of children included in the evaluation said that they felt safer and happier following placement and were pleased to be reunited with their families, and or communities.

Nevertheless, there is more work to be done on how reintegration is managed in practice. In particular, there is an urgent need to strengthen social work practices regarding family assessment and risk analysis, before a decision is made to reintegrate a child, as well as regular follow-up and review after placement has occurred to ensure the ongoing safety and well-being of children undergoing reintegration. The issue of children who cannot be located or contacted remains a matter of concern, and consideration needs to be given to the desirability of reunifying children whose parents are likely to migrate for work, or where the child may be encouraged to migrate by the parent as it has been shown to be almost impossible to monitor these children as required for the programme.

The Programme needs to focus on providing tailored, specialist and intensive social work support to the most vulnerable children and families, including younger children, girls, children with disabilities and children living in poorer households, to ensure that these children can benefit equally from the reintegration reforms, and have the opportunity to be safely cared for in a family or community environment. There is also a need to put in place contingency plans for children whose reunification or community-based placement breaks down or fails.

While recipients expressed satisfaction, support for children in the process of reintegration was found to be minimal and short-term, leading in some cases to family migration and a need for the child to earn money rather than attend school.

Regarding safety and well-being, although the majority of children undergoing reintegration were doing well, there was a sizeable minority who reported concerns for their safety, or who were assessed by DoSVY to need further support, and some who could not be located post-placement.

There is a clear and explicit commitment to the principles of equity, gender equality, resilience and human rights evident in the design of the reintegration programme, and this is well articulated in policies, guidelines and plans for implementation. However, in practice, younger children and disabled children are not undergoing reintegration at the same level as older children without special needs. In addition, while the majority of children in the survey showed high levels of well-being and resilience, a significant minority were doing less well, with girls disproportionately represented within this latter category.

### *Mapping of RCIs*

In 2015 UNICEF advocated for and provided technical support to MoSVY to conduct a mapping study of registered and unregistered residential care facilities in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, along with 24 other provinces, which helped to begin the process for reintegration efforts. Prior to the mapping exercise, the only available information on the number of RCIs and the children accommodated within them was based on an unpublished study from 2005<sup>65</sup> and on MoSVY inspections. Both of these were of limited use for estimating the number of children in RCIs, as the former was from 10 years previously and the latter was restricted to RCIs officially registered with MoSVY or who had signed an official memorandum of understanding.

The mapping exercise constitutes a significant achievement as it provided Cambodia with evidence-based data on the number of residential care facilities and children living in them. The mapping of residential care facilities in Cambodia (released in 2017) identified 406 RCIs and another 233 residential care facilities, with a total of 26,187 children.<sup>66</sup> This was a greater number than those known previously to MoSVY, and a considerable number of unregistered homes were identified. The mapping exercise offered a valuable opportunity to assess standards, care provided, and the situation and circumstances of the children living in institutions. A key finding of the 2015 mapping study was that just under 80 per cent of 13 to 17-year-old children living in RCIs had at least one living parent: a finding which underscored the need to understand why children were placed in RCIs and to develop a government strategy to reduce their number.

### *Sub-Decree 119 on the Management of Residential Care Centres*

At the end of 2015 and towards the beginning of 2016, UNICEF supported the Government to strengthen the legal framework for alternative care. A key achievement in this regard was the issuing by the Government of Sub-Decree 119 on the Management of Residential Care Centres in September 2015, which brought the management of all RCIs under the authority of MoSVY and set out strict requirements for the establishment and management of residential forms of alternative care. Sub-Decree 119 also contained a commitment that MoSVY would work to reduce the number of children resident in RCIs, and repeated the provision contained in the Prakas on Procedures to Implement the Policy on Alternative Care for Children issued by MoSVY in 2011 that permission for children to reside in residential care centres should be given only as a "*last and temporary option [...] possible only after the search for parents or parent, relative or guardian or foster parent has been exhausted.*"

### *Commitment on the implementation of Sub-Decree on the Management of Residential Care Centres*

In December 2015, UNICEF supported MoSVY to issue a commitment statement on the implementation of Sub-Decree 119. The commitment statement, which resulted from UNICEF's advocacy efforts, defined the key initial actions for the deinstitutionalisation process, and set the framework for efforts towards the safe reintegration of children. The statement included the following: measures to ensure improved oversight and tracking of residential institutions; measures to strengthen RCI 'gatekeeping' procedures to prevent the unnecessary admission of further children

<sup>65</sup> The comprehensive survey was carried out by Holt International with support from USAID. 8,270 children were identified by the survey. The figure provides an illustration of the growth of the number of children in residential care over the period of 10 years.

<sup>66</sup> These included transit homes and temporary emergency accommodation, group homes, pagodas and other religious buildings and boarding schools.

into residential care, measures to ensure that those children currently living in RCIs can be reintegrated into family-based placements wherever feasible, and measures to strengthen response mechanisms for handling cases of abuse.

*Action Plan for Improving Childcare with the target of safely returning 30 per cent of children in residential care to their families by 2018*

These reforms were followed by the development of the Action Plan for Improving Childcare, drafted in early 2016 and signed in late 2016, which set a goal for reintegration of 30 per cent of children resident in RCIs in the five target provinces covered by the 2016-2018 UNICEF Child Protection Programme. As part of the strategy to reach this target, the National Action Plan articulated the establishment of alternative care options and a national framework for fostering and assigned roles and responsibilities for relevant stakeholders to achieve this goal.

The Child Welfare Department in MoSVY is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the Action Plan for Improving Childcare, including deploying social workers to conduct case management of children to be reintegrated from residential care, and providing support, guidance and advice to DoSVY to implement provincial operational plans. MoSVY has established Provincial Reintegration Teams in the five priority provinces to support and speed up the reintegration processes. The DoSVY focal point is responsible for managing DoSVY social workers and supporting them to conduct case management with 3PC-recruited social workers. The role of the CCWC is to support and collaborate with DoSVY and the NGOs to follow up on children reintegrated from residential care.<sup>67</sup>

In addition, the Action Plan contains a commitment to preventing the registration and authorisation of new RCIs, and to reducing existing RCIs, by closing those that fail to meet minimum standards. In the last two years, no new RCI has been given approval to start operating by MoSVY, reflecting the impact that the Action Plan has had on government practice, and a total of 33 RCIs have been engaged in either reintegration, transition or closure. As of the end of 2017, a total of 13 RCIs have closed or are in the process of closure, five have transitioned into community-based care models, or are in the process of transition, while 25 are currently engaged in reintegrating children from their RCI into family-based care. A total of 80 RCIs have shown an interest in reintegrating children, while 33 are interested in transitioning into a community-based model. These results demonstrate significant progress towards implementation of the Action Plan, and evidence the value the Plan has had in mobilising partnerships to buy in to the key objectives of UNICEF's reintegration programme.

Finally, in accordance with the Action Plan and assistance from UNICEF, MoSVY has simplified its paper-based inspection system and converted it to digital tablet inspection to make it easier to identify failing RCIs. Under the new digital inspection system (developed by Open Institute with UNICEF support), RCI inspections are no longer conducted by the MoSVY National Inspection Team, but by trained OSVY officials using an 'inspection app' on a digital tablet.<sup>68</sup> The new digital system is aimed at making the system more effective, efficient and accurate, reducing the time required to conduct inspections, as well as enabling the collection of more comprehensive, detailed and disaggregated data, on facilities, staffing and children, that can be analysed and utilised for follow-up actions, including monitoring trends on institutionalisation, and measuring progress in promoting forms of

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<sup>67</sup> A CCWC Handbook for the implementation of the MoSVY Action Plan for Improving child care was being developed in early 2018, and the evaluation team was informed that this would be published and disseminated in the course of 2018. However, it should be noted that some RCIs have reintegrated children without informing or involving DoSVY.

<sup>68</sup> In early 2018 the digital inspection system was expanded to all provinces and new data became available. Previously inspections were carried out by five MoSVY officials. Under the reform more than 50 people among MoSVY/DoSVY and OSVY were trained on digital inspections.

family based care.<sup>69</sup> The number of staff able to undertake inspections has also increased: from five members of staff at national level to over 50 at national and sub-national level.

MoSVY has agreed to expand digital inspections to all types of residential care facilities in 2018, with UNICEF support and, in collaboration with Open Institute, new procedures have been developed for conducting inspections, including 'spot checks' of inspections conducted to verify that they have been carried out correctly. In addition, UNICEF has funded the Open Institute to develop a tracking tool to enable data to be kept on every child going through the reintegration process, which can be accessed by social workers.

#### *Further capacity development plans*

The Action Plan was accompanied by the production of two more important documents, which set out longer term goals for continued implementation beyond 2018. The first of these was the Capacity Development Plan for Family Support, Foster Care and Adoption 2017-2023, which included actionable goals, building on the momentum of existing reforms, to strengthen social work capacity for promoting family-based care, and the empowerment of parents and carers to prevent family separation. Whilst the Action Plan for Improving Childcare focused primarily on reducing the numbers of children in alternative care, the capacity development plan provided more detailed recommendations for the short, medium and long term to strengthen alternatives to institutionalisation of children.

The other document produced during this period was the Capacity Development Plan to Enhance Alternative Care for Children with Disabilities. This document provides a brief overview of the situation of children with disabilities (CWD) in RCIs, as well as specific recommendations on how to improve their quality of care and ensure better access to basic services for CWDs living in their communities. The document focuses on setting out short (1-2 years), medium (3-5 years) and long-term (5+ years) actions in three specific areas: family support and gatekeeping to prevent the separation of families of CWDs; support to CWDs in RCIs; and support to CWDs in foster care.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Enhancing social work capacity*

Although the Government committed to a 30 per cent safe reintegration target, there were an inadequate number of staff in place to undertake this task. To address this, UNICEF reached an agreement with MoSVY to support the recruitment and placement of social workers, with the salaries of the social workers being paid by UNICEF for two years, on the understanding that the social workers would be progressively integrated onto the MoSVY payroll. At the time of the evaluation 31 social workers had been recruited, of whom 17 were placed with DoSVY and 14 in NGOs. Three had already been hired by DoSVY Phnom Penh to become civil servants on the MoSVY payroll by November 2017. The recruitment of new social work staff was particularly appreciated by DoSVY management at the provincial level.<sup>71</sup>

These comprehensive policy measures together with the Action Plan on Improving Childcare have been effective in mobilising support for the promotion of reintegration from across all sectors and levels of Government. Almost all government stakeholders interviewed in the qualitative research, from different departments and specialties, were aware of the deinstitutionalisation and reintegration programme, and the majority expressed support for its aims and objectives. Interviews revealed a

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<sup>69</sup> We were not able to get accurate data for the period up to the end of 2017 from the Open Institute, as there were early implementation problems with the data system. We were informed that the data system is now functioning, and that data is available for 2018.

<sup>70</sup> See also, the Study on Alternative Care Community Practices for Children in Cambodia, including Pagoda-based Care, UNICEF 2017.

<sup>71</sup> Interviews with DoSVY social workers suggest that their backgrounds and qualifications are mixed; many lacked formal qualifications in social work, and whilst some had been recruited from NGOs, others lacked any previous substantive social work experience. Several informants explained the NGO social workers work alongside government, and that capacity is built this way.

growing awareness and commitment to the idea that institutionalisation should be a measure of last resort, including amongst RCI managers and staff.

Multi-sector authorities are now actively involved in supporting the reintegration of children. Whilst the initiative is being led by MoSVY and implemented by DoSVY social workers in each of the five provinces, CCWC, NGOs, and RCI staff are working in close cooperation to achieve these aims.

#### *Number of children undergoing a process of reintegration*

As a result of these coordinated efforts, and according to data provided by DoSVY during the evaluation, a total of 1,065 children and youth were undergoing a process of reintegration out of institutional care across the five target provinces by April 2018. Of these 1,065 children and youth, 740 were recorded as having been reunified or received a family or community-based placement to date, 25 were transferred to a new RCI, with the files of the remaining 300 opened, but awaiting reunification or placement.<sup>72</sup>

Not all of these beneficiaries, however, are children. Of those who have been reunified or been placed with a family or in a community-based service to date, 582 were found to be under 18 years at the time of their first family or community-based placement. This amounts to almost five per cent of the 11,788 children who were counted as living in RCIs across the five provinces at the beginning of 2016.<sup>73</sup> Five per cent is short of the 30 per cent target aimed for by the end of 2018. However, it represents an increase from the 2.1 per cent of children and youth reintegrated by the end of 2016.<sup>74</sup>

**Figure 2: Children undergoing a process of reintegration by age**

Age at first community or family-based placement	No. of children	Proportion
<18 years at first reintegration placement	582	54.6%
18+ years at first reintegration placement	158	14.8%
Transferred to a new RCI	25	2.4%
Not yet placed (Estimated mean age of children not yet placed is 15 years; the age range in this group is 7-28 years)	300	28.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,065</b>	<b>100%</b>

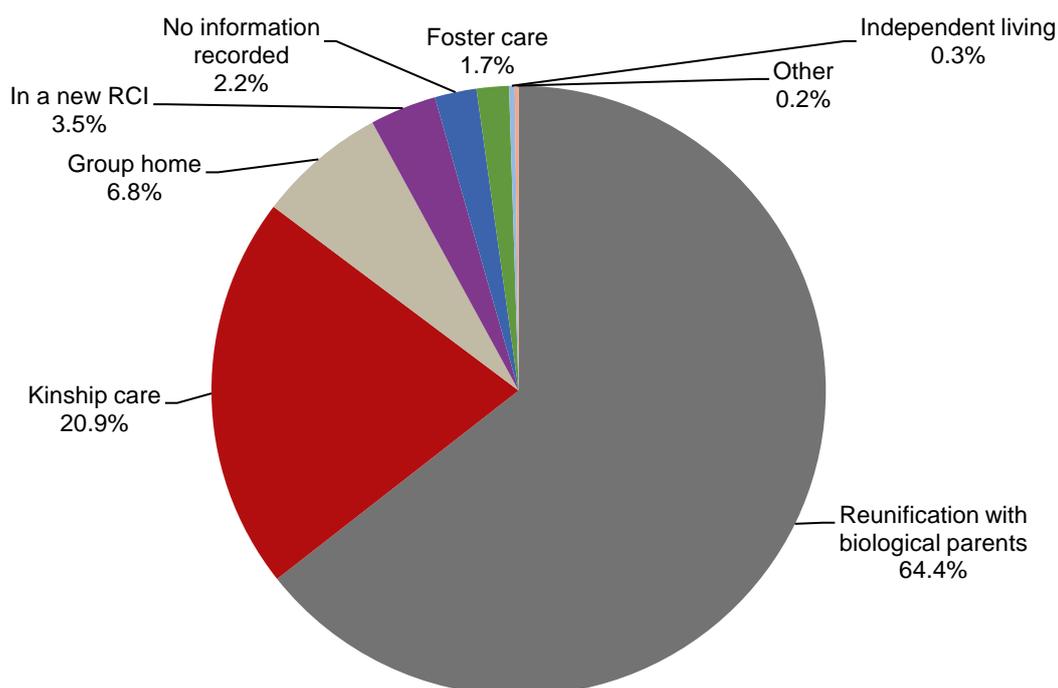
Of the children who have been moved to date, 389 (64.4 per cent) were recorded as being reunified with biological parents, the next most common type of placement being kinship care (20.9 per cent), followed by group homes (6.8 per cent).

<sup>72</sup> The reunification or placement of these children will not now take place until 2019 to enable social work to be undertaken to ensure safe reintegration.

<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Action Plan for Improving Childcare, 2016.

<sup>74</sup> 250 children were reintegrated between January-December 2016, UNICEF Cambodia, Quarterly Progress Report to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), October-December 2016.

**Figure 3: Placement of children undergoing a process of reintegration**



The finding that the majority of children placed to date have been reunified with their biological parents reflects the first principle in the Action Plan for Improving Childcare 2016-2018, which states that “*it is vital to explore reintegration with a child’s family of origin as the first priority*”. Although a lower proportion (64.4 per cent) of children were reunified with parents, than were found to have a living parent according to the RCI mapping research (80 per cent), this is likely to reflect the fact that, as was noted in the Study on Alternative Care Community Practices,<sup>75</sup> many of the children in RCIs have complex family backgrounds with a number of factors that led to their placement, including parental death, migration, remarriage, alcohol and drug misuse or parents who were unable to provide a safe environment for the child. This is important, given that other key principles of the Action Plan emphasise that the best interests of the child must determine any decisions regarding reintegration, including considering family and community connections, and the child’s physical and emotional safety and well-being, and that all reintegration processes should aim to benefit and not harm children, including considering issues of preventing abuse.

### *Support provided on reintegration*

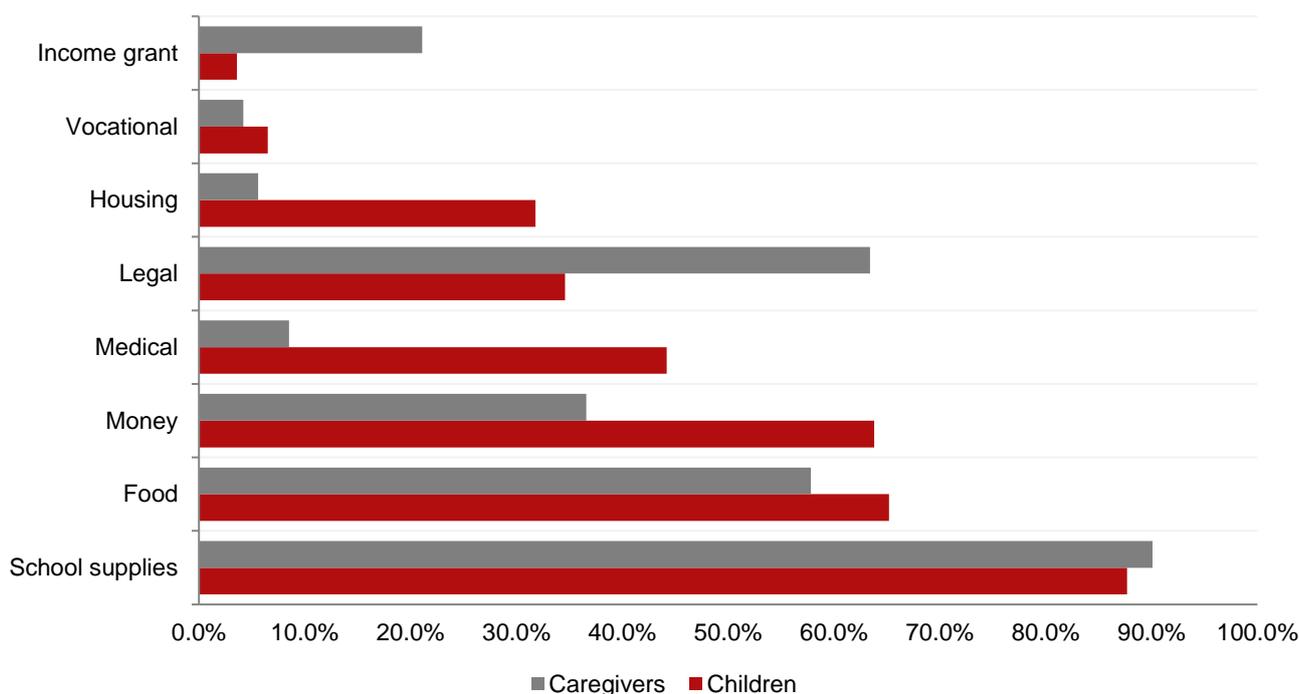
It is also relevant that services and support provided to families and children to facilitate the reintegration process were found to be limited. A number of respondents noted the superior facilities and resources available to children living in the RCIs, compared to the relative poverty of families in the community. In addition, some of the children who were placed into extended families indicated that the family were struggling to feed and care for them. Whilst 92.3 per cent of surveyed children, and 97.6 per cent of surveyed caregivers reported receiving material support as part of the reintegration process, this support was found to be relatively limited, consisting primarily of basic food sustenance and school supplies such as notebooks and uniforms.

*“The orphanage gave us US\$ 20 per child per month. I divide it up to pay for extra classes. The rest of the money goes to meals and snacks. The orphanage also give us 50 kg of rice*

<sup>75</sup> UNICEF Cambodia, 2018.

*for the boy, and 1kg of salt. The girls get school uniform and some supplies such a books and pencils.”<sup>76</sup>*

**Figure 4: Support provided to children undergoing reintegration as reported by children and caregivers in the survey**



### *Beneficiary satisfaction with support*

Although support was found to be basic, it is relevant and important that (in general) children and parents interviewed in the research expressed high levels of satisfaction and gratitude for the support that they had received from the reintegration programme.

#### ***Have you found the support that you have received from the orphanage (for the reintegration) helpful?***

*“Yeh, quite helpful. The 50kg of rice lasts for 10 days.”<sup>77</sup>*

*“The social affairs officers come. They come and distribute some gifts and they ask me questions – a note book and clothes [...]. I feel happy when I see them. They bring me books and clothes.”<sup>78</sup>*

In the beneficiary surveys, children and caregivers were asked to rate their satisfaction with support received on a scale of 1-9 and the results were relatively encouraging, with the overwhelming majority of beneficiaries expressing satisfaction with the support that they had received.

Interestingly, older children and boys expressed higher levels of satisfaction with support received than younger children and girls. Furthermore, children living in more economically secure households<sup>79</sup> reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with support received than those living

<sup>76</sup> Interview with a grandmother (carer) of 3 reintegrated children, 12 December 2017.

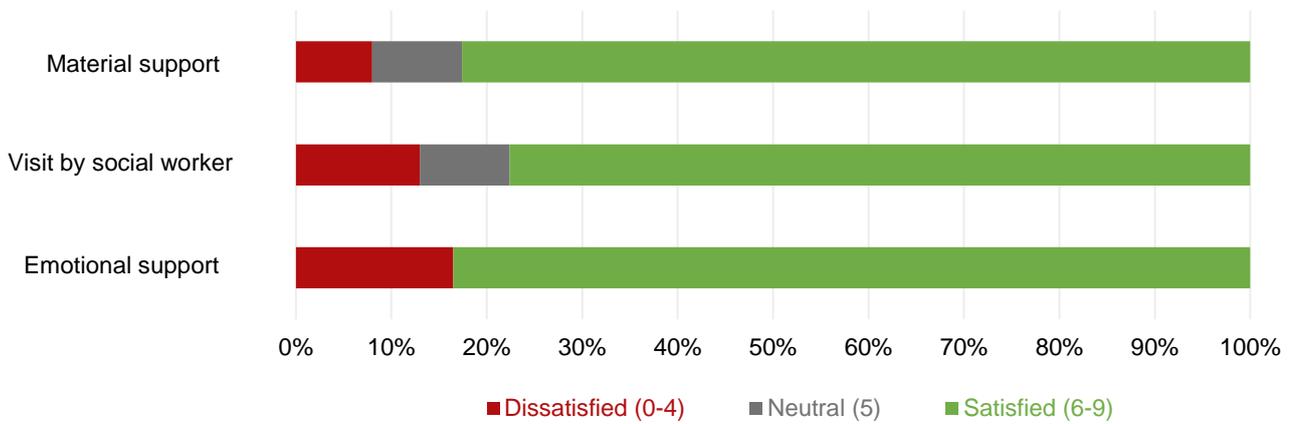
<sup>77</sup> Interview with a grandmother(carer) of 3 reintegrated children, 12 December 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with a boy placed in kinship care, 9 December 2017.

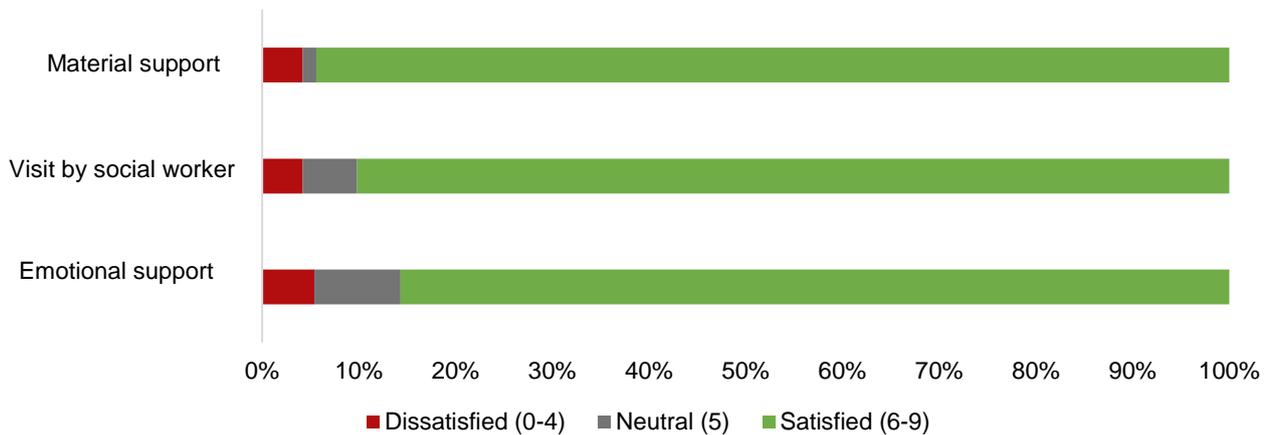
<sup>79</sup> This was measured by asking children how often their family had enough money for food, clothes, school supplies, medications, gifts, trips and entertainment.

in relatively poorer conditions ( $p < 0.01$ ). Caregivers also expressed higher levels of satisfaction with support provided, than did children.

**Figure 5: Children's satisfaction with support received**



**Figure 6: Caregivers' satisfaction with support received**



On the other hand, some respondents interviewed during the qualitative research emphasised that the assistance that they received was insufficient to address the vulnerabilities and needs of their households, and many stressed that they were struggling to cope during the reintegration process.

When asked what extra support they would find beneficial, respondents typically asked for capital investments or grants to set up a business for a more sustainable solution to their problems, and to pay off mounting family debts. Most had ideas in mind for what kind of business they would start and what investment they would need to make this possible.

*"I used to request a washing machine to start a business. There are soldiers living here, so it's a good market. If I had money I could stay home and take care of the children. At the moment, we both have to travel far from the village to work. I want a job really nearby so that I can take care of the kids. At the moment, I work both day and night growing vegetables and rice, just to make sure the kids are not starving. We have no income but we are spending every day. We need to keep working. I don't want to ask for money, I just want a job."*<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Interview with a grandmother (carer) of 3 reintegrated children, 12 December 2017.

### *Safety and well-being of reintegrated children: Realising the 'best interests' and 'do no harm' principles*

During the course of the evaluation, in both qualitative and quantitative interviews of the 143 children included in the survey, parents and social workers were asked about the safety and well-being of children undergoing reintegration, as well as their views on the benefits of the reintegration programme more generally.

In general, respondents recognised the protective benefits of the reintegration programme for promoting children's safety and well-being and agreed with the central premise of the programme that (all else being equal) children are better off when cared for in a family compared to an institutional setting. Participants referenced higher quality and more attentive care, connection to community, opportunities to engage in social and cultural life, and the ability to develop important life skills as benefits to living within a family compared to an institutional setting.<sup>81</sup> These views were supported by evidence from children themselves, many of whom stated that they felt safer and happier after returning home.

One boy spoke about how he had returned home after a period of truancy from school at the RCI; he spoke of feeling pressured and stressed in the RCI environment, and feeling much happier since he was placed into his grandmother's home as part of his reintegration process, where he was now regularly attending school: *"when I was there [at the orphanage] I would skip classes to play video games. And then I got behind and I felt ashamed and scared to go back. I felt threatened and pressured [...]"*<sup>82</sup> His grandmother described how she had gently encouraged him to go back to school, by using his uncle (also living with them) as a positive role model, illustrating some of the benefits of living in a caring family environment.<sup>83</sup>

Not all children felt this way, however. One caregiver described how her son had initially refused to leave the RCI because he wanted access to the education opportunities that living in the institution could bring:

***"Did your kid want to come back?"***

*No, he insisted on staying and getting an education there. He never wanted to come home yet.*

***So, is he unhappy to be home?"***

*At first, at the beginning when they told him to come back home he didn't want to come. But now I guess he has got used to it after a year."*<sup>84</sup>

Importantly, whilst recognising some of the positive benefits of reintegration, many child protection practitioners and policy makers advised caution against setting fixed targets for reintegration, noting that reintegration is not always in the best interests of all children (as indeed is recognised in the principles contained in the Action Plan for Improving Childcare). They pointed out that some children may have been separated from their families for a significant period of time, losing ties they may once have had, and forming new connections in the institutions:

*"There are some emotions playing around. The reintegrated kids have been separated from their long-time friends at the orphanage, and they are not ready to go home. And meanwhile the parents are not ready to take over the care of the children because they [the parents] are also still struggling. And some families also still have domestic violence."*<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Group meeting with Provincial Women and Children's Consultative Committee, 8 December 2017.

<sup>82</sup> Group interview with reintegrated siblings (kinship care), 12 December 2017.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with a grandmother of reintegrated siblings, 12 December 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with a mother of a reintegrated boy, 9 December 2017.

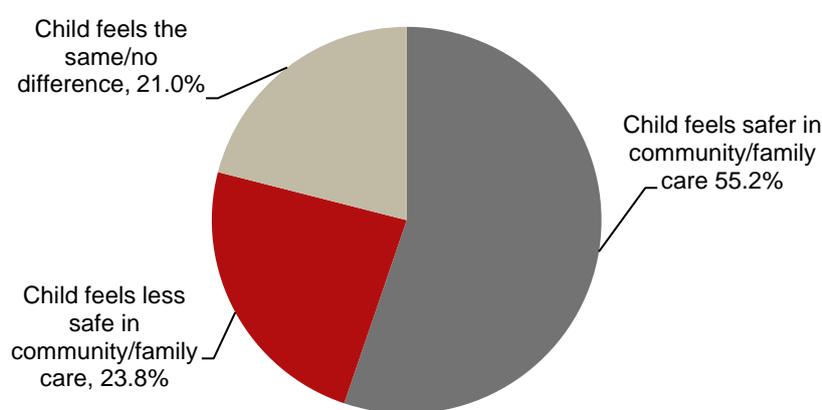
<sup>85</sup> Interview with DoSVY, 6 December 2017.

With this in mind, a number of extra measures have been put in place since the survey results were made available to ensure a safe reintegration process for children, including proper case management, and at least quarterly follow up on children placed for a minimum of three years.

### *Children's perceptions of safety*

The survey of children undergoing reintegration, which took place between November 2017 and February 2018 found that 55.2 per cent of children surveyed felt safer in their family or community placement than they had while living in institutional care and 21 per cent felt the same about the level of their safety. However, a significant minority, almost one in four or 23.8 per cent, of children said that they had felt safer when living in the RCI.

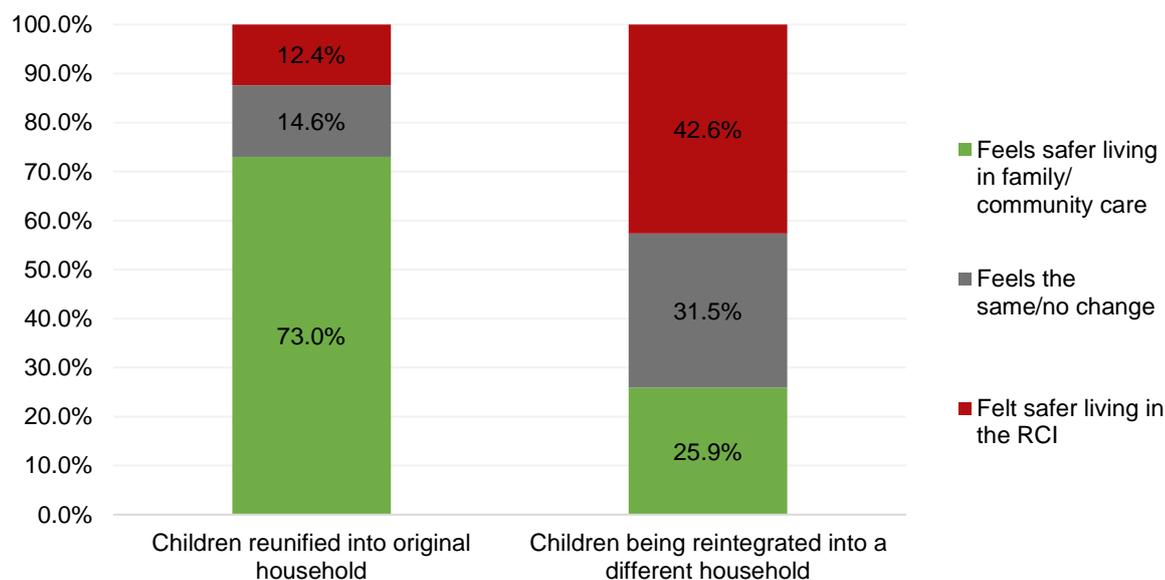
**Figure 7: Children's relative feelings of safety: Comparing family and community-based placement to living in an RCI**<sup>86</sup>



Interestingly, the data from the survey suggests that children who were not reunified with the family members that they were living with before they went into institutional care are significantly less likely to feel safer in their community or family placements, than reunified children. As many as 42.6 per cent of children included in the survey who were undergoing a process of reintegration into a new household (a different household to the one that they were living with before they went into institutional care) reported feeling less safe after being removed from institutional care.

<sup>86</sup> Relative feelings of safety were ascertained using the question: "Do you feel more or less safe where you are living now compared to when you were living in the RCI?" The children's responses are shown in the chart.

**Figure 8: Children's relative feelings of safety depending on whether they were reunified<sup>87</sup>, or undergoing reintegration into a new family**



The mixed findings from the survey in relation to children's feelings of safety were supported by evidence from the qualitative research. Whilst social workers and other practitioners working directly on reintegration tended to emphasise that, in their view, the majority of cases of children in the process of reintegration had been a success, they were nonetheless able to point out examples of cases where things had not gone to plan, a reintegration turned out not to be in the child's best interests and, indeed, may have caused further harm. One staff member at an RCI described how they had repeatedly tried to place one boy into his mother's care, but each time, after returning home, he had been re-referred to the orphanage after being found begging on the streets or apprehended by the police for petty theft. She explained that after repeated cycles of this, the orphanage had decided not to readmit the child:

*"We cannot take him anymore. The Commune Council for Women and Children — just the other day — tried to refer the same kid again to us! We no longer take him. We reintegrated him — we told them it was now up to them to provide support. Now he has stolen a motorbike and gone to the reservoir. He is working at a construction site. His step mother is a drug addict — a drug abuser [...]. She is always posting about him on Facebook [...]."*<sup>88</sup>

Another social worker described how a girl, who had been placed in an orphanage after being physically abused by her stepfather, was placed back into her household due to a desire to reunify the family. This official went on to describe how they had tried to support the family but the limited nature of the services available were not sufficient to address their complex needs and prevent further violence.

He explained:

*"Our social workers check in to try to educate the family. But the support that we can provide is very basic. It is a relief for the family. It helps. But alcohol is still an issue. When the wife drinks, the husband is disappointed, and he wants to correct her behaviour by using violence. We are struggling — we are observing the condition — they are still consuming alcohol."*<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Reunified does not imply that children were reunified into biological parents' home, but rather they were returned to the same family that they were living in before they went into care.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with NGO RCI staff member, 12 December 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with DoSVY, 6 December 2017.

### *Assessment and placement*

While the decision to undertake safe reintegration of children in RCIs is one that fits with current understanding of good practice, these cases are illustrative of a number of weaknesses in the implementation of the reintegration programme that were identified during the evaluation and underscored by evidence from stakeholders. Case file reviews revealed that reintegration assessments are very basic, with forms that do not require social workers to go into great detail. It appears that, in practice, decisions to reintegrate children are often driven by the availability and willingness of living parents or other family members to take a child, or the closing of an RCI rather than a comprehensive risk analysis and best interests assessment. Caregivers indicated that they found it hard to refuse to take a child back or agree to his placement when asked directly by orphanage staff, NGOs or social workers, even where they did not feel that they had the capacity to support the child.<sup>90</sup>

The evidence indicates that in many cases, once a decision is made to begin reintegration, and consent from the child and the family member is obtained, the final placement occurs very soon afterwards, rather than taking place over a period of time, with trial visits. This analysis is triangulated by data on reintegration cases provided by UNICEF and MoSVY which contains information about the specific dates of 'tracing' of families, assessment for placement, and the placement itself. Of the 489 beneficiaries who had intelligible dates recorded, 38 (7.8 per cent) were found to have been placed on the very same day that family tracing occurred, 15.4 per cent were placed within one week of family tracing, and 29.9 per cent (almost one third of all children) were placed within just two weeks of family tracing. In some cases, children were reportedly removed from institutions for breaking the rules (such as using a mobile phone), or because funding was running out and institutions were closing as a result of the reintegration reform. These children were sent back to their family without a risk or best interests assessment, or indeed any assessment being undertaken. While these children may be regarded as technically falling outside of the reintegration process, nevertheless they are still children for whom the RCI and DoSVY were responsible, as they were children without parental care. Such children clearly need to be caught by the system and procedures put in place to ensure that they are safeguarded, and their welfare protected.

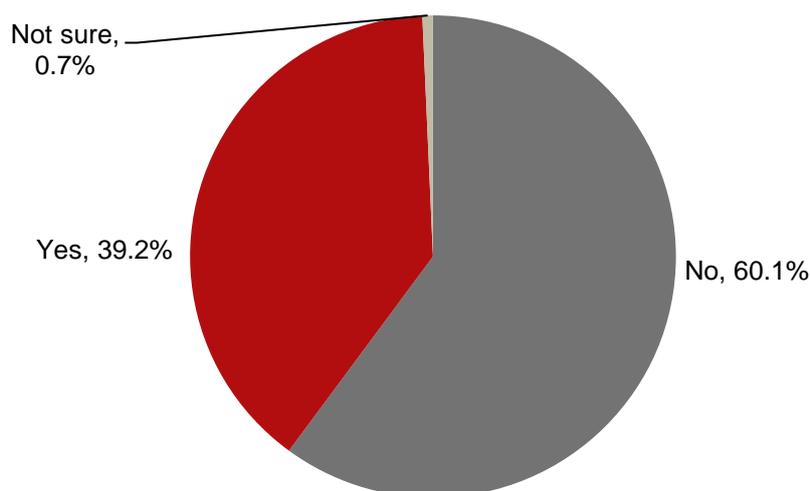
### *Consent to be reintegrated*

A further issue that was raised by child protection practitioners interviewed in the qualitative research was the importance of obtaining consent from the child before the reintegration process occurs. The majority of children undergoing reintegration that were surveyed during the evaluation said that the decision to leave the institution was not their own and, in fact, that they had wanted to stay in the RCI (60.1 per cent). In general, evaluation findings indicate that there is often a lack of meaningful participation of families and children in the reintegration process, reflected in a lack of understanding amongst beneficiaries about why reintegration was occurring, what support they could expect to receive, and limited preparations made to facilitate family reunification, placement and change.

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with the sister of a reintegrated child (kinship care), 9 December 2017.

**Figure 9: Children's responses when asked "did you want to leave institutional care?"**



These findings suggest that some of the principles contained within the Guidelines for Reintegration and Reunification, including that “*children and families must be at the centre of all reintegration decisions and actions*” and that consideration should be given to issues of informed consent have not been fully understood, internalised and implemented by partners.

#### *Action taken to ensure safe reintegration*

Capacity and resources available for ensuring appropriate follow-up were found to be limited and it was clear from the case status update that quarterly visits to check on children and their caregivers were not taking place in all cases.

Between November 2017 and the middle of December 2017, MoSVY<sup>91</sup> undertook a case status update on all children who had been placed as part of the reintegration process since 2016, the purpose of which was: first, to assess the safety of children who had been reunified and received integration support from DoSVY and civil society (including the RCIs) and, second, to assess and document the current status of these children.<sup>92</sup> Most of all, the aim was to ensure the well-being of the children and to ensure that no child had been harmed as a result of the reintegration process. Guidelines were issued by MoSVY setting out how the case status update was to be undertaken. This included a requirement that all children who had been reunified with their families or relatives or placed in foster care or placement in a group home, independent living arrangements, transit centre or other community-based option, as well as children who had an ‘open’ case and had been moved from one location to another, including those moved from one RCI to another, were to be physically visited together with their caregivers.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Guidelines for the case status update were issued by H.E. Touch Channy, Director General of the Directorate of Technical Affairs, MoSVY, 13 October 2017.

<sup>92</sup> Guidelines for the case status update were issued by H.E. Touch Channy, Director General of the Directorate of Technical Affairs, MoSVY para. 2, 20 October 2017.

<sup>92</sup> The decision to conduct the case status update was suggested by UNICEF to MoSVY in Q3 2017. The idea was initially discussed during the UNICEF Child Protection Team internal retreat and field visit that took place at the end of May/beginning of June 2017. The reason was that there was a concern that not all children had been followed-up regularly as recommended in the Action Plan, and there was a need to verify the status and safety of all children going through the reintegration process. UNICEF discussed with MoSVY the idea in Q3 2017 and then provided support to MoSVY to develop the methodology to conduct the case status update starting from November 2017.

<sup>93</sup> For those children who had been visited or whose case had been followed up within the last month and the case worker was confident enough that the child was safe and their condition fine, the Guidelines did not require a further visit.

The exercise involved meetings between partners, visits and calls to reunified and placed children, on the basis of which social workers were required to fill out an assessment form and rate each child's level of risk.

Each case was to be rated according to set reporting criteria:

1. Green (safe):

- Happy to stay with the placement families/relatives/community
- Have enough food (three times per day)
- Safe living environment
- Look healthy
- Continue going to school (school age children only).

2. Yellow (at risk):

- Not well socialised with families/relatives/community
- Not enough food (two or less times per day)
- Often gets sick and does not look healthy
- Not going to school, regularly.

3. Red (high risk):

- Very poor family connection, loneliness with the families/relatives/community
- Not enough food and poor nutrition (only two or less times per day)
- Often gets sick, no access to health, looks skinny
- Stopped going to school since placement
- At risk of violence, exploitation or abuse
- At risk of neglect because main parent/caregiver has migrated to Thailand or elsewhere or the child has been abandoned.

According to the latest available data in March 2018, 445 children were given a safety rating: with 390 children (87.6 per cent) marked green, 32 (7.2 per cent) marked yellow and 23 (5.2 per cent) marked red (at risk). Forty-three (78.2 per cent) of the 55 children marked yellow or red had been reunified with their biological parents, 11 were placed into kinship care, and 1 was living in a group home.<sup>94</sup> Following the case status update, further checks were made on children who fell into the yellow and red criteria,<sup>95</sup> though evidence as to the action taken was not provided to the evaluators. It does not, however, appear that any were removed from their placement.

In addition to rating the children according to these criteria, a further 54 children (just above 12 per cent) were marked as white on the case status update, either because the children fell into the category 'unable to be located' or they could not, or had not, been followed up after placement. The figures for the children marked as white varied between the five provinces of Phnom Penh, Kandal, Preah Sihanouk, Siem Reap and Battambang. In June 2018, UNICEF estimated the number of those unable to be located at 29 children (6.5 per cent) according to the information provided by DoSVY.

However, researchers undertaking interviews with children undergoing reintegration and working with DoSVY social workers believed the figure of children who could not be located for whatever reason was higher. The reason given by DoSVY for being unable to be located was primarily that the children had migrated, either on their own or with their families. News was provided, for instance, by relatives

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<sup>94</sup> It was not possible to follow up those who were reunified or placed back in the community in other forms of alternative care by NGOs without DoSVY involvement, though the number of these are thought to be around 1,200.

<sup>95</sup> According to the summary report of the 3PC Joint Field Monitoring 19<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> June 2018 in Siem Reap and Battambang, visits were made to 126 reintegrated children, with 100 green cases, 22 yellow and 4 red cases. 260 children were reintegrated without cooperation from DoSVY according to the summary. It should be noted that 50% of reunified children in Siem Reap and 30% in Battambang are placed outside these provinces.

in relation to 19 of the 29 children who stated that the family had either migrated internally or to Thailand. It was not possible to confirm the explanation.

The fact that these children who are undergoing a process of reintegration cannot be located or visited is a matter of concern, particularly when it is allied to qualitative evidence from social workers, that some families are not cooperative and do not want or welcome visits from DoSVY. There is a risk that children undergoing reintegration may be exploited or trafficked when their families migrate or move and fail to provide notice of their new location, or simply no longer respond to approaches from DoSVY social workers. DoSVY do not have any legal authority to force those caring for children undergoing reintegration to comply with monitoring requirements. A further barrier to monitoring is that children who are being reintegrated, and particularly those who are being reunified, often live in areas that are remote or difficult to access, particularly in the rainy season.

Following various meetings held between February and June 2018, and after extensive consultation, UNICEF has produced a strategy to ensure that higher reintegration targets can be reached safely.<sup>96</sup> This includes engaging RCIs more closely, especially with respect to plans to close or reintegrate children, conduct identification, follow-up and provide support to children that left RCIs without DoSVY involvement, providing stronger follow-up and systematic monitoring of post-reunification or placement status, increasing human capacity and the roll out of full inspection of RCIs as quickly as possible. New criteria for reintegration have also been agreed amongst the stakeholders. These require that:

- The child must have a single parent still surviving or a relative;
- The family must have capacity to care for the child; and
- The family and child are willing to reunify and stay together.

Although around a further 300 cases have been opened for reintegration, at the moment it is not intended to reunify or place these children back with parents or relatives until the beginning of 2019<sup>97</sup> to allow for fuller assessments to be completed.

While on the one hand, it is encouraging that the RGC and many of the RCIs are committed to reintegration, the practice and process of reintegration has presented a number of challenges. Many of the families interviewed were found to be navigating complex and multiple problems, including debt, alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, chronic illness and disability and housing insecurity. Any attempt to reintegrate children in such circumstances requires intensive, tailored, and specialist support – services which are not available in Cambodia. Some social workers expressed concern about their capacity to manage the more challenging issues and emphasised their need for a greater level of training and capacity building in social work skills, and the need for front line practitioners to also receive more training and professional support. In addition, there was no evidence that contingency plans had been made to address failure or breakdown of placements. This needs to be addressed as breakdown, for a variety of reasons, is likely to occur in a proportion of cases.

### *Gender, equity, resilience and rights*

The Action Plan for Improving Child Care 2016-2018 includes equity as a guiding principle and specifies that, in the context of the Action Plan, equity implies that all children have the right to be raised in a loving family environment. The plan further provides that *“to ensure this principle is rigorously applied, particular attention will be paid to children with special needs”* and establishes that indicators related to children with special needs will be included in its monitoring and evaluation framework. The commitment to affording special focus on children with additional needs is also

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<sup>96</sup> Summary and synthesis of key reflections and action points (for reaching higher reintegration targets safely).

<sup>97</sup> Comment from Child Protection Section, UNICEF Cambodia.

reflected in the development of a separate and distinct action plan specifically dedicated to promoting family-based care for children with disabilities, as discussed above.<sup>98</sup>

Findings from the evaluation in relation to the realisation of these principles in practice are mixed. Despite the commitment to promoting family-based care for disabled children, only 16 children with disabilities have received a family or community-based placement to date under the reintegration programme: 11 reunified with biological parents and five placed in kinship care. Whilst children with disabilities are thought to constitute 4.2 per cent of the total population of children in residential care in the five target provinces,<sup>99</sup> these children account for only 2.8 per cent of children in the reintegration programme. Only one child included in the reintegration survey was disabled, and this child was found to have lower than average levels of well-being (z score= -0.6, 27<sup>th</sup> percentile). However, this child did express that he felt safer in his family placement than he had felt in institutional care. He said that he had wanted to leave the institution, and that he felt very satisfied with the support he had received under the reintegration programme.

Overall, evaluation findings indicate that the majority of children undergoing reintegration have high levels of well-being and resilience. Almost three out of four, 71.4 per cent of children, agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“on the whole, I feel confident and good about myself”*, 75.5 per cent agreed that *“on the whole, I think I am able to do things as well as other children my age”*, and 82.5 per cent agreed *“I take a positive attitude towards myself.”*<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, there are a minority of children who are faring less well: 16.8 per cent of children agreed with the statement *“I feel like a failure”*, and 7.7 per cent said that over the last 30 days they had had thoughts of hurting themselves or suicidal ideation.

Household wealth was found to be a significant predictor of outcomes in relation to well-being with children from more impoverished households reporting significantly lower levels of well-being in their reintegration placement: being less likely to feel loved by their caregiver, to feel wanted, to feel listened to, and more likely to feel lonely and isolated ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Additionally, the data indicates that girls are faring somewhat less well in their reintegration placements than boys. Girls reported lower levels of well-being than boys (t-test,  $p = .08$ ). They were more likely than boys to say that they regularly went to bed hungry, more likely to say that their caregiver sometimes or frequently made them feel unloved or threatened to abandon them, less likely to say they went to school, and more likely to report longer hours of work doing chores. One respondent in the qualitative research explained:

*“For boys – after reintegration with their family – they continue schooling, but for girls, in the majority of cases, they are already 15 years old at the time of reintegration, so when they are back the family tries to get them to work in a factory. Compared to boys, most of the girls, after reintegration, do not go to school, but work.”*<sup>101</sup>

Indeed, social workers interviewed in the qualitative research sometimes explained that boys may be prioritised for reintegration, due to a perception that they would cope better in the community, and greater concerns for girls' well-being and safety, and especially their sexual safety.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> See Recommendations and Action Plan to promote a family setting for children with disabilities without parental care, October 2016.

<sup>99</sup> Mapping of Residential Care Facilities in the Capital and 24 Provinces of the Kingdom of Cambodia, MoSVY, February 2017.

<sup>100</sup> All 143 children in the reintegration survey were asked these questions and responded.

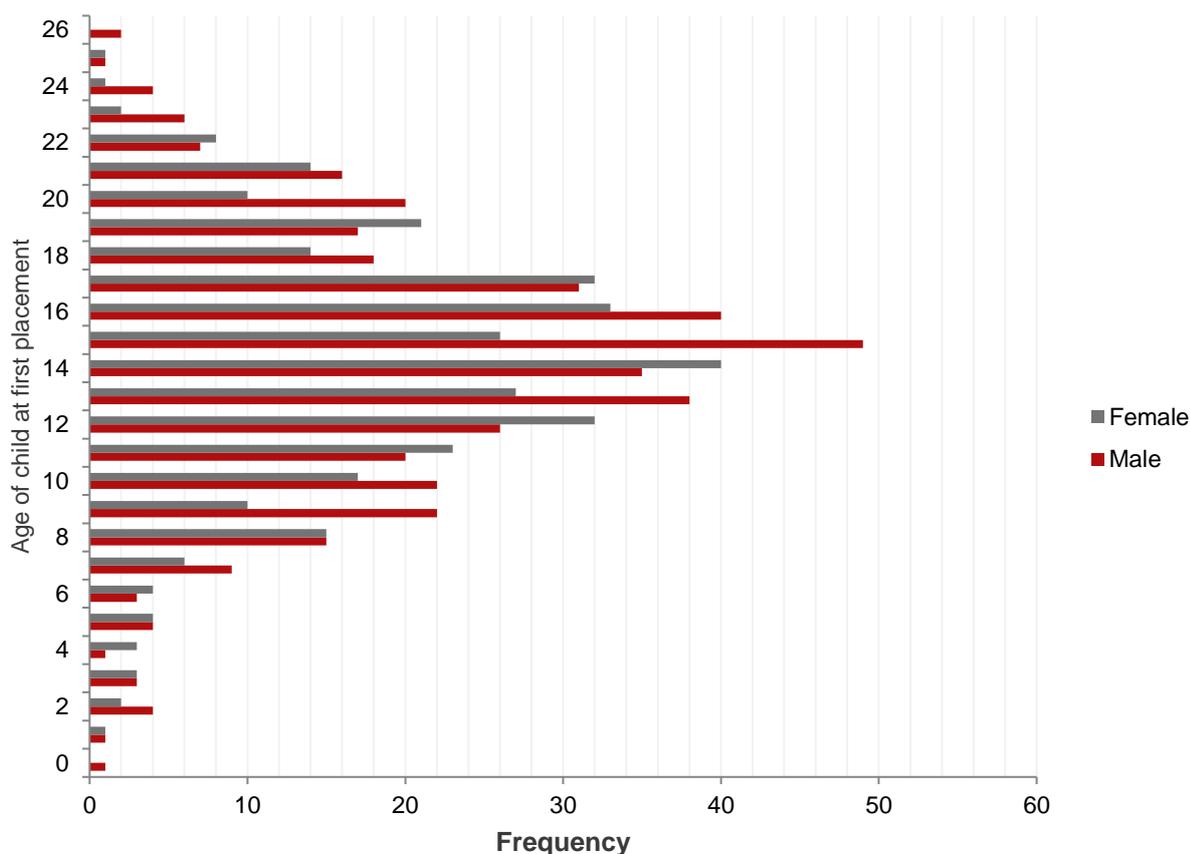
<sup>101</sup> Interview with Commune Council for Women and Children, 13 December 2017.

<sup>102</sup> Group interview with social workers, 12 December 2017 and group interview with social workers, 9 December 2017.

These findings are reflected in data on reintegration, which reveals that more boys (324, 53.8 per cent) have been placed to date than girls (278, 46.2 per cent). However, it is also important to note that the mapping found more boys (52.4 per cent) than girls (47.6 per cent) in institutional care.<sup>103</sup>

In addition to a slight overrepresentation of boys, the data indicates that the reintegration programme is mostly targeting older children and youth (despite efforts to encourage DoSVY to focus on younger children). According to the data, more than 9 out of 10 children were adolescents at the time of their reunification or placement; only 4.2 per cent of children were found to be under the age of 10 years old at the time of their first placement, and less than 2.5 per cent were under the age of 5. Over 1 in 5, some 21.2 per cent, of the young people who have been placed so far, were recorded as 18 years or over at the time of their first community or family placement.

**Figure 10: Age at first placement**



These findings were supported by data from the qualitative research. Staff at RCIs explained that one of the most important criteria for reintegration was that children had completed their education or had reached a sufficient age or level of maturity to be able to support themselves independently, and that this largely exempted younger children from the programme. This was especially the case where the family were poor and could not support or educate the child. This leaves younger children, and those arguably most in need of family rather than institutional care, at a disadvantage. If they cannot be returned to their previous care takers or to extended family, there appears to be little reason why they could not be prioritised for foster care or placement in a group home, especially as the numbers are relatively small.

<sup>103</sup> Mapping of Residential Care Facilities in the Capital and 24 Provinces of the Kingdom of Cambodia, MoSVY, February 2017.

Taken together these findings indicate that gender, age and equity sensitivity remain issues that need to be addressed to ensure that younger children, girls, and those from particularly vulnerable households benefit equally from the reintegration process and have access to sufficient support during integration to promote their rights, well-being and resilience.

### 5.2.3. Effectiveness of prevention programming

*This section reviews UNICEF's work to strengthen prevention of VAC and unnecessary family separation through institutional reform and capacity building of service providers and NGO partners to deliver effective prevention services. It explores the effectiveness of these initiatives at achieving their intended aims.*

***To what degree has UNICEF's Child Protection Programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for keeping vulnerable girls and boys in families, supporting their safe reintegration into family care, and protecting them from violence through institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services and a supportive community environment?***

*How effective have behavioural change campaigns been designed to prevent and to respond to violence and unnecessary family separation?*

*To what degree and how appropriately have partnerships been mobilized in a manner that contributes effectively to the Child Protection Programme?*

*How satisfied have children, young people and caregivers been with the quality of prevention and response services that they have received?*

**Summary of main findings:** Awareness-raising work aiming at preventing VAC and unnecessary family separation has started in the community but still has a way to go to achieve a supportive community environment. This is likely to change once the behavioural change campaign gets underway and the training curriculum for Buddhist monks and the child protection handbooks for both Buddhist monks and CCWC members are completed, distributed and internalised by those to whom they are aimed.

The Child Protection Programme has also addressed violence in schools through a Positive Discipline Programme in schools, known as Positive Discipline and Effective Classroom Management (PDECM). This has been implemented in 409 primary schools with baseline and end-line surveys showing that the Programme has been effective and that there has been a measurable drop in the levels of violence being used against children, contributing to a far safer community environment for children while at school.

Individualised prevention services are being offered to vulnerable children and families by 3PC. Qualitative evidence shows that services were targeted at particularly vulnerable families, usually identified through local authorities, such as village leaders. These tended to include families living in poverty, families living on the street, families who neglect to send their child to school or families who are known to be considering sending their child to an RCI.

Whilst many beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the support provided, and some explained that it had meaningfully improved their lives, interviews with other beneficiaries suggested that prevention services were not always sufficiently tailored to need and often did not include sufficient resources to meet complex needs.

### *Behavioural change campaign*

UNICEF has developed a behavioural change communications strategy, the Cambodia PROTECT strategy, which draws upon global evidence on VAC prevention and response. The purpose of the strategy is to promote a culture of zero tolerance of VAC, transform attitudes and build a commitment to end violence and family separation. The programme will use mass media, interactive communication technologies, community engagement and advocacy. It is aimed at primary participants (parents, children, family members); secondary participants (community level officers and religious leaders) and tertiary participants, including service providers, lawmakers, judiciary and police. The communications programme has a budget of US\$ 2.9 million and was due to start in April 2017. Delay appears to be related to the size of the programme and delays in the launch of the VAC Action Plan, of which the Cambodia Protect Strategy is a part. Clearly, Cambodia PROTECT will be an important element in the prevention of VAC and family separation, but it was not possible to evaluate its effectiveness, given that it has yet to be completed and implemented.

### *Partnership mobilisation*

Since the inception of the Child Protection Programme, UNICEF has succeeded in mobilising key stakeholders to incorporate prevention of VAC and unnecessary family separation into their institutional mandates. This has resulted in a number of policy achievements at national and subnational level. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) recently adopted a Positive Parenting Strategy (key result 3.3), the development of which was supported by UNICEF, Save the Children and a second NGO partner, Investing in Children and their Societies (ICS). The strategy, which is at the initial stages of implementation, calls for universal, targeted (prevention) and specialised (response) interventions to improve positive parenting.

In addition, UNICEF has supported the Action Plan on Violence Against Children (key result 1.2), adopted by the Government in December 2017, which contains concrete and actionable commitments on VAC prevention by key government agencies. The VAC plan sets out a number of important prevention activities, including a media, communication and information strategy, school-based activities (e.g., pre-service training for teachers and a School Child Protection Policy), and parenting support programmes. It also assigns responsibility to relevant ministries, including MoWA, MoSVY, MoEYS and local authorities. These achievements demonstrate that UNICEF has achieved significant buy-in to the Child Protection Programme priorities from key stakeholders, particularly around prevention.

Finally, UNICEF contributed to the establishment of mechanisms to address child protection in emergencies (CPIE), namely through providing financial and technical support to MoSVY for the development of a multi-agency contingency plan on CPIE. This plan is a working document, which is updated every two years by MoSVY and the National Committee for Disaster Management with continuing technical support from UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision and Plan International. Alongside this plan, UNICEF co-leads the Child Protection Sector at the UN and NGO Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF) and regular meetings are held for cluster members. The 2017-2018 revisions of both the MoSVY and HRF contingency plans have yet to be finalised and implemented.

#### **Box 3: Child protection in Emergencies**

The multi-agency contingency plan follows a cluster approach relying on strong humanitarian partnerships and contains steps that should be taken before, during and after the impact of the hazard, to ensure timely, comprehensive and effective child protection in the context of emergencies. The plan assigns responsibility to relevant ministries, including MoSVY, as well as other actors including UNICEF, and timeframes in relation to the impact of the hazard that specific activities should be undertaken. One such step is the development and annual revision of national and sub-national level contingency plans, which include the mapping of child protection resources and capacities as well as common forms and protocols and child protection performance benchmarks. Child protection is also being mainstreamed into other clusters, such as the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) cluster, through steps such as making openings of latrines smaller to reduce the risk of children falling in.

To ensure that the current child protection responses in emergencies are revised and continue to grow there is provision for the production of a lessons learned document following every emergency, which can then be reviewed in anticipation of future events. However, the plan does not have any steps to be taken if a hazard, such as severe rainfall or predicted flooding is forecast. Such steps might include putting child protection actors on alert and pre-emptive coordination.

Beyond this contingency plan, 19 Emergency Provincial Focal Points have received training on a number of issues: how to conduct rapid assessments, data collection on drowning cases, the child protection code of conduct, basic psychological support and counselling, the UNICEF Core Commitment for children and how to work safely in areas with risks from landmines and explosive remnants of war during flash flooding. Furthermore, mine risk education has been integrated into primary school teaching leading to 25,000 school children receiving education on this topic from trained primary school teachers, as well as 1,257 children receiving education from child-to-child teams during flash flooding.

Data on the effectiveness of these measures is limited but UNICEF's child protection team have identified a number of remaining challenges in providing timely and comprehensive child protection in emergencies in Cambodia, such as the lack of Government ownership on child protection issues; the lack of reliable data collection systems during emergencies; and limited funding for mine risk education programmes.

### *Prevention work within communities*

Evaluation findings suggest that relevant government partners, and particularly MoWA, the CCWC, and the police currently carry out awareness-raising work aimed at preventing VAC and unnecessary family separation as part of their daily activities. Whilst it is unclear to what degree these activities can be attributed to UNICEF's Programme, they demonstrate that UNICEF has achieved significant buy-in to the aims and objectives of the Child Protection Programme from key stakeholders, which has translated into concrete prevention work in communities. CCWC representatives included in the study recognised that UNICEF's support had added value to their prevention work within communities and, importantly that the lessons they had learned in UNICEF training were being deployed and found to be successful in preventing children being placed in orphanages.<sup>104</sup>

These activities are likely to be strengthened by UNICEF's on-going capacity building work, including the Positive Parenting Strategy, the Action Plan on Violence Against Children and a handbook aimed at strengthening the capacity of CCWC representatives to undertake prevention work at the commune level.<sup>105</sup> All of these activities are planned for delivery in 2018 and onwards.

Qualitative findings, however, reveal a number of limitations and barriers to the effectiveness of community-based prevention work. Several stakeholders expressed concern that community members who attended locally-run awareness sessions typically do so out of a sense of obligation due to their position in the commune, or the hope of gaining a material benefit, and that training has little meaningful impact on their behaviour. As one respondent emphatically explained: *"[awareness-raising] is like you are throwing water on the duck's head, it never stays there. This training or public forum, people will not take it, they will not learn it. They go because maybe they will get something. But the messages are not in their minds [...] the commune chief tries to persuade people to go because they might be given some material goods – they go there just to show their face so commune chief [is] not angry and because they might receive soap or a sarong."*<sup>106</sup>

Additionally, as explained by one CCWC representative, authorities are prepared to deliver prevention messages in public forums but are reluctant to confront problematic behaviour on an individual basis, with some CCWC members feeling that they lacked authority to do so. This approach reflects a widely-held view that what happens within a family is a matter of private concern. It also continues to uphold the taboo against acknowledging that violence is occurring within a family and in turn prevents the perpetrator of violence being confronted or there being any intervention to prevent or stop the violence. These cultural norms are a significant barrier to VAC prevention and response work, as discussed in the preceding analysis on child protection response.

The Child Protection Programme has, nevertheless, addressed these barriers and has put in place relevant activities to help shift cultural attitudes, including amongst community members. The behavioural change campaign strategy for preventing and responding to violence and against children and unnecessary family separation (key result 3.1) will be crucial in addressing attitudes, though this had yet to be delivered at the time when the evaluation field work was conducted. In addition, the Child Protection Pagoda Programme (key result 3.4) contains a community outreach component, which includes advocacy and awareness raising on VAC and unnecessary family separation. The Programme recognises the potential of monks to influence community attitudes and practices through sermons, prayers and spiritual guidance including at religious ceremonies, noting that, *"given the central role that Buddhism plays in Cambodia, there exist some unique and important entry points to advocate for societal change in traditional practices which can harm children."*<sup>107</sup> The Pagoda Programme, which has taken into account the recommendations contained in the report on

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<sup>104</sup> Individual interview with CWCC.

<sup>105</sup> See key result 3.2.

<sup>106</sup> Individual interview with Anti-human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection police, Provincial Department of Women's Affairs, 27 November 2017.

<sup>107</sup> Rasmussen, Karen, Pagoda Child Protection Programme and Cambodia Buddhist Sangkha, 2017,

Alternative Care Community Practices for Children in Cambodia, including Pagoda-based Care,<sup>108</sup> is in the early stages of implementation but it is very encouraging and a considerable achievement on the part of the UNICEF Child Protection Programme to see that a training module on child protection has been integrated into the Buddhist Education Institute Curriculum, and has been delivered to a number of monks. In addition, a child protection handbook, *Novice Sokha*, has been distributed.

#### *Prevention work with teachers*

Part of UNICEF's prevention of violence in the community activities has included training on positive discipline techniques, targeted at teachers and delivered as part of in-service training in schools. The training was developed as a response to results from the 2013 CVACS, which found violent forms of discipline to be prevalent in both schools and homes. Evaluation findings suggest that positive discipline training has begun to have an effect on behaviour and norms, contributing to some reduction in the use of violent discipline by teachers. They also indicate, however, that significant work remains to be done and that eliminating violent discipline in Cambodia should be seen as a long-term goal.

The positive discipline in schools programme, PDECM, was piloted in 12 primary schools across three Cambodian provinces and, based on promising results from an end-line evaluation of the pilot, the programme has since been implemented in a further 409 primary schools.

Whilst data on the impact of the training in the 409 'roll out' schools is not available, the 2016 evaluation of the pilot<sup>109</sup> found that the programme has been effective at preventing VAC. The evaluation of the pilot began with a baseline study on the use of a range of forms of violent discipline reported by teachers and students in 24 schools conducted in 2015. After the baseline, the PDECM training programme was implemented in 12 of the 24 schools, an 'experiment group,' whilst the remaining 12 schools, 'a control group,' did not receive the training. An end-line survey was conducted in June and July of 2016 to compare use of discipline in experiment schools to the control group. According to results from both students and teachers surveyed for the study, use of violent discipline reduced in intervention schools, and was found to be lower in intervention schools than in a control group. The results of the study, which compared use of moderate verbal, harsh verbal, moderate physical, harsh physical and severe physical forms of discipline in schools, are set out in Figure 11 below. The first chart compares baseline data to end-line data and the second chart compares the end-line data from the experiment group to the end-line data from the control group for both students (upper) and teachers (lower).

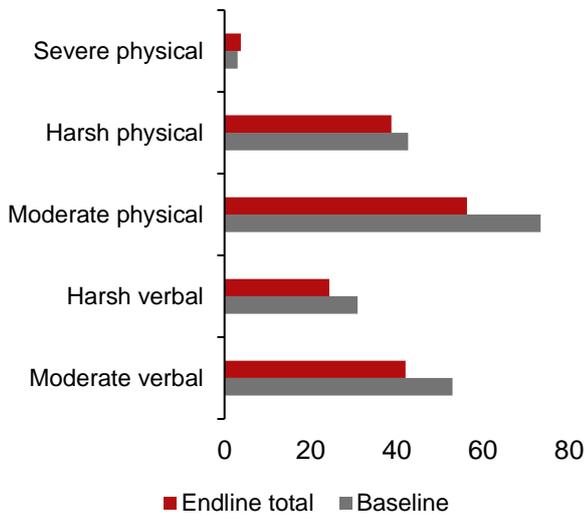
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<sup>108</sup> UNICEF Cambodia, 2018.

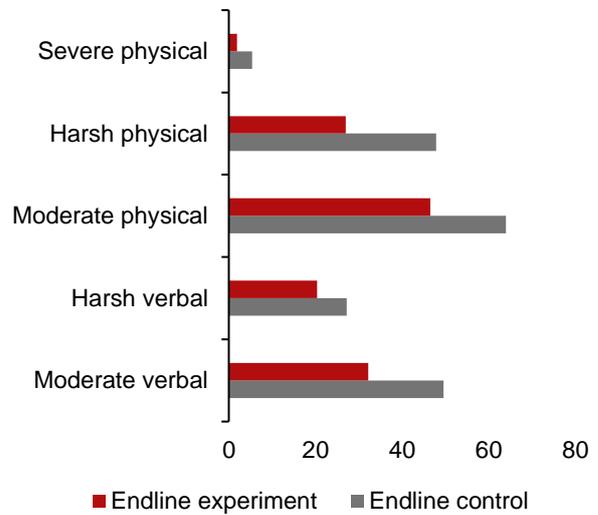
<sup>109</sup> *Disciplinary Methods in Cambodian Primary Schools: Towards Violence Free Schools – A post-intervention survey analysis*, Department of Psychology of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP).

**Figure 11: Use of Violent Discipline, as reported by students (upper) and teachers (lower)**

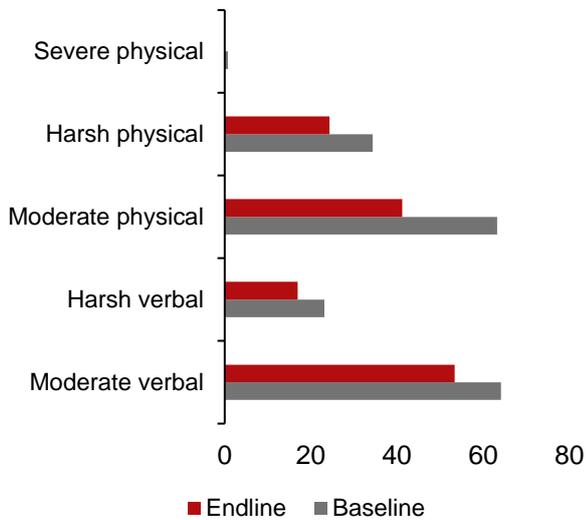
*Use of Violent Discipline Reported by Students: Baseline vs. Endline*



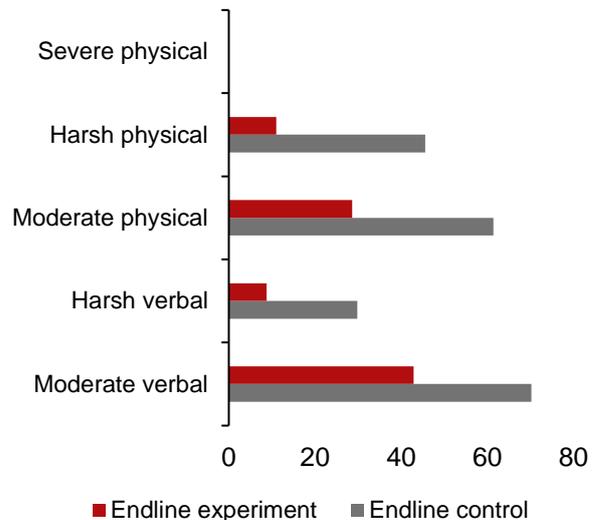
*Use of Violent Discipline Reported by Students: Experiment vs. Control*



*Use of Violent Discipline Reported by Teachers: Baseline vs. Endline*



*Use of Violent Discipline Reported by Teachers: Experiment vs. Control*



As demonstrated by the above charts, all forms of violent discipline considered in the study were found to have reduced after the training intervention was delivered and use of all forms of violent discipline was found to be less prevalent in experiment schools than in control schools. Statistical analysis of differences between the control and experimental group suggest these to be significant in nine out of the 26 specific types of discipline examined; most of these effects fell into the moderate verbal and moderate physical categories, suggesting that 'harsh' forms of violence may be more difficult to influence.

It is important to note that whilst both students' and teachers' responses indicate that all types of violent discipline used in the classroom reduced after the programme, rates of types of discipline reported to be used in the classroom by students tended to be higher than those reported by teachers

in baseline, experiment and control groups. Disparities in teacher and student responses suggest that teachers may be inclined to downplay the level of violence used.

The results suggest that the programme was effective in reducing use of violent discipline against both male and female students. It is also interesting to note that the types of violent discipline techniques used were found to differ between male and female teachers, with some techniques used more frequently by female teachers and others used more frequently by male teachers, though the statistical significance of these results have not been tested.

Whilst implementing partners tended to speak positively about the programme, several pointed out the importance of engaging parents as well as teachers in intervention communities. According to respondents, the lack of equivalent understanding of non-violent discipline methods from parents in areas where positive discipline in schools has been rolled out has tempered the effects of the programme:

*“In general, we still have problems with awareness of parents and their use of violence. Parents don't understand it. Parents still practice their traditional way of disciplining children. [The] attitude of students is affected by this and we don't get the results that we want. [We] need to educate the parents.”<sup>110</sup>*

This sentiment was echoed by the teachers who had received positive discipline training, who felt that in order for the programme to have a meaningful impact, parents would need to be given similar training:

*“My wife, other members of the community, [they] do not understand even when I explain, they do not listen, they still behave the same, so more education and training sessions would be better. So, if UNICEF can, we would like to have this kind of training and education for our community people because still community members tell us: you have to hit my children otherwise they would not learn.”<sup>111</sup>*

This suggests a need for positive discipline training in schools to be accompanied by training programmes with parents whose children attend the school.

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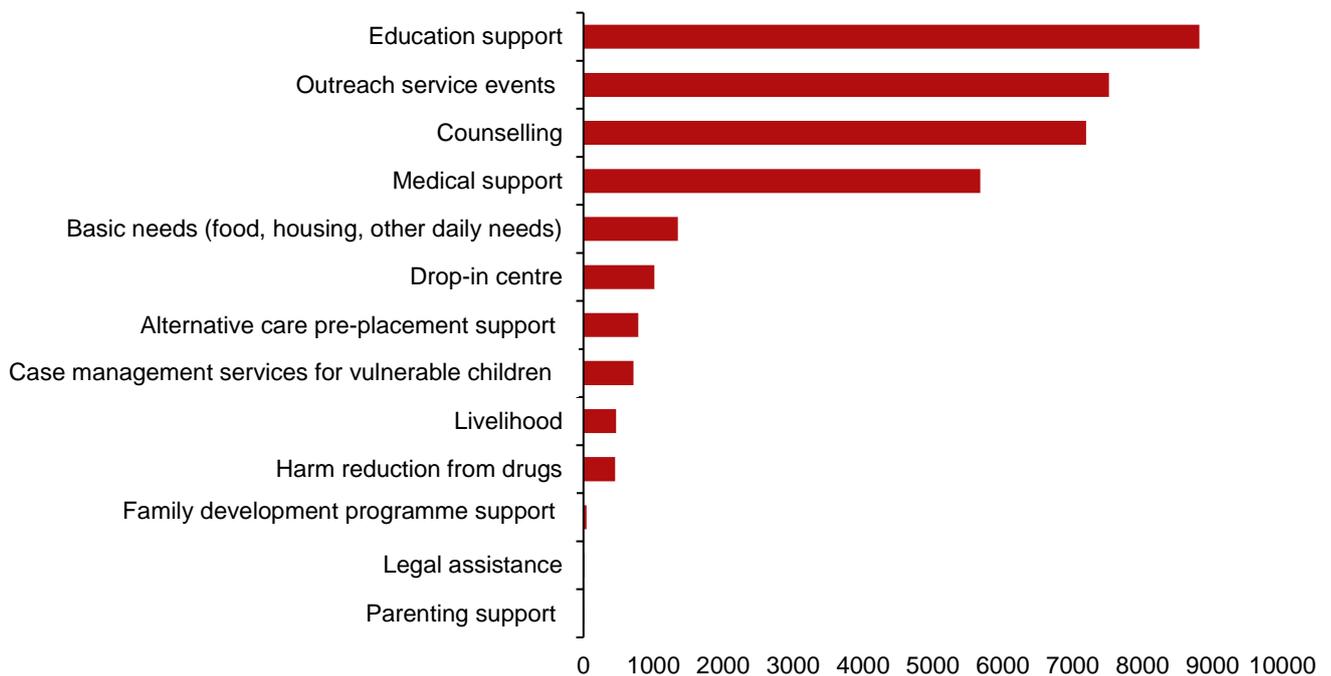
<sup>110</sup> Group interview with primary education authorities, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 5 October 2017.

<sup>111</sup> Group interview with Primary school, 4 December 2017.

### Individualised prevention services

UNICEF's programme has also contributed to the prevention of VAC and family separation through services delivered by the 3PC partnership to individual children and families in UNICEF target provinces. These services were designed to address underlying risk factors that may make children more likely to experience VAC. According to UNICEF monitoring reports, 9,185 newly identified children benefitted from targeted services in 2016 and 8,415 did so in 2017. Whilst data on the specific breakdown of services delivered is not available for 2016, data for 2017 reveals the most common type of service delivered was educational support (8,813), followed by attendance at outreach service events (7,522), and counselling (7,193). The breakdown of types of services delivered is presented in Figure 12. It is important to note that in many cases, more than one type of assistance was delivered.

**Figure 12: Types of prevention services received, 2018<sup>112</sup>**



<sup>112</sup> UNICEF Cambodia Quarterly Progress Reports to the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, 2017.

#### **Box 4: Equity and gender trends in provision of prevention services**

UNICEF's quarterly reporting suggests that gender equality and equity concerns were prioritised in programming; reports on service delivery tended to consider gender breakdown, and consistently emphasised that services were targeted towards the most vulnerable children. Indeed, prevention services were found to have been provided to, accessed by, both vulnerable girls and boys in relatively equal numbers, indicating that the programme has integrated a gender sensitive approach. Whilst data on service provision was not available disaggregated by gender across all quarters (e.g., quarter 1 of 2017 was missing), where gender disaggregated data was available it appears that all types of services were delivered to, accessed by, both girls and boys. Interestingly, however, boys consistently comprised the majority of vocational training beneficiaries, perhaps due to the fact that boys faced fewer barriers to accessing such opportunities than girls. It is notable that very few services were provided to children with HIV and disabilities: both groups comprised 0.1 per cent of vulnerable children in families supported by 3PC in 2017, which may suggest a need for greater efforts to identify particularly marginalised children.<sup>113</sup>

The figures presented above were supported by qualitative findings, which confirm that the vast majority of support provided to children by 3PC partners entailed very basic material support related to education, such as school supplies, the provision of a bike or shuttle bus service to enable children to attend school and, in some cases, arranging basic vocational training. By contrast, several important and relevant types of support, such as basic needs support and, perhaps surprisingly, parenting support, are rarely provided. Services were found to be targeted at particularly vulnerable families, usually identified through local authorities, such as village leaders. These tended to include families living in poverty, families living on the street, families who neglect to send their child to school or families who are known to be considering sending their child to an RCI.

In most cases, prevention support was found to be delivered by NGO social workers, rather than government authorities: *"DoSVY would not have anything to give directly but would refer to Friends International or any other NGOs if the child needs support."*<sup>114</sup> This is consistent with the division of labour employed by the 3PC partnerships, whereby NGOs are responsible for direct service delivery overseen by government authorities. As demonstrated by the preceding quote; however, it is clear that NGO support is necessary given the Government's lack of capacity to deliver material assistance.

Social workers explained that each assistance package is determined on a case by case basis and that material support is often accompanied by 'educational counselling' to children and families, and in some cases basic vocational training or income generation support, depending on need. 3PC monitoring data suggests that some types of prevention support were effective in addressing underlying risk factors: 78 per cent of family businesses that received livelihood support in 2016 were still open after at least a year of operation and participants in alcohol support groups reported both reduced drinking (58 per cent) and reduced violence in their families (78 per cent) in an end of year survey (2017).<sup>115</sup>

#### *Beneficiary satisfaction with individualised prevention services*

Qualitative data on the outcomes and influence of prevention support was diverse, with respondents reporting a variety of levels of satisfaction with support received. Many beneficiaries expressed appreciation for the support provided. This is unsurprising, given that, particularly in the context of extreme poverty or vulnerability, any support, even of fairly minimal level, was viewed as helpful. In several cases, however, support appeared to have made a meaningful difference to beneficiaries' lives and may have reduced the likelihood of violence and unnecessary family separation.

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<sup>113</sup> UNICEF Cambodia Quarterly Progress Reports to the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, 2017.

<sup>114</sup> Group interview with DoSVY social workers, 28 November 2017.

<sup>115</sup> 3PC Monitoring Framework, 2017.

### Box 5: Preventing VAC and unnecessary family separation

After the death of her husband, S was living in extreme poverty and struggled to provide for and feed her four children, particularly when surgery left her unable to work in her construction job. Her case was referred to a local NGO by a neighbour who claimed she used violence against her children – S explained that she became frustrated with the children when she arrived home tired and they had not done their homework or housework, but only 'pinched' them and threatened them with a stick. S described her experience receiving support from the NGO, which had provided her with basic material support and delivered advice and counselling to both S and her children:

*"It was kind of magic when they came. I think they were weren't really worried about the violence, they just wanted to reduce my burden, to give me some support so maybe I could reduce the violence. I felt relieved. It reduced some expenses for household supplies. It was good advice. It is advice I will pass on to my girls – not to use such negative behaviour. When they come all the girls gather around. They say to them – 'don't play around, focus on your studies.' It was quite encouraging. The girls were more attentive and started focussing on school. When I looked at the books I could see the improvement. I was no longer stressed out and I felt less depressed. Back then I was suffocating, and now those emotions are reduced, so I can focus much more on earning. It just reduced my stress!"<sup>116</sup>*

S's case demonstrates how interventions that provide financial or food subsistence, can reduce stress within the family and create the conditions for more positive parenting. The case workers delivering support in this case had established a strong relationship with both the mother and children, who expressed appreciation for their visits and advice. This case illustrates that in order for counselling and advice to have a meaningful impact on behaviour within families it is important for case workers to take the time to establish trust and rapport with beneficiaries.

In many cases, however, prevention support services were found to have little meaningful impact on beneficiaries' circumstances, or on risk of VAC and unnecessary family separation. The types of support provided were often pre-formulated (e.g., basic school supplies that NGOs hand out) and had not been tailored to beneficiaries' particular needs. Furthermore, crucial forms of prevention support, such as social protection services or support to address a lack of free and accessible health and education services, were not available.

#### 5.2.4. Effectiveness of programme monitoring

*Has sufficient attention been given to measuring, monitoring and reporting results? How effectively has evidence been used to inform programmatic changes and adjustments?*

**Summary of main findings:** A digital inspection system for inspection of children's homes has been developed and is currently being used to monitor RCIs, and UNICEF is currently supporting the development of a digital tracking tool for all children undergoing the process of reintegration. The evidence from the survey of children placed in care as part of their reintegration revealed considerable monitoring gaps and inadequacies in record keeping, making it difficult to obtain accurate data. However, UNICEF has used the information from early versions of the evaluation and the Alternative Care Community Practices for Children in Cambodia (2018)<sup>117</sup> effectively and has taken active steps to address the issues raised.

The Child Protection Programme has devoted significant resources to measuring and monitoring programme results. However, it relies upon its partners (3PC and DoSVY/MoSVY) to monitor the delivery of prevention and response services and to monitor children in the process of reintegration.

Over the past three years the Child Protection team has funded a full-time member of staff to focus on strengthening data collection systems in relation to Child Protection in Cambodia (see 5.2.2) and has also partnered with the Open Institute to develop data systems for processes of RCI inspection and reintegration. The digital inspection system (key result 1.3) includes a set of standardised tools to inspect RCIs, which have been applied by trained OSVY officials, as well as a digital database which allows UNICEF and partners to monitor RCI inspection and closure on an ongoing basis. The implementation of digital inspection was identified as a priority by government partners. However, one stakeholder noted that the data has yet to be fully analysed or utilised by Government.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, several inconsistencies have been noted in the data, such as an unexplained drop in the number of

<sup>116</sup> Individual interview with a mother receiving NGO support, 12 December 2017.

<sup>117</sup> Alternative Care Community Practices for Children in Cambodia, including Pagoda-based Care, UNICEF, 2018.

<sup>118</sup> Individual interview, 12 December 2017.

RCIs, and the fact that numbers of children captured by the digital inspection system are far lower than estimates resulting from the RCI mapping. Despite these challenges, which may impact on the utility of the evidence, it is a notable achievement that a digital inspection system has effectively been established and taken effect.

The programme has also supported the development of a digital 'tracking tool', to be implemented by MoSVY, which contains data on the numbers and status of children undergoing the process of reintegration. The tracking tool provides data disaggregated by age and gender and captures several indicators in relation to children's safety and well-being. However, at the time of writing it was not yet fully in use. As a result, evidence from the tracking tool has not been included in this evaluation and has yet to inform programme design.

Evaluation findings suggest that an improved system of monitoring and data management is much needed; data on reintegration provided by MoSVY at the time of the evaluation exhibited several problems which made analysis problematic. For example, formatting in the database was inconsistent, with some observations presented in columns and others in rows, no standardisation of data variables and a number of clear errors. Further, and importantly, the data lacked a sensitive and meaningful assessment of the level of risk associated with each child's case, an essential aspect of any child protection data monitoring system. At present whilst several risk factors are contained in the database (e.g., whether or not the child is in education), there is no overall assessment of the severity of risk in each case, information which is necessary to guide appropriate follow up action (for further information on the action taken to address these issues see section 5.2.2).

Finally, UNICEF has provided capacity building support to 3PC partners to strengthen their data monitoring systems. In particular, a participatory workshop held with monitoring and evaluation staff from 3PC partners resulted in some improvements to their data collection approaches. UNICEF worked with partners to identify how changes in their data collection and reporting could produce more useful and meaningful data. Improvements included reporting on numbers of beneficiaries supported, as well as numbers of services delivered, and distinguishing between support provided to children separated from their families and children experiencing other vulnerabilities. This further disaggregation provides helpful information about the types of child protection cases being addressed through 3PC.

Going forward, however, there is a need for a comprehensive and integrated child protection data management system in Cambodia. At present, the data available on child protection cases is limited to data kept by various NGO service providers and is neither standardised nor comparable. UNICEF has taken several steps to support the establishment of a national Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) (key result 3.1.3), including through developing a concept note in collaboration with MoSVY and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and Open Institute setting out plans for the development of a CPIMS, and investing in a consultant to conduct initial assessments to inform its development. UNICEF is also supporting the Open Institute to contribute to its design. Whilst the development of such a system would be difficult at present given the lack of a coordinated child protection system in Cambodia, UNICEF should continue to prioritise its establishment as the Child Protection system continues to develop.

### **5.3 Efficiency**

*This section examines whether the approach to child protection systems building has been efficient and the factors which impact and constrain efficiency.*

***To what extent and how has UNICEF mobilised and used its resources (human, technical, financial) and improved coordination to achieve its planned results for Child Protection?***

*How successful have UNICEF's efforts in advocacy and policy influencing been in leveraging resources and partnerships? Have they encouraged and contributed to a greater collaborative effort towards child protection?*

*To what extent have UNICEF resources (human, technical, financial) been sufficient in managing the Child Protection Programme? How adequate are the capacities of UNICEF's implementing partners?*

*How effectively have coordination mechanisms been working within UNICEF's Child Protection Programme and other programme outcomes to create and sustain linkages across sectors, and between child protection actors, as a result of UNICEF's investments?*

**Summary of main findings:** The success of the programme in terms of advocacy and policy influencing and in leveraging resources has been and continues to be a notable strength. UNICEF has encouraged and contributed to a greater collaborative effort towards child protection as reflected by 3PC and its work with Family Care First and government partners.

Over the period covered by the evaluation, UNICEF has funded a highly diverse and broad range of activities, all of which constitute important pillars of a comprehensive child protection system. Overall decision-making about where to direct funds, and invest money were found to be strategic and efficient.

The capacities of UNICEF's implementing partners have varied, and both government and NGO partners require further training and professional supervision on social work, record keeping and case management if they are to develop the required capacity.

One of the noticeable aspects and strengths of the UNICEF Child Protection Programme is its wide, cross-sectional nature and holistic approach to child protection, which has involved a number of different UNICEF teams. A system strengthening approach has been taken to child protection which has engaged education, health, communication, IECD, the adolescent programme and social governance and inclusion teams. This has enabled child protection issues to be addressed with all levels of Government, with the main institutions, professionals and practitioners working with children, as well as the public.

### *Efficiency in leveraging resources and partnerships*

Of particular note is the efficient manner in which partnerships have been mobilised to support the central focus of the programme: to support reintegration of children into family care and prevention of further family separation. UNICEF's placement of 31 fully-funded and dedicated full-time social workers in DoSVY and NGOs is especially encouraging, helping to bolster both morale and social work technical capacity, and encouraging efficiency, by allowing the more experienced social workers time to work on issues where they are most needed.

UNICEF's efforts to mobilise the 'on-the-ground' capacity, through the use of CCWC Councillors, was found to be especially efficient. These councillors have close connections to communities and a mandate to support vulnerable children and families, placing them in an ideal position to provide assistance to ongoing monitoring and follow-up for reintegration cases and other 'at risk' groups of children.

Despite these positive aspects, stakeholders also raised a number of concerns with the delegation of child protection functions to lower levels of local Government. In particular, they cautioned against the devolution of work and responsibility to people in the commune council, who do not have social work skills or training, and who lack a sufficient budget, resources, and technical assistance from the district and commune levels to facilitate these activities. Commune Councillors complained of being overworked and overstretched, with a huge diversity of social problems to respond to, all on a limited budget. They described:

*"It's so hard – I am the only woman in this council – the only one dealing with women's issues – how can I deal with this on top of everything else? We don't have enough time to follow-up and check on those kids who are reintegrated. We are very neglected, we have very limited resources, we don't have the capacity to follow up on all of those cases."*<sup>119</sup>

Stakeholders spoke of having to use their own salaries to support child protection activities and, in particular, having to pay for their own transport to visit families, and to conduct follow-up and monitoring visits — a crucial aspect of an effective social work response.

Whilst resourcing of child protection work, and social services more broadly, is limited at all levels, many stakeholders expressed a particular concern that funding is not trickling down to local authorities and communities, where it is arguably needed the most. This is likely to be partially due to the fact that two ministries are involved: MoSVY, who are responsible for DoSVY and OSVY personnel and

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Commune Council for Women and Children, 7 December 2017.

services, and MoI, who are responsible for the CCWC. It is not clear, for instance, who should pay the transport costs of follow-up visits by CCWC councillors to children undergoing reintegration.

Concerns raised by participants were not limited to funding. Lack of human resource and technical capacity in carrying out child protection work amongst district and commune authorities was also found to be a serious issue. Whilst institutional knowledge of dealing with child protection is building slowly, it still rests with too few individuals, and is currently concentrated at provincial level.

Stakeholders expressed concerns about the capacity of the CCWCs for taking on responsibilities for following up on reintegration cases, emphasising that the training and technical support that they are receiving may be inadequate. Whilst UNICEF have been providing training for CCWC Councillors on reintegration work, many councillors emphasised that it has not been enough, and they still do not feel confident in carrying out their roles in this work.

### *Efficiency of coordination of partners*

Whilst the involvement of multisector stakeholders in child protection work is to be encouraged, the lack of a single authority with clearly designated responsibility for the delivery of child protection, was found to be creating confusion amongst the multiple agencies (MoI, MoSVY, MoWA, WCCC, CCWC, MoEYS and Ministry of Health (MoH)) at commune, district and provincial levels, who are involved in child protection: *“for one case we have three to four institutions handling the issues, so they have a channel of reporting to go through. As a result, we might receive information about the case here at social welfare — maybe early on, but maybe late.”*<sup>120</sup>

This was also reflected in poor record keeping, with children's files being shared and stored, typically in an ad hoc manner, between Commune and District WCCCs, OSVY, DoSVY and police authorities.

There are significant challenges and inefficiencies caused by the present institutional structure. The CCWCs and WCCCs are ultimately responsible to MoI, who have governing authority and political influence at village and commune levels. Meanwhile, child protection and social welfare capacity is concentrated in MoSVY, who, in turn, have limited coordination and cooperation with the police: *“So the police — for any cases that are not a big deal — if they can't make money out of the case, they will call us to deal with it.”*<sup>121</sup> This was found, in particular, to be creating inefficiencies in response to child protection cases involving a criminal element, with a lack of transparency and information sharing between police and child protection authorities, raising questions as to whether child protection issues are being adequately addressed.

*“There was a rape case of a girl, but I don't have the full story. The thing is our office has no legal responsibility to take legal action in this case, so we just hand over the case to the police. So, I don't have the exact record, but it is just a rape case. Our role is just to do the aftercare — the post trauma care. We just need to look for services available that can provide support to the family.”*<sup>122</sup>

Finally, a number of stakeholders noted inefficiencies in the division of responsibilities between the government authorities and NGOs. Government authorities lamented their over-reliance on NGOs to provide all direct services and support to children and families, limiting their roles to coordination and administration with little direct capacity to intervene and provide a social work response.

*“Normally it's the NGOs who come to support and solve issues. So, it's like — as government staff — I have an issue, I ask the NGO to support to address it. We need to implement the support ourselves — we don't just want to be a bridge — a facilitator — handing over issues to NGOs all the time. We want to*

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<sup>120</sup> Interview with DoSVY, 11 December 2017.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with a DoSVY Social Worker, 9 December 2017.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with District Office of Social Affairs (OSVY), 8 December 2017.

*address our own issues directly as we are the owners the administrators of the area. But in order to do that, we just need a budget!*<sup>123</sup>

*“And sometimes we are not given a good direction or action plan. Like say NGOs come here to work with us — but we don't know what they are doing. If we were given a good budget we could sit together with NGOs and draw up a proper action plan, to make things more practical, more sustainable. I hope that make sense [...]”*<sup>124</sup>

As well as being considered inefficient, this division of labour raised questions about the project's ultimate sustainability: *“the state does not have budget, and what if the 3PC social workers were not around anymore?”*

### *Efficiency of UNICEF resources (human, technical, financial)*

The Child Protection Programme was found to be well managed with adequate human, technical and financial resources. The weakest element of management related to ensuring adequate data collection and that there had been adequate follow-up of children who are being reintegrated. These weaknesses, apparent at the start of the evaluation, were largely addressed by UNICEF at the time of submission of the evaluation.

### *Efficiency of coordination mechanisms across outputs*

A clear example of the benefits of cross-sectoral working can be seen in the contribution of the education team and the Positive Discipline Programme in schools, reducing the level of violence by teachers against children in the target schools,<sup>125</sup> the development of the Clinical Handbook on Healthcare for Children Subjected to Violence or Sexual Abuse by the health team,<sup>126</sup> and the development of the behavioural change campaign, as well as communication on the national strategic framework on positive parenting by the communications team.<sup>127</sup> In addition, the social governance and inclusion team have worked with Government on social services budgeting and cash transfers, aimed particularly at improving nutrition of children, while IECD have contributed through the development of health and survival of children at community level. The Child Protection Programme has also worked with religious bodies who play a significant role in the provision of child protection services.

The Adolescent Development Officer in the child protection team has had a cross-cutting role in child protection. Her contribution started in 2015, working with adolescents to assist them to mobilise their peers to join in the VAC campaign,<sup>128</sup> a role that has continued. It has included support of NGOs, and particularly the Coalition on the Rights of the Child (NGO-CRC), to work with adolescents and youth on a wide range of activities to reduce harmful behaviour, with outreach services for especially vulnerable adolescents on the street, children out of education and peer education. In addition, the Adolescents Programme has formed an Adolescent and Youth Reference Group, which meets regularly to address issues of child protection and VAC and which has taken an active part in the Reference Group meetings for this evaluation, commenting on all aspects of the programme and on the findings of the evaluation.

As some aspects of the Child Protection Programmes have yet to be delivered, it is not possible to evaluate the effectiveness or efficiency of cross-team working. However, it has allowed a number of elements of child protection to be put in place for delivery and even at this stage, it is clear that without such cross-team working the Child Protection Programme would be far narrower, much less effective and have less impact and sustainability.

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<sup>123</sup> Interview with Commune Council for Women and Children, 7 December 2017.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with District Women and Children's Consultative Committee, 7 December 2017.

<sup>125</sup> See key result 2.2, at section 3.2.

<sup>126</sup> See key result 2.3, at section 3.2.

<sup>127</sup> See key result 3.1, at section 3.2.

<sup>128</sup> This work was done through the Coalition on the Rights of the Child, a national NGO.

## 5.4 Sustainability

*This section examines the sustainability of the Child Protection Programme and the programmes it supports, as well as the sustainability of resources and capacity development.*

***To what extent are the benefits and achievements of the UNICEF-supported programmes likely to continue after the programme has ended through national ownership, changes at family and community level, and scalability and use of partnerships for sustainability?***

*What would be the resource implications to scale-up the Child Protection Programme to the other four priority provinces identified in the mapping of residential care facilities?*

*To what extent has the implementation of the Child Protection Programme thus far contributed to the generation of sustainable capacities at the national and sub-national levels?*

*What are the enabling as well as constraining factors that are likely to influence replication and sustainability?*

**Summary of main findings:** UNICEF's capacity building approach at national level, amongst service providers and practitioners, and within communities is conducive to the achievement of sustainable outcomes. The evaluation identified areas where the programme had made meaningful contributions to capacity within the child protection system; namely, through supporting the development of social work capacity within DoSVY and contributing to the establishment of basic case management. The programme's contributions are still at the early stages but have laid the foundations for a comprehensive child protection system owned and implemented by Government.

Evaluation findings suggest that over-reliance on NGOs for the delivery of child protection services may constrain the sustainability of the programme in the long-term. Whilst it may be unrealistic for Government to provide social work services in child protection cases in the short term, it is important to establish a government-owned, minimum level, social work case management system that takes responsibility for basic child protection functions, with cases referred to NGOs for specialised services as necessary. As an interim measure, DoSVY/OSVY should work closely with NGO social workers, allowing NGOs to take on some of the minimum level tasks where they have the capacity to do so.

Finally, evaluation findings demonstrate that the sustainability of UNICEF's reintegration initiative is likely to be undermined by the lack of developed family support services and community-based alternative care services. Cases where children are victims of violence, abuse or neglect rarely receive a child protection response until they reach crisis point, when, in the absence of alternatives, they tend to end up back in institutions (sometimes temporarily, but often not). At present, reintegration of children from institutional to family-based care is absorbing the bulk of the government's social work capacity leaving little capacity for meaningful child protection response work.

### *Sustainability of the capacity building approach*

UNICEF's Child Protection Programme was designed to generate and strengthen capacities including at national level, amongst service providers and practitioners, and within communities. Capacity building language is contained in the all four outputs of the Child Protection Programme and many programme interventions aim to build the capacity of beneficiaries. Given the fact that these interventions are either at early stages of implementation or have been developed and planned but not yet delivered, it is difficult to determine the degree to which they will contribute to sustainable change in the long term. However, the evaluation did identify areas where the programme has made meaningful contributions to capacity within the child protection system, namely, through supporting the development of social work capacity within DoSVY and contributing to the establishment of basic case management capacity. The programme has also contributed to the generation of sustainable capacity through supporting the development of action plans and tools, such as the MoSVY Action Plan on Improving Child Care (2017), which has been replicated at provincial levels, and the Clinical Handbook on Healthcare for Children Subjected to Violence or Sexual Abuse (2017), as well as the digital inspection system for RCIs which can be owned and implemented by Government.

In addition, evaluation findings indicate that the Programme has contributed to a change in perspectives amongst relevant government authorities and implementing partners. As previously mentioned, the Programme facilitated the development of consensus amongst relevant government stakeholders about the importance of deinstitutionalisation and reintegration, the need to develop services to prevent separation, as well as the need to strengthen VAC prevention and response. This change in institutional culture is an important achievement and lays the foundation for national ownership of child protection work going forward.

### *Enabling and constraining factors*

While the Child Protection Programme's focus on capacity building is conducive to the achievement of sustainable outcomes this should be seen as a long-term goal. The Programme's contributions are at the early stages, and significant work still remains to be done to ensure that interventions lead to the achievement of a comprehensive child protection system owned and implemented by Government. Furthermore, the evaluation identified several factors which are likely to constrain the sustainability of the Programme, and which UNICEF should address as a priority in future programming.

First, the evaluation identified over-reliance on NGOs (including those that are part of the 3PC partnership) for the provision of child protection services as a barrier to sustainability. As one stakeholder observed, *"normally it's the NGOs who come to support us to solve issues. So as Government staff, I have an issue, I ask the NGO to support us to address it. But this approach is not sustainable. I want us to have the capacity to fix our own issues. We need to implement the support ourselves."*<sup>129</sup>

Whilst it may be unrealistic for Government to provide the required social work services in child protection cases in the short-term, it is important to establish a government social work case management service that takes responsibility for, at least, basic child protection functions, such as identification, assessment and care planning, with cases referred to NGOs for specialised services as necessary.

In the short term, child protection services will continue to be delivered by NGOs but in the mid to long-term such a high level of reliance on NGOs and CSOs is unlikely to be sustainable as these bodies may not be able to maintain their current funding levels for years on end. To sustain the child protection system, the Government will need to increase the funding within the child protection system, increase the number of social workers employed and take responsibility for ensuring the necessary services are in place, either delivered by government bodies or commissioned from NGOs. Although the Government has agreed to take on more social workers and has agreed to fund those currently being paid by UNICEF (16 at present are placed with DoSVY) retention of social workers and the accrual of sustainable capacity is likely to depend upon being able to offer competitive salaries and benefits to government social workers.

Evaluation findings suggest that there is a need to ensure that the individualised prevention support and material assistance provided to families are such that they will have a long term and sustainable impact on their circumstances. For instance, one respondent emphasised the need to provide support that can increase a family's ability to generate their own income:

*"Our best strategy should be, if we had some cash, we wouldn't give that directly to the family, instead we would buy them materials. For example, we would buy them a pig sty — so something more sustainable like that."*<sup>130</sup>

*"Yes, there are pros and cons for reintegration. The pros are that we see that it is helpful for the kids to reintegrate with their families — they receive warm care, and a welcoming environment at home. But there are some resource struggles for the caregivers. It isn't enough to give [one-off] cash handouts — the families need employment — they need some skills so that their living can be more sustainable."*<sup>131</sup>

At present, and problematically, quantitative data on the nature of services provided indicates that livelihood support is one of the least frequent forms of service, suggesting a need for increased provision of sustainable support such as capital investment, vocational training, job placement, and loans to support income generation.

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<sup>129</sup> Individual interview with District CWCC, 7 December 2017.

<sup>130</sup> Individual interview with DoSVY, 6 December 2017.

<sup>131</sup> Individual interview with DoSVY, 6 December 2017.

Finally, evaluation findings demonstrate that the sustainability of UNICEF's reintegration and deinstitutionalisation initiative is undermined by the lack of early intervention in child protection cases, and a paucity of available response services in Cambodia. As explained in the effectiveness chapter of the report, in cases where a child is a victim of violence, abuse or neglect, intervention rarely occurs until the child protection issues reach crisis point, when, in the absence of family support services and community-based alternative care services, the child tends to end up in an institution (sometimes temporarily, sometimes longer-term). A further conundrum is that reintegration of children from institutional to family-based care is a challenging undertaking, which is currently absorbing the bulk of the government's limited social work capacity and, in turn, is preventing social work capacity being directed to early intervention.

### *Scaling-up sustainability*

Evaluation findings clearly indicate that strengthening the child protection system in Cambodia requires a long-term commitment, including continued support and investment from development partners. The system is in its infancy and whilst UNICEF's Programme has made a valuable contribution to the building of a child protection system, (particularly through achieving buy-in from government partners and addressing the need for reintegration and deinstitutionalisation), significant gaps in the system remain. Rather than scaling up existing programming, evaluation findings show the need for UNICEF now to consider filling these gaps, in particular addressing the need for legal reform, agreement between ministries on responsibility for child protection services, development of a comprehensive, government-run child protection case management service, and strengthening identification and referral mechanisms.

Several respondents emphasised the importance of UNICEF's long-term commitment to child protection systems building, explaining that changes in the focus of UNICEF's Programme may undermine sustainable achievements:

*"For my experience with UNICEF, UNICEF normally finishes its programme in three to four years and then they don't continue with the Programme. They go on with a different story, and pick a different issue, and different focus. I am the person who always receives projects with UNICEF and I receive different projects each time. They never finish what they start. They always have unfinished business!"<sup>132</sup>*

*"UNICEF should discuss developing a long term strategic plan directly with the MoSVY, and not programmes as short as these programmes usually are. They need to think more long-term and be strategic. They shouldn't go around from this issue to that, they should focus on one or two issues for a long time, and they should focus on grassroots government officers and promoting capacity at the grassroots."<sup>133</sup>*

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The Child Protection Programme 2016-2018 is to be found in Outcome 3 of the Country Programme and provides that: *"by 2018, girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence and those separated from their family, or at risk of separation, are increasingly protected by institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services and a supportive community environment."* By the end of the evaluation period (March 2018),<sup>134</sup> virtually all of the activities contained in the Programme had been initiated, though some were still in a developmental stage and had yet to be implemented. The Programme has been vigorously pursued by UNICEF and although the targets are ambitious, the Programme has made a good start in meeting them.

### *On relevance*

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<sup>132</sup> Individual interview with DoSVY, 11 December 2017.

<sup>133</sup> Individual interview with DoSVY, 11 December 2017.

<sup>134</sup> Though further developments have been noted during the course of the consultations and up to the date of submission of the report.

The overall strength of the Child Protection Programme lies in its relevance to the Cambodian child protection context. The Programme was found to be consistent with UNICEF's Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021, as well as Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The design and the multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach, which aims to strengthen the child protection system and reduce family separation are particularly relevant given the stage of development of the Cambodian child protection system.

The evaluation addressed Output 4, which deals with strengthening capacity of youth-focused organisations and implementing age and gender-appropriate interventions, only in relation to the other outputs. As a result, the evaluation was not able to ascertain fully the extent to which children's voices are heard and reflected within the UNICEF Programme, despite meeting with Adolescent and Youth Reference Group. The lack of children's voices was partially rectified by the Survey of Reintegrated Children carried out within the evaluation. The Survey indicated that there remains a need to improve child participation in decisions that affect them and to take their views into account, especially in the process of reintegration.

### *On effectiveness*

Specific strengths of the Programme in terms of effectiveness include the National and Provincial Action Plans for Improving Child Care; the launch of the costed Violence Against Children (VAC) Action Plan; the appointment of 31 new social workers to the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (DoSVY) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the five priority provinces; delivery of the Positive Discipline Programme to 409 schools; the Child Protection Clinical Handbook; the Child Protection in Pagodas programme (including the Child Protection in Policy)<sup>135</sup> and the addition of training materials on identification and referral of children in need of protection into the Buddhist Education Institute Curriculum; the Juvenile Justice Law; the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC) programme for reintegration of children from the residential care institutions (RCIs) and the provision of community-based services to prevent family separation; the development of the digital inspection system for RCIs and the development of a behavioural change communications strategy. All of these are positive and significant achievements. There is little doubt that the Positive Parenting Programme and the behavioural change communications strategy once delivered will add to the achievement of the outcome when they are delivered later this year.

UNICEF's advocacy has also been particularly effective and a major strength of the Programme. UNICEF has successfully influenced the direction of child protection system-strengthening, resulting in significant achievements, including the decision by Government to start a process of reintegration of children accommodated in RCIs, the government prohibition on the opening of new RCIs, and a change in attitude as to the appropriate form of care for children who cannot be looked after by their parents.

Delays in implementation of activities are a weakness of the Programme, though most delays have been due to external factors beyond UNICEF's control. In particular, the delay in delivery of the communications strategy intended to change attitudes on violence, and the delay in delivery of the positive parenting activity, meaning it was not possible to run the latter together with the Positive Discipline Programme, are likely to have some consequential impact on the overall effectiveness of the programme and on building a supportive community environment.

At present, child protection cases are dealt with by a multiplicity of bodies, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), Ministry of Interior (MoI) (in the form of the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) and the Women and Children Consultative Committee (WCCC)), the Cambodian National Police (CNP) and Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), leading to duplication of provision in some cases and inadequate delivery of services in others. In addition, there are no referral protocols, leaving those who have identified a child in need of protection with no clear instruction or information as to which body a referral should be made.

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<sup>135</sup> Ministry of Cults and Religion, June 2018.

Further, there is insufficient clarity as to which level — provincial, district or commune — should intervene to protect a child.

The result of this fragmented and largely uncoordinated child protection system is that it is not possible to say that, at present, there is a supportive community environment.

The lack of a child protection budget at commune level, allied with a lack of trained and skilled staff makes it exceedingly difficult to provide a supportive community environment, even with the best efforts of the CCWC. Going forward, and in order for there to be an effective child protection service that protects children from VAC and family separation, UNICEF will need to use its influence and best endeavours to support institutional reform and to leverage resources from Government. Whether such funds are received by MoI or MoSVY should be of secondary importance, though some rethinking about which Ministry should be responsible for providing front-line child protection services may be necessary.

### *On efficiency*

A more obvious weakness is to be found with respect to ensuring children *“are increasingly protected by institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services and a supportive community environment.”* UNICEF has faced challenges in ensuring the quality of reintegration services and support to children provided both by DoSVY and NGOs. UNICEF has taken steps to address this weakness through extending a survey on outcomes for children being reintegrated and has used the survey of 143 of these children undertaken as part of this formative evaluation to tighten the criteria for reintegration of children in RCIs, to slow the numbers of children reunified or placed for the remainder of 2018 until full assessments and risk analysis are undertaken and support mechanisms are in place, as well as to improve the monitoring and follow-up of children being reintegrated. It is essential that children's best interests remain at the heart of the programme and that more regular and effective monitoring is put in place with active and timely intervention when children can no longer be located, or when the child's case receives a yellow or red flag.

Further weaknesses which have impacted the efficiency of the Programme and the development of *“institutional and legislative frameworks and quality services”* include issues of governance within the child protection system; a lack of relevant legal instruments on child protection, a lack of detailed planning by Government for the delivery of quality child protection services and a significant lack of human and financial capacity within the child protection system. UNICEF has sought once again, to address these weaknesses by funding 31 social workers, by advocating for a new Child Protection Law and by advocating with and supporting MoSVY to submit a proposal to the Council of Ministers for a Child Protection Technical Unit within the Ministry. However, these weaknesses are likely to take some time to address and are likely to require continuing input and support from UNICEF.

The Child Protection Programme has concentrated heavily on the reintegration of children in RCIs, with government social workers focusing mainly on assessment of families prior to reintegration and post-placement monitoring of this group of children, while the 3PC partnership has provided family support services, outreach support to vulnerable children and virtually all the community-based alternative care services. This evaluation found that services offered by 3PC are heavily slanted towards education support, outreach, counselling, medical support and basic needs, preventing family separation rather than response services. Qualitative evidence obtained for this evaluation indicates that key informants believe that the most vulnerable children, especially street children and those subject to violence, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse in the home (particularly where there is domestic violence) are not receiving sufficient protective services. This would appear to be partially due to a lack of ability amongst key duty bearers to identify child abuse, to understand family dynamics and a lack of knowledge about referral of such children, and partly due to a lack of training, experience and human capacity to address it, especially within CCWC and DoSVY/Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (OSVY). In order to protect children from violence and abuse in the home and to ensure quality of services, there is a need to build up a cadre of trained,

well-skilled social workers, either within a government department or in an NGO commissioned by the Government to provide such services.

Overall, there remains a lack of trained, skilled and experienced social workers in the government service combined with an inadequate budget to meet the needs of children and families, which has an inevitable impact on the quality of services. As noted above, UNICEF has taken steps to address this, through training and the appointment of 31 social workers in DoSVY, OSVY and NGOs, who will in due course be employed by Government. However, it is likely that support will continue to be needed for these and other new social workers, as well as commune-level staff for some years to come to ensure an effective child protection service. In order to ensure efficiency and the building of capacity within government bodies responsible for child protection (particularly DoSVY and OSVY), the relationship between Government and NGOs would benefit from being formalised, with closer working relationships, together with the introduction of Government agreed standard operating procedures or memoranda of understanding in order to produce a more cohesive child protection system, and to ensure that services meet the needs of children within the area.

### *On sustainability*

There is currently a heavy reliance on the NGO sector (and particularly 3PC and Family Care First) for the provisions of child protection services. This is likely to continue at least in the medium term due to the lack of capacity within the Government to deliver child protection services.

The 3PC partnership has provided a basic bedrock of services within the five priority provinces, and can be regarded as a strength of the Programme. However, it is unlikely that quality child protection services can be provided in the medium to long-term without further economic investment by the Government. Without an investment of government resources into alternative community-based care services (and particularly foster care) nationwide, the current reduction in numbers of children in institutionalised may not be sustainable, as this remains, at present, the major form of alternative care available.

## **7. LESSONS LEARNED**

### **Lack of legislation and coordination in response to child protection issues**

The evaluation found that there is a weak process of identification and response to children who are suffering abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation. Even where a child is identified, there is no clear referral process and no indication in the relevant Sub-Decrees and Prakas setting out which body is responsible for taking action, and which body is accountable for the delivery of basic child protection services (i.e., identification, referral, assessment, decision-making, support, application for an order to protect the child). This is largely due to the lack of a primary law or secondary legislation regulating child protection. In order to ensure that children “*are increasingly protected by institutional and legislative frameworks*” it would have been beneficial for the Programme to have had a specific activity relating to this issue – and in the short term to have focused on the development of standard operating procedures or joint working protocols amongst different government bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), setting out a referral and response process and to have started a process of review of the current child protection laws with a view to amendment or a new Child Protection Law.

### **Lack of working protocol for cooperation and coordination between sub-national bodies**

Despite best efforts to encourage cooperation and coordination between the different child protection bodies at the sub-national level, this has not always been successful. There is still a lack of understanding that a criminal investigation, which involves a child victim or witness can, and as a rule should, go hand-in-hand with a child protection investigation. The object of the police investigation is to determine whether a crime has been committed and if so by whom. The role of the child protection body is to ensure the child's welfare. At the time of this evaluation there was no working protocol setting out how the police and child protection bodies should work together during an investigation.

## **Children undergoing safe reintegration**

The decision to undertake safe reintegration of children living in residential care institutions (RCIs) was an appropriate decision and reflects good practice and has been successful in the majority of cases. However, there are lessons to be learned about the process of reintegration. While 55 per cent of children surveyed during the evaluation said that they felt safer in their family or community placement than they had living in institutional care, and 21 per cent said that they felt equally safe or there was no difference, nearly a quarter (23.8 per cent), said they felt less safe (including 12.4 per cent of children being reintegrated into their own family and 42.6 per cent of children being reintegrated into another family). Figures from the case status update prepared by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth (MoSVY) showed just five per cent of children were recorded as 'unable to be located' although the children's survey indicated that this number was higher. The inability to locate children being reintegrated so soon after the process has taken place, and the number of children who feel less safe now that they have been placed during reintegration is a matter of concern. This is likely to be due to the manner of implementation, including inadequate assessments of the child and family prior to reintegration, pressure on families (birth parents and kinship carers) to take on care of the child, and a lack of appreciation and understanding of risk and of the underlying reasons for the initial placement of a child. In some of the interviews conducted with caregivers who took part in the survey it was suggested that the fact that the child has a living parent who was willing to take the child was the determining factor for reintegration. The Survey also indicated a likelihood that the procedures contained in the Reintegration Guidelines on Assessment, Support and Follow-up have not always been followed. The findings indicate that in order to ensure that reintegration is safe in all cases, there is a need for a greater level of skill amongst staff involved in the assessment of families and children and a need for greater practice supervision and more regular monitoring visits.

Follow-up of children being reintegrated has not always been easy. Physically accessing children following placement has been an issue, given the geographical spread of children who have been reunified with families or placed with kinship carers, and the time and cost of follow-up visits. It is not clear that this issue was sufficiently taken into account by the Programme, and the case status update shows that some children were not followed up with for long periods of time. A further issue has been the migration of children being reintegrated into their families, or on their own, either within Cambodia or abroad, resulting again in a lack of monitoring of children being reintegrated and children who are no longer able to be located. The possibility of children migrating with their family appears not to have been foreseen and presents a challenge which is yet to be addressed.

## **Theoretical and practical training of social workers**

Although the UNICEF programme has provided training to existing Departments of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth (DoSVY) and Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth (OSVY) social workers, and to Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) and Women and Children Consultative Committee (WCCC) staff, and it is now possible to obtain a degree in social work, the level of social work skill remains low. Qualitative evidence gathered during the process of this evaluation indicates that there remains a pressing need for more training, particularly in relation to awareness and identification of child abuse in all its forms, the impact of domestic violence on children and perhaps, most importantly, the analysis of risk. Such training needs to be both theoretical and practical, to be ongoing and to be accompanied by professional supervision of those working on child protection cases, to assist them to reach the required level of capacity. The amount of training required when starting from a very low base level cannot be underestimated. Many of those engaged in complex child protection work recognised that their skills were unequal to the task and that they require on-going support and supervision.

## **Further investment in community-based care to meet reintegration targets**

The lack of provision of community-based alternative care has meant that it is unlikely that the target of 30 per cent of children in RCIs to be safely reintegrated can be met within the time frame of the

Country Programme 2016-2018. It would appear from the data that only 5.1 per cent of children in RCIs had been through the process of reintegration thus far at the time of writing. Of the children being reintegrated, 64.4 per cent of children were reunified with their birth parents, with a further 20.9 per cent placed in kinship care. 6.8 per cent were placed in a group home, 3.5 per cent in another RCI and only 1.7 per cent in foster care. As can be seen, the figures for children in foster care remain very low. It has, of course, to be recognised that the development of alternative care services has only really gained momentum since the start of the Child Protection Programme 2016-2018 and still relies almost entirely on NGO-developed facilities. There remains a need for further investment in community-based alternative care, and particularly foster care, and for Government to invest in such services, either directly or through the commissioning of NGOs.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

A number of activities contained within the Child Protection Programme are still to be implemented. This includes the Positive Parenting Programme; training on the Clinical Handbook on Child Protection, the acceptance of the Three Year Strategic Plan and Operational Plan to Guide the Implementation of the Juvenile Justice Law and the Juvenile Justice Guidelines and the Communication Strategy to End Violence and Unnecessary Separation of Children. As a result, the evaluation makes no recommendations on these aspects of the Child Protection Programme.

Recommendations, directed to UNICEF, have been developed based on findings presented throughout the evaluation report, and in particular, analysis of the outcomes, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme. They have been validated in a series of validation workshops involving key evaluation users.

### **1. Legal framework**

It is recommended that UNICEF continue to prioritise legal and organisational reform.

Legal reform could take a number of guises. The Government should be encouraged to draft a new, comprehensive Child Protection Law with accompanying Regulations. However, it must be recognised that the process of drafting and passing a new law can take some years, and that effective child protection system-strengthening cannot wait that long. For the present, it is recommended that:

- UNICEF work with the Government to review Sub-Decree 34 (and continue to work on Sub-Decree 54), and to develop either detailed working protocols or standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the delivery of child protection. This should ideally take the form of secondary legislation or statutory guidance; and
- Any new instrument should place a statutory duty on all bodies and professionals working with children to refer cases of suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence; set out the body (which it is recommended should be Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (OSVY) or Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (DoSVY) until such time as there are sufficient social workers in post at the district level) to whom a referral must be made; the body with responsibility for investigating and assessing the potential risk to the child; the body responsible for determining which services, if any, are to be provided to the child and the family; and which body is responsible for making an application to the Court for a transfer of parental power under the Law on Marriage and the Family.

### **2. Organisational framework for the delivery of child protection**

It is recommended that UNICEF undertake further discussion with the Government on the organisational framework for delivery of child protection. It is recommended that:

- Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) should be the front-line service for child protection, receiving local-level allegations that a child is being abused, at risk of abuse or in need of support to prevent family separation;

- CCWC should support children and families who are in need of material assistance and other forms of family support, where a child protection intervention is not required;
- In all cases where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is being, or is at risk of being abused, neglected or exploited or the subject of violence, or there is a very real risk of family separation, a referral should be made to DoSVY (or OSVY if the number and capacity of social workers can be increased and improved), who should be responsible for the child protection investigation, assessment, risk analysis and decision-making on the support and services that should be offered, reviews of cases, etc.

### **3. Organisational framework for the Cambodian National Police**

It is recommended that:

- The Anti-Trafficking Police Unit take on a wider range of cases, and function as the specialist police unit for child protection cases:
  - Any report of a crime involving physical or sexual abuse of a child made to the local administrative police post should be referred immediately for investigation to the Anti-Trafficking Police Unit. Such a referral should also trigger a child protection referral, to be made to OSVY (or DoSVY until OSVY has a sufficient number of social workers in post) by the Anti-Trafficking Police; and
  - Where the commune police receive a report of domestic violence involving physical or sexual assault of a woman, and there are children resident within the house, a child protection referral should be made to the CCWC by the police officer attending at the incident — the CCWC officer to then refer the case on to OSVY or DoSVY where child protection intervention is required.
- A joint working protocol should be developed between the Anti-Trafficking Police Unit and OSVY/DoSVY/CCWC setting out the duties, functions and roles of each body and how they are to work together; and
- Further training on child protection be given to police officers in the Anti-Trafficking Police Unit.

### **4. The Positive Discipline Programme**

The results of the Positive Discipline Programme are encouraging, and it is recommended that this programme be continued into the next Country Programme 2018-2023, and be expanded to cover all provinces, if financial resources allow. It is also recommended that, wherever possible, Level 1 (universal 'light' parenting support for positive parenting) of the Positive Parenting Programme should be offered and delivered to parents and care-givers of pupils at the school at the same time as the Positive Discipline Programme.

### **5. Social work case management**

At present, there appears to be little in the way of effective social work case management and this has an impact on the efficiency of child protection as a whole. It is recommended that a social work case management system should be introduced as a matter of urgency, and that case files should be opened and kept by the body responsible for investigation, assessment, risk analysis, care planning and reviews (i.e., OSVY/DoSVY). Where a child is being offered a service by a non-governmental organisation (NGO), a social worker in OSVY/DoSVY should remain the lead body, responsible for coordinating case management.

It is further recommended that UNICEF continue in the short-term to support and fund the placement of social workers, while continuing to advocate with the Government for an increase in the number of employed social workers nationally.

### **6. Reintegration**

It is recommended that consideration be given to a change of approach in the new Country Programme. With the increase in experience of social workers in reintegration over the course of the Child Protection Programme 2016-2018, the emphasis in the new Country Programme 2018-2023

should be on family support and the expansion and use of community-based, alternative care settings (especially foster care), with placement in a residential care institution (RCI) being treated as an exception. If there are no available community-based alternative care services immediately available, placement in a RCI should be for a strictly limited period of time, while an alternative placement is identified.

It is accepted that this would be dependent on a significant growth in the alternative care services currently available, and financial investment in such services, particularly in the recruitment, training and support of foster carers over the course of the Country Programme.

- With respect to children who remain in RCIs at the end of the 2016-2018 Programme, it is recommended that all should be subject to a rapid assessment in 2019, as the new Country Programme starts, to determine whether reintegration to the family is feasible and if not, to identify an appropriate form of community-based alternative care, with an emphasis on 'last in, first out';
- It is recommended that the draft Guidelines for the Reunification and Reintegration of Children from Residential Care in Cambodia should be implemented and that DoSVY social workers should receive further training on the procedures contained within the Guidelines to ensure a thorough best interests' assessment and risk analysis occurs before reintegration;
- A more rigorous monitoring system should be put in place: a child being reintegrated should be visited every week for at least the first month by a social worker with further face-to-face visits every month for another six months. Where a case is yellow or red flagged there should be a reassessment of the care plan within two weeks; and
- When a child is reunified or placed, the parent or carer should be required to sign a formal agreement with respect to cooperation, including a requirement to inform DoSVY (or OSVY) of any change of circumstance, including intended change of address or movement of the child to another address in order to reduce the number of 'unable to be located' children.

## **7. Training**

Although training has been provided to social workers and commune officials, more training is needed. It is recommended that:

- Training on recognising and identifying child abuse be offered to CCWC staff;
- That both Government and NGO social workers be offered training on family assessment and risk analysis;
- Health and education professionals should receive training on their professional duty of care to safeguard children and on the referral process; and
- Practice-based training and coaching should continue to be offered to DoSVY and OSVY social workers on a regular basis over the course of the next Country Programme to professionalise the child protection service.

## **8. Budget**

It is recommended that UNICEF use its influence and leverage with national and sub-national Government to set a dedicated budget for child protection over the next Country Programme.

## **9. Planning**

It is recommended that UNICEF encourage DoSVY in the five target provinces to engage with NGOs to draft a bi-annual Child Protection Services Plan. This should set out the needs of children in the province, the existing services capable of meeting those needs, the needs which remain unmet, and how DoSVY, NGOs and other bodies are planning to fill the gap in services highlighted in the report.

**Table 4: Timetable for delivery of recommendations**

Recommendation	Short-term (less than 2 years)	Medium-term (2-5 years)	Long-term (5 years plus)
<b>1. Legal framework</b>			
UNICEF should advocate for law reform and the drafting of a new Child Protection Law with accompanying Regulations and Guidance.	<p>UNICEF to provide technical assistance for review of existing laws relating to child protection to determine the amendments needed;</p> <p>UNICEF to provide technical assistance for development and drafting of new Child Protection Law and accompanying Regulations and Guidance; and</p> <p>UNICEF to provide technical assistance on developing and drafting working protocols or SOPs between the different government bodies involved in child protection.</p>	<p>New Child Protection Law, Regulations and Guidance adopted and implemented by the Government setting out which body is responsible for which aspect of child protection;</p> <p>Working protocols or SOPs (for case management) in place and implemented; and</p> <p>Child Protection actors trained on the Law(s).</p>	
<b>2. Organisational framework for the delivery of child protection</b>			
UNICEF to advocate for reform of the organisational framework for child protection.	<p>Increase in the number of social workers;</p> <p>Support appointment of para-social workers at commune level;</p> <p>Encourage the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), Ministry of Interior (Mol) and Women and Children Consultative Committee (WCCC) together with NGOs to formulate a national policy for support to families to prevent separation, and link to cash transfer programme;</p> <p>Work with MoSVY, DoSVY, OSVY, CCWC and WCCC on allocation of resources to ensure that there are adequate resources available to cover transport and other related costs of case management on a timely basis; and</p> <p>Develop referral protocol for child protection cases identified by CCWC and commune police to DoSVY (OSVY).</p>	<p>Increase in the number of social workers;</p> <p>Support appointment of para-social workers at commune level; and</p> <p>Budget allocation for child protection by central Government in place.</p>	Increase in the number of social workers.
<b>3. Organisation framework for the Cambodian National Police</b>			
UNICEF to advocate with Cambodian National Police (CNP) for the Anti-Trafficking Police Unit to extend their remit and function as the specialist police unit for child protection cases.	<p>Work with CNP and the Anti-Trafficking Police to establish specialist units to handle child protection cases;</p> <p>UNICEF to assist the specialist police unit to develop a referral protocol</p>	Develop pre-service curriculum for the specialist police units.	

	<p>within the CNP and between the specialist police unit and DoSVY (OSVY) and CCWC; Increase the capacity of the specialist police unit to deal with child protection cases;</p> <p>Enhance specialist police unit skills in child friendly interviewing of children subject to violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation.</p>		
<b>4. The Positive Discipline Programme</b>			
Extend to cover all provinces and encourage delivery of the Positive Parenting Programme at the same time to ensure holistic approach to the use of violence	UNICEF to work with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) on extending the coverage of the Positive Discipline Programme to all schools in the country.	UNICEF to work with MoEYS to integrate Positive Discipline Programme into pre-service teacher training curriculum.	
<b>5. Social work case management</b>			
Introduce a social work case management system.	<p>UNICEF to work with MoSVY to develop a case management system;</p> <p>UNICEF to continue its work on development of a tracking system for children in the child protection system; and</p> <p>UNICEF to assist MoSVY to introduce the concept of supervision within case management and to appoint and train supervisors.</p>	<p>Case management system implemented in the five priority provinces;</p> <p>UNICEF to continue to assist MoSVY to train supervisors; and</p> <p>UNICEF to continue to support social workers placed under the current Country Programme while advocating to Government to take over the payment and to employ them and a progressively increasing number of social workers.</p>	Case management system implemented nationally.
<b>6. Reintegration</b>			
Emphasis of the new Country Programme 2018-2023 should be on family support and the expansion and use of community-based, alternative care settings (especially foster care), with placement in an RCI being treated as an exception. If there are no available community-based alternative care services immediately available, placement in an RCI should be for a strictly limited period of time, while an alternative placement is identified.	<p>All children who remain in RCIs at the end of the 2016-2018 Programme, to be subject to a rapid assessment in 2019, as the new Country Programme starts, to determine whether reintegration to the family is feasible and if not, to identify an appropriate form of community-based alternative care, with an emphasis on 'last in, first out';</p> <p>Criteria for reunification to be re-examined;</p> <p>Formal agreements for parents and carers of reunified and placed children to be agreed with restrictions on changing residence without notification to DoSVY;</p> <p>UNICEF to support DoSVY in reviewing and tightening up the monitoring process to be agreed with DoSVY;</p>	UNICEF to continue to support Government in further development of alternative, family-based care services particularly of short-term and long-term fostering services.	

	<p>UNICEF to provide technical assistance to DoSVY on record-keeping for children being reintegrated; and</p> <p>UNICEF to continue its work on the development of fostering and adoption.</p>		
<b>7. Training</b>			
<p>UNICEF to provide training to skill up existing and new staff to professionalise child protection services.</p>	<p>UNICEF to develop and deliver training for CCWC members on recognising and identifying child abuse;</p> <p>UNICEF to develop and deliver further training to Government and NGO social workers on family assessment and risk analysis;</p> <p>Health and education professionals should receive training on their professional duty of care to safeguard children and on the referral process; and</p> <p>UNICEF to provide technical assistance to develop practice-based training and coaching both within University social work programmes and for social workers already undertaking child protection work in order to professionalise the child protection service.</p>	<p>Continue to provide training to build a national cadre of senior child protection social workers who can provide to social work staff; and</p> <p>Develop on-line continuing education and practical skills training for social workers to be available free of charge to Government and NGO social workers and CCWC staff.</p>	
<b>8. Budget</b>			
<p>UNICEF use its influence and leverage with central and local Government to set a dedicated budget for child protection over the next Country Programme.</p>	<p>UNICEF to assist Government to cost child protection services and determine how to develop services progressively.</p>	<p>UNICEF to advocate for a progressive increase in budget to enable a comprehensive child protection system to be established.</p>	
<b>9. Planning</b>			
<p>UNICEF to encourage DoSVY initially in the five target provinces and then nationally to engage with NGOs to draft a bi-annual Child Protection Services Plan.</p>	<p>Provide technical assistance to DoSVY and NGOs in the five target provinces to draft a Child Protection Plan setting out the needs of children in the province, the existing services capable of meeting those needs, the needs which remain unmet, and how DoSVY, NGOs and other bodies are planning to fill the gaps in services.</p>	<p>Provide technical assistance to DoSVY and NGOs nationally to draft a Child Protection Plan setting out the needs of children in all province, the existing services capable of meeting those needs, the needs which remain unmet, and how DoSVY, NGOs and other bodies are planning to fill the gaps in services.</p>	