

Child Abuse Programme

Working together for and with children
Stimulating multi-level responses for children and families

Geneva 2007



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We all acknowledge that every child is unique. This means that responses must be able to allow for differences in both a child's needs and in the way they respond to services. The onus is on the project or the service-provider to
a) get information about the child's needs and strengths, and in so doing, to be informed by children as well as by adults
b) provide a range of flexible responses to try to meet their needs.

While everyone agrees that we must work together much more effectively if we are to provide comprehensive care for abused and exploited children*, there is to date little evidence of good practice emerging around the globe.

What this means of course is that not only do "official" state services need to work together to prevent abuse and exploitation and provide care for victims, but also that NGOs and other civil society actors should work together; and, most important of all, that state and civil society must join forces together to provide the best quality care for children and families.

Working together also means working with children so that children are acknowledged and respected as actors in these processes, whether we are talking about prevention, recognition, response or advocacy.

There are indeed good examples of new alliances between groups at all levels:

e.g., an NGO prevention programme seeks to add an advocacy strategy and joins forces with a local research institute

e.g., an NGO shelter/recovery programme seeks to add a project on prevention and joins forces with another NGO providing information/education programmes, etc.

However, there is less evidence of multi-level responses reaching every child that needs them **within a given locality (province, district or municipality)**. Oak Foundation in its next 5 years hopes to stimulate further examples of multi-level responses to meet the needs of abused and exploited children. To do this, we are beginning to develop some tools/illustrations to help NGO partners and Oak staff.

* the mandate of the child abuse programme of Oak Foundation focuses specifically on sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and related trafficking.

These can be used whether we are talking about

- a) a comprehensive programme in one location, or
- b) a single-focus programme (e.g., a shelter-recovery programme for victims of sexual exploitation) attempting to become more comprehensive through the addition of new components and/or by effective networking with the programmes and services of others.

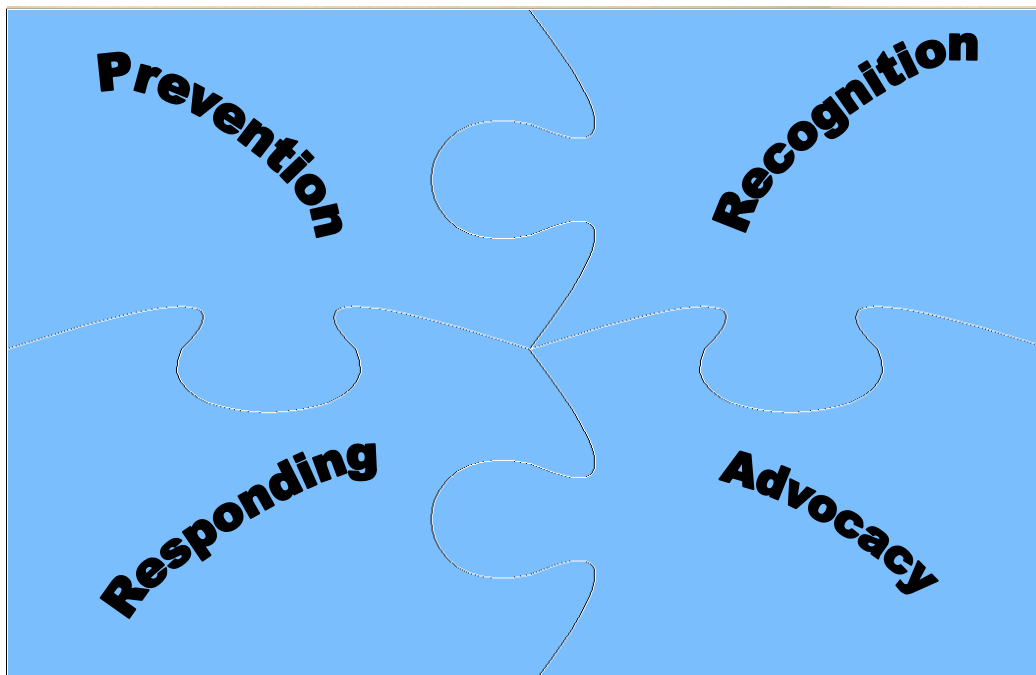
We hope that these will also assist our NGO partners in their assessments of **resources and gaps** as they develop multi-level responses. They should help our partners who are setting up new programmes to:

- a) situate their proposals in the local context,
- b) offer children **a range** of services to meet individual needs
- c) identify existing networks and allies with whom to work.

1. The illustration/tool below, a 4-piece jigsaw, brings together the different levels of work required to build multi-level responses

Each of these 4 pieces represents huge areas of work and no one NGO – or state service - can do it alone. This is why collaboration is vital if children are indeed to be placed at the centre of our concerns and holistic programmes developed.

All 4 pieces are interlinked, for example, any programme developed to recognise and respond to the needs of children should also seek information, including from children, which could be used in a preventive programme or in advocacy



2. “The Child Protection Wheel – Where Does the Project Fit?” (See page 7) this relates mainly to two items in the jigsaw – recognition and responding.

It provides NGOs with a list of questions that they should consider as part of the planning process in order to assess where their project will fit within the local child protection network. It will also help identify gaps that need addressing.

This wheel is about protecting children and so it **applies to both abused and exploited children.**

3. The wheel does not relate to the wide spectrum of activities which come under the area of prevention.

There is no tool offered here because of the wide range of activities which could be undertaken to try to prevent/reduce the incidence of sexual abuse and exploitation. These are generally classified by the professional community in the following way:

- a) Primary prevention activities: directed to all children, the public, professionals, young adults, etc., - school-based prevention programmes, community-based programmes, gender education programmes, parent education, life skills training, the availability of telephone helplines.
- b) Secondary prevention: directed to families deemed to be at risk of abusing, neglecting or exploiting their children - family support, home visiting and a range of programmes needed to meet the needs of these families (mental health needs, substance abuse programmes etc).
- c) Tertiary prevention – programmes designed to prevent further abuse to victims, offenders and their families, once abuse has been disclosed; and to ameliorate the adverse effects of abuse, neglect and exploitation (e.g., rehabilitation/recovery programmes).

There are however preventive activities, in addition to the above, which apply specifically to children abused and exploited in prostitution but do not apply, for example, to sexual abuse within the family, e.g., the provision of educational and economic alternatives to prostitution

What would be helpful for Oak’s partners is to consider

- a) preventive activities in the region that already exist and with which your programme could coordinate
- b) new areas in which the NGO would like to work
- c) links with any state system and/or informal network on child protection available in your locality

4. Advocacy

Even when recognition, response and prevention are coordinated within a region, an advocacy strategy will be needed to ensure that multi-level action leads to new services and new funding from the state as well as long-term change for children.

National governments have usually made commitments both internationally and regionally to protect children. Therefore projects need to identify what commitments their governments have made, what child protection legislation and policies exist, and if and how these are being implemented. This will then enable NGOs to identify gaps and issues that may need a coordinated advocacy strategy in their region or nationally.

This too will need to take account of local contexts and should be as much the subject of a clear and consistent plan as the direct work with children and families themselves. **Advocacy should be closely linked to ongoing direct work with children and families, whether prevention or response, in order to ensure that advocacy messages reflect the needs of the children and families they are intended to serve.**

5. Training

All work on prevention, recognition, response and advocacy would be maximised if one other important condition was met, namely that **all professionals working with children are trained**

- a) to work in a child-sensitive way and
- b) to provide child-friendly environments in which to work with children
- c) to detect and respond to child abuse

Professionals in all disciplines should also have knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and how it changes their work with children.

6. Using these tools

a) These 2 tools, the jigsaw and the wheel, can of course be used beyond the scope of the multi-level responses. Oak does indeed seek evidence from its partners of ways to build more holistic responses for abused and exploited children, and will seek out projects in priority countries/regions that attempt to add **1 or 2 new elements** to develop more comprehensive care for children

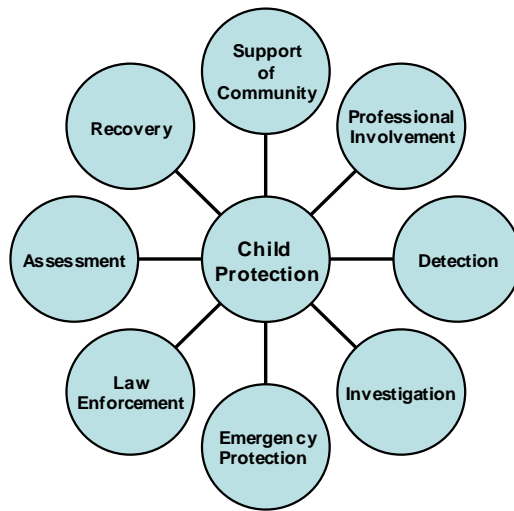
b) Oak has begun to fund multi-level responses based on this jigsaw in Riga Latvia, Kampala Uganda, Addis Ababa and Nazareth in Ethiopia. In planning these multi-level responses, Oak's partners have spent time – sometimes 1 year –:

- i) to achieve **joint commitment** to multi-level, comprehensive programmes and learning

- ii) to identify an agency to provoke, maintain and **nurture the coordinated effort**
- iii) to develop a **common plan and set baselines** (planning grant may be useful here)
- iv) to develop whatever research is required for **monitoring and evaluation** to show that such initiatives can improve outcomes for children

The Child Protection Wheel Where Does the Project Fit?

Components of Child Protection



(Reproduced with thanks to Prof. Margaret Lynch, UK)

Successful child protection is dependent on the presence of a number of interrelated components that are operated in a child focused manner by professionals and other players who have an understanding and appreciation of children's rights. The important role children themselves have to play must be acknowledged and respected with opportunities for them not just to express their views but to also contribute actively to the development and evolution of projects.

While a project may choose to focus on one component this can not be done in isolation and those planning the project will need to know who, if any one is addressing the other components. To take an example: an emergency shelter for trafficked children will among other considerations need to know how to find

the children, how to get them medical or legal assistance and perhaps most

important of all how to get them admitted to rehabilitation/recovery programs. Those running prevention programs will inevitably come across examples of active current abuse and therefore must consider how to handle such cases.

The above "wheel" is an attempt to represent the components or spokes that need to be considered in advance to facilitate the smooth running of any project working with the recognition and responding pieces of the jigsaw. The model will also help identify gaps in a child protection "system" or network that need addressing.

Each of the spokes is considered in turn and includes a number of questions to help project planners consider the viability of a proposal and where it will sit within any local system (formal or informal) of child protection. Where no system exists the approach may help to identify existing components that if co-ordinated would form the basis of a network that can at least provide support to the project. It will of course also identify gaps and hopefully trigger thoughts of how to fill them!

While the wheel relates directly to projects concerned with the recognition and responding pieces of the jigsaw, any project addressing sexual abuse or exploitation should be considering how information coming from the project could be used to inform those working on advocacy and prevention

Support of the Community

If a child protection project is to change for the better the lives of children already suffering or likely to suffer abuse then the local community must acknowledge that the abuse is occurring and agree that it should be stopped. The community should also be willing to back the actions you intend to take to combat the abuse and its consequences. Where the necessary community support does not exist, advocacy and public education will be needed to gain that support.

For some forms of abuse and neglect members of the Community may be the first to recognise (detect) the abuse and refer on to your project or other services

Suggested Questions¹

- Is there evidence you will be addressing a Child Protection issue that is of concern to the local community?
- Would they support the actions you are proposing?

If the answer is YES to both questions ensure the community is kept informed (e.g. use the media) on the progress of your project.

If the answer to either of the above is NO

- Is the issue already featured in an advocacy or public education campaign being run by another organisation?

If the answer is YES
Talk to them!

If the answer is NO

- Should you be including an advocacy or public education campaign as part of your project?

OR

- Is there another organisation that you could work with that is better placed to run a campaign?
- Is there a need to build the capacities of the local government (community level) in child protection?

If the answer is YES

- Is this for your organisation or is another one better placed to do this?

¹ These questions are not a definitive list but are intended to help you reflect as you develop your ideas

- Is there a need to facilitate the organization of a parents' and children's association so they themselves can take an active part in child protection?

If the answer is YES

- Is this for your organisation or is another one better placed to do this?

Professional involvement

Successful Child Protection work requires input from a variety of professionals. Any NGO or other organisation working with abuse will need to know if there are competent local professionals already involved in the child protection system (if there is one) or who could be called upon to help individual children and families.

For example street children who become ill will not get the medical attention they need if it is the policy of the local clinic or hospitals to turn away those who can not pay or who are not accompanied by a parent. Likewise a mother needing legal advice following repeated episodes of domestic violence will need a lawyer who understands the psychological effects of such attacks for her and her children.

Sensitised professionals should be able to detect abuse and refer on to appropriate services.

Suggested Questions

- What kind of professional advice are your project and beneficiaries of your project likely to need? (Consider at least Medical, Psychological, Educational and Legal)
- Can you organise access to such advice in advance?

Whether YES or NO

- Will there be a requirement for sensitisation / training of the professionals whose help you will need (including ensuring their approach is at all times child-focused and rights-based)?

If NO

- Do not give up but consider more advocacy to target the Professionals whose help you will need.

Also

- Are there other Professionals in the community who will have contact with the beneficiaries (though not necessarily as part of the project) and need to be supportive of your project's aim?

If YES

Make sure they are informed about the project (Might be included in plan to keep community informed).

Detection/Recognition

Any project or other provision providing services for abused children and their families or seeking to support vulnerable child with a view to preventing abuse will be dependant on the recognition or detection of the children and families. Some projects may have direct contact with children e.g. children on the street but others will be dependant on referrals from members of the Community or from professionals who are in contact with the children (hence the need for awareness among the Community and professionals)

Any project working with children and families will if they are perceptive have the potential identify a range of abused and neglected children. This will also apply to projects focussing on one form of abuse or seeking to prevent abuse. E.g. a project providing public education to prevent domestic violence may be approached by children who are physically or sexually abused. A project providing play opportunities for young children from a slum may become aware that a child is being recurrently beaten. Organising peer activities for young girls may lead to disclosures of sexual abuse.

Project workers will need to know what to do under such circumstances.

Children in any project need to know who they can go to if they need help, including if they want to talk about abuse experienced by themselves or another child known to them.

Suggested Questions

- How will the target group for your project be identified (detected)?
- If this will be dependant on Community and/or Professional awareness, is this in place?
- If forms of abuse and neglect outside the expertise of your project are detected, is there an existing referral system (among the NGOs or with the local social welfare/services department)?

If YES

Make sure you have good communication with them and know how to refer.

If NO

You have identified a gap!

You will need to consider acquiring the necessary skills within the project or to encourage others to do so.

- Is there a legal obligation to report any forms of abuse in your country?

If YES

- Who are you required to report to? (It is that body who would usually lead on any statutory investigation)

If NO

- Do you want to campaign / join a campaign to introduce mandatory reporting?
- Do children know where or to whom they can go to get help?

Investigation

Most projects will already be ensuring those served fit the criteria selected for inclusion, i.e. they will undertake some investigation of the potential beneficiaries' circumstances at the time they present to the project. For example this may relate to the living circumstances of children (with or without parental care or contact) or to the form of abuse or exploitation experienced. Acquiring such background "qualifying" information is likely to be dealt with by the intake procedure developed by a project. It will also contribute to the Assessment Spoke.

However the nature of abuse and exploitation means that other bodies will be involved in investigations of allegations. Indeed there may even be a mandatory requirement to report allegations to a statutory body (usually the Police). See question in previous section.

A project may also have a very important role in supporting children and families who wish to report abuse or exploitation or whose abuse is under investigation.

Suggested Questions

- Are you clear which body or bodies locally has responsibility for investigation of alleged abuse and exploitation?

If YES

Make sure you establish communication with them and understand how they function (or are supposed to function) also, find out if the processes and investigators are child-focused/rights-based

If NO

Find Out!

In any case be prepared to advocate on behalf of those abused and exploited.

(For young people in conflict with the law (and therefore under investigation for alleged criminal acts) – see law enforcement spoke)

Emergency Protection

For all forms of abuse and exploitation there will be occasions when emergency action is required to protect a child's life or to prevent likely immediate severe harm.

In some instances (e.g. trafficking) this means a child needs to be “rescued” and taken to a place of safety. For other children (e.g. an injured child in hospital or a child already in an emergency shelter) it may be necessary to prevent a child being moved.

To be effective emergency protection must be supported by the enforcement of appropriate laws and the availability of suitable accommodation for “rescued” children.

The protection of the child under the law should not be dependant on proving the guilt of the alleged perpetrator(s) and should extend to children at risk of further abuse by a parent or guardian.

Suggested Questions

- Is there a law that can be used to protect children in an emergency and keep them safe from the abuser(s)?

If YES

Make sure you know how to activate the process leading to that legal protection.

If NO

- Are you sure that is so?

Check it out again - It may exist but there is ignorance or reluctance about implementation!

If No (again) or YES but the process is itself abusive to the child e.g. through insensitive repeated questioning or medical examinations.

You have identified some gaps/issues that need advocacy partners.

- Is there emergency accommodation for children who need immediate placement?

If YES

Make sure you know how to access it.

If NO

You have identified a gap that needs filling urgently!

Are the emergency protection processes and placements that are available child focused and child rights based?

If NO

You have identified another area the will require advocacy and training

Law Enforcement

Any work relating to child abuse, neglect and exploitation can not ignore the legal dimension. Projects may find themselves interfacing with legal issues in a number of ways.

Protection of children

As indicated above children who have been abused or exploited deserve protection under the law without having to wait for possible prosecution of the perpetrators.

Prosecution of perpetrators

Such prosecution is likely to be the result of Investigation which may well rely on evidence from beneficiaries of projects, professionals and project workers.

Projects working with families may well find themselves working with parents who are subjects of investigation possibly for child abuse or neglect or unrelated crimes.

Children in Conflict with the law

For some projects (e.g. street children) the children themselves while victims of exploitation may well be targets of the police for petty crime, drug abuse and for "being a nuisance".

Suggested Questions

- Do you have links with the local police and others responsible for law enforcement (e.g. labour inspectors) and those in the judicial system such as the lawyers and judges?)

If NO

Consider how you can make them.

If YES or NO

Make sure they understand what your project is all about.

Understand how they function.

- Should you consider offering training or is advocacy and attitude change needed first?
- Who else can you involve locally to make the police, lawyers and judges more receptive to needs and rights of young victims of abuse and exploitation?

Assessment

To make long term positive changes to the lives of those who have experienced abuse and exploitation (the same is also likely to apply to perpetrators) much more than a safe place is required.

For recovery and reintegration to succeed it must be based on a sound assessment of an individual's needs undertaken in a way that also identifies strengths and promotes resilience. While projects that focus on getting children out of dangerous environments can legitimately consider children in groups as one moves towards reintegration a "one size fits all" approach is less likely to be successful.

A holistic approach to assessment of a child will consider positive and negative influences in a number of areas and will include looking at: the developmental needs of the child, the parenting abilities of the parents, and social, environmental and extended family influences. A careful consideration of the individual child's needs at referral will make the most of scarce specialist services or NGOs providing rehabilitation.

Suggested Questions

- Does your project have a systematic approach to recording each child's characteristics and to beginning a needs assessment?
- Do you have professionals, services or other NGOs to which you can refer for specialist assessments?
- If you are providing specialist services do you assess their appropriateness for each child before enrolling them in the project?
- Is there a gap in the ability to assess needs that should be addressed locally?
- Are children involved as active participants in the assessment process and given time to reflect on their experiences and express their views of their needs and how these might be met?

Recovery

The ultimate aim of working with abuse and exploitation must be recovery and reintegration. Without services and NGOs that are able to contribute to this process the other components that we have considered will lose much of their impact. A child can not stay indefinitely in an emergency shelter nor is it the environment best suited to recover from the psychological effects of sexual trauma.

Those projects focusing on rehabilitation will be dependant on other services and NGOs for appropriate referrals. Not all rehabilitation and reintegration needs to take place in specialist facilities. There are many mainstream services and NGOs working with children and families that with appropriate knowledge, skills and support can contribute to the reintegration of abused and exploited children.

Suggested Questions

- Is your project providing rehabilitation services?

If NO

- Do you know who locally does?

If YES

- Do those who should refer to you know all about what you can offer?
- Are you sharing your expertise about what works with mainstream services and other NGOs?
- Is yours a service or NGO that works with children and families that could with extra support from elsewhere contribute to integration?

If YES

- Do you know where to go for that support?