



## ASSESSING CHILD PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES:

### *FIELD EXPERIENCE USING THE INTER-AGENCY EMERGENCY CHILD PROTECTION ASSESSMENT RESOURCE TOOLKIT*

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# Assessing Child Protection In Emergencies: Field Experience Using the Inter-Agency Emergency Child Protection Assessment Resource Toolkit

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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from a structured analysis of field learning regarding use of the Inter-Agency Emergency Child Protection Assessment Resource Toolkit (hereafter referred to as the Resource Kit). The Resource Kit was developed through an inter-agency process through 2007-2009 under the auspices of the Protection Cluster's Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). The Resource Kit, and the assessments it is intended to support, are part of a larger effort to improve standards, develop more appropriate and effective programming, avoid duplication of services, and more effectively respond to the needs of children in crisis. Pilot trials in Georgia, Indonesia and South Africa in 2008 were followed by a process of revisions, culminating in the current version of the Resource Kit. In January 2009 the CPWG identified the need for a structured process of analysis of field-use as a key measure in determining next steps in the initiative.

The analysis has been conducted by a research team from the Program on Forced Migration and Health at Columbia University. The analysis was designed to document the strengths and weaknesses of the current Resource Kit in field use. This information was intended to provide an evidence base for recommended revisions and also to inform other measures necessary to support the emergency assessment process. The findings and recommendations based on this research were presented and discussed at the January 2010 meeting of the Child Protection Working Group in Geneva, Switzerland. Feedback from participants has been incorporated into this final report.

From September through October of 2009, members of the Child Protection Working Group and the Care and Protection of Children (CPC) Learning Network provided the research group with the names of personnel working for United Nations or non-governmental organizations who were believed to have considered using the Resource Kit in the context of an inter-agency child protection assessment since its launch.

This process identified a total of 20 sites where child protection assessments had apparently been considered. Of these, seven assessments have taken place using the Resource Kit; one site had proceeded with an assessment using different tools; four assessments were still in the planning stages; and six sites had postponed plans for the assessment. As of January 2010 the status of assessments at the remaining two sites remains unclear. This report is principally based upon experience as reported to the research team through telephone-based structured interviews and information gathered through documentary review

from four of the sites where assessments drawing upon the Resource Kit had been conducted. Given that the choice of different tools and the reasons for postponement of planned assessments can potentially yield important learning, the report also utilizes accounts from several settings where assessments were planned utilizing the Resource Kit that have not gone forward at present.

Please refer to Table 1 for a complete listing of the emergency contexts included in this analysis and the known status of the assessment. Information in this table, as elsewhere in the report, is based on direct communication with child protection actors on the ground, with regional or headquarters staff who have been involved in the project, or a combination of both.



## GEORGIA

*OCTOBER—DECEMBER 2008*

### *Context*

In August of 2008, artillery barrages into civilian areas began as a result of an escalation in tensions between Georgia and South Ossetia. On August 8<sup>th</sup>, the situation worsened when fighting broke out between Russian and Georgian armed forces and Russian air attacks into Georgia began. Within a few days, Russian troops occupied most of South Ossetia and several Georgian cities and much of the rest of the country was within shelling range. The outbreak of armed conflict led to the displacement of over 1,580,000 in parts of the contested regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and other regions within Georgia. Many of these individuals, largely from Gori and other

**TABLE 1. ASSESSMENT LOCATIONS**

Location	Resource Kit Used?	Assessment Status	
Bangladesh	No	In planning	Now plan to use the Resource Kit for emergency planning and preparedness purposes.
Bhutan	Yes	Completed	No further data available.
Central African Republic	Yes	Completed	Please refer to case study included in this report.
Chad	Yes	Completed	Adapted tools as part of emergency preparedness plan.
Eritrea	No	Postponed	Plan to use another tool in an assessment later this year; no further data is available as to why.
Georgia	Yes	Completed	Please refer to case study included in this report.
Gambella Region, Ethiopia	Yes	Completed	Please refer to case study included in this report.
Gaza, occupied Palestinian Territories	Yes	Completed	Please refer to case study included in this report.
Guinea	N/A	Uncertain	No data available.
Haiti	No	Postponed	Have not used the tool to date due to time required for adaptation; plan to do so later this year.
India	No	Postponed	Plan to use resource kit to support emergency preparedness; no further data is available.
Iraq	N/A	Uncertain	No data available.
Madagascar	No	Completed	Used another tool; no further data is available as to why.
Myanmar	Yes	Completed	No further data available.
Pakistan	No	In planning	Began planning an assessment in response to Swat displacement, but security and complexities of the displacement have led to delays.
Philippines	No	Postponed	Child protection was included in larger protection assessment due to resource constraints; considering use in the south later in year.
Somali Region, Ethiopia	No	Postponed	Postponed due to political sensitivities and access restrictions.
Sudan	No	In planning	Will use another tool; Resource Kit thought to be too complicated.
Yemen	No	Postponed	Plan to use Resource Kit, but have encountered time and human resource constraints.
Zimbabwe	No	In planning	Interested in mapping child protection systems and will use/develop another tool better-suited for this purpose.

parts of Shida Kartli in Georgia, settled in collective centers, or the temporary shelters that had been established in former schools, kindergarten and other buildings.



The child protection sub-cluster chose to conduct an assessment from October to December of 2008 in order to gain a more complete picture of the needs and vulnerabilities of children, and to develop more appropriate and evidence-based programs.

#### *How the Resource Kit Was Used*

Staff from IRC (International Rescue Committee), Save the Children and World Vision Georgia initiated the assessment process by coming together to adapt the tool for use in the context, before taking it to the full sub-cluster. These individuals worked together to identify focus areas for the assessment, select appropriate tools, adapt them to the context and then organize translation. As one person involved in the process noted, the inter-agency nature of the process from the outset had several advantages:

*“The process of working together on the assessment and building the relationships between organizations was one of the most important things about [the assessment]. Most organizations were already doing programming, and because they were coordinating on the assessment, they were coordinating on programming as well.”*

Once full buy-in and support from the larger sub-cluster was attained, arrangements for implementation began with six of the sub-cluster member organizations actively participating (IRC, Save the Children and World Vision Georgia, Norwegian Refugee Council, Terre des Hommes, and Charity Humanitarian Center Abkhazeti). One staff member from Save the Children US served as the overall coordinator of the assessment and all 6 organizations con-

tributed their own staff and resources to support data collection at their existing program sites.

The *key informant interview guide* was administered to community leaders within each collective center. At the time of the assessment, the Resource Kit did not include a *focus group discussion guide* so this had to be developed by those planning the assessment. Data collectors took part in a joint half-day training on focus groups, and each agency took responsibility for conducting a separate half-day session for their staff on the key informant interviews. Each NGO had an appointed team leader who gathered data collection forms from their team members. Save the Children hired a consultant to handle data entry and a second person to analyze the focus group data. The rough analysis of both components was then handed over to Save the Children’s Project Manager who prepared the final report. Save the Children shared the findings with the sub-cluster, member organizations, the Ministry of Education, and then uploaded the report onto different websites.

#### *Implementation – Lessons Learned*

At various stages of the assessment process, staff from several non-governmental organizations, some quite familiar with the context or the Resource Kit, dedicated considerable amounts of time to the preparing for, planning and supervising efforts. Indeed, a major limitation of the assessment was the time involved to adapt the tool, mobilize resources, develop consensus and buy-in for the project, train data collectors and ultimately conduct the assessment. Although, as noted above, there were advantages of this being an inter-agency process, this also compounded time challenges due to the required consultation. In the words of two persons involved in the process:

*“I’m not sure how timely this assessment really was – perhaps it was a little late and would have been more useful earlier... Even the idea of the assessment was late, and because this was an inter-agency assessment (once the decision to do the assessment) was made it took time to coordinate everyone involved, make the assessment a homogenous process, and tweak the tool.”*

*“We were trying to get it done so quickly, organize all of these trainings. We organized trainings and no one showed up. In the end, people had to think, ‘this is our assessment’ and have that buy in. They had to see that this was not a favor that they were doing for anybody, but something for all of them.”*

Another limitation was the lack of training in and familiarity with child protection issues specific to emergency

situations despite the fact that many non-governmental organizations were running child-focused programs in Georgia at the time of the emergency and staff were well educated. The inter-agency nature of the assessment again compounded this challenge. Training and supervision of the data collectors was decentralized and the guidance and clarification given to staff regarding what certain questions were meant to capture and how to use different components of the tool varied from organization to organization. Also, the sub-cluster did not pilot test the adapted tools, and completed questionnaires were given first to supervising staff from the respective agencies, which did not allow for a uniform quality check during the data collection process. Errors and inconsistencies did not come to light until the data collection process was completed. As a result, the quality of the data gathered during the assessment process, particularly the key informant interviews, meant that it was not always usable.

### *Resource Kit – Lessons Learned*

One of the main difficulties reported with the Resource Kit was the format of the questionnaire. The “pre-emergency” and “post-emergency” format - which is somewhat modified in the latest version of the Resource Kit, but still present - was confusing for both interviewers and interviewees. For example, the questionnaire asked about the services available before and after the emergency. Residents in the collective centers often came from several different villages and key informants tended to answer based on his or her own village of origin. Therefore, information from all of the IDPs in a given collective center were not represented in the findings from the key informant interviews. The questions also asked for a lot of qualitative information, were open-ended (which was not always necessary) and considerably complicated and prolonged the data analysis process.

Another challenge was the translation process. Initially, a professional translator was hired to translate the tool into Georgian, but the assessment leaders were not satisfied with the results. A staff member from one of the organizations, who was fluent in the language, had to redo the translation. The staff member better understood the purpose and content of the tools and the assessment, which helped ensure that the style of the translation reflected the content and its underlying objective.

### *Key Results*

Despite difficulties with the Resource Kit and the challenges of implementation, the assessment process did yield

important insights into the child protection situation for the displaced including:

- ◆ Collection centers needed to be improved to ensure children’s safety;
- ◆ Families were not prepared for events like the loss of mobile telephone networks, and this led to temporary separation;
- ◆ High levels of both physical and psychological abuse by parents and teachers at home and in schools was documented. This was true both before and after the displacement;
- ◆ Parents and teachers had little knowledge that humiliation and verbal punishment are forms of abuse. Those who were aware often chose to use them anyway for a lack of alternative discipline strategies;
- ◆ Parents needed training in helping to identify and respond to psychological distress and trauma-related behaviors in children;
- ◆ Both parents and teachers needed additional skills to help manage displacement-related stress;
- ◆ Internally displaced children needed programs to help facilitate their transition into host schools; and
- ◆ Early Childhood Development Centers (ECD) appropriate for children 0—2 years of age were needed.

These issues are quite diverse, touching not just upon child protection, but education, healthcare and general emergency preparedness. Many of the findings and possible solutions related to state policies, coordination between agencies and a range of underlying issues. The actions taken to respond depended on a wide range of factors, particularly upon available resources and forms of response already in place. For example, efforts were already underway to establish a referral network (Child Protection Referral System). Initially, villages of the conflict region were not going to be included, but the assessment helped draw more attention to child protection issues in the region and many parts of the conflict region were included in piloting the referral network. A remaining concern was a perception of those involved in the assessment that little had been done to address the recommendation regarding emergency preparedness of the sub-cluster – an action that relies on state actors as well as nongovernmental agencies. While some state-level reforms have taken place, those interviewed believed more government reforms were needed in this area.

# GAZA, occupied PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

FEBRUARY 2009

## Context

Between December 27, 2008 and January 19 2009, the Israeli military incursion in to the Gaza strip 'Operation Cast Lead' left an estimated 1,336 Palestinians dead, including 430 children and 110 women. More than 5,450 Palestinians were wounded, some permanently, including some 1,870 children and 800 women. The bombardment left destroyed or badly damaged an estimated 21,000 residences forcing 51,000 people to seek temporary shelter in public spaces such as schools or with relatives. In addition, the fighting caused damage and destruction to United Nations' warehouses, clinics, hospitals and schools, including those serving as shelters for the displaced.

While humanitarian access during the three-week war was severely limited, humanitarian actors based in Jerusalem were able to remain abreast of the situation through regular telephone communication with staff and partners in Gaza. In February, when the situation had stabilized, the child protection sub-cluster organized a rapid two-day child protection assessment under the leadership of UNICEF. The assessment was designed to fill in critical gaps in data along themes identified by sub-cluster members during the bombardment.

## How the Resource Kit Was Used

National and international members of the child protection sub-cluster used information gathered from partners during the implementation of 'Operation Cast Lead' to identify 10 critical child protection concerns that required further assessment and potential intervention. These concerns were:

- ◆ Large numbers of deaths and injuries;
- ◆ Effects on psychosocial and mental health;
- ◆ Risks posed by mines and unexploded ordnance;
- ◆ Separated children, particularly when being transported to hospital, for short periods of time;
- ◆ Increased vulnerability of children living in shelters, living with extended families or placed in institutions;

- ◆ Lack of public information dissemination and messaging;
- ◆ Lack of access to basic services;
- ◆ Increased number of children with disabilities;
- ◆ Ensuring NFIs (non-food items) take children's needs into consideration; and
- ◆ The lack of press sensitivity towards children as an audience (e.g. media coverage showing disturbing images).

The sub-cluster chose to use the Resource Kit's *key informant interview guide* as a basis for a two-page tool designed for use at the household level. Households were to be selected using a simple random sampling strategy. Prior to translating the tool into Arabic, UNICEF first removed items that were not thought relevant to the Gaza context (e.g. sexual exploitation and abuse or child labor), before adding in new questions to reflect the issues of greatest concern to the sub-cluster. At the time of the assessment, the children associated with armed forces or armed groups (CAFFAGs ) was a highly sensitive and political issue. The assessment team felt that inquiring about this protection problem at the time would have been very difficult and potentially dangerous and questions relating to this had to be removed from the questionnaire.

The sub-cluster works closely with a number of local organizations based in Gaza and staff of these organizations were recruited to form the assessment team. Save the Children - Sweden and UNICEF organized and led a one-day training for team members, only some of which had prior assessment experience.

## Implementation – Lessons Learned

While the tool had been adapted for use at the household level, illness of a key staff member on the day of the training resulted in inaccurate information being conveyed to partners regarding the sampling and interviewing approach. The sub-cluster had planned for the assessment team to look at selected geographical areas and identify a random sample of households for the interviews within them. Instead, team members took the interview guide to community-based organizations, and asked staff members there for information. Since the offices of many of these organizations are concentrated in the same area(s), much of the information overlapped. This resulted in considerable repetition in the information provided from such sources. As a consequence, tallies of critical data, including the number of killed or injured children, were signifi-

cantly higher than what members of the cluster considered plausible. This mistake did not come to light until the data collection process was completed and analysis was underway. It was acknowledged to severely compromise the reliability of much of the quantitative information collected. The research team believed that this error linked back to the amount of time available for the training and assessment process and the limited number of personnel in Gaza with the skills required to lead this process. As one participant described:

*“It is really important that it (the assessment) be done by local organizations, but the amount of training is also very important... Building capacity is very much a forward investment, and you don’t always have the money to do this or the time to do this in emergencies.”*

#### *Resource Kit – Lessons Learned*

Field experience in Gaza identified two main difficulties with the Resource Kit. Firstly, the assessment leaders found the current format cumbersome and that it does not clearly identify which sections are most important and relevant for users. Secondly, the tools took a considerable amount of time to adapt to the local context.

*“In the middle of an emergency, [you] can’t read a 60-page document and translate it. Emergency staff are working from 7 a.m. to mid-night every single day just responding. The Resource Kit has lots of materials and actions that you need to know, but these should be known or done in advance, especially if it needs to be translated...For example, ethics. The Resource Kit should say ‘What are the five key things that need to be done to ensure we are ethical? What should I do?’ ... Even if you have done assessments before, a lot of what you know goes out the window....”*



#### *Key Results*

While sampling issues led to the quantitative estimates of needs being unreliable (and ultimately unusable for planning or advocacy purposes), actions are being taken on the local level based on lessons learned from the assessment process itself. The assessment team found that the adaptation, translation and team training process took a considerable amount of time and was difficult to implement effectively in an acute emergency. UNICEF – OPT has thus begun to integrate assessment tools into their emergency preparedness and response plans (EPRP) so that the tools and trained personnel are in place and can be mobilized quickly should a similar event occur again. UNICEF is also working with partner agencies to support the development of emergency preparedness and response plans, conduct training on guidelines and develop strategies that will enable those involved to translate plans into action if and when the need arises.

### GAMBELLA REGION, ETHIOPIA

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER 2009

#### *Context*

Gambella National Regional State with a population of 300,000 persons is a relatively small region of western Ethiopia and is one of the least developed parts of the country. The geographical position of Gambella Region, along with its natural resource base, and diverse populations and livelihoods strategies have caused localized conflict and placed it at the center of national and cross-border disputes further fueling local tensions. This region is plagued by civil conflict, a vulnerable livelihoods base, limited capacity of local government, and recurring natural disasters. The droughts of 2009 that have destroyed maize and other staple crops, a rise in tensions between Nuer sub-clans, and movement of persons across the Sudanese border in search of pasture as well as to avoid political disputes have lead to a heightened state of food insecurity across the region and the displacement of thousands of families. In order to provide an evidence base for programming and improve emergency planning and preparedness processes, UNICEF and the Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs organized a child welfare assessment in the region.

#### *How the Resource Kit Was Used*

Initially, UNICEF’s Emergency Child Protection Officer

and local child protection staff made preliminary arrangements for the assessments with support from an intern. A key task was generating formal support from the Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs and other agencies and building a sense of partnership for what eventually became a government-led initiative. UNICEF funded the assessment, government staff donated their time, and a consultant was brought on board to coordinate the process and provide technical guidance to the assessment team.

The scope of the child welfare assessment was initially kept open because so little was known about the issues affecting children in the region. In August, a mapping exercise was conducted in order to provide a geographic sketch of: the main ethnic groups living in the area; livelihood strategies; access to basic services; and resources and vulnerabilities. This information established the foundation for the purposive sampling strategy used for the assessment.

The initial adaptation process took place in Addis Ababa, and focused largely on selecting the tools, taking out parts of materials that were not relevant, and making the tools more user-friendly and accessible to the end users. The consultant – in consultation with national and local partners - chose to use the *participatory ranking exercise*, *focus group discussion guide*, *key informant interview guide*, and *desk review* worksheets from the Resource Kit. The



consultant also added a community timeline exercise in an effort to capture significant events that have shaped life in the assessment locations. These tools were then shared with UNICEF staff in Addis Ababa and in Gambella as well as government partners. Following a round of comments and feedback from these stakeholders, final revisions were made to the tools and then translated into four languages (Nuer, Anuak, Mejenjer and Amharic). Material within the Resource Kit that outlines and describes the basic concepts of child protection were used as part of the training curriculum for data collectors.

UNICEF's intern then drafted the Terms of Reference for

data collectors that were then given to the Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs for approval. Government partners from five Bureaus nominated staff to work as data collectors. UNICEF also posted the Terms of Reference in town and invited qualified individuals in the general public with prior assessment experience to apply. Individuals recruited through both channels formed the core of the assessment team. Data collectors and team leaders took part in a five-day training lead by the contracted consultant with support from translators.

The three-and-a-half-week data collection process began in late September. During this time the assessment teams visited seven of the twelve *woredas* in the region. Assessment locations were selected that represented the vulnerabilities and characteristics identified during the earlier mapping exercise. Accessibility and security were also considered. The *participatory ranking exercise* took place first, followed by focus groups touching on the two — three main issues identified during the ranking exercise. Men, women, girls and boys took part in separate sessions. Simultaneously, other data collectors held key informant interviews. Because of the limited amount of time for the assessment, local leaders selected participants for the *participatory ranking exercise* and *focus group discussions* prior to the arrival of the assessment team.

Once data collection was finalized, the consultant led the data analysis process and compiled the findings, which were then shared with UNICEF and government partners. Stakeholders then took part in a consensus building exercise where they were asked to work together to agree upon the issues and required actions based on the assessment findings.

#### *Implementation – Lessons Learned*

One of the main obstacles to this assessment was getting the required contracts through the approval channels within UNICEF Ethiopia and further delays in releasing the funds for the assessment. Conversations surrounding the assessment began in January 2009, and the Terms of Reference for the project and consultant to be brought in as the lead were finalized in May 2009. Moreover, an intern was brought in for ten weeks to support the planning and data collection as well as document the process. The assessment did not begin, however, until September 2009 - approximately six weeks after initially planned, and several weeks after the intern deployed to support the process had left the country.

An additional issue was the limited amount of time allotted for the assessment (eight weeks from start to finish). Gambella is a diverse and logistically complex region,

with very few resources available on the ground. Despite these difficulties – well-known to those working in the region — and the range of on-going humanitarian issues in Gambella, a larger-scale more robust assessment that included random sampling would have been feasible if sufficient time had been allocated during the planning process. Even using a purposive sampling strategy, the assessment team was still under great time constraints with the three to four weeks of data collection that were built into the contract for the assessment. Data collectors were only able to go to a small number of the more remote areas of Gambella, even though there were known active emergencies in these locations. In each *woreda*, the team had only two days to gather data, which meant that full saturation of qualitative findings was not achieved. This is in part due to the nature of the planning process. Those with knowledge of the issues and logistical requirements of the region and those with the technical expertise joined the process when the scale and scope of the assessment and the corresponding resource allocations had for the most part, already been determined.

Though most of the data collectors had prior experience working on surveys (e.g. Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) or census) or worked for government departments on related issues, the time required for training and supervising the data collectors was a major challenge. Child protection concepts and the data collection methodologies within the Resource Kit were largely unfamiliar to the data collectors and the five days allocated for the process was not adequate.

*“Not allowing more time for training – this is my biggest regret. It had a big impact on data collection. All of the concepts were so new, it was really difficult. We could have done more on the basic concepts of child protection as I’m not sure there was much buy-in on some issues. We didn’t have time to get into these discussions and address this. It was similar with the data collection methods. I would have liked to have found time to practice these more during the training as they take quite sophisticated skills to do well.”*

The *participatory ranking exercise* was perceived to have produced good quality data. An added strength was that it was simple and after some practice the team was able to lead the exercise properly without supervision from the assessment coordinator. However, the community timeline and child risk and resource mapping exercises initially planned had to be removed because of time constraints and the limited capacity of the data collectors and their familiarity with these data collection methods.

The limited capacity of government staff was, in general, reported as a significant challenge. Many of the staff had little experience with child welfare issues. These concepts were quite difficult for even those government workers involved in child welfare programs. In addition to capacity, the frequent absenteeism of government personnel was also a limitation. The necessary individuals were often out when meetings were needed and in other cases gone for several weeks at a time to Addis Ababa for meetings at the federal level.

#### *Resource Kit – Lessons Learned*

The limited amount of time planned for the assessment was generally seen to prevent implementation of a methodology of the sort that could have provided objective measures of the prevalence of specified concerns (i.e. a quantitative approach utilizing some form of random sampling). However, those directly engaged in implementing the assessment believe that the Resource Kit lacks the



tools required to inform this type of assessment, and that new tools would be required in order to gather data on magnitude and severity of child protection issues at the individual or household level. While the tools used did generate important information about the larger humanitarian context, the current structure does not facilitate assessment of the prevalence and scale of issues facing children.

The consultant coordinating the assessment also had to make changes to the code of conduct for the assessment team members. Though the ICRC’s code of conduct is recommended in the Resource Kit, the organizers felt that it was not appropriate for an assessment of this type, as it does not include key issues like confidentiality, the importance of informed consent and managing expectations of participants. The consultant also had to draft informed consent documents for focus group participants, as well as for the parents or guardians of children as samples of these were not included in the Resource Kit.



## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

November—December 2009

The assessment team had planned to use the *institutional and humanitarian capacity mapping tools*, but found eventually that they simply did not fit the context. In Gambella Region, there are few government services and only a handful of non-governmental organizations. As one participant describes it:

*“There is just so little there, we would just write none, none, none. Perhaps the problem is that the tools are too specific, or far too sophisticated for Gambella. I was taken aback by the examples, so advanced in terms of psychosocial and child protection. In Gambella, there is nothing anywhere near a monitoring system. We could list on one hand the resources there and you don’t need a tool for that.”*

There were, however, smaller scale projects and initiatives that were not easily captured by the tool. The consultant obtained some information during the desk review process and more information via the data collectors and the key informant interviews, but felt that more guidance on how to do this in a more structured way would have been useful.

### Key Findings

The assessment brought to light a wide range of issues facing children, their families and communities in Gambella Region including “push factors” that are fueling vulnerability. Some of these factors include on-going food shortages, conflict and the limited access to basic services such as health care and education. The assessment process also generated data surrounding specific needs and threats to children in the region. Food shortages, inadequate health services, and conflict were consistently ranked by participants in focus groups at the most significant contextual issues affecting children. These same participants consistently ranked inadequate education services and the costs of attending school, separation from parents, early sexual activity and abduction as the main issues specifically affecting children in Gambella. In response to these findings, UNICEF is in the process of working with the regional government to create a child-focused social welfare program across the region.

### Context

The Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the poorest and least developed nations in the world. Since gaining independence from France in 1960, the CAR has been plagued by sporadic conflict between Government forces and rebels and wider unrest in recent years, leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and has been most acute in the northeast. Unrest in neighboring nations, Chad, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), continues to affect stability in the Central African Republic as well.

As part of its global strategic plan for 2009, War Child UK was seeking to expand operations into an additional country on their internal “desk list” – countries monitored for possible intervention with critical ratings on the Failed States Index, UNDP Development Index, high infant mortality rates, and those experiencing recent or on-going conflict. In November of 2009, in consultation with UNICEF, War Child UK conducted a three and a half week Child Protection Assessment in order to inform and shape their planned expansion into CAR.

### How the Resource Kit was Used

Planning for the assessment began about one month prior to the assessment team’s arrival in CAR. After conferring with the Child Protection Working Group, regional and country-level UNICEF personnel, UNICEF agreed to provide funding for the assessment. The assessment process began with a desk review conducted by two interns under the supervision of War Child’s Programs Director.

The assessment team consisted of the Programs Director, a staff member from War Child’s program in the Democratic Republic of Congo and a community-mobilizer from a local organization. Translators were engaged in the assessment process on an as needed basis. Prior to arriving in CAR, the assessment team selected and adapted the tools for use. These included the *focus group discussion and key informant interview guides, humanitarian and institutional capacity mapping tools and the participatory ranking exercise*.

The assessment was structured to provide a broad overview of Child Protection concerns, including CAFFAGs,

gender-based violence (GBV), child labor, education, and livelihoods, with a particular focus on children and youth 12 – 18 years of age.

In coordination with UNICEF and OCHA, War Child UK conducted the assessment in Paoua, Bossangoa, and Boca-ranga in the Northwest and on street children in Bangui. The criteria used to select these regions were: known child protection concerns; a limited number of programs in place; and the security and accessibility of the area.



The assessment team conducted three focus group discussions: one with a youth organization, another with an organization for single mothers and a third with youth. Using a snowball sampling approach, the team also conducted a number of key informant interviews with United Nations personnel, non-governmental organizations, local authorities and community leaders.

#### *Implementation – Lessons Learned*

While UNICEF, IRC and other organizations did lend support to the process, this assessment was largely the result of a single organization. This was in part due to the purpose of the assessment – to inform programmatic response by War Child UK. However, there were opportunities for more collaboration and cooperation that were not fully

utilized. UNICEF personnel were overwhelmed managing existing programs, and pre-occupied with training events and visiting delegations from headquarters. Moreover, there are very few organizations currently implementing child protection programs and the child protection sub-cluster is quite small. Those organizations that are on the ground are also overwhelmed, with a limited number of personnel, few cars and their own programs to attend to in a difficult environment. This complicated efforts by War Child to make the logistical arrangements necessary for the assessment.

Education levels in CAR are also quite low and most trained and educated persons are already working for NGOs, the United Nations or government. This issue, along with the limited availability of partners, made it difficult for the assessment team to set-up focus group discussions, arrange key informant interviews and otherwise organize the assessment process. A staff member from Association Centrafricaine Pour le Bien Etre Familial, a local non-governmental organization based in Paoua, was recruited to work as part of the assessment team and did prove to be a significant asset to the process.

The assessment also took place close to several public holidays and visits from high-level international delegations. This contributed to delays in the initial timeline and again, served to preoccupy partners and assessment participants.

#### *Resource Kit – Lessons Learned*

One lesson learned during the course of this assessment was “assessment fatigue” on the part of potential participants. The assessment team felt that the Research Kit assumes Child Protection actors are coming on the ground in an emergency. But in CAR, as in other emergency contexts, organizations have been in some of these locations for years, there are still few services in place, and the humanitarian situation remains largely unchanged. The assessment team had to take extra caution to work with this reality and not raise false hopes.

*“ [You] have to be careful – never been to a place where authorities don’t ask you for anything, they’ve given up. It was basically a whole country that was depressed. We didn’t want to give false hope, but didn’t want to ask the same questions...others had done assessments and not shown up. Really, this is one of the least developed countries and [has the] least amount of services. NGOs are clustered in certain areas.”*

The assessment team also found the *desk review*, *institutional capacity* and *humanitarian capacity* tools too sophisticated for this context. Very little information is available

on CAR and most of what is available can really only be obtained in country. While the *desk review tool* provided a useful guideline for this process, the team felt that in most emergency contexts, it would be difficult for child protection actors to obtain the majority of the suggested information in advance of arriving in country.

There are few formal child protection institutions in place in CAR and also a small number of non-governmental organizations working on child protection issues. There are, however, a few grassroots and community-based organizations in place, as well as traditional protection practices and mechanisms. These programs and practices were not easily captured by the *institutional and humanitarian capacity mapping tools*.

*“I wonder if the ‘types of institutions (included in the Resource Kit) really hit on non-formal institutions, or community-based programs like day care, ECD, youth centers or GBV centers. This steers you towards more formal institutions rather than CBOs or natural structures.”*

The assessment team also believed that some of the questions posed in the Resource Kit were articulated in too complex a manner, rather than addressing core issues in a straightforward manner. As one individual involved in the assessment describes it:

*“ Legal redress, ‘PEP kits’, most people will not know what these are unless they have worked in a humanitarian organization before. Word choice is important – if I’m supposed to ask questions based on this it would be hard. ... and prevention of separation campaigns. I have rarely seen one of these. Maybe in DRC when people were going back into Rwanda. These are pretty advanced things – in reality you’ll only have this if you have community mechanisms in place to do this type of work, and in an emergency these systems often fall apart.”*

### Key Results

At the time of the writing of this report, War Child was still working on the final analysis of the data. However, several key findings have emerged in the preliminary analysis.

There is believed to be a considerable knowledge gap in the needs of youth and services for youth due to pressures of conflict, and economic and climatic shocks. These have lead to more children on streets, women and girls involved in prostitution and more people joining armed groups. Those joining armed groups are thought to do so not out of force but because of the belief that others have wronged them. Poverty has also lead to a breakdown of community and extended family support structures. The education system is also weak and largely dysfunctional. The increased practice of sorcery and witchcraft is also a signifi-

cant threat to children and youth. Lastly, there are very few resources allocated to addressing child protection and other humanitarian and development issues in CAR. War Child UK has submitted concept papers to DfID and UNICEF with the hope of initiating programs in response to some of the needs identified during this assessment.

## LOCATIONS WHERE PLANNED ASSESSMENTS ARE POSTPONED

In at least six of the emergency contexts -Yemen, Eritrea, Somali Region of Ethiopia, the Philippines, Haiti and India - child protection actors have postponed planned child protection assessments. In three of these contexts, the research team was able to document in some detail the basis for the postponement. While some reasons varied from location to location, the time, human and other resources required to plan and mobilize an inter-agency assessment were consistently identified as the major factor leading to deferral.

In the Philippines, UNICEF and partners had planned to conduct a child protection assessment in response to Typhoon Marakot. However, after a period of further consideration UNICEF concluded that they had access to inadequate human resources to roll out an assessment and there were insufficient funds available to support another partner to conduct such work. Given these constraints, they decided it would be more effective to link up with assessments that were already in motion. Ultimately, child protection was integrated into a larger protection assessment. The child protection sub-cluster is continuing to discuss undertaking a specific standalone assessment in the south of the country.

UNICEF in Yemen had also planned to coordinate an assessment in response to the displacement of tens of thousands by clashes between government troops and north-western rebels belonging to the *Zaidi* sect. After several months of consideration, this assessment, however, has also been postponed. Despite recognizing the need for the assessment, even highly experienced staff felt overwhelmed - with most of their time and energy taken up responding to the emergency, coordinating partners, and coaching, training and supervising staff. The resources required to adapt the tool, mobilize and conduct an assessment were considered to be greater than what is available in the current context.

**TABLE 2. OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDIES**

	Assessment Period	Version of Resource Kit Used	Sampling	Tools Used	Data Collection/ Analysis	How Information Was Used
<b>Georgia</b>	October - December 2008	Initial	Purposive Sampling	Key informant interview guide	Save staff and consultants	NGO program response; expansion of planned referral network to region; less action on preparedness findings.
<b>Gaza</b>	February 2009	January 2009	Simple Random Sample	Key informant interview guide	UNICEF Staff	Was not used because the data collection process was incorrect.
<b>Gambella, Ethiopia</b>	September - October 2009	September 2009	Purposive Sampling	Key informant interview guide Participatory Ranking Desk Review Focus group discussion guide	Consultant	UNICEF tentatively planning on setting-up child-focused social welfare program in Gambella Region.
<b>Central African Republic</b>	November - December 2009	Drew upon elements of January and September 2009 editions.	Snowball sampling Convenience Sampling	Key informant interview guide Focus group discussion guide Participatory Ranking Institutional Capacity Mapping Humanitarian Capacity Mapping Desk Review	War Child International	War Child has prepared and submitted concepts notes for DfID and UNICEF in order to support a planned expansion of programs into under-served regions of CAR.

**TABLE 3. ISSUES ANALYSIS MATRIX**

Issues Identified	Central African Republic	Gambella, Ethiopia	Gaza, oPT	Georgia	Haiti	Philippines	Somali, Ethiopia	Yemen	Zimbabwe
<p><b>With the Tools</b></p> <p>Focus Group Discussion Guide not in Resource Kit.            Complexity of the material made translation difficult.            Adaptation is difficult and time consuming            Format of tool is cumbersome.            Tools inadequate for a quantitative assessment            Code of Conduct in Resource Kit suitable for humanitarian workers but not appropriate for data collectors.            Sophistication of Institutional and Humanitarian Capacity Mapping Tools makes these difficult to adapt to local context.            Does not include enough systems mapping material.            Samples of informed consent for parents, children and other populations taking part in assessment are not included in the Resource Kit.            Time required to train or supervise assessment team was problematic.            Assessment fatigue on part of participants presented ethical concerns and complicated data gathering efforts.            Data collectors received improper or inconsistent training/supervision.            Not enough skilled and experienced emergency child protection personnel on the ground to lead/support assessment process.            Time available to plan and/or implement the assessment was not sufficient.            Funds required to fund another partner and the assessment process were not available.            Sensitive issues such as CAFFAGs and GBV were difficult to assess.            Humanitarian access to emergency-affected areas restricted due to nature of the conflict.</p>	X	X	X	X	X				
		X	X	X	X				
		X	X	X	X	X			
		X	X	X		X			
		X	X						
		X	X						
		X	X					X	
		X	X	X	X				
		X	X	X	X				
		X	X	X	X				
<p><b>With Implementation</b></p>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	
		X	X	X	X	X		X	

The Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs (BOLSA) and UNICEF Ethiopia had also planned to conduct a child welfare assessment in the Somali Region. The purpose was to identify issues and needs facing children and use this to refine and expand programming, particularly BOLSA’s Child Focused Social Welfare Program now in place in five emergency-affected zones of the region. The data was also to be used to improve UNICEF’s emergency preparedness and response planning efforts. However, there were a number of obstacles to taking this forward. There are on-going tensions between the Ethiopian Defense Forces and the Ogaden Liberation front, an armed separatist group in Somali Region. UNICEF and BOLSA felt that questions pertaining to children associated with armed forces or armed groups in the current approach of the Resource Kit was too direct for this context. There were also concerns that the BOLSA and UNICEF may not be able to get clearance to access certain areas, or the assessment process all together, if they chose to leave this line of inquiry in the adapted tool. Even if they were able to work around access issues, gathering data on children associated with armed forces or armed groups was seen to present potential risks for data collectors and assessment participants. At the same time, there were also concerns that it would be unethical for UNICEF to fund and help coordinate a child protection assessment in conflict locations without asking about this group. The assessment in the Somali Region has been postponed until an appropriate way forward can be determined in these circumstances.

These emergency contexts exemplify the issues and challenges that have led to delays or postponement of the remaining three delayed assessments included in this analysis. Further information regarding the status, planned structure and issues identified in all of these locations can be found in Table 1 and Table 3.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussions with child protection actors in the field have identified a number of strengths associated with the Resource Kit. First, the Resource Kit addresses a previously unmet need for common tools suitable for assessing the needs of children in emergencies in a coherent and consistent manner. Specialists and organizations no longer begin an assessment with what one resource person referred to as “a blank slate.” In addition, the Resource Kit appears to serve as a useful starting point for inter-agency dialogue and collaboration. While not all child protection agencies have been involved in the assessments, many have taken

an active interest and have given technical, financial or operational support to the process.

In looking at the components of the Resource Kit, certain tools are emerging as particularly useful. The *key informant interview guide* has, to date, been the most widely used tool, with all four of the sites completing emergency assessments integrating it into their assessment process.



The *participatory ranking exercise* has also been well received, with users valuing the simplicity of the method, the quality of the data produced by a team that may lack experience and the ease of the analysis process. Table 2 provides a comprehensive listing of the tools used in each assessment location.

This research has also brought to light a number of difficulties with the Resource Kit, as well as challenges to the larger implementation process. Table 3 provides an overview of these findings across the emergency contexts for which information was available.

With regard to the Resource Kit, the following issues were reported across multiple contexts: the format was cumbersome; the complexity of the material made translation difficult; the adaptation processes were difficult and time consuming; the Resource Kit does not contain a sufficient amount of systems mapping material; and the sophistication of the institutional and humanitarian capacity tools made them difficult to adapt to the local context. The sheer size of the Resource Kit (more than 60 pages and in multiple files), the absence of prioritized information, and the complexity of some of the material discouraged or delayed even experienced staff from setting about the task of examining and adapting the tools for use. As noted in Table 2, at least two emergency contexts (Gaza and Gambella) looked unsuccessfully to the Resource Kit to support a quantitative assessment. The team in Gambella considered the guidance provided to be inadequate for a quantitative assessment approach and used other methods, while the sub-cluster in Gaza tried to adapt the *key informant*

*mant interview* for this purpose. The lack of clear guidance on quantitative measurement limited the ability of these and other assessment process to clearly articulate the magnitude and severity of child protection concerns.

Discussions with users in the field also identified several key challenges to implementation. One of the main findings, as indicated by Table 1, is that such impediments have in many cases led to assessments not taking place. The following implementation issues were recurrent across sites: shortages of trained and experienced personnel to lead or support the assessment process; constraints in terms of required training and supervision of the assessment team; the time available to plan or implement the assessment was inadequate; and restricted access to assessment locations. Experience in both the Gambella and Somali Regions of Ethiopia, Gaza, Georgia, CAR and elsewhere indicates that planning an inter-agency assessment is challenging, even for experienced field personnel and even in more stable settings.

Problems with training, capacity and the amount of time required to adapt tools, plan and implement an assessment were noted as significant impediments to the process even in those settings where an assessment did take place. Finally, this research brought to light a number of the difficulties of inquiring about, and the frequent political and cultural sensitivities of, child protection concerns such as children associated with armed forces or armed groups or GBV. These questions were often excluded from the assessment due to political or safety concerns, or not explored in depth due to the limited experience of the data collectors. In one instance (Somali, Ethiopia), this was one of the main reasons for the postponement of the assessment.

All these issues have had a significant impact on the quality of the data gathered, and the extent to which the assessments have been able to fulfill their primary objective – informing response. In several instances, these issues have limited the ability of the child protection community to roll out a timely assessment altogether. Based on these findings, we propose seven key recommendations.

## *COORDINATION*

### **1. Clarify mechanisms for managing and monitoring use of the Resource Kit .**

During the research period, the research team had significant difficulty determining where, when and how the Resource Kit has been used and which version of the Resource Kit had been utilized. Such difficulties were exacerbated by multiple changes in the title of the material and thus shifts in its intended scope. It is recommended that one agency be ap-

pointed to take the lead in managing and monitoring the on-going use of the Resource Kit in the field. This will entail both making sure that child protection actors in the field have access to the most up-to-date version of the Resource Kit (including clear information on the intended scope of the materials) and supporting on-going learning on the Resource Kit. Together, this will allow the CPWG and other interested parties to better monitor the outcomes of these and other child protection assessments.

## *TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT*

### **2. Edit and reformat the Resource Kit to address issues of accessibility for users in the field.**

Reports across the case studies indicate that the material in the Resource Kit requires major technical editing. In its current form, the Resource Kit has proven unwieldy and not well tailored to a timely assessment. It is recommended that information that is not essential for the target audience should be removed so that the core principles, concepts, components and measures essential to a successful assessment process are easily identified. Tools should be simplified wherever and whenever possible. These improvements will make the tool more accessible for emergency personnel and reduce the time and complexity of the adaptation and translation processes – major challenges noted with the current Resource Kit identified by field users.

### **3. Develop new and revise existing methods for the Resource Kit.**

This research identified a number of weaknesses with, or gaps in, the actual tools contained within the Resource Kit. The lack of accessible quantitative tools and the limited guidance on purposive and random sampling strategies needed to support a quantitative assessment were noted in several of the emergency contexts. The absence of quantitative data limited the ability of these assessments, for example in Gambella, to articulate the magnitude and severity of child protection concerns. It is recommended that a specific tool and supporting sampling guidance should be developed to fill this gap.

Several emergency contexts (Gambella, Ethiopia, Somali, Ethiopia and Sudan) expressed an interest in using the assessment process to map child protection systems. However, the assessment leaders did not feel that tools within the Resource Kit adequately addressed this need. The Resource Kit would be enhanced through a revision of current tools and possible development of new tools, to better document the child protection systems in place in emergency contexts.

#### **4. Develop a decision tree to guide the planning process.**

Inclusion of a new section - a decision tree - is recommended to help future assessment teams address some of the operational and ethical difficulties observed in other contexts to date. This included the planning limitations that prevented more comprehensive sampling in Gambella, and issues over children associated with armed forces or armed groups in Somali Region. The decision tree would also aim to improve the accessibility and minimize the complexity of the Resource Kit, serving as a useful starting point for overwhelmed and overworked child protection personnel. It is recommended that this new tool be presented in a flow diagram format that allows users to clearly and quickly identify the most important considerations to be made, parties that should take part in each step, and the implications for each option. The tool should also include guidance on critical ethical considerations. It is envisioned that the decision tree would replace the current “7-Step Guidance” section. Much of the material now in this section would be retained and used in a follow-on reference section to support those in need of additional technical guidance.



#### **5. Develop further concrete guidance on ethics.**

This research and analysis identified several gaps in the guidance on ethics currently offered in the Resource Kit. These issues gaps include: the absence of a code of conduct appropriate for an assessment context (the code of conduct currently included relates more directly to ongoing programming); absence of samples of informed consent procedures for use with parents, children and other populations participating in the assessment process; and

guidance on the ethics of excluding known child protection issues from the data collection process in sensitive environments. Such materials should be developed and added to the Resource Kit. The Resource Kit should also include expanded guidance on determining the risks of gathering sensitive data and the ethical implications of inclusion or exclusion of sensitive issues from the assessment process.

#### *CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT*

#### **6. Develop a strategy for addressing issues of capacity and integrating the Resource Kit into disaster planning and preparedness efforts.**

One of the clear impediments to effective use of the Resource Kit identified in this study was the lack of skilled and trained child protection staff to lead and support an assessment. Equally crippling was the time required to select, adapt and translate and train an assessment team on the tools. Increasing the number of skilled, trained emergency child protection responders would greatly aid the future efficacy of the Resource Kit. Means of achieving this would include the provision of global and regional trainings on the Resource Kit, and/or the development of an emergency deployment roster to support the deployment of trained personnel to the field. Organizations should also be encouraged to integrate assessments into emergency planning and preparedness plans wherever possible. These efforts will help ensure that child protection personnel become familiar with and conversant in the principles and methods of the Resource Kit, and where possible, begin preparing for an assessment prior to the onset of an emergency. In so doing, child protection actors will be better able to quickly and methodically roll out rigorous, well-organized and useful assessments.

#### *RAPID ASSESSMENTS*

#### **7. Develop discrete tools for Rapid Assessments.**

Current materials clearly do not meet the need for rapid assessment, including multi-sectoral or protection sector-specific assessments. Discrete tools need to be developed for this purpose, building on other relevant work strands (e.g. UNICEF, UNHCR, CU, CDC collaborations regarding methods for field assessment; and core indicators proposed for Protection Sector Rapid Assessments). Such material may, in due course, be included within the Resource Kit, but the specific demands (and opportunities) in the early stages of a humanitarian emergency need to be recognized.