PROMOTING SYNERGIES BETWEEN CHILD PROTECTION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
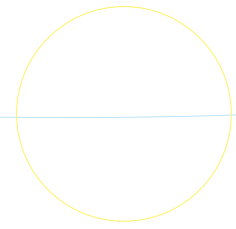
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WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
APRD	Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy (Central African Republic)
CAAFAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
CAPE	Centre for the Care of Infants (Senegal)
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CLMS	Child Labour Monitoring System (Ghana)
CLU	Child Labour Unit (Ghana)
COPE	In Care of the Poor (Nigeria)
CRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
DACF	District Assemblies Common Fund (Ghana)
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (Ghana)
DSW	Department of Social Welfare (Ghana)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes
EU	European Union
FAFN	Armed Forces of the New Forces (Côte d'Ivoire)
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCA	Cape Verdean Institute for Children and Adolescents
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO)

IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Network
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (Ghana)
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MHO	Mutual Health Organisation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NHIS	National Health Insurance System (Ghana)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PARER	Partnership for the Reduction in Number and Reintegration of Street Children (Senegal)
PMTCT	Preventing Mother-to-Child-Transmission
PNAS	National Plan of Social Action (Burkina Faso)
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme (Ethiopia)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RHVP	Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIMPOC	Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour
SNF	Social Needs Fund (Equatorial Guinea)
SSN	Social Safety Net (Sierra Leone)
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UFDR	Union of Democratic Forces (Central African Republic)
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	UN Development Program
UNECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNRISD	UN Research Institute for Social Development
WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office (UNICEF)
WHO	World Health Organization
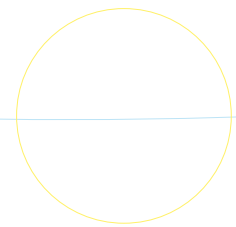
PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is one of a series of reports produced by a regional study on social protection and children in West and Central Africa, commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) and carried out by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London between November 2007 and November 2008, in partnership with local researchers in the region.

Social protection is now widely seen as an important component of poverty reduction strategies and efforts to reduce vulnerability to economic, social, natural and other shocks and stresses. It is particularly important for children, in view of their heightened vulnerability relative to adults, and the role that social protection can play in ensuring adequate nutrition, utilisation of basic services (education, health, water and sanitation) and access to social services by the poorest. It is understood not only as being protective (by, for example, protecting a household's level of income and/or consumption), but also as providing a means of preventing households from resorting to negative coping strategies that are harmful to children (such as pulling them out of school), as well as a way of promoting household productivity, increasing household income and supporting children's development (through investments in their schooling and health), which can help break the cycle of poverty and contribute to growth.

The study's objective was to provide UNICEF with an improved understanding of existing social protection mechanisms in the region and the opportunities and challenges in developing more effective social protection programmes that reach the poorest and most vulnerable. The ultimate aim was to strengthen UNICEF's capacity to contribute to policy and programme development in this important field. More generally, however, the study has generated a body of knowledge that we are hopeful will be of wide interest to policymakers, programme practitioners and researchers, both in West and Central Africa and internationally.

Specifically, the study was intended to provide:

- A situation analysis of the current situation of social protection systems and programmes in West and Central Africa and their impact on children;
- An assessment of the priority needs for strengthening social protection systems to reduce poverty and vulnerability among children in the region;
- Preliminary recommendations to inform UNICEF's strategy development in the region.

The study combined a broad desk review of available literature, official documents and data covering the region as a whole on five key dimensions of social protection systems, with in-depth case studies in five countries, resulting in 11 reports produced overall. These are as follows[1]:

Five regional thematic reports:

- R. Holmes and T. Braunholtz-Speight (2009) 'Strengthening Social Protection for Children in West and Central Africa';

[1] Full titles are listed in the references.
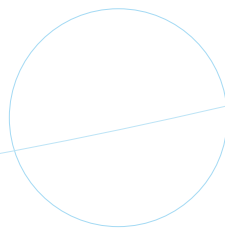
- G. Handley (2009) 'Fiscal Space for Strengthened Social Protection in West and Central Africa';
- R. Holmes and A. Barrientos (2009) 'Child Poverty: A Role for Cash Transfers?';
- C. Walsh, with N. Jones (2009) 'Maternal and Child Health: The Social Protection Dividend'; and
- N. Jones (2009) 'Promoting Synergies Between Child Protection and Social Protection'.

Five country case study reports:

- E. Villar and B. Makosso with R. Holmes, N. Jones and P. Pereznieto (2009) 'Social Protection and Children in West and Central Africa: Case Study Republic of Congo';
- R. Holmes and E. Villar (2009) 'Social Protection and Children in West and Central Africa: Case Study Equatorial Guinea';
- N. Jones, W. Ahadzie and D. Doh (2009) 'Social Protection and Children in West and Central Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in Ghana';
- P. Pereznieto and V. Diallo (2009) 'Social Protection and Children in West and Central Africa: Case Study Mali'; and
- P. Pereznieto and A. Fall (2009) 'Social Protection and Children in West and Central Africa: Case Study Senegal'.

A final synthesis report:

- R. Holmes and N. Jones (2009) 'Child-sensitive Social Protection in West and Central Africa: Opportunities and Challenges'.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the core of social protection is a concern for addressing vulnerability and risk. It is increasingly understood that social protection policy frameworks and programmes must be informed by a recognition of the diversity of vulnerabilities and risks, and the way in which these evolve across the lifecycle. This report focuses on children's vulnerabilities and risks related to an absence of protection from violence, abuse and neglect, and the ways in which measures to address such vulnerabilities and risks can be more effectively integrated into social protection policy frameworks in the West and Central Africa region. The analysis is based on a desk review as well as the findings from five in-depth country cases: Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Mali and Senegal.

Seven major drivers of children's protection-related vulnerabilities are identified. Economic poverty and experience of household and community-level shocks represent a first major driver of protection violations, which may be manifested in terms of child labour, child trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation, and in some cases heightened likelihood of family violence. Rapid urbanisation and economic globalisation have also had a major impact on informal social protection mechanisms and are a second major driver of children's vulnerability and risk of violence, abuse or neglect.

A third factor relates to discriminatory socio-cultural attitudes about age, which are often compounded by gender, indigenous or ethnic minority status, disability and sexuality. The social exclusion arising from such attitudes can reinforce other economic or social inequalities and risks, including lack of access to basic services, justice and livelihood sustenance. Key child-specific manifestations include corporal punishment against children and sexual violence in the home, school or community. A fourth, related, driver is that of harmful traditional or religious attitudes and practices, which remain deeply entrenched in many parts of the region. These include female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/FGC), the bonded labour of children in religious institutions and child marriage.

The fifth driver is that of armed conflict, which has been and continues to be key underpinning factor of protection-related violations and related consequences for children in the region. This manifests itself in the form of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) as well as child victims of other forms of physical and sexual violence and harmful forms of child labour. Institutional weaknesses are identified as the sixth driver; here, the analysis focuses on the failure of state institutions to provide adequate protection, from limited access to birth registration to insufficient child-specific provisions within the justice system. The final driver is that of health shocks and chronic illness, especially HIV and AIDS, which have left millions of children orphaned in the region.

An overview of existing child protection systems in West and Central Africa underscores some of the challenges they face in their ability to address these vulnerabilities. Child protection systems comprise the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors – especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to support prevention and response to protection related risks… At the level of prevention, their aim includes supporting and strengthening families to reduce social exclusion, and to lower the risk of separation, violence and exploitation' (UNICEF, 2008a). We focus on five key elements of protection systems: (i) protective legislative frameworks relating to children's right to live a life protected from violence, abuse and neglect; (ii) government institutions that are responsible for ensuring that this right is met; (iii) prevention services and awareness-raising activities to ensure that the general public, parents, authorities and children are aware of this right and related legal frameworks and services; (iv) responsive and reintegration-oriented social services for victims of violence, abuse and neglect; and (v) linkages to non-

governmental service providers. Overall, the findings highlight the fragmented nature of existing services; the severe under-resourcing of these services both financially and in terms of human resources; the very high levels of reliance on international agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to fill gaps in services; and the limited degree of coordination across agencies. Moreover, major gaps in terms of data collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes and knowledge management contribute to the urgent challenges to be tackled.

Links between child protection and social protection strategies and programmes are generally weak in the region. In the few countries with cash transfer programmes, linkages between broader social protection initiatives and child protection concerns are being addressed. This is the case, for example, in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Cape Verde. Overall, however, linkages are rare and potential synergies remain unrealised, as institutional capacity, interagency coordination and resource limitations continue to be major challenges.

A number of important potential entry points to build up linkages between child protection and social protection more generally include: (i) social transfer programmes, especially those with some element of conditionality; (ii) social health insurance; (iii) social welfare services; (iv) stakeholder involvement; and (v) the development of a robust evidence base and accessible knowledge management system. These will require more integrated strategy development and innovative low-cost approaches to using existing social protection mechanisms to address the multidimensionality of child-specific economic and social vulnerabilities

1. INTRODUCTION

A protective environment for children boosts development progress, and improves the health, education and well-being of children and their evolving capacities to be parents, citizens and productive members of society. Harmful and abusive practices against children, on the other hand, exacerbate poverty, social exclusion and HIV, and increase the likelihood that successive generations will face similar risks.

(UNICEF, 2008a)

At the core of social protection is a concern for addressing vulnerability and risk. It is increasingly understood that social protection policy frameworks and programmes must be informed by a recognition of the diversity of vulnerabilities and risks, and the way in which they evolve across the lifecycle (Holzman et al., 2003).

In this report, the fifth in a series of regional thematic reports produced for a study on social protection and children in West and Central Africa, we focus on children's vulnerabilities and risks related to an absence of protection from violence, abuse and neglect, and the ways in which measures to address such vulnerabilities and risks can be more effectively integrated into social protection policy frameworks. Many of the vulnerabilities identified stem from social factors such as family violence, break-up or illness and death (e.g. owing to HIV and AIDS); extra-family violence and conflict; social exclusion and discrimination; and harmful traditional practices.

Children most affected include: children deprived of parental care[2]; children affected by HIV/AIDS; children living in institutions and in conflict with the law; children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG); survivors of school violence, sexual and physical abuse; and children affected by female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/FGC) and early marriage. However, other child protection concerns are closely intertwined with economic vulnerabilities, manifest in forms such as child labour, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. Still others are related to broader issues of social equity and exclusion to be addressed through what Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) term transformative social protection. These include the absence of protective legislation and policies such as birth registration systems, or child-friendly legal systems and their effective implementation.

After this introductory **Section 1**, which sets out the analytical framework for the study as a whole, **Section 2** of the report provides an overview of the underlying causes of children's vulnerabilities to violence, abuse and neglect in West and Central Africa, and an analysis of the patterning of these vulnerabilities, including the ways in which they are often exacerbated based on children's gender, (dis)ability, ethnicity or other factors. **Section 3** outlines existing child protection frameworks and systems in the region, while **Section 4** looks in more detail at particular child protection services and programmes, analysing factors that facilitate or hinder their effective implementation. The report proposes, in **Section 5**, a number of possible entry points for greater integration of child protection policies and services with national social protection systems, summarising the main policy implications and conclusions in **Section 6**. A number of **annexes** offer further information on: (i) integration of child protection concerns in selected poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs); (ii) child protection services for response and reintegration; and (iii) child protection indicators in selected surveys in the region.

Increasingly, social protection is conceptualised as a set of public actions that address poverty, vulnerability and risk throughout the lifecycle. Such actions may potentially be conducted in tandem with private initiatives – either formal private sector or informal individual or community initiatives. Building on the recognition that poverty has both monetary and non-monetary dimensions, vulnerability and risk are now also recognised as

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[2] This includes orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), child-headed households and children working and/or living on the street.
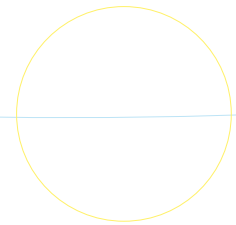
being multidimensional, including natural and environmental, economic, health, social and lifecycle axes. The distribution and intensity of these vulnerabilities are likely to be experienced differently, depending on the stage in the lifecourse (infant, child, youth, adult, aged), social group positioning (gender, ethnicity, class) and geographic location (for example urban/rural), among other factors.

For children, the experience of risk, vulnerability and deprivation is shaped by four broad characteristics of childhood poverty and vulnerability:

- **Multidimensionality** – related to risks to children's survival, development, protection and participation in decisions that affect their lives;
- **Changes over the course of childhood** – in terms of vulnerabilities and coping capacities (e.g. young infants have much lower capacities than teenagers to cope with shocks without adult care and support);
- **Relational nature** – given the dependence of children on the care, support and protection of adults, especially in the earlier parts of childhood, the individual vulnerabilities of children are often compounded by the vulnerabilities and risks experienced by their caregivers (owing to their gender, ethnicity, spatial location, etc.);
- **Voicelessness** – although marginalised groups often lack voice and opportunities for participation in society, voicelessness in childhood has a particular quality, owing to legal and cultural systems that reinforce their marginalisation (Jones and Sumner, 2007).

The diversity and relational nature of childhood risks are mapped out in Table 1. Health, lifecycle and social vulnerabilities have clearly identifiable child-specific manifestations. Natural/environmental and economic shocks impact children largely owing to the relational nature of childhood poverty and vulnerability. There is, however, also an argument to be made that, as a result of children's physical and psychological immaturity and their dependence on adult care and protection, especially in early childhood, risks in general affect children more profoundly than they do adults. This suggests both that all types of vulnerability and risk should be assessed through the lens of children's 'evolving capacities' and that it is likely that the most detrimental effects of any shock will therefore be concentrated in infancy and early childhood.

In view of the particularly severe, multiple and intersecting deprivations, vulnerabilities and risks faced by children and their caregivers in the West and Central Africa region, we draw on Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler's (2004) transformative social protection framework for an analytical view that encompasses protective, preventative, promotive and transformative social protection measures. A transformative perspective relates to power imbalances in society that encourage, create and sustain vulnerabilities – extending social protection to arenas such as equity, empowerment and economic, social and cultural rights. This may include, for example, sensitisation and awareness-raising campaigns to transform public attitudes and behaviour along with efforts to change the regulatory framework to protect marginalised groups from discrimination and abuse.

Operationally, this framework refers to social protection as the set of all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide:

- **Social assistance** to extremely poor individuals and households. This typically involves regular, predictable transfers (cash or in-kind, including fee waivers) from governments and non-governmental entities to individuals or households, with the aim of reducing poverty and vulnerability, increasing access to basic services and promoting asset accumulation.
- **Social services** to marginalised groups that need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services based on particular social (rather than economic) characteristics. Such services are normally targeted at those who have experienced illness, the death of a family breadwinner/caregiver, an accident or natural disaster; those who suffer from a disability, familial or extra-familial violence, family breakdown; or war veterans or refugees.

Table 1: Vulnerabilities - Lifecycle and childhood manifestations

Type of vulnerability	Indicators	Child-specific manifestation
Natural/ environmental	Natural disasters/phenomena/ environmental (human-generated environmental degradation, e.g. pollution, deforestation)	Children more vulnerable owing to physical and psychological, and also possible spill-over economic vulnerabilities, as natural disasters may destroy family livelihoods
Economic	• Income (low returns to labour, unemployment, irregular salaries, no access to credit) • Inter-household inequality in access to land, rights and duties related to social standing, gender discrimination (access to productive assets)	As above + child labour, child trafficking, child sexual exploitation owing to conceptualisation of children as economic assets
Lifecycle	Age-dependent requirements for care and support (infancy through to old age)	Physical/psychological vulnerabilities compounded by political voicelessness
Social	• Family composition (high dependency, intra-household inequality, household break-up, family violence, family break-up) • Extra-family violence, social upheaval, social exclusion and discrimination • Gender discrimination (unequal access to productive assets, access to information, capacity-building opportunities) • Social capital (access to networks both within one's community and beyond [bonding and bridging social capital], access to community support and inclusion) • Education/information/literacy	Family and school/community violence, diminished quantity and quality of adult care, discrimination
Health	Age-specific health vulnerabilities (e.g. infancy, early childhood, adolescence, childbearing, old age), illness and disability	Under 3 years, especially vulnerable, access to immunisation, malnutrition, adolescence and child bearing

- **Social insurance** to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood, health and other shocks. Social insurance supports access to services in times of need, and typically takes the form of subsidised risk-pooling mechanisms, with potential contribution payment exemptions for the poor.
- **Social equity measures** to protect people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse. These can include anti-discrimination legislation (in terms of access to property, credit, assets, services) as well as affirmative action measures to attempt to redress past patterns of discrimination.

These social protection instruments are used to address the vulnerabilities of the population in general, but can also be adapted to address the specific risks faced by children as mapped out in Table 2 below. Given the close actual and potential linkages between women's empowerment and child well-being (in what has been referred to as the 'double dividend' in the UNICEF (2006c) State of the World's Children Report 2007), each of the general social protection measures could also usefully be assessed through a gender-sensitive lens. Namely, to what extent is each social protection addressing gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities and gender barriers to services, supporting women's care responsibilities and ensuring their inclusion in programme design and evaluation?

Table 2: Types of social protection and household and child-specific measures

Type of social protection	General household-level measures	Specific measures for children
Protective Social assistance	Cash transfers (conditional and unconditional), food aid, fee waivers, school subsidies, etc.	Scholarships, school feeding, cash transfers with child-related conditionalities, fee waivers for school, fee waivers for childcare
Social services	Distinct from basic services as people can be vulnerable regardless of poverty status – includes social welfare services focused on those needing protection from violence and neglect – e.g. shelters for women, rehabilitation services, etc.	Case management, alternative care, child foster systems, child-focused domestic and community violence prevention and protection services, rehabilitation services, reintegration services, basic alternative education for child labourers, etc.
Preventative Social insurance	Heath insurance, subsidised risk-pooling mechanisms – disaster/unemployment insurance, etc.	Fee waivers for health insurance for children
Promotive Productive transfers	Agricultural inputs, fertiliser subsidies, asset transfers, microfinance	Indirect spill-over effects (positive and negative)
Transformative Social equity measures	Equal rights/social justice legislation, affirmative action policies, asset protection	Legislation and its implementation to promote child rights as victims (e.g. of violence, trafficking, early child marriage, etc.) and as perpetrators (special treatment and rehabilitation services for young offenders), efforts to promote children's voice and agency
Complementary measures Complementary basic services	Health, education, economic/financial, agricultural extension	Child-focused health care services; pre-, primary and secondary school; childcare services
Complementary pro-poor or growth with equity macroeconomic policy frameworks	Policies that support growth plus distribution	Policies that support progressive realisation of children's rights in line with macroeconomic growth indicators

2. UNDERLYING CAUSES AND PATTERNING OF CHILDREN'S VULNERABILITIES TO VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Because social protection is concerned with addressing risks and vulnerabilities, any discussion of possible synergies between social protection and child protection systems needs to be informed by an understanding of the types and patterning of vulnerabilities related to child well-being and violations of children's protection rights. However, as highlighted by the UN Study on Violence against Children (UN, 2006), one of the key challenges facing advocates of children's rights, particularly in West and Central Africa, is the relative dearth of existing knowledge on the extent and severity of child protection violations. This owes in part to the complexity of knowledge generation in this area: children's vulnerabilities and risks of abuse, violence and neglect are multiple and often overlapping. Children without parental care, for example, are often more vulnerable to sexual violence, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, whereas children in child-headed households are more likely to be living with HIV and AIDS (Ayieko, 1997) or to be recruited as child combatants (Machel, 1996; 2007).

Limited evidence is also closely tied to the socio-cultural and political 'invisibility' of child violence, abuse and neglect (e.g. UN, 2006), especially in contexts characterised by authoritarian and hierarchical models such as authoritarian political structures, a history of military rule and/or hierarchical socioeconomic structures based on gender, age, ethnicity, religious and class differences (Harber, 2001; Jones et al., 2008a; Nhundu and Shumba, 2001). These structural factors, combined with the frequent reluctance of children to discuss experiences of violence and abuse, make data collection and analysis a particular challenge (Leach et al., 2003).

Where evidence exists, available data are often small in scale (Burton, 2005; Ebigbo, 2003; Ogunyemi, 2000) and/or based on anecdotal accounts (such as Save the Children UK's 2006 study of sexual exploitation in Liberia's displaced persons camps). These limitations notwithstanding, the evidence available indicates that the risk factors underlying children's vulnerabilities to abuse, violence and neglect are multiple, widespread and in need of urgent policy attention (Human Rights Watch, 2003; ILO, 2006; Jones and Espey, 2008).

In the West and Central Africa region, research into children's experiences of abuse, exploitation and violence is relatively new, with most research published since 2000[3]. This owes in large part to a pervasive culture of silence around such issues, but also reflects a change in the field of child protection, moving away from a narrow focus on high-risk groups, and the newly emerging realisation that widespread socioeconomic changes taking place in the region (including urbanisation, migration, conflict, disease epidemics, population growth, etc.) are presenting new challenges to families, communities and governments in protecting children against violence and abuse. It is also beginning to be understood that such violence and abuse is found in multiple contexts in both the private and public spheres.

Failure to protect children from such violations has both immediate and longer-term educational, physical, psychological and well-being impacts. These include psycho-social distress, mental health consequences and higher suicide risks (Behrendt and Mor Mbaye, 2008); social stigma and possible rejection by families and

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[3] Of a sample of 49 published and grey literature sources, 24 were on South Africa, 16 on Southern Africa, four on East Africa (Uganda and Kenya) and five on West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria) (Jones et al., 2008a).
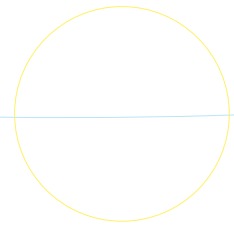
communities, especially in the case of sexual violence, because of the high cultural value often attached to sexual purity (Ogunyemi, 2000); low educational attainment (endangering achievement of Millennium Development Goals – MDGs – 2 (universal primary education) and 3 (educational parity)) through underperformance or school dropouts (ActionAid, 2004); and reproductive health risks through unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and AIDS (Jewkes et al., 2002; Kim and Bailey, 2003). Beyond these more immediate effects, experience of violence and abuse may also set the stage for future adult and intergenerational interactions, in what is described as the cycle of violence (Save the Children Sweden, 2004) and lifecourse and intergenerational transfers of poverty (Harper et al., 2003).

The following discussion provides an overview of the patterning of children's experiences of violence, neglect and abuse in West and Central Africa, clustered according to seven major drivers.

2.1 ECONOMIC POVERTY AND SHOCKS

Economic poverty and experience of household and community-level shocks appear to be a major driver of protection violations. A growing body of research (e.g. Bøås and Huser, 2006; UN, 2005a) shows that children involved in harmful forms of labour – subject, for example, to trafficking and other forms of commercial exploitation – typically hark from families that suffer from high levels of poverty and/or that have struggled to weather single or persistent negative shocks (such as drought, loss of employment, death or severe illness of a family member).

In terms of family violence, the UN regional consultation study (2005) noted that households in West and Central Africa are often characterised by 'crowding, intermingling of relations and financial difficulties, and may constitute a "social setting" where violence is expressed, sometimes latent, sometimes explicit' (UN, 2005b). There was also a general consensus that children in polygamous families were more likely to suffer psychosocial distress or abuse owing to multiple relationships at play (ibid), as were children involved in domestic labour (often in the guise of adoption by relatives) (Bortei-Doku and Doh, 2007).

Economic poverty and shocks are also closely linked to children's involvement in work activities and labour. The regional proportion of children engaged in child labour is 34% – roughly the same as the sub-Saharan African figure of 35%, with large variations by country (see Figure 1). The types of work undertaken are 'gendered': girls tend to be engaged in domestic work, agriculture and vending; boys tend to work fewer hours, engaged in more specifically economic activities, including low-skilled jobs (UNICEF, 2005d). The UN's 2005 consultation for the West and Central Africa region drew attention to the potentially dangerous work children undertake in the region, including mining, waste collection and begging (UN, 2005b). Even in the case of less dangerous forms of labour, children's school attendance and achievement may be negatively affected (Canagarajah and Nielson, 1999), particularly in households with low maternal education levels (Blunch and Verner, 2001; Ray, 2002) and for girls in contexts where there is a preference for son's educational attainment over that of daughters. This may restrict their employment options in later life and, if so, leave them vulnerable to the economic, social and physical risks associated with work that is not 'decent', i.e. that is low paid, hazardous or demeaning.

Figure 1: Poverty rates in West and Central Africa

Source: UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 1999-2006.
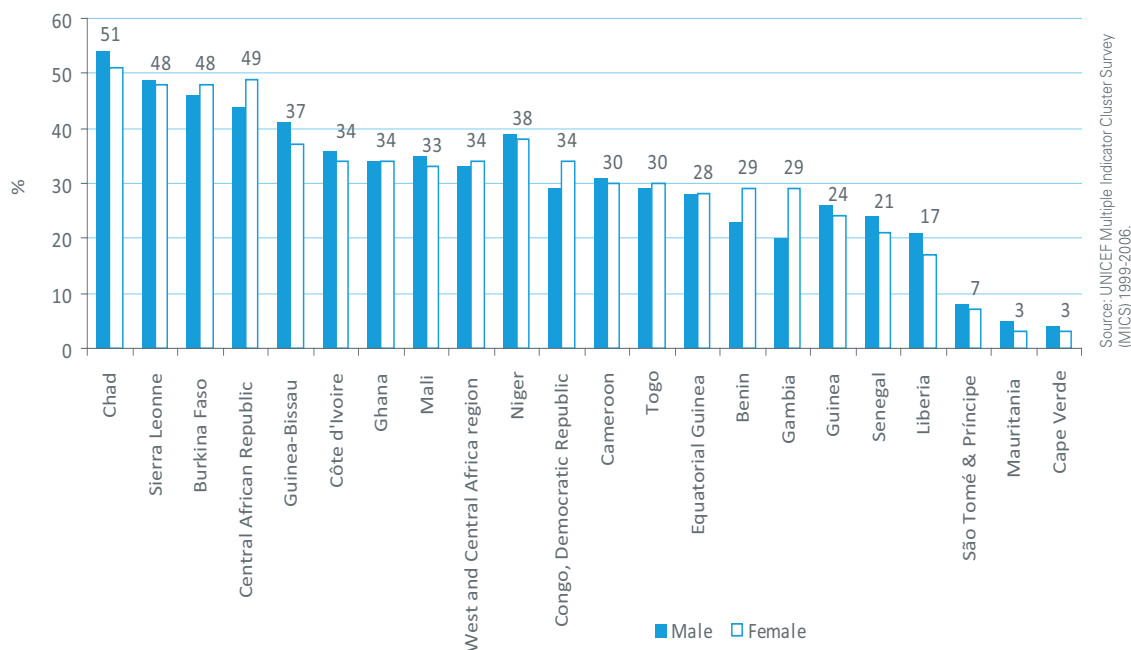
2.2 URBANISATION AND GLOBALISATION

Rapid urbanisation, as well as economic globalisation, has fuelled extensive rural-to-urban migration and also cross-border migration, often resulting in family separation and/or child migration to support household labour needs (e.g. Black et al., 2004). Frequently, such changes are accompanied by the breakdown of traditional social protection mechanisms for the poorest and most vulnerable (UNFPA, 2006). Evidence on the patterning of remittances, for example, indicates that they tend to accrue to those with at least a minimum economic base, rather than to the poorest (Adams, 2008). Within this context, growing numbers of children are at risk of various forms of commercial exploitation and/or 'streetism' (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

Trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation have been identified as major problems in a number of West and Central African countries, including Ghana (ECPAT, 2008), Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Togo (ILO, 2001) and Nigeria (Ogunyemi, 2000), involving an estimated 200,000 children annually (Human Rights Watch, 2003)[4]. The demand for children varies: child trafficking has been identified as a pertinent issue when considering the recruitment of soldiers in areas such as Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia (Tienfenbrun, 2007), but also with regard to general labour and domestic work in places such as Togo (Human Rights Watch, 2003). According to a 2001 International Labour Organization (ILO) report, trafficked children typically work from 10 to 20 hours a day, may be compelled to carry heavy loads, operate dangerous tools and/or lack adequate food or drink. Findings on Nigeria from the same report indicate that one out of five trafficked children dies of illness or accident, whereas others succumb to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS. Psychologically,

[4] This is distinct from children who often move from their parental home to that of relatives for reasons of economic scarcity or better educational opportunities. Some of these children, however, do end up being treated as quasi domestic servants and/or subject to other forms of abuse (Human Rights Watch, 2007a).

many children suffer mental health and psychosocial distress from harsh working conditions, ill treatment and disease, and often lose their human dignity and develop a feeling of being outcast, with disproportionate numbers turning to crime and drug consumption and/or suffering from long-term mental disorders (ibid).

In many cases, trafficking is also linked to sexual exploitation. In Ghana, for instance, girls who work on the streets of Accra as kayayas (porters or carriers), petty traders or semi-skilled labourers are 'highly vulnerable' to commercial sexual activity owing to their 'lack of marketable skills' (ECPAT, 2008). In Nigeria, where the number of street children in urban areas is on the increase, one study (Ogunyemi, 2000) indicates that the level of forced sex among street children was 38% for girls and 28% for boys in two urban centres. Here, the lack of familial structure that results from being orphaned, from being abandoned or from running away from a troubled family often puts children at serious risk of sexual abuse.

Children who live and/or work on the streets do so as a result of a variety of causes (including family dysfunction or breakdown, conflict), but economic poverty and shocks often play an important role. Some children live on the streets; many more live at home but earn money working on the streets, hawking or running errands. Most children living and sleeping on the street end up joining gangs, with gangs serving as a substitute family of sorts, but in many cases older gang members exercise violence on younger children. Children are often used to carry out petty crimes and are often sold drugs to keep them under senior gang members' control (UN, 2005b). Children living on the streets are also deemed to be highly vulnerable to adults looking for sex and also to police maltreatment (ibid). As such, Ebigbo (2003) locates the street as the origin of much of urban Nigeria's child abuse. Similarly, in Ghana, the UN Development Program (2007) found that 2.5% of HIV/AIDS orphans were living and sleeping on the street, and only 18% of them felt safe and secure.

2.3   SOCIO-CULTURAL ATTITUDES

A third key driver of children's vulnerability to abuse, violence and/or neglect relates to discriminatory socio-cultural attitudes and practices, which are based on age but often compounded by gender, indigenous or ethnic minority status, disability and sexuality (e.g. Committee on the Rights of the Child[5]; Human Rights Watch, 2007a). As Kim and Bailey (2003) note, for instance, sexual violence against children is strongly gendered and appears to disproportionately affect girls, 'taking place in a context of gender inequality and specific cultural beliefs and attitudes about gender roles, especially those concerning male and female sexuality'. Such social exclusion can also reinforce other economic or social inequalities and risks, including lack of access to basic services, justice and livelihood sustenance (Oduro and Ayree, 2003; UN, 2005a), and may result in vulnerability to neglect, violence and abuse in the household, school or community.

Within the household, the UN regional consultation document (2005b) found that, in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal, for example, the right of parents or others in charge of a child to 'give that child a beating' is openly acknowledged. In a survey of 2070 households in Togo, for instance, children aged 10-17 were asked about their experiences of familial violence; of 1613 children interviewed, only 5% said they had never been beaten (ibid). However, it was recognised that this concept of 'reasonable corporal punishment' is difficult to define or police, and risks considerable physical and psychological harm of children.

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[5] The Committee on the Rights of the Child's responses to Burkina Faso, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Sierra Leone all called for greater attention to indigenous children's rights and better disaggregated data to track progress. All references to Committee on the Rights of the Child reports can be found at www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/sessions.htm.

Children, especially girls, may also be at risk of sexual violence within the family. Incest in the region remains surrounded by taboo and shamed silence, but a study in Benin found that approximately 32% of children interviewed had experienced sexual abuse within the family, most often at the hands of cousins, uncles and aunts (UN, 2005b). In Cameroon, records of sexual abuse cases similarly found that most abuse was perpetrated by relatives or families, and up to 20% of cases by fathers. For children living with relatives, the risk of sexual violence was thought to be compounded given their heightened dependency on adults in the household and typically lower status (ibid).

Much of what has been said and published on violence against children and sexual violence in particular takes for granted that a large proportion of this violence is exercised by parents or other relatives inside the private space of the home[6]. By contrast, there is limited record of the violence exercised in other settings and, as a result, school-based sexual violence against children remained largely invisible until the UN Study on Violence[7]. In part this is due to the general assumption that schools are, by definition, a safe and protected place for children. The overall information dearth, alongside cultural factors within West Africa that have silenced frank discussion on the issue, has resulted in many countries failing to consider sexual violence in schools as a grave problem. There has therefore been little attempt to implement specific legislation. As concluded in a UNICEF regional report (2008b): 'The problem of sexual abuse and harassment at school is regarded as moderate because of the lack of data and analysis of cases combined with the culture of silence around such questions.'

Although the evidence base is limited, a growing body of research on sexual violence in and around educational facilities in West Africa and testimonies from students suggest that the problem of sexual exploitation is pervasive (UNICEF, 2008b; Behrendt and Mor Mbaye, 2008). Sexual exploitation takes place not only within schools, perpetrated by teachers and other care providers, but between students and while journeying to and from school (see Box 1).

Box 1: Survey evidence of sexual violence, harassment or sexual relationships between teachers and pupils in and around West African schools

Benin: According to a 2006 survey of 10 villages, 34% of school children interviewed confirmed that sexual violence occurred within their schools, and 15% of teachers acknowledged that sexual harassment took place within and around their school

Ghana: A study conducted in 2003 suggested that 6% of the girls questioned had been victims of sexual blackmail over their class grades and 14% had been raped by their school

comrades, whereas 24% of the boys admitted to having raped a girl or to having taken part in a collective rape.

Niger: In interviews conducted with 50 teachers and 174 students, 47.7% of students had observed teachers express feelings of love for a fellow student, whereas 99% of teachers responded that there were sexual incidents, of varying nature, between students and teachers at their school.

Source: Jones and Espey (2008).

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[6] This section is based heavily on Jones and Espey (2008).

[7] In terms of methodological approaches, because of the relative silence surrounding the problem of sexual abuse at school and school violence, there has been only limited investment in quantitative data. More often, researchers have drawn on a variety of non-survey research methods, including ethnographic studies. These are particularly useful for uncovering social norms and values and informal practices within school which reinforce cultures of violence. Other non-survey research methods are newspaper content analyses of articles documenting cases of abuse (which provide valuable insights into the framing of public debates on the issue), action research (Abrahams et al., 2006) and analysis of non-clinical files from education jurisdictions (providing insights into the social characteristics of perpetrators and victims who report problems of abuse).
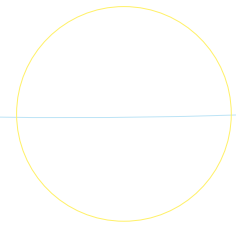
Sexual abuse in a transactional capacity is a particular problem in West African school settings. According to one survey, 6% of female students interviewed in Ghana said that a male teacher had at some point blackmailed them with sexual favours for good grades (UN, 2006). Other research highlights a wide range of language used by students to refer to girls' sexual relations with their teachers (Plan Togo, 2006). Forms of transaction include 'sexually transmittable grades', whereby sexual favours are given by students to teachers in exchange for good grades, as well as 'sexually transmittable means', which describes sexual acts in exchange for school materials, food or tuition support. Complex experiences of abuse such as these are poorly researched and/or documented, thus the figure of 6% likely represents only the tip of the iceberg. Often, such threats go unreported as girls feel ashamed, owing to cultural values and the importance placed on purity, and/or do not know who to inform. Such evidence suggests that experiences of sexual exploitation in West Africa are entrenched in authoritarian and highly gendered school management systems and curricula (Kent, 2004; Dunne, 2007).

2.4   TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

Harmful traditional practices remain an important and deeply entrenched driver of protection-related vulnerability in West and Central Africa. Moreover, traditional and religious attitudes and practices often reinforce and perpetuate social cleavages discussed above. These value and belief systems may in turn be exacerbated, but not exclusively, by low levels of education.

A diverse array of harmful traditional practices has been identified in West and Central Africa, but because of the cultural sensitivity of many of these issues, reliable evidence is limited. In the case of FGM/FGC, prevalence varies widely, ranging from as high as 96% among women of 15-46 years old in Guinea to just 2% in Niger (see Figure 2). Deleterious effects vary depending on the type of excision undergone (from clitoridectomy to infibulation) and range from trauma, infection and heightened susceptibility to STIs and HIV and AIDS owing to the use of the same implements (Kellner, 1993), to chronic pain, decreased sexual enjoyment and psychological consequences, such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Moreover, a World Health Organization (WHO) multi-country study involving 28,000 women found that women who had undergone genital mutilation had significantly increased risks of adverse events during childbirth (WHO et al., 2008).

Figure 2: FGM/FGC prevalence among women/girls aged 15-49

Source: Data from DHS and MICS 2001-2006.
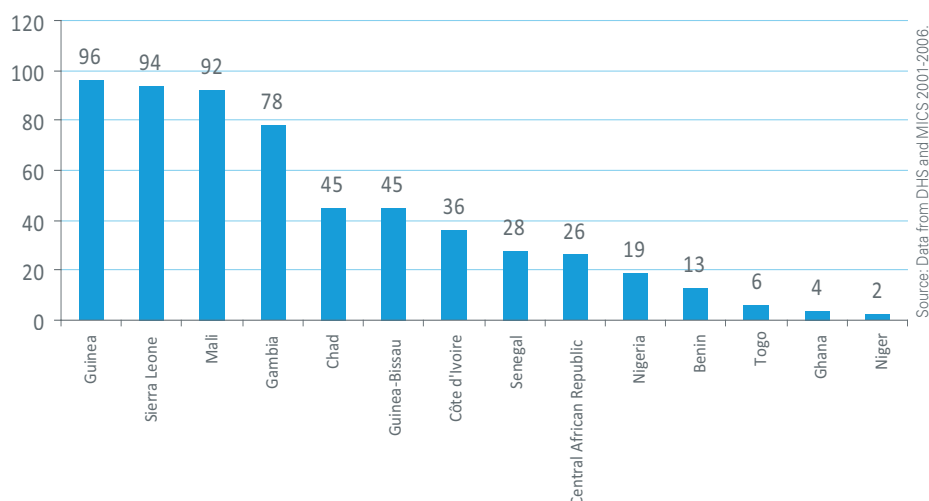
The UN regional consultation study (UN, 2005b) considers a wide variety of traditional and cultural practices that violate children's rights to protection and care. These include incest for 'mystical' reasons, sexual bondage in religious institutions, such as the practice of trokosi ('wife of the gods') in the Volta region of Ghana[8] and the scapegoating of so-called child sorcerers, who are singled out by their community on the basis of factors such as HIV and AIDS status, being a twin or being thought to possess spiritual powers.

Another critical and widespread problem is that of child marriage (see ECPAT, 2008). UNICEF (2005a) figures put the marriage of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 at 49% in West Africa and 50% in Central Africa, with rates varying by country (see Figure 3 below). Although a common reason for marrying of children at a young age is to 'protect' daughters from premarital sexual activity and pregnancy, young brides are often confined to a life of domestic servitude, and are frequently more vulnerable to violent and sexual abuse throughout their lives owing to gender power imbalances. In some cultures, especially in Mauritania, Niger and northern Mali, girls are often force-fed in order to enable them to develop more quickly and present a plump appearance as 'mature women' (UN, 2005b).

Figure 3: Women married by age 18, 1998-2003

Source: Data from DHS and MICS 2001-2006.
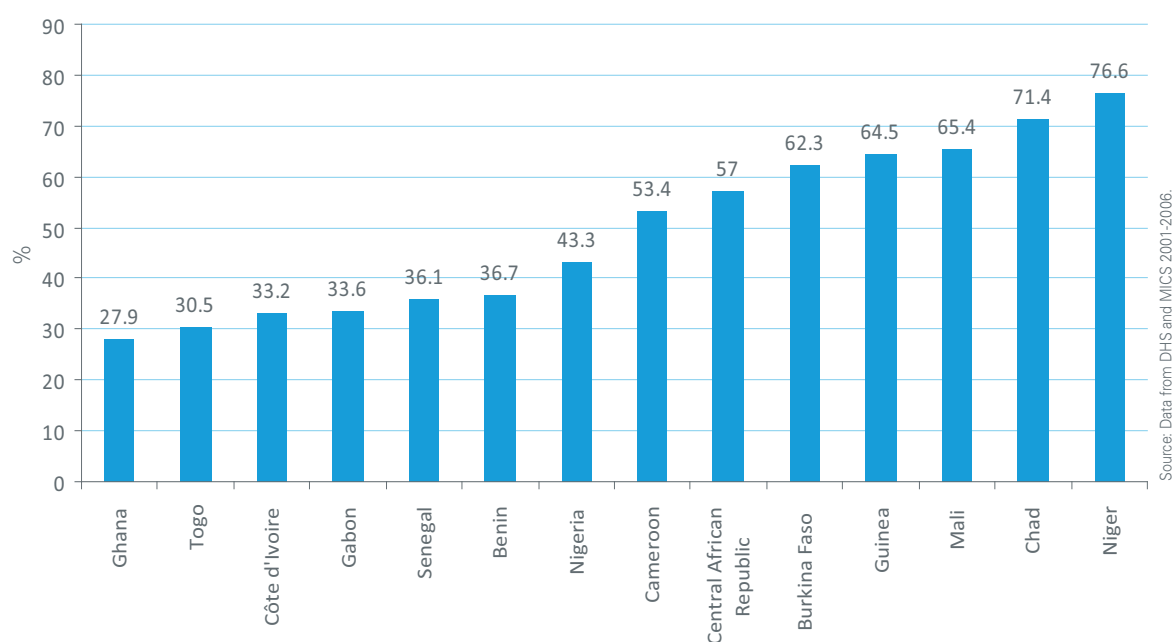
As illustrated in Figures 4, 5 and 6, girls belonging to the poorest quintile, living in rural areas and with low educational levels are most at risk of early marriage. This illustrates the intersection of economic and socio-cultural drivers of vulnerability, and the importance, as we argue later on, of employing a more integrated approach to tackling child-specific risks and vulnerabilities.

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[8] Trokosi is a traditional practice whereby an individual who has committed a crime is punished by traditional authorities, ordering that a young girl in the family be sent to a shrine as a 'goddess'. She is then subjected to a variety of abuses, such as rape, and kept in bondage until she dies. There are an estimated 10,000 girls living as a trokosi in the Volta region (Ben-Ari, 2001).
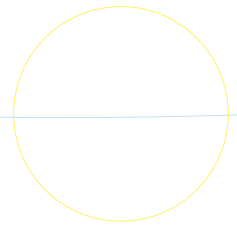
Figure 4: Child marriage rates (before age 18) by urban/rural location

Source: Data from DHS and MICS 2001-2006.

Bars labeled (Rural values shown): Ghana 38.9, Togo 40.8, Côte d'Ivoire 43, Gabon 48.6, Senegal 53.1, Benin 45, Nigeria 52, Cameroon 51.3, Central African Republic 73.6, Burkina Faso 69.9, Guinea 75.3, Mali 74.3, Chad 73.6, Niger 85.7

■ Urban □ Rural
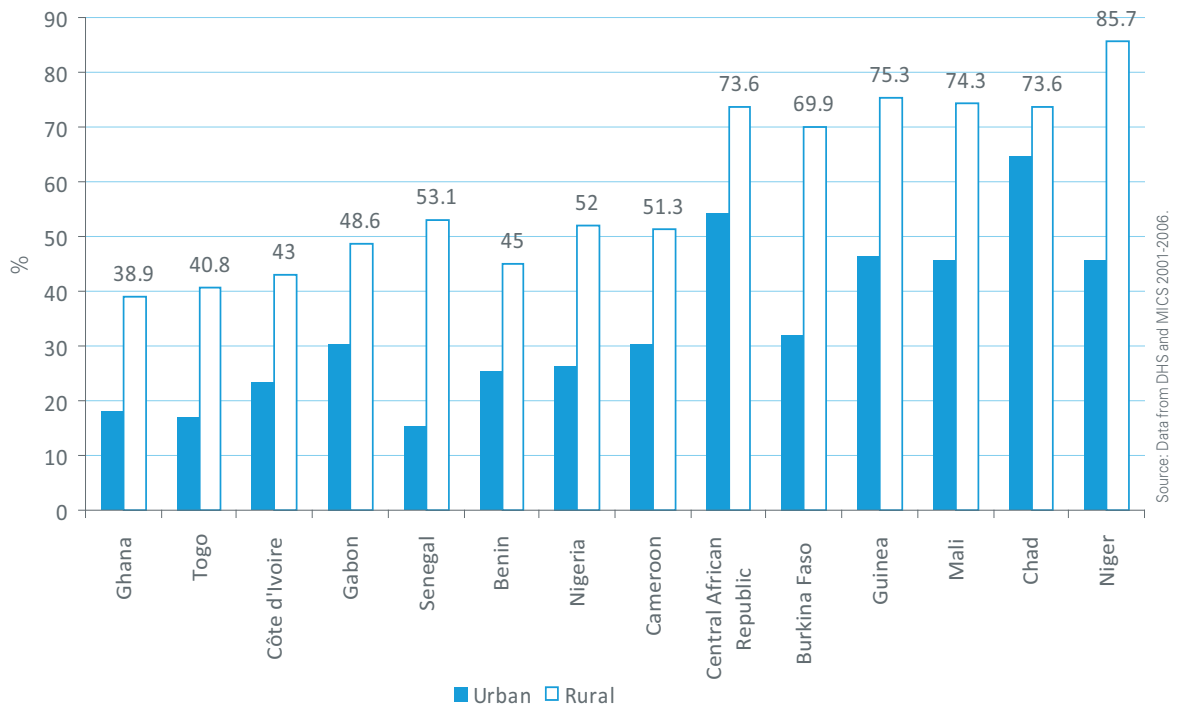
Figure 5: Child marriage rates (before age 18) by wealth quintile

Source: Data from DHS and MICS 2001-2006.

Bars labeled (Poorer 20% values shown): Ghana 42, Togo 49.3, Côte d'Ivoire 47.6, Gabon 46.5, Senegal 58.5, Benin 55, Nigeria 65.8, Cameroon 63.9, Central African Republic 75.5, Burkina Faso 71.9, Guinea 82.8, Mali 76.8, Chad 75.5, Niger 87

■ Poorer 20% □ Richer 20%
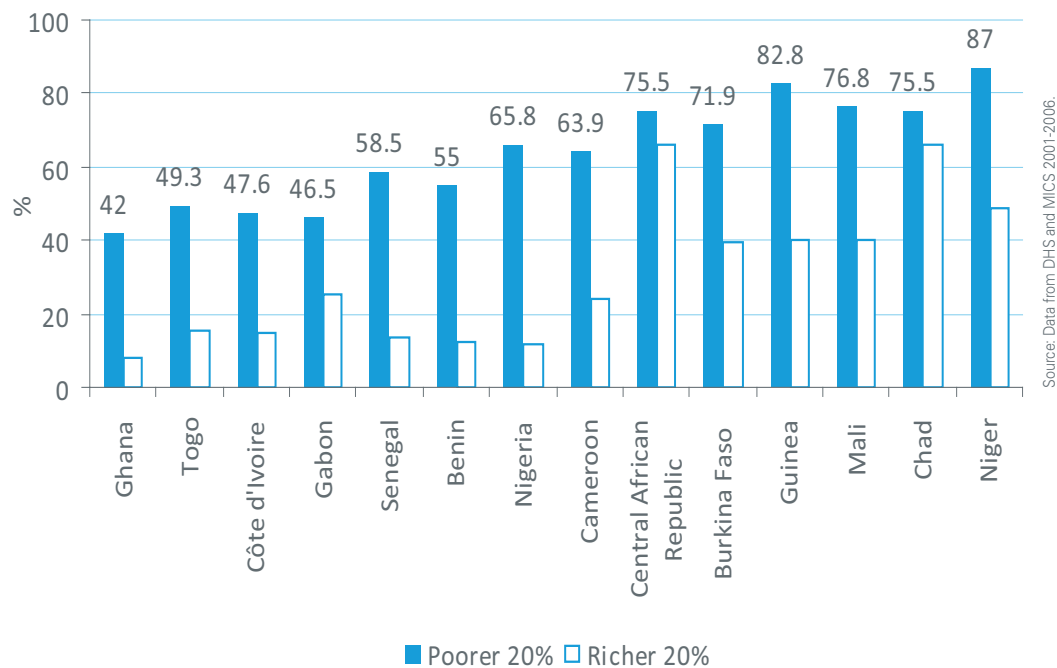
Figure 6: Child marriage rates (before age 18) by education level

Source: Data from DHS and MICS 2001-2006.

Legend: ■ No education □ Primary education ■ Secondary education ■ Higher education
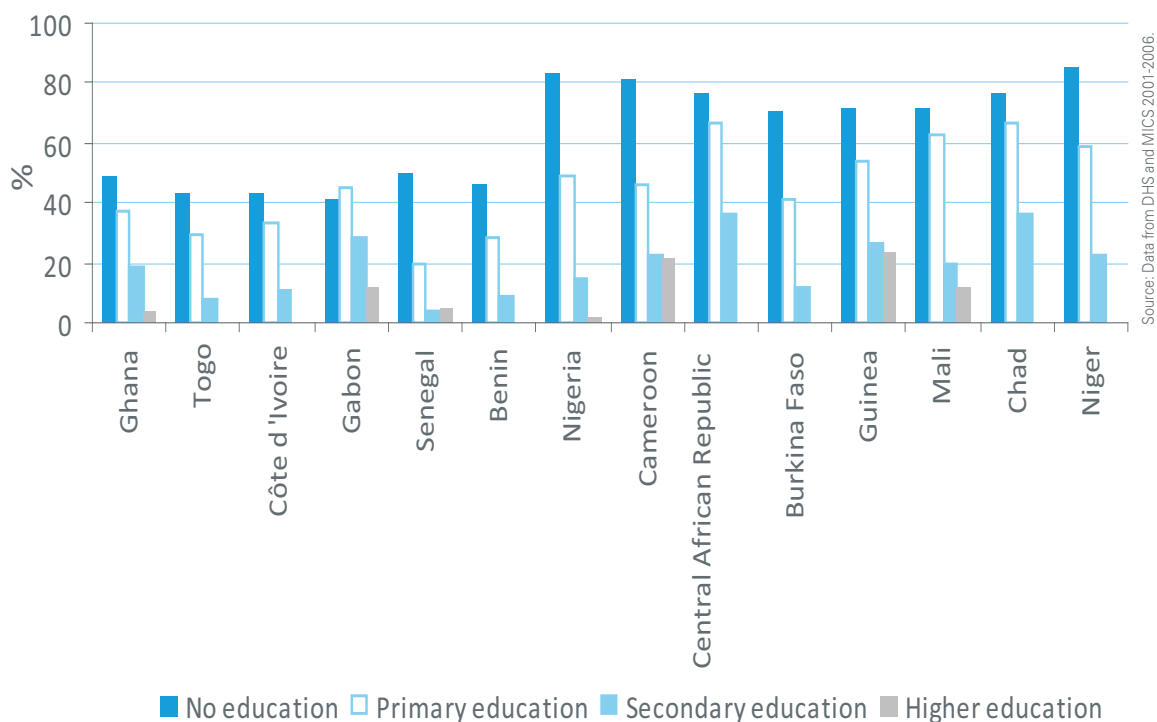
2.5 ARMED CONFLICT

Armed conflict has been and continues to be a major driver of protection-related vulnerabilities in the region, and although a number of peace settlements have been resolved in the past five years, addressing protection-related violations and associated consequences remains a major challenge. Conflict situations often undermine the social fabric at both family and community levels, and disrupt governance and accountability mechanisms, leaving children particularly vulnerable to various forms of abuse. Girls appear to be especially vulnerable to sexual abuse (e.g. Save the Children UK, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2007b) and boys to recruitment, although a sizeable number of girls have also been recruited in the region (Machel, 2007).

A much-discussed manifestation of conflict-related violations concerns the involvement of children in armed conflict – not only as child combatants but also as cooks, 'house girls' for soldiers, porters, etc. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the involvement of children in armed conflict – the most specific prohibition of child soldiers under international law – has now been ratified by 120 states, including 10 of the 24 countries in West and Central Africa. However, the deployment of CAAFAG remains a serious issue in the region[9], with children who are already exposed to a range of other vulnerabilities most susceptible to recruitment. These include:

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[9] Twum-Danso (2003) estimated that 120,000 child soldiers were deployed in Africa, with many of the conflicts in question taking place in West and Central Africa.
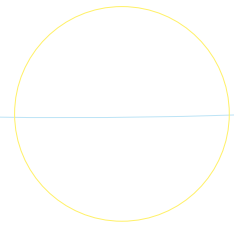
- Children from particular ethnic/racial or religious groups, owing to the specific knowledge they have of certain contexts;
- Children living in conflict zones and interacting with those participating in the conflict;
- Children who come from unstable or disrupted backgrounds;
- Children separated from their families and OVC, who do not have the necessary protection required to prevent recruitment;
- Children who are separated and unaccompanied and who therefore look for protective services within an armed group;
- Children who are trafficked;
- Former child soldiers;
- Migrants; and
- Children from other socially excluded groups (McCallin, 2001; Nosworthy and Gya, 2008).

In terms of ongoing involvement in conflict situations, the 2008 Global Report on Child Soldiers identified the use of child combatants by governments in the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of Congo between 2004 and 2007 (see Box 2) (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008). Exact numbers are difficult to obtain and it is thought that figures in the report are likely to underestimate the severity of the problem.

There are also significant problems in post-conflict environments, particularly with regard to demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) challenges (Jesseman, 2001; Twum-Danso, 2003). The 2008 Global Report highlighted limited progress in terms of ensuring justice and accountability in relation to child recruiters[10], and the inadequate nature of DDR programmes for children. Many programmes are under-funded and, more often than not, exclude children and especially girls (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008). Returning children often receive no support, especially as in their communities of origin former child soldiers are often feared and abandoned, and lack access to basic and social services. Girls returning home having been impregnated may face rejection from their family (MacVeigh, 2007).

Perhaps not surprisingly, existing evidence suggests that the culture of violence is particularly strong in societies that have emerged from or are still in the grip of conflict. In the West and Central Africa region, this includes the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In addition to the deployment of child combatants and their frequent exclusion from DDR programmes in post-conflict environments, violence against children in conflict and post-conflict environments often encompasses an important gender dimension. Girls (and women) are particularly vulnerable to an increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, as highlighted by Save the Children UK's (2006) research on the abuse of girls by peacekeepers and other authority figures in Liberian refugee camps. In such contexts, 'transactional sex' is a common modality of abuse, with the poverty of the camps compelling girls to offer their bodies in exchange for money, clothes and food. This problem was further compounded when children were orphaned or abandoned.

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10 In Sierra Leone, children were allegedly recruited in Sierra Leone by the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) to fight in Liberia in July 2005. Charges against the former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, of crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international law committed in Sierra Leone include the recruitment and use in hostilities of child soldiers under the age of 15. A trial began in June 2007 before the Special Court for Sierra Leone (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

Machel (1996) highlights the widespread use of rape and sexual violence as a tool of war, noting that 'sexual attacks and exploitation are used systematically during armed conflict to humiliate and terrorise'. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data on the number of children who are at risk of sexual abuse in armed conflict in the West and Central Africa region, but comprehensive reports such as Plan International's (2008) global study on the role of young girls in war highlights the number of female children participating in wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone as soldiers, workers and 'wives' of soldiers.

2.6 INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS

Children's vulnerability to abuse, violence and neglect is closely linked to the failure of state institutions to provide adequate protection. In the case of children and the justice system within the West and Central Africa region, the lack of legislation specifically pertaining to children, infrastructural deficiencies and a lack of awareness of child rights have resulted in many children who have come into conflict with the law being tried in adult justice systems. These frequently lack the capacity to address child-specific issues and are more likely to harm the child's future development and social reintegration by subjecting them to unsuitable facilities and modes of detention. According to Articles 37 and 40 of the CRC (UN, 1989), children in conflict with the law have the right to treatment that promotes their sense of dignity and worth, accounts for their age and aims to provide for their reintegration into society. However, evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Mali, Liberia and Senegal demonstrates the limitations of juvenile justice in the West and Central Africa region[11].

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[11] www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/sessions.htm.
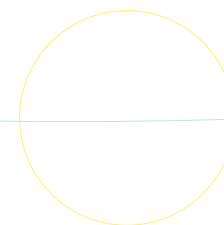
Incidences of arrest and motivations for children to come into conflict with the law throughout the West and Central Africa region are inherently tied to their socioeconomic situation. Theft, prostitution, begging, drug use and alcoholism are commonly correlated with poverty and destitution; there are numerous incidences of arrest reportedly on the grounds of prejudice related to ethnicity, social or economic status (UNICEF, 2006b). When children are detained, the CRC recommends that closed facilities be the last resort and that children should not be detained in the same facilities as adults. However, this right remains unfulfilled across the region, with inadequate specialised detention and rehabilitation centres, few diversion programmes and inconsistencies between international commitments and national and sub-national legislation. Moreover, juvenile procedural codes are poorly implemented. In Liberia, for instance, five years after the end of the civil war, there is a series of cases where juveniles have been imprisoned, often without trial, despite the existence of detailed juvenile justice procedures that protect against such arrest. This is often because child rights are overlooked in conflict situations, because magistrates do not have much of a grasp of juvenile law, because of the contradictions between customary and formal law or merely because systems are insufficiently resourced to manage suspected young offenders (IRIN, 2007).

Another institutional weakness, with far-ranging consequences for child vulnerability, is the limited access to birth registration in the region. Birth registration provides children with their fundamental right to an identity and is often essential for securing access to services and resources later in life. As such, the UN General Assembly in the 2002 A World Fit for Children Resolution recognised that, in order to achieve goals related to the protection of children and enhancement of service provision, it is essential that governments have accurate population data, of which birth registration is a fundamental component. Yet, according to UNICEF (2006c), 66% of births in sub-Saharan Africa go unregistered, and in West and Central Africa the rates range widely, from just 9% in Chad to 89% in Gabon, as depicted in Table 3. Ensuring access to birth registration for the poor and marginalised is critical too for the provision of social protection, as we discuss in more depth below.

Table 3: Child birth registration rates in West and Central Africa, 2007

Country	Birth registration (%)	Country	Birth registration (%)
Benin	70	Ghana	67
Burkina Faso	-	Guinea	67
Cameroon	63	Guinea-Bissau	42
Cape Verde	-	Liberia	-
Central African Republic	73	Mali	47
Chad	9	Mauritania	55
Congo, Democratic Republic	34	Niger	46
Congo, Republic	-	Nigeria	30
Côte d'Ivoire	72	São Tomé & Príncipe	70
Equatorial Guinea	32	Senegal	62
Gabon	89	Sierra Leone	-
Gambia	32	Togo	65

Source: UNICEF (2006c).

2.7 HEALTH SHOCKS AND CHRONIC ILLNESS

Health shocks and long-term illness of children and their caregivers are critical not only in terms of morbidity and mortality, but also with regard to protection-related vulnerabilities. HIV and AIDS is one major factor. Although the HIV epidemic has been much less widespread than in Southern Africa and is largely declining[12], the West and Central Africa region is still home to nearly one-third of the 25 million people in sub-Saharan Africa who are living with the virus. By the end of 2005:

- 170,000 child deaths in the region owed to AIDS;
- 1.3 million children were in need of paediatric care;
- 600,000 pregnant women were HIV+, yet only 1.3% of them received antiretroviral drugs to prevent the spread of HIV to their babies; and
- Of the more than 20 million orphaned children in the region, 21% were orphaned by AIDS (UNICEF, 2008b).

The lack of parental or family care may in turn exacerbate vulnerability to other forms of neglect and violence. Although the extended family has traditionally fulfilled a caring role for orphans and vulnerable children, these informal social protection mechanisms are eroding in many parts of the region, owing in part to urbanisation and migration but also to economic shocks and poverty. Moreover, data on migration and sexual abuse in the region suggest that the HIV epidemic could quickly worsen in the coming years[13]. In addition, there is growing evidence that the current level of funding for children affected by HIV and AIDS in West and Central Africa is inadequate and incommensurate with the response that is needed today (UNICEF, 2008b).

[12] Most of these epidemics are either stable or declining, as is the case for Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. In Côte d'Ivoire, HIV prevalence among pregnant women in urban areas fell from 10% in 2001 to 6.9% in 2005. The largest epidemic in West Africa – in Nigeria, the continent's most populous country – appears to have stabilised at 3.1%, according to HIV infection trends among women attending antenatal clinics (UNAIDS, 2008).

[13] Sex work is an important factor in many of West Africa's HIV epidemics. More than one-third (35%) of female sex workers surveyed in 2006 in Mali were living with HIV, and infection levels exceeding 20% have been documented among sex workers in Senegal and Burkina Faso (UNAIDS, 2008).
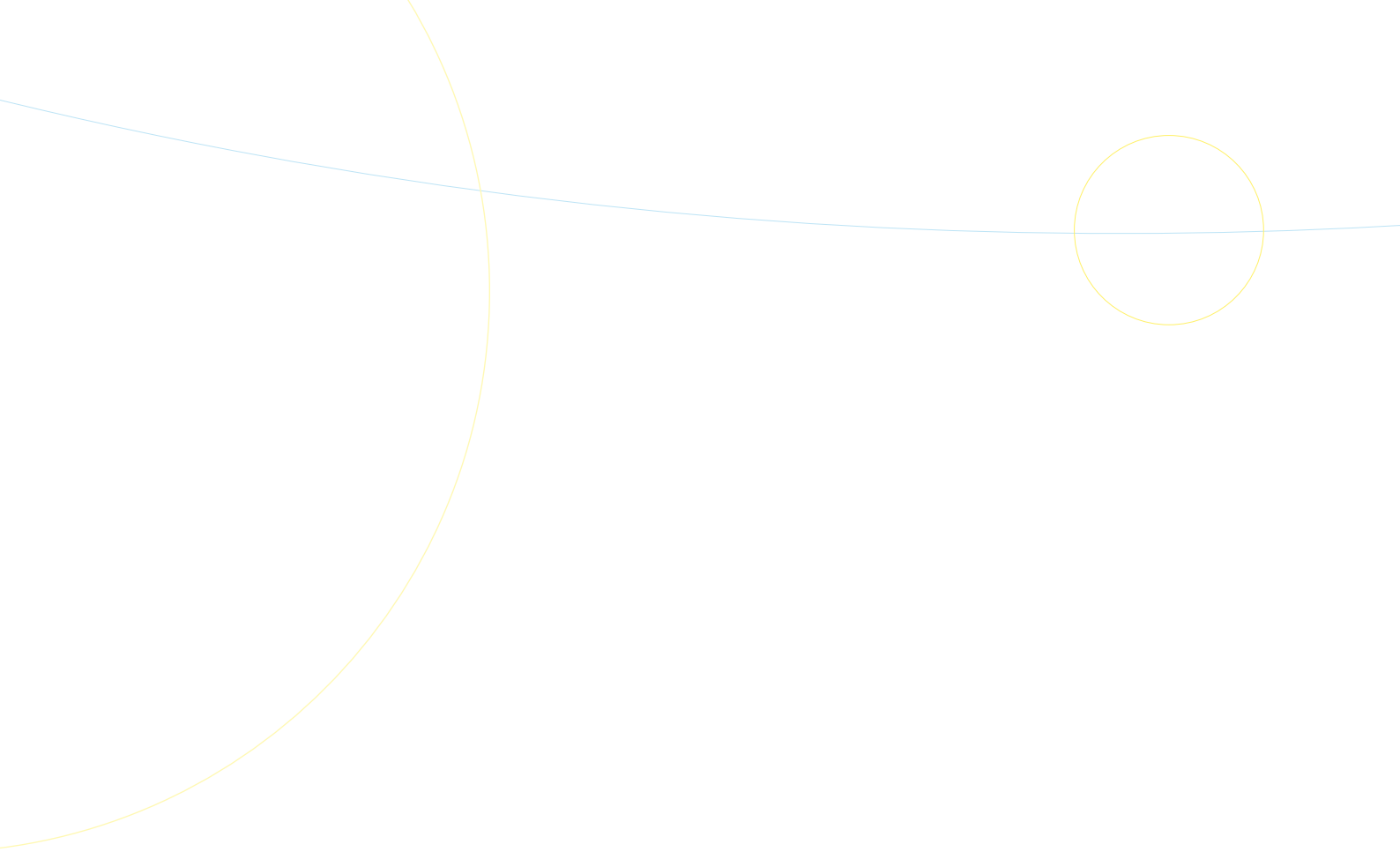
3. CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

This section discusses the extent to which there are child protection systems in place in West and Central Africa to respond to the protection-related vulnerabilities identified above. By child protection 'systems', we are referring to systems that 'comprise the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors – especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to support prevention and response to protection related risks… At the level of prevention, their aim includes supporting and strengthening families to reduce social exclusion, and to lower the risk of separation, violence and exploitation' (UNICEF, 2008a). We focus on five key elements of protection systems: **protective legislative frameworks** relating to children's right to live a life protected from violence, abuse and neglect; **government institutions** that are responsible for ensuring that this right is met; **prevention services and awareness-raising activities** to ensure that the general public, parents, authorities and children are aware of this right and related legal frameworks and services; **responsive and reintegration-oriented social services** for victims of violence, abuse and neglect; and, lastly, **linkages to non-governmental (NGO) service providers**. This mapping will in turn provide us with an opportunity in Section 4 to systematically assess the entry points to strengthen synergies between social protection and child protection systems in order to better address the multidimensionality of childhood poverty and vulnerability.

3.1 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Legislation, although often inadequate in and of itself in promoting a real change in attitudes and behaviours, often constitutes a necessary first step. It can also serve as a public relations tool to draw attention to a particular social problem and to raise awareness of specific issues among responsible line ministries and staff within the justice system. In terms of children's right to protection, it is critical that the UN CRC is domesticated in national legislation.

In terms of legislative frameworks, a child protection system is ideally framed by a child protection code which provides an overview of existing legislation and ensures consistency across related laws. Additional laws that are critical include:
  • Legislation against violence (within and outside the family, including in schools), covering different types of violence (physical, sexual and psychological, e.g. bullying, involvement of children as combatants);
  • Legislation to protect children in conflict with the law;
  • Legislation to protect child witnesses and victims;
  • Legislation against trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation;
  • Legislation against traditional harmful practices;
  • Legislation on children's engagement in labour activities;
  • Legislation providing for support for children suffering from neglect or lacking parental care;
  • Anti-discrimination legislation (on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability, etc.); and
  • Legislation to protect children's land housing and property rights.

The extent to which such legislative frameworks are in place in West and Central Africa varies widely. In two of our country case studies, there are only weak legislative frameworks. For instance, Equatorial Guinea has no child protection legislation and is yet to ratify a law against trafficking. Similarly, in Congo, a bill on child protection is currently waiting to be passed in the Parliament. In the other three cases, there are more

comprehensive bodies of protective legislative for children. Ghana has a Children's Act (1998) and a range of complementary laws against child labour, trafficking, domestic and sexual violence (Government of Ghana, 1998); Mali has a Child Protection Code (2002). In Senegal, although a National Plan of Action for Children is still being discussed and several decrees relating to the 2007 Law to Reform Child Protection remain unpublished, the UN CRC was incorporated into the Constitution in 2001 making all provisions legally binding. (For more details across the region, see Annex 1.)

3.2   INSTITUTIONAL AGENCIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The institutional positioning, human and financial resources, capacities and coordinating mechanisms of agencies dealing with children's protection issues in West and Central Africa vary considerably, but without exception they are under-resourced on multiple levels, given the severity of children's protection-related vulnerabilities and risks. In our case study countries, government agencies dealing with child protection issues are all comparatively weak, with the exception of the Senegalese Centre for the Care of Infants (CAPE), which is under the Office of the President and thus enjoys strong political leverage[14]. The institutional composition ranges from a complex set of institutions in contexts such as Ghana and Congo to more streamlined institutional arrangements in countries such as Mali and Senegal (see Box 3).

Resource constraints mean that outreach at the local level on child protection issues is very limited. For instance, in Ghana there are no local Ministry of Women and Children offices and the situation is similar in the case of Mali's Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Families. As such, most campaigns are carried out at the national level and sometimes regional levels, but at the local level only International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and NGOs appear to be active players (Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009). Reliance on NGOs to carry out grassroots work is also a feature of Senegal's child protection system (Pereznieto and Fall, 2009).

3.3   CHILD PROTECTION SERVICE PROVISION

Child protection actions and services can be divided broadly into prevention/awareness-raising activities and services and responsive and reintegration-oriented social services. They may be delivered by government agencies, NGOs, religious organisations or a combination thereof. The following section provides a brief overview of child protection programmes in the region based on the limited web-based evidence available.

3.3.1 PREVENTION/AWARENESS-RAISING SERVICES

Concerted attention to child protection activities is relatively recent, as evidenced by the passage of relevant laws, primarily in the past decade. As discussed above, the process of developing and passing these laws has served to varying degrees to raise awareness about the violence and abuse-related problems that the laws address. A review of the most recent government reports on CRC implementation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child indicates that post-legislation awareness-raising activities and preventative services have received less attention and resources from governments, with many awareness-raising activities led by international NGOs or UNICEF.

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[14] It is important to point out, however, that the 2006 response of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to the Senegalese government's periodic report on progress against the CRC, noted the lack of political clout of the Directorate for the Protection of Children's Rights.

Box 3: Institutional arrangements to tackle child protection violations

Complex institutional arrangements:
- **Ghana:** Relevant institutions include the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and the Child Labour Unit (CLU) in the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment; the Department of Children in the Ministry of Women and Children; and the Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service. These different units remain fragmented, however, without a clear coordinating mechanism, and have limited clarity about their respective mandates and division of labour (e.g. the CLU and the Department of Children work on child labour issues).
- **Congo:** A similarly complex array of institutions includes the Directorate for the Legal Defence of Children, the General Directorate for Social Action and the Family, the General Directorate for Human Rights (overseeing minority rights), the Ministry of Social Welfare and the High Commission for the Integratio n of Youth.

More streamlined institutional arrangements:
- **Mali:** All child-related issues, including those concerning protection, are coordinated by the Directorate for the Promotion of Children and Families within the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Families. The Ministry also includes a unit that houses ILO-IPEC. An important exception is that

programmes pertaining to children with disabilities are dealt with by the Ministry of Social Development, Solidarity and the Elderly.
- **Senegal:** Child protection policies and programmes are the responsibility of the Directorate for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Ministry of Family, National Solidarity, Women's Entrepreneurship and Microfinance, complemented by the Directorate for the Education of Young Offenders and Social Protection, focusing on the reintegration of children at risk, in the Ministry of Justice.

Little in the way of formal institutional mechanisms:
- **Equatorial Guinea:** Although the Ministry for Social Affairs and the Protection of Women and a Child Rights Committee are officially responsible for child protection issues, there is no overarching child protection policy and few dedicated staff. This is despite, for instance, the growing problem of Equatorial Guinea functioning as a hub for child trafficking. Moreover, the Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2006 observations on Equatorial Guinea's report on CRC implementation focused heavily on the lack of data and information about child protection issues in the country and urged the government to provide more information in subsequent reports (see Annex 2).

Sources: Holmes and Villar (2009); Jones et al. (2009); Pereznieto and Diallo (2009); Pereznieto and Fall (2009); Villar and Makosso (2009).

Common concerns articulated in the Committee's responses include the fact that governments are not ensuring that the principle of 'the child's best interest' is embedded in institutions throughout society, and have not established a comprehensive database to document the extent of and trends in violations of children's protection rights. The regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has also called for the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders, such as transporters and truck drivers in the case of trafficking, community leaders – especially in the case of birth registration, authorities in terms of birth registration for migrants and refugees and heads of state in terms of a commitment to end trafficking and the plight of street children. ECOWAS has highlighted the importance of improved coordination of sensitisation efforts among parliamentarians, NGOs, children, youth, the academic world, media, civil servants, entrepreneurs and religious and traditional chiefs (ECOWAS, 2008).

In countries with weak child protection institutions, such as Congo and Equatorial Guinea, our analysis suggests that awareness-raising activities and the provision of preventative services are particularly lacking. For example, in Congo, the government's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in
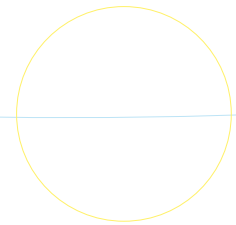
2006 referred to an active birth registration campaign but made little mention of other active awareness-raising or preventative activities. The lack of awareness of child protection issues was identified as a major barrier in Equatorial Guinea but no particular awareness-raising efforts were identified (see Holmes and Villar, 2009).

In countries with more developed child protection systems, preventative and awareness-raising activities are more extensive. In Ghana and Senegal, for instance, there are active nationwide campaigns about the importance of birth registration, as well as concerted campaigns about the importance of tackling the use of child labour, promoting universal education and curbing child trafficking. Community sensitisation activities and the training of medical professionals and authorities on preventing harmful traditional practices such as FGM/FGC, ritual slavery of girls, force feeding, etc. are also an important part of the child protection systems in these contexts. In these countries, there appears to be a strong recognition of the importance of involving religious and traditional leaders in order to promote more widespread attitudinal change (e.g. Jones et al., 2009; Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009). Other awareness-raising activities include the following: Ghana is investing in the prevention of corporal punishment in schools by training teachers about its negative effects; Mali is strengthening the training of service providers to better cater to the needs of disabled children; and Senegal is also promoting media campaigns against sex tourism to protect children. (For more details on these and other initiatives below, please refer to Annex 2.)

Anti-discrimination legislation is a key component of the transformative dimension of social protection (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). While a number of governments mentioned legislative efforts to address discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, HIV/AIDS status, migrant status, refugee status, etc., few of the latest round of government reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child have identified efforts to ensure enforcement of such legislation. A number of the Committee's responses have called particularly on governments to adopt legislation to promote better inclusion and integration of children with disabilities (e.g. Ghana) and indigenous children (e.g. Congo), as well as to address the stigmatisation of children with HIV/AIDS, especially adolescent girls (e.g. Ghana).

3.3.2 RESPONSIVE AND REINTEGRATION-ORIENTED SOCIAL SERVICES

The type and focus of responsive and reintegration-oriented social services vary considerably across the region. Broadly speaking, they can be grouped as:

- Services to combat child labour and trafficking;
- Reintegration services for select groups of children (trafficking and CAAFAG);
- Services to care for children suffering from neglect and/or absence of parental care;
- Services designed to provide medical, psychological and legal help for children who have been victims of violence and abuse;
- Legal services for children in conflict with the law; and
- Birth registration services.

With few exceptions, these public services are under-resourced and have limited geographical coverage, as highlighted in the periodic reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In response to this lacuna, perhaps more than in any other area of children's rights, international agencies and NGOs play a key role in funding and implementing child protection services. In this regard, UNICEF is arguably the most important and influential international agency working to support improvements in child protection. According to UNICEF's Medium-term Strategic Plan for 2006-2009, 'increased protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation' is one of five principal programme and policy priorities (UNECOSOC, 2005). In most countries, UNICEF is a key provider of funds and technical assistance for child-related national governmental agencies and often plays a leading role in supporting development of critical policy documents (e.g. the Mali National Plan of Action against Child Trafficking and the Nigerian Youth Programme for Protection and Participation), as well as organising sensitisation campaigns (e.g. around birth registration, care for OVC, etc.) (Jones et al., 2009; Holmes and Villar, 2009; Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009). Over time, UNICEF has also become more involved in supporting institutional assessments and drawing up capacity development plans for child-focused government agencies (e.g. Apt and Akuffo-Amoabeng, 2007; Yuster, 2008).

The ILO, through IPEC, is also very active in the region (see ILO, 2006). It has time-bound support programmes in Ghana (2004-2008), Mali and Senegal (2004), and longer-term country programmes in Burkina Faso, Benin, Mali, Niger and Togo. The ILO also supports national surveys on child labour through SIMPOC (Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour) in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal. In addition, it implements a number of regional projects focusing on the involvement of children in the worst forms of labour in armed conflict, trafficking, cocoa and commercial agriculture (especially in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria) and mining (Burkina Faso and Niger).

A number of major international NGOs, such as Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are also actively involved in the region on a range of child protection issues, and are often the only organisations providing services in particular marginalised areas. They play an important role in terms of funding, technical assistance and capacity building, and in lending to higher profile issues that are often relatively invisible on national policy agendas.

Information on national NGOs active on child protection issues is much scarcer, and there appear to be no national, let alone regional, databases of organisations working on these issues. This is in no doubt a reflection of scarce funding and resources (e.g. Jones et al., 2008a) and also of the relative dearth of protection-focused NGOs. In Congo, for instance, there are few non-governmental groups focused on children suffering from sexual exploitation; the organisations that do exist are church related and mainly concerned with supporting girls with children (Villar and Makosso, 2009). Similarly, the 2008 Niger PRSP emphasises that NGOs are not working in the most marginalised and remote areas.

Efforts of international and national non-governmental actors notwithstanding, the approach to addressing child protection issues remains highly fragmented, and there is a high degree of dependence on international agencies for funding and implementation of services. This suggests that there is limited government buy-in on the importance of addressing children's protection-related vulnerabilities; hence, the current service delivery system is unsustainable. Greater attention is needed to support national government agencies to develop the requisite technical capacities as well as the planning and budget advocacy skills to secure sufficient funding from the national budget to promote a longer-term approach to fulfilling children's rights to protection and care.
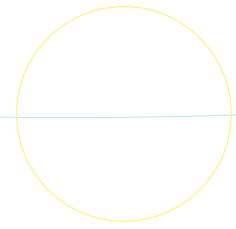
3.4   FINANCING

Financial constraints are a major hurdle in the effective implementation of the mandates of child protection-related agencies. This is manifested both in terms of poor financial planning – for example, commitments to child protection in national PRSPs are seldom accompanied by committed budget lines – and in the low overall funding volumes allocated to child protection programmes.

In **Ghana**, for instance, the Ministry of Women and Children receives less than one-tenth of a percent of the national budget and there are currently no funds to continue work on child labour when the IPEC programme of the CLU is closed down in early 2009. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its 2006 observations on Ghana's last report on CRC implementation, called for greater transparency on budget allocations to address child-specific vulnerabilities and risks. Apt and Akuffo-Amoabeng (2007) further argue that, although 'fiscal decentralisation of district assemblies has not taken effect to ensure that district DSW offices receive direct funding from assemblies', more could be done to tap funding from sources such as the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) and debt relief funds released under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, but that this has been hampered by 'limited institutional capacity and skills to advocate for and benefit from district level resources'.

In **Mali**, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Families receives just 3% of the budget for all initiatives on children, families and women. As a result, programmes on child protection are heavily reliant on funding from UNICEF and a few bilateral donors as foreign aid in the country is seldom targeted at child well-being (Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009).

In **Equatorial Guinea**, the Ministry for Social Affairs and the Protection of Women has only a limited budget for child protection programmes, but the multi-donor-funded Social Needs Fund (SNF) has earmarked funds for OVC.

In **Senegal**, the situation is similarly mixed: funding is a major challenge for the Ministry of Family, National Solidarity, Women's Entrepreneurship and Microfinance but this issue is being taken seriously, as evidenced by current joint action with parliamentarians and international NGOs to support better budgeting for children. Moreover, the CAPE unit under the Office of the President receives considerable donor funding and is well resourced, enabling it to implement some of the actions related to PARER (Partnership for the Reduction in Number and Reintegration of Street Children), a national donor-funded programme for street children.

Given this context of limited funding, our country case studies found that UNICEF plays an important role in providing financial support and technical assistance to child protection-related agencies. This is perhaps especially the case in Mali and Equatorial Guinea, where UNICEF has played an instrumental role in shaping policies and programmes.

3.5   STAFF CAPACITY

A decade ago, Lachman (1996) highlighted the 'lack of appropriately-trained people', and the 'absence of support systems for practitioners' as major challenges facing child protection systems in Africa. While there have been some important improvements over the past decade, our research suggests that capacity constraints remain an important concern. Part of the problem is related to the limited number of personnel employed in child-related agencies, especially at the decentralised level (UNICEF, 2002).

In **Mali**, for instance, the new Code on Child Protection is not yet being implemented, and one of the constraints is the lack of so-called child protection delegates[15] at the regional level, who will in theory be responsible for collecting information and reporting on the progress of the code's rollout in Bamako and all eight regions. In the case of **Congo**, owing no doubt in part to the turmoil of the conflict and post-conflict environment, the government's first report on the CRC was seven years late.

There are also significant concerns about staff quality. Common capacity weaknesses are particularly pronounced in the case of inter-sectoral planning and coordination, budget planning and advocacy skills[16] and policy analysis. Additional capacity gaps identified through key informant interviews and document analysis in our case study countries include the following.

In **Congo** and **Equatorial Guinea**, given weak legislative frameworks and child protection systems, strengthening capacity of staff to engage in sensitisation initiatives with a range of stakeholders is a first priority. In order to promote action in the development of dedicated child protection systems, awareness-raising among policymakers and the public alike will be critical in order to overcome the invisibility of children in public policy and to combat a lack of recognition of children as rights holders, as well as to address cultural sensitivities around child protection issues (such as child labour) (Holmes and Villar, 2009; Villar and Makosso, 2009).

In **Ghana**, a recent institutional assessment has identified a range of individual and organisational capacities that need to be addressed in order to better meet the protection needs of children and their caregivers. These include staff capacity to engage in policy analysis (particularly related to poverty and vulnerability, and gender analysis); to oversee data collection and analysis and to harmonise this work with the range of household surveys carried out by the Ghana Statistical Service and the Ghana Education Service's education management information system; and to carry out rigorous monitoring and impact evaluations of programme results on different target populations. All of these functions will also require upgraded competencies in information and communications technology (ICT) in order to be able to ensure effective information management and linkages among programmes. Significantly, the Ghanaian government has recognised these problems and, with the support of UNICEF, has devised a comprehensive plan to strengthen capacities (Jones et al., 2009).

In **Senegal**, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has highlighted capacity constraints as an important area to address. In its 2006 observations on the Senegalese government's most recent periodic report on CRC implementation, the Committee recommended that the inter-ministerial Directorate for the Protection of Children's Rights be 'further enhance[d] … by defining its exact mandate and role and by providing adequately trained staff.' As discussed, CAPE, under the Office of the President, is going some way to address this, but a medium- to long-term commitment is required for effective realisation.

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[15] The child protection delegates are envisaged as high profile community members who will put in volunteer time to promote compliance with protection-related legislation.

[16] ECOWAS (2008) identifies budget advocacy skills as critical and calls for funds from debt relief initiatives to be invested in child protection services.

4. EXISTING AND POTENTIAL LINKAGES BETWEEN CHILD PROTECTION AND BROADER SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS

4.1 EXISTING LINKAGES

Analysing the extent to which child protection and social protection services are linked is a complex task. Given that this study was limited to a desktop review for countries other than our five country case studies, we sought to map existing linkages in two ways: (i) through analysis of national social protection frameworks and programmes; and (ii) through a documentary analysis of PRSPs.

4.1.1 SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS AND PROGRAMMES

In terms of existing social protection strategies, policies and plans, we are aware of only six in the region – Burkina Faso's 2007 National Plan of Social Action (PNAS); Cape Verde's National Social Protection Strategy; the Democratic Republic of Congo's National Strategy for the Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups; Ghana's National Social Protection Strategy; Mali's Social Development Policy, which has a strong focus on social health insurance; and Senegal's National Social Protection Policy. Moreover, as discussed by Holmes and Barrientos (2009) in terms of one aspect of social protection, social transfer systems in West and Central Africa are in their infancy and, of the four most important schemes (Ghana's Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty – LEAP – programme, Sierra Leone's Social Safety Net – SSN – programme, Nigeria's In Care of the Poor – COPE – programme and Cape Verde's 'minimum social protection' and 'social solidarity pensions'), only Ghana's and Nigeria's specifically target children. Within this context, linkages with child protection services include the following.

Ghana's LEAP programme has strong linkages to child protection services by virtue of its focus on OVC. This has been facilitated by the fact that the DSW, which manages LEAP, has long had a mandate for working with vulnerable populations, including OVC, and that it is part of the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment, which is the overall coordinating agency for social protection. In addition, there is a strong focus on birth registration (as part of the single registry database that will provide information about programme participants and their access to complementary services), as well as on conditions that participating households do not involve their children in child labour or trafficking. Over time, there are also plans to link caregivers and OVC to complementary basic and social services, especially for children with HIV and AIDS and disabilities, and to ensure that children and their caregivers are registered with the National Health Insurance System (NHIS).

Burkina Faso's PNAS has a strong focus on addressing social risks, such as social exclusion, and within this there is explicit attention to OVC, to vulnerable adolescents and to children and adults with HIV and AIDS. However, the capacity of the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity to implement the PNAS is weak and existing programmes are small and fragmented, with little coordination.

Cape Verde's Social Protection Strategy has a strong focus on child protection and child rights, with this comprising one of the three core pillars, alongside protection, integration and social insertion and

food security[17]. Measures foreseen include expanding existing child protection legislative frameworks and mechanisms (following a detailed mapping of existing legislation and public and NGO services) and establishing emergency services for at-risk children[18].

In some cases, however, potential synergies remain unrealised. In Mali, for example, because of the national strategy's predominant focus on health issues, there are as yet no specific linkages with child protection services (Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009). In Senegal as well, specific linkages are currently lacking in the National Social Protection Policy; however, given the systematic analysis of child protection issues in the PRSP and the latter's lifecycle approach to risk and vulnerability, there are ample entry points for these. Moreover, our research suggests that, with the Directorate for the Promotion of Children's Issues as part of the Ministry of Family, National Solidarity, Women's Entrepreneurship and Microfinance, which is responsible for broader social protection, there is strong potential for closer synergies (Pereznieto and Fall, 2009).

4.1.2 PRSPs

A document analysis of 20 countries in the region with PRSPs suggests that in most cases child protection issues receive little attention and there is no explicit link to broader social protection systems (see Annex 1)[19]. In a few countries, however, PRSPs have given considerable attention to child protection issues, with linkages to broader social protection systems or social policy more generally. While inclusion of an issue in a PRSP is no guarantee of implementation of programmes to address that issue, it at least suggests that officials involved in the design of PRSPs are aware of the problem and have sought to think through possible policy and programme responses. Countries in which this is the case include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

The frequency of child protection keywords in these PRSPs ranges from 20 in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo to 56 in the case of Niger; all of the countries except Niger have either a national social protection framework or a social transfer system. However, the discussion of child protection issues in the Niger PRSP is exceptionally detailed and framed in terms of the risks that not addressing child protection vulnerabilities pose to national achievement of the MDGs. For example, in relation to MDG 1, child labour and trafficking are seen as both a cause and consequence of poverty; achieving MDG 2 (universal education) is closely linked to a decline in early child marriages; and MDG 4 (reduction of maternal mortality) is unlikely to be tackled as long as early pregnancies and FGM remain widespread (IMF, 2008).

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[17] http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/152900/CapeVerdePRSC2SPMatrix.pdf.

[18] These centres belong to the Cape Verdean Institute for Children and Adolescents (ICCA), set up in 1982 under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour, the Family and Solidarity. ICCA is a long-standing partner of UNICEF and plays an important role in the general promotion of child rights, as well as protection for children who are victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. It has offices in five of the 22 municipalities and in 16 others has set up municipal child protection committees, on which all key local bodies are represented (local government, education, health, police, justice system, etc.) These committees engage in individual case follow-up and coordination, as well as promotion activities on child rights. ICCA also has three centres for long-term care of children and two 'child emergency centres' in the main cities of Praia and Mindelo, open 24 hours a day, for child victims of violence and sexual exploitation (personal correspondence with Anthony Hodges, Regional Social Policy Advisor, UNICEF WCARO).

[19] These countries are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Congo, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, São Tomé and Togo. Using a simple heuristic measure of how many mentions of child protection-related issues there are in the PRSP as an indicator of relative importance attached to the issue, none of these countries has more than 14 references to child protection concerns and Central African Republic had just one. It appears that child protection issues are significantly under-resourced in these contexts and of relatively low visibility on the national policy agenda. This is also broadly fitting with our analysis of Committee on the Rights of the Child reports as discussed above, with the possible exceptions of Burkina Faso, Cape Verde and Mali.

4.2 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR STRONGER SYNERGIES

Given the multidimensionality of child poverty and the particular vulnerabilities that children face in terms of violence, abuse and neglect, a key challenge facing the development of child-sensitive social protection policies and programmes is how best to strengthen child protection systems through integration within a broader package of social protection initiatives. Having mapped out the characteristics of existing child protection systems in the West and Central Africa region and existing linkages with social protection frameworks, this section outlines possible opportunities for synergies as part of a forward-looking vision to address known protection-related risks that often compound and reinforce other social and economic vulnerabilities. Synergies between child protection and more general social protection mechanisms can help to stem the greater vulnerability typically faced by groups of children more at risk of discrimination and social exclusion (e.g. girls within the household, disabled children, indigenous children, etc.)

We begin by outlining how governmental agencies responsible for child protection can better link to broader social protection frameworks and policies. The discussion then focuses on: (i) the necessary budgetary resources for this; (ii) entry points for linking child protection services to other social protection programmes, including social transfers; (iii) opportunities for working in partnership with diverse stakeholders to deliver these synergies; and (iv) the importance of developing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to shape programme design and implementation, assess programme impacts, build political support and improve programme quality. The discussion as a whole is informed by the CRC principle of progressive realisation for social and economic rights, such that it provides a possible framework towards which national governments and their partners would strive over time in line with existing resources and capacities.

4.2.1 INSTITUTIONAL LOCATION AND COORDINATION

As discussed above, a critical challenge is to strengthen the institutions responsible for improving child protection outcomes and their coordination to ensure that child protection issues are mainstreamed into sector policy frameworks and programmes. Given the diversity of institutional arrangements for addressing child protection concerns in the region, a country-specific approach will be vital. In the case of countries where a single agency is responsible (at least to some extent) for both child protection and broader social protection initiatives, such as Ghana, Mali and Senegal, the emphasis should be on ensuring that child-related issues are not compartmentalised into vertical programmes but rather integrated throughout the agency (see Jones et al., 2009; Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009; Pereznieto and Fall, 2009). In other contexts, where there are more complex institutional arrangements, it will be essential to develop institutionalised interagency mechanisms that ensure regular meetings, common data systems and knowledge sharing, coordinated case management across agencies and a clear division of labour. Given the gendered patterning of many violations of children's protection rights, capacity building in child- and gender-sensitive analysis and programming would help officials to ensure policy and programmatic coherence.

In all cases, working towards the development of a national social protection strategy with clear reference to economic and social risks and vulnerabilities is a prerequisite. More specifically, the child protection dimensions of social protection should be prioritised in order to provide a clear roadmap for the development of relevant preventative, protective and promotive services, together with the establishment and enforcement of transformative anti-discrimination legislation. The absence of such planning frameworks in contexts such
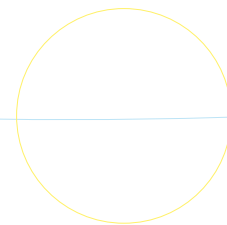
as Equatorial Guinea and the Central African Republic contributes to the difficulties that child protection advocates face in advancing children's right to protection (e.g. Holmes and Villar, 2009). Given that financial planning and resource allocation decisions are increasingly linked to PRSPs or equivalent national development strategies, ensuring that such frameworks are cross-referenced is critical for the development of systematic programmatic and financial planning (Handley, 2009).

For countries that currently lack national social protection strategies (all but six in the region), agencies with a regional presence, such as UNICEF and the regional economic community, ECOWAS, could play a useful coordinating role in helping to share examples of good practice across countries, as well as facilitating access to technical assistance in developing such strategies where appropriate. Fostering opportunities for dialogue and deliberation about linkages between multiple governmental and non-governmental stakeholders is another useful role that regional bodies as well as bilateral funders could undertake (e.g. through social protection sectoral working groups). In this regard, the multi-sector discussions currently being undertaken to promote the elaboration of a National Plan of Action for Children in Senegal is a good example, in that it is serving as an opportunity: 'to articulate joint actions that include the extension of social protection to children to reduce their vulnerability and guarantee their rights to education, health and protection from harmful labour, violence, abuse or neglect through mainstreaming children into social protection extension mechanisms and actions that include community outreach to engage with harmful traditional practices' (Pereznieto and Fall, 2009).

In addition, efforts should be taken to ensure that child protection strategies or codes and national action plans for children, where they exist, complement national social protection strategies. Linkages and synergies should be identified and highlighted throughout. For countries that lack such framework documents, support should be provided to assist in their development in line with national governments' CRC commitments.

4.2.2 RESOURCE CHALLENGES

Even after such policy frameworks and institutional coordination mechanisms are established, the significant resource constraints that child-related agencies in West and Central Africa face will need to be addressed in order to promote effective implementation. Jones et al.'s (2009) analysis of the Ghanaian case highlights the resource- and time-intensive nature of multidimensional social protection support. Lessons from NGO interventions for survivors of family violence underscore the importance of long-term support and the investment required to ensure smooth coordination and complementarities among services providers. Similarly, work by the ILO Global Social Trust project on eradicating the worst forms of child labour indicates that an effective package of care needs to involve not only children, but also their families, teachers and communities. Moreover, investment in monitoring and evaluation systems is also important to ensure that investments are of maximum efficacy (ibid).

Given the relative invisibility of child protection issues on the policy agenda, the budget implications of a multidimensional package of care will need to be spelled out clearly through detailed costings of awareness-raising and preventative services, as well as services aimed at redress and reintegration. In light of the weaknesses in budget planning in agencies with child protection mandates, it is essential that development partners support capacity development in this area and offer technical assistance in the short term. One case of good practice in the region that could be drawn on as an example is the current child-sensitive budget initiatives being undertaken by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Families, parliamentarians and a number of NGOs in Mali (see Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009).

Improving the budget planning and advocacy skills of agencies tasked with child protection and broader social development or social welfare agencies in the region will enable them to negotiate more effectively with ministries of finance for greater resource allocations; additional efforts are needed to ensure that dedicated social funds and debt relief mechanisms are also harnessed to address child protection deficits. For instance, in the case of Equatorial Guinea, a potential area for scaling up current small-scale social protection programmes is the donor–government basket SNF. The SNF could be used to address child-specific social risks through programmes to enforce child maintenance; child labour or trafficking rehabilitation efforts; and awareness-raising campaigns around sexual exploitation and prostitution, child trafficking, early marriage and pregnancies (see Holmes and Villar, 2009).

4.2.3 ENTRY POINTS FOR STRENGTHENED LINKS

Given the diversity of social protection programmes and mechanisms in the region, there are a range of possible entry points to strengthen child protection components of social protection initiatives.

Social transfers
For countries with cash transfer programmes, synergies can be promoted along a number of dimensions. Most directly, such programmes can help to reduce family economic vulnerabilities which often contribute to child protection vulnerabilities, such as involvement in child labour, trafficking, 'streetism' and in some cases bullying owing to poverty-induced social exclusion and other forms of family and/or community violence.

Another popular way to address child protection within social transfer schemes has been through categorical targeting. For instance, Ghana's LEAP programme focuses specifically on OVC and their caregivers. Lessons could also be drawn from outside the region, from the Kenya cash transfer programme targeted to OVC and the South African case, which has a specific Foster Care Grant for guardians of children who are not their own and a Care Dependency Grant for carers of children who suffer from a severe mental or physical disability.

Another approach is to introduce child protection-related conditionalities. Several of the household-level conditions that LEAP programme participants must comply with in Ghana are related to child protection. These include ensuring birth registration of children and preventing involvement of children in excessive or harmful forms of child labour and all forms of child trafficking. While the ability of the DSW as implementing agency is likely to be limited to effectively monitor this at the community level (given its reliance on the voluntary labour of Community LEAP Implementation Committee members), such conditions can nevertheless serve as a valuable community awareness-raising opportunity about the negative impacts of not protecting children from such exploitation[20].

Similarly, regular (e.g. monthly or bi-monthly) visits to beneficiaries by government staff implementing cash transfer programmes could present another good opportunity to sensitise programme participants on children's rights and on the need to develop community strategies to tackle violations (such as harmful traditional practices, family and school violence, discrimination based on gender, disability, HIV and AIDS status). In other words, a 'light touch' approach to conditionality and monitoring could offer an opportunity

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[20] Good practice from South Asia also suggests that linking the non-involvement of children in labour activities with access to microcredit programmes for women leads to a significant reduction in child labour. While individual compliance with the conditions is relatively difficult to ascertain, the articulation of child labour as a negative practice is often an important first step in curbing its widespread practice and tolerance (Jones et al., 2007).

to focus not on punitive sanctions against child protection violations, but rather on public education efforts about services and strategies to promote better child protection outcomes (Jones et al., 2009).

A similar approach to awareness-raising efforts could be adopted from the parenting and household management workshops that have been integrated into several conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes in Latin America, especially Colombia[21] and Peru (Jones et al., 2008b). In the Latin American cases, the focus has been on addressing the asymmetrical roles and responsibilities of women and men within the household and in terms of care work, and in particular on increasing men's role in child rearing. But such workshops could also be used to focus on specific aspects of child protection, for example sensitising parents to alternative approaches to female initiation rites so as to reduce the incidence of FGM, or developing community awareness about the risks of school-based violence.

Another important potential entry point is the single registry system being developed through the LEAP programme in Ghana, based on the experiences of a number of successful cash transfer programmes in Latin America (e.g. Mexico, Brazil, Peru). The objective of a single registry system is to collate data about children and their households, as well as the range of services to which eligible children have access. This serves not only as a baseline for monitoring and evaluation purposes but also as a centralised database or information management system that can be used to better coordinate the provision of a package of services and assistance needed to address children's multidimensional vulnerabilities. It can also serve as an important way to ensure that the most vulnerable children have a birth registration.

Finally, possible lessons could be drawn from Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). As part of the public works component of the PSNP, expectant and nursing mothers are exempted from work conditionalities in an effort to promote exclusive breastfeeding and better care of infants, which is otherwise rendered impossible if women are compelled to be involved in heavy agricultural or construction labour in order to meet household survival needs (see RHVP, 2002)[22].

As has been noted above, only a handful of countries in West and Central Africa currently have cash transfer programmes (in particular Cape Verde, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone), although new social transfer programmes using vouchers have also been developed more recently in response to the global food price crisis (notably in Burkina Faso) (for more details, see Holmes and Barrientos, 2009). Given the multiple possible entry points for enhancing linkages between social protection and child protection, advocating for the introduction of social transfer programmes is clearly one important option. At the same time, recognising the very small-scale nature of the programmes in the short to medium term[23], efforts to integrate child protection into broader social protection initiatives will also need to seek entry points in other types of social protection programmes.

Social health insurance
Promoting linkages with social health insurance programmes (such as Ghana's NHIS) and mutual health organisations (MHOs) (such as those popularised in Mali and Senegal) is another potential avenue for ensuring synergies between child protection and broader social protection programmes.

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[21] Personal correspondence with Armando Barrientos, 2008.

[22] Note also that provisions for pregnant and lactating women were also part of the initial LEAP design document, but this provision appears to have since faded from the political agenda (Jones et al., 2008a).

[23] Even at the end of the five-year rollout of Ghana's LEAP programme, for example, only one-sixth of households living below the extreme poverty line will be covered (i.e. one-sixth of 18% of the population).

In the Ghanaian case, where the NHIS now covers almost 50% of the population and most recently has introduced free services for all children under 18 years as well as pregnant and lactating women, thinking creatively about how to use this broad-based interface with the public to better integrate child protection concerns is clearly very important (Jones et al., 2009). Integrating protection-related services with primary health care clinics would thus be an important opportunity to strengthen child protection initiatives, both preventative and promotive, among poor communities. This would require adequate numbers of female service providers in rural districts (especially to deal with concerns linked to harmful traditional practices and sexual violence and abuse), as well as training modules on how to address child protection issues in an age-appropriate and culturally sensitive manner. Rather than addressing incidences of abuse directly, case management systems and a referral system could be established to link victims of violence to the local DSW or the DOVVSU within the police system (ibid).

Although the coverage of the MHOs in Mali and Senegal is significantly lower (less than 4% of the total population), similar types of linkages could be sought. In Mali in particular, where the umbrella organisation, the Technical Union of Mutual Organisations, plays an important coordinating role, forging links between this group and governmental and non-governmental child protection advocates could be a valuable investment. Moreover, such partnerships are likely to be even more advantageous given that the current focus of Mali's social protection efforts is largely towards promoting access to health care for the poor and vulnerable (Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009).

An additional option in countries with social health insurance or MHOs would be to draw on the experience of a pilot programme in Ghana run by the DSW and supported by UNICEF, which made direct payments on behalf of OVC to cover their social health insurance registration costs. While the recently introduced fee waivers for all children in Ghana have now rendered the need for such a system obsolete, it could be a useful option in contexts either where resource constraints preclude a categorical waiver of this scale and/or where political support is weak.

Social welfare services

Existing social welfare services mandated to address child maintenance payments, alternative care arrangements for neglected children, children either at risk or victims of violence and abuse, etc. are also an obvious focal point to promote synergies with other forms of social protection. Here, two-way referral systems are needed: referrals from social protection programmes designed to address economic risks (e.g. social transfers or social health insurance) to social welfare services responsible for both preventing social risks and redressing its manifestations; and referrals from social welfare services to broader social protection programmes when social workers and other service providers are able to identify that economic vulnerability is associated with violations of a child's protection rights.

A case in point could be Senegal's PARER programme, concerned with the social reintegration of street children. Such children are often in need of psycho-social counselling and reintegration support, but are also likely to need access to social transfers and subsidised or free healthcare in order to prevent a return to 'streetism' (Pereznieto and Fall, 2009). A similar type of linkage could also be promoted between extremely poor children who receive services from the Ghanaian DOVVSU and the LEAP cash transfer programme.

Legislation

The fourth entry point, and one that has already been discussed in some detail above, is the development and implementation of legislation that promotes non-discrimination and social equity. This could include

ratification of international and regional agreements of a similar nature (e.g. the CRC and related optional protocols, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child) as well as participation in peer review processes (e.g. the ECOWAS Peer Review on the Situation of Children in West Africa, African Union initiatives on social protection and social policy). As highlighted in our analysis of the responses by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to West and Central African governments' periodic reports on CRC implementation, the passage of legislation is a critical first step, but this must be accompanied by commitment of adequate resources in order to ensure effective enforcement. As we discuss below, this includes sensitisation and capacity strengthening of multiple stakeholders and the establishment of strong accountability mechanisms.

4.2.4 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Children's protection-related vulnerabilities cut across the responsibilities of multiple government sectors as well as multiple societal domains – the market and workplace, family, education services, health services, social services, community. Securing both the awareness and commitment of a range of governmental and non-governmental actors involved in social protection planning and implementation to serve as catalysts of change will therefore be essential in order to help realise children's rights to protection from abuse, violence and neglect.

Children and young people
An important starting point in developing a child-sensitive approach to social protection systems that address both economic and social risks and vulnerabilities is to involve children and young people themselves. As the UN Violence Study (2006) emphasised, children routinely place violence, abuse and exploitation at the top of their agendas when they are consulted about their concerns. It is therefore critical that children's voices and experiences are taken into account when designing programmes. Possible mechanisms for achieving this are to work through schools[24], youth groups, children's clubs, child-focused NGOs and/or tailored community-level consultation processes. Effective examples of such processes should in turn be shared through civil society umbrella groups, government–donor sectoral working groups, education ministries and governmental agencies mandated with the fulfilment of children's right to protection.

Legislators
In order to ensure that government actors are held accountable for realising children's and young people's demands for protection, one important group that is often forgotten but is critical in terms of pressing for accountability from the executive and judicial branches of government is the legislature. Although there is a general recognition that the legislative branch is still relatively weak in many parts of Africa (e.g. Dramon and Langdon, 2005; Jones and Tembo, 2008), it is only by ensuring that legislators, and particularly social development and justice select committees, have access to information about the state of child protection outcomes and progress (or lack thereof) over time that they will be able to hold the government to account.

A valuable starting point would be UNICEF's 2005 Child Protection Handbook for Parliamentarians, which provides an overview of how to approach the establishment of a comprehensive child protection system and legislative framework (O'Donnell, 2005). Useful recommendations that might be considered in the West and Central Africa region include:

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[24] Working through schools should be one approach among several, given growing recognition that schools themselves may be sites of violence and abuse (Jones and Espey, 2008; Jones et al., 2008a; Plan International, 2008). The important challenge of reaching out-of-school children also calls for a multi-pronged strategy.

- The establishment of a cross-party legislative committee on social protection that includes a focus on child protection issues, which would discuss social protection and child protection-related developments, monitor government action and liaise with civil society advocates of child-sensitive social protection;
- The creation of either an in-house or an external mechanism to ensure parliamentarian access to relevant data and analysis about social protection programme impacts, including attention to effects related to child protection violations; and
- Tailored capacity-building programmes.

Given that the Parliamentary Strengthening Centre for Africa is based in Accra, Ghana, and has already been involved in some capacity-building initiatives around gender and social development issues, this is an important resource that could potentially be tapped across the region.

Private sector

Another often neglected actor in social protection and child protection initiatives is the private sector. The private sector can play a critical role in the development of child-sensitive social protection interventions, particularly in terms of establishing corporate social responsibility mechanisms for child protection goals. There are already a number of examples of good practice in the region in terms of addressing instances of harmful forms of child labour. ILO's IPEC programme regularly works in partnership with the private sector in its efforts to identify children involved in the worst forms of child labour and to help them and their families to reintegrate those children back into the school system (author interview, 2008). There have also been a number of national and regional efforts involving partnerships between government, NGOs and the private sector to reduce the employment of children in particular sectors, such as cocoa (Bøås and Huser, 2006) and mining (IPEC, 2006). Although private sector actors often perpetrate violations of children's right to protection, it is only by working to sensitise them to these problems and by promoting dialogue and good practices that such attitudes and behaviour are likely to change.

Service providers

As discussed in preceding sections, it is essential to ensure that frontline service providers in the social sectors and police/judicial systems are aware of the importance of child-sensitive social protection to tackle both economic and social risks, so that the necessary cross-sectoral synergies, linkages and coordination take place (for example in case management and referral). This requires sensitisation programmes, shared data systems and capacity development for teachers, health and social workers, the police and judges. Such efforts are, of course, not easy to achieve when the current emphasis, particularly in the education sector, is on expansion to keep pace with the influx of students into classrooms as governments strive to achieve education for all. In many countries, education ministries are therefore relying on often untrained or poorly trained teaching assistants who lack even basic pedagogical skills. Moreover, as Nhundu and Shumba (2001) have found, young, poorly qualified male teachers are responsible for the highest number of sexual violence abuses by teachers against students. As teachers with two or more years experience remained in the school system, however, the rate of offenders was reduced significantly.

Opinion leaders

Lastly, but certainly not least, involving community, religious and traditional leaders in efforts to prevent and redress violations of children's rights to protection through broader social protection frameworks needs to be prioritised. In many West and Central African societies, community and other traditional or religious leaders continue to command a great deal of public respect, acting as powerful opinion shapers. This is often reinforced by the coexistence in many societies of multiple forms of law: modern, customary and/

or religious. Given that child protection violations are often bound up with complex socio-cultural systems and worldviews, efforts not supported by traditional and religious leaders are unlikely to be effective. For instance, UNICEF's current campaign work against FGM in Mali is being facilitated through support from some traditional leaders, but is also hampered by persistent opposition from others (see Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009).

Similarly, Senegal's PRSP explicitly emphasises the importance of working with traditional authorities to address child protection abuses, and especially to reduce the exploitation of talibé boys (boys who are required to beg to support the incomes of religious teachers) (Pereznieto and Fall, 2009). Working together with traditional leaders is also a central component of the Senegalese Directorate for the Protection of Children's Rights strategy to reduce the incidence of harmful traditional practices. In Ghana, where royal chiefs still enjoy considerable power alongside democratically elected sub-national authorities, the DSW is seeking to work more closely with these traditional authorities in order to ensure the efficacy of the current rollout of the LEAP programme (author interview, 2008).

4.2.5 EVIDENCE BASE AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

While the broader UNICEF/ODI study of which this report is a part has identified a number of important windows of opportunity to promote greater synergies between child protection and broader social protection systems, perhaps most importantly it has highlighted the urgency of developing a more systematic national and regional evidence base in order to inform policy and programme development and implementation. A number of relatively low-cost initiatives could be undertaken by building on existing data collection systems.

First, with the global push around the MDGs, there has been growing attention to the need to develop data systems to monitor progress. While none of the MDGs focuses explicitly on child protection, national government agencies responsible for the fulfilment of children's rights in coordination with UNICEF could advocate for the inclusion of child protection-related factors as variables to be taken into consideration in analytical efforts to understand the drivers and barriers to achievement of the MDGs. This would include, for instance, investigating and monitoring the linkages between poverty and child labour[25], children living and working on the street and trafficking; the role that violence in schools plays in school dropouts, especially among adolescent girls; and the role of harmful traditional practices such as FGM and early child marriage in the perpetuation of exceedingly high maternal and infant mortality rates in the region. A similar approach could be taken in the case of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms already in place to track progress against PRSP goals and objectives.

In a similar vein, existing nationally representative surveys could be expanded through the addition of carefully focused modules on a wider range of child protection issues (taking into account the limitations of survey instruments to tackle sensitive socio-cultural issues). These could include, for example, demographic and health surveys (DHS), multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) and various WHO surveys. While important advances have been made over the past decade in terms of data collection on child protection issues, additional areas such as school violence, children and the justice system and child combatants require further

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[25] A good example here is the district-based multi-sectoral integrated child labour monitoring systems (CLMS) in Ghana, which has linkages to the existing central system in the Employment Information Bureau of the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment, and has been designed and validated by national stakeholders.

efforts (see Annex 3 for further details). Only with trend data (i.e. data at multiple points in time) will we be able to assess the extent of progress or stagnation in terms of efforts to address children's protection-related social and economic vulnerabilities.

Survey data must in turn be complemented by qualitative work to understand the mechanisms and dynamics underpinning survey findings and to establish the relative efficacy of a range of programmatic interventions. In particular, there is an urgent need for more process and programme-level data to measure different aspects of service provision and programme implementation – coverage, resources, impacts, efficiency and effectiveness and costs. Given the relative dearth of local experts on social protection and children's rights issues, in the short to medium term partnerships between international and local researchers could be facilitated by donors in order to strengthen local capacity[26].

In order to enhance synergies between social protection programmes and child protection services, data also need to be collected and shared in a coordinated database about programme beneficiaries and the services individuals are accessing. Single registry systems have been established in Latin American cash transfer programmes and serve as useful mechanisms for identifying gaps in service coverage among the most vulnerable and impoverished. Ghana has followed this international good practice and is in the process of establishing such a database as part of the LEAP programme but, as Jones et al. (2009) argue, greater attention to the detailed operation of such a system will be required in that context if its maximum potential is to be realised.

In light of the contested nature of social protection, especially in low-income country contexts, it is critical that adequate attention and resources are invested in strong monitoring and evaluation systems in order to assess impacts and learn from and refine programmes on a regular basis. This has been one of the key lessons emerging from the implementation of large-scale CCT programmes in Latin America, where having rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems has enabled programmes to maintain political support across several administrations by demonstrating quantifiable improvements in child well-being outcomes. In this regard, much could potentially be gained by partnering with research institutions, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Poverty Action Lab, which works with NGO and/or government partners to undertake impact evaluations on a wide range of poverty and social policy interventions[27].

Generating relevant new knowledge is only one dimension in the development of a rigorous evidence base. The corollary is an accessible and easily maintained knowledge management system. Overall, our five country case studies concluded that knowledge management systems for children's rights, including children's right to protection, were very weak within both government and civil society; this is further supported by our analysis of the Committee on the Rights of the Child's responses to West and Central African governments' periodic reports on CRC implementation. As such, it will be critical to invest in the development of an online database of key research reports as well as information about government and civil society agencies working in the field of social protection at the national, regional and district levels. While an internet-based system will obviously exclude considerable parts of the population owing to limited connectivity in the region, small resource centres could be supported at the national, regional and district levels so that interested parties can access those resources.

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[26] Based on the experience of leading research donors, especially the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), developing such research capacities requires a persistent and long-term investment – in Sida's case of up to 20 years and in IDRC's case sometimes up to 10 years (Jones and Sumner, 2007).

[27] See www.povertyactionlab.com/ for more details.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The challenges in promoting integration of child protection systems within broader social protection frameworks in West and Central Africa are significant and multiple. Moreover, the extent and depth of the challenges vary considerably across countries and need to be informed by the CRC principle of progressive realisation of economic and social rights[28]. In contexts where child protection systems are yet to be established and social protection is not yet on the policy agenda, building towards a child-sensitive social protection system that addresses both the economic and social risks and vulnerabilities that children face is likely to prove a long road, especially given broader political and economic governance challenges. By contrast, in countries such as Ghana, Burkina Faso and Senegal, where there are already long-established child protection programmes and social protection is already on the policy agenda, the challenges are of a different order, and will need to focus more on reforming and strengthening existing, even if fledgling, systems, and promoting greater inter-sectoral coordination.

These widely varying contexts highlight the importance of country-specific realities and strategies. What this report has sought to do is: (i) identify the ways in which child protection systems need to be strengthened in order to better address child protection-related vulnerabilities; and (ii) suggest the opportunities and specific entry points that can be built on to bring about enhanced synergies between child protection frameworks and programmes and broader social protection systems.

Overall, the report has highlighted the pressing need to strengthen child protection systems along a number of dimensions in order to better meet the multiplicity of child vulnerabilities in the region. The main underlying causes of children's protection-related vulnerabilities and risks have been identified as economic poverty and livelihood shocks, including changes related to economic globalisation; cultural attitudes towards children and gender relations, roles and responsibilities; traditional and religious practices and legal systems that often reinforce or take advantage of power differentials between children and adults, males and females, the socially included and excluded; crisis situations (either natural disasters or human-induced conflicts) that frequently undermine the social fabric and traditional systems of protection; and disease epidemics, especially HIV and AIDS. The main manifestations of child protection-related vulnerabilities are seen to be: absence of birth registration; neglect and/or absence of parental care; economic and sexual exploitation; family, school and/or community violence and abuse; harmful traditional practices; inadequate protection of children in the justice system; CAAFAG; and social discrimination and stigmatisation (on the basis of gender, disability, HIV and AIDS status, etc.)

In order to better address the underlying risks and vulnerabilities children face in terms of violence, abuse and neglect, as well as the specific manifestations of these vulnerabilities, four broad areas have been discussed: legislative and policy frameworks; institutional arrangements and capacity; awareness raising and preventative services; and responsive and reintegration services.

In terms of legislative and policy frameworks, a significant number of countries in the region lack overarching child protection codes and policy frameworks and/or national action plans for children, yet these are a critical

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[28] Note that this principle of progressive realisation does not apply to protection-related civil rights, such as the right against torture.
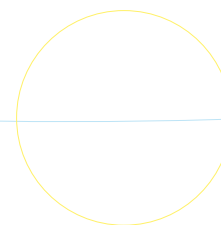
first step in developing an effective, coherent and adequately resourced child protection system. Many countries also lack specific legislation to tackle social discrimination, harmful traditional practices, child exploitation and violence, as highlighted by the responses of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to government periodic reports, and are yet to ratify the CRC optional protocols on child trafficking and the use of child combatants. Even in countries with such legislative frameworks, enforcement appears to be relatively weak, owing to limited resourcing, sensitisation and capacity of police and judicial personnel, conflicting traditional, religious and modern legal system provisions in many parts of the region and, all too often, limited political will.

A second core dimension of effective child protection systems relates to institutional arrangements for ensuring that children's right to protection is fulfilled. Our findings have highlighted the diversity of existing arrangements, but also the common problems of: low political status and challenges involved in ensuring intra and especially interagency coordination; significant under-resourcing of such agencies and their programmes, often exacerbated by the weak budget planning and advocacy skills of programme staff; and capacity constraints in terms of policy analysis, data collection and analysis, monitoring, evaluation and communication.

The third and fourth dimensions of effective child protection systems concern the breadth and range of preventative and responsive/reintegration services. Overall, given the relative invisibility of children on the policy agenda and especially that of child protection-related issues, awareness-raising activities and prevention services are a pressing concern if child protection outcomes are to be improved in the region. These remain largely weak or non-existent, especially at the local level, in many contexts, although there are marked differences in countries with comparatively more developed child protection programmes, such as Ghana and Senegal. Important awareness-raising work has also been carried out by regional and international agencies such as ECOWAS, UNICEF, the ILO and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as NGOs, which have played an important role in raising the profile of child protection issues such as trafficking, the rights of OVC, FGM/FGC and the worst forms of child labour.

In terms of responsive and reintegration social services, the level of coverage of systems across the region varies widely – particularly by type of service. On the one hand, there is a growing but still limited number of alternative care services (governmental, NGO, religious) for OVC (especially those orphaned by AIDS), and for children involved in the worst forms of child labour, so that they can be reintegrated into education; efforts to strengthen birth registration are also underway. By contrast, services for children who are victims of family or school violence, or harmful traditional practices, and for CAAFAG and children in conflict with the law appear to be exceedingly thin and in urgent need of policy and programming attention.

The growing international and regional attention that social protection is currently attracting offers an opportunity to work towards more effective and coherent policy responses towards child protection deficits in West and Central Africa. Our findings have highlighted first and foremost the importance of strengthening institutional capacities and intra and interagency coordination, as well as better budget planning and advocacy capacities, so that attention to children's protection-related vulnerabilities (both economic and social) can be more effectively integrated into national social protection frameworks and programmes. In terms of specific entry points for promoting synergies, our analysis suggests that there are multiple opportunities within social transfer programmes but that, given their relatively limited coverage and scale, equal attention should be given to promoting linkages with other social protection programmes with broader coverage, especially social health insurance and mutual health insurance schemes, as well as social welfare services.

In order to achieve synergies between child protection and broader social protection systems, harnessing opportunities to work in partnership with diverse stakeholders is critical: these should include legislators, the private sector, traditional and community leaders, frontline service providers and children and young people themselves. Examples of good practice of such partnerships can be identified in various contexts in the region, but a more systematic approach facilitated by a national action plan for children and/or a national social protection framework is essential to ensure maximum coordination and coherence. It will also be critical to ensure that relevant international conventions and protocols are not only ratified but also domesticated into national legislation, and that there is adequate investment in capacity building of government officials, judicial personnel and frontline service providers in order to ensure awareness of these instruments and to promote their enforcement.

Finally, the existing evidence base on child protection-related vulnerabilities and risks in the region is very limited and urgent efforts are needed to order to ensure that new policy and programming are informed by rigorous quantitative and qualitative research, and to promote more effective monitoring and evaluation systems. This will again require a partnership approach and creative efforts to maximise linkages with existing data collection, reporting and analysis efforts at the national and regional levels.
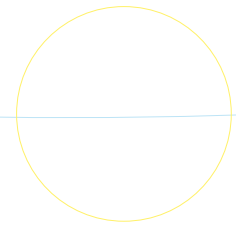
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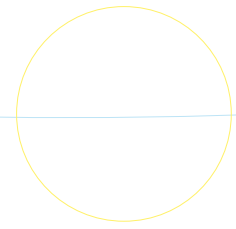
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ANNEX 1. INTEGRATION OF CHILD PROTECTION ANALYSIS / STRATEGIES IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN PRSPS

Benin (PRSP 2008)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP	P63, Para 195, Child Protection & Development		P58, Para 178, Strengthening of Vocational Training and P92, Table dcxx, Promotion of Decent Work	P63 Para 195: Child Protection and Development					P59 Para 183: HIV/AIDS Prevention	P56 Para 172, P63 Para 192, P63 Para 195				P97 Objective 8: Promoting the Security of Citizens, P100 Objective 9: Combating Corruption and Encouraging Ownership, PP99-101: Human Rights	P79 Objective 5: Social Advancement and Solidarity							

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child protection: 'The government has set itself the goal for 2007-2009 of ensuring that the rights of children and adolescents are respected and that they have equal access to essential social services' (P63).

Child labour: Benin's employment policy encourages the 'integration of young people into economic activity' and 'efforts to combat child labour' (P58). Objective 11, dccxi: 'Fight against the worst forms of child labour'.

Trafficking: ' … equal access to essential services by (i) protecting children and adolescents against mistreatment and child trafficking' (P63).

HIV/AIDS orphans: 'To address this pandemic, the Government will emphasize (ii) primary prevention (especially among young people), treatment and care (particularly connection with mother-to-child transmission and the management of paediatric cases, as well as support to AIDS orphans' (P59).

OVC: The government has pledged to improve primary and secondary school completion, with special attention to '(viii) providing residential homes and high schools for girls and orphans' (P56). The government has pledged to promote the family unit, particularly 'the capacities of family-promoting institutions and of foster homes' (P63). Ensuring the rights of children and adolescents are protected by '(v) encouraging the familial and social reinsertion of orphans and vulnerable children' (P63).

Children with disabilities: Objectives include strengthening of structures responsible for handicapped persons and training of teachers on the special needs of handicapped persons.

Juvenile justice: Objectives seek to improve rehabilitation centres, support the training of detainees, conduct a benchmark study on juvenile delinquency in Benin and promote/monitor the implementation of child rights.

Burkina Faso (PRSP 2005)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	4	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP			P64, Para 5.1.6, Promoting Employment and Youth		P22 Para 2.2.7: Analysis of Poverty by Gender, P112 Para 7.4: Risk in the Health Care Area	P112 Para 7.4: Risk in the Health Care Area			P41 Para 3.2.2.2: The Health Sector	P50 Para 4.2.2: Health, P64 Para 5.1.6: Promoting Employment and Youth, PP80-81 Para 5.2.2.1: Education, P96 Para 5.2.4.1: Democratic Governance	P16 Para 2.2.4: Perceptions of the Status of Poverty											

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child labour: 'It is the country's young who will take the lead in revolutionary new information and communication technologies. Yet the young are the most vulnerable to unemployment and underemployment, to sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS' (P64).

Harmful traditional practices: 'The factors underlying the health status of women include not only ignorance and poverty but also the burden of domestic activities, harmful traditional practices' (P22). 'There are two other risks associated with (i) the low level of education of the population ... and (ii) the socio-cultural obstacles that are the root cause of a number of behaviours harmful to the health of particular population groups.... this is reflected in the persistence of certain harmful traditional practices such as the existence of food taboos, the practice of female genital mutilation and domestic violence' (P112).

Female genital mutilation: As above (P112).

HIV/AIDS orphans: 'UNAIDS 2002 estimates put the number of orphaned children at 350,000 and the number of children infected with HIV/AIDS at over 2000' (P112).

Street children: The participatory poverty assessment (April 2003) revealed differences of perception on the part of specific groups such as street children and children who do not attend school, who stress the lack of jobs ... and the intergenerational social reproduction of poverty' (P16).

Vulnerable groups: Key references highlight the importance of measures to provide for vulnerable groups with special health needs, for the employment of youth who are most vulnerable to underemployment, to education that is female-friendly and to promote human rights, particularly 'the rights of special groups, such as women, children , the disabled and other vulnerable or poor groups' (P96).

Cameroon (PRSP 2003)

Child protection theme	Frequency mentioned	Relevant sections of PRSP
Child protection	0	
Child abuse	0	
Child labour	0	
Trafficking	1	P84 Para 3.7.4 (371): Other Social Development Policies & Strategies
Harmful traditional practices	0	
FGM/FGC	0	
Violence against children	0	
Family violence	0	
HIV/AIDS orphans	1	P84 Para 3.7.4. (371): Other Social Development Policies & Strategies
OVC	3	Executive Summary PPxix-xx, P77 Para 345: Combating Malaria
Street children	7	Executive Summary Pxx Para 56, P5 Para 101, P19 Para 2.3, P82 Para 3.7.3: Urban Poverty Reduction Strategies, P84 Para 3.7.4: Other Social Development Policies & Strategies, P156 Annex: Implementation Matrix
Sexual violence	0	
School violence	0	
Juvenile justice	0	
Children with disabilities	0	
Fostering	1	P194 Annex
Child combatants	0	
Birth registration (absence of)	1	P167 Annex 3..3: Poverty Reduction Actions and Strategies Derived from Participatory Consultations
Child marriage	0	
Children in conflict with the law	0	
Children without parental control	0	
Commercial sexual exploitation	0	

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Trafficking/HIV/AIDS orphans: 'The efforts of the government and donors will also be focusing on improving conditions for the special protection of children that are in particularly difficult situations. Specific measures to obtain that objective include … (ii) opening transit and reception centres to attend to street children and minors victimized by various forms of trafficking and exploitation, (iii) caring for AIDS orphans' (P84).
Vulnerable groups: Strategies to improve services to vulnerable groups include improving health care, i.e. the Roll Back Malaria Initiative (Pxix, P77) and setting up a social development strategy (Pxx).
Street children: The instigation of an Urban Development Strategy, with priority actions to correct 'social care services targeting street children' (Pxx, P82, P156) and a participatory poverty reduction strategy developed in consultation with a range of actors including NGOs and other representative organisations (for street children, the handicapped etc.) (P19).
Fostering: Programmes to provide 'supply of and access to education', including fostering child care support (Annex, Programme 1, Project 3).
Birth registration: 'Interviewed populations proposed … (vi) making issuance of birth certificates automatic and mandatory' (P167).

Cape Verde (PRSP 2005)

Child protection theme	Frequency mentioned	Relevant sections of PRSP
Child protection	0	
Child abuse	0	
Child labour	0	
Trafficking	0	
Harmful traditional practices	0	
FGM/FGC	0	
Violence against children	0	
Family violence	0	
HIV/AIDS orphans	0	
OVC	2	P33 Para 139: Social Protection and Fight Against Poverty, P34 Para 141-142
Street children	0	
Sexual violence	0	
School violence	0	
Juvenile justice	0	
Children with disabilities	0	
Fostering	0	
Child combatants	0	
Birth registration (absence of)	0	
Child marriage	0	
Children in conflict with the law	0	
Children without parental control	0	
Commercial sexual exploitation	0	

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Vulnerable groups: The creation of a broad solidarity movement and the National Poverty Alleviation Programme, both of which target the needs of the most vulnerable social groups. 'the target groups of the Program are women, mainly those heads of households, the Union of Labour Intensive Works workers, unemployed and particularly youth unemployed, vulnerable groups such as elderly, handicaps, abandoned children and the invalids' (P34).

Central African Republic (Interim PRSP 2000)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP											P39 Annex D: Matrix of Macroeconomic and Structural Measures, 2000-2002											
Key references and objectives in PRSP	**Street children:** Strategy 8.4, set up a database to monitor social policies, with social data including a 'study about street children' (P39).																					

Chad (PRSP 2003)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Relevant sections of PRSP	P70, Para 4.2.4.3: Social Protection		P70, Para 4.2.4.3: Social Protection						PP34-35, P69 Para 4.2.3.3, P117 Indicators	P33 Para 2.2: Vulnerable Social Groups, P68 Para 4.2.4: Improving the living conditions of Vulnerable Groups, P103, PP117-118												

Key references and objectives in PRSP:

Child protection: Children needing special protection 'are children who have had difficulty adapting or being re-inserted into family or social life. They lack access to basic services and physical, moral or legal protection' (P33). Strategies to improve this are 'the setting up of a social protection system' (P68).

Vulnerable groups: Social protection measures are to be implemented that seek to 'lessen vulnerability and ease the poverty of vulnerable groups'. A risk prevention strategy will be developed that focuses on outreach campaigns, a review of family law and 'consolidation of the cooperation between the government and grassroots communities aimed at increasing access to social services' (P70).

HIV/AIDS orphans: 'AIDS leads to marginalization. Its victims become a burden on their families and those who die of it leave children that society has to take care of. Actions so far taken by the government … aim to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS; community based and public care for AIDS victims and orphans is still rudimentary' (PP34-35). 'With regards to HIV/AIDS, actions to be taken will, in particular, address awareness campaigns for high-risk groups but also children from primary school onwards. Arrangements will be made for pregnant women to be systematically screened and for victims of HIV to be treated' (P68).

Child labour: Social protection strategies aim to 'a) mitigate the pernicious effects of informal mechanisms for responding to crises by discouraging the worst forms of child labour' (P70).

Congo, Democratic Republic (PRSP 2007)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	2	4	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	1	0
Relevant sections of PRSP								P54 Para 207: Strengthening the Role of Women in Development	P43 Para 2.3.3.5: Social Protection, PP89-90 Paras 374-378	P87 Para 3.5: Social Protection, P90 Para 4.3: Attenuate the Socioeconomic Impacts of HIV/AIDS on the Community	P13 Para 17: Post-conflict Context, P43 Para 2.3.3.5	P43 Paras 2.3.3.5-2.3.3.6: Social Protection, Gender, P87 Para 3.5 363 and 364: Paras 4.1. 376			P87 Para 3.5 363 and 364: Disabled Persons	P90 Para 4.3 378	P60 Para 1.2.1. 229-231: DDR.				P122 Annex III, Table 22: Profile of Urban Poverty	

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Family violence: "The Government will (vi) protect women against violence of any kind within the family and in society generally' (P54).

HIV/AIDS orphans: 'The shortcomings of the social protection system in the Democratic Republic of Congo are illustrated in particular by (iii) … children in difficulty … 10.7% of all children are orphans (and 34% of these are orphaned by AIDS)' (P43). 'Holistic care interventions and impact attenuation efforts will target persons living with HIV/AIDS and affected persons (widows, orphans, etc)' (P89). 'The following actions are contemplated: (i) support for the complete assumption of care costs for orphans and vulnerable children…' (P90).

Vulnerable children: 'The Government's priority actions will be focused on four target groups, namely (i) women and vulnerable children; (ii) disabled persons' (P87). Para. 363 refers specifically to vulnerable women and children and efforts that will be made to improve their socioeconomic conditions (P87).

Street children: The post-conflict context and 'the precarious of the social situation is exacerbated by … a pronounced increase in the number of orphans and street children' (P43). 'The shortcomings of the social protection system in the Democratic Republic of Congo are illustrated by: … (iii) an ever greater number of children in difficulty, among which there are nearly 40,000 street children' (P43).

Sexual violence: '26% of girls are adolescent mothers; and (iv) there is a large number of victims of sexual violence who have not been attended to' (P43). The following actions will be carried out to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable women and children: ' … (viii) assumption of the psychosocial, medical and health-related, legal, and judicial concerns of victimized children and those born of sexual violence' (P87). The prevention and stabilisation of HIV/STIs via '(i) mobilization of communities to convince them to change behaviour in respect of vulnerability factors (prostitution, failure to use condoms, early sexual relations etc.)' (P89).

Children with disabilities: 'The following actions are contemplated (i) establishment of a national and grassroots-based readjustment program; (ii) improvement in the economic and social standing of disabled persons, and combating the prejudices against them; (iii) promotion of education and training for the disabled; and (iv) improvements in the health and mobility situations of persons with disabilities' (P87).

Fostering: 'The following actions are contemplated … (00) support for the foster families of orphans and vulnerable children (socioeconomic support)…' (P90).

Child combatants: 'The persons targeted to benefit from reintegration support are the demobilized adult ex-combatants, child soldiers' (P60). 'Reinsertion of former child soldiers. The program will basically aim at providing assistance, including: community welcome preparation by the cooperation bodies, direct support to families, direct support to child soldiers without families, education, vocational training, youth activities (including job opportunities), health care, psychosocial support services, and HIV/AIDS prevention services' (P60).

Children without parental control: 'In this matrix, family circumstances are indicated to correlate with urban poverty, particularly for those with little or no support from their family who are frequently very poor, where neither 'parental authority not daily food can be guaranteed' (P122).

Congo, Republic (PRSP 2004 – Interim Report)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP									P58 Table 11: Strategic Pillar 5	P.11 Para 2.2.1.3: Poor Social Coverage and Para 3.3.4: Social Welfare & Employment	P11 Para 2.2.1.3: Poor Social Coverage, PP68-69 Table 19	P18 Para 2.3.3: Security and Peace, PP101-102			P11 Para 2.2.1.3: Poor Social Coverage, P51							

Key references and objectives in PRSP

HIV/AIDS orphans: Strategic Pillar 5 sets out the strategy, priority action and follow-up indicators for efforts to fight HIV/AIDS in the period 2005-2007. This includes strategies such as education and sensitisation campaigns, screening tests, psycho-social care, etc. (P58).

OVC: 'The various structural adjustment programs with their unmitigated social costs, the armed conflicts …, HIV/AIDS, precarious living conditions … have made a large segment of the Congolese population vulnerable. The general objective is to improve significantly the conditions and standard of living populations by a quality social welfare scheme.' Within this scheme, girl-mothers, ex-combatants, etc. will be provided for (P11).

Children with disabilities: 'The KAP9 survey on child care attests that 87.1% of respondents acknowledge that the management of disabled children is handled by the family and 77.4% approved of this practice for orphans and abandoned children' (P11).

Street children/child soldiers: 'The Congo is emerging from a long decade of socio-political crisis and armed conflict that have caused a variety of social ills, such as street children, child soldiers, teenage mothers … The situation has resulted in a clear increase in the number of persons requiring special protective measures' (P11). For priority actions and expenditure in years 2003-2007 see Table 19.

Sexual violence: The notion of security is multidimensional … With regards to security the major problems identified are the following … (iii) upsurge in sexual violence' (P18).

Gambia (PRSP 2007)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP										P111 Para 7.4: Nutrition		P153: Gender Action Plan							PP104-105 Para 7.1.3: Women's Empowerment, Situational Analysis			

Key references and objectives in PRSP

OVC: 'Nutrition is a Millennium Development Goal that has largely already been met as measured by children's weight. There are however still some nutritional problems … The most vulnerable groups are women and children – under five years of age … Anaemia, due to iron deficiency, is also very common among women, especially during pregnancy and is a major contributing factor to the high material morbidity and mortality rates' (P111).

Sexual violence: The Gender Action Plan suggests that there is inadequate capacity for law enforcement agents to protect and manage gender-based violence and that there is inadequate social protection against HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment and abuse. Suggested strategies are training law enforcement agencies and creating awareness of women's rights (P153).

Child marriage: 'Investing in women's economic empowerment … would contribute immensely to poverty reduction … Women's access to health services is still limited, early marriage and gender-based violence further challenge the advancement of women and girls' (P104).

Côte d'Ivoire (PRSP 2002 – Interim Report)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP				P72 Para II.4.2.9: Child Welfare and youth Employment Policy				P72 Para: Women in Development		PP66-67 Para II.4.2: Social Sectors and Basic Infrastructure, P73 Para II.4.2.10: Social Protection and Coverage of Vulnerable Groups	P29 Para I.1.2.3: Other Causes, P72 Para II.4.2.9: Child Welfare and Youth Employment Policy, P73 Para II.4.2.10: Social Protection and Coverage of Vulnerable Groups	P72 Para: Women in Development										

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Trafficking: The government will establish a framework that seeks to achieve child welfare objectives by ' ... (ii) providing training for social workers and NGO staff ... (iv) resolutely combating child trafficking and enslavement' (P72).

Family violence: The government aims to provide women with 'access to financial resources so as to increase their independence and self-sufficiency', while strategies include protecting women's rights 'particularly their rights within marriage and their right to work' and 'combating sexual assault and family violence, and bad treatments, notably affecting young girls in the role as housekeeper' (P72).

OVC: The development of the social sectors will relate to the objective of ensuring equitable access to basic social services and to decent living conditions, with a view to reducing regional and local inequalities and disparities, including emphasis on ' ... (iv) social protection and coverage of vulnerable groups (women, children, handicapped people, elderly), notably the poorest' (PP66-67). Strategies to improve the position of vulnerable groups will include ' ... (ii) intensifying the actions of information, education and communication ... (iii) the creation of a fund for the training and setting up of trained young over 18... (iv) the setting up of an insertion and reintegration program for street children, orphans and babies in families ... (vii) the promotion and development of community activities centers for childhood' (P73).

Street children: Other causes to be addressed are 'mismanagement of the family environment, degradation of the way of life ... and the phenomenon of street children' (P29). 'To achieve the child welfare objectives, the government will: (i) continue to raise public awareness concerning the issue of street children ... ' (P72). Strategies to improve the difficult situation of the poor and vulnerable groups will include ' ... (iv) the setting up of a insertion and reintegration program for street children, orphans and babies in families' (P73).

Sexual violence: Strategies and measures to improve the position of women will include ' ... (f) combating sexual assault and family violence, and bad treatments, notably affecting young girls in their role as housekeeper. Special emphasis will be placed on girls' issues. Steps to be taken include ... (d) strengthening legal tools to protect girls from sexual harassment, rape and corruption of minors; (e) appointing social workers to all school institutions, particularly schools for girls' (P72).

Ghana (PRSP 2006)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	1	4	8	3	2	0	0	0	2	3	7	0	0	2	2	0	0	3	1	2	0	1
Relevant sections of PRSP	P54 Para 4.8.1: Integ. Child Devt	P54 Para 4.8.1: Integ. Child Devt, PP136-137	P44 Para 4.3.2: Training and Skills Devt, P54 Para 4.8.1: Integ. Child Devt	P54 Para 4.8.1: Integ. Child Devt, PP136-137	PP136-7, P142 VII: Women's Empowerment Framework				P49: Reduce the Impact of HIV/AIDS-related Vulnerability, P127	P54 Para 4.8.1: Integ. Child Devt, P127	PPvii-viii Preface, PP3-4 Review of PRSP1, P112, P121, P136			PP136-137: Framework on Rights and Entitlements	P117 Appendix 11B, P44 4.3.2: Training and Skills			Pxxvii Preface, P50 Para 4.5: Population Management, P51: Promote Compulsory and Universal Birth Registration	P49: Reduce the Impact of HIV/AIDS-related Vulnerability	P54 Para 4.8.1: Integ. Child Devt		

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child protection/child abuse: Priority attention in child development will be given to 'child protection issues including special programmes to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and child trafficking, child abuse, commercial sex exploitation of children and streetism; protect orphans and vulnerable children and children in conflict with the law ... ' (P54). The Framework IV to Improve Access to Rights and Entitlements stipulates that there is 'Increased abuse of children and harmful traditional practices (FGM, trokosi, early child marriages and puberty)', which require policies that 'protect children from direct and indirect physical and emotional harm' whereby the strategy is to conduct 'research to track cases on child abuse and human trafficking' (PP136-137).

Child labour: 'Outside the formal education system, many young people lack the requisite skills, thus making them vulnerable in their livelihoods toe exploitation including the worst forms of child labour. Groups of young people requiring support most in this regard include: young persons 15 years and above who never went to school or who drop out of primary school and junior secondary school; those who have completed junior and senior secondary school but are unemployed due to poor quality/relevance of education received ... and young people with disabilities' (P44). Priority attention in child development will be given to 'child protection issues including special programmes to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and child trafficking, child abuse, commercial sex exploitation of children and streetism ... ' (P54). The Framework VII – Life Cycle Related to Vulnerability and Exclusion – emphasises the need to tackle child labour concerns such by strengthening 'measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in the shortest possible time' by ensuring that state and non-state agencies provide adequate support for the well being of children ... ' (P112).

Trafficking: Priority attention in child development will be given to 'child protection issues including special programmes to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and child trafficking, child abuse, commercial sex exploitation of children and streetism; protect orphans and vulnerable children and children in conflict with the law ... Priority attention will also be given to enact the Disability, Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Bills' (P54). The Framework IV to Improve Access to Rights and Entitlements raises the issue of human trafficking and suggests that policies seek to 'eliminate child trafficking and apply the standards and codes to children right to ensure that the legal framework for sanctions against child trafficking is in place' (PP136-137).

Harmful traditional practices: The Framework IV to Improve Access to Rights and Entitlements stipulates that there is 'increased abuse of children and harmful traditional practices (FGM, trokosi, early child marriages and puberty)' which require policies that 'protect children from direct and indirect physical and emotional harm' whereby the strategy is to conduct 'research to track cases on child abuse and human trafficking' (PP136-137). The Framework VIII – Women's Empowerment – also raises the issue of harmful traditional practices, suggesting policies to create an enabling environment for victims of violence to access help, but intensifying sensitisation programmes on women's rights and by ensuring the passing of the Domestic Violence Bill (P142).

HIV/AIDS orphans: 'Ensure supportive environment for persons infected or affected by HIV/AIDS; ensure safety of orphans and vulnerable children' (P49). Strategies to provide for the vulnerable as a result of HIV/AIDS include 'Provide adequate resource care homes in support of orphaned children ... Provide adequate counselling services and safety nets for children affected and infected with HIV/AIDS ... ' (P127).

OVC: Priority attention in child development will be given to 'child protection issues including special programmes to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and child trafficking, child abuse, commercial sex exploitation of children and streetism; protect orphans and vulnerable children and children in conflict with the law ... ' (P54). Strategies to provide for OVC include counselling services, a legal framework, care homes (P127).

Street children: 'In the first four years after the government established for the first time a dedicated Cabinet-level ministry to look after women and children's affairs, the nation can proudly record the rescuing and rehabilitation of more than 3000 "street children" including many young girls, who had been living and sleeping rough in Ghana's principle cities' (PPvii-viii). The Review of the GPRS1 medium priorities shows that the vulnerable and excluded programmes witnessed increased expenditure, including the rehabilitation of street children (PP3-4). The Frameworks VII and IV demonstrate future strategies for tackling street children including developing programmes for out of school children, providing shelter for street children (P121, P136).

Juvenile justice: The Framework IV to Improve Access to Rights and Entitlements raises concerns over the denial of rights, the slow pace of adoption of the national and international laws and charters, absence of information and mainstreaming of rights. It aims to 'ensure the implementation of child rights in relation to their handling by law enforcement agencies,' by increasing budgetary allocation to agencies responsible for children in conflict with the law,' by 'strengthening the capacities of institutions to monitor and track juvenile offenders' and 'intensify education on the Juvenile Justice Act' (PP136-137).

Children with disabilities: The Human Development Basic Services Framework (Appendix 11b) emphasises the need to increase access to and participation in education, thereby requiring that buildings and training institutions are made accessible to the physically disables (P117). 'Outside the formal education system, many young people lack the requisite skills ... thus making them vulnerable in their livelihoods to exploitation including the worst forms of child labour. Groups of young people requiring support most in this regard include: young persons 15 years and above who never went to school or who drop out of primary school ... and young people with disabilities' (P44).

Birth registration: A means of population control is to promote 'compulsory universal birth registration as a basic right and population management measure' (Pxxvii and P50). 'The issue of birth registration was not addressed in the first GPRS. GPRS II recognises birth registration as an important population management issue as well as the fundamental right of the child as a citizen.' The aim is to achieve universal coverage by 2009 (P51).

Guinea-Bissau (PRSP 2007)

Child protection themes	Frequency mentioned	Relevant sections of PRSP
Child protection	0	
Child abuse	0	
Child labour	1	P42 Para 5.4
Trafficking	0	
Harmful traditional practices	0	
FGM/FGC	0	
Violence against children	0	
Family violence	0	
HIV/AIDS orphans	4	P19: Health and Poverty, PP26-27: Operational Strategies, P40: Health and Nutrition, P85
OVC	2	
Street children	2	
Sexual violence	0	
School violence	0	
Juvenile justice	0	
Children with disabilities	1	PP39-40: Education and Training
Fostering	0	
Child combatants	0	
Birth registration (absence of)	0	
Child marriage	2	PP26-27: Operational Strategies and Action Plans
Children in conflict with the law	0	
Children without parental control	0	
Commercial sexual exploitation	0	

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child labour: 'Improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups. The program to assist children will have the following priorities: … (iii) strengthen intervention programs for street children and working children and eliminate the worst types of labour' (P42).

HIV/AIDS orphans/vulnerable children: The consequences of poor health and poverty are 'impoverishment of the persons afflicted and of their families , and an increase in AIDS orphans: an additional burden on elderly persons who must care for their small children with their meager resource … the populations are already so poor that they cannot bear the cost of caring for their loved ones or for children orphaned by AIDS' (P19). 'The intensification of the fight against HIV/AIDS/STDS, malaria and tuberculosis as part of international initiatives such as the National AIDS Strategic Plan', which will focus on ' … ' (iv) the provision of care for AIDS orphans' (P40). 'Vulnerable groups also belong to specific social categories such as: children, women, the handicapped (especially victims of landmines and other explosives), youth, war veterans and the elderly' (PP41-42).

Street children: 'Improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups. The program to assist children will have the following priorities: … (iii) strengthen intervention programs for street children and working children and eliminate the worst types of labour' (P42).

Children with disabilities: In Education and Training, 'the follow strategic programs are indicated for improving equity … (iv) giving children with minor handicaps the opportunity to go to school and be treated appropriately' (PP39-40).

Child marriage: ' The fourth pillar aims at improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups. Specific actions on behalf of women, particularly heads of households, also merit special consideration to address the causes that keep them in their state: illiteracy, lack of professional training, early marriage … ' (PP26-27). The frameworks on PP82-85 provide the financial pledges to social development including financing for programmes working with women, street children, the disabled, the elderly and vulnerable.

Guinea (PRSP 2008)

Child protection themes	Frequency mentioned	Relevant sections of PRSP
Child protection	0	
Child abuse	0	
Child labour	0	
Trafficking	0	
Harmful traditional practices	0	
FGM/FGC	1	P111 Para A, A.4
Violence against children	0	
Family violence	0	
HIV/AIDS orphans	2	P114 Box 5.2: Objectives of the Fight against HIV/AIDS
OVC	0	
Street children	0	
Sexual violence	0	
School violence	2	P19 Para 1.3: Poverty and Access to Education, P107: Action on Educational Content
Juvenile justice	0	
Children with disabilities	1	
Fostering	0	
Child combatants	0	
Birth registration (absence of)	0	
Child marriage	0	
Children in conflict with the law	0	
Children without parental control	0	
Commercial sexual exploitation	0	

Key references and objectives in PRSP

FGM: To face the challenge of maternal morbidity the health policy will focus on: ' … (iii) the fight against sexual mutilations of girls' (P111).

HIV/AIDS orphans: The National Strategic Framework 2008-2010 will focus on 'adequate and comprehensive case management of persons living with HIV/AIDS and persons affected, in particular orphans and vulnerable children' (P114).

School violence: There are six main reasons provided for lack of satisfaction in the education sector, of which '(v) violence in the school environment and (vi) the lack of discipline' are two (P19).

Children with disabilities: 'In terms of increased access:' ' … (vii) prepare infrastructures for children with special educational needs (blind, deaf-mute and physically disabled)' (P106).

Liberia (Interim PRSP 2007)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Relevant sections of PRSP	PP72-73: Strengthening Youth Programmes and Policies													P83 Objective 2								

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child protection: 'At least 10% of the CRC recommendations implemented and preparation of 2008 state party report initiated' (P72). 'Commence preparation of Liberia's response to CRC committee recommendations and report for 2008' (P73).

Juvenile justice: 'Four facilities for youth offenders (three male and one female) and four facilities for people with disabilities rebuilt' (P83).

NB: The Interim Report makes reference to improving education facilities and access for girls, and for improving the labour opportunities/services for youths but there are few explicit references to the above protection issues.

Mali (PRSP 2008)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP			P33 Para 6.3: Strengthening of the Social Sector							P22 Para 4.1.3: Human Resource Development, P53 Para 8.12.2: Health and Social Development, P79: Indicators				PP51-52 Para. 8.12.2: Education							

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child labour: 'The fight against HIV/AIDS and the worst forms of child labour … are conditions for equitable, harmonious and sustainable development' (P33). 'Since 2006, Mali has had a National Programme for combating the worst forms of child labour. The programme which includes the 2006-2010 period, includes measures to prevent the involvement of children in actions identified as one of the worst forms, as well as measures intended to withdraw, protect and ensure the socio-economic reintegration of children' (P33).

OVC: 'Significant initiatives have been taken for underprivileged persons, in particular the financing of income-generating activities, as well as providing medical care and school for children in difficult situations' (P22). In terms of health and social development, 'effective management of person and social categories in difficult situation. These are mainly old people … women and children in difficult situations' (P53).

Children with disabilities: Education Sector Investment Programme will support in particular '(ii) the rehabilitation of about 200 classrooms each year and the fitting of up to about 200 classrooms for children who need special education' (PP51-52).

Mauritania (PRSP 2007)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	6	2	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP	P106: Children, P153 3.9: Children			PP50-51: The Rule of Law			P49 2.3: Cross-cutting Issues in the PRSP		P133: Priority Objectives and Indicators	P97 Para 5.5: Targeted Poverty Reduction Programmes	P49 2.2.-2.3: Cross-cutting Issues in the PRSP			P49 Para 2.3: Cross-cutting Issues, P106 Para 511	P49 2.3: Cross-cutting Issues, P106: Children, P153				P117 Box 13	P106: Children, Para 508		

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child protection: 'The focus is on implementing the conventions dans le domaine de l'enfance and establishing a legal framework that is in harmony with international legislation and promotes civic participation of youth' (P106).

Trafficking: 'In the wake of legal and institutional reforms to anchor the rule of law more solidly, the protection of human rights has been reinforced through … (ii) adoption of a law banning human trafficking in all its forms' (PP50-51).

Violence against children/street children: 'Whilst health and education indicators have improved significantly since 2000, the situation is still of concern on several scores: … (iii) street children and young beggars, whose numbers are hard to estimate are more exposed to various forms of violence, exploitation, discrimination and abuse' (P49).

HIV/AIDS orphans: Indicators in the PRSP measure HIV/AIDS prevalence, prevalence among women ages 15-24 and the number of AIDS orphans.

OVC: 'Targeting represents a key component of project design …. the targeting of the poorest and most vulnerable social groups (unskilled youths….)' (P97). Health and nutrition strategies will 'guarantee that at-risk children and vulnerable groups have access to efficient, sustainable, and suitably adapted basic services' (P102), while social protection strategies will aim to 'improve the handling of medical care and education for vulnerable groups – the disabled, children at risk… – and to offer them an environment conducive to their integration and socioeconomic development' (P107).

Juvenile justice: Since 200,1 the Juvenile Protection Code has been approved (49) and two paths have been pursued to provide legal protection to children '(i) improving the qualifications of the court and social personnel working in the justice system for minors and (ii) speeding up the process of harmonizing national legislation with the relevant international legal provisions' (P106).

Children with disabilities: Education development needs to focus on handicapped children 'who constitute 5% of all handicapped persons' and 'receive no legal or institutional protection' (P49).

Child marriage: In terms of education, 'combat all factors that are disincentives to student retention (schools without complete programs, poverty, early marriage, etc.)' (P117).

Children in conflict with the law: In the educational area, the emphasis is on significantly improving the supply and quality of preschool education and caring for children with special needs (the disabled, those in trouble with the law, etc.)' (P106).

Niger (PRSP 2008)

Child protection themes	Frequency mentioned	Relevant sections of PRSP
Child protection	14	P10 Para 3, PP53-54, P55 Box 8: Child Protection and Poverty, P100: Ensuring the Protection of Children, P179
Child abuse	0	
Child labour	9	P 45: Employment and Poverty, P 53: Child Protection and Poverty, P 54 Box 7: Child Workers, P83 Para 448, P99: Other Performance Indicators
Trafficking	2	P55 Box 8, P100 Para a, 535
Harmful traditional practices	2	PP53-54: Child Protection and Poverty
FGM/FGC	6	PP51-52: Gender, Promotion of Women and Poverty, P54 Para 254, P55 Box 8, P99, P100: Guaranteeing Gender Equity
Violence against children	4	P53 Para 247, P100: Guaranteeing Gender Equity, PP179-180, P99: Other Performance Indicators
Family violence	0	
HIV / AIDS orphans	1	P53 Para 247, P55 Box 8
OVC	2	
Street children	4	P10 Para 3, P100: Ensuring the Protection of Children
Sexual violence	0	
School violence	0	
Juvenile justice	0	
Children with disabilities	0	
Fostering	0	
Child combatants	0	
Birth registration (absence of)	2	P99: Other Performance Indicators
Child marriage	5	P100: Guaranteeing Gender Equity, P55 Box 8
Children in conflict with the law	3	P100: Guaranteeing Gender Equity
Children without parental control	0	
Commercial sexual exploitation	2	

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child protection: To operationalise the poverty reduction strategy, several sector policies and programmes have been prepared and/or implemented such as the National Child Protection Policy and the National Integrated Development Policy for Young Children (P10). 'Despite the adoption of a national child protection policy in 1999, many children are still marginalized and live under particularly difficult conditions ... many children are in difficult situations due to separation from their biological families, for some, due to the lack of security and love, for others, and due to the poverty of their families.' Generally speaking, there is a lack of reliable data, inadequate collaboration between technical services, low capacity, the coexistence of three sources of law (modern, Muslim and customary) (PP53-54). It is therefore recommended that the code be revised (P100).

Child labour: The population of child workers is believed to stand at more than 15% of the working population in Niger (P45) as a result of poverty (from Quibb data, see P53). This is particularly acute in small-scale mining (gold, tin, gypsum). The government has pledged to reform this industry by 'eliminating the worst forms of child labour in the sector' (P83). Other ambitions are to reduce the number of child workers in the labour force from 15% in 2006 to 10% by 2012 (P99).

Trafficking: 'Importance of Child Protection in Achievement of MDGs ... MDG1: analyses show that child labour is the cause and consequence of poverty; poverty is at the basis of child trafficking' (P55). 'Prevent and sanction cases of abuse, violence and discrimination against children and women (domestic violence, repudiation, early marriage, FGM, children in conflict with the law, child labour, child trafficking, slavery, prostitution etc)' (P83).

Harmful traditional practices: 'In the area of social security, despite the lack of exhaustive statistics, many children are in difficult situations due to separation from their biological family etc. These groups are most vulnerable to the AIDS pandemic, harmful traditional practices, while some are in conflict with the law' (P53).

FGM/child marriage: The marginalisation of women is in large part a result of disparities in financial assets, access to physical assets and 'the significant scope of violence against women, particularly early marriage, genital mutilations and battering' (PP51-52). Monitoring indicators are 'proportion of child victims of female genital mutilations (0% in 2012)' (P99).

Birth registration: 'The proportion of children registered at birth goes from 32% in 2006 to 90% in 2012' (P99). Indicators relating to child protection in general: 'guaranteeing the availability of reliable disaggregated data on children' and 'ensuring that care is provided to street children, children in conflict with the law, victims of child trafficking, child victims of sexual and economic exploitation (put an end to employment of minors), and child victims of domestic maltreatment' (P100).

Nigeria (PRSP 2005)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP	P46: Ensuring the Welfare of Children	P48 Table 4.3	P78, Ch 6, Part 3	P46: Ensuring the Welfare of Children	P48 Table 4.3	P40: Environmental Health	P46: Ensuring the Welfare of Children			Pxvii Table 1, P49 Table 4.4				Pxvii Table 1, P49 Table 4.4					P40: Environmental Health			P46: Ensuring the Welfare of Children

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child protection: 'Children's welfare will be protected by strict enforcement of the Child Rights Act of 2003 by child rights implementation committees at the federal, state, and local government levels' (P46).

Child labour: Informal and Illegal mining has led to 'Child Labour and poor working and living conditions at mine sites' (P78).

Trafficking/violence against children: 'Children's welfare will be protected by strict enforcement of the Child Rights Act of 2003 by child rights implementation committees at the federal, state, and local government levels. These Committees will strictly enforce the protection of children from .... All forms of violence.... child trafficking' (P46).

Commercial sexual exploitation: 'Children's welfare will be protected by strict enforcement of the Child Rights Act of 2003 by child rights implementation committees at the federal, state, and local government levels. These Committees will strictly enforce the protection of children from .... All forms of violence....All forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including sexual exploitation' (P46).

FGM/child marriage: Under the environmental health reform programme, the government will intensify the campaign to eradicate harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and child marriage' (P40).

São Tomé & Príncipe (PRSP 2005)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP									PP113-114 Tables 113-114		P9: General Characteristics of Poverty, P114 Table 114											

Key references and objectives in PRSP

HIV/AIDS orphans: 'Nonmonetary indicators: Number of Orphans Suffering From Aids' (P114).

Street children: 'The worsening of the (poverty) situation is noticeable in the external manifestations of poverty ("street children" phenomenon, abandonment of minors, decline in the gross enrolment rate at the basic education level, etc.)' (P9).

Senegal (PRSP 2007)

Child protection themes	Frequency mentioned	Relevant sections of PRSP
Child protection	3	P55: Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups, P77 Pillar 3
Child abuse	0	
Child labour	5	P13: Manifestations of Poverty, P14 Table 3, PP55-56: Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups, P77: At Risk Children, P102
Trafficking	0	
Harmful traditional practices	1	P77: At Risk Children
FGM/FGC	0	
Violence against children	4	P13: Manifestations of Poverty, P14 Table 3, PP55-56: Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups, P77: At Risk Children, P102
Family violence	0	
HIV/AIDS orphans	2	P55: Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups, P77: At Risk Children
OVC	4	P24: Strategic Visions and Targets, PP55-56: Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups, P77: At Risk Children
Street children	1	P13: Street Children
Sexual violence	0	
School violence	0	
Juvenile justice	1	PP55-56: Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups
Children with disabilities	3	P47: Education and Training, PP55-56: Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups, P77: At Risk Children
Fostering	0	
Child combatants	0	
Birth registration (absence of)	1	
Child marriage	2	P13 Para 29
Children in conflict with the law	2	PP55-56: Social Protection of Vulnerable Groups
Children without parental control	1	P13: Manifestations of Poverty
Commercial sexual exploitation	0	

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child protection: 'In the case of at-risk children, the goal is to strengthen the priority actions to eliminate the worst forms of child labor and to protect children against all forms of exploitation, abuse, and violence. More specifically, this will involve: (i) developing a strategy for caring for and socially reintegrating children in conflict with the law and children in difficult situations; (ii) creating and building the capacities of institutions specialized in caring for vulnerable children (children of female beggars, children serving as guides for the disabled, children of women affected by extreme poverty, AIDS orphans, children victimized by drug addiction, talibé boys, abandoned children, or children in conflict with the law); (iii) strengthening the existing legislation on child protection and taking steps to ensure its effective implementation; (iv) developing information, social communication, research, advocacy, capacity building, and direct promotion activities to eliminate the exploitation of children by panhandling, early marriages, etc; (v) ensure better care for the children victimized by HIV/AIDS and chronic diseases; (vi) engaging in advocacy efforts aimed at the political authorities, religious authorities, traditional authorities, development partners, and the community as a whole with a view to improving the living conditions of talibé boys; (vii) taking steps and establishing provisions for the registration of all persons in the civil registry; and (viii) continuing and strengthening the improvement of spaces and infrastructures favorable to the development of children' (PP55-56).

Child labour: 'Child labor is defined here as the exercise of an economic activity by children under 15 years old. Roughly 32.5 percent of children between 10 and 14 years of age have already started their working life. Young girls between 10 and 14 years of age are employed as domestic servants or in selling food products to help maintain poor households. Poor women and young girls leave their village in a quest for work (domestic service, grinding millet, washing clothes, small-scale commerce) to make ends meet. In the process they are exposed to prostitution, exploitation, rape, and infanticide' (P14). The 'goal is to eliminate the worst forms of child labour' (P55).

Street children: 'Talibés and other street beggars (mostly children and adolescents) are thought to account for 1 percent of the population. The talibé phenomenon is a serious social problem involving human rights violations. Talibés can be seen at highway intersections, markets, mosques, banks, and other public places in urban areas, as they pursue their daily quest for food and money both for their own survival and for the maintenance of their marabout' (P13).

Children with disabilities: '(vi) elimination of disparities between economic groups (rich/poor), between the sexes, between regions and within regions, between sectors (urban/rural), at all instructional levels, and taking into consideration the needs of handicapped children' (P47).

Child marriage: 'As a result of household poverty, many children become victims of violence such as early and forced marriage, or suffer the side-effects of armed conflict (landmine victims in Casamance)' (P13).

Sierra Leone (PRSP 2005)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV/ AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	2	2	5	2	1	0	4	0	0	5	3	2	0	2	2	1	4	0	0	0	0	1
Relevant sections of PRSP	P147 Pillar 3, P151 Pillar 3	P47 Para 3.12.4, P147 Pillar 3	P49 Para 2.12.8, P50 Box, P85 274, P104 Para 5.2.4.3, P138 Annex 2	P50 Box, P147, Pillar 3	P146 Pillar 3		P49 Para 2.12.8			P49 Para 2.12.8, P103 5.2.4.3, P48, PP98-99 Para 5.2.3.1, P103 Para 5.2.4.3, P147 Pillar 3	PP48-49 Para 3.12.9	P47 Para 3.12.4, P50 Box		P85: Reform the Judiciary	P98 Para 5.3.2.1, P103 Para 5.2.4.3	P50 Box	P2 Para 1.2, P49 Para 2.12.8, P103 Para 5.3.4.3					P138 Annex 2

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Child abuse: 'The 2003/2004 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey also shows that the incidence of poverty among the youth is about 58 percent. This is manifested in the high rate of unemployment and underemployment in their group in both rural and urban areas. The extremely poor among them are largely marginalized and include the disabled, school dropouts, unemployed, commercial sex workers, drug addicts, diamond diggers, HIV/AIDS infected and sexually/physically abused young boys and girls, pregnant girls, teenage mothers and the homeless' (P47).

Child labour: 'Some of the key challenges to fighting child poverty include: a) absence of a national framework to address the issue of children; b) poor quality child service delivery, especially in the social sectors; c) decline in family, cultural and traditional values; d) powerlessness; and e) dreadful child labour' (P49).

Vulnerable children/street children: 'The vulnerability of children has become very acute since the end of the war. As one of the most powerless groups in society, children often bear the heaviest burden of extreme poverty and deprivation. When the family's source of revenue fails, children leave school, their health and nutrition suffer and they have to take paid and unpaid labour, particularly household labour, and other productive activities such as mining and farming for their livelihoods. Others end up as street children …The war succeeded in destroying a high proportion of children. They were not only used as perpetrators of violence but were also victims of separation, displacement and violence. Their vulnerability was further worsened by the absence of educational facilities and opportunities, shelter, food, health and recreational facilities' (P49).

Juvenile justice: 'The reform measures in the medium term will aim at accelerating the administration of justice and reforming laws that respect women and children, such as juvenile justice system, gender-based violence, and tackling the worst forms of child labour' (P85).

Child combatants: 'The final phase of disarmament and demobilisation of all combatants got underway from May 2001 to January 2002 with the support of the multidonor funded DDR programme. A total of 72,490 combatants were disarmed and 71,043 demobilised, including 6845 child soldiers' (P2). 'The war succeeded in destroying a high proportion of children. They were not only used as perpetrators of violence but were also victims of separation, displacement and violence' (P49).

Togo (PRSP 2008)

Child protection themes	Child protection	Child abuse	Child labour	Trafficking	Harmful traditional practices	FGM/FGC	Violence against children	Family violence	HIV /AIDS orphans	OVC	Street children	Sexual violence	School violence	Juvenile justice	Children with disabilities	Fostering	Child combatants	Birth registration (absence of)	Child marriage	Children in conflict with the law	Children without parental control	Commercial sexual exploitation
Frequency mentioned	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant sections of PRSP				P53 Para 3.3.5					P28 Table 5, P49 Para 3.3.2, P53 Para 3.3.5, P92 Annex 7	P41 Para 3.2.3, P 50 Para 3.3.3, P53 Para 3.3.5												

Key references and objectives in PRSP

Trafficking/HIV orphans: 'To achieve protection-of-children goals, it is essential to target the right beneficiaries, who are, first and foremost, the child, the mother-child pair, and the family. Strategically, a communication process to induce changes in behavior should be at the forefront of our concerns. The principal areas of intervention are: (i) formulation and implementation of a national policy to protect and promote childhood; (ii) the adoption of an appropriate legal and institutional framework for protecting children in general and the orphans and other children rendered vulnerable as a result of HIV/AIDS; (iii) organization and training of the population to play an active, ongoing part in endogenous and self-sustained development; (iv) planning, coordination, and monitoring of programs for the protection and promotion of distressed children and youth; and (v) support for the least privileged segments of society to provide a shield against all forces bringing about the breakdown of the family structure and to combat the trafficking and exploitation of children' (P53).

OVC: 'Making existing programs more effective and establishing new programs to combat nutritional deficiencies. This will be done by implementing the Accelerated Child Survival and Development Strategy, promoting foods rich in micronutrients, and enriching/fortifying foods.. In addition, the national strategy for feeding new-born babies and infants, in the HIV context, will be implemented as a matter of urgency, as will the establishment of school canteens for pre-school and primary school children in vulnerable areas. The government will also provide, on the one hand, for the implementation of a nutrition program for adolescent girls and pregnant and breast-feeding women and, on the other, for the establishment of an animal and plant health, food and nutrition surveillance mechanism. Finally, specific programs to provide food for vulnerable persons (the elderly, those infected with HIV/AIDS, mothers and children suffering from severe nutritional deficiencies) will be started and implemented by the government' (P50).

ANNEX 2. CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES FOR RESPONSE AND REINTEGRATION

Combating the worst forms of child labour

In Ghana, Mali and Senegal, IPEC and various national programmes have attempted to identify incidences of the worst forms of child labour; remove children from these situations; and work with children, parents, employers and educators to provide alternative forms of household livelihoods and reintegrate children into schooling. In Ghana, particular attention has been paid to the cocoa and agriculture sectors; in Mali, the focus has been mining and child begging. Other efforts in the region have been in addressing the root causes of child economic exploitation, such as the system of child begging in some quranic schools in the region, which has religious, social and economic connotations. It is believed that by improving the lot of quranic teachers in these widely popular schools the system of child begging could be discouraged and eventually eliminated (UN, 2005a).

Services for children suffering from neglect or lack of parental care

Because of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and a high number of AIDS orphans, a key focus of responsive services has been to address the needs of OVC. This includes:
- Social transfers (e.g. the cash transfer programme, LEAP and a pilot programme by UNICEF to cover health insurance costs of OVC, Ghana);
- Youth education programmes to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS and to reduce stigmatisation (Senegal);
- Adoption services: a major recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to governments in the region has focused on the need to improve adoption regulation and services (e.g. Congo, Senegal);
- Cooperation with privately run or religious-based orphanages (e.g. Congo);
- Schemes to provide economic empowerment to families, especially women, through microcredit programmes (e.g. Ghana);
- Family mediation initiatives (e.g. Senegal);
- Subsidised education and health services for children and mothers with HIV/AIDS (e.g. Ghana);
- Early child development programmes for at-risk children (Ghana).

Recently, in recognition of the large number of 'street' children in major urban centres, a number of countries have also introduced programmes to reduce the number of children living and working on the streets. These include microcredit and entrepreneurial training to parents and supporting the reintegration of street children into schools (Ghana).

Services for children in conflict with the law

Overall, there is a strong concern on the part of the Committee on the Rights of the Child that not enough is being done to ensure that children in conflict with the law are adequately protected and provided with special non-adult services. The 2005 consultation in West and Central Africa for the UN Violence Study highlighted the problem of violence against children in prisons, and the scarcity of correctional facilities for minors. A number of the Committee's responses to governments' periodic implementation reports on the CRC emphasise concerns about the use of corporal punishment and torture against juvenile offenders. Even in countries such as Ghana, which have specific juvenile justice acts, implementation has been slow and uneven. However, a number of countries have recently introduced innovative services, such as child tribunals at the sub-national level (e.g. Mali [Pereznieto and Diallo, 2009]), the provision of psychological and social reintegration services (e.g. Mali,) and the training of legal professionals in child-sensitive approaches.

Services to reintegrate child combatants

Although programmes to reintegrate combatants are promoted in the region, limited attention has been paid to the special needs of children, and particularly those of girls (Machel, 1996). In Congo, however, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commended the government for working on pilot programmes to support children displaced by conflict and child combatants, with assistance from the European Union (EU), France, Norway, the World Bank and UNDP. Similarly, the 2005 UN consultation process for the UN Study on Violence highlighted the value of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in Sierra Leone, which had provided child victims an opportunity to recount their experiences, both as victims and perpetrators of violence.

Services to support victims of violence and abuse

A growing number of countries have legislation to address various forms of violence and abuse of children (from family and school violence to trafficking), but services to fulfil these commitments are more limited, particularly in rural areas. Services that do exist include:
- Training of legal professionals (e.g. through the DOVVSU in Ghana);
- Provision of health and social care for victims (Congo);
- Psycho-social counselling (e.g. Ghana);
- Shelters (Ghana) or 'listening centres' (Mali) for trafficked children;
- The development of girl-friendly schools and education sector planning (Burkina Faso [Plan International, 2008]);
- The establishment of so-called children's panels comprised of stakeholders from the community ranging from religious leaders to frontline service providers to promote an inter-sectoral approach to child protection at the regional and district levels (Ghana).

Birth registration services

Over the past decade, spurred by national sensitisation campaigns, birth registration services have expanded significantly in the region, as evidenced by changes over time in government reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee's responses. Increasingly, staff of local authorities are being trained about the importance of promoting universal registration, and in countries with substantial nomadic and migrant populations, such as Mali, initiatives to provide mobile services for the issuance of identification documents in rural areas are being developed.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child review process, along with related 'shadow' NGO reporting to the Committee, is one of the most important mechanisms for monitoring the role and performance of the services and programmes outlined above. In addition, ECOWAS (2008) has established a mechanism for Peer Review on the Situation of Children (2001-2010) in its member states. The Peer Review is based on the ECOWAS Declaration on the Decade of a Culture of the Rights of the Child in West Africa (2001-2010) and aims to promote better policies in accordance with best practices and to work towards complying with international standards and procedures.

Overall, however, the relative dearth of quality data collection and lack of regular reporting and analysis of child protection indicators serve as a major constraint to effective monitoring and evaluation. The various ILO, WHO, DHS and more recently MICS surveys are all helpful in this regard, but national authorities and civil society need to have access to capacity strengthening support in order to be able to better use such data in order to ensure greater accountability.

ANNEX 3. CHILD PROTECTION INDICATORS IN SELECTED SURVEYS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Issue	Indicators — UNICEF MICS 3 most recent survey round (2005-6)	DHS ongoing surveys	WHO
			(Statistics released annually in May.) All indicators used at: www.who.int/whosis/data/Search.jsp?countries=[Location].Members
Child combatants	No.	No.	No.
Harmful traditional practices	Yes. Survey focuses on two prevalence indicators: 1) FGM/C prevalence levels among women aged 15-49. 2) Status of daughters, calculating the proportion of women aged 15-49 with at least one daughter who has undergone FGM/C. Standardised module for FGM. MICS and DHS combined allow a comprehensive picture of global prevalence rates of both FGM/C and child marriage to be constructed. www.childinfo.org/fgmc_methodology.html. Indicators used for child marriage: • Percentage of women first married/in union by the age of 18. • Percentage of girls 15-19 years currently married/in union. • Spousal age difference. • Percentage of women currently in a polygamous union by age groups. • Percentage of married women who were directly involved in the choice of their first husband or partner. Standardised module for child marriage. www.childinfo.org/marriage_methodology.html.	Yes. Indicators include: • Knowledge of FGC. • Prevalence of FGC. • Percentage of women with at least one living daughter. • Type of FGC. • Median age at FGC. • Attitudes towards FGC. Standardised module for FGM. DHS has indicators of: • Age at first marriage. • Age at first sexual intercourse. • Age at first pregnancy. • Fertility preferences. Standardised module for child marriage.	No indicator in general survey but has undergone specific research into FGM in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan (2006).
Violence against children including family and school violence	Yes – in the family. To track violent discipline, MICS set a number of questions. These covered a range of discipline methods – from non-violent forms to severe physical means of punishing children. The questionnaire was adapted from the Parent-Child Conflict Tactic Scale, an instrument used to assess the treatment of children. The questions were addressed to mothers and caretakers to cover the discipline methods used by any member in that household during the month preceding the interview. Standardised module for child discipline. Section on mother's attitudes towards domestic violence. No indicators on school violence.	Indicators on domestic violence. In selected countries, information on experiences of physical and sexual violence for youths aged 15-24.	No.

Issue	Indicators		
Commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking	No.	No.	No.
Child labour	Yes. MICS survey questions what kinds of work children are involved in and for how many hours. Collects data on both economic activities and domestic work. Its definition of child labour: Ages 5-11: At least one hour of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week. Ages 12-14: At least 14 hours of economic work or 18 hours of domestic work per week. Ages 15-17: At least 43 hours or economic or domestic work per week. Also looks at background characteristics and child labour. Combines MICS and DHS data for a comprehensive picture.	Tracks children's school attendance, reasons for dropout rates, involvement in employment (types and pay). Under household and respondent characteristics section.	No.
Children without parental care including orphans, child-headed households and street children	Yes. MICS survey includes the questions: Who is the primary caretaker of a child? Are the child's natural parents alive? Or live in the household?	Indicators measure fosterhood and orphanhood.	No.
Children in conflict with the law	No.	No.	No.
Birth registration	Yes. Mothers and caretakers of children under five were asked questions regarding the possession of a birth certificate, registration, reasons for non-registration and knowledge of how to register a child's birth. MICS surveys have an independent standardised module for birth registration. www.childinfo.org/birth_registration_methodology.html	Yes. Questions on birth registration are generally included under the section on reproduction.	No. Measures births attended by medical personnel in urban and rural areas and according to mother's educational level.
Children affected by HIV/AIDS	Yes. Also draws on UNAIDS and WHO data. Because a definition of vulnerability and a minimum set of services is yet to be determined and standardised, it is thought that developing routine monitoring indicators and tools for collecting data on orphans and vulnerable children is difficult.	HIV prevalence rates. Indicators on Prevention of mother-to-child-transmission (PMTCT). Gathers information on young people's knowledge of contraception and childbearing. Access to services. Specific AIDS indicator surveys.	Coverage of antiretroviral therapy for PMTCT. HIV prevalence rates.