

Child Protection

UNICEF Australia's
Priority Programs Results 2017 – 2020



The first thing we would like to say is thank you.

Thank you for generously supporting UNICEF Australia’s child protection work. A child who is grappling with the profound physical, emotional, health and developmental consequences of child abuse will not be able to fully benefit from education, health or other programs and services. By supporting child protection programs, you enable children to fully benefit from, and make the most of all other programs for children. This certainly contributes to ‘changing the story’. Thank you!



197,708

children directly
benefitted from child
protection services



353,323

community members
reached with activities to
promote positive and
gender-sensitive norms
and attitudes



9,026

government and NGO
social welfare workers
trained in child protection
related to their functions



4

social welfare
professional development
institutions which
integrated child
protection into their
curricula and professions



12

laws/policies related to
child protection
developed or
strengthened



9

child protection
prevention or response
models tested in specific
locations which have
potential to be scaled up
nation-wide



Where we work

This map highlights the countries in the world where Priority Programs for children, families and communities were implemented.



Cambodia

Child Protection:

Protect children from violence, abuse, exploitation, and unnecessary family separation.

Early Childhood Development:

Prioritising inclusion to meet the holistic needs of children.



Pacific

Child Survival:

Saving lives by protecting children against rotavirus in Kiribati.

Drone delivery of vaccines and health supplies to remote, inaccessible communities in Vanuatu.

Sustainable introduction of rotavirus, pneumococcal and HPV vaccines in 9 Pacific Island Countries to improve child survival.

Early Childhood Development:

Investing in Guadalcanal's best human capital – children.

WASH:

Reach for the Stars: improving access to WASH in schools using the Three Star Approach in Fiji.

COVID-19 Response:

COVID-19 support to health, nutrition, WASH and communication.

COVID-19 response to education in the Solomon Islands.



Myanmar

Child Protection:

An integrated child protection system for the prevention and response to violence against children.

WASH:

Thant Shin Star: Improving access to WASH in remote rural schools by piloting the Three Star Approach in Chin and Kachin states



Papua New Guinea

Child Protection:

Supporting accelerated implementation of Child Protection Act and National Child Protection Policy.

Child Survival:

Roll out of early essential newborn care (EENC) with a focus on prevention and management of neonatal hypothermia.

Early Childhood Development:

Ensuring equitable access to ECD for all children in Papua New Guinea.

COVID-19 Response:

Responding to child protection and nutrition needs in COVID-19 response.



Timor-Leste

Child Protection:

Momentum and Opportunity: Strengthening the Child and Family Welfare System.

Child Survival:

Improvement of healthcare quality for maternal and child survival.

Early Childhood Development:

Inspiring teachers and accelerating learning through play.

COVID-19 Response:

Addressing the secondary impacts of COVID-19.



Laos

Child Protection:

Strengthening community based child protection services for vulnerable children.

Child Survival:

Addressing chronic malnutrition in rural communities.

Early Childhood Development:

Improving access to early learning for remote communities from ethnic minorities.

WASH:

Improving access to WASH in rural Savannakhet and providing support to communities in the flood impacted region of Attapeu.

COVID-19 Response:

COVID-19 support to education, ECD and child protection.

Social Protection:

Leaving no one behind: establishing the basis for social protection floors.



Zimbabwe

Child Survival:

Improving child survival through quality maternal, newborn and child health services in rural health facilities and communities.

WASH:

Improving access to WASH in remote and isolated schools.



Indonesia

Child Survival:

Scaling up the integrated management of acute malnutrition.



Bangladesh

Early Childhood Development:

Ensuring children in Rohingya refugee communities don't miss out on the best start in life.

Foreword



The Scale of Child Abuse

In the past year, over 1 billion children have reportedly experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence. Violence against children is often hidden, unseen and grossly under-reported. It is believed that child sexual abuse is 30 times higher than official reports would suggest, while physical abuse is 75 times higher. It is estimated that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys are sexually abused by the time they are 18, and 3 out of 4 children experience violent discipline at home or school.

The Effects of Child Abuse

Suffering abuse and exploitation deeply affects children's emotional, social and cognitive development. For example, child abuse survivors may:

- **Struggle with self-confidence and interpersonal relations and/or suffer trauma and mental health conditions**, including anxiety, PTSD, depression and personality disorders.
- **More likely engage in risky behaviours**, leading to substance abuse, communicable diseases, violent conduct, injury and health issues.
- **Suffer impairment of normal brain development and irreparable damage to the nervous system**, affecting their ability to evolve emotionally and socially and their

capacity to concentrate and learn.

- **Often experience the above effects simultaneously**, with a clear compounding impact.

But it does not end there. In fact:

- **The effects of child abuse usually continue into adulthood**, profoundly impacting a person's life-long physical and emotional health, with likely consequences on their livelihood and socio-economic well-being.
- **Generally, the effects are also intergenerational**, with a culture of violence being passed on from generation to generation and becoming the norm in families and communities.
- **With such profound and long-term consequences, the socio-economic impact on societies is inevitable**, with high numbers of children developing into adults who are less productive, socially inept and less able to positively contribute to their communities, while the required health, justice, education and social services create an additional financial toll on societies. In the Asia Pacific region, the economic cost of just a few of the health consequences of child abuse is estimated at 2.5% of the region's GDP.

Investing in Child Protection

Protecting children from abuse is the first step to unleashing their potential to learn, grow up (physically and emotionally) healthy, access opportunities and develop into adults who positively contribute to stable societies. Failure to invest in child protection inevitably undermines investments for children in all other areas (including education, health, youth empowerment and social welfare).

Ultimately, supporting and investing in child protection means supporting and investing in all programs for children.

"A strong child protection system protects all children in a country, without exclusion. And it aims to prevent them from being abused now and in the future. It is clear that quantifying the immediate and long-term number of children benefitting from the national child protection systems UNICEF Australia has supported in the past three years across five countries is not really possible, and this report scratches only the surface. Arguably, our reach includes all current and future children in our targeted countries. This is a huge 'return on the investment' of our donors funds, or as we like to call it, 'impact on investment'."

- Adrian De Giovanni, International Programs Manager, Child Protection, UNICEF Australia



Systems Strengthening Approach to Child Protection

What is Systems Strengthening?

UNICEF adopts a **systems strengthening approach to child protection** which aims to create a holistic protective environment for children where the government is the ultimate guarantor. As detailed in the figure below, this involves working closely and concurrently with all relevant actors (government, civil society, communities, families and children) to ensure:

- **Strong Laws and Policies** which define clear objectives, functions, and standards for the protection of children.
- **Effective Multi-sectoral Services** which cover all relevant areas (health, social welfare, education, justice, police, etc).
- **Adequate Awareness and Capacity** of all involved actors and service providers on how to prevent and respond to child abuse.
- **Strong Institutional and Community Mechanisms** where government services and community mechanisms work in synergy.
- **Conducive Norms and Attitudes** which permeate society and are protective, rights-based and gender responsive.
- **Strong and reliable data** which informs evidence-based approaches, policies and programs.

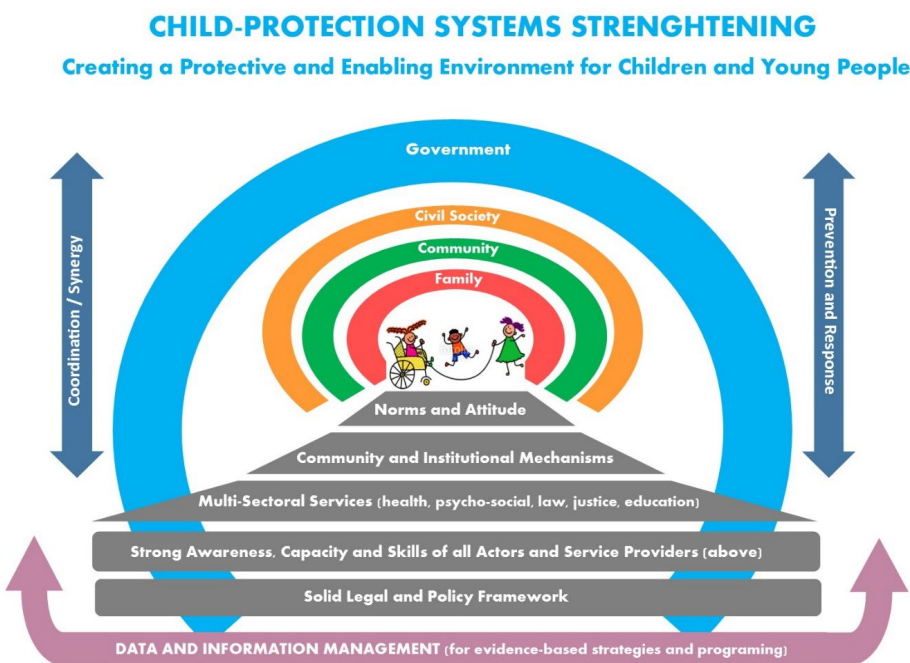
Why Systems Strengthening?

UNICEF’s support to governments to strengthen their **Child Protection System** is a complex task given the many elements and actors involved, the need for integration and coordination, and the complexities of working with governments. However, it is the most effective approach which yields the highest and most sustainable results. In fact, a functioning government-led child protection system:

- **Influences/changes the way an entire country operates** having an impact at scale, reaching all children and communities nation-wide.
- **Ensures child protection is locally relevant and ultimately not reliant on external agencies, resources or capacity**

in line with the government’s responsibility as the ultimate guarantor for child protection (as per the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**).

- **Captures and addresses all risks and areas affecting all children in a country**, since it creates a holistic protective environment and does not restrict focus on individual issues to the exclusion of others (such as child labour, child prostitution, child trafficking, etc).
- **Results in a high ‘impact on investment’ which goes beyond the immediate**, since it reaches all children in the country and dramatically increase the number of children prevented from being abused, both now and in the future.



UNICEF Australia's Child Protection Program (2017-2020)

UNICEF Australia's Child Protection Program 2017-2020 supported projects in five priority countries (Cambodia, Laos, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Myanmar and Timor-Leste) focusing on specific actors, areas and/or foundations of these countries' child protection systems which required special and tailored support. Further details are in the next section; however, some of the overarching achievements include:



Institutionalisation of capacity building: The general approach for strengthening capacity has progressively evolved from delivering multiple trainings for a critical mass of government actors and service providers, to ultimately integrating child protection into the curricula of the relevant professional training institutions. In this way, this training becomes a sustainable part of the standard skillset of every current and future actor/service provider in the country. In our Child Protection Program 2017-2020, this was accomplished in professional institutions in Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Timor-Leste.

Pilot-to-scale of innovative, 'first ever' models: Over the strategy period UNICEF Australia's support enabled the development and testing of nine 'first ever' child protection models in selected locations across all five targeted countries, with the ultimate

aim to revolutionise how child abuse is addressed and to increase the reach through replicable models and potential for scale up. This is the most reliable and cost-efficient way to progressively realise a relevant, effective and sustainable national child protection model/system in a country.

Government/other donors increased contribution: One of the benefits of a 'pilot to scale' approach is that governments and donors feel more confident to invest efforts, resources and funds to extend successfully-tested models. In our Child Protection Program 2017-2020, this occurred in Cambodia and PNG with piloted approaches already receiving other funds to take the project to scale. Government agencies in Laos and Timor-Leste have included the extension of successfully-tested models in their budget proposals for the future years.

Policy and Legal Framework: UNICEF Australia directly supported the development and implementation of child protection policies and laws across all five targeted countries, which consolidated the core framework of their child protection systems, instilling standards and principles in line with international child rights conventions (and ultimately benefitting all children in these countries).

Value for Money (i.e. impact on investment): The additional advantage of each of the above approaches is that they maximise impact and sustainability while minimising costs, resulting in an overall Child Protection Program 2017-2020 with a high 'return' (in terms of impact) on investment and significant value for money.

Integrating violence response services & challenging harmful practices in Cambodia

Multisectoral Services

Health and police response services for child survivors of violence and sexual abuse: The 'first ever' model of child protection response service was tested in selected locations, becoming available for hundreds of thousands of children. In 2020 alone, these services were accessed by over 2,400 survivors of child abuse.

Life and entrepreneurship skills training for adolescents: Training modules were integrated into the curricula of 45 schools, reaching over 12,000 adolescents. Additionally, over 1,000 girls and boys received career counselling, vocational training and/or job placement support, to access opportunities and assist in exiting a cycle of poverty and marginalisation.

Challenging Norms and Attitudes

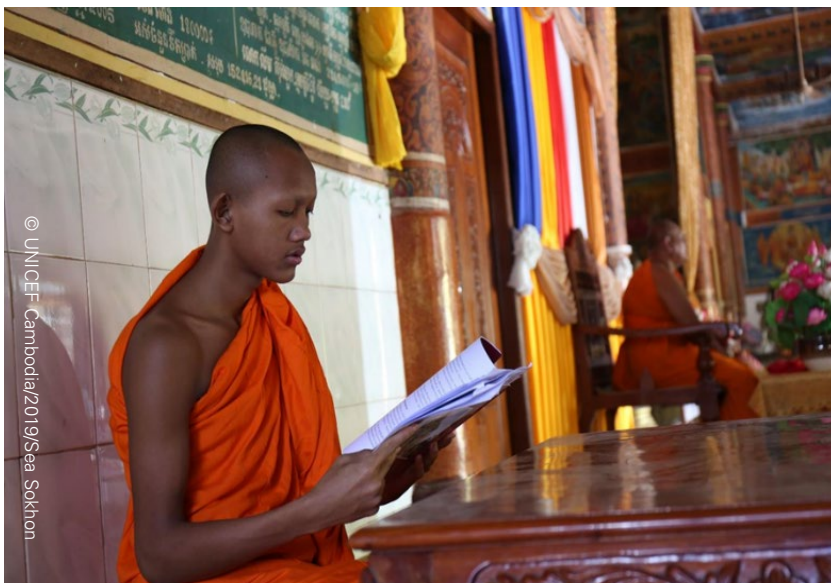
Child protection model integrated into Buddhist institutions: At the national level, child protection modules were incorporated into the training curriculum to become a monk. At the pagoda-level, a model including the adoption of a Child Safeguarding Policy, child protection training for monks and awareness-raising for communities by the trained monks was successfully tested in 147 pagodas and is now planned to be extended nation-wide.

The first Provincial Action Plan on Child Marriage in the country was developed in Ratanakiri Province, where child marriage among the ethnic minority population remains high. This included a mass awareness-raising program, reaching over 35,000

people and significantly contributing to changing harmful norms and attitudes at scale.

Law and Policy Framework

The National Guidelines on Diversion of Children in Conflict with the Law and the Guidelines on Child-Friendly Justice were developed to support the Juvenile Justice Law. Once launched, all children in the country who come into contact with the law as victims or perpetrators will be treated in a child-friendly manner and in line with international and human rights standards. In anticipation of the launch, in 2020 nearly 600 children were immediately released from prison and diverted to alternative measures of detention, many being able to continue schooling.



17-year-old monk, Venerable Chheang Choukly, received training on child protection and was part of the pilot raising awareness in communities to foster protective norms and attitudes.

"I truly enjoy raising awareness among families and communities and found it significantly important for them to understand the impacts of violence on children ... It takes each and every single one of us to break the cycle of violence."

- Chheang Choukly



Supporting the launch & implementation of a new child protection system in PNG

PNG's child protection system was launched as recently as 2017 with the adoption of the National Child Protection Policy. UNICEF Australia's support aimed to assist the government to establish the institutional foundations needed to implement the policy, build the capacity of service providers and address harmful norms and attitudes to improve child protection.

The National Council for Child and Family Services was established with UNICEF's support, which is the government body mandated to lead the Child Protection System in the country and set up and coordinate services for children across sectors. Provincial councils are currently being established.

30 Child Protection Officers were appointed and trained across a number of pilot provinces. These are the first

formal frontline actors in the country dedicated to preventing and responding to child abuse at the district and community level.

A case management handbook for child protection service providers was developed, which establishes minimum standards and processes for services across sectors (health, social, justice, police, etc).

Over 100 health workers in two provinces were trained on specialised child abuse prevention and response services. Between 2018-2020 alone, over 5,000 survivors of child abuse accessed these services.

Juvenile Justice Plans were developed in four provinces for the first time in the country, which establish priority areas and services for children in contact with the law. After testing and adjustments, the Plans will be extended nation-wide.

Challenging Norms and Attitudes

UNICEF piloted a Positive Parenting Program in four provinces to support parents to shift from violent to positive discipline and understand the profound impacts of child abuse. Over 8,000 parents were engaged in the program and a recent review indicates that norms and attitudes are effectively shifting. The success has prompted the government to institutionalise the program and roll it out nation-wide.

Emergency Response

Following the earthquake in 2018, UNICEF Australia also supported the establishment of 32 Child Friendly Spaces in the most affected areas, where nearly 15,000 children received psychological support and over 3,000 received specialised child protection services.

Patrick, a father of eight, used to discipline his children by smacking, pulling their ears and beating them with a belt, and did not fully understand the importance of education. After the Positive Parenting training, he and his wife shifted behaviour.

"We now encourage our children to do the right thing, play in safe environments and go to school. We also make time to listen to their needs and explain why we can't meet all their needs all the time. It's about positive communication."





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Improving response for child survivors of abuse in Myanmar

The Government of Myanmar began the process of formally developing its child protection system only in 2019 with the adoption of the national Child Protection Policy. Before and since then, this project has supported the government in key areas which will constitute the backbone of the country's emerging Child Protection System.

Strengthening capacity of social welfare actors

A major component of this project has been strengthening the social welfare workforce and their capacity to provide quality responsive child protection services.

This has been achieved by: (a) developing a child protection curricula which is integrated into the university course for social workers; (b) review of the Department of Social Welfare's training curricula and

case management procedures, and development of an institutional capacity development plan; (c) training for over 1,000 government and NGO social welfare workers on child protection service provision.

It is estimated that between 2017-2020, over 2,000 child survivors of abuse (mostly sexual abuse) benefited from the resulting improved services provided by social welfare actors and almost 30,000 received psychosocial support in conflict areas of the country.

Introduction of a foster care model

The first ever model of family-based/foster care for children in the country was developed and tested in two provinces. This is the first time this approach has been used in the country, and it promises to achieve the rights of children without

parental care to grow up in a safe, family environment. The model is being adjusted and will be further tested in crisis/conflict areas, with the ultimate aim of nation-wide scale up.

Challenging Norms and Attitudes

Over 35,000 community members (including over 10,000 youth) were reached with messaging related to preventing and responding to child abuse, harmful norms and attitudes, and available services.

The sessions are run by community groups and youth leaders and address abuse, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, early marriage and bullying. They also serve as a call to action, to inspire youth to stand up and call out acts of oppression and violence against their peers.



© Plan International Myanmar

Chye Ju Naw (21) is one of over 125 youth leaders trained by the Project to raise awareness of child protection issues and services.

"The girls begin to realise what is happening to them. This campaign motivates them to speak up. I really enjoy enabling others to speak out. These sessions give me strength and determination".

Innovative models of protection for most at-risk in Laos

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Children in Contact with the Law

The UNICEF Australia supported project in Laos helped to establish 'first ever' models in the country for community-based legal aid services for child and women victims of abuse and community-based diversion for alleged/actual child offenders. These were developed and tested in three provinces. Examples of diversion from the formal justice system include community work, warnings, family/community supervision, compensation, and curfew. Over 1,000 government law and justice officials, community leaders, paralegals and village volunteers were trained on the delivery of these services and more than 5,000 community members were reached with relevant awareness-raising

messages. Thousands of children in the three pilot provinces now have access to these services, with over 100 directly accessing them between 2018-2020. The pilot model has proven to be successful and is planned to be expanded nationwide.

The Juvenile Justice Coordination Committee and the Child Prosecutor Unit were established and trained, which are mandated to lead the legal/justice aspects of the country's emerging Child Protection System.

UNICEF also supported drop-in centres for at risk children to prevent them from becoming offenders or victims of abuse. Nearly 450 children benefitted from these services, including social services, transitional homes, vocational training and support

to be diverted from the formal justice system.

Children with Disabilities

The first ever model of care for children with disabilities in the country was developed and tested in two provinces. Community mobile technical teams provide services and advice (including medical check-ups and diagnoses; community-based rehabilitation plans; support to families; referral to other services, such as accessing school and medical treatment) under the supervision and guidance of provincial/district government. In 2020 alone, over 100 children with disability have been reached by these first ever government-led services.



Before the Project, eight year old Kum, who has a disability, was isolated from other children and the community, and could only crawl. Thanks to UNICEF's work in Laos, Kum's mum now knows how to perform basic rehabilitation exercises and has access to clinical support and guidance. Kum has now learned to sit and walks nearly independently. He is also attending school.

"Before I was really worried about his future, and what would happen to him if myself or my husband passed away, but now I have hope."

- Kum's mum



Building the backbone of a child protection system in Timor-Leste

The UNICEF Australia supported child protection project in Timor-Leste began in July 2019, so it is just one year into implementation. Having supported the Government to develop a Child and Family Welfare Policy (adopted 2016), UNICEF is now assisting the government to build a system to implement the policy, starting with a pilot in three municipalities.

Supporting the Policy and Legal Framework

At the start of the project UNICEF organised an exposure visit for Government decision-makers from Timor-Leste to Cambodia to observe how the Cambodian government structures and is implementing its Child Protection System, as well as generate ideas on how to improve effectiveness of their own system.

A mapping of existing child protection laws, policies and regulations was also conducted to identify gaps and needs for revisions. Based on these activities UNICEF will support the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion to consolidate the legal, policy and regulatory framework for child protection in the coming years.

Social Welfare Workforce Capacity Building

The social welfare workforce are the backbone of the child protection system. The curricula for the capacity development of the country's social welfare workforce was revised and finalised. This will benefit social workers, healthcare professionals, teachers, police officers, justice officers, community leaders, gender focal points, NGOs and government child protection officers.

The process to establish a social welfare training department within the government and institutionalise the above capacity building was initiated through a relevant government decree. In the coming years, the project will support the set up of the training department.

Piloting the Child Protection System

The pilot implementation of the Child Protection System has previously been conducted in three municipalities. This project is expanding the pilot to four additional municipalities. Implementation has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, social welfare actors in the initial three municipalities continue to carry out their functions remotely or with due precautions, benefitting thousands of children.



In the municipality of Viqueque, the social welfare workforce involved in the pilot are motivated by its successes. "Before the pilot, we [the social welfare workforce] would each be doing our own work separately. But afterwards we started to understand what each of our roles is in protecting children, and how we can work together to prioritize the best interest of the child."

- Juliana Soares, Government Child Protection Officer

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Thank you for contributing to changing the story...

