AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS AND THEIR LINKAGE WITH THE NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM OF SIERRA LEONE[1]

The Columbia Group for Children in Adversity

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[1] This research is the first part of a multi-year program of action research that aims to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms by supporting effective linkages with the national child protection system. Currently, this research is being conducted in Sierra Leone and Kenya.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the research team and should not be assumed to reflect the views of any agency associated with this initiative, including donors, Reference Group members, and other partners.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBCPM	Community-based child protection mechanism
CBO	Community-based organization
CRA	Child Rights Act
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DCI	Defense for Children International
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
FORUT	Campaign for Development and Solidarity
FSU	Family Support Unit
GBV	Gender-based violence
ILI	Inter-Agency Learning Initiative
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NPSE	National Public School Exam
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
TBA	Traditional birth attendant
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) are used widely by NGOs and communities to address and prevent the harms to children caused by violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. A key question, however, is how effective and sustainable these mechanisms are. A global, inter-agency desk review of mostly externally facilitated CBCPMs was conducted as the first phase of work and the foundation for this study. It reported that two key determinants of effectiveness and sustainability of CBCPMs were ownership by the community and linkage with the national child protection system. The review identified as challenges the paucity of evidence regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of CBCPMs, the failure of many externally catalyzed CBCPMs to build on already existing mechanisms and processes, and the tendency of many agencies to cause inadvertent harm by, for example, establishing CBCPMs as parallel mechanisms that are poorly linked with the national child protection system.

The ethnographic research presented in this report is part of an inter-agency, grounded learning initiative undertaken in response to the desk review. It aims to strengthen child protection practice in the global child protection sector through research in three countries in West Africa (Sierra Leone), East and Southern Africa (Kenya), and Southeast Asia, respectively. The key components of the learning initiative in each country are to (1) document existing CBCPMs in multiple areas and their linkages with the national child protection system, (2) define population based outcomes and measures for gauging the effectiveness of the national child protection system, (3) systematically test the effectiveness of community owned interventions to strengthen the linkages between CBCPMs and the national child protection system, (4) feed the findings back to communities, governments, and agency partners in each country as a means of stimulating reflection and action on strengthening CBCPMs, and (5) use what is learned to strengthen child protection practice at national, regional, and global levels.

The research is part of a wider interagency learning initiative, which also include the development of a community of practice. The initiative is funded with generous support from the Oak Foundation, USAID, UNICEF, Save the Children, and World Vision. The initiative is implemented through strong interagency partnerships and overseen by a global reference group (Annex 1). Save the Children serves as coordinator for the initiative and chair of the global reference group, and the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity serves as the technical lead for the research.

The present study is the first part of the research in Sierra Leone, which will use a quasi-experimental design to test the effectiveness of community-designed interventions to strengthen the linkages between CBCPMs and the national child protection system. The research was conducted by a team of Sierra Leonean researchers with the support of international researchers from the Columbia Group. The objective of this study, which was conducted January-April, 2011, was to learn systematically about the functioning of existing CBCPMs and their linkages with the national child protection system.

METHOD

The research used a methodology of rapid ethnography that focused on child protection aimed to provide a rich, grounded picture of local beliefs, values, and practices in regards to children, their developing activities and social relations, and the community mechanisms for their protection and well-being. To explore the actual functioning of CBCPMs, people were asked in multiple contexts what happens when a particular child protection issue arises—who do people actually go to, who makes the decisions, which actions are taken, and how do various stakeholders who occupy different social positions view the outcomes. People were free to identify any process or mechanisms of response by, for example, indigenous processes, NGO committees, or aspects of the national child protection system. This was a bottom-up process of mapping the functional pathways through which people respond to child protection risks.

Site selection

For purposes of depth of learning, the research did not study a nationally representative sample of villages and chose to focus on two districts. Through a consultative process, Moyamba and Bombali Districts were selected as the research sites because they were judged to be typical of Sierra Leone, and they reflect its diversity. Moyamba is a southern, mostly Mende speaking district with few international NGOs, whereas Bombali is a northern, mostly Temne speaking district with many international NGOs. In each district, consultation with district officials, NGO workers and Chiefs identified two nonadjacent chiefdoms that, following the requirements of the quasi-experimental design of the overall research, were comparable in size, mode of living, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, access to resources such as health posts and schools, and external child protection supports such as NGOs and Government Social Workers. The two chiefdoms in Bombali District were Liebiesaygahun and Magbiamba N'dohahun, and the two chiefdoms in Moyamba District were Kombura and Upper Banta.

Preliminary meetings were conducted first with the Paramount Chiefs. These meetings demonstrated respect to the local leaders, enabled the collection of general information about the villages, and served as venues for explaining the purpose of the research and inviting collaboration. Subsequent meetings held with village Chiefs demonstrated respect and helped to collect the information needed to finalize the selection of villages. Across the two chiefdoms within each district, there were three pairs of comparable villages, which ranged in population size from 200 to 1,100 people. In all the sites, polygamy was a common practice, and subsistence farming was the dominant means of livelihood.

Participants

The study population consisted of the approximately 6,000 people who live in the twelve research sites. The participant observation methodology included over time relatively large numbers of people, whereas a much smaller number of people participated in the group discussions, in-depth interviews, and other research activities outlined below. Although the ethnographic work did not include representative sampling, it entailed a systematic effort to include people who lived on the margins of the community and were exceptionally poor even by Sierra Leone standards. The researchers sought deliberately to include both adults, who often comprised the child protection mechanisms, and children, who are agents of their own protection

as well as beneficiaries of protection mechanisms. Special attention was given to working with women as well as men since many of the protection risks and mechanisms have important gender components. By collecting information from different subgroups such as young women, young men, adult women, and adult men, it was possible to simultaneously learn about the views of each subgroup and to contrast the perceptions of adults (men and women) and young people and to contrast the perceptions of girls and boys.

Research Team

The research team included a mix of national and international researchers. The national team of Sierra Leonean researchers was led by a Lead National Researcher (Dora King) and a Moyamba Team Leader (David Lamin), both of whom had extensive research experience, keen ethical sensitivity, and in depth understanding of the local culture and languages of Sierra Leone. The Moyamba Team Leader and the Lead National Researcher contributed to the development of the methodology and oversaw the data collection by a team of three researchers in Moyamba and Bombali, respectively.

The six national researchers who worked under the Team Leaders had been selected for their prior experience in qualitative research, motivation, openness, and flexibility. The six national researchers participated in a two-week workshop (conducted January 17-25, 2011) in Freetown that aimed to develop the skills needed to collect quality data, sharpen ethical awareness and ability to manage challenges that might arise, and to field test and finalize the research tools. The workshop used a highly participatory methodology that included vignettes, role plays, discussion of ethical dilemmas, group problem-solving discussions, and field experience in participant observation, group discussions, and in-depth interviews. After the workshop, the Team Leaders worked with the national researchers in their respective sites, offering mentoring and supervision to insure the collection, recording, storage, and sharing of data of high quality.

The international researchers, who were from the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, oversaw the research design and methodology and the collection of quality data, ensured that the research met appropriate ethical standards, led the analysis and interpretation of the data, and prepared technical reports on the research and its findings. The research was overseen by a global inter-agency reference group, coordinated by Save the Children, who provided advice at key points in the research study. Within country, an inter-agency reference group consisting of partners such as the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, UNICEF, ChildFund, Defense for Children International, Plan International, Save the Children, War Child Holland, and World Vision advised on issues such as site selection and research ethics.

Research Tools and Plan

The general research plan was for each researcher, who spoke the local language, to live in a particular village for two weeks and to collect information until saturation was reached using methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, timelines, group discussions, body mapping, and key informant interviews. Participant observation entailed making first hand observations of children in the context of family, peers, school, work, religious practice, and community life. Hour-long, in-depth interviews of a flexible nature were used to learn about the views of individual participants from various sub-groups and to probe why participants held the

views that they had expressed. Timelines were used to learn about how participants viewed the normal child development process, identify key developmental milestones and what marks the transition from childhood to adulthood, and learn about children's roles and responsibilities at different stages of development.

Group discussions of approximately 90 minutes duration with approximately 10 participants were used to identify the things that local people saw as the most serious harms to children and to trace out the two most typical pathways and mechanisms of response to each of the top two child protection issues in regard to a hypothetical child. The discussion participants came from a pre-defined sub-group such as teenage girls, teenage boys, women, and men. Within each subgroup, participants were selected with an eye toward capturing diversity of, for example, socio-economic status and ability status.

Body mapping was used to engage young children (5-13 years of age) and learn about their perspectives by having a group of children trace the outline of a child on a large sheet of drawing paper. Having colored in the drawn figure and named it, the children were asked questions such as "What do the eyes see that they like?" and "What do the eyes see that they don't like?" Similar questions were asked regarding ears, mouth, hands, etc. Care was taken not to probe what the children said since the intent was to avoid exploring the child's own, possibly painful experiences.

In order to learn about linkages between community processes and the national child protection system, key informant interviews were conducted with Chiefs, members of Child Welfare Committees, and NGO child protection workers. At the district level, interviews were conducted with members of the District Council, staff of the MSWGCA, and members of the Family Support Units (FSUs), which include a social worker and a police officer, both of whom have been trained how to handle sensitive children's issues. Under the national law, the FSUs are the appropriate channels for reporting criminal offenses such as sexual abuse of children.

The plan for data collection called for each researcher to conduct four group discussions (one each with teenage girls, teenage boys, adult women, and adult men), fifteen in-depth interviews, ten timelines, multiple body mappings, and regular participant observations. During week 1, the emphasis was on participant observation, group discussions, timelines, and body mapping, whereas in week 2, more emphasis was placed on in-depth interviews. This phased approach aimed to build the trust that was needed for in-depth interviews, and the early conduct of group discussions was intended to provide a snapshot of similarities and differences of views in the community, identify people who should be selected for in-depth interviews subsequently.

Numerous logistical and other challenges necessitated adjustments to the plan and the use of a flexible, contextualized approach. After the workshop, only five field researchers were available immediately, and this left the Moyamba and Bombali teams with three and two researchers, respectively. As a result, it was necessary to extend the research beyond the March 1 end date that had been envisioned originally. Additional delays due to illness and the need to have typists prepare the records pushed the end date for the research back to April 11, 2011.

Research Ethics

The research was conducted with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, beneficence, and nonmaleficence in mind. All the researchers were bound to the Save the Children Child Safeguarding policy and its Code of Conduct, and they respected principles of informed consent and confidentiality. To guard against the harm that could be caused by asking about specific cases of abuse, the researchers asked general questions that pertained to all children in the village rather than to particular individuals. The researchers tried to avoid or manage the problem of raised expectations by presenting themselves as members of a Columbia Group research team and explaining that participation in the research would not bring material benefits. To avoid the problems associated with an extractive approach, the research design included steps to feed the information obtained back to the communities for purposes of verification and reflection. In both the preparatory workshop and in the field research, emphasis was placed on the need for ongoing reflection and discussion of ethical issues and for a self-critical stance in which one views one's own work through the lens of the humanitarian imperative Do No Harm.

Data Capture, Transcripts, and Records

To capture accurately the participant's exact words, without summarizing or inserting one's own categories or vocabulary, the researchers tape recorded their interviews, jotted down notes during the interview, and prepared afterwards compressed verbatim transcripts without names and other identifying information. The Lead National Researcher and the Moyamba Team Leader regularly read the written transcripts of their respective researchers, checked them against the tape recorded interviews, and advised on how to improve their accuracy, comprehensiveness, and overall quality. Although the interviews were conducted in languages such as Mende, Temne, and Krio, the researchers decided to take notes in English because it is a written as well as a spoken language. Records of each interview or activity were typed up, usually by a professional typist, and stored by the appropriate team leader.

Data Analysis

Two international researchers used an intensive (55 person days), grounded methodology of reading and rereading the entire data set, identifying natural categories and consistent patterns that emerged. Common categories (e.g., types of risk) and patterns (e.g., patters of response) were defined inductively, that is, by observing them at whatever levels they appeared, and variations were noted. These categories and patterns were checked through discussion among the researchers, and revisions were made as necessary. The categories and patterns served as working hypotheses that were then checked by re-reading and further analytic discussion among the researchers. To identify narratives that illustrated key categories and patterns, the two researchers independently identified and then discussed the representativeness of quotes from people in different areas. Also, the method of contrasts was used to identify gender differences in perceptions or differences between subgroups such as teenage girls, teenage boys, adult women, and adult men.

Limitations

The research did not involve a national sample, and the short time frame of the research limited its depth compared to that achieved by traditional ethnography. Limitations arose also from the collection of data by field researchers who were still in the process of honing their skills and from the necessity to conduct a small number of interviews via translation. Issues of confidentiality arose when names and other individual identifiers appeared in numerous records. In addition, the research relied primarily on people's perceptions. It did not attempt to record the incidence rates of particular risks or responses.

KEY FINDINGS

The participants were highly appreciative of the approach of learning about what local people do to care for their children and to respond to various harms to children. Some Chiefs commented that this was not something that agencies or researchers typically did in Sierra Leone. Findings specific to children and child protection are summarized below.

Children, Childhood, and Child Development

Children were defined not according to their age but to the individual's dependency, role, or activities. In general, children were regarded as people who cannot do things for themselves and are dependent on their parents or other adults. Consistent with this view, even people who were over 18 years and would have been regarded as adults in Western societies were seen by the participants as children if they were unable to do things for themselves. The importance of activities was visible in the widely shared view that once young people have become sexually active, they are adults since sexual intercourse is by definition adult activity. Children were viewed in relational terms that recognized the interdependent roles of children and parents and the importance of children helping to do the family's work. Participants also viewed children as means of continuing the family name and maintaining the memory of the parents.

Discernible developmental markers, milestones, and age-appropriate activities were visible. When children are born, the parents usually conduct a naming ceremony in the first week. For the first year of life, mothers carry their children in a cloth tied to their backs, enabling them to do their farming and continue breastfeeding. Between years one and four, children were weaned, and once they had begun to walk, they were usually left by themselves while the parents went to their farm. Alternately, they were left in the care of an older sister who was not going to school. Between the ages of five and eight years, significant changes occurred in children's roles, responsibilities, and daily activities. Children began attending primary school, and they took on a wider array of family work responsibilities that were different for girls and boys. Typically, they had to do family work in the morning, walk to school (which in many cases, involved distances of several miles), work in school all day, walk home, where they continued their family work and tried to make time for homework.

Between nine and twelve years of age, girls and boys took on additional work responsibilities, with sharper differentiation in their work. Boys worked on the father's farm, and girls did a mixture of farming and an increasing amount of 'house work.' Physical differentiation between girls and boys also became more pronounced in this period, as boys' physical stature increased

and, near the age of twelve years, many had hair beginning to show under their arms. Key aspects of physical maturation for girls were the emergence of breasts and the beginning of menses, which many participants saw as markers of the transition into adulthood. Complementing these physical changes were behavioral changes such as engaging in sex (mommy and daddy business).

In early adolescence, some boys continued working and also attended secondary school, though few secondary schools existed in many areas. To pay the school fees, many boys worked in order to earn money. Significant numbers of boys, however, dropped out of school and did farming, joining a company (a village cooperative) in which people did rotational work together. At this stage, teenage boys also did 'heavy work' such as climbing palm trees for fruit used to make palm oil and palm wine, and hunting with their fathers. At fifteen years, boys performed demanding tasks such as brushing the bush, which included cutting tress and harvesting rice. In some villages, boys smoked marijuana and drank palm wine, whereas girls did not.

During these years, many boys and girls became sexually active. Young girls are often said to have assumed 'full womanhood,' and some parents arranged early marriages for the daughters during this period. Outside of marriage, there were strong tendencies for peers to have sex, which often occurred in conjunction with dance activities late at night.

At twelve to fourteen years of age, both boys and girls were increasingly regarded as adults eligible to transition to Junior Secondary School. In practice, however, many girls dropped out of school when they became pregnant or had married. Marriage often occurred following initiation into the Bondo Society. In many cases, the marriages were informal, hasty arrangements made because the girl was pregnant. Such marriages lacked the security and psychosocial supports that traditional arrangements had provided, and they left many girls at risk of abandonment and neglect. Boys, too, were increasingly regarded as adults since they had been initiated, showed deeper voice and physical maturity, were sexually active, and did the work of adult men.

Protective Factors and Preventative Mechanisms

The communities under study exhibited numerous protective factors, which are supports or processes that aided children's healthy development, and preventative mechanisms, which had been established to avoid the occurrence of preventable harms to children. Key protective factors were parental care and support from extended family members. Parents cared for their children, fed and clothed them, showed them how to become contributing family members, and taught proper behavior such as respect for elders and not stealing or fighting. Most parents sent their children to school and valued education. Grandmothers and elders frequently supported children and families by offering guidance and advice. Extended family members also helped to create a protective environment by, for example, an uncle taking in the children of his deceased brother.

In the community, important protective factors were access to education, friendships with other children, and support from natural helpers such as teachers, religious leaders, women leaders, and youth leaders. In most communities, the Chief and other traditional leaders were seen as people who helped children and intervened when problems arose. Valuable preventative mechanisms were provided by the Chiefs and the traditional system of governance, which included by-laws against particular harmful practices. NGOs and Family Support Units, which included police and social workers, did awareness raising on topics such as child abuse, and this

work not only contributed to prevention but also built links between the community and the national child protection system.

Main Harms to Children and Pathways of Response

The principal risks, defined as ‘things that harm children,’ were: teenage pregnancy out of wedlock, out of school children, maltreatment of children who were not living with their parents, and children doing heavy work. Participants seldom spoke of these risks using terms such as ‘child labor’ and other terms used by child protection workers. Of the four interacting risks, the two that were most consistently cited across villages as serious problems were teenage pregnancy and out of school children. Children doing heavy work was of greater concern to people in Bombali than in Moyamba, whereas the reverse was true in regard to the maltreatment of children who did not live with their parents. Each risk is described below together with the community-based child protection mechanisms or pathways of response that participants said were used most frequently.

Teenage Pregnancy Out of Wedlock. Teenage pregnancy was a widespread, variegated problem that reflected a mixture of consensual sex, transactional sex, and sexual abuse. Consensual sex usually involved relations with boyfriends, many of whom were classmates of similar age or a few years older. Adults viewed teenage pregnancy from consensual sex as a problem only when it occurred out of wedlock, yet most girls did not regard pregnancy out of wedlock as a problem. Pregnancies out of wedlock also occurred through transactional sex with older men, which was not uncommon and was associated with material benefits such as obtaining nice clothing or getting one’s school fees paid. Sexual abuse occurred in several ways, one involved mothers ‘sending’ their daughters for purposes of material gain, often with a promise of marriage, to men who then ‘virginated’ (raped) them.

The most typical pathway of response was for the family of the girl who had become pregnant to try to reach a settlement with family of the boy who had impregnated her. When the pregnant girl became aware of her pregnancy, she began a delicate process of informing her parents, which was often done through an intermediary since the girl feared her parents’ wrath. To avoid direct confrontation with the mother and father, the pregnant girl often disclosed her pregnancy to her close girl friend. The friend told her own mother, who in turn told the pregnant girl’s mother. Mothers also learned about the pregnancy by other means such as gossip or direct observation.

Having learned about the pregnancy, the mother usually told the father, who sometimes became very angry and blamed the wife. Additionally, the father demanded that the girl identify ‘the owner of the pregnancy.’ Then he and his wife went to the boy’s family, called on the boy to ‘answer’ that he was responsible for the pregnancy, and asked the boy’s family to ‘settle as a family.’ If the boy accepted responsibility for the pregnancy, the girl’s parents asked the boy’s parents to make compensation for the school expenses they had already made for the girl in the current academic year. Typically, the boy’s family agreed to pay this compensation and also to care during the pregnancy for the girl, who went to live with the boy’s family until she was ‘put to bed’ (delivered the baby). If the girl had been attending school, she had the option of returning to school after delivering her baby, and the boy’s family paid her school expenses for the following year. The baby was given to the boy’s family, which was responsible for the baby’s

upbringing and expenses. In practice, however, few girls returned to school following delivery. Following the birth of the baby, many of the young fathers dropped out of school as well and worked to pay off the settlement costs such as payment to the girl's family for previous school expenses, expenses for the girl during pregnancy, and expenses for the baby after delivery.

The usual outcome was that the girl's parents arranged for their daughter to marry the boy and to live with his family. Overall, adults viewed the arranged marriage as positive because the family had been spared the shame of having their daughter be out of wedlock following delivery and they had received significant economic benefits. However, young women did not necessarily want to live with the boy's family, who might have blamed or marginalized her. If the girl had become pregnant through relations with an older man who gave her favors, the young women often did not want to be forced into marriage with the man.

In some cases, the families could not settle the matter themselves and took it to the Chief. If, for example, the boy denied responsibility for the pregnancy or the boy's family was too poor to afford the requested arrangements, then the girl's parents brought the matter to the village or town Chief, paying a sum of money for the Chief's services. The Chief usually brought together both families and heard the case, in some cases with other authorities. The decision presented to both families typically called for both the boy and the girl to pay a fine, with the boy's family subsequently reimbursing the girl's family for her part of the fine. In addition, the Chief required the boy's family to reimburse the girl's family for the girl's school expenses for the current school year. The boy's family was also asked to pay the school expenses for the girl the year following her delivery or, if the girl did not plan to return to school, the parents were required to arrange a marriage.

Family settlement attempts sometimes failed because the boys' parents refused to pay, or the accused boy continued to deny responsibility for the pregnancy or had even run away. The Town Chief referred such cases to the Section Chief, who attempted to handle it but referred it to the Paramount Chief otherwise. In the rare case that the Paramount Chief was unable to resolve the case, the case was sent to the FSU.

The second typical pathway of response to teenage pregnancy out of wedlock was to get an abortion, without telling the girl's or the boy's family about the pregnancy. If the girl first told her close girl friend that she was pregnant, the friend either told her boyfriend or advised her to tell her boyfriend. Her friend also advised her to run away to a big town 'to abort' the pregnancy, and she asked the boyfriend for money to pay for the abortion. Similarly, if the pregnant girl first disclosed her pregnancy to the boyfriend, he advised her to 'spoil the pregnancy.' Typically, the boyfriend went to his friends to ask for money to pay for the abortion. In most cases of attempted abortion, the pregnant girl and her friend went to traditional healers ('people with medicine'/ 'native doctors'), who gave the pregnant girl herbs to ingest. Alternatively, she went to a traditional birth attendant (TBA) or a hospital for an abortion. If the abortion succeeded, then the girl's parents often did not learn of the pregnancy. All three abortion venues, however, were dangerous, since unsuccessful abortions sometimes led to the death of the pregnant girl. The girl's parents typically attributed their daughter's death to witchcraft, although the girl's close friend sometimes told the girl's parents that attempted abortion had caused the death.

In Moyamba District, a variation of this pathway occurred in response to 'tampering,' that is, cases in which the pregnancy had resulted from exploitative sex that had been arranged or encouraged by a mother. In such a case, the pregnant girl usually told her mother of her pregnancy or the mother noticed it herself. The mother often colluded with the girl in keeping the pregnancy secret from the father, and advised the girl to get an abortion from a traditional doctor or a TBA. When the attempt succeeded, the father did not learn of the pregnancy and the family was spared the embarrassment that public disclosure would have caused. If, however, the mother deemed it necessary to tell the father of the daughter's pregnancy, she told him, and he then took the case with his wife to the Chief.[2] In some cases, the Chief referred the matter to the police, who took the man to jail and initiated an investigation. In others, the Chief summoned the accused man, levied a fine, ordered him to pay the girl's school fees, and instructed the man to marry the girl.

Again, a partial gap occurred with respect to how young women and adults viewed this outcome. Parents and extended family members viewed this as a positive outcome because the man had been punished, the girl was being cared for, and her marriage had protected the honor of the girl and the family. However, some young women said this was a negative outcome because the girl had no desire to be forced into marriage with the older man and feared she would be consigned to a life of maltreatment at his hands, those of his other wives, or both.

Out of School Children. The participant observation indicated that significant numbers of young people who were of school going age were out of school. Both children and adults said that many children did not attend school because the schools were located too far away and children did not like having to walk long distances, in some cases five or more miles, to get to school. Many children did not attend school because their parents could not afford to pay school fees and other school related costs. Also, some families required their children to work on their farms rather than go to school. Many children dropped out of school because they engaged in heavy work and were too tired, sick or otherwise unable to go to school. Similarly, children in Moyamba were often sent to live with uncles and others who elected not to send the children to school, making them work instead. Many girls dropped out of school after they had become pregnant, which happened frequently following initiation into Bondo Society.

Other factors that led children to being out of school included maltreatment at school, for example, through beating by teachers, and being subjected to teasing and discrimination. Widespread polygamy also played a role, as stepmothers tended to want their stepdaughters to work rather than go to school. Some adults believed that children were out of school because they engaged in bad behavior such as gambling. When leaving school was due to children's own decisions, adults tended to attribute such decisions to the children not having developed proper values or behavior, describing them as "stubborn and "not serious." In contrast, children pointed out the significant hardships and stresses that they and other children encounter each day.

The dominant pathways of response to children being out of school was through the extended family, and which pathway was taken depended on the cause of children being out of school. For example, if a girl were out of school because she was pregnant, the girl's family sought a

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[2] Sometimes the family did not take the case to the Chief but attempted to reach a family settlement with the older man's family.

settlement with the family of the boy, as described above. If, however, the child was unable to pay school expenses, he usually told either the parents (typically the mother first, who often told the father), an aunt or an uncle, or the teacher or school chairman. Once family members had become aware that the child was out of school, they typically took steps to obtain the money needed to pay the costs of the child going to school. Usually, they took on extra work or went to extended family members to borrow the money needed to send the child back to school. An aunt or an uncle who had learned the child was out of school sometimes helped to pay the school expenses or gave the child work and compensation that made it possible to pay the school fees. Teachers also stepped forward in some cases and either assigned the child paid work that enabled return to school or paid the costs himself or herself.

In some cases involving boys who were out of school, the pathway of response was via a friend. For example, a boy who had stopped going to school told a friend, who then helped to pay the school related costs. Alternately, the friend advised the boy not to leave school for good but to work and earn money for a time and then return to school. Either path yielded the same outcome—the boy returned to school. This outcome was viewed positively not only by the boy and his friend but also by the boy's family and members of the wider community.

If the child had decided to stop going to school even when the parents and most adults thought he or she should be in school, the father typically used a mixture of encouragement and threat. First, he advised and encouraged the child to return to school, and he often enlisted other family members to deliver the same message to the child. If the child returned to school, then the matter was settled. If, however, the child did not return to school, then the father talked with the teacher, who in turn pressured the child, or the father threatened or beat the child. The levels of satisfaction with the outcomes achieved in such cases often varied for children and parents. When children did not return to school, the parents were usually unhappy, whereas the children themselves were satisfied. Conversely, when some children eventually returned to school, the parents were happy, yet at least some children were unhappy because they had not wanted to go to school.

Maltreatment of Children Who Were Not Living with Their Biological Parents. Significant numbers of children lived not with their biological parents but with uncles, aunts, or other extended family members. If both parents had died, for example, the children were taken in by extended family members of the parents, typically the father's. Discrimination in such situations was quite common, and the 'new' children in the household were expected to do extra work. Often, such children were subjected to maltreatment such as food deprivation and beatings, and they lacked access to the dominant pathway of response outlined below.

The dominant pathway of response was through the father, who typically learned the situation from the child or through the mother or an uncle. Having learned about the situation, the father or uncle visited the child's caretaker in order to investigate. If the father saw that the child was suffering and the caretaker had not provided proper care, he asked the caretaker to 'please return my child back to me' took the child home. While the child was home, the father looked for a different, better placement site for the child. A second option was to 'settle' with the caretaker, getting an agreement on changes that the caretaker would make. If the father saw that the care arrangements were not too bad or that no other options existed, he advised the child to go back

and live with the caretaker. The latter advice was not uncommon when living with the caretaker was the child's only means of continuing school.

Heavy Work. Heavy work was interconnected with problems such as maltreatment of children who were not living with their parents. Not uncommonly, older children were sent to live with relatives in another town as a means of gaining access to either a junior or senior secondary school. Extended family members typically expected children to work in exchange for food and housing while they attended school. However, some extended family members provided them with neither food nor access to school and only demanded that they work. Engagement in heavy work was identified as one of the leading causes of children either not being able to learn or being out of school altogether.

Some children who engaged in heavy work viewed it as a contribution to their families. If heavy work was too much for a child, the dominant pathway of response was for the child to complain to the mother, saying 'the work is heavy.' In turn, the mother requested the father to 'change the duties' of the child. The father then asked the child which type of work he would prefer, and the child selected work that was satisfactory to both himself and the father. In a secondary pathway of response, the child (in some cases with the encouragement of an aunt) told the Chief or the town head man of his situation. The Chief then called the parents and advised them how to treat children.

In summary, nearly all the pathways of response to the main harms that people identified were through indigenous processes involving the extended family or the Chiefs.

Additional Harms to Children

Throughout the discussions of harms to children, significant discrepancies between the views of children and adults were visible. For example, children were far more likely to view heavy work as painful and harmful. Similarly, children frequently indicated beating, abusive language, and punishment as things that the 'heart disliked,' whereas most adults did not view those as sources of harm. Differences also emerged in regard to additional harms identified by participants. Prominent among these were child beating; cruelty; incest, rape, and sexual abuse; neglect and bad parenting; witchcraft, abduction and ritual murder; and child rights.

Child Beating. Beating children or 'flogging' was used widely for purposes of disciplining children, as adults had the attitude of 'spare the rod, spoil the child.' Whereas adults tended to believe that children are not affected negatively by beating, children's body mappings frequently identified flogging as one of the things they did not like to see, hear, or feel. Young people also said that parents and teachers sometimes used harsh flogging. Some people, however, viewed harsh beatings as unnecessary and harmful, and they pled with those who did the beating to stop.

Cruelty. FSUs in both districts said that each year, there are cases such as that in which an 8-year-old child reached her hand into soup that her mother was preparing for a male guest. As punishment, the mother put the girl's hand inside a plastic bag, poured kerosene on it, and lit it, causing severe burns to the girls' hand. In other cases, severe beatings by parents caused broken bones or significant wounds. Even much less severe treatment seemed harsh to children. In body mappings, children referred to a punishment called 'peppering,' wherein the parent forcibly put

hot chili peppers into the child's mouth. They also expressed their dislike for the punishment wherein parents pressed the hand of a disobedient child onto a hot iron.

Sexual Abuse. Sexual abuse of children by family members was referred to as 'incest,' whereas sexual abuse of children by people outside the family was referred to as 'rape' and sometimes as 'tampering.' FSUs said that incest was far more common than child rape and typically occurred at the hands of an uncle. Teachers were also reported to have sexually abused girls, often by demanding sex in exchange for passing grades. This was part of a wider problem of sexual abuse or 'tampering' by adult men who had power and money. Some parents wanted such relationships because of the income it brought to the family, whereas other parents disapproved of this practice.

Neglect and Bad Parenting. Inattentive parenting and neglect occurred in forms such as leaving young children (2-3 years of age) on their own and in danger of wandering onto a road, where they could be hit by passing vehicles. In other cases, parents sent their children to buy cigarettes and rum, which aroused concerns among some adults that parents were 'exposing them' to bad habits at an early age. In some villages, women said that they withheld care and basic necessities from a child as a means of retaliating against their husbands.

Witchcraft. Some people believed that children's pain and illness was caused by witchcraft done in response to a child stealing. Children, too, were believed to engage in witchcraft in order to prevent their parents from sending them back to school when they did not want to attend school any more.

Abduction and Ritual Murder. There were also reports of the ritual murder of children for purposes of consuming particular body parts, which was believed to confer great power. No direct observations were made of such rituals, yet children and villagers expressed fear of them.

Child Rights. Adults expressed strong concerns that child rights were interfering with their ability to be good parents, for example, to discipline children and teach proper behavior. People also said that NGOs had taught children about their rights without placing equal emphasis on responsibilities, thereby contributing to unruly behavior.

Linkage of CBCPMs with the National Child Protection System

Connections between CBCPMs and the national child protection system were, for the most part, weak or even nonexistent. Although some positive connections were visible, the majority of the sites had little, if any, contact with police, social workers, trained human rights workers or other elements of the national child protection system.

Family Support Units. FSU members expressed strong motivation to support vulnerable children, reach out to communities, and apprehend, interrogate, and aid the prosecution of perpetrators of criminal offenses against children. The FSUs were quite active in responding to criminal cases such as those involving child abuse, and in Moyamba, some participants went to the FSU in cases of teenage pregnancy that had not been settled at family or chiefdom levels. However, most people said that they had little access to FSUs, which were not present in their

communities. Access was a problem because local people could not afford to go to a large town or city where the FSUs were to report offenses. Also, local people said they could not afford to take time away from their farming and preferred to keep problems private. In closely knit villages, people regarded everyone as part of their family and were reluctant to report matters outside the 'family' due to fear of censure and isolation. Also, participants said that the FSU actions provided little benefit to the victims, as little happened following their report. Although the FSUs were linked with but distinct from the regular police, people's fears of the police may have limited their willingness to engage with the FSUs. Also, the motivation of Chiefs to work with FSUs was inconsistent.

Social Workers. The MSWGCA had designated for each chiefdom a government trained Social Worker, whose role was to help build awareness of children's issues and to respond to and prevent various kinds of child abuse. Although there was one Social Worker per chiefdom, several Social Workers in Moyamba covered two different chiefdoms. Also, few Social Workers lived in or near the chiefdoms to which they had been assigned. In some villages, people had not seen their Social Worker for over a year and that as a result, they had turned for support to other venues such as traditional mechanisms or social workers who had been trained by NGOs. Significant obstacles to the work of the Government Social Workers were poor coordination with NGOs and lack of money to cover their travel expenses or basic office items such as phones and computers. Similarly, Probation Officers often had to take children in conflict with the law into their own homes and provide them food, thereby reducing the amount of food available for their own children.

Human Rights Workers. Several of the researched villages had people who had been trained to do human rights education and promotion, monitoring, and reporting to police and other authorities as was appropriate to the seriousness of the offense. The human rights workers responded to serious cases such as child rape, and they collaborated in appropriate ways with Chiefs. However, some people saw human rights as undermining parental authority and imposing outside ideas that did not fit the local context.

Child Welfare Committees

CWCs had been established at chiefdom level in the research sites and had received training by international NGOs. Although CWCs had been mandated by the Child Rights Act, opinion was mixed in regard to their functionality and effectiveness. Child protection workers and government workers in the formal system tended to see CWCs as effective, particularly when the Paramount Chief actively supported their work. The weight of the evidence, however, indicated that CWCs were struggling. Most participants made no mention of CWCs. Also, CWCs encountered challenges such as inconsistent training, lack of standardized operational guidance, excessive reliance on volunteer effort, and village people's lack of access to the CWCs, which were typically located in Chiefdom headquarters towns.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The wider implications of the findings presented above and the recommendations that follow from them are presented below as numbered statements, which are not listed in order of priority. The complete recommendations are in body of the report (see pages 100-107).

1. A significant disconnect exists between the formal child protection system and community based child protection mechanisms. Overwhelmingly, people respond to child protection risks not through CWCs and the formal system but through traditional mechanisms involving the extended family, the Chiefs, and customary laws and practices.

Although elements of the national child protection system were present in both Districts and in varying degrees in the four chiefdoms, most people made little use of them. This was true even in cases of criminal offenses that, according to national law, are to be handled by the formal child protection system. Overall, the national child protection system was underutilized at community level.

Lack of access no doubt contributed to this disconnect. A deeper source of the disconnect, however, was that local people had a different world view and set of narratives, meanings, and social rules and customs than those that underlie the national child protection system. It was as if the people in the villages lived in a different world than that inhabited by policy makers and workers in the national child protection system. From the worldview of local people, there were many reasons for not using the formal child protection system. Also, the weight of social customs impeded the use of the national child protection system. Village people had well defined family and community mechanisms for handling harms to children, and they felt comfortable using these. Social norms mitigated against using the formal system, which was viewed as reflecting ‘other’ values and as inhibiting practices such as corporal punishment that were seen as necessary for rearing children in an appropriate manner.

The recommendations in Sierra Leone are for child protection agencies and stakeholders in all areas, including urban areas, to use elicitive methods to document grassroots-level mechanisms of child protection and for the Government and NGOs to prioritize the development of effective linkages between community-based child protection mechanisms and the national child protection system. Globally, NGOs should rethink the common practice of establishing many child protection committees that do not build on existing CBCPMs. Also elicitive methods for studying CBCPMS and their linkage with national child protection systems should be included in efforts to map national child protection systems.

2. The imposition of international concepts of child protection, most notably of ‘child rights,’ has had harmful effects. Alternative, respectful approaches toward social transformation are necessary for bringing communities within the national child protection system.

The strong backlash against child rights and related concepts indicates that the didactic, top-down approach to introducing these concepts has been counterproductive. Local people hold a different world view than that in which the discourses of child protection and child rights are

grounded. Local people see child rights and related concepts as outsider ideas, the imposition of which evokes feelings frustration and being disrespected. With the emphasis on what parents did wrong and no attempt to relate concepts such as human rights in local practices, it was natural for people to feel criticized, undermined as parents, and resentful toward child rights.

Fortunately, more respectful, non-didactic methods of introducing concepts such as child rights are available. These involve use of a slow, dialogue oriented approach in which one learns first about people's views of children and their needs and then build connections between local views and those of international human rights standards. The recommendations are to initiate inter-agency dialogue and learning, both in Sierra Leone and globally, about more respectful, effective ways of introducing child rights and other child protection concepts and to avoid the imposition of CWC, focal points, and other community links with the national child protection system.

3. Multiple protective factors that are indigenous to families and communities are essential in enabling the resilience of Sierra Leonean children.

Two key protective factors that emerged were being in the care of competent, biological parents and being in school. In Sierra Leone, the recommendations are to engage communities and child protection workers in dialogue about how to minimize and prevent the maltreatment of children who are not living with their biological parents, and to enable dialogue and collaboration between the child protection and education sectors on how to make schools safe, child friendly environments that promote learning and well-being. Globally, there should be learning initiatives aimed at developing better models for preventing and minimizing the maltreatment of children who are not living with their biological parents. Also, efforts to build national systems of child protection should avoid a deficits approach and take steps to strengthen protective factors and aid prevention.

4. Children and adults held somewhat divergent views regarding child protection risks and satisfaction with response pathways and outcomes.

Children were more likely than adults to view tasks such as fetching water using 5-gallon containers as stressful and harmful for children. Similarly, adults and family members typically thought it was appropriate to require a pregnant girl to marry the man who had impregnated her. Some girls, however, did not share that view, particularly if the pregnancy had resulted from sexual exploitation by an older man. In light of these divergences, it is vital to include children in the development and operation of the national child protection system, avoiding an adult-centric approach and supporting dialogue and mutual understanding between children and adults.

The recommendations are to use child friendly methods in community-level child protection assessments, to make girls' and boys' central in discussions of what are the appropriate outcomes of the national child protection system, to engage with girls and boys as agents of their own protection, and to support dialogue and increased understanding between children and adults on issues of child protection and well-being. Globally, children's views should inform efforts to learn about the effectiveness of CBCPMS and to insure boys' and girls' meaningful participation in national child protection systems.

LESSONS LEARNED

Among many valuable lessons learned, the most fundamental one was that this research required high levels of collaboration with the Government at both Freetown and District levels, UNICEF, and diverse NGO partners. This collaboration helped to not only overcome various logistical challenges but also learn how to do the research in an effective, appropriate manner. Also, the financial support from different partners was of fundamental importance.

A central lesson was that it is essential to have a research coordinator who can focus on a mixture of management and logistics. With regard to capacity building, a key lesson was that the preparatory workshop had been too short and had not included practice in the kinds of rural settings where the actual data collection occurred. The importance of ongoing capacity building via field mentoring and supervision was apparent, and the system of having Team Leaders who regularly mentored the field researchers proved to be productive. However, an alternative model that might help to raise the data quality is to have in each district, a pair of researchers, one of whom is the team leader. In this approach, each team leader would be a primary data collector who could give intensive mentoring to another individual researcher.

Perhaps the greatest lesson of this project is that more ethnographic research such as this is needed as a necessary complement to the diverse efforts to map national child protection systems. Bottom-up learning is essential for learning how to build effective links between communities and national child protection systems.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In diverse contexts, community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) are front line efforts to protect children from exploitation, abuse, violence, and neglect and to promote children's well-being.[3] CBCPMs are defined broadly to include all groups or networks at grassroots level that respond to and prevent issues of child protection and vulnerable children. These may include family supports, peer group supports, and community groups such as women's groups, religious groups, and youth groups, as well as traditional community processes, government mechanisms, and mechanisms initiated by national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For example, CBCPMs include Child Welfare Committees, religious groups that support orphans and other vulnerable children, family (including extended family) processes for responding to problems such as teenage pregnancy, and traditional processes wherein a Chief and/or elders adjudicate or respond to violations against children.[4]

CBCPMs are foundational elements of a national child protection system for reasons of scale, sustainability, and systems building. For one thing, CBCPMs offer a means of prevention and response on a large scale to the diverse child protection threats that arise at community level. In addition, CBCPMs are potentially sustainable means of protecting children and promoting their well-being. Many CBCPMs are indigenous, that is, developed solely by local people who own and manage them and work to insure their effectiveness over time. Externally facilitated CBCPMs, too, can be sustainable, if they have been organized in a manner that promotes community ownership.[5] CBCPMs are also highly important in building national systems of child protection. If CBCPMs connect with and support the national system, then the national system of child protection stands a greater chance of being effective and of improving the lives of vulnerable children and families. If, however, there is a disconnect between CBCPMs and the wider child protection system, the ability of the national system to actually reach grassroots people and improve the lives of children and families may be limited.

A global desk review of mostly externally facilitated CBCPMs was conducted as the first phase of work and foundation for this study.[6] A persistent global issue it identified is the tendency of external agencies to develop community-based child protection mechanisms in a manner that does not build adequately upon the community mechanisms and local resources that are already present in communities. Whether in emergencies or long-term development contexts, external NGOs have tended to focus more on setting up new committees or mechanisms rather than on working through existing structures and processes.[7] In fact, the desk review indicated that top-down imposition and the creation of parallel systems are widespread problems that lead

[3] Eynon & Lilley(2010); Wessells (2009a).
[4] In this paper, the term 'community' is defined as a group of people who live and interact in a particular area and share common social identity and bonds of kinship, ethnicity, and religion. Even where no community as such is discernible (e.g., in refugee camps), there may be groups or networks of people who care for children and respond to protection violations. These groups or networks are also of interest.
[5] Wessells (2009a).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

to low levels of ownership, effectiveness, and sustainability; create backlash; and cause unintended harm by, for example, undermining existing systems.

Inter-agency Learning Initiative on Child Protection Systems and Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms

Since January 2009, a group of child protection agencies has come together around an inter-agency learning initiative on community-based child protection mechanisms. A first phase of work in 2009 reviewed the available global evidence on community-based mechanisms and their impact on children's protection. A significant finding was the low quality of the evidence base and the severe lack of evidence of impact on children's outcomes. In addition, the issue of linkages between community mechanisms and the national child protection system was highlighted as a potential factor for effectiveness. A planning meeting, supported by the Oak Foundation, was held in September 2009 with 17 national and international organizations to develop the vision for a second phase of work, an interagency process of grounded learning.

The second phase aims to strengthen child protection practice through action research in three selected countries – Sierra Leone, Kenya and a country in Southeast Asia to be determined. Broadly, this research process aims to test whether one can increase the effectiveness of CBCPMs by strengthening their linkages with the national child protection system. The research is part of a wider interagency initiative that aims to: (1) increase understanding of how communities protect children and the role of CBCPMs in this; (2) generate a robust evidence base on the effectiveness of different community-driven strengthening interventions that enable CBCPM capacities to prevent and respond appropriately and effectively to child protection issues; and (3) establish a global community of practice around CBCPMs.

This interagency research aims specifically to strengthen the practice of child protection. It will support vulnerable children and families in the three countries by means of its action component wherein communities decide how to improve their CBCPMs by strengthening their linkages with the national child protection system. It is anticipated that Governments will benefit from the research by learning across countries how to develop effective community linkages in their national child protection systems and how to measure their system's effectiveness. NGOs and practitioners may benefit by developing a stronger evidence base for guiding interventions and learning how to develop community owned mechanisms that are integrally connected with national systems of child protection.

The initiative is funded with generous support from the Oak Foundation, , USAID, UNICEF, Save the Children, and World Vision. The initiative is implemented through strong interagency partnerships and overseen by a global reference group (Annex 1). Save the Children serves as coordinator for the initiative and chair of the global reference group, and the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity serves as the technical lead for the research.

This ethnographic study is the first part of a multi-year program of action research that aims to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms by supporting effective linkages with the national child protection system. An overview of the wider inter-agency initiative is provided above.

The Sierra Leone Context

Sierra Leone has a population of 6.2 million people, approximately 70% of whom are under 18 years of age. The country has undergone significant urbanization in recent years, and approximately 1.7 million people live in Freetown, the capital city. Although significant numbers of people live in cities such as Freetown, Bo, and Makeni, the majority of people live in rural areas, and agriculture is their main livelihood. Particularly in rural areas, many families are polygamous, as it is not uncommon for men to have two, three, or even four wives, each of whom might bear 3-7 children. The main religions of Sierra Leone are Islam (77%) and Christianity (21%), although animistic practices remain common in many areas.

Sierra Leone has a dual system of governance by (1) an elected government and national laws, and (2) a traditional system of governance under Paramount Chiefs and customary law. The country is divided into 14 districts, which are governmental units of administration. Particularly in rural areas, people in each district live under a traditional system of chiefdoms,[8] which are divided into several sections, each of which contains numerous villages. Each chiefdom is overseen by a Paramount Chief, whereas each section and village has a Section Chief and a Village Chief, respectively. The traditional and governmental systems interact in various ways, as some Paramount Chiefs are also Members of Parliament. Despite its small size (Sierra Leone is about the size of the U. S. state of Maryland), the transportation system is quite limited, as the poor rural roads and may be inaccessible during the rainy season.

The people of Sierra Leone have exhibited remarkable resilience during and following the brutal 11-year war that ended in 2002. Yet the scale of unmet needs remains very high in Sierra Leone, where the average life expectancy is only 42 years. Chronic poverty is a profound problem nationwide. Unemployment rates are estimated to be over 80%, and families struggle daily to meet basic nutritional needs and to achieve food security. Many people have very limited access to clean water, hospitals and clinics, and diseases such as cholera and malaria are widespread and damage the lives of large numbers of children. Many families are so poor that they are unable to send their children to school since they cannot pay the related expenses, or they may need their children to work their farms in order to have sufficient food.

The children of Sierra Leone face a multitude of child protection threats such as sexual abuse and exploitation, teenage pregnancy, dangerous labor, female genital mutilation/cutting, trafficking, HIV and AIDS, and severe corporal punishment, among others. As one example, a recent study[9] of teenage pregnancy reported that approximately half of sexually experienced teenage girls had become pregnant, frequently out of wedlock. Although some pregnancies resulted from consensual sex between peers, some pregnancies were the product of exploitation in which girls had engaged in transactional sex with older men, who provided money and other

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[8] Nationwide, there are 149 Chiefdoms.
[9] Coinco (2010).

favors. Teenage pregnancy was associated with school dropout, high levels of maternal mortality, and birth complications. These and other child protection problems indicate a powerful need for an effective national system of child protection.

National Child Protection Systems—Some Definitions

The field of child protection has no universal definition of a national child protection system, and terms such as 'formal system' and 'non-formal system' are often used in different ways. For purposes of clarity, it is useful to define how these terms are used in this report.

National child protection system. As used in this report, a national child protection system is an interlocking, dynamic set of institutions, mechanisms, norms and practices at different levels (e.g., family, community, district, society) that, in combination, have nationwide reach and protect children by preventing, responding to, and mitigating the effects of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect of children. A national child protection system may include Government institutions such as a Ministry of Social Welfare, police, and a judiciary, and many civil society mechanisms such as traditional chiefdom practices, customary law, and community-based mechanisms.

Formal vs. non-formal aspects of the system. Although traditional societies can have quite formal structures, the formal child protection system refers in this report to the parts of the national system that are constructed and implemented by the Government, often with support from mechanisms facilitated or funded by UN agencies or NGOs. Thus, chiefdom, family, and other civil society mechanisms are non-formal aspects of the system, whereas Government ministries, courts, and Government social workers and police are part of the formal system. In Sierra Leone, CWCs are part of the formal system because they are mandated by law.

Linkages. Linkages are connections between elements in the system that people actually use. A national child protection system includes vertical linkages between elements that have a wide geographic reach (e.g., district or chiefdom levels) and elements that have smaller geographic reach (e.g., village or neighborhood within a city). For example, a vertical linkage between a village and the formal system could consist of actual referrals of criminal offences to the police or of a Government Social Worker conducting educational dialogues in villages on positive parenting. Such linkages between villages and the formal child protection system are the focus of interest in the action research described in this report. It should be noted that some of these linkages can be very valuable, whereas others, such as linkages between villages and corrupt police, are harmful. Also, it cannot be assumed that such linkages are always the best option for addressing particular child protection issues, some of which may be more appropriately addressed through local, nonformal channels.

Linkages of different kinds may be important in the functioning of national child protection systems. For example, there may be valuable vertical linkages between nonformal aspects of the national system, as occurs when villages collaborate with a national civilian organization such as a National Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse. Horizontal linkages may also be of value. For example, community associations in two adjacent urban areas might collaborate in addressing the problem of children not going to school regularly. Although governments bear primary responsibility for protecting children, effective national child protection systems link government and civil society mechanisms.

The National Child Protection System in Sierra Leone

As mapped by Child Frontiers,[10] the national child protection system consists of a mixture of governmental and civil society elements, including traditional mechanisms. The core governmental elements are the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

[10] Thompstone (2010).

(MSWGCA), the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), and the national justice system. In each district, MSWGCA Social Workers are assigned to and periodically visit particular Chiefdoms for purposes of education and response to particular cases involving child protection violations. Under national law, cases of child rape and severe child abuse are handled by Family Support Units (FSUs), which operate under the Sierra Leone Police and include both police and social workers who have received training on how to work with children. Criminal cases of child abuse and also juvenile justice are prosecuted through a national system of courts. Non-criminal offenses against children or committed by children are handled through the traditional system of justice, in which key actors are Chiefs and semi-formal local courts overseen by traditional leaders. At all levels of the national system, UNICEF and international and national NGOs play a key role, particularly in regard to capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, and research aimed at strengthening the national system.

The national child protection system faces significant challenges such as severe shortages of financial resources and difficulties reaching remote areas. In addition, a significant gap has existed between the governmental and traditional parts of the system. A national study of randomly selected communities found that government actors such as police and social workers are not present in 90% of communities.[11] Also, the Child Frontiers mapping indicated that most people rely on traditional mechanisms and that greater attention is needed to building congruence between the governmental and traditional aspects of the system.

The cornerstone of efforts to strengthen the national child protection system in Sierra Leone is the 2007 Child Rights Act (CRA), which, among other things, called for the establishment of a Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in each village. To support the implementation of the CRA, UNICEF and various NGOs have helped to build the capacities of CWCs, mostly at Chiefdom level. In late 2010, the Ministry of Social Welfare, which oversees the implementation of the CRA, decided not to include village-level CWCs as part of the implementation process due to shortages of finances and operational capacities.

To support the congruence between the governmental and traditional aspects of the national child protection system and to provide more effective child protection support at village level, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in 2010 between the Paramount Chiefs, the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police, and Child Welfare Committees as represented by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. Under the MoU, each Paramount Chief will work to establish a chiefdom level CWC and a CWC in each village of his or her jurisdiction. Where it is infeasible to establish a CWC and there is no social development worker, the Paramount Chief will appoint a focal person on child abuse for each community. The focal person will report immediately cases of child abuse to the Chief, who in turn will report criminal cases to the FSU within 24 hours. In addition, the FSU will establish a FSU in each police post or appoint a policy officer to serve in its place. Although this MoU is an important step forward, it was in the early stages of implementation in April, 2011.

At a moment in Sierra Leone when significant effort is being devoted to connecting communities with the national child protection system, a high priority is to address questions such as the following. What CBCPMs exist and are typically used at village level? To what extent are these mechanisms effective in protecting children, and how are the outcomes achieved

[11] Rossi (2009).

by various CBCPMs perceived by different sub-groups, including girls and boys? What are the obstacles to building stronger connections between CBCPMs and the national child protection system? How could CBCPMs be strengthened by building more effective functional connections with the national child protection system? The wider research in Sierra Leone, the design of which is outlined below and in Figure 1 (next page), is intended to help answer these questions.

The Action Research Design

The overall research design involves distinct phases of work in each of the three countries, over multiple years. This ethnographic study is the first part of the work.

Learning About Existing Community Mechanisms. This phase aims to identify and learn about the functioning of existing community-based mechanisms using a rapid ethnographic approach and grounded learning orientation.

Child Protection and Well-being Outcomes Definition. This phase aims to define population-based positive outcomes in regard to efforts to protect children. It will blend local and outside understandings using a mixture of methods such as free-listing by random samples of children and adults, in depth interviews, and application of international instruments.

Action Research to Strengthen Community-based Mechanisms. Using participatory methodology, this phase will test the efficacy of small community-chosen interventions to strengthen CBCPMs by building more systematic, effective linkages with the national child protection system. It involves random selection of comparable communities to receive either immediate intervention or delayed intervention. Rigorous baseline measures of child protection and well-being will be collected, followed by ongoing monitoring and repeated outcomes measurement at 12 and 24 months.

Feeding Back and Influencing. Because the research is action oriented, this ongoing phase will use the information learned to strengthen child protection at multiple levels. Information from the study will be disseminated at several key points to local child protection leaders, who will be invited to reflect and act on the findings. It will also involve influencing and advocacy activities with global, regional and national agencies and groups to take the lessons learned on board.

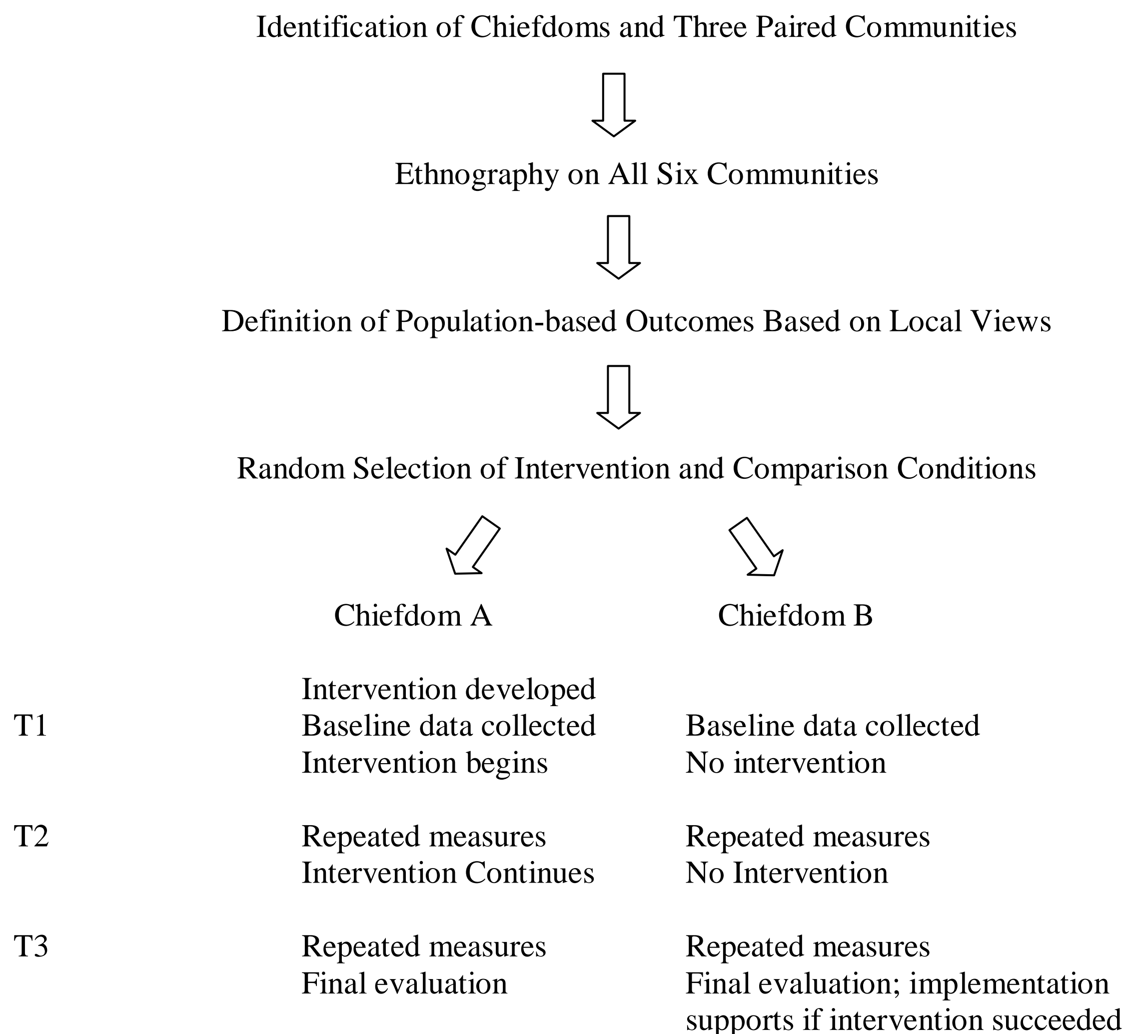

Figure 1. The design of the action research in each of two districts in Sierra Leone. The ethnography is the first phase of a multi-phase design. [12]

[12] The inclusion of a comparison condition in the wider design is not inherently problematic since there is no denial of a proven intervention to the comparison chiefdom. If the community designed intervention proves effective, steps will be taken to make it available to the comparison chiefdoms.

Objective and Approach

The objective of the ethnographic research was to identify and systematically learn about the functioning of existing CBCPMs, whether indigenous or external. The key questions asked in this research are shown in the box below. Efforts to learn about CBCPMs commonly take a child protection assessment approach that uses the vocabulary and embodies the assumptions of the international child protection community and asks about mechanisms such as CWCs. For purposes of this research, however, it seemed important to take a step back, bracket the usual vocabulary and assumptions, and learn deeply about how local people understand children, harms to children, and existing community mechanisms for responding to and preventing those harms. In many respects, the research embodied the stance that 'we don't know what we don't know,' meaning that we do not know at that juncture which questions to ask or how to ask them. There is a danger that if we ask about 'child protection' at the start, we will not get very far since local people may have different understandings of what is a child, when childhood ends, and what protects or harms children. If outsider language and assumptions were imposed, the likely result would be backlash and feelings by local people that they have been disrespected.

Key Questions, Ethnographic Phase

- How do local people understand:
  What is childhood and children's development?
  What are girls' and boys' normal activities, roles, and responsibilities?
  What are the main child protection risks or sources of harm to children?
  What processes or mechanisms are used by families or communities to support children who have been affected by various protection threats? What are the outcomes of those mechanisms, and how satisfactory are the outcomes in the eyes of different stakeholders?
- How do child protection risks vary by gender and age?
- Whom to girls or boys turn to for help when protection threat X arises?
- Who are the natural helpers and what networks do they have?
- What are the indigenous, 'traditional' mechanisms of protection and how are they regarded by different groups?
- Apart from indigenous mechanisms, what groups or structures (e.g., Child Welfare Committees or CBCPMs facilitated by NGOs) exist in communities and/or Chiefdoms? How are they perceived by local people? What are their roles, responsibilities, and functionalities?
- How are very sensitive/complex issues addressed ?
- Who has or does not have access to existing protection mechanisms (e.g., do the poorest of the poor or people not related to the Chief have access)?
- What do government and NGO actors see as their main roles and responsibilities in regard to CBCPMs?
- What are the linkages of community mechanisms with the national child protection system? How do communities perceive government mechanisms such as FSUs?
- What are the gaps in those linkages?
- What needs are there for strengthening the community based mechanisms?

To achieve its objective, the research took the approach of ethnography, which aims to scientifically describe a specific society or culture. Ethnography uses participant observation and elicitive questions to learn about local categories and practices in a descriptive, nonjudgmental manner. Ethnography is well suited to the objective not only because of its utility in learning

about cultural practices and its attentiveness to local language and idioms but also because it can be adapted for purposes of rapid, issue focused learning even in crisis affected contexts.[13] In this study, child protection was the set of issues that was focused on.

Ethnography is also very useful in learning about how gender, power, roles, and social positions shape the views of people who occupy different roles and positions in the community and the wider child protection system. Using a method of contrasts, for example, one can juxtapose the view of young women with those of adults or of young men, or of very poor people with people who are better off. Similarly, one can juxtapose the views of NGO and Government child protection workers with those of community people, including children. Such contrasts can help to reveal significant divergences in how these actors view various parts of the national child protection system, how they understand the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and most important, their views of the functioning of the system. Learning about the perceptions and practices of people who occupy different positions within a child protection system is a fundamental step toward creating a functioning, effective national system of child protection.

[13]Mignone, Hiremath, Sabnis et al. (2009)

METHODOLOGY

The research used a methodology of rapid ethnography that focused on child protection and aimed to provide a rich, grounded picture of local beliefs, values, and practices in regards to children, their developing activities and social relations, and the community mechanisms for their protection and well-being.

By nature, ethnography forgoes the use of structured questionnaires in favor of a slower, flexible, contextual process of learning as described below. A key part of the learning process was to identify the actual functioning of CBCPMs. This was done by asking in multiple contexts a set of questions that provided a functional mapping of child protection mechanisms and processes. What happens when a particular child protection issue arises? Who do people actually go to? Who is consulted and who takes the decisions? What are the outcomes of the decisions, and how are those outcomes seen by stakeholders in different positions? In essence, this was a bottom-up process of mapping the functional pathways through which people identify and respond to child protection risks.

Site Selection

The selection of district research sites was guided by criteria such as security, accessibility, diversity, and availability of NGO partners that can help support the research, particularly in the intervention stages. Through a highly consultative process, Moyamba and Bombali Districts were selected as the research sites because they were judged to be typical of Sierra Leone, and they may illuminate its regional and ethnic diversity. Moyamba is a southern, mostly Mende speaking district, whereas Bombali is a northern, mostly Temne speaking district. Bombali has many international NGOs, including ones that work on child protection, whereas Moyamba has very few. These districts are not a national sample but are intended to provide information that is relevant to other districts.

The overall action research design (see Figure 1, p. 28) calls for three pairs of communities in each district that are comparable with regard to size, mode of living, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, access to resources such as health posts and schools, and external child protection supports such as NGOs and Government Social Workers. Because in each district, three communities will subsequently be in an intervention condition while the other three are in a comparison condition, it was important that the matched pairs of communities have relatively little social interaction. Extensive interaction across matched communities could have enabled the spontaneous spread of the intervention to the other site, making it impossible to isolate the effects of the intervention.

The three pairs of communities within Moyamba and Bombali, respectively, were identified through a phased, iterative process. First, two comparable, nonadjacent chiefdoms in each district were identified, and then three comparable pairs of communities across the chiefdoms were identified. Data collected from UNICEF, the Government Department of Statistics, and the District Councils informed the selection of chiefdoms. Also, group discussions were held with

knowledgeable stakeholders from Government Ministries (e.g., MSWGCA and the Ministry of Education), District Council members and staff (e.g., Development Officers), and child protection NGOs. These discussions, which focused on the aforementioned criteria and used a consensus methodology, were highly valuable since many published data were somewhat out of date or did not pertain to chiefdom or village levels. Also, because the participants came from different agencies, the discussions provided rich information about key issues such as where external NGOs worked or which chiefdoms had more schools than others.[14]

After the two comparable chiefdoms within a district had been identified, a site visit was made to each chiefdom headquarters for purposes of relationship building, checking the accuracy of the information obtained through the sources described above, and obtaining additional information about villages. Whenever possible, the first step in the site visit was to meet with the Paramount Chief, who is the traditional leader and highest authority in the chiefdom. If the Paramount Chief was away, a phone call was made to him or her,[15] and the initial meeting was with the Chairman or other elders or authorities whom the Chief recommended. These meetings demonstrated respect to the local leaders and served as venues for explaining the purpose of the research and inviting support and collaboration. Typically, Chiefs and elders expressed interest in the research and seemed pleased by its focus on what Sierra Leonean people are already doing to protect and support their children. They identified the people in the Chiefdom who had the most comprehensive accurate information about different villages and towns. Discussions with these key informants was used to identify prospective research sites at village level. Across the chiefdoms, attention was given to finding comparable villages, with emphasis also on sites that local leaders regarded as typical of the chiefdoms.

Subsequently, the prospective villages were visited for purposes of relationship building, verifying information on the villages, and learning more about the sites. The village meetings typically began with a discussion with the village Chief or other village leaders and elders in order to demonstrate respect, explain the purpose of the research, and invite support. As had occurred at chiefdom level, the village Chiefs typically expressed interest in the research and liked the approach of learning from and documenting the community mechanisms already in place. Direct observation and discussions with knowledgeable people in the village made it possible to verify in an approximate manner information about the population, resources available, modalities of living, and other selection criteria.

Chiefdoms and sites in Bombali District. Of the thirteen chiefdoms in Bombali District, Liebiesaygahun Chiefdom and Magbiamba N'dohahun Chiefdom were selected for this research. Both are governed by a traditional administration, the head of which is the Paramount Chief.

Liebiesaygahun Chiefdom, like Magbaimba Ndorhahun, was ranked among the bottom three in the District for development indicators in an inter-agency study conducted after the Sierra

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[14] This method had its challenges as well since new grants to NGOs can lead to rapid changes in child protection programming. In Moyamba, for example, one of the chiefdoms (Dasse) that had been selected initially had to be changed since in late 2010, as Plan International had received funding to do child protection and education work there yet not in the companion chiefdom.

[15] In Moyamba, women or men may be Paramount Chiefs, though in other districts, only men are Paramount Chiefs.

Leone war. Though significant gains have been made in the areas of health, education and sanitation, both chiefdoms retain their status.

Libiesaygahun is approximately 14 miles by 22 miles and has a population of approximately 13,476 people. The chiefdom headquarters town, Batkanu, is located approximately 40 miles from Makeni, a major city in the area and the district headquarters. It is settled primarily by the Loko and Temne, who practice both Islam and Christianity, with Islam being the dominant religion. Indigenous African rituals and systems of thought remain intrinsic to everyday life and continue to have a notable impact on the health and well-being of children through the practice of initiation rituals, herbal medicine, and medical diagnosis through divination. Subsistence farming is the primary economic activity, and the main crops grown are rice, pepper, millet, cassava, corn, and beans. Children play significant roles in the planting and tending of crops during the rainy season. The chiefdom includes twenty primary schools and five junior secondary schools, several of which are Islamic. A senior secondary school was recently opened in Batkanu, but it has yet to hire full time teachers. The Chiefdom has 5 health posts located in Gbonka, Matoto, Mabimba, Batkanu, and another unidentified village. The major NGOs working in the chiefdom include War Child Holland, and Plan International. War Child recently conducted trainings for the CWC at the chiefdom level.

Magbaimba N'dorhahun Chiefdom has an estimated population of 8,577 people.[16] The chiefdom headquarter town, Kagbere, is approximately 38 miles from Makeni and the seat of the Paramount Chief. The chiefdom is divided into nine sections, each headed by a section Chief. Due to poor road networks, many of its villages remain remote and inaccessible by car. Villagers have access to only three clinics located in the villages of Kagbere, Mambiama, and Hunduwa The chiefdom has 15 primary schools (including community schools) and one junior secondary school at Kagbere, which serves students who walk from as far as 9 miles away. Students who need to attend a senior secondary school must live in towns such as Gbendembu (in the neighboring chiefdom of Gbendembu N'gowahun), Rokulan (in Sanda Tendaren Chiefdom), or Makeni. Subsistence farming is the primary economic activity, with rice, millet, couscous, cassava and yams as the main crops. The main sources of daily protein intake are fish and beans, while goats, sheep and chickens are consumed on special occasions.

Of the numerous NGOs that are active in Magbaimba, some work closely with the Paramount Chief, who is a former social worker. War Child, Holland helped to set up peace clubs and other pyschosocial support structures at Kagbere three years ago. Action Aid has constructed schools and water wells. Plan International conducts programs on health and education and currently supports a school feeding program. ChildFund trained the CWC in the past year and is currently implementing an intervention on teenage pregnancy. ENCISS and DCI are also active in the chiefdom.

The three research sites in each of these chiefdoms are indicated in Table 1.

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[16] The 2004 report from the Sierra Leone Statistics Office put the population at 8,577. The figure given by the paramount Chief during a conversation in 2011 was 10,500 . Accounting for population growth, this may be more accurate.

Table 1. Research sites in Bombali District.

Liebiesaygahun Chiefdom	Magbiamba N'dohahun Chiefdom
Mashebra	Pelewala
Sendugu	Robanka
Simbaya	Hunduwa

Chiefdoms and sites in Moyamba District. The two chiefdoms selected in Moyamba District—Kombura Chiefdom and Upper Banta Chiefdom—are both among the poorest chiefdoms (class C) in the district. Both are home to predominantly Mende speaking people, and each is headed by a Paramount Chief.

Kombora Chiefdom has a population of 9,577 people, who are considered to be the poorest and most vulnerable people in the district. The Paramount Chief and other administrators such as the chiefdom speaker, the treasury clerk, and the chiefdom police live in the chiefdom headquarters town of Bauya. Although Mende is the dominant ethnic group, people in some villages along the borders with neighboring Bumpe, Ribbi, and Gbonkoleneke Chiefdoms speak both Mende and Temne. Islam and Christianity are the main religions in the chiefdom. Subsistence farming is practiced widely, with rice as the main crop, and the main farm products sold are rice, benni seed, cassava and cassava products (garri and foo-foo), palm oil, nut oil, and vegetables. The sole secondary school in the chiefdom and is located in Bauya, and children from villages within a seven mile radius attend this secondary school or are sent to Moyamba town to attend school. FORUT, an NGO that has constructed health posts or traditional birth attendant (TBA) huts, has been active in setting up child rights clubs in schools and training children on their rights.

Upper Banta Chiefdom consists of five sections with 46 villages, has a population of 6,098 people, most of whom are Islamic, and is crisscrossed by the Jong River which runs through Moyamba and Bonthe Districts. The Paramount Chief lives in the chiefdom headquarter town of Mokele, where he is assisted by the chiefdom speaker. The people, who are mostly Mende, practice fishing and farming, with rice and cassava being their main crops. Cassava cultivation is slowly becoming dominant since rice yields have been insufficient to feed the population. The Jong River provides opportunities for fresh water fishing on a small scale. Unlike Kombora, this chiefdom has huge deposits of Bauxite, which an international company mines. Although the mining has resulted in some road improvements it has not significantly improved the lives of the people and has caused deforestation and water contamination. There is a secondary school in Mokele and also in Guala. Most children who pass into secondary school, however, attend school in Mattru Jong in Bonthe District and come home for weekends to help parents work on the farm. No NGOs were active in Upper Banta during the period in which the research was conducted.

The three research sites in each of these chiefdoms are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Research sites in Moyamba District.

Kombura Chiefdom	Upper Banta Chiefdom
Gondama	Gondoma
Levuma	Mongerewo
Senehun	Morgongbay

Study Population and Participants

The study population consists of the approximately 6,000 people who live in the twelve research sites, the population of which ranged from 200 to 1,100 people. The observation and activities conducted as part of the participant observation methodology included over time relatively large numbers from this population. A much smaller number of people participated in the group discussions, in-depth interviews, and other research activities outlined below.

Although the ethnographic work did not include representative sampling, a systematic effort was made to include people who are positioned differently with the communities. Instead of using convenience samples, the field researchers observed who lived on the margins of the community and reached out to people who were exceptionally poor even by Sierra Leone standards. The researchers made a deliberate effort to include both adults, who often comprised the child protection mechanisms, and children, who are agents of their own protection as well as beneficiaries of protection mechanisms. Special attention was given to working with women and well as men since many of the protection risks and mechanisms have important gender components. By collecting information from different subgroups such as young women, young men, adult women, and adult men, it was possible to simultaneously learn about the views of each subgroup and to contrast the perceptions of adults (men and women) and young people and to contrast the perceptions of girls and boys.

Research Team and Organization

The research team included researchers at two levels—national and international. The national team of Sierra Leonean researchers was lead by a Lead National researcher (Dora King) and a Moyamba Team Leader (David Lamin). These lead researchers were selected through a wide, consultative process that networked extensively with other researchers and people in higher education posts in Sierra Leone. The search for the Lead National Researcher was guided by criteria such as strong skills of ethnography, field ethnographic experience in Sierra Leone, ethical sensitivity, prior management of research teams, understanding of the local culture and languages of Sierra Leone, experience in training and capacity building, and ability to work effectively with multiple partners, including the Government of Sierra Leone. Initially, this search focused within Sierra Leone, yet expanded subsequently to include Sierra Leoneans who live in other countries due to a paucity of highly qualified, available candidates. The selection process included interviews of the finalists and criminal background and reference checks of the top candidate before a contract was offered. The selection of the Moyamba Team Leader occurred through wide consultation with different child protection stakeholders, direct

observation of field discussions by the Principal Investigator, and UNICEF's willingness to secund David Lamin to the project.

Both lead researchers played an important role in developing the research tools described below, insuring their contextual appropriateness, and finding the appropriate local idioms within which to convey key ideas or questions. The lead researchers oversaw the work of and mentored six field researchers. The Moyamba Team Leader played a key role in identifying appropriate candidates for field researchers, many of whom had participated in various UNICEF research projects or those of international NGOs. The Moyamba Team Leader, together in most cases with an international researcher, interviewed the candidates, who were selected according to the following criteria: strength of motivation, prior qualitative research experience, ethical sensitivity, openness, experience working with young people and on protection issues, team orientation, flexibility and problem solving ability, interpersonal skills, and ability to speak local languages.

The Moyamba Team Leader and the Lead National Researcher oversaw the data collection in Moyamba and Bombali, respectively. Their roles were to manage, mentor, and backstop sub-teams of field researchers and insure the collection, recording, storage, and sharing of data of high quality with the international team. The team leaders played a key role in contextualizing the methodology to the Sierra Leone context, ensuring that ethical standards such as confidentiality and informed consent were adhered to, collating data, and overseeing the typing of the data and the storage of records. The national team advised on various aspects of the research and helped to ensure the collection of quality data.

The international researchers were from the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, which had the principal responsibility for the technical aspects of the research. The Columbia Group researchers included Drs. Mike Wessells (Principal Researcher), Kathleen Kostelny, and Lindsay Stark. Dr. Stella Neema of Uganda offered advice at multiple points advisor on the ethnographic work. Working closely with the national research team, the Columbia Group was responsible for developing the ethnographic research design and methodologies, overseeing the collection of quality data, ensuring that the research met appropriate ethical standards, analyzing and interpreting the data, and preparing technical reports on the research and its findings.

The research was overseen by a global inter-agency reference group, coordinated by Save the Children, who provided advice at key points in the research study (see Annex 1). Within country, an inter-agency reference group consisting of partners such as the Ministry of Social Welfare, UNICEF, ChildFund, Defense for Children International, Plan International, Save the Children, War Child, and World Vision advised on issues such as site selection and research ethics.

Selection, Training, and Capacity Building of Field Researchers

To prepare the field researchers for their work, a two-week preparation workshop was conducted January 17-28, 2011 in Freetown under the joint leadership of the international team and the national team leaders. As outlined in Annex 2, the workshop aimed to develop the skills needed to collect quality data, sharpen ethical awareness and ability to manage challenges that might arise, and to field test and finalize the research tools, which are described below. The workshop used a highly participatory methodology that included vignettes, role plays, discussion of ethical dilemmas, group problem-solving discussions, and field experience in participant

observation, group discussions, and in-depth interviews. These activities were guided by an action-reflection methodology wherein group reflection and problem-solving followed each activity. This group process created a spirit of mutual learning and camaraderie, and it also helped to identify specific improvements in the research tools and processes.

The trainees in the workshop were eight Sierra Leoneans who had been selected according to the criteria outlined above. One of the participants was a researcher and practitioner whom Save the Children had seconded to the project. The plan was to select from this group the six researchers who showed the greatest skill in ethnographic methods and interest in the research. Delaying the final selection of researchers to the end of the training made sense because few people in Sierra Leone have ethnographic skills, and the emphasis of the educational system on rote memorization has not developed the flexibility and problem-solving skills that ethnography requires. It seemed best to learn through observation who had the highest skill levels. As it turned out, two trainees elected not to participate in the subsequent research.

Following the training, the six field researchers divided into Moyamba and Bombali teams, respectively, and went to their respective sites. The Moyamba Team Leader provided ongoing mentoring and capacity building for the Moyamba team, and the Lead National Researcher provided ongoing mentoring and capacity building for the Bombali team. In both Moyamba and Bombali, the team leaders periodically observed directly the work of each field researcher, collected and read their reports, and offered advice on how to improve the quality of one's work. This mentoring played an important support function for the field researchers, who lived and worked under challenging circumstances.

Research Tools

The various research tools are summarized below, and the revised tools are presented in Annex 3.

Participant observation: The field researchers lived in their respective research sites approximately six days a week, typically over a period of two weeks. Visiting schools, sharing meals, and accompanying people to their farms, they made first-hand observations of children in the context of family, peers, school, work, religious practice, and community life.

In-depth interviews: The field researchers conducted one-on-one interviews of approximately one hour duration in the local languages with diverse young people (13-18 years) and adults. The interviews aimed to probe the questions outlined above, yet were conducted in a contextual, flexible manner that took into account the participant's gender, their situation and social position, and their interests and willingness to discuss particular topics. The interviews were open-ended in that they were not strictly scripted, and the researchers had been trained to ask probing questions and to follow the interests of the participants.

Timelines: Timelines were used to learn about how participants viewed the normal child development process and to identify key developmental milestones (e.g., naming, going to school, initiation) and what marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. To learn about children's roles and responsibilities at different stages of development,

questions were asked about the typical activities and responsibilities of children at different ages and the typical progression of development of children over time. On average, timelines took 40-60 minutes.

Group Discussions: Group discussions were researcher facilitated discussions with 7-10 participants over a period of approximately 90 minutes. In the first part of the discussion, participants identified the things that harm children (other than poverty and health problems) and then ranked them, identifying the three that were most serious. In the second part, the researchers asked questions that identified the two most typical pathways and mechanisms of response to each of the top two child protection issues in regard to a hypothetical child. Questions included what happens when threat X arises or to whom do children typically go, who responds, what are the various steps in the support or redress process, who takes the decisions, what are the outcomes, and how satisfied are different sub-groups (e.g., parents, girls) with the outcomes. The discussion participants came from a pre-defined sub-group such as teenage girls, teenage boys, women, and men. Within each subgroup, participants were selected with an eye toward capturing diversity of, for example, socio-economic status and ability status.

Body Mappings: To engage young children and learn about their perspectives, the researchers conducted body mappings (typically for 30-45 minutes) with small groups of children 5-13 years of age. In this method, a child lay on a large sheet of paper while other children used crayons to trace an outline of his or her body. Having colored in the drawn figure and named it, the children were asked questions such as "What do the eyes see that they like?" and "What do the eyes see that they don't like?" Similar questions were asked regarding ears, mouth, hands, and so on. Care was taken not to probe what the children say since the intent was to avoid exploring the child's own, possibly painful experiences. Also, talking in depth with young children requires specialized skills and very keen ethical sensitivities, the development of which requires more than a two-week workshop.

Key Informant Interviews: In villages, in depth interviews were conducted with Chiefs and child protection workers (e.g., CWC members, NGO workers, social workers) in order to learn about their views of child protection threats in their villages; the various mechanisms (e.g., traditional or indigenous mechanisms, Child Welfare Committees, NGO facilitated mechanisms; government mechanisms) that may or may not be present in their villages; and the linkages of community mechanisms with the national child protection system. At district level, research team leaders or international researchers interviewed officials from the Ministry of Social Welfare and police in order to learn about how they view their responsibilities, relations, and effectiveness in regard to CBCPMs. The key informant interviews invited suggestions for strengthening the linkages between the national child protection system and the CBCPMs, thereby providing useful information for the subsequent action phase of the research.

Research Ethics

The research was conducted in a manner designed to ensure that the benefits to participants outweighed any costs or unintended harm, and that the research process embodied the ethical principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, beneficence, non-maleficence, and the best interests of the child. Recognizing that in practice, researchers often cause unintended harm, careful steps were taken throughout the research to strengthen ethical awareness, to prevent and manage Do No Harm issues, and to provide ethical oversight. Ongoing reflection and discussion of ethical issues by the researchers and local stakeholders who have keen insight into the local context has been a central part of the methodology.

To begin with, the researchers at all levels were bound by Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy, which defined key principles, harmful actions that must be avoided, and processes for reporting violations and responding to them in an appropriate manner. During the training workshop for the field researchers, a constructive discussion occurred with Save the Children staff about whether the researchers should be bound by the Child Safeguarding Policy requirement to report any abuses observed in the community (e.g., a father using harsh corporal punishment to discipline his child). It was agreed that this kind of direct reporting on child protection violations in the community would have made it difficult to conduct the research. A mandate for direct reporting on community violations could have undermined the trust that ethnography requires, as community members might have felt that they were being watched and judged.

Collectively, it was decided that the ethnographic research needed to maintain an observation and learning orientation rather than an immediate action orientation. An important point of consensus that emerged from the discussions was practitioners and researchers contribute to child protection in different yet complementary ways. Practitioners' contributions are more immediate and action oriented, whereas the researchers' contributions occur in a longer time frame and are aimed at developing the new

Key Research Principles

1. Humanity. The researchers and the research process shall respect the rights of all people and treat all women and men and boys and girls of all ages in a humane manner that supports their dignity, saves lives, and alleviates suffering.

2. Impartiality. The research will not discriminate against particular people or groups of people and will insure that assistance is provided according to people's needs and rights.

3**. Neutrality.** The researchers and the research process will neither take sides in hostilities nor stir or participate in political controversies or processes.

4. Beneficence. The research will have discernible benefits—including benefits that relate to information and social improvement—to the participants and affected people. As explained below, this principle requires that the research will not be extractive and will include specific steps that benefit the participants and other affected people.

5. Nonmaleficence. The research will take appropriate steps to prevent and mitigate physical or emotional harm to the participants and other affected people. The research process will include specific, contextually appropriate steps to prevent and minimize harm by protecting confidentiality, insuring informed consent, and requiring adherence to a Code of Conduct.

6. Best interests of the child. The research will respect and protect the best interests of children, defined under international law as people under 18 years of age. It is recognized that the well-being of children is closely interconnected with that of their parents, extended family, and community.

learning that can guide the strengthening of practice. Both approaches, however, embody the same core values of protecting children.

Based on this consensus, Save the Children adapted its policy to fit the needs of the ethnographic research while adhering to the values underlying the policy. In place of direct reporting of violations in the community, the research teams agreed to prepare a written report on the child protection issues they observed during the research with the intent of helping to guide subsequent interventions. If a child disclosed that he or she was being abused, the researchers agreed that they would give the child in a discreet manner the contact information of a worker from a child protection agency who had previous expressed willingness to help in such a case. This arrangement also left room for the individual researchers to report violations directly if they felt it was necessary to do so. Of course, the researchers were strictly obliged to report any child protection violations on the part of other researchers in the team, and a process for doing this and for allegations management and action via Save the Children were in place.

Some Questions Considered in Regard to Informed Consent

- Obtaining the approval and support of the Chief is necessary on entering the villages. Will village people feel free to not participate in the research when the Chief has expressed his or her support for it?

- Well educated outsiders are typically viewed by villagers as wealthy, powerful, and in a position to help meet basic needs. Will village people fear that by saying 'No' they might reduce the chances of getting support for themselves, their families, or the entire village?

- How can the purpose of the research be explained in a way that people understand and that does not raise unrealistic expectations?

- What does informed consent mean in a collectivist context?

- Is it appropriate to ask a woman to participate without having obtained the husband's permission in advance?

To help establish a norm of critical reflection on the ethics of the research, the preparatory workshop included extensive discussion of ethical dilemmas and issues associated with raised expectations, psychological harm resulting from aggressive questioning, violations of confidentiality, poor coordination and parallel systems, discrimination, and imposition of outsider approaches, among others. Key challenges in the conduct of ethical research were analyzed in regard to informed consent and confidentiality, and strategies for managing the challenges were agreed upon while recognizing the need to be flexible and learn from actual field experience. The workshop discussions were informed by the Working Guide on Research Ethics (see Annex 3, pp. 124-128) that had been developed for this research and that drew

extensively on the ethical insights from diverse researchers and practitioners.[17] The box below presents a sample of some of the kinds of questions and dilemmas that were discussed in regard to informed consent.

The workshop participants agreed that to do the research in an ethical manner required ongoing reflection and a self-critical stance in which one views one's own work through the lens of the humanitarian imperative Do No Harm. Table 3 shows in a Do versus Don't format some of the consensus points that emerged from these discussions and informed field practice.

Table 3. Ethics of Research: Selected Do's and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Learn about local beliefs and practices with an eye toward sensitive description and capturing local people's own words, beliefs, and practices.	Pass judgment on people's beliefs and practices, get involved in political discussions, or try to talk people out of their current positions.
Be sensitive to people's work schedules.	Force people into interview times that conflict with their farming or other key activities.
Pay careful attention to hidden power asymmetries that can subtly compel people to say 'Yes' even when they actually prefer to say 'No."	Obtain informed consent via the Chief only, without asking individuals.
Learn from trusted informants how to inform people effectively about the purposes of the research, what kinds of information will be collected, who will see the information, how the information will be used, and how to enable people to say 'No' without fear of negative consequences.	Ask people with low literacy rates to thumbprint or sign sheets of paper they do not understand or fear may be used against them.
Keep names, personal identifiers, and other confidential information in a safe, locked place that is accessible only to people who have a legitimate need to know.	Leave confidential files on an open desk or computer or include names and other identifiers in public documents such as reports.
Work in a transparent manner that avoids raising expectations.	Make promises that one cannot keep, or present oneself in a misleading way.
Work in a gender sensitive manner.	Assume that girls and boys are the same, face identical protection risks, or have identical mechanisms of coping and protection.
Ask for permission to tape record discussions as a means of capturing the participants' exact words.	Turn on the tape recorder unless and until each participant has granted permission.
Ask questions about young people in the community in general, not focused on particular	Ask aggressive questions, for example, about the participant's own experience with problems such as

[17] Allden, Jones, Weissbecker et al. (2009); Boyden, 2004; Hart & Tyrer (2006); Mackenzie, McDowell & Pittaway (2007); Scheck & Williamson (2005); Straker (1996); Wessells (2009b).

individuals or cases.	sexual abuse.
Identify in advance of the research a natural helper or social worker who could provide psychosocial support to someone who is distressed by the discussions.	Assume that someone who becomes distressed during a discussion will heal spontaneously and has no need of follow-up.

Following the workshop, the lead researchers took ongoing steps to cultivate ethical awareness and learning, identify problems in regard to adhering to the ethical principles described above, and managing the problems. The lead researchers regularly visited the field researchers in their respective villages and observed and commented on how they interacted with people, how they collected and managed the data, and other issues. These visits served as excellent venues for discussing ethical issues that had arisen that required dialogue and mentoring from a more experienced researcher. The lead researchers also reviewed the field researchers' notes and tapes, and they offered suggestions on how to maintain ethical research or how to correct inappropriate practices. Most important, the lead researchers helped to stimulate reflection on the impact of researchers' presence in the local communities.

The ethnographic work was conducted in a manner designed to limit the problem of raised expectations that can leave community people feeling frustrated and abandoned. The preliminary meetings with Chiefs and leaders, subsequent discussions with community people, and the actual data collection sessions all emphasized that the purpose of the research is to learn about the CBCPMs that are already in place. No promises of action were made. The researchers introduced themselves as members of the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity in order to avoid the raised expectations that can occur when one is introduced as a staff member of an NGO or UNICEF. At the same time, the research sought to avoid taking a strictly extractive approach, which community people may experience as exploitative. Following the preparation of a report on the research, the main findings will be fed back to the communities both to check the accuracy of the findings and to invite reflection by the participants on their implications. This group reflection itself is hoped to become a catalyst for community guided and owned action to protect children more effectively. In addition, the overall research design includes an action component.

Data Capture, Transcripts, and Records

During each interview, the researcher took jottings during the interview and recorded the interview on tape, assuming that the participant had granted permission to tape. Soon after the interview, the researcher used the jottings and the tape recording to prepare a compressed verbatim transcript of the interview. The highest priority was to capture accurately the participant's exact words, without summarizing or inserting one's own categories or vocabulary. The compression was intended primarily to delete repetitions and to reduce the volume of the records, thereby making the task of analysis more manageable. Significant time was devoted during the preparatory workshop to developing the skills needed to prepare accurate, complete compressed verbatim transcripts.

Because the participants spoke in local languages such as Mende, Temne, Loko, and Krio, a significant dilemma was whether the written transcripts should be in the language used by the

participant or in English. Use of the local languages in the transcripts had the advantage of staying very close to the exact words used by the participants. The disadvantage, however, was that the local languages had evolved for oral use, and the researchers deemed it very challenging to write in those languages. English had the advantage of being a written as well as a spoken language, yet there were risks that the researchers' translations would be imperfect[18] and might lose too much of what the participants had said. On balance, it was decided to prepare the written transcripts in English, with key phrases or terms written in the local language and also translated and explained in English. To ensure the transcripts' accuracy, the Lead National Researcher and the Moyamba Team Leader regularly read the written transcripts of their respective researchers, checked them against the tape recorded interviews, and advised on how to improve their accuracy, comprehensiveness, and overall quality.

The researchers also prepared compressed verbatim transcripts for the group discussions. Present in each group discussion were two researchers, who served as discussion facilitator or as notetaker. In some cases, the two researchers switched roles mid-way in the group discussion, which had two parts (see Annex 3, pp. 144-150). During the discussion, the note taker took extensive jottings, recorded the results of the rankings of the various protection risks, and tape recorded the discussion (assuming the participants had granted their informed consent). Because the discussions often took place in somewhat noisy places or in rooms that had poor acoustic qualities, care was taken to capture as much as possible via the jottings and to assign a particular number (e.g., R1, R2, etc.) to each participant. The latter provision made it possible for readers of the transcripts to see whether one or two participants had dominated the discussion and to identify the diversity of views expressed. Shortly after the group discussion, the two researchers reviewed the jottings, filled in key points, and used the tape recording to develop the compressed verbatim transcript. As had been done with respect to the interviews, the team leader read the transcripts, checked them for accuracy, and advised on how to improve both the group facilitation and the accuracy of the transcripts. In some cases, the team leaders observed or served as note-takers or facilitators for group discussions, providing additional mentoring as part of these activities.

Written notes were also prepared following the use of research tools other than interviews (in-depth or key informant) and group discussions. Each researcher engaged daily in participant observation activities, made jottings as needed, and took time in the evenings to write up the descriptive notes. For the timelines, the researchers did not collect compressed verbatim transcripts since that would have added too much to an already demanding workload. Instead, they kept the visual timelines that participants had either drawn or helped to make, and they made a written record of the key events in a child's life, the main milestones and markers, and key activities and responsibilities of young children, school aged children, and teenagers. Similarly, for the body mapping activities, the researchers kept the body maps that the young people had drawn, and they also took notes on which items the eyes, the ears, or other body parts liked or disliked. The body mapping records also included information on how many children said a particular item and particular words or phrases the children had used.

To protect confidentiality, the researchers kept the audio tapes in their possession. They also reused the tapes every few days, thereby avoiding having a large library of tapes that someone

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[18] All the researchers spoke and wrote English, yet their English skills varied, and none had English as their first language.

might try to access. In regard to the written records, the team agreed to remove names and other individual identifiers, except in cases such as a discussion with a Chief where it was important to know who the participant was. For the most part, the records included only general identifiers such as ‘adult woman’ or ‘teenage boys’ and codes such as R1 and R2. If the researchers needed to keep a record of names, for example, in order to keep track of people they had already interviewed or that they hoped to line up for an interview, they kept the names in a separate book that was not publicly available and kept in a safe place. Also to protect confidentiality, this report uses only general identifiers such as ‘Mother in Moyamba.’

Initially, the field researchers attempted to prepare their submitted written records by laptop computer. However, this proved to be unworkable due to the large volume of material, the researchers’ relatively slow typing speeds, and limited access to electricity. Midway through the data collection, a decision was taken to hire typists who would work from the researchers’ handwritten notes. This arrangement reduced the burden of work on the researchers yet also added another layer of logistical complexity particularly since the typists were usually in cities such as Freetown and Makeni, away from the research sites.

Work Plan and Implementation

The initial plan had been to conduct the research in four weeks with separate teams of three field researchers working in Moyamba and Bombali, respectively. The Lead National Researcher would oversee the Bombali team, while the Moyamba Team Leader would oversee the Moyamba team. The teams would be formed with an eye toward gender balance and inclusion of people who had the appropriate language skills. The teams would work sequentially in the two chiefdoms, with each researcher living for two weeks in one village in chiefdom A and then for two weeks in one village in chiefdom B. In each village, they would conduct four group discussions (one each with teenage girls, teenage boys, adult women, and adult men), fifteen in-depth interviews, ten timelines, six body mappings, and regular participant observations. The researchers would work six days per week, and the team leader would visit them approximately every other day in their research site. For purposes of data checking, debriefing, and discussing issues as a group, the research team in each district would spend alternate nights together in the same guesthouse.

The plan for data collection during week 1 was to emphasize participant observation, group discussions, timelines, and body mapping, and to place greater emphasis on in-depth interviews during week two. This phased approach aimed to provide the time needed to build trust, which is essential for the collection of meaningful data via in-depth interviews. The early conduct of group discussions was intended to provide a snapshot of similarities and differences of views in the community, identify people who should be selected for in-depth interviews subsequently, and avoid arousing suspicions or feelings of exclusion that might have occurred if a researcher had talked only with a small number of people during the first week.[19] To conduct the group discussions, pairs of field researchers would team up, working first in the village of researcher A and then in the village of researcher B. Similarly, the body mapping activities, which were done with groups of children and which generated considerable excitement, were intended to build trust in the researchers, who conducted the mappings publicly.

[19] Only a few in-depth or key informant interviews could be conducted in a single day due mostly to the lengthy process of preparing the condensed verbatim transcripts.

Although this plan served as a useful guide, logistical and other challenges necessitated a number of adjustments and the use of a flexible, contextualized approach. Only five field researchers were available immediately following the preparation workshop. Three of them were assigned to the Moyamba Team, and two were assigned to the Bombali team.[20] Because this meant that the Bombali team would complete only 4 villages in the four weeks, the time frame for the research was extended for an additional two weeks to allow the data collection in the remaining two villages in Bombali. Additional extensions became necessary due to factors such as illness, the long travel times required to move between villages to do the group discussions, the researchers' heavy burden of work, and the additional time needed to type up transcripts and reports. Although the research had been planned to end by March 1, it continued until early April.

Operationally, the researchers were unable to meet as a team every other night since the research sites were too far apart and the travel costs were very high. Although there were few opportunities to come together as a group, the team leaders met regularly with each field researcher in his or her village for purposes of observing the work, reviewing and checking the work completed, and advising on how to make improvements.

Language challenges also necessitated adjustments, notably the use of translators in some cases in Bombali. It was not uncommon for residents of Bombali to want to interview in a language the researcher did not speak. Some residents who understood Krio, for example, wanted to speak in Temne, possibly because they had greater fluency of expression in that language or preferred it for reasons related to ethnicity and identity. To address this problem, it was necessary on occasion for researchers to work through a translator.

Also, in some cases, logistics challenges led to adjustments in the mode of work (not the research tools themselves), offering the opportunity to try out different approaches. In one site in Bombali, two researchers lived in the village for one week and collaborated on the data collection. Also, for one village in Bombali(separate from the aforementioned), it was not possible to conduct the group discussions during the first week, so they were done during the second week that the researcher was in the village. These variations were regarded as potentially useful in no small part because the initial plans had a rationale but were not backed by evidence that they were the most effective approach. The variations afforded useful learning opportunities.

Data Analysis

Working with the Lead National Researcher and the Moyamba Team Leader, two international researchers (Kostelny and Wessells) analyzed the data using a grounded methodology.[21] In an intensive process that included 55 person days, the two researchers read and reread the entire data set (see Annex 4) in a holistic manner until natural categories (e.g., types of child protection risks) and consistent patterns (e.g., pathways of response to particular risks) emerged. For each social unit (e.g., village, chiefdom, district), functional network analysis was conducted in order to identify common patterns of response to perceived threats to children's well-being. This was done by integrating the information from different sources and

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[20] In March, a third researcher who had participated in the preparatory workshop joined the Bombali team.
[21] Charrnaz (2004).

using it to construct a functional network matrix (see Annex 3, p. 173) for a particular village or at higher levels.

It was not assumed that there would be emergent common categories at any particular level (e.g., the district level). Rather, common categories and patterns were defined inductively, that is, by observing them at whatever levels they appeared. These categories and patterns were checked through discussion among the researchers, and revisions were made as necessary. The categories and patterns served as working hypotheses that were then checked by re-reading and further analytic discussion among the researchers. To identify narratives that illustrated key categories and patterns, the two researchers independently identified and then discussed the representativeness quotes from people in different areas.

The analysis sought equally to identify diversity in the categories and patterns of response. For each typical pathway of response, for example, variations were identified and classified as relatively frequent or infrequent. Also, the method of contrasts was used to identify gender differences in perceptions or differences between subgroups such as teenage girls, teenage boys, adult women, and adult men. Together, these methods proved to be useful in representing the differences as well as the similarities and in identifying how power, social position, and gender shape people's views.

Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of the research was its short time frame. Even with the extensions mentioned above, research conducted over a period of several weeks can go only so deep and cannot hope to provide the thick descriptions provided by ethnography conducted over a period of years. Because rapid ethnography offers fewer opportunities for participant observation than a longer, slower approach, it places greater emphasis on people's perceptions as reflected in their narratives and is less well suited for capturing fully the convergences and divergences between what people say and do. For example, if local people said consistently that event X occurred frequently, it was not possible to verify the accuracy of that shared perception, unless records were available. Further, it was not possible to document the wider cosmology and practices of the participants, and this made it difficult to achieve the rich, highly contextualized picture that would have emerged from a longer study. Fortunately, the deep knowledge of the Sierra Leonean context of the Lead National Researcher and the Moyamba team leader helped to offset this limitation as they helped to clarify the significance of practices such as naming rituals and the meanings of key terms.

Limitations arose also from the collection of data by field researchers who were not professional ethnographers. The field researchers' ability to learn diverse methods rapidly and to collect rich, useful information under challenging conditions was impressive. Understandably, however, they sometimes missed opportunities to probe on particular issues and also made errors such as inserting their own language (e.g. 'child labor') into the transcripts that were intended to capture the exact words of the participants. To reduce such difficulties, it would have been useful to extend the preparatory workshop by a week and include within it a greater variety of field activities that more closely approximated the contexts of the actual research sites.

Language was also an issue in some villages, particularly in the three villages in Bombali where people spoke mostly Loko. In these villages, it was possible to conduct most interviews

and discussions in Krio, although a small number of interviews had to be done via translation. The translators were local people with whom the researcher for a particular village had established a relationship of trust. Care was taken to explain the necessity of capturing the participants' exact words and idioms and of avoiding the insertion of one's own terminology or summary interpretations. Nevertheless, some loss of meaning or accuracy is likely in working through translation.

Numerous limitations arose in regard to the ethics of the research. Although the proposal for this research was shared and discussed with many stakeholders such as the Ministry of Social Welfare, UNICEF, NGOs, and human rights advocates, it did not undergo review by a local committee as had been intended. Significant efforts were made to establish an Ethics Advisory Committee consisting of ethically minded Sierra Leoneans who understood child protection issues and who would review the research proposal in advance (see Annex 3, p. 124.). However, the Ministry of Social Welfare advised delaying the startup of the Committee, which it had thought might serve as a wider review mechanism for all research related to child protection and welfare. Future stages of this research process will attempt to work through a local review committee that is constituted solely for this project.

In practice, numerous ethical issues arose in the field. Despite the promise of confidentiality to interview and discussion participants, individual participant's names sometimes occurred in written records. Although these records were shared initially only among the research team, they also became available to typists. In addition, the research instructions and training called for careful documentation of the exact verbal interchange wherein the research was framed and informed consent was obtained. However, some transcripts had clearly used a cut and paste method of documenting the important initial interaction and granting of consent and also permission to use the tape recorder. Although these lapses probably reflected the pressures of time and a heavy workload, corrective steps will be taken in future phases of the research both in Sierra Leone and in other countries such as Kenya.

Temporal and geographic constraints also limited the analysis and interpretation of the data. Because many of the reports were late coming in due to problems getting the voluminous material typed up, much of the data set had to be read and analyzed in a period of several weeks. A stronger process would have included additional time and also opportunities for the entire research team, including the field researchers, to review and discuss the data and explore various patterns and interpretations together. The costs of such a process, however, exceeded the limited funding that was available. This limitation was partly offset by having the Lead National Researcher and the Moyamba Team Leader participate in the analysis by suggesting what they saw as the main child protection threats participants had identified in their respective districts, reviewing the pathways of response, and checking the overall accuracy of the report and the representativeness of the participant narratives included in it.

KEY FINDINGS

A number of common patterns emerged consistently across the twelve individual research sites, the four chiefdoms, and the two districts. In some cases, a single dominant pattern was visible, for example, in regard to the top three threats to children's well-being. Even when no dominant pattern occurred at all levels, common variations were observed across these levels.

Among the most dominant patterns was the happiness of local participants with the research approach. In general, people were highly appreciative of the approach of learning about what local people do to care for their children and to respond to various harms to children. Some Chiefs commented that this was not something that NGOs or researchers typically did in Sierra Leone. People expressed their appreciation by being generous in making time to talk with the researchers and in treating the researchers well as they lived in the villages. This was a positive outcome since it suggests that the research approach succeeded in its attempt to establish the trust needed to obtain very useful information from interviews and other methods.

At the same time, distinctive differences were observable in the districts, chiefdoms, and villages. In each section below, the common patterns and variations are presented initially. To provide a more variegated picture, the less typical patterns and patterns that characterized particular districts, Chiefdoms, or villages are also described. For ease of reference, the key findings are presented in numbered subsections, each of which presents narratives of young people and adults. Far from being anecdotes, these narratives are primary data that illuminate typical views and bring forward the participants' voices.

1. Children, Childhood, and Child Development

What is a Child?

Adults and young people defined who is a child based on the individual's dependency, role, or activities. In general, children were regarded as people who cannot do things for themselves and are dependent on their parents or other adults. Consistent with this view, even people who were over 18 years and would have been regarded as adults in Western societies were seen by the participants as children if they were unable to do things for themselves. The importance of activities was visible in the widely shared view that once young people have become sexually active, they are adults since sexual intercourse is by definition adult activity. Role also mattered since young people who did the work of adults were regarded as adults.

> *Children are those that are not able to do anything for themselves. They depend on people to do everything for them. They should be trained to take care of themselves in futures.* (Grandmother, Moyamba)

> *A child is someone who cannot do anything for himself or herself. All is done by the parent.* (Teacher, Moyamba)

A child is under 5 years old…. Also someone that is old that cannot do anything for himself is a child. We take care of them and 'bayo bayo' [encourage] them. Except they do something for those persons because they cannot do anything for themselves again so I take them as a child. (Young adult male, Bombali）

...Like a blind person also is a child because he cannot do anything for himself. (Young adult man, Bombali）

A child is anyone is not yet big and who has not started doing 'mama en dadi bizness".[22] (Mother, Bombali)

Overall, children were not defined in chronological terms. Yet some participants cited very young age as a sign of being a child, though the number of years varied considerably. Only a small number of participants cited a Western style chronological definition of children as people under eighteen years of age. These were mostly teachers, headmasters, or people who had participated in a training on human rights.

Participants viewed children in relational terms that recognized the interdependent roles of children and parents and the functions associated with those roles. Parents are expected to provide food and care for children, encourage them and provide education, teach them respect and proper values and behavior, and discipline them when necessary. In return, children are expected to help the family to do its work, return the parents' investment in them, and care for elderly parents. By the age of five years, children are expected to help with farming and family chores. While some parents want their school aged children to go to school so they will be able to help lift the parents out of poverty, other parents prefer that their children help them work on their farm instead of going to school Parents see their payment of children's school fees and secondary costs for items such as uniforms, books, and paper as a very significant investment on which they expect a return.

A child is the one who benefits the parents. (Adult female group discussion, Moyamba)

Well when you gave birth to a child, it is that child to bring benefit to you. If you suffer for the child, when she is small she too will be of benefit to you. (Grandfather, Moyamba)

I will say the young people, who are unable to talk, walk or do something for himself or herself as a child. Because she or he does not have the knowledge I have. They are people who are innocent. But when you give birth to a child who is grown up and cannot benefit you, that is not a child to me; but if there is another child that can benefit me, that is a child. (Father, Moyamba)

A child is someone who can think about his/her parents in the future. There are children who do not think about their parents. Those ones I will not consider as children but those who think about their parents are real children. (Father, Moyamba)

The seriousness of parents' emphasis on children being functional and able to benefit the family resonated in the following exchange between a field researcher and a father in Levuma in the

[22] Sexual intercourse.

context of a small boy who wore tattered clothing and no shorts and who was sitting and eating rice from a plate.

> R[23]: *I wish that I could find someone who wants to buy a child. 'I will just sell you to that person because you are not a child that has come to benefit me' the man said to the child.*
> I: *Is he your son?*
> R: *Yes but this nor to betteh pikin because this one na three year old en e still dea na gron [but this is not a good child because this one is now three years old and he is still sitting down on the ground and is unable to walk].* (Father, Moyamba)

Participants also viewed children as means of continuing the family name and maintaining the memory of the parents.

> *What I know about a child is in the name. In Mende we call a child "Ndoe" [leave behind]. It means that when you die you will leave it behind. That is why it is called Ndoe. The child who is left behind is to make people remember you when you are dead. People will point at the child and say "this child is late X's child" so that you name will remain in the world.* (Chief, Moyamba)

> *A child is one you give birth to for future purposes like maintaining your family lineage. You give birth to a child so that when you die the child will stay behind to maintain the family name and lineage. That is what I call a child. If you are alive you will die one day and leave the child behind. We make sure we take care of the child so that he or she can grow up well so that the spirits of the deceased will be moving freely, pleased that the child is in better hands doing well. If the child is not well taken care of, the spirit of the deceased will be discouraged to the point that the child will be taken in death by the deceased person. That is when people start saying the deceased person has taken the child because the spirit [deceased] was not happy with the way care was taken over the child.* (Mother, Moyamba)

As the latter narrative indicates, the parent-child relations have spiritual dimensions. Many people in rural areas of Sierra Leone believe that when people die, their spirits continue to exist and can intervene (in this case, causing the death of the child) when the parent does not fulfill his or her obligation to care well for the child.

In some villages, there was a strong belief that God determines the outcome of a child in conjunction with how the parents raise the child.

> *First of all, it is God who destines a child to be successful or not. Also it depends on the parents who rear and the willingness of the child to obey the parents. Then God will decide the fate of the child to be good or not.* (Men's group discussion, Bombali)

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[23] Throughout this report, 'R' designates the participant and 'I' designates the interviewer. In group discussions, each participant was assigned a number, making it possible to see on the transcript what a particular participant had said throughout the discussion.

Naming Ceremonies in Bombali

The naming ceremony, referred to in Krio as "pull na doe" (bringing the child outside), involves giving the child a name and also introducing the child to the world. Through the ceremony, the child is welcomed into the world of taste, the neighborhood, the neighbors, and other ceremonies or gestures that give the child an identity. It identifies the child as an individual and as a member of the community in various ways that may be gendered, religious, or familial.

Naming ceremonies can vary by socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and religion and may be simple or more elaborate. A simple ceremony might involve giving a name to the child and saying a prayer, or it might also involve other gestures and actions and a feast. Poor people might throw a feast by killing a chicken whereas wealthier people might put on a more elaborate feast that involves killing a sheep.

The naming ceremony is not a religious tradition, but it may take on a religious tenor based on the family's faith, combining elements of a monotheistic faith and African belief systems (though this is not true for Pentecostal or born-again Christians). As in many African countries, the dead are invoked through libation or other forms of remembrance such as naming a new born soon after the death of a family member (some people believe that the dead relative has actually returned as the newborn child.) Christians might call a pastor or reverend, who says some prayers or reads from the bible or a formal liturgy. Muslims may call an imam, who reads from the Koran or chooses a name for the child from the Koran.

Child Development

Child development was observed to be a gendered, fluid process that does not follow rigid timetables. Nevertheless, discernible developmental markers, milestones, and age-appropriate activities were visible. As children grew larger in stature and acquired new competencies, they were assigned increased responsibilities to help the family do its work. As young people showed signs of physical maturation and entered puberty, they took on adult responsibilities and engaged in adult behaviors, leading them to be seen as adults.

When children are born, the parents usually conduct a naming ceremony in the first week (see box above). For the first year of life, mothers carry their children in a cloth tied to their backs, enabling them to do their farming while remaining together with their infants. The mothers breastfeed the infants, while older siblings may help with bathing the infants and helping them sit up. By the end of year one, most babies who had been crawling have learned to walk.

One to four years. Between years one and four, children were weaned, and once they had begun to walk, they were usually left by themselves while the parents went to their farm. Alternately, they were left in the care of an older sister who was not going to school. During this time, children began interacting and playing with other children. In addition, they began doing small tasks, such as bringing water or a cup, that their parents had asked of them. In Moyamba, children as young as three or four years went to the farm with their parents. In both Moyamba

and Bombali, some girls were initiated into Bondo Society under five years of age, although these cases were rare.

Five to eight years. Between the ages of five and eight years, significant changes occurred in children's roles, responsibilities, and daily activities. Many children started primary school at around five years of age, although in Moyamba, children often entered school at closer to six or seven years of age. In one village, parents often delayed sending their children to school until they were around nine years of age. Play with peers is common, including games such as football (soccer) for boys. During these years, children take on a wider array of family work responsibilities. Both boys and girls helped with domestic activities such as pounding rice, gathering firewood and fetching water, which typically was hand pumped or obtained from a distant stream. Typically, children carried water on their heads in a 5 gallon "rubber" (container). The activities were often divided along gender lines. In Moyamba, both boys and girls helped to sweep the compound, whereas in Bombali, girls did the sweeping unless the family had no daughters, in which case the boys did the sweeping. In both districts, girls did the cooking and laundering. Boys helped their fathers on the farm by watering vegetables, taking the cattle out for grazing, harvesting rice, and 'brushing the bush,' that is, helping to clear the land and prepare it for cultivation.

Even in primary school, children were challenged to balance the demands of family work and school. Typically, they had to do family work in the morning, walk to school (which in many cases involved distances of several miles), work in school all day, walk home, where they continued their family work and tried to make time for homework. In Bombali, children were frequently late for school because of all the work they had to complete before they were allowed to go to school. Many children were tired by the time they had reached school. Some felt discouraged from attending because they had no food in the morning and received none at school, although children in some villages received food at school via the World Food Program. At night, children played, with football being the favorite sport for boys, while girls engaged in clapping games. Also most children enjoyed going to video halls where movies were shown.[24]

Nine to twelve years. Between nine and twelve years of age, girls and boys take on additional work responsibilities, and there is sharper differentiation between the work of girls and boys. In general, girls do mainly 'house work,' whereas boys work on the father's farm. By age twelve, girls did their own laundry, pounded cassava leaves and prepared other vegetables for cooking, and had learned to do all household chores. Because the boys have grown larger and stronger, they work as close assistants to their fathers, helping with watering pepper, digging cassava and potatoes, making 'heaps' (mounds for planting peppers), harvesting rice, brushing the bush on the farm, sowing seeds, scaring birds, and weeding the garden. In Bombali, older boys went on their own to the bush to get rice or cassava and sold it in markets to make "quick money." The gender differentiation is not exclusive, however. For example, girls also help with farming by watering the vegetables, and in Bombali, both boys and girls help to scare the cattle away from rice that has been set out to dry.

During these years, most girls and boys continue to go to school and to work before and after school for their parents. There were inter-village differences in the kinds of work children did on

[24] In some areas, sexually explicit movies were also shown, and this was a significant concern for parents.

school days. For example, one village in Bombali had a law that permitted children to do heavy work only on the weekends to avoid conflict with school. In addition to work for their parents, children did various chores at school such as sweeping the floor and bringing benches to sit on. Children also did personal work for teachers such as helping to plant their groundnut farm and pounding rice. Such work was often a form of payment, particularly for volunteer teachers who received no salary.

Physical differentiation also became more pronounced between nine and twelve years of age. Boys' physical stature increased and, near the age of twelve years, many had hair beginning to show under their arms. Key aspects of physical maturation for girls were the emergence of breasts and the beginning of menses. According to adults, girls were 'ashamed' of these developments yet paid more attention to how they look, laundered their clothes carefully, and began having boyfriends. Many participants mentioned breast enlargement and the onset of menses as markers of the transition into adulthood. Complementing these physical changes were behavioral changes such as engaging in sex (mommy and daddy business).

Thirteen to fifteen years. In early adolescence, some boys continue working and also attend secondary school, though few secondary schools exist in many areas. To pay the school fees, many boys worked in order to earn money. Significant numbers of boys, however, dropped out of school and did farming, joining a company (a village cooperative) in which people did rotational work together. At this stage, teenage boys also did 'heavy work' such as climbing palm trees for fruit used to make palm oil and palm wine, and hunting with their fathers. At fifteen years, boys performed demanding tasks such as brushing the bush which included cutting tress with cutlasses, and harvesting rice. In one village in Bombali District, adolescent boys helped to harvest the main agricultural crop—marijuana—which they also smoked. In other villages, too, boys smoked marijuana and drank palm wine, whereas girls did not do so. In Simbaya, boys between 13 and 15 are called "borbor", which means a 'semi-child'.

During these years, many boys and girls become sexually active. Young girls are often said to have assumed 'full womanhood,' and some parents arrange early marriages for the daughters during this period. At least one village in Bombali, however, outlawed arranged marriages, though it still reportedly occurred. Outside of marriage, there were strong tendencies for peers to have sex. Different villages held dance activities late at night, and many adolescents violated their parents' orders by sneaking out the window at night to go there and have 'love affairs.'

> R: *if a boy impregnates a girl, he is considered an adult….*
> I: *Who gets the girls pregnant?*
> R: *Some of the boys are up eighteen years and above. You know that children cannot impregnate a girl. A person who impregnates a girl is a "kpakui"* [adult]. (Elder man, Moyamba)

As outlined below, many girls became pregnant out of wedlock, dropped out of school, or were forced into early marriage by their parents. Not infrequently, the boys' competition for particular girls at the dances led to fighting, which sometimes escalated to a point at which wounds were inflicted.

At twelve to fourteen years of age, both boys and girls were eligible to sit for the first national public school exams (NPSE) as part of the transition to Junior Secondary School. In practice,

however, few girls sat for the NPSE since many girls dropped out of school when they became pregnant or when they had married. Aside from pregnancy, marriage at that age was commonplace since girls had been initiated into the Bondo Society, reached physical maturity, and performed many of the responsibilities that mothers typically do. In many cases, the marriages were informal, hasty arrangements made because the girl was pregnant. Such marriages lacked the security and psychosocial supports that traditional arrangements had provided, and they left many girls at risk of abandonment and neglect. Boys, too, were increasingly regarded as adults since they had been initiated, showed deeper voice and physical maturity, were sexually active, and did the work of adult men.

Of course, girls' and boys' development continued beyond the early teenage years. Since these young people regarded themselves as adults, and this view was shared by older adults, it would be an imposition of outside views to speak of 'child development' beyond the early teenage years. The fact that a significant gap existed between how local people defined children and how international standards define them has implications for how one conceptualizes and approaches issues of child protection.

2. Protective Factors and Preventative Mechanisms

Although the emphasis of this report is on child protection risks and response mechanisms, it would be misleading to take a deficits approach. In fact, the communities under study exhibited numerous protective factors, which are supports or processes that aided children's healthy development, and preventative mechanisms, which communities had established to avoid the occurrence of preventable harms to children.

Parents cared for their children, fed and clothed them, showed them how to become contributing family members, and taught proper behavior such as respect for elders and not stealing or fighting. Most parents sent their children to school and expressed an appreciation of the importance of education.

> *If a child inherits anything from you, whether money or house, all that will finish, but if you help the child to get his basic education, till he dies, nothing will be wrong with the child and that is help to the child which the parent should give to the child.* (Father, Bombali)

In the immediate family, older siblings frequently helped to care for and provide role models for younger children. Grandmothers and elders frequently supported children and families by offering guidance and advice. Extended family members also helped to create a protective environment by, for example, an uncle taking in the children of his deceased brother.

In the community, important protective factors were access to education, friendships with other children, and support from natural helpers such as teachers, religious leaders, women leaders, and youth leaders. In most communities, the Chief and other traditional leaders were seen as people who helped children and, as explained below, intervened when problems arose. Traditional healers supported children's health and well-being through the application of traditional rituals, herbs and other remedies. In some communities, there were westernized health workers and social workers who supported children.

Valuable preventative mechanisms were provided by the Chiefs and the traditional system of governance and also by international NGOs. In some villages, the Chiefs were highly active in raising awareness about various harms to children, and they also passed various by-laws against practices such as children working outside school while schools were in session. Although the by-laws were unevenly enforced in most communities, their existence did signal what was regarded as right or wrong conduct in the community. In addition, NGOs and FSUs did awareness raising on topics such as child abuse, and this work not only contributed to prevention but also built links between the community and the national child protection system.

3. Main Harms to Children

Across chiefdoms and districts, the principal risks, defined as 'things that harm children:' were teenage pregnancy out of wedlock, out of school children, maltreatment of children who were not living with their parents, and children doing heavy work. Although these issues were richly interconnected, they are presented separately for purposes of clarity, with selected narratives used to illustrate the interplay between them. Of the four issues, the two that were most consistently cited across villages as serious problems were teenage pregnancy and out of school children. These two risks are the primary foci of this section. Children doing heavy work and maltreatment of children who did not live with their parents were widespread concerns but were not universal and showed greater variation in strength. In general, children doing heavy work was of greater concern to people in Bombali than in Moyamba, whereas the reverse was true in regard to bad treatment of children who did not live with their parents.

Below, each risk is discussed with an eye toward defining the problem as seen by local participants, presenting divergent views among different sub-groups, and identifying what participants saw as the likely causes of the problems or conditions and situations that enabled them. Participants' views of causes and enabling conditions may be particularly useful in helping to develop causal pathways and in laying the foundation for informed efforts at prevention. The emphasis will be on the words and views of the participants, who seldom, if ever, used terms such as 'child protection,' 'child labor,' or 'risks' that feature prominently in the discussions of international child protection workers.

Teenage Pregnancy

Consistent with other recent research,[25] people in all sites identified teenage pregnancy as among their top concerns or sources of harm to children. Many teenage women, including young teenagers, were pregnant, and significant numbers of them had multiple babies. However, it was not the pregnancy itself but pregnancy out of wedlock that was typically viewed as the problem. People viewed it as normal for younger women to marry, become pregnant, and have multiple children, but they were concerned about teenage pregnancy out of wedlock for reasons such as the disruption of education and boys' and men's failure to accept responsibility for the pregnancy.

> *Girls start having sex by 10 years and continue until they are pregnant…* (Women's group discussion, Moyamba)

[25] Coinco (2010).

For the girls, they take man bizness as their paramount hobby. Even when the parent tries to talk to her, she will not value her parents' word. The children have to walk five miles to access secondary school at Batkanu and when they go, the eyes of the parent will not see the child. You will be seated thinking your child has gone to school, but most times they stop half way and the only thing you will see in the end is pregnancy. That is mostly our problem here as parents. (Woman leader, Bombali)

There are plenty girls here that leave school early because of the 'man bizness' They get involved and most times the men will deny the pregnancy and some of the boys they run away to other places and leave the girls here to suffer. (Mother, Bombali)

Teenage pregnancy was a variegated problem that reflected a mixture of consensual sex, transactional sex, and sexual abuse.

Consensual sex. Typically, consensual sex involved relations with boyfriends, many of whom were classmates of similar age or a few years older. As discussed above, these relations frequently occurred on the periphery of nighttime dances.

I: *Who are mostly responsible for these pregnancies? Is it boys or men?*
R: *Most times the bike riders, then the pupil to [pupil] relationship. They might be in the same class or school and start a relationship.* (Father, Moyamba)

Participants also linked girls' participation in consensual sex to initiation into Bondo Society.

R6: Yes one of the things that make night in this village is early pregnancy because when children start to grow breasts she will attract the men, and the men will convince them to get sex with them and make then pregnant over and again which make them not to continue anything that brings them progress but will destroy that child's education.
I: Our brother has told us that men go after girls and get them pregnant so that is one problem we have identified who else want to show us another problem?
R4: Another problem that affects the children is the Bondo initiation.
I: how?
R4: When a child or girl goes to Bondo and comes out it is not easy for that child to continue her school again because they will think that they are now big (adults) in the village they will start doing " man bizness." Their schooling will come to a halt.
(Group discussion with young male and female adults in Moyamba)

The first thing that is responsible is the initiation of girls into the Bondo society. As soon as that happens the girl will think that she is now a woman and the next thing you know is that she is pregnant and the family will push her in the care of the person who impregnated her. Also school boys impregnate girls. (Father, Moyamba)

Some participants linked sex with boyfriends to government practices regarding education, including sex education.

From what I see, the girls are mostly chasing the boys and sometimes their parents would be sleeping while they jump through the window to meet the boys. The sex

education brought into the school is also making them to be wild. They take the theory at school and they will do the practical in the community. (Elder man, Moyamba)

We have so many girls that left school because of pregnancy but nowadays we are hearing that a girl can get pregnant, leave school, give birth and return to school. But during our own days if a girl gets pregnant while in school, that is the end of her school. The government is really helping girls to become pregnant. (Grandfather, Moyamba)

Transactional sex. Living in poor families, many of which struggled to meet basic needs, unmarried teenage girls also engaged in transactional sex with boys or men, who in turn provided food, or small amounts of money. Transactional sex with older men was not uncommon and was associated with larger material gains such as obtaining nice clothing or getting one's school fees paid. Many parents were upset over the girls' behavior and their missing or dropping out of school.

I:*What are the underlying reasons for their dropping out of school due to pregnancy?*
R: *Some are impregnated by the boys, others by their teachers while some become pregnant from farmers (Girl, Bombali)*

The girl will follow men for money. She will dress up in the morning for school but she will not go to school but will "balance"(sneak away) to the man's house where she will spend the whole day because of money. (Mother, Moyamba)

Some parents give their children to men because of poverty. They will see that the girls are so small but they will make the man to tamper with the girl. These problems are many here. (Father, Moyamba)

It was noteworthy that teenage girls themselves neither raised nor discussed the issue of transactional sex. Possibly, they might not have seen it as a problem since they gained from it and it was not an unusual practice. Alternately, they might have felt embarrassed to discuss this with outsiders.

Sexual Abuse. Although sexual abuse occurred in several ways, one involved mothers 'sending' their daughters for purposes of material gain, often with a promise of marriage, to men who then' tampered with' or 'virginated' them.

There are some mothers when they give birth to baby girl, they will start telling a man "this child is your wife" and when that girl gets bigger that mother will be sending to the man. Because when the mother told the man that the baby girl is his wife, the man will start giving gifts. When the girl grows up now, the men will say 'I have been gifting to that girl.' The mother will send the girl to collect money for soap and even snuff. That is what will happen until one day the man get tempted and virginate the girl. (Teacher, Moyamba)

Although villagers did not identify sexual abuse as a significant problem, the social workers and police who comprised FSUs did. The FSUs lacked hard data on prevalence, particularly at village level. In fact, they had data only on cases that had actually been reported to them, when both FSUs and other key informants said that sexual abuse was underreported. It is unclear

whether villagers' infrequent mention of rape and severe forms of 'tampering' reflected the low frequency of sexual abuse, a reluctance to discuss it, or both.

Divergent views of parents and young people. An important finding was that young women typically did not identify teenage pregnancy out of wedlock as a problem, whereas adults did. Some parents viewed it as a source of shame for the family, since it could imply that the parents had not raised their child properly. More often, however, parents took a pragmatic view and spoke of the family burdens it imposed or the young mother's inability to parent properly. A theme that resonated strongly with adults was the financial burden that it placed on the parents. Moreover, pregnancy for most girls meant the end of schooling, thus limiting their future options.

> *If a girl marries someone who cannot drive away the poverty of parents, the parents will be upset and the father will even drive the girl out of the house.* (Girl, Bombali)
>
> *Yes that is still a problem because they don't have husbands to take care of the pregnancy so their parents are going to take up the burden again….* (Group discussion, young adult females, Moyamba)
>
> *They leave school and so they have no future.* (Group discussion, young adult females, Moyamba)
>
> *Children should not become mothers; they don't know how to care for babies because they are children themselves. They become 'san rep mangoes' and they rot [literally 'sun-ripened mangoes,' which are picked before they are ripe and rot quickly]. These mangoes are not good to eat. This means that the children have become women because they have a child but they are also children. They are social misfits, neither women nor children.]* (Group discussion, young adult women, Moyamba)

This divergence resonates with the findings of the recent UNICEF study that parents frequently saw teenage pregnancy as a moral problem and attributed it to the breakdown of traditional values and bad behavior on the part of young people, whereas young people viewed it as normal, even acceptable behavior.

Out of School Children

The participant observation indicated that significant numbers of young people who were of school going age were out of school. Both children and adults said that many children did not attend school because the schools were located too far away and children did not like having to walk long distances, in some cases five or more miles, to get to school. However, children were out of school due to diverse pressures and factors such as economic problems, gender related issues, maltreatment at school, bad behavior, and children's decisions to leave. Overall, villagers tended to speak of this set of problems either as 'children out of school' or 'children leaving school.' In naming this problem, it seemed appropriate to emphasize the former phrase since the latter term seemed to put the onus on children when in fact children often missed or left school due to factors beyond their control.

Although being out of school is discussed separately here, the interaction among the various risks should be recognized. For example, many children dropped out of school because they engaged in heavy work and were too tired, sick or otherwise unable to go to school. Similarly, children in Moyamba were often sent to live with uncles and others who elected not to send the children to school, making them work instead.

Economic problems. Both adults and young people said that children sometimes cannot attend school because parents cannot afford school fees and other school-related costs. Some participants spoke also of the jealousies felt by children from poor families and the shame and frustration felt by children whose families were unable to afford uniforms or school supplies. For children, being out of school was usually viewed as a source of distress since many regarded going to school as the normal behavior of children and viewed school as a source of hope for the future.

> *The other problem is that the child will be going to school for some years and when they reach some certain state the school will call for huge fees which the parent cannot pay. The child will leave school. Is that not backwardness*? (Women's group discussion, Moyamba)

> *People are working, but they don't get anything. They put groundnut, they put rice, but they don't get anything. That's why some children can't be successful. They stop in Form 1 because their people can't pay for them*. (Girls' group discussion, Bombali)

> *If the child is sent to school and she meets with other children whose parents are rich, they have everything that child will want. And the child whose parents are poor cannot afford it, that child will spoil her heart. And if the parents do not take time she will not learn, especially if she sees these things everyday that she cannot have. This will make her to leave school and go to the street. ... it is not even once but so much, every day I see such things happening.. There are some people who will tell children that 'last year I paid your fees, but you did not pass so I will not pay for you this year*.' (Grandfather, Moyamba)

> *I : What makes child suffer the most in this village?*
> *Girl: When a child want to learn, but her mother does not send her to school. It confuses their heart…. You give birth to a child, but you don't put her in school. You give birth to her to work on the farm. That hurts them. …They put you in school so your people can have more, but you leave and you are just wandering around. That makes you suffer…..The parent drives them out and says, 'get out of my house.' They wander around and go and look for food here and there.'* (Girl, Bombali)

The inability to pay school fees lead families in some cases to send their children to an Islamic school.

> *Some may prefer to send their children to learn Arabic because there they don't pay fees. It is the strength of the child and how much he can work for the teacher that matters in this case. Those children will wear one set of clothes for the whole year. There are other men because they did not go to school all they care about is women and not the education of their children. (*Pastor, Moyamba)

Some families did not send their children to school because they saw it as more important that the child help the family work its farm than for the child to go to school.

> *We want the children to go to school, but some of the people here do not send all their children to school, rather they give them work to do. The children are always late for school as a result. Some of them get tired of going to school. They do not go to school and some of them get pregnant and marry.* (Chief, Bombali)

> *Instead of going to school, they* work*…. The little children plant the rice. Elderly people are unable to bend down and children are fast. The parents will not urge the child to go to school. If he says, I am not going to school, the parent immediately says to him, 'Take the hoe. Let's go!'* (Headmaster, Bombali)

The heavy work that children performed often left them tired and unable to learn or to go to school.

> *Some (children) do not grow well because they work a lot in the farms and on the homes…. Some of the mothers and fathers take the children with them. When it is time to brush the farms, they will stop going to school until the brushing is over. Every day, when the go to the farms, the mothers tell the children to carry bundles of wood. Those big big bundles of wood that the child carries that makes his head hurt. Some of the children help their mothers and father to water the pepper garden…Some water the gardens even before going to school…. Some of the children do not go to school, because of the heavy work they do. That makes them sick and they cannot learn again. ..Some of them are 1 years, some 14 years, and also some are 10 years old. Some parents don't have a lot of children and they will use the small small ones to work for them in the farms and do other work in the house.* (Mother, Bombali)

Economic challenges were also visible in regard to hunger, which was one of the main reasons children gave for not going to school.

> *The reasons most children don't come to school is because of no bulgar. Because we will always come to school if there is bulgar.* (Primary school girl, Bombali)

Children's hunger related to economic challenges at home since many children did not have a meal before going to school. However, it also reflected wider economic challenges, as teachers and education officials said that the children would stay in school and be in a better position to learn if there were enough money for schools to provide meals. In both Moyamba and Bombali, the school attendance more than doubled on days when food was made available through an NGO or the WFP.

Gender issues. Many girls dropped out of school when they became pregnant. In a small minority of cases, girls gave birth and returned to school, but a more common pattern was for a pregnant girl to get married and stay out of school.

> *Girls make man business their problem. They end up leaving school. Some leave mostly because of pregnancy.* (Teenage boy, Moyamba)

For the girls, their mothers may have a girl going to school. Maybe a man comes who has something small, will say I am interested in this girl, I want to marry her, I will be responsible for her, will bring 400 thousand Leones, and then the girl will end up pregnant and leave school, then the men forget about the girls and does not care about her like before. (Group discussion, young adult men, Bombali)

The ones who drop out, get married and some die when they get pregnant and cannot give birth. My cousin is dead because of that. Since that time I am afraid to get pregnant. (Young female adult, Bombali)

Initiation into Bondo Society also made it difficult for girls to continue their education. Not only were initiated girls viewed as adults and therefore available for marriage and pregnancy, but in some cases, the families spent so much on initiation that too little was left to pay for girls to go to school. Also, initiation activities kept the girls out of school for long periods.

If the father initiates five girls into the Bondo Society, will he be able to pay fees for his other children? He will not. (Chief, Moyamba)

Parents spend so much on Bondo Society, that boys are deprived of educational support. (Pastor, Bombali)

What affects the children's learning is this Bondo business. At times during school, children are put in the Bondo bush, two terms will pass, and by the time she comes out, has missed school, and then just gets pregnant and gets married (Group discussion, young adult men, Bombali)

Some of us girls, our people put us in Bondo. We say we don't want to go, and they say, you must go. (Group discussion, girls, Bombali).

That ruins our school. Your see your friends going to school, but you are in the Bondo bush. You worry that you will fail in school because you were in the Bondo bush. (Group discussion, girls, Bombali)

Maltreatment at school. When children from poor families wore shoddy clothing to school, they were often subjected to teasing and ridicule that was quite painful for the child and led in some cases to refusal to go to school.

Some people send their children to school but don't have shoes, uniform, they walk with their ten toes [barefoot]. When they get to school their friends tease them. (Group discussion, girls, Bombali)

But look at your own child with a torn crepe (shoe)on his feet and even his trousers torn. His companions will say don't push near us, and this child will be ashamed of his appearance and refuse to go to class. He will hide in the corner when school ends for the day… (Group discussion, women, Moyamba)

Some of the worst forms of maltreatment, however, came from teachers. In fact, students identified beating (flogging) by teachers as a significant reason why children do not go to school.

Children stop going to school, they are discouraged by their parents. They prefer to sit at home because if they go to school late (because parents make them work) the teachers will beat them. That makes them sick and they cannot learn again. (Young female adult, Bombali)

She'll [a young girl] say, "I'm leaving school." The friend will say, "Why?" She'll say "My head is not here, they (teachers) are beating me. I'm not focused, I don't want to be there. I'm being beaten." (Girl, Bombali)

Participant Observation of Maltreatment at School

Each child was asked to go to the black board by the teacher to go and write Alphabets from A-Z and number from 1-20. Any child who misses it will be beaten according to how many you miss. If you miss six you will be given six strokes. Whatever number you miss you will be beaten according to that number. To lure them to the black board the teacher who was about fifty years will tell them " if any comes forward and sing one of the notorious Sierra Leone song will be will not be beaten." So the children raise their hands up and he could choose one of them. All those who went to the board were about age five to ten. They could sing these songs well but could not write well the alphabet and numbers so they were beaten anyway even though the teacher promises not to beat them. (Observation by researcher, Moyamba)

Unlike children, most adults viewed this use of harsh corporal punishment, which is discussed further below (see pp. 70-71), as unproblematic and necessary for teaching good behavior and instilling discipline. Moreover, some parents kept their children out of school since they viewed teachers as extracting money from them for 'no reason.'

Another reason for children dropping out of school is that some parents tell them to stay away from school when they don't provide the little sums like Le 100, Le 50 and Le 500 that the teachers demand from time to time. (Youth leader, Bombali)

Related problems of maltreatment were discrimination and teachers' prolonged absence.

There is discrimination towards students. Ones who are not favored, are failed by the teachers. The children will get tired of failing, and leave school for good. (Imam, Moyamba).

The other problem that I can think of is this -- like you have come, you say let us teach you. …we teach you once and then we don't for a very long time.. That is what is happening here. If they ring school bell today, it will take a very long time before they ring another like for two months the children will not go to school again. Will that child learn anything? There is no teacher here so the children will not learn so what do we do we take the children to the farm. We don't like it but that is what has happened to us.

> *It is painful but we don't have a choice. The children will become like us who did not go to school. We don't like it but that is what God has done to us and so we accept.* (Group discussion, women, Moyamba)

The impact of teachers' repeated, prolonged absence was likely heightened by the already low quality of education.

Peer pressure. Although peers generally supported school participation, particularly before the teenage years, some peers questioned the value of school attendance.

> I: *Don't you advise your friends to stay in school?*
> R: *We talk to them, but they sometimes taunt us whenever we advise them to join us in school. One of them even persuaded me to leave school because according to her, it is a waste of time.*
> I: *What does she mean?*
> R: *She said that 'school is not interesting because there is nothing more to show after graduating from school for girls in this village. We will all eventually end up marrying and bearing children. So why should a girl even bother to go to school in the first place? It is a waste of time.'* (Schoolgirl, Bombali)

Such views, which may have helped to create an environment conducive to dropping out of school, serve as a poignant reminder of the limited options available to young women.

Polygamy. Polygamous families, which were the norm in most villages, often had negative dynamics such as jealousies between wives that negatively affected school participation.

> I: *Why do the fathers refuse to pay fees for the girls?*
> R: *fathers who are polygamous may take the advice of the girl's stepmother, who often do not wish the girl's progress.* (Girl, Bombali)

> *Also, girls from polygamous households find it difficult to study after school at home, because nagging stepmothers always want girls to engage in household chores throughout the day. They always compare the length of time that in school girls engage in household chores with those of out of school girls which is unfair. That was why I dropped out of school, because I wanted the nagging to stop.* (Girl, Bombali)

Bad behavior. Children and adults were divided in their views of the main reasons why children were out of school. Children and young adults emphasized their tiredness from having to do so much work before and after school, having to walk long distances , not having food at school, maltreatment, and parent's inability to pay school fees. In contrast, adults tended to emphasize young people's bad behavior such as gambling ('gamble bizness') by boys, disagreements over which often lead to fighting and injuries. Adults also held that young people were out of school because they were not serious, were more interested in dances and 'love affairs,' or were stubborn and refused to go to school.

When they return from the dance they no longer listen to the words of the parents. The girls get pregnant….I have three girls and one of them has deliberately refused to go to school even though she has every support. (Chief, Bombali)

The boys don't go to school because of gambling, smoking cigarettes, drinking and smoking stuff. (Teacher, Bombali)

Boys go to dance dance and stay out late when they should have been studying. They feel tired, don't pay attention in school, and fail exams. (Pastor, Bombali)

Boys join gamble business or stealing business instead of going to school…. tries to "grab" girls he passes and meets… (Girl, Bombali)

Children refuse to go. The parents try, but fail to get them to go to school. (Chief, Bombali)

Some children do not like going to school and their mothers are always responsible for this. …For some their parents are not happy about this so their children will leave their homes and roam about form one village to the other doing nothing. The father will stop the mother from giving them food. The boys also is driven from the house. (Imam, Bombali)

Children's decisions to leave school. In some cases, children or teenagers decided to leave school, even in the absence of maltreatment, parents' inability to pay school fees, or other insurmountable external obstacles. Adults tended to attribute such decisions to the children not having developed proper values or behavior, describing them as "stubborn" and "not serious." In contrast to these dispositional attributions, children pointed out the significant hardships and stresses that they and other children encounter each day. In addition, both adults and children referred to children who were "stupid" or "not clever," and decided to leave school after being repeatedly failed by the teacher, and not passing to the next level.

No clear account emerged in regard to why some children decided to leave school whereas other children decided to stay in school. Some children said they decided to leave because their village had no secondary school and it was too tiring to walk five or more miles day after day. It would be a mistake to underestimate the cumulative effects of the multiple stresses that children experienced day to day. Another possibility is that, amidst the widespread poverty and unemployment, some children lost faith that education would better their lives. Further, some children may have had better support systems than others and were in a better position to cope with the ongoing challenges. There may also have been variations in student-teacher relations or the overall quality of schools that influenced children's decisions. It remains for future research to clarify the interplay between external and internal factors in shaping the decisions of children and young people regarding whether they stay in school.

Maltreatment of Children Who Were Not Living With Their Parents

In Moyamba and Bombali, many children are in the care of their biological parents, whereas many others are not and live with an uncle or other extended family members or with a stepfather. When a father has died, the mother and the children usually become part of the family

of the father's eldest brother, though the children can also go to other siblings of the father. Similarly, if both parents die, the children are taken in by extended family members of the parents, typically the father's. Alternately, if the mother remarries, she is expected to care for any children that the new husband brings with him. In these arrangements, children live with other children in households that are not headed by the biological father. Discrimination in such situations was quite common, and the 'new' children in the household were expected to do extra work.[26]

> *At times, it happens like this. I am married and have my own children, about 10, then my brother dies, so I inherit his children. I will help, but I will take care of my own children better. (*Group discussion, young adult men, Bombali)

> *As long as there is no mother or father, things are not easy.*
> *R4: They strain. They are not treated equally.*
> *R1: The children become slaves in the home. They fetch wood, fetch water, sweep.*
> (Group discussion, young adult men, Bombali)

> *There is difference in the way you treat the children. If you have 300 Leones and you have your own children, and there other children there, you give your children the money and leave the others, unless your children give them from what they have.*
> (Group discussion, young adult men, Bombali)

Children who were in the care of people other than their biological parents were frequently subjected to maltreatment such as food deprivation and beatings.

> *The children without mother or father are usually flogged and this discourages the children. They are beaten for any little thing they do.* (Group discussion, young adult men, Bombali).

> *I: Why do they beat the child always?*
> *R: Some people, if the child is not their own child they will treat him like that. Also if the child belongs to their mate also, the stepmother will always give that child problems and especially if she hates the child's mother that is when she hates the child also….*
> R: *Some children do not do very bad things. But it is because the parents are hot tempered they will beat them for small small things that they do. Like if they tell the child to fetch water and he does not do it, it is a problem. If the child mistakenly spoils something in the house, they beat them. If something got missing in the house they will say it is the child that takes it. These are some of the things they do.* (Father, Bombali)

In several villages, people said that this kind of mistreatment had sent some teenagers to live on the streets.

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[26] Discrimination also occurs in households in which children live with both biological parents. In Bombali and Moyamba, many families are polygamous, and if one of the wives is favored, the children of that wife usually enjoy privileges that are denied to other children. Additionally, it was described that step mothers often don't wish to see the children of a different wife progress, and will not encourage or support those children, and treat them more harshly.

Because many villages have no secondary schools, it was common for families to send their children to live in a town that had a secondary school. In some cases, the children live not with extended family members but with adults from other families. In both situations, the parents' and children's expectations that the children would continue school went unmet.

> *We are in the village and do not have a secondary school here. We send our children to stay with our relatives in towns where there are secondary schools. You will go and talk to this person so that your child will stay with him or her. But after sometime those relatives will start to deny the children food in the house and if it is a girl child she will start to follow men in order to be able to get food. This will make them to get pregnant, leave school and then come back to us with the pregnancy.* (Group discussion, young adult men and women, Moyamba)

> *I: When children are sent to attend secondary school in other towns, what happens to them?*
> *R6: The people who are to take care of them (caregivers) will not take proper care of the child and so the child will end up in the street to find food and other things*
> *R2: The girls will go after men for money in order to buy food.* (Group discussion, women, Moyamba)

> *There are people who will come here and tell you to give them your child so that they will care for her. They will take the child away and start maltreating her or him. The child will get fed up and not do well even in his or her education.* (Group discussion, women, Moyamba)

> *If you give that child to someone and the person takes the child to Freetown, the first thing the caretaker will say is "you are selling this water to get your school fees" but the child will be on it for more than three months. She will send a message saying 'I have not been going to school ever since I came here, I have been selling water…If you ask that caretaker, she will say 'the money you gave is not enough.'* (Group discussion, women, Moyamba)

These narratives indicate that living with adults other than one's parents is one of the risks for children leaving school. Living with adults other than one's parents is also a risk for pregnancy.

> *When children in this village go to the town to live with different people they have serious problems with these people. If their parents give them food to take to the care takers like rice and other food items that people harvest in this village, the care takers will appreciate it only for a week or two. As soon as the food finishes they will ask them to go and eat in their village which is miles away from the town and there is no transport running to and from the village to take them to school every day. Even if there was the cost might be too much. The girls when faced with this situation will go out to look for food and will get themselves impregnated by boys or men and they will bring the problem to their parents who will already be faced with money problems.* (Councilman, Moyamba)

> *There is no secondary school in this town, so we send out children to stay with other people in other towns in order to attend secondary school. These people usually do not*

provide much care for the child and leave them to go hungry. The children come here every weekend for food and some other things for their upkeep, but most parents cannot afford to provide for their children every weekend when they come. So some children will prefer to leave school and come to the village, because of the suffering that they go through. For the girls when they see that they are going hungry they will follow men and at the end will become pregnant. There are also other children whose parents provide for them their daily upkeep, but will still join bad groups and drop out of school. We have so many of such children in this village. (Woman leader, Moyamba)

Here, too, the dynamic interplay between the different risk factors was apparent.

Children Doing Heavy Work

Heavy work was a significant issue in both districts, although it was a greater problem in Bombali than in Moyamba District, and it was interconnected with problems such as maltreatment of children who were not living with their parents. Not uncommonly, older children were sent to live with relatives in another town as a means of gaining access to either a junior or senior secondary school. Extended family members typically expected children to work in exchange for food and housing while they attended school. However, some young people said that the extended family members provided them with neither food nor access to school and only demanded that they work.

Aside from such similarities, important differences were visible in the nature and severity of the issue of children doing heavy work. It also varied across districts and villages. To capture this diversity, the findings on the different districts are presented separately below, with notes on inter-village differences.

Bombali District. Even at a young age, children who lived with their parents typically did heavy work at home and on the family farm. In fact, participants from Bombali identified heavy work of even school age children as the next most serious concern after teenage pregnancy and children out of school. An exception was Robanka, possibly because a section Chief lived there and the Paramount Chief was a former social worker. In Robanka, people showed concern about the consequences of breaking the by-laws, which restricted the kinds of work children could do and when.

At school age, both boys and girls do heavy work structured according to gender. By age nine years, boys engage in heavy farm work such as clearing the bush, hoeing, and making heaps for planting, while girls do heavy housework such as pounding rice and carrying heavy loads of firewood, water, and cassava. In body mapping exercises, children identified numerous types of work they disliked, including carrying heavy loads, carrying wood, and pounding rice. Of note, children did not dislike all work, but rather the hard, heavy work. In the body mapping exercise, children reported liking lighter work such as fetching water, cooking, laundering, and gardening.

Both young people and adults spoke poignantly about the suffering and negative consequences that engagement in heavy work causes children.

We work and we suffer. (Young adult female, Bombali)

The parents give us a lot of work to do. When you come from school, they will not let you rest, they will ask you to beat the rice, fetch water, go to the bush and fetch firewood. We do a lot of jobs. At times we are hungry. There is no food to eat in the afternoon, but they will tell you to work . If you don't work, you will not eat. (Young adult female, Bombali)

Children work for parents. ...Me, I get sick. I am in pain. Your body does not look good… You are thin, the body ages fast….The child dies earlier and people will say he died of witchcraft. (Young adult female, Bombali)

Children's Views of Risks

As a fun, age appropriate way of learning what children saw as dislikes or risks, 45 body mappings were conducted in the 12 villages. A typical body mapping exercise included 8-9 children, who identified what different body parts liked or disliked. Approximately half the groups consisted of children 5-8 years, and half consisted of children 9-12 years.

Children universally disliked snakes, devils, feces, quarreling and fighting, and abusive language. Things that 'the heart did not like' included bad news, beating, punishment, and scolding by parents. Dislike of heavy work was common among girls and boys. Younger children said they disliked carrying heavy water containers, whereas older boys disliked brushing the land and girls disliked pounding rice. Many children indicated they did not like witches, alcohol, marijuana, seeing dead bodies, or being slapped, hit, or burned. See Annex X for additional information on the outcomes of the body mappings.

Significant discrepancies between the views of children and adults were visible. For example, children frequently indicated beating, abusive language, and punishment as things that the heart disliked, whereas most adults did not view those as sources of harm. Also, children were far more likely to view heavy work as painful and harmful. Together, these observations suggest that the psychosocial and physical impacts of daily events—as they are experienced by children—may not be apparent to adults.

For some children, the rigors of heavy work were compounded by food deprivation and physical and verbal abuse. Frequently targeted for beating were young women who were out of school, pregnant, and unable to identify the father.

Coming from school and you are given rice to pound without eating anything and you are not allowed to chew the rice you are pounding. After cooking the rice they will scold you until you are not able to eat the rice. (Boy, Moyamba)

There are a lot of problems. The children work all day, some go to school and some do not. They do heavy work, especially some of the girls who are not going to school. They get pregnant and there is no father responsible for the pregnancy. The parents will beat them. (Girl, Bombali)

Engagement in heavy work was identified as one of the leading causes of children either not being able to learn or being out of school altogether.

> *Some of the children will stop going to school because of the heavy work. We get tired and we are not able to learn in class. We just go and sit in class. At times we sleep without listening to the teacher. So some of them fail on one class two or three times, but the ones that are clever manage to pass.* (Young adult woman, Bombali).

> *Some (children) do not grow well because they work a lot in the farms and on the homes…. Every day, when they go to the farms, the mothers tell the children to carry bundles of wood. Those big big bundles of wood that the child carries that makes his head hurt…. Some of the children do not go to school, because of the heavy work they do. That makes them sick and they cannot learn again.* (Mother, Bombali)

> *We the parents are the one disturbing our children, because of the type of work we are giving them to do. They are not able to learn.* (Group discussion, women, Bombali)

Adults' identification of heavy labor as a problem was matched in some cases by a willingness to change.

> *… If we have someone who can help us to end hard work for children, we'll be happy.* (Mother, Bombali)

The challenges of effecting such a change amidst severe poverty and low availability of options other than subsistence farming are discussed further below.

Moyamba. In Moyamba, heavy work was a less pronounced problem that was not ranked among the top three issues in the group discussions. Yet it was cited consistently as a problem, particularly in regard to teenagers. In Gondoma village in Kombura Chiefdom, people said that children doing heavy labor had occurred in the past but was no longer an issue due to sensitization processes that had been conducted.

There was also evidence of a gap between the views of children and adults on the issue. For the most part, adults said that children participating in heavy work was not a big problem. Yet in body mappings conducted in all villages, children indicated that they engaged in heavy work which they did not like. For example, they did not like to hear 'that I should pound rice', or that they had to go to the bush to hoe. This gap, which warrants additional attention, raises the important question of whose view matters most.

4. Additional Harms to Children

Beyond the four main risks, there were a multitude of other risks to children that were less common yet nonetheless of concern to adults, children, or both. These risks varied in frequency and severity, and some, such as child beating, were not consistently identified as harmful to children. Also, significant variation occurred across sites, with problems such as gambling being cited much more often in some villages than in others. For each risk, the discussion below

follows the pattern established above of presenting first the most widely occurring form of the risk, with variations noted subsequently.

Child Beating

Child beating or 'flogging' was widespread in most sites, where adults saw it as a necessary means of teaching children proper behavior and of maintaining respect and discipline. In some villages, child beating was viewed as a minor problem at best.

> I:*Is child beating a problem here?*
> R9: *Yes, but small, small. They don't wound them.*
> R8: *Now for some children, even if you beat them, they say "kanda wam, kanda cold" [the skin gets warm and the skin gets cold, meaning they are not affected].* (Group discussion, women, Bombali.)

Consistent with the saying 'spare the rod, spoil the child,' parents and teachers saw beating as a means of teaching good behavior and of getting children to avoid a particular, undesired behavior.

> *If I want my child to do something for me and the child refuses, I too will do something that will pain the child. We beat such stubborn children.* (Group Discussion, Woman, Moyamba).

> *We give them six strokes so that they will not do that again (fetch water from the tap) and the other children will not do it.* (Group Discussion, Man, Bombali)

> *We beat rice at school for the teachers. Sometimes if you don't beat, they will flog you.* (Primary school boy, Bombali).

Children's views of flogging diverged sharply from those of adults. In contrast to the view that children are not affected by beating, children's body mappings frequently identified flogging as one of the things they did not like to see, hear, or feel. Young people also said that parents and teachers sometimes used harsh flogging. One such case was recorded (see box on next page) by participant observation.

Although child beating was widespread and viewed by adults as normal, even as necessary, some participants viewed it as a negative practice, particularly when it was overused or laid on too heavily.

> I: *What other problems do they get that are caused by other people?*
> R: *Except that the way they treat the children, some people like to beat the children and this is not good because if people always beat the child then the child will not be happy.*
> I: *How does that disturbs the children here?*
> R:*Well, it is the child that suffers, even though they have told us not to beat the children but some people are very wicked they beat them and the Chiefs do not know about it.*
> I: *What happens to a child that they beat always?*
> R: *The child is always not happy, he does not feel free to do anything, he does not have time to play with others because each time he does something wrong, they will beat the child.*

I:*Why do they beat the child always?*
R: *Some people, if the child is not their own child they will treat him like that. Also if the child belongs to their mate also, the stepmother will always give that child problems and especially if she hates the child's mother that is when she hates the child also.* (Father, Bombali)

Also, in cases such as the beating of children who were not the parents' own biological children, child beating was viewed as unfair and discouraging.

The children without mother or father are usually flogged and this discourages the children. They are beaten for any little thing they do. (Young adult man, Bombali).

Views regarding child beating, however, were far from homogenous. Although most parents thought child beating was appropriate and even necessary, some participants

Researcher Observation of Flogging in Moyamba

I saw girl of about 15 years old being flogged by a fairly old man with what looked like a sizable stick. Both of her hands and feet were tied together with a rope. There were people gathered outside the veranda where the girl was been flogged. As I sat outside watching, I heard a young man explaining to a woman why the girl was being beaten. According to him, this girl had a boyfriend whose parents had asked that the parents of this girl warn her not to follow their son because he was too small to have a woman. When the girl was asked by her parents whether it was true that she had an affair with the boy, she told them that she loves the boy and was willing to get married to him. What made the parents to be angry is that, before this time so many men had come to marry this girl but she had refused to get married to them and so they were disappointed to realize that it was because of that small boy that she had refused to get marry. This was the reason why they were flogging her so hard in order to ensure that she leaves that boy and get marry to somebody who is responsible enough. This girl by the way does not go to school and is been taken care of by her old father who can barely afford a day's meal for the family. (Observation by researcher, Moyamba)

viewed it as unnecessary and counterproductive even when it was mild and used sparingly. Also, people differed in regard to where they drew the line between appropriate punishment and punishment that was excessive or cruel. In some cases where parents were beating their children, neighbors who heard the child's cries and who thought the punishment was too severe intervened by 'pleading with' the parents to stop or by saying that the child had suffered enough.

Cruelty

Cases of clearly excessive or 'cruel' punishment were reportedly rare yet occurred in many areas. FSUs in both districts said that each year, there are cases such as that in which an 8-year-old child reached her hand into soup that her mother was preparing for a male guest. As

punishment, the mother put the girl's hand inside a plastic bag, poured kerosene on it, and lit it, causing severe burns to the girls' hand. In other cases, severe beatings by parents caused broken bones or significant wounds. Cases such as these were of such magnitude that they were deemed to be potentially criminal offenses that should be handled by the FSUs. Although they were not documented in the research sites, it seemed reasonable to include them here because FSU members claimed adamantly that they happen in all Chiefdoms and most villages.

There was also suggestive evidence that young children differed from adults in what they regarded as excessive, cruel treatment. In body mappings, children referred to a punishment called 'peppering', the parent forcibly put hot chili peppers into the child's mouth. They also expressed their dislike for the punishment wherein parents pressed the hand of a disobedient child onto a hot iron. This potential gap between children and adults in regard to what counts as cruelty warrants additional research.

'Incest,' Rape, and Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of children by family members was referred to as 'incest,' whereas sexual abuse of children by people outside the family was referred to as 'rape' and sometimes as 'tampering.' The former carried much lighter penalties (up to 15 years in prison) than the latter (up to 30 years in prison). FSU members in both districts said that across all Chiefdoms, incest was far more common than child rape and typically occurred at the hands of an uncle, either when the uncle lived in the child's home with the parents present or when the child had been sent to live in the uncle's home. Alternately, the rape perpetrator was sometimes another person from outside the family but who had been living in the house with the parents and the girl who was abused.

Teachers were also reported to have sexually abused girls, often by demanding sex in exchange for grades, food, or school expenses.

> *In schools, teachers abuse girls. They have sexual relationships, usually in exchange for grades, and they give lunch and money to girls who come from very poor homes and don't have lunch at school. Also, government workers and NGO workers have relationships with girls in or out of school.* (Male key informant, Moyamba)

The sexual abuse by teachers was part of a wider problem of sexual abuse or 'tampering' by adult men who had power and money. Parents held diverse views on whether this was a positive or negative situation. Some parents wanted such relationships because of the income it brought to the family. Others parents, however, disapproved of this practice and warned their children not to get involved with older men. Overall, however, parents were pessimistic about their ability or even the Chief's ability to prevent it.

Neglect and Bad Parenting

Although it was the norm for parents to care for their children, both adults and children pointed out problems of bad parenting that in some cases shaded into neglect, although local people did not tend to use that term. Participant observations indicated that young children (2-3 years of age) were sometimes left on their own, even when they were close to a road and were in

danger of being hit by passing vehicles. In one village in Bombali, children as young as five years were unsupervised at night and tried to sneak into or get someone to pay for them to go to the ‘video’ show where people sometimes watched graphic sexual images. The young boys frequently gained entry since the owner let the boys in if they agreed to carry benches back at the end of the video. Similarly, parents sent their children to buy cigarettes and rum, which aroused concerns among some adults that parents were ‘exposing them’ to bad habits at an early age.

In some villages, women said that they withheld care for a child as a means of retaliating against their husbands.

> R: *If I and their father are not in good terms I’ll pretend as if I am not aware of the child’s presence. I will not care for the child.*
> I: *Does that happen here?*
> All: *Yes.* (Group Discussion, women, in Moyamba)

Withholding of care also occurred in cases in which parents banished a young person, typically a teenager, from the house.

> *When the girl marries someone who “cannot drive away the poverty” of parents, parents will be upset and father will even drive the girl out of house.* (Group Discussion, men and women, Moyamba)

In addition, parents withheld necessities such as food, even when those had been promised to the child.

> *If a parent promises a school going child that if he (the child) makes groundnut garden she will make food for him to take to school, and refuses to keep that, the child will be very unhappy.* (Group discussion, women, Moyamba)

Witchcraft

In all the sites, people had a spiritualistic cosmology and believed in witches and witchcraft. For example, some people believed that children’s pain and illness was caused by witchcraft done in response to a child stealing.

> *The boys here take drugs, smoke and misbehave. They go to disco dance in other villages and cause trouble for their parents. Some of them steal other people’s property and when they are asked, they deny and the owner will swear and cast spell on the thief and later they become sick and die or at times, he will not die but will suffer from pain and other illness then the parents will take him to the “juju man” (herbalist) to search for a cure. At times, they will be well, but at times they will suffer for a long time.* (Group discussion, young adult men, Moyamba)

Children, too, were believed to engage in witchcraft in order to prevent their parents from sending them back to school when they did not want to attend school any more. In Bombali, for example, as a researcher walked among trees believed to have mystical powers, an escort explained “these are the trees that girls who drop out of school stand under and use a stone to

evoke the spirits to cast spell on their parents who force them to go back to school." Similarly, there were reports that girls used this form of swearing to prevent their parents from finding out about their pregnancy.

In some cases, girls were seen as using witchcraft to convince their parents to allow them to drop out of school and to marry their man of choice.

> R: *The girls sometimes drop out of school for no good reason. They may decide to get married even though their parents do not favor their decision.*
> R5: *Some even convince their parents to withdraw them from school. If the parents refuse, they pick up stones and swear the parent to "debul" [devil or demon/deity] which cast spells on their mother's harvest.*
> *R8. Such girls willfully become pregnant and tell the stones to convince their mothers to allow them to marry the man of their choice. They sometimes promise to give the unborn child as a gift to the "debul" should their wish be granted.*
> I: *What happens after they get married to the man?*
> R8. *The baby they give birth to will die. Even the subsequent children too will continue to die.*
> I: *What do they do with the stone after talking to it?*
> R8: *Some become so furious with their mothers for refusing their wish, that they throw the stones and could not trace it except a "medicine man" [native doctor or sorcerer] intervenes in order for their babies to survive. Others keep the stone at the bottom of their bags where their things are kept.* (Group discussion, young adult men and women, Bombali)

The potentially serious consequences of such witchcraft were visible in the beliefs that the spells would spoil the mother's harvest, which could have serious impact on other family members, and making a pact with the 'debul' by granting him the unborn children.

Abduction and Ritual Murder

There were also reports of the ritual murder of children for purposes of cannibalism, as consuming various body parts of children was believed to confer great power.

> R: *There are areas where children have disappeared—their bodies have been found, and people claim it is due to ritual murder. It happens mostly around election periods.*
> I: *Could you explain a bit what ritual murder might entail?*
> R: *Ritual murder is when somebody is killed and body parts are removed—the skin on the palm, the skin on the face—and it's being used for rituals to make someone very powerful, to make someone win an election.*
> I: *What age children are involved in this?*
> R: *Children as young as two years have been victims, but mostly it is children between six and thirteen years.*
> I: *Does it matter who the children are—are the children selected on any basis?*
> R: *It's difficult to say if there has been a pattern. It seems mostly to affect children who have been easy to capture. Both males and females have been affected by these practices.* (Adult male key informant, Moyamba)

During Christmas season which is the time that cannibals come around to capture children for rituals, the Chief will call a general meeting and warn parents not to leave the children to work alone along the road. You should not send a child alone to the stream to fetch water. After the meeting parents will come and warn their children not to go to the bush alone. (Chairwoman, Moyamba)

No direct observations were made of such rituals, and much remains to be learned about the nature and frequency of such illegal practices.

Child Rights

In both districts, participants spontaneously identified 'child rights' as a threat to children. In a preliminary meeting with adults in Moyamba, a leader's mention of child rights unleashed heated discussion about how 'the NGOs have taken our children from us.' Although not all discussions were so impassioned, adults said consistently that child rights were interfering with their ability to be good parents.

Despite the idea of the human right, there is a saying which goes this way; "if you spare the rod, you will spoil the child." You should not beat and wound the child, but you should let him know that he is being disciplined for something good that must be learnt. If that is not done and the child is just allowed to do as he or she feels, that child will grow wayward. (Father, Bombali)

One thing that doubts us as parents is the fact that they say parents should not beat their children any more. For this is not good because beating the child is one way that makes your child to fear you and listen to you, otherwise the children will keep on doing wrong things without fear. So we have been left in doubt and they say that is what the government says. If children don't fear their parents, they will not grow well and this hinders their development. (Chief, Bombali)

R: *Well the things that I know that are harmful to children is that we are not allowed to beat children. It is far different from what happened in our own days. Even if parents want to discipline their child, they cannot because of the law, so they become stubborn.*
I: Is this harmful for children when they are no longer beaten?
R7: Yes, because one would want to control the child and to discipline that child but the children will not listen to instructions. This is harmful for them. (Group discussion, men, Moyamba)

I: *What are the things that happen to children here, boys and girls that affect their development and make them unhappy?*
R7: *Thank you. Now, one of the things that hurts us here, the government says we should not cuss or beat our children. They no longer listen to us or obey us. They say, if you beat me, if you cuss me, I'll report you to human right. As a result, the girls get out of hand and in the end, they get pregnant and drop out of school. When this happens, we have nothing to do because as the saying goes, "bad bush nor dae for troway bad pikin" ('there is no bush to throw away a bad child').* (Group discussion, women,

Bombali)

Numerous participants observed that following the passage of the Child Rights Act, NGOs had come to their chiefdom or village and had taught children about their rights but with no emphasis on children's responsibilities. As a result, children used 'child rights' as a means of doing what they wanted to do, without reflecting on their responsibilities in the family or at school. In some villages, adults said there had been cases in which a father beat a child in a manner that was not severe for a wrongdoing, and the child reported the father to the police, who fined the father. In one such instance, the child's reporting of the father to the police had led the father to banish the child from his home.

The observation that child rights have created powerful backlash and negative outcomes for children (e.g., family separation) indicates the need for careful reflection on the way in which child rights have been introduced in Sierra Leone. This issue will feature prominently in the subsequent discussion of the implications of the key findings (see pp. 102-109).

5. Pathways of Response

Each site had a relatively elaborate set of mechanisms for responding to child protection threats. For the most part, these were not of formal child protection mechanisms such as CWCs, action by FSUs, or processes led by external NGOs. In fact, people said they used formal system mechanisms in only three of the twelve sites. In all the sites, people relied most heavily on indigenous mechanisms that involved extended family processes and processes centered around the traditional system of Chiefs and customary law.

For each of the main risks, the community-based mechanisms or pathways of response were identified, with primary emphasis placed on the most typical pathway and the one or two variations that were the next most frequently used. These are presented below in regard to each main risk together with the views of various stakeholders regarding how satisfactory the outcome was. As had been done in regard to risks, the main pathways that were used across both districts are presented first, and variations by district, chiefdom, or village are noted subsequently. For purposes of brevity, these pathways are presented visually and are described in general terms, without accompanying narratives in each case.

Teenage Pregnancy

In both districts, the dominant pathway of response was through the families of the girl who was pregnant and the boy who had impregnated her. These families first attempted to settle the matter themselves, and, if they were unable to do so, the girl's family referred the matter to the town Chief, who either settled the case or referred it upward to higher Chiefs. Getting an abortion was the next most typical response to teenage pregnancy out of wedlock. These pathways are pointed out in the box below (see next page). As outlined below, which response was preferred depended in part on whether the pregnancy had occurred between a boyfriend and a girlfriend or was the product of 'tampering.'

What is done in response to teenage pregnancy?

The girl will show the man that is responsible for the pregnancy. Her parents will call the man and ask him whether he is the one responsible for impregnating their child. If the man answers yes, he will then bring his family to meet the girl's family for an arrangement. The man's family will come to the girl's family and agree to send the girl back to school when she gives birth to her baby. But if the girl decides not to go back to school, then she will get marry to the man. (Mother, Moyamba)

The girl's parents report the matter to the Chief and he calls all those responsible together with the speaker of the town, the chairlady and the youth chairman to witness the matter. After that the elders will tell the parents to be patient and take the matter without palava [quarrel]. So they will decide for the girl to get married to the boy after delivery or at times if they are both going to school and the boy does not want to get married, they will tell him to "marry" the baby when it is delivered so the girl can go back to school and the baby belongs to the boy and his parents. (Young adult man, Bombali)

Typical Pathway. The essential first step for family engagement was the discovery by the girl's mother that her daughter was pregnant. As Figure 2 illustrates (see next page), this happened in numerous ways. In most cases, the pregnant girl became aware of her pregnancy when she had missed her period or noticed other physical changes in her body. A delicate process then began of informing her parents, though this was often done through an intermediary since the girl feared the wrath of her parents. Both teenagers and adults said that the mothers of pregnant girls often become angry upon learning of their daughter's pregnancy, and the anger is even greater on the side of the father, who may beat his daughter and also his wife for not having prevented the pregnancy. To avoid direct confrontation with the mother and father, the pregnant girl typically disclosed her pregnancy to her close girl friend, who in turn told the girl's mother.

Mothers also learned about the pregnancy by the pregnant girl telling her boyfriend, who told a friend who then informed the girl's mother. In some cases, the mother found out about the pregnancy without her daughter having said anything about it. Elderly women sometimes noticed changes in a girl and told the girl's mother, or the mothers themselves noticed the changes in their pregnant daughters. Gossip among neighbors also served as a source of information for mothers.

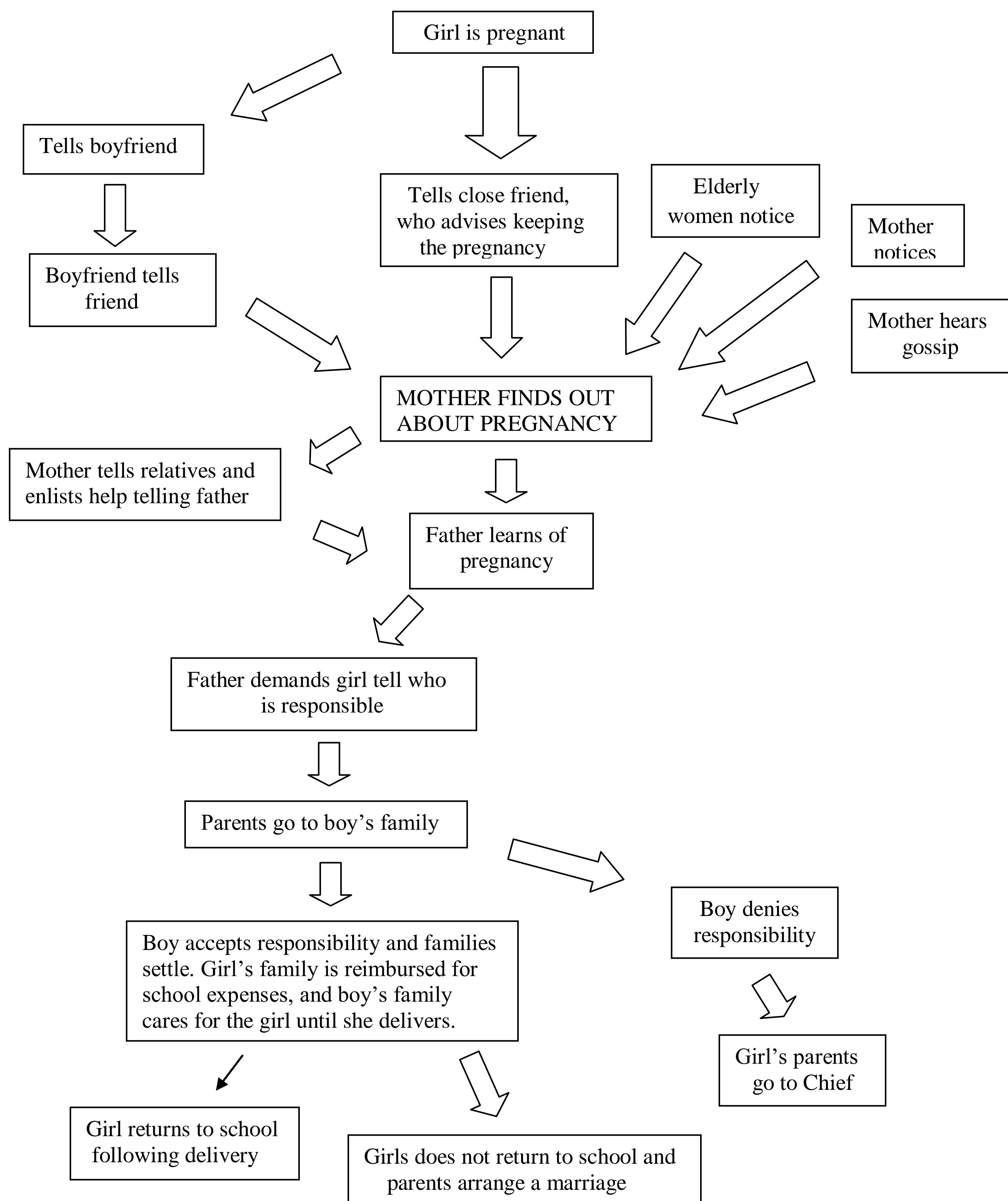

Figure 2. The dominant pathway of response to teenage pregnancy out of wedlock.[27]

[27] In this figure, the thin line indicates a less frequently used pathways.

Having learned about the pregnancy, the mother usually told the father directly, although this was also done indirectly by the mother telling key relatives such as her mother or her husband's brother, who in turn told the pregnant girl's father. The father then demanded that the girl identify 'the owner of the pregnancy.' When he found out who was the perpetrator, he and his wife went to the boy's family, called on the boy to 'answer' that he was responsible, and asked the boy's family to 'settle as a family.'

If the boy accepted responsibility for the pregnancy, the girl's parents asked the boy's parents to make compensation for the school expenses they had already made for the girl in the current academic year. Typically, the boy's family agreed to pay this compensation and also to care during the pregnancy for the girl, who went to live with the boy's family until she was 'put to bed' (delivered the baby). Many villages had by-laws that prohibited the boy from attending school during this period, but the by-laws were seldom enforced.

If the girl had been attending school, she had the option of returning to school after delivering her baby, and the boy's family paid her school expenses for the following year. The baby was given to the boy's family,[28] which was responsible for the baby's upbringing and expenses. In practice, however, few girls returned to school following delivery. According to teenage girls, the young mothers in such a situation would likely have felt ashamed in front of their peers, regarded themselves as too mature for school, been unable to concentrate, or were otherwise not interested in staying in school. In one village, only "one in ten" girls would return to school, while in another village it "never happened." Following the birth of the baby, many of the young fathers dropped out of school as well, often due to the increased expenses that were incurred in settling the case. These included payment to the girl's family for previous school expenses, expenses for the girl during pregnancy, and expenses for the baby after delivery.

The typical outcome was that the girl's parents arranged for their daughter to marry the boy and to live with his family. Adults and young women differed in their views about whether this was a satisfactory outcome. Overall, adults viewed the arranged marriage as positive because the family had been spared the shame of having their daughter be out of wedlock following delivery and because they had settled the matter quietly without going the more public route of having taken the matter to the Chief. Also, the economic benefits to the family were noteworthy. The family had received compensation on its 'investment' and also did not have to shoulder the responsibility of feeding and caring for either the baby or the daughter. In contrast, young women did not necessarily want to live with the boy's family, who might have blamed or marginalized her. If the girl had become pregnant not by way of a boyfriend but through intercourse with an older man who gave her favors, the young women did not want to be forced into marriage with the man.

In some cases, the families could not settle the matter themselves and took it to the Chief. If, for example, the boy denied responsibility for the pregnancy or the boy's family was too poor to afford the requested arrangements, then the girl's parents brought the matter to the village or town Chief, paying a sum of money for the Chief's services. The Chief usually brought together both families and heard the case, in some cases with other authorities. The decision presented to

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[28] This practice was called 'marrying the baby.'

both families typically called for both the boy and the girl to pay a fine, with the boy's family subsequently reimbursing to the girl's family her part of the fine. In addition, the Chief required the boy's family to reimburse the girl's family for the girl's school expenses for the current school year. The boy's family was also asked to pay the school expenses for the girl the year following her delivery or, if the girl does not plan to return to school, the parents were required to arrange a marriage.

In some cases, family settlement failed because the boys' parents refused to pay, or the accused boy continued to deny responsibility for the pregnancy or had even run away. The town Chief referred such cases to the section Chief, who attempted to handle it but referred it to the Paramount Chief otherwise. In the rare case that the Paramount Chief was unable to resolve the case, the case was sent to the FSU.

There were a number of noteworthy variations in this dominant pattern. In Libiesaygahun (Bombali), family settlements do not always require that the pregnant girl stay in the home of the responsible boy. If the girl's parents saw her as 'clever' and wanted her to stay in school, they preferred to keep her at home where she will be apart from the boy. In that case, the boy's parents gave the girl's parents rice, palm oil, goats, or other items in order to cover the family's expenses caring for the girl.

In Robanka, where a Section Chief resided, family settlement was not the first option. Instead, the girls' father took the case to the section Chief, who referred it immediately to the paramount Chief. Since the Chiefdom has a by-law making it a crime for a boy or man to impregnate an unmarried girl, the Paramount Chief fined both the girl's and the boy's families. If they were unable to pay, he referred the matter to the police. If the families did pay the fines, he then told them to 'arrange the matter back home.' Typically, the boy's family agreed to take care of the girl and returned to the girl's family the money they had paid as a fine.

Abortion. The second typical pathway of response in both districts was to get an abortion, without telling the girl's or the boy's family about the pregnancy. As Figure 3 shows (next page), abortion came about in several ways. If the girl first told her close girl friend that she was pregnant, the friend either told her boyfriend or advised her to tell her boyfriend. Her friend also advised her to run away to a big town 'to abort' the pregnancy, and she asked the boyfriend for money to pay for the abortion. Similarly, if the pregnant girl first disclosed her pregnancy to the boyfriend, he advised her to 'spoil the pregnancy.' Typically, the boyfriend went to his friends to ask for money to pay for the abortion.

In most cases of attempted abortion, the pregnant girl and her friend went to traditional healers ('people with medicine'/'native doctors'), who gave the pregnant girl herbs to ingest. In other cases, the pregnant girl went to a traditional birth attendant (TBA) or a hospital for an abortion. If the abortion succeeded, then the girl's parents often did not learn of the pregnancy. All three abortion venues, however, were dangerous, since unsuccessful abortions sometimes led to the death of the pregnant girl. The girl's parents typically attributed their daughter's death to witchcraft, although in some cases, the girl's close friend told the girl's parents that their daughter had died as a result of attempted abortion.

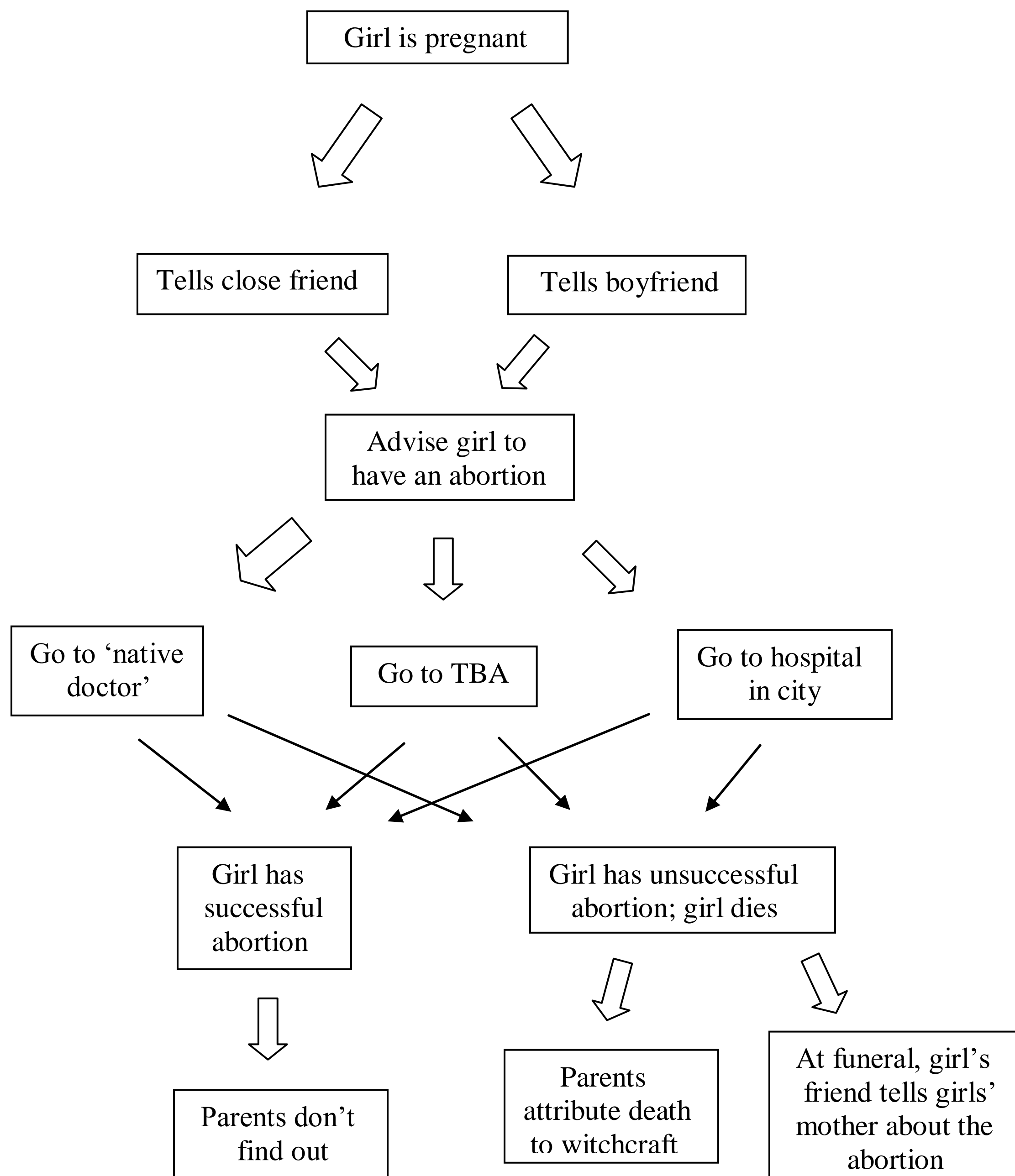

Figure 3. The abortion directed pathway of response to teenage pregnancy.

‘Tampering.’ A variation of both the pathways described above occurred in Moyamba District in response to ‘tampering,’ that is, cases in which pregnancy resulted from exploitative sex that had been arranged or encouraged by a mother. In such a case, the pregnant girl usually told her mother of her pregnancy or the mother noticed it herself (see Figure 4, next page). The mother often tried to collude with the girl in keeping the pregnancy secret from the father because of his tendency to blame the mother and to beat her and even ‘drive her out of the house’ together with the daughter. As part of this collusion, the mother advised the girl to get an abortion from a traditional doctor or a TBA. As described earlier, participants reported that deaths occurred frequently due to failed abortion attempts. When the attempt succeeded, the father did not learn of the pregnancy and the family was spared the embarrassment that public disclosure would have caused.

If, however, the mother deemed it necessary to tell the father of the daughter’s pregnancy, she told him, and he then took the case with his wife to the Chief.[29] In some cases, the Chief referred the matter to the police, who took the man to jail and initiated an investigation. In others, the Chief summoned the accused man, levied a fine, ordered him to pay the girl’s school fees, and instructed the man to marry the girl.

Again, a partial gap occurred with respect to how young women and adults viewed this outcome. Parents and extended family members viewed this as a positive outcome because the man had been punished, the girl was being cared for, and her marriage had protected the honor of the girl and the family. They added that the girl might see the arrangement initially as negative but would, over time, come to see it in positive terms. Although some young women agreed with this perspective, others said that this was a negative outcome because the girl had no desire to be forced into marriage with the older man and feared she would be consigned to a life of maltreatment at the hands of him, his other wives, or both.

Out of School Children

In both Moyamba and Bombali, the dominant pathways of response to children being out of school was through the extended family. However, which pathway was taken depended on the cause of children being out of school. For example, if a girl were out of school because she was pregnant, the girl’s family approached the family of the boy who had impregnated her and argued that the boy had to marry her and also return the investment the girl’s family had made by having sent her to school. In such a case, the boy’s father compensated the girl’s family but treated his payment to the girl’s family as a loan to be paid back by the boy. To repay the loan, the boy, too, had to leave school in order to work. The irony was that this pathway of response focused mainly on the girl’s parents receiving compensation, and it left both the girl and the boy out of school.

This pathway of response contrasted with the more typical one that related to poverty. A child who was unable to pay school expenses told either the parents (typically the mother first, who often told the father), an aunt or an uncle, or the teacher or school chairman. Thus there was

[29] Sometimes the family did not take the case to the Chief but attempted to reach a family settlement with the older man’s family.

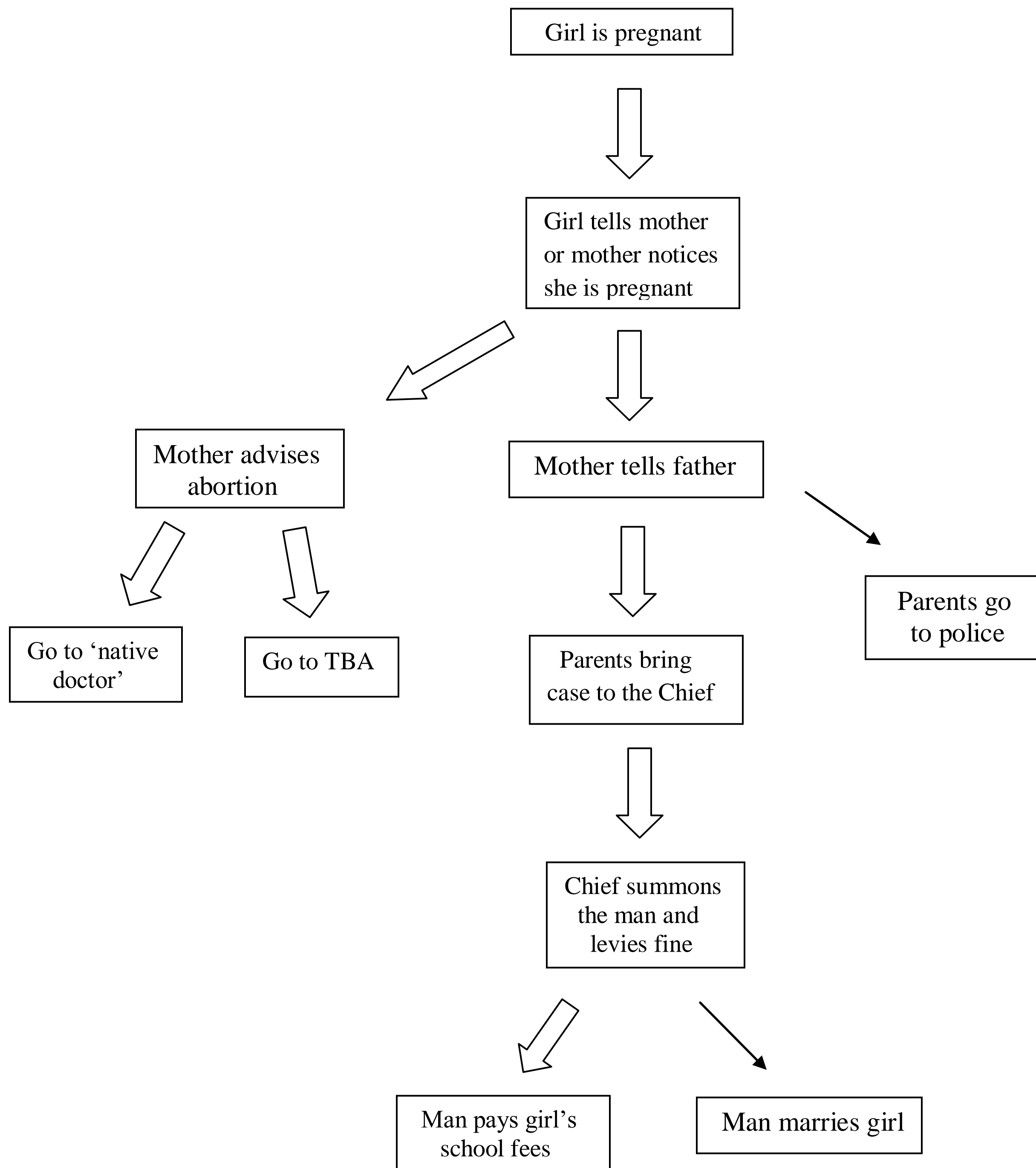

Figure 4. Response pathways in Moyamba in cases of 'tampering.'[30]

[30] In this figure, thin lines indicate less frequently used pathways.

was considerable variation in whom the child went to initially, and no single point of first contact emerged as clearly being most typical. In fact, children did not always tell family members early on that they had stopped going to school, as the parents sometimes heard about the situation from neighbors or other community members.

Once family members had become aware that the child was out of school, they typically took steps to obtain the money needed to pay the costs of the child going to school (see Figure 5, next page). Not infrequently, the mother responded by taking on a business venture such as selling groundnuts to raise funds to send the child back to school. In some cases, the father took on extra work and used the income to pay for the child's school costs. Alternately, the parents went to extended family members to borrow the money needed to send the child back to school. An aunt or an uncle who had learned the child was out of school sometimes helped to pay the school expenses or gave the child work and compensation that made it possible to pay the school fees. Teachers also stepped forward in some cases and either assigned the child paid work that enabled return to school or paid the costs himself or herself.

In some cases involving boys who were out of school, the pathway of response was via a friend. For example, a boy who had stopped going to school told a friend, who then helped to pay the school related costs. Alternately, the friend advised the boy not to leave school for good but to work and earn money for a time and then return to school. Either path yielded the same outcome—the boy returned to school. This outcome was viewed positively not only by the boy and his friend but also by the boy's family and members of the wider community.

A persistent problem was what to do in cases in which a young person decided to stop going to school even when the parents and most adults thought he or she should be in school and there was no conspicuous obstacle such as extreme poverty that prevented school participation. In such cases, the father typically used a mixture of encouragement and threat. First, he advised and encouraged the child to return to school, and he often enlisted other family members to deliver the same message to the child. If the child returned to school, then the matter was settled. If, however, the child did not return to school, then the father talked with the teacher, who in turn pressured the child, or the father threatened or beat the child. If the child still did not return to school, some parents complained to the Chief, who called the child and encouraged him to return to school so that the parents would not be discouraged. The levels of satisfaction with the outcomes achieved in such cases often varied for children and parents. When children did not return to school, the parents were usually unhappy, whereas the children themselves were satisfied. Conversely, when some children eventually returned to school, the parents were happy, yet at least some children were unhappy because they had not wanted to go to school.

In at least one village, the Chief took a preventive, if punitive, stance.

> I: *What is your role in such cases when it is brought to you?*
> R: W*hen it is brought to me I threaten the children that if they decide not to go to school they will not be allowed to stay in this village as long as your father has not stopped paying your fees and you have decided to leave school you will not stay in this town. I will threaten them but because we do not have hand cuff or a "block house" (prison cell) we will only threaten them to go back to school but if they insist that they will not go back then we will not kill that child but rather we will leave him or her.*

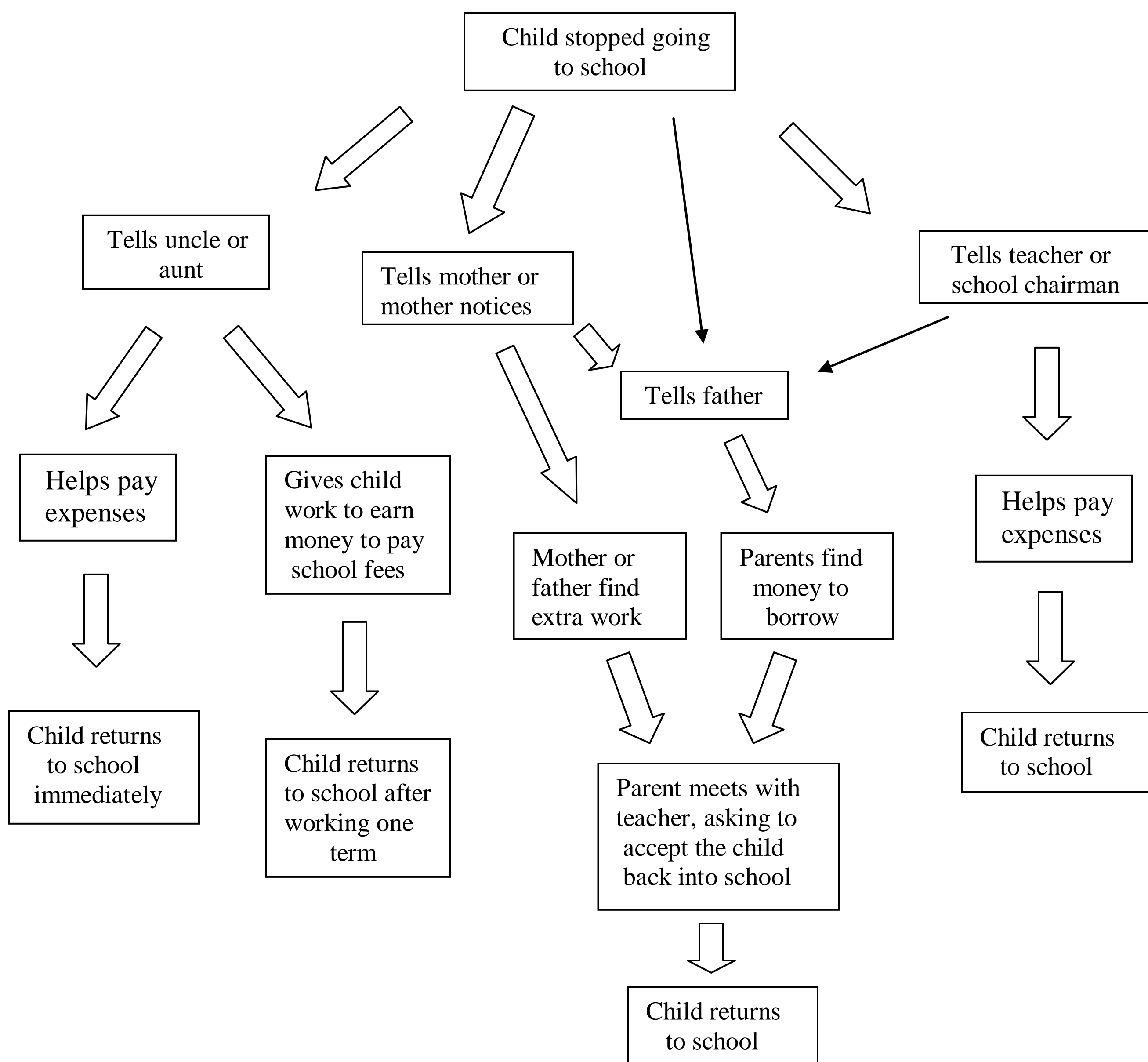

Figure 5. Common response pathways for supporting out of school children.[31]

[31] In this figure, very thin lines indicate less frequently used pathways of response.

I: *Do you threaten them with the law?*
R: *Yes I will tell them that I am going to bring the police. When I mention the police some have gone back to school many times because of that.*
I: *Who are the people that you consult with in taking the decision to threaten the child, and how well has that worked for you?*
R: *Some children are afraid of our words and because of that they have gone back to school.* (Chief, Moyamba)

The research, however, did not attempt to document either how many children were out of school or the comparative effectiveness of different pathways in helping children return to school.

Maltreatment of Children Not Living with Their Biological Parents

For children who were not living with their biological parents and were being mistreated, the dominant pathway of response is through the child's father.

I: *What is done? [when a child who is not living with his parents is being maltreated]?*
R1: *If the child is serious, he or she will come and explain to the parents what has happened to them.*
I: *What will the father do?*
R2: *Father goes to ask from the caregiver what might have been the problem.*
R5: *When you have a child that attends school in another town and that child comes and tells you about what is happening with him/her, if the father wants the child to be educated, he will then go to the person that the child is staying with to find out about the problem. Based on what he will find out, he will either find another place for the child to stay or if there is no other way, he will encourage the child to continue staying in the same place.*
I: *Is there any other action that the father will take?*
R1: *If his child is at fault, he will advise the child and encourage him/her to continue staying at the same place. He will then beg the 'caretaker' to accept the child back.*
(Group discussion, women, Moyamba)

In some cases, the child told the father directly of his or her situation, although in other cases the child first told the mother, who in turn told the father. Alternatively, the child in some cases told an uncle of his or her situation.

Having learned about the situation, the father or uncle visited the child's caretaker in order to investigate (see Figure 6, next page). Depending on what he learned, he pursued one of three courses of action. If he saw that the child was suffering and the caretaker had not provided proper care, he asked the caretaker to 'please return my child back to me' and took the child home. While the child was home, the father looked for a different, better placement site for the child. A second option was to 'settle' with the caretaker, getting an agreement on changes that the caretaker would make. If the father saw that the care arrangements were not too bad or that no other options existed, he advised the child to go back and live with the caretaker, saying 'child, if

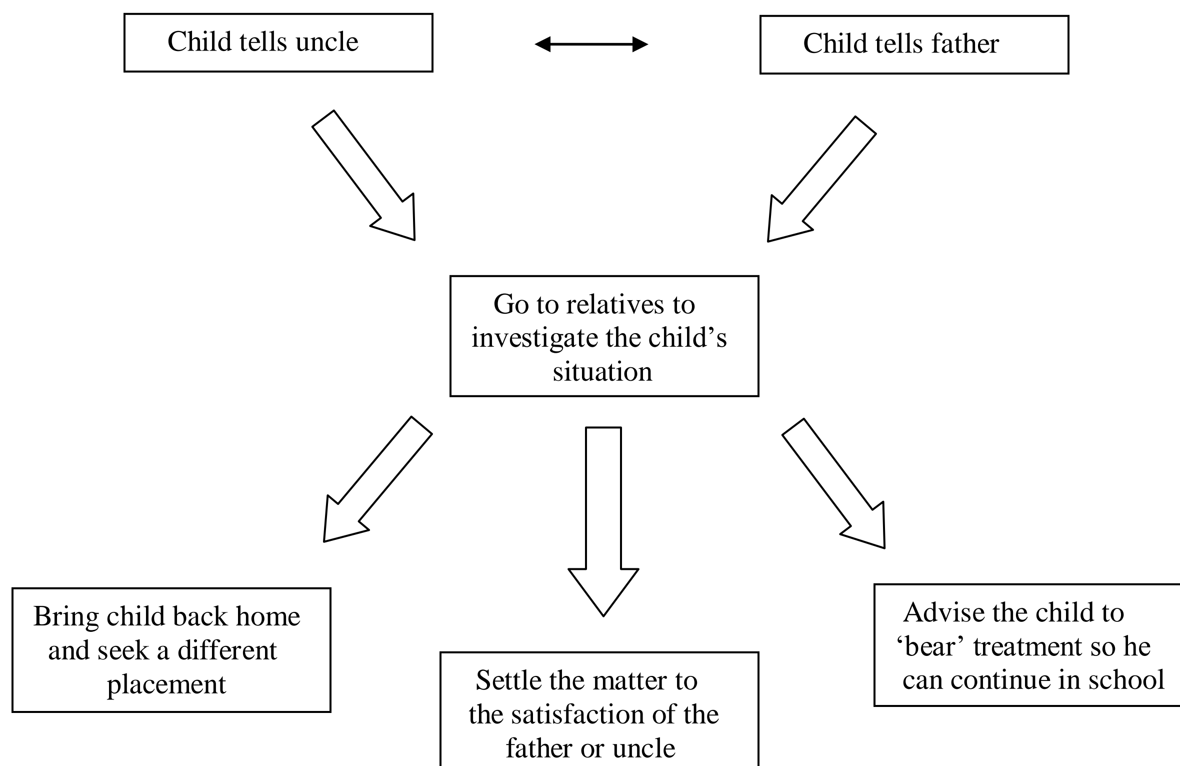

Figure 6. Pathway of response and response options for maltreated children who were not living with their biological parents.

you want to prosper, go back to where you were.' The latter advice was not uncommon when living with the caretaker was the child's only means of continuing school.

Children Engaged in Heavy Work

As discussed previously, some children who engaged in heavy work viewed it in positive terms as a contribution to their families. In cases in which heavy work was too much for a child, the dominant pathway of response was for the child to complain to the mother, saying 'the work is heavy.' In turn, the mother requested the father to 'change the duties' of the child. The father then asked the child which type of work he would prefer, and the child selected work that was satisfactory to both himself and the father.

In a secondary pathway of response, the child (in some cases with the encouragement of an aunt) told the Chief or the town head man of his situation. The Chief then called the parents and advised them how to treat children.

Pathways for Other Issues

Aside from the top four risks, the pathways of response to other risks that had not been identified followed the pattern wherein people responded primarily through family and community processes. For example, sexual abuse within families was a criminal offense, yet it was typically handled within the family.

> I: *What happens when an uncle living in the household sexually abuses a girl?*
> R: *If it is incest, usually they try to address it within the family because they do not want the family name to be shamed. Also, it's usually done by an adult male and people do not want this male to be shamed because incest is such a shameful thing. Sometimes it goes out of control and goes to the Chief. The Chief will call the man and start an investigation. But then, along the way, it is resolved quietly, and he knows when it is resolved. Because they want to protect from shame the man who has committed the rape. Sometimes if the child is in foster care, she will be sent back to her parents. Sometimes the child will be criticized for lying against an adult. Sometimes the man responsible becomes very adamant. If he accepts that something happened, then the Chief will ask him to marry her.*
> I: *When the Chief rules that the man should marry the girl, how does the family view that?*
> R: *For them, it is the best solution because the girl has been tampered with. Sometimes they only know this when the girl becomes pregnant and then there's a husband. It's a good resolution for them.*
> I: *How about from the girl's standpoint?*
> R: *Usually, they are not consulted. This is the normal way of addressing these issues. The child has been appraised by the Chief and family members that she should marry the perpetrator, then she goes to that man and he becomes the husband.*
> I: *In your work, have you spoken with any girls who have been in this situation?*
> R: *Yes but not here but in Moyamba Town. In some villages, some girls say they accept the marriage and are not happy about it. In some cases they have run away from the marriage to different towns.*
> I: *Do they run away after they had started living with the man?*
> R: *Yes, after living with the abuser. Because in many cases there's a huge age gap or difference or they are not happy about the outcome of the decision taken by family members and the Chief or because they are not consulted. They are just expected to go along with the decision in this kind of situation.* (Child protection worker, Moyamba)

As outlined below, people did sometimes report criminal offenses to the FSUs. Yet the point remains that for most people, family and community mechanisms were the primary pathways of response.

6. Linkage of CBCPMs with the National Child Protection System

A key finding was that the connections between CBCPMs and the national child protection system were, for the most part, weak or even nonexistent. The majority of the sites had little, if any, contact with police, social workers, trained human rights workers or other elements of the

national child protection system. However, some positive connections were visible, as people in three of the sites said that they had access to, used, and benefitted from particular elements of the national child protection system, including the chiefdom-level CWCs that were intended to be bridges between communities and the national system. These connections and also the wider disconnection and the reasons for it are discussed below in regard to FSUs, police, social workers, human rights workers, and CWCs.

Family Support Units

Discussions with police and social workers who comprised FSUs in Bombali and Moyamba indicated that FSU members have strong motivation to support vulnerable children and fulfill their mandate under the law to apprehend, interrogate, and aid the prosecution of perpetrators of criminal offenses against children. The FSU members said that they were unique not only because of their mandate but also because they had received special training on how to work with children and families on difficult cases. FSU members expressed appreciation for the distinctive collaboration between police and social workers. In both districts, they emphasized their willingness to connect with communities, even distant ones, in order to fulfill their mandate.

The FSUs were quite active in responding to criminal cases such as those involving child abuse. The FSU in Makeni spoke of the previously mentioned (see pp. 71-72) case in which an upset mother had cruelly burned the hand of her daughter. As indicated below (see next page), they responded quickly to the incident and did their part to get the case before the Magistrate in a timely manner. The heavy workload of the FSU was evident in the fact that in the previous year (2010), 51 cases of child sexual abuse had been reported in Bombali District, and there were cases involving other kinds of abuse as well.

In Moyamba District, some participants spoke of how they relied on the FSU in cases of teenage pregnancy that had not been settled at family or chiefdom levels.

> I: *When girls become pregnant do you report the case to the FSU?*
> R: *Yes, it happens sometimes when the man responsible for impregnating the girl is "tehun" (disobedient). It happens to my daughter and I took the matter to the FSU who charged the matter to magistrate court. The man was released from prison only last year. It is only when the man becomes disobedient that we take such steps, but if the man is obedient and begs the girl's family then it will be arranged as a family.*
> I: W*hen cases are taken to the FSU how is it arranged?*
> R: *The FSU will punish the man but will not take money from the man and give it to the girl's family. They will arrange it just like the Chiefs and the man will be forced to take up the responsibility of the girl and to send her back to school after she gives birth.*
> I: W*hat is your view about the FSU?*
> R: *Their work to save the lives of children is very good. Now when someone wants to do any wrong to the child they will know that there are people who can fight for the girls so their work is very good.*
> I: W*hat about social welfare—do you work with them?*

R: *Yes but we only take people who are disobedient to these people. As long as the man remains obedient then elders will beg for them.*
I: H*ave cases being taken to social welfare from this town?*

An FSU Responds to a Case of Child Abuse

I: *In this particular case, how old was the victim?*
R1: *8 years old.*
I: *Why did the burning occur?*
R1: *The girl had stuck her hands into soup that her aunt had prepared for someone. The girl was caught red handed. Because of that, her hands were tied and burned.*
I: *I have to ask your patience. Could you please walk me through step by step what happens in a case like this?*
R2: *In this matter the social worker is the complainant. We took the child to our office, filled out a report, and issued a medical form. We took her for medical treatment at Makeni hospital.*
I: *Is the medical treatment free?*
R2: *Yes.*
I: *And what happened next?*
R1: *We took a statement from the victim who explained what had happened to her. From which the aunt was invited—she was brought to the station. We arrested her and then obtained voluntary caution.*
R2: *She admitted she did it.*
R1: *Presently the case in on trial in the Magistrate's Court.*
I: Is she being held in prison?
R1: *Yes. She has been in our custody two days.*
I: *When will the case be heard?*
R1: *The matter occurred on the 27th, and it went to court the 30th.*
I: *And how long will the proceeding continue?*
R2: *I attended court yesterday and learned the matter will come up on Tuesday for the verdict.*
I: *Will this be private?*
R2: *Yes—the common understanding between MSW and FSU is that all cases involving children should be in the closed chamber. For that reason, the case was deferred to Tuesday, which is the day reserved for cases concerning juveniles.*
I: What is the woman actually charged with?
R1: *We charged her with child cruelty and domestic violence.*
I: *What will be the likely penalty if she's convicted?*
R1: *That is up to the Magistrate! These are our own areas. [laughter]*
I: *In previous cases of a similar nature regarding children, what kinds of penalties have been applied?*
R2: *It varies. In 2009, there was a case of wounding. The suspect was sentenced for two years six months or a fine of 500,000 leones.*

Source: Interview with FSU members in Bombali.

R: *Yes for instance if someone impregnates a child and does not want to care for the girl then he will be taken there. It will be arranged that he must support the girl and then they will come back home but it is not common here. It is only those who fail to be responsible for girls that they impregnate.* (Male elder, Moyamba)

The FSUs were also praised for avoiding the harm to children that could have resulted from having members of the SLP (Sierra Leone Police) Criminal Investigation Division, who are mandated to work with adults, interview children. According to a child protection worker in Bombali,

FSUs are effective. In my mind they have eased the burden on the judiciary such as the courts. The FSU has been trained on methods of mediation and diversion. There are some cases that are really bad and are not reported to the CWCs directly but to the FSU. Those cases are being diverted at pretrial level. Those that are serious go for prosecution. They are also engaged in sensitization and dissemination of information about child protection at community level. (Child protection worker, Bombali)

On the other hand, most people said that they had little access to FSUs, which were not present in their communities. In some cases, they had heard the FSU members speaking via radio, but they lacked direct access.

I: *How do you work with the FSU?*
R: *We have never worked together.*
I: *How do you see the FSU?*
R: *It is a fine thing because they enlighten us on issues.*
I: *Do they come here to enlighten you?*
R: *No, we hear them over the radio.* (Chief, Moyamba)

Numerous respondents cited transportation difficulties as a significant obstacle to reporting to FSUs. To report an offense required long travel to a city and high transport fees. Repeat visits were typically needed for purposes such as being present at the time of a judicial hearing. The accumulated expenses, coupled with the cost of having taken valuable time away from farming and the desire to keep problems private, encouraged people to find local solutions, without engaging with the FSUs.

R: *It's hard to get to the formal system. If someone is living in Tambaka, which is the farthest, nearly in Guinea, you can only get to an FSU in Kamakwie.*
I: *And how far away is that?*
R: *It's a distance, and they have to cross a river. And the people there are Madingos who are Islamic and believe children's issues should not be discussed in public. They don't want other people to know about it. So many of those cases—a good number—will not get reported. Even if at times they get to the FSU, they have to go back and forth, back and forth. They are not interested in doing this. People don't see the need for justice because justice is inaccessible. They need to work on their farms so they try to solve things in their own way.* (Child protection worker, Bombali)

I: *Do local people have much contact with the FSUs and are they likely to use the FSUs?*
R: *There's not too much contact. Some people are within walking distance of Moyamba Town and are able to contact the FSU. In cases such as Dasse, the Chief refers cases to the FSU. She comes over to Moyamba or she pays transport for the victims to come to Moyamba to go to the FSU. In Teyama where you have a police post in Kori Chiefdom, some people try to access the FSU. But in most parts of the district, people do not have access because the FSU is far away.*
I: *If there were strong access, would there be a tendency for people to report to the FSU?*
R: *Yes. They have tried and reported some cases. If they have access, I am sure there will be an increase in reporting.* (Child protection worker, Moyamba)

Echoing these sentiments, FSU members cited lack of transport as a significant obstacle and said that they could do a better job if they had vehicles and fuel that they could use to reach out to the distant villages.

Transportation problems and costs, however, were by no means the main obstacle to reporting offenses through the FSUs. In closely knit villages, people regarded everyone as part of their family and were reluctant to report matters outside the 'family' due to fear of censure and isolation.

I: *Do you work with the police on children's issues?*
R: *No*
I: *Why?*
R: Here we don't report child cases to the police; we solve it as a family. (Imam, Moyamba)

… It is customary for people to report to the Chief. He is the leader of their community. To come to the FSU is a problem. Also, the Chiefs try to resolve some cases on their own, and these cases were not reported to the FSU. People think that when you report another community member to the FSU, you are bringing enmity to the village and you are breaking the bonds of kinship. When you report to the FSU, action is taken against the perpetrator, but the action does not benefit the victim in any way. There's no reparation. The process that the FSU uses is quite different from the process used by the Chief. The Chief will mediate, the Chief will counsel and try to build peace. That is usually not the case with the FSU. (Child protection worker, Moyamba)

The perception that the action of the FSU does not benefit the victim was a significant obstacle to reporting to the FSU, and it was compounded by the burdens of reporting.

I: *So people don't see as many benefits of going to the FSU?*
R: *No. They don't see many benefits. When you have to pay, there are financial obligations which also increases the burden on them already. You have to pay for the police to come to your place. You have to pay to go to the police. You have to provide*

food for them when they come to the village. It's a big burden. (Child protection worker, Moyamba)

The burden was made more onerous by the fact that it was born by the individual who reported the violation. In addition, participants complained that little actually happened after they had made the report.

I: *What is the link between the Chiefs and elders in this village and the FSU, social welfare, the magistrate courts and other government bodies that work for the protection of children?*
R: *There is no link between them. Cases are mostly taken to the FSU by individuals; in that case it is the individual who has to work with the FSU to fight the case. There is no support from the Chiefs. Sometimes the FSU will call the Chief as witness and the Chief will go there but that happens only when the case was first taken to the Chief. When cases go to the magistrate court they do not ask anybody in the village especially the Chief because the magistrate court does not respect the Chief's court. Many of the cases taken to government die away because they are never treated. They keep saying come next week, come next week until you get fed up and you don't go there any more.* (Teenage girl, Moyamba)

Although the FSUs were linked with but distinct from the regular police, people's fears of the police may have limited their willingness to engage with the FSUs.

I: *Have you ever made a report to the police?*
R: *Never! I am afraid. The mention of court instills fear in me, let alone police.* (Mammy queen, Bombali)

People's fears related in part to collective memories of the tactics of punishment and humiliation that the police had reportedly used years before.

R: *The police came here and disgraced him (the Chief). They lay him on the floor and even hit him in front of us. They claimed that they had information that we were training Kamajors*[32] *here who had guns which was a lie. The whole village looked like a war front. Everyone was running to the bush to find a place to hide for the fear of being beaten…. Even the children run for themselves. Everyone was afraid and concerned about his or her live. In fact some children lost their lives from that incident. One of them died instantly while running to the bush and others were sick for some time and not all of them survived it. The health condition in the bush affected them.*
I: *What was done about that?*
R: *Nothing came out of it. They just came and beat people for nothing. They even took some of our properties with them. One of the police shamelessly took my stepmother's big chicken with him.* (Woman, Moyamba)

Even where fears of the police were not a major issue, there were concerns about how the police would handle the case. Some people, for example, said that even following the report of a

[32] Kamajors were members of traditional hunting societies, which during the war, had transformed into armed groups that had fought against the main rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front.

case to the police that by law should have been handled by police, local families would 'compromise' the case by seeking a solution between families.

> *Yet some of those cases, even after they have gone to the police, are going to be compromised. The police come to them and ask for a statement but when you ask them to come back, they won't come back again. The family of the perpetrator has gone to the family of the victim, and they have decided what to do and they're going to pay. Accepting the money at that point in time is alright. They are not interested in court. Most times, the decisions have been taken by elders, there again exposing the children to greater risk. While they discuss the issue, the child is not considered. They consider only the family's image—the children are left out again. Only the image and respect of the family is considered. There is no concern for the child and the trauma the child is going through.* (Child protection worker, Bombali)

As this participant noted, the negotiations between families focused more on family image and harmony than on the best interests of the child.

The tension that existed between traditional approaches and that of reporting to the FSU was evident in the views of Chiefs, who were the leaders of the traditional system but who also had responsibilities to adhere to national law.

> I: *When do you make referrals and to whom?*
> R: *There is a law for children in this town that no one should beat their child mercilessly or burn the child's hands on the fire or drive the child out of his or her place at odd hours. If that happens we will refer such cases to NA court [Native Administration Court], social welfare and FSU at Moyamba. It is only the distance that affects us.*
> I: *What about international NGOs, groups that support children but their branch is in overseas do you have it?*
> R: *We don't have it here it is only FORUT that comes to assist but they are based in Bauya. They only talk of agriculture; they built us a traditional birth attendance house house.*
> I: *The laws that the government has made on behalf of the children how well do you enforce these laws?*
> R: *Well here, the laws are not too forced here on people. We know that we should send our children to school but most parents will say 'I don't have money to send all my children to school; I am sending some to go and learn Arabic.' It is only things like maltreatment of the child that we the Chiefs cannot allow parents to do so.*
> I: *Do you have access to government groups like FSU, what cases do you refer to them?*
> R: *I told you earlier on that we have access to them; they are not here, they are in Moyamba. We refer cases like rape, wound, marital or child matters that we cannot handle those are the things that we refer*
> I: *What is their own work, their responsibilities?*
> R: *They give warning to people who refuse to obey the laws concerning women and children. They imprison those who make it habit to harm children they take action against people who rape or maltreat children.*
> *I: What are your own responsibilities in respect of their own roles?*

R: *I refer cases to them if I have any, but there are times when I don't refer cases because we are all relations here. We threaten to do so for people to be afraid, because if we don't do that we will get so much trouble.*
I: *As Chief do you feel respected and supported by the government worker?*
R: *Well I feel respected because no one has threatened me but I don't get any support from them.* (Chief, Moyamba)

The lack of support expressed by the Chief hints at the need to build stronger relations between Chiefs and the FSUs. Indeed, improved relations will be essential for fulfilling the previously mentioned MoU between the Paramount Chiefs and the MSWGCA.

Social Workers

The MSWGCA had designated for each chiefdom in Bombali and Moyamba Districts a government trained Social Worker, whose role was to help build awareness of children's issues and to respond to and prevent various kinds of child abuse. Ideally, there was one Social Worker per chiefdom, although in practice, several Social Workers in Moyamba covered two different chiefdoms.

Few Social Workers lived in or near the chiefdoms to which they had been assigned. Instead, they planned to visit the chiefdom or chiefdoms on a regular basis. The fact that Social Workers visited rather than lived in the chiefdom was seen by local people as a limiting factor.

The CWCs are supposed to work with the Social Worker in each chiefdom. But the Social Worker has no office, accommodation, or food. How can they work under these conditions? It is the responsibility of the District Council to provide these things but they do not. In the chiefdoms, the Social Workers are not recognized—people don't know them. It is said they only add to the poverty that is already there. (Child protection worker, Moyamba)

I: *What do you know about the Family Support Unit (FSU)?*
R: *I have only heard about them but I have no idea.*
I: *What are the linkages of the mechanisms you have as a community with the Ministry of Social Welfare?*
R: *There is one representative of Social Welfare at Kagbere who comes here on and off to advise the community about children.*
I: *Are there any gaps?*
R: *There are no gaps, the only problem is that we don't have a representative here.* (Chief, Bombali)

In some villages, people said they had not seen their Social Worker for over a year and that as a result, they had turned for support to other venues such as traditional mechanisms or social workers who had been trained by NGOs. Typically, the NGO facilitated social workers volunteered their time on a limited basis and worked with significantly less training than the Government Social Workers had received.

A significant obstacle for the Government Social Workers was their inability to travel extensively to spend time in the villages. Social workers had no travel budget and no means of transportation of their own, and they had to bear the high costs of public transport on very limited salaries.

> *A big problem for us is low salary—we have no encouragement. Travel out to the chiefdoms is very hard, especially for the remote chiefdoms that do not have public transport. Even if there is public transport, it is too expensive.* (Social Worker, Moyamba)

Financial obstacles were also emphasized by the lead District Social Workers, who said they lacked the phones and computers needed to do their reports. In Moyamba, Social Workers said that they were reduced to making handwritten reports that took months to reach Freetown. Also, Social Workers said they had to pay out of their own pockets to use phones to call their clients or to follow up on cases.

Financial obstacles were also salient in discussions with the Social Workers who served as Probation Officers. Because of the absence of remand centers, these officers often had to take children in conflict with the law into their own homes and provide for them by using the family food, thereby reducing the amount of food available for their own children. The Probation Officers reported also that no means were available for keeping out of the formal justice system juveniles who had committed minor offenses. In Bombali District, however, UNICEF worked with the District Council to establish a Child Panel that would work with minor cases, providing a channel for diversion.

Aside from financial problems, MSWGCA staff said that their work is hampered by poor coordination.

> *Another big problem is coordination. Here in Moyamba we have Action Aid, Plan International, and NESPE [an education group]. We should be the coordination office for all child protection work. But some NGOs just go and do their work without coordinating with us. To address this problem, we've been developing with UNICEF a National Framework for Coordination. We want each child protection agency to work with us and take a collaborative approach.* (Social Worker, Moyamba)

According to the Social Workers, this poor coordination impeded efforts to work effectively with communities and to build a functioning national child protection system.

Human Rights Workers

Several of the researched villages had people who had been trained to do human rights education and promotion, monitoring, and reporting to police and other authorities as was appropriate to the seriousness of the offense. Some participants commented on the helpfulness of the human rights workers or 'helpers.'

> R: *The FSU at Bauya, is sometimes very helpful. The human right helpers in this town also monitor and will report and tell their supervisors when bad things happen to children.*
> I: *Does everybody have access to the FSU at Bauya and the human rights helper in this town?*
> R: *Yes the human rights helper in this town is Mr.[X][33]; he is also a volunteer teacher in this school. If anybody wants to go and report to the FSU they are free to go. Nobody will stop them. The Chiefs have not stopped anybody from going to the FSU to report. The Human Rights take care of pregnant girls they will summon the man who impregnates a girl or who will do harm to a child. The man will go there and apologize and will pay bills for the time the woman or the child spent there. However many people are afraid of going to see the FSU or the human rights helper.* (Teenage girl, Moyamba)

Human rights workers also responded to serious cases such as child rape, and they collaborated in appropriate ways with Chiefs.

> R: *An adult raped a 7-year-old girl and the matter was reported to the Chief. He called in the human right worker to play his part. The Chief had sent the child to the hospital for the nurses to examine her, and they confirmed that the girl was raped. The Chief and human right worker followed the issue to the hospital to know the outcome of the nurse's work.*
> I: *What happened after that?*
> *R: The parents, community and Chief asked that the human right man do his work.*
> I: *Who made the decision?*
> *R: The Chief and human right man.*
> I: *What was the outcome?*
> R: *The human right worker made a phone call to Makeni where the office he represents is based, and reported the issue. In response, the office informed the police and they sent a team of police men to come to Kagbere. The village support team was told to move to Kagbere, where the paramount Chief was also informed about the issue.*
> I: *What was the reaction of the paramount Chief?*
> R: *He supported the idea that the matter should be sent to Makeni.*
> I: *What happened next?*
> R: *The police arrived, arrested the man who raped, handcuffed him and took him, the girl that was raped and her family to Makeni.* (Woman, Bombali)

The action of human rights workers at community level, however, was a double-edged sword. As was true for child rights, some people saw human rights as undermining parental authority and imposing outside ideas that did not fit the local context.

> R8: *Even human right is responsible. The children refuse to go to school and threaten to report us the parents to the police, even the head teachers who usually flog them – government has stopped that…*

[33] Participants' names have been deleted in order to protect their confidentiality.

I: *Madam [X], tell us something, you have been quiet so far.*
R5: *I have a very troublesome child. Twice I have been invited to Human Rights office on behalf of the child*
R3: *The child misbehaved and when [X] beat her, she went to the human rights people in this town. They forwarded her to the human right people in Moyamba and the human right people forwarded her to the police. [X] explain to them.*
R5: *The police came here and charged me to pay money. I lost over twenty thousand Leones and from that day, I don't have anything to do with the child anymore. Whenever she asks me for something, I tell her to go the human right people or to the police. She asked me to buy slippers for her and I told her to go to the police so that they can give her the money as I have given them all the money I had.*
I: *Is the child living with you?*
R5: *Yes I cannot drive her out of my house because the human right people will arrest me, but I have nothing to do with her anymore. I do not even send her to do anything for me anymore.*
I: *How old is the child?*
R5: *She is about thirteen years of age. She is very stubborn and does not listen to me. She does not want to work at all, just to play and eat.*
I: *How do you address such problems? What do you do to children who are stubborn and difficult to deal with?*
R4: *We deprive them of food, 'starve them'. We don't beat them because they will take us to Human Rights.* (Group discussion, women, Moyamba)

This mother's rejection of her daughter points out the problems of introducing human rights into communities without having significant community acceptance and ownership of the concept. Also, the fact that human rights had led some women to substitute one form of mistreatment (beating) with one (food deprivation) that was as bad or worse indicates the magnitude of the task of bringing communities within the circle of child rights as mandated under the Child Rights Act.

Child Welfare Committees

None of the participating villages had outside child protection support such as CWCs that external NGOs had facilitated. However, CWCs had been established at Chiefdom level in the research sites and had received training by international NGOs. Although CWCs had been mandated by the Child Rights Act, opinion was variegated in regard to their functionality and effectiveness. On the positive side were views of Government social workers and child protection workers such as the following.

They are doing their level best. In[village X], about two miles from here, there was a boy who abused two girls. The CWC reported it since they have the cell number of the FSU, of the MSW, DCI, Center for Human Rights and Democracy, HANCII, and protection agencies. They arrested the boy because it's in the MoU between the MSW and police that where there is no FSU present, the CWC is mandated to arrest the suspect. But within 24 hours, they need to inform police. They did that, and the man was brought up. Most of the Paramount Chiefs in Bombali District report sexual abuse

cases because they are part of the CWC. Before this time, in cases like this, the Paramount Chief would do mediation and the suspect would be fined. Now the Paramount Chief is part of the CWC, and when a case comes to him, he will refer to the FSU. The FSU vehicle or personnel will come, and the Paramount Chief hands over the suspect to the FSU. The Paramount Chief will want to know what happened, so we take some jottings—the Chief gives us all the information on the case. (Social worker, Bombali)

I: *How functional and effective are CWCs?*
R: *Oh, the CWCs are very effective in rolling out the CRA. I would say that strongly, because most of the cases that are now reported to the FSU come from the CWCs because they monitor cases day in day out in their community. And they have reduced the burden of cases on the Magistrate and formal justice mechanisms. They are effective of course. They need logistics to function independently—to organize programs themselves, to hold community dialogues and sensitizations, and to be able to reach out to the community. The logistics are really important and if they don't have them, it may be impossible to reach out beyond chiefdom headquarters. Most offenses happen at village level so people there need to learn what are their roles and responsibilities. The focal persons there play a key role in whatever cases arise. The focal point can refer cases to the CWC at chiefdom level and if necessary, the CWC can go to the authorities for action.* (Child protection worker, Bombali)

As these narratives suggested, the effectiveness of the Chiefdom CWC depended in part on the willingness of the Paramount Chief, who is a CWC member, to be actively engaged and to adhere to the Child Rights Act and the MoU by referring criminal offenses to the FSU.

The weight of the evidence, however, indicated that CWCs were struggling. It was noteworthy that most respondents in this research made no mention of CWCs, which were located in Chiefdom headquarters towns far from many rural villages. Issues of consistency arose because CWCs operated with varying levels of training and without official guidelines to steer their work.

CWCs are usually set up by NGOs. In Moyamba, where you have very few child protection NGOs, it means you hardly find CWCs in many parts of the district. In 2010, the Ministry decided to scale up CWCs and mandated social workers to establish a CWC in every Chiefdom. So in principle, there should be a CWC in each chiefdom in Moyamba District. Plan International supports CWCs in three Chiefdoms. But in other Chiefdoms, they have not been trained, and they were only set up quickly by social workers. There have been no meetings with people to explain what the CWCs are and how they should work. There are no official guidelines. And they are not functional except in areas where Plan International works, where they are functional to some extent. (Child protection worker, Moyamba)

Operational challenges included the long distances many people lived from the CWC, which made CWCs accessible mostly for people who lived in Chiefdom headquarters towns. In

addition to these operational challenges, there were difficulties associated with the factionalized manner in which some CWCs worked.

> *In Bombali, only one chiefdom is having problems with the training of the CWC. Others have been formed and trained but they still have problems administering their responsibilities. Most of them do not function as a group. For example, if a problem occurs, I'm a CWC member, and I'm very close to the family that has this problem, I will try my own way to see how to solve it instead of bringing it to the whole group to decide what to do. In other communities, CWCs work in pockets of 3-4 members clustering together addressing particular issues. Most times, CWCs are responding to problems rather than trying to prevent. If they are doing awareness raising and helping people understand what they need to know about helping children avoid certain risks, they would be really effective. The prevention aspect is key in protection. Most times, when you prevent something from happening, then you save lives.*
>
> *In some cases, NGOs help set up CWCs and help people understand this is what we should do, this is how we should help our children. But CWCs are set up at chiefdom levels. Some chiefdoms are so big that people living in villages 15 miles away can't reach the CWC, which can't know what is happening in a place 20-30 miles away. Even having meetings can be a problem because they have to come from so far away. Some CWCs may have been formed for convenience. CWCs contain 14 members, but of those, 9 may live in the headquarters. They may attend only to what is happening in the headquarters. They may only go 4-6 miles beyond the headquarters. But they do not*

Validation Check Through Feeding Back to Communities

Three months after the data collection, the Moyamba Team Leader and the Lead National Researcher convened meetings with approximately 65 people from the participating villages in each of three chiefdoms. The participants included chiefs, elders, religious leaders, leaders of women's groups and youth groups, children who are in school, children who are out of school, and other citizens. The aim was to feed the information learned back to the communities in order to demonstrate respect and check whether people saw the findings as accurate or inaccurate. First the researchers repeated some of the main questions asked during the research and invited responses from different people. Next, they described the findings presented in this report and then conducted a discussion with the participants about the correlation between what people had just said and the findings in the report. People agreed consistently that there was a good match, thereby confirming the accuracy of the findings.

Equally important, participants reflected on what their communities should do in light of the findings. In each chiefdom, participants identified a possible solution to the problem wherein families responded to teenage pregnancy through compromises between families of the pregnant girl and the boy or man who had impregnated her. Participants argued that there should be a chiefdom by-law that prohibits such compromises and is strictly enforced. This example illustrates the mobilizing effects of feeding back to communities and serves a poignant reminder that communities themselves are sources of social change and action for child protection.

> *reach the far villages. And children in the distant villages will have more problems than those that are closer to the headquarters. They do not have access to ways of addressing their problems.* (Child protection worker, Bombali)

Key informants also said that CWC members had put in large amounts of volunteer time without compensation and that the time taken away from farming and family pursuits had negatively affected their level of motivation. The implications of these challenges to CWCs and other parts of the national child protection system are discussed further below.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has aimed to contribute to the process of developing a strong, effective national child protection system. The urgent need for such a system is evident in the multiplicity of risks to children such as being out of school, engagement in heavy work, maltreatment of children in foster care, teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, and cruelty, among others. The need for an effective national child protection system is evident also in light of the extensive interactions among the various risks that children face. The systemic nature of the risks requires a systemic approach to response and prevention.

The purpose of this section is to consider the wider implications of the findings presented above and make recommendations that can help to guide the development of the national child protection system and the global child protection sector. The implications are offered below as numbered statements, which are not listed in order of priority, together with a brief commentary followed by companion recommendations pertaining to the national and global levels, respectively. For purposes of analysis, the terminology of international child protection will be interlaced with the local terminology discussed earlier in this report.

1. A significant disconnect exists between the formal child protection system and community based child protection mechanisms. Overwhelmingly, people respond to child protection risks not through CWCs and the formal system but through traditional mechanisms involving the extended family, the Chiefs, and customary laws and practices.

Effective national child protection systems include a mixture of formal, governmental elements and civil society mechanisms. Mutually supportive interaction between the governmental and civil society aspects strengthen the system and make it owned or supported by the people. When civil society elements such as CBCPMs are disconnected with the national system, however, the national system is at risk of being ineffective, irrelevant, or both.

Although elements of the national child protection system were present in both districts and in varying degrees in the four chiefdoms included in this study, most people made little use of them. This was true even in cases of criminal offenses that, according to national law, are to be handled by the formal child protection system. People in some areas used the formal system more than did people in other areas. Overall, however, the national child protection system was underutilized at community level.

This disconnect has diverse causes, one which is lack of access. Severe limits on the resources of the FSUs and the MSWGCA impeded outreach to rural areas. Similarly, chronic poverty made it difficult for village people to pay the high transportation, accommodation, and opportunity costs involved in traveling to large towns or cities such as Moyamba Town or Makeni.

A deeper source of the disconnect, however, was that local people had a different world view and set of narratives, meanings, and social rules and customs than those that underlie the national child protection system. It was as if the people in the villages lived in a different world than that inhabited by policy makers and workers in the national child protection system. From the

worldview of local people, there were many reasons for not using the formal child protection system.

To begin with, local people understood children and childhood in terms that diverged from the chronological terms enshrined in the Child Rights Act and international child rights standards. From the standpoint of local views, it would have made little sense to regard a harm to a 15-year-old female as a child protection issue since such a female would not be regarded as a child. In addition, what local people counted as child protection risks did not coincide with those of child protection workers and child rights standards. At best, there was partial overlap between local views of risks and those of child protection workers. These views found general agreement on issues such as maltreatment of children in foster care, out of school children, and heavy labor. Divergence occurred on issues such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), which is part of girl's initiation into Bondo Society. That no one identified FGM/C as a risk stood in stark contrast to international human rights views of FGM/C as a harmful traditional practice. Divergence also occurred in regard to harsh corporal punishment, which international child rights standards prohibit. For the most part, local people viewed harsh corporal punishment as an acceptable, even necessary, means of disciplining children and teaching them obedience and proper behavior.

Perhaps most important, the weight of social customs impeded the use of the national child protection system. Village people had well defined family and community mechanisms for handling harms to children, and they felt comfortable using these. Social norms mitigated against using the formal system, which was viewed as taking family business outside the 'family' of one's village. In addition, local people did not see their families as gaining anything from the use of the formal system, whereas settlements reached through traditional family and community mechanisms often brought tangible gains to families. Furthermore, many local people viewed the formal system as reflecting 'other' values and as inhibiting practices such as corporal punishment that were seen as necessary for rearing children in an appropriate manner. This sense of the formal system as 'other' was likely compounded by the fear that some people felt in regard to police and other elements of the national child protection system.

A useful lens for analyzing the disconnect is the concept of community ownership, which was found in the desk review that lead to this study to be the primary determinant of effectiveness and sustainability. Nearly all the mechanisms discussed under 'pathways of response' (see pp. 76-87) were indigenous in that they had not been catalyzed by outside actors such as the government or NGOs. In the language of the desk review, they fit category 4 of the ILI typology,[34] the category which enjoyed the highest levels of ownership. Indeed, people saw these mechanisms as 'theirs' rather than as things that had been brought in by NGOs or other actors. As had been reported in the desk review, these indigenous mechanisms were incomplete since they did not address many child protection issues such as child beating and were often guided more by family concerns than the best interests of the child. Nevertheless, the ownership that people generally felt toward their indigenous mechanisms contrasted sharply with the low sense of ownership expressed in regard to government mechanisms such as FSUs, which provided direct services and therefore fit category 1. One of the challenges, then, of building a national child protection system is to build a sense of community ownership of the national system.

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[34] Behnam (2008)

The importance of bringing communities into the national system of child protection cannot be overstated. If mechanisms of the national system do link effectively with communities or if communities refuse to use them, the efficacy of the national child protection system will likely be compromised significantly. For the national child protection system to work effectively, it must not only be present in local places but must have the support of local people. Community support for the formal system is no less important than physical access.

In this respect, there is considerable need for bottom-up, community owned approaches to building links with the national child protection system. A key question is how to link communities with the national system in a way that is owned by the community and effective in producing positive outcomes for children. At present, few documented models of how to do this exist. Indeed, the wider research project of which this ethnographic study is part aims to develop and test such models.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIERRA LEONE:

(1) In all districts and in urban as well as rural settings, child protection agencies and stakeholders should use elicitive methods such as ethnography to document and learn about grassroots-level mechanisms of child protection.

(2) Both NGOs and the Government should prioritize the development of effective linkages between community-based child protection mechanisms and the national child protection system. Key steps are to: (a) convene stakeholders at the earliest possible date to collectively review current approaches to developing linkages between CBCPMs and the national child protection system, (b) collectively develop, test, and share the results of different models for strengthening linkages between CBCPMs and the national child protection system, (c) allocate increased financial and human resources for purposes of strengthening the linkages between CBCPMs and the national child protection system.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL CHILD PROTECTION SECTOR:

(1) NGOs should rethink the common practice of establishing child protection committees and groups that do not build on or intersect with existing community-based child protection mechanisms. Before NGOs begin child protection work in a new area, they should learn in a respectful, systematic, elicitive manner about what child protection supports are already there. They should use this respectful process of learning, which communities appreciate, as a platform for community empowerment and the enhancement of community owned mechanisms for prevention and response to child protection issues.

(2) As a complement to or component of mappings of national child protection systems, elicitive methods should be used to learn systematically about existing community-based child protection mechanisms, their functioning, and their linkage or lack thereof with the national child protection system.

(3) All efforts to build national child protection systems should make it a high priority to develop and document the effectiveness of strategies for strengthening contextually appropriate, sustainable linkages between communities and the national child protection system.

* * * *

2. The imposition of international concepts of child protection, most notably of 'child rights,' has had harmful effects. Alternative, respectful approaches toward social transformation are necessary for bringing communities within the national child protection system.

An important finding of this research is that there is enormous backlash at community level against terms and concepts such as 'child rights,' which are at the heart of the Child Rights Act and international child protection standards. This finding resonates with the findings of other research projects in Sierra Leone and also in Liberia.[35] The strength of local antipathy toward child rights indicates that a counterproductive approach has been used in introducing this core concept. Although the concept of 'child rights' has evoked considerable backlash, other terms and concepts of international child protection have also encountered resistance.

The sources of the backlash and resistance relate to the 'two worlds' problem noted above and the enormous power asymmetry between rural communities on the one hand and the government and child protection agencies on the other. The fundamental problem is that the rights discourse and its associated concepts are grounded in Westernized views of children and what harms or aids their healthy development. Since this discourse and set of concepts is incommensurate with local beliefs and practices, there is on the surface little natural resonance between child rights and local beliefs and practices. In this sense, the CRA itself as an act of imposition in that it was passed into law in Freetown and then was taken with the force of national law to the communities. Following the passage of the CRA, NGOs went to communities, held educational sessions that taught and promoted children's rights, and informed people that violations of children's rights such as beatings of children were cause for police intervention and arrest.

This didactic, top-down process was as disrespectful as it was ineffective. It was disrespectful because it imposed outsider ideas without building on existing understandings of children and what enables their well-being, and it treated parents who beat their children as criminals. Little or no effort was made to understand local practices or to appreciate the good things that Sierra Leonean parents and people do on behalf of their children. With the emphasis on what parents did wrong and no attempt to relate concepts such as human rights in local practices, it was natural for people to feel criticized, undermined as parents, and resentful toward child rights. Local people felt powerless in the face of these outside ideas and approaches, and this likely produced frustration and may have lead people to channel other concerns with the government or NGOs into 'child rights' which came to symbolize all that was wrong in their relations with powerful outsiders.

Fortunately, more respectful, non-didactic methods of introducing concepts such as child rights are available (see box, next page).[36] Research on changing harmful practices such as FGM/C[37] has shown the value of taking a slow, dialogue-oriented approach and indicates that social transformation occurs most effectively when it is guided by community people who understand the local context, how to frame key messages, and how to enable constructive

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[35] E. g., Behnam (2011); Shepler (2005); Shriberg (2007).
[36] This process was described to the lead author by Carlinda Monteiro, who developed it. The child rights aspect was added into ongoing training on children's psychosocial well-being as described in Wessells & Monteiro (2000).
[37] Ahmed, Al Hebshi, & Nylund (2009); Dagne (2009)

change. After these ideas have been shared, one can discuss possible connections between them and the idea of children's rights. Similarly, the global desk review of community-based child protection mechanisms[38] reported that a slow approach of dialogue and problem-solving is a

A Dialogue Oriented Approach to Child Rights in Angola

During the Angolan war of several decades, people in rural areas were aware of children's needs yet had little or no understanding of children's rights. Christian Children's Fund (now ChildFund)/Angola introduced the concept of child rights by building on local understandings of children's needs. This was done in the context of reflecting on children's psychosocial well-being.

In workshops conducted with approximately 20 adults, the facilitator, who was from the local area, wrote the word 'child' in the local language (or Portuguese where that was more appropriate) in the center of a large sheet of paper. Then she asked 'What do children need for healthy development?' As the participants responded by saying things such as 'love,' 'education,' 'care,' and 'respect,' the facilitator wrote those words on the paper around the word 'child.' Then she asked 'Who provides these things?' As the participants suggested 'parents,' 'aunts and uncles,' 'teachers,' 'neighbors' and others, she wrote them on the paper, forming concentric circles of care around the child. This was accompanied by discussion of the web of interconnecting responsibilities—e.g., of parents to care for children, and of children to be respectful of adults and to help their families.

Child rights were then introduced by explaining briefly Angolan national laws regarding the treatment of children and their connection with international human rights standards. Also, the facilitator invited reflection on points of convergence between the participants' views and those embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, having summarized what participants had said about the importance of education, she described the view that children have a right to education and invited discussion. As the discussion unfolded, she also noted that the previous discussion of interconnecting responsibilities fit with the child rights discourse about duty bearers at different levels and their obligations.

Although these discussions were not designed to teach about child rights per se, they helped to make abstract concepts intelligible and to link them with people's own lived experiences, understandings, values, and practices. People appreciated this respectful process and expressed interest in learning more about child rights. Although such a dialogue-oriented process did not immediately close the gap between local beliefs and practices and those embodied in child rights standards, it opened a space for constructive dialogue, discussion of how to negotiate the 'two worlds,' and social change. It also avoided the problems of backlash described above.

[38] Wessells (2009).

more effective and respectful way of introducing concepts such as child rights. Consistent with this approach, an experienced child protection worker in Moyamba suggested learning first about traditional practices of child rearing and views of what children need in order to develop well. Subsequently, discussions of child rights can connect with these practices and understandings of children's needs. In this manner, bridges are built between child rights and local understandings. As a result, people find the ideas more relevant to their context, and they do not feel that they are being talked down to.

These insights have important implications for current efforts to bring communities into the national child protection system by means such as establishing child protection focal points in each community[39] as called for under the MoU between Paramount Chiefs and the FSUs. If the focal points were seen as imposed, either by the Government or the Paramount Chiefs, this might limit community support for reporting to them. Similarly, if the focal points are viewed as promoters of alien concepts such as child rights, their effectiveness would be limited. Instead of the didactic, top-down approach that has caused so many problems, it will be useful for the focal points and networks of natural helpers to work from inside communities to build support for using the focal points and for enabling social transformation that brings communities under the tent of human rights. Ongoing ethnography will be useful in tracking the changes that occur as a result of the development of the system of focal points.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIERRA LEONE:

(1) Initiate inter-agency dialogue and learning about respectful, effective ways of introducing child rights and key concepts of child protection at community level. Document and test the effectiveness of these methods in different parts of Sierra Leone, using what is learned to strengthen child protection practice at community level.

(2) CWCs, focal points, and other community links with the national child protection system should not be imposed or introduced through didactic, top-down approaches. They should be introduced or strengthened through a respectful, dialogue and mutual learning approach that includes steps to build support from within communities and to enable access to the formal child protection system through networks of natural helpers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL CHILD PROTECTION SECTOR:

(1) Donors and international NGOs should commission inter-agency research to document and learn more systematically about (a) the problems associated with the ways in which 'child rights' are currently introduced in different countries and regions and (b) more respectful, effective ways of introducing and using the concept of child rights at grassroots levels. Rather than a one-off approach, this effort should be part of an ongoing process of reflection and learning about how to enable effective social transformation in support of children's rights.

(2) To build support for child rights and use of formal, national child protection systems, practitioners should take a slow, non-didactic approach that emphasizes mutual dialogue and problem-solving and builds on local understandings.

* * * *

[39] Where it is infeasible to establish a CWC and there is no social development worker.

3. Multiple protective factors that are indigenous to families and communities are essential in enabling the resilience of Sierra Leonean children.

Although this research identified significant risks to children and pathways of response to them, it is important from the standpoint of policy and practice to take stock of the key protective factors that were also identified. Two of these—being in the care of competent, biological parents and being in school—deserve special attention.

Although it is important not to romanticize parental care,[40] living with one's biological parents was shown by this research to have protective value. In fact, one of the most significant risks in Moyamba District was the maltreatment of children who were not living with their biological parents. A high priority is to keep children with their biological parents. Where this is not possible, it is essential to build protective monitoring and action into the foster care arrangements.

Being in school warrants special attention because children who were in school were less vulnerable and less likely to experience an array of risks that confronted out of school children. Once children had left school, they were at increased risk of engagement in heavy labor, gambling, and other problems. In addition, it was the lack of access to schools locally that typically led families to make for their children the potentially harmful alternative care arrangements mentioned above. Because of problems such as maltreatment at school and the poor quality of education, efforts to keep children in school should be complemented by steps to improve learning and the overall caliber of education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIERRA LEONE:

(1) Engage communities and child protection workers in dialogue about how to minimize and prevent the maltreatment of children who are not living with their biological parents.

(2) Enable dialogue and collaboration between the child protection and education sectors on how to make schools safe, child friendly environments that promote learning and well-being. This dialogue should include workers in Government Ministries, UN agencies, and international and national NGOs, as well as teachers and educationists at grassroots levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL CHILD PROTECTION SECTOR:

(1) Initiate global learning about models and approaches for preventing and minimizing the maltreatment of children who are living in extended family settings, including documenting examples of national child protection systems that are effective in monitoring and responding to this issue.

(2) Both practitioners and policy makers should prioritize steps to enable children to live with their biological parents and participate fully in quality education.

(3) Efforts to build national child protection systems should avoid a deficits approach and take steps to strengthen protective factors and to aid prevention.

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[40] Ager(2006).

4. Children and adults held somewhat divergent views regarding child protection risks and satisfaction with response pathways and outcomes.

Community views of child protection risks, responses to them, and outcomes of the decisions taken were by no means homogenous. One of the most important divergences of views were those of children and adults. For example, younger children were upset by parental arguments and domestic violence, whereas adults did not mention these as risks to children. In general, children were more likely than adults to view tasks such as fetching water using 5-gallon containers as stressful and harmful for children. Gender considerations also influenced perceptions of outcomes by children and adults. For example, adults and family members typically thought it was appropriate to require a pregnant girl to marry the man who had impregnated her. Some girls, however, did not share that view, particularly if the pregnancy resulted from sexual exploitation by an older man. In light of these divergences, it is vital to include children in the development and operation of the national child protection system, avoiding an adult-centric approach and supporting dialogue and mutual understanding between children and adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIERRA LEONE:

(1) Practitioners' assessments of community-level child protection risks, resources, and mechanisms should use child friendly methods in order to include the voices and perspectives of girls and boys at different stages of development.

(2) Make girls' and boys' voices and views central in discussions of what are appropriate, desired outcomes of child protection mechanisms and the national child protection system.

(3) Engage with girls and boys as agents of their own protection and as resources for strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms.

(4) Practitioners should support a process of dialogue and increased understanding between children and adults on issues of child protection and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL CHILD PROTECTION SECTOR:

(1) Include the voices and views of girls and boys in all child protection assessments and efforts to learn about the effectiveness of community-based child protection mechanisms.

(2) Enable girls' and boys' meaningful participation in community-based child protection mechanisms and national systems of child protection.

LESSONS LEARNED

The research process yielded many valuable lessons, which for purposes of convenience are grouped below according to the categories of collaboration, capacity building, logistics, finances, and the research model.

Inter-Agency Collaboration

Perhaps the most fundamental lesson learned was that high levels of inter-agency collaboration were essential for this research. Active engagement and collaboration with the Government was essential for the success of the research. At Freetown level, the MSWGCA staff provided useful information on the functioning of the national child protection system and ethics issues. They also helped to position the research strategically by connecting it with the work of the National Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Child Rights Act. In addition, the national Statistics office provided much needed information about the population and the location of health and education services in various Chiefdoms. At district level, District Council leaders offered useful information on how Council activities impacted child protection, and Council staff members provided vital information that helped to guide the selection of Chiefdoms. Useful information about the functioning of the formal system and links with communities was also gained from district-level Social Workers, staff of the MSWGCA, and the Sierra Leone Police.

Strong, consistent backing by UNICEF was necessary in opening doors with the Government, connecting the research with the strategic process of developing the national child protection system, helping to meet financial challenges, and developing a national research team of high caliber. A pivotal development was the secundment to the research team of David Lamin, who brought a deep understanding of Sierra Leone and child protection issues, an appreciation of traditional systems, and a rich array of networks to the research. In many cases, David served as a key informant who guided relations with local Chiefs and communities and offered essential advice on aspects ranging from how to make effective links with the Government to how to express fundamental concepts in Mende. His efforts were fundamental in building the national research team, many of whose members had engaged previously on UNICEF research projects.

The active collaboration with diverse NGOs proved to be essential in handling diverse logistics and technical challenges. For example, Save the Children secunded one of its valued staff to the national research team, and it provided extensive logistical support with vehicles, visas, meeting spaces, and other necessities. Plan International, the lead NGO in Moyamba at the time when the research was conducted, offered valuable advice on various Chiefdoms and helped provide accommodations for researchers. ChildFund, Defence for Children International, and War Child Holland provided necessary information on various Chiefdoms that helped to guide the selection of research sites.

A positive sub-lesson from this collective organization and work is that successful inter-agency collaboration begets additional inter-agency collaboration. The inter-agency

collaboration on this research itself helped to strengthen the norms of cooperation and sharing that are vital for the construction of a strong national child protection system.

Capacity Building

With regard to capacity building, a mixture of negative and positive lessons arose. Early on in the data collection, it became apparent that the preparatory workshop had been too short and had not included practice in the kinds of rural settings where the actual data collection occurred. This challenge could be overcome in future trainings by extending the preparatory workshop from two weeks to three weeks and including several days of practice in rural areas similar to the actual research sites.

On a brighter note, a key lesson was the importance of ongoing capacity building via field mentoring and supervision. Even three weeks into the data collection, it was clear that there were ongoing challenges wherein the researchers' inserted their own terminology into their interview and group discussion reports (which were intended to capture the participants' exact words). Although the extension and adaptation of the workshop suggested above would have helped, this adjustment by itself could not have guaranteed the development of the full array of skills needed to deliver quality ethnographic data. Fortunately, the model of having a Team Leader working in the field and mentoring two or three researchers proved to be an effective means of providing the ongoing capacity building. The development of the researchers' skills and level of functioning in a research role occurred at different paces and in different ways for each individual. The close attention that the Team Leader gave to each researcher was tailored to the unique needs of each researcher and helped to steadily build skills while reducing biases and errors.

Logistics

A central lesson was that it is essential to have a research coordinator who can focus on a mixture of management and logistics. The research encountered formidable logistical challenges that took up too much time of the team leaders. Significant effort was devoted to transportation challenges such as finding and managing appropriate rental cars and drivers. In at least one case, discrepancies between recorded mileage and fuel use suggested that fuel was being stolen, and this risk required constant vigilance. In another case, the rental company assigned a much larger vehicle than was needed, and extensive time had to be invested in finding a smaller, more fuel efficient vehicle.

Perhaps the greatest logistics challenge concerned the preparation of the researchers' participant observation notes and records of their interviews, timelines, body mappings, and group discussions. Initial plans had called for the researchers to type up on laptop computers their notes and records each evening and to submit Word files daily or every other day to their Team Leader, who would review them and offer advice regarding how to improve the records, the interviews, or both. However, it was impossible to keep the laptop computers charged up, as electricity was in very short supply in most villages, and the extreme heat impaired the performance of the computer batteries. To make matters worse, the researchers' weak typing skills made the preparation of timely reports a torturous affair. After two weeks, a decision was taken to hire typists to type up the researchers handwritten notes and records. Although this was

a good decision, the use of typists made extensive demands on the time of the Team Leaders, who had to make many exchanges with the typists, most of whom were in Freetown, and who had to check the accuracy of the typed records against the handwritten originals. Ultimately, these challenges placed an excessive burden of time and energy on the Team Leaders, whose primary responsibility was to insure the quality of the research.

Finances

A related lesson learned was that financial support from various stakeholders was indispensible. The secundment of key people to the research by UNICEF and Save the Children helped to reduce the strain on an already limited, overstretched budget. Also very helpful were in-kind contributions of field accommodations by Plan International and of car and driver by UNICEF.

Research Model

The ethnographic process also unearthed the need for a different research management model. The model used consisted of having two team leaders, each of whom oversaw and mentored three national researchers. For the most part, each researcher worked on his or her own in one village at a time. Although this model was useful, it presented challenges of consistency and depth. Although the national researchers did good work and exceeded expectations in many respects, the diversity in their skill levels made in some cases for excessive variation in the quality of the data collected. In some villages, for example, significant numbers of in-depth interviews were conducted without rich, thoughtful probing of the kind that a more experienced researcher would have provided. As a result, some of the interviews did not reveal insights commensurate with the amount of work or the volume of data collected. Furthermore, it was challenging for researchers who were learning ethnography to work by themselves. Alternatively, a team-based approach could have provided necessary social support and opportunities to learn from peers.

An alternative model that could address these issues is to have in each district, a pair of researchers, one of whom is the team leader. In this approach, each team leaders would be a primary data collector whose work would insure higher levels of data quality. This approach circumvents the difficulties that arise when less experienced researchers work individually, and it would provide strong capacity building via ongoing, close mentorship. This alternate research model is already under consideration for the research just getting under way in Kenya. The experience based formulation of this proposed mode of working is only one of the many lessons that have been achieved through this process of rich, grounded learning from communities in Sierra Leone.

Perhaps the greatest lesson of this project is that more ethnographic research such as this is needed as a necessary complement to the diverse efforts to map national child protection systems. Through bottom-up mapping of functional CBCPMs, we move into a better position to learn how to build effective links between communities and national child protection systems.

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19	War Child Holland	TBC
20	Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict	TBC
21	World Vision	Bill Forbes

ANNEX 2

Agenda: Workshop on Preparation of Prospective Researchers

Ethnographic Phase of Action Research on Strengthening Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms in Sierra Leone

January 17-28, 2011

Purpose, Methodology, and Outcomes

Rationale and Objectives

Community-based child protection is essential for the protection and well-being of children and also for the construction of effective national systems of child protection. An inter-agency study[41] that reviewed 160 evaluations of community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) indicated that too often, CBCPMs are initiated externally (for example by NGOs), without understanding or building on the mechanisms and processes that are already present in communities. As a result, these mechanisms have limited effectiveness and sustainability, and some have caused unintended harm.

To strengthen community-based child protection in Sierra Leone, inter-agency action research will document the functioning of existing CBCPMs and test whether and how CBCPMs can be made more effective by strengthening their linkages with other components of the national child protection system. The functioning of existing CBCPMs, whether indigenous or externally facilitated, will be documented through rapid ethnography and related qualitative research methods in February, 2011.

The purpose of this workshop is to prepare the prospective national researchers to collect quality data in an ethical manner during the ethnographic phase of the research. The objectives are to: (1) build the capacities of prospective national researchers to collect quality data using rapid ethnographic and related tools; (2) increase the sensitivity of participants to issues of research ethics and child safeguarding and prepare them to conduct research in safe, ethical manner that respects the participants' dignity and human rights; and (3) review collectively and finalize the methodological tools.

Key Questions:

The key questions to be answered through the research in the ethnographic phase are:

- How do local people understand:

[41] Wessells, M. (2009). *What are we learning about protecting children? An inter-agency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings*. London: Save the Children.

What is childhood and children's development?
What are girls' and boys' normal activities, roles, and responsibilities?
What are the main child protection risks or sources of harm to children?
What processes or mechanisms are used by families or communities to support children who have been affected by various protection threats? What are the outcomes of those mechanisms, and how satisfactory are the outcomes in the eyes of different stakeholders?
- How do child protection risks vary by gender?
- Whom to girls or boys turn to for help when protection threat X arises?
- Who are the natural helpers and what networks do they have?
- What are the indigenous, 'traditional' mechanisms of protection and how are they regarded by different groups?
- Apart from indigenous mechanisms, what groups or structures (e.g., Child Welfare Committees or CBCPMs facilitated by NGOs) exist in communities and/or Chiefdoms? How are they perceived by local people? What are their roles, responsibilities, and functionalities?
- How are very sensitive/complex issues addressed ?
- Who has or does not have access to existing protection mechanisms (e.g., do the poorest of the poor or people not related to the Chief have access)?
- What do government and NGO actors see as their main roles and responsibilities in regard to CBCPMs?
- What are the linkages of community mechanisms with the national child protection system? How do communities perceive government mechanisms such as FSUs?
- What are the gaps in those linkages?

Methodology

The workshop will use a participatory methodology designed to develop skills in using the various methods in appropriate, creative ways. The primary methods will be group discussion and problem-solving, observation and reflection, role plays, scenario analyses, and practice use of different tools, with coaching and mentoring. Working closely with the prospective national researchers will be key members of the Sierra Leone National Research Team—Dora King (Lead National Researcher) and David Lamin (Moyamba Research Team Leader)—and international researchers from the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity—Drs. Kathleen Kostenly, Lindsay Stark, and Mike Wessells.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the workshop, prospective researchers will:

- Understand the purpose, phases, key questions, and methodology of the action research
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of the researchers
- Demonstrate appropriate skill in using the various ethnographic and qualitative tools and in recording quality data to answer the key questions listed above
- Understand and be willing to adhere to the child safeguarding policy
- Be more aware of the ethical issues associated with this research and be prepared to make sound decisions in regard to these issues
- Have increased understanding of how the data will be analyzed

- Help to finalize the methodological tools

Working Schedule

Day 1: Monday, January 17—Foundations and Context

9:00 – 10:40	Introductions, Purpose of the Action Research and Workshop
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	What is child protection in the Sierra Leone context?
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:10	Phase 1 findings on CBCPMs, ethical and practical issues, implications
3:10 – 3:30	Coffee Break
3:30 – 5:30	Linking CBCPMs with national child protection systems

Day 2: Tuesday, January 18—Design and Methods

9:00 – 10:40	Design of the action research & key questions, methods
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Ethnographic methods
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:10	Participant observation
3:10 – 3:30	Coffee Break
3:30 – 5:30	Participant observation

Day 3: Wednesday, January 19--Methods

9:00 – 10:40	In-depth interviewing
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	In-depth interviewing, key informant interviews

12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:10	Functional network analysis
3:10 – 3:30	Coffee Break
3:30 – 5:30	Informed consent, note taking & record keeping

Day 4: Thursday, January 20—Ethics & Child Safeguarding

9:00 – 10:40	Child safeguarding policy
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Child safeguarding policy implementation, and ethical considerations in the action research[42]
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 5:30	Field learning: participant observation

Day 5: Friday, January 21—Methods and gender issues

9:00 – 10:40	Debriefing on field learning
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Field learning discussion
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:10	Gender issues
3:10 – 3:30	Coffee Break
3:30 – 5:30	Gender issues

[42] Note that ethics issues will be discussed throughout the workshop.

Day 6: Monday, January 24--Methods

9:00 – 10:40	Learning about children's development
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Timelines and discussions practice
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:10	Note taking
3:10 – 3:30	Coffee Break
3:30 – 5:30	Data analysis

Day 7: Tuesday, January 25--Methods

9:00 – 10:40	Group discussions
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Group discussions
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:10	Note taking & record keeping
3:10 – 3:30	Coffee Break
3:30 – 5:30	Note taking & record keeping

Day 8: Wednesday, January 26—Field Work

Morning	Field learning
Afternoon	Field learning & debriefing

Day 9: Thursday, January 27—Methods and Planning

9:00 – 10:40	Skills building
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Skills building

12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:10	Skills building and planning
3:10 – 3:30	Coffee Break
3:30 – 5:30	Skills building and planning

Day 10: Friday, January 30—TBD & wrap-up

9:00 – 10:40	
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:10	
3:10 – 3:30	Coffee Break
3:30 – 5:30	Wrap-up and closing

ANNEX 3

Key Tools, Ethnographic Phase

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Key Questions for Ethnographic/Qualitative Research in Sierra Leone, February, 2011

The aim of the research to be conducted in Moyamba and Bombali Districts in February, 2011 is to learn about existing community-based mechanisms of child protection and support for children. The task is to describe the mechanisms and support processes that currently exist, as they are understood by local people who occupy diverse positions in the social system. The research is not prescriptive in that it does not attempt to identify what communities ought to do to support children. To accomplish its descriptive task, the research will focus on ethnographic and related qualitative methods to answer the questions outlined below.

Key Research Questions

The main questions this research seeks to answer are: When children have been harmed by child protection issues (abuse, exploitation, violence, neglect) whom do they go to for help, and what are the processes and perceived outcomes?

The more specific key questions to be addressed in the ethnographic phase are:

- How do local people understand:
  What is childhood and children's development?
  What are girls' and boys' normal activities, roles, and responsibilities?
  What are the main child protection risks or sources of harm to children?
  What processes or mechanisms are used by families or communities to support children who have been affected by various protection threats? What are the outcomes of those mechanisms, and how satisfactory are the outcomes in the eyes of different stakeholders?
- How do child protection risks vary by gender?
- Whom to girls or boys turn to for help when protection threat X arises?
- Who are the natural helpers and what networks do they have?
- What are the indigenous, 'traditional' mechanisms of protection and how are they regarded by different groups?
- Apart from indigenous mechanisms, what groups or structures (e.g., Child Welfare Committees or CBCPMs facilitated by NGOs) exist in communities and/or Chiefdoms? How are they perceived by local people? What are their roles, responsibilities, and functionalities?
- How are very sensitive/complex issues addressed ?
- Who has or does not have access to existing protection mechanisms (e.g., do the poorest of the poor or people not related to the Chief have access)?
- What do government and NGO actors see as their main roles and responsibilities in regard to CBCPMs?
- What are the linkages of community mechanisms with the national child protection system? How do communities perceive government mechanisms such as FSUs?
- What are the gaps in those linkages?

Working Guide on Research Ethics

Research often causes unintended harm by violating the principles of confidentiality or informed consent, or stigmatizing particular groups of people. If conducted in an extractive manner, the research process may raise expectations, create frustration, and lead affected people to mistrust outsiders. In the process of exploring sensitive topics or issues, research may pick open people's wounds and leave people in a more vulnerable condition than they had been in previously. Research may also increase power imbalances that cause particular people or groups of people to be vulnerable. Researchers may also use their own power to exploit the research participants.

A high priority in this research is to respect the humanitarian imperative Do No Harm and to adhere to appropriate ethical standards. This section outlines these principles, the review process for insuring that they are upheld, and practical guidelines for implementation.

Ethical Principles

1. Humanity. The researchers and the research process shall respect the rights of all people and treat all women and men and boys and girls of all ages in a humane manner that supports their dignity, saves lives, and alleviates suffering.

2. Impartiality. The research will not discriminate against particular people or groups of people and will insure that assistance is provided according to people's needs and rights.

3. Neutrality. The researchers and the research process will neither take sides in hostilities nor stir or participate in political controversies or processes.

4. Beneficence. The research will have discernible benefits—including benefits that relate to information and social improvement—to the participants and affected people. As explained below, this principle requires that the research will not be extractive and will include specific steps that benefit the participants and other affected people.

5. Nonmaleficence. The research will take appropriate steps to prevent and mitigate physical or emotional harm to the participants and other affected people. The research process will include specific, contextually appropriate steps to prevent and minimize harm by protecting confidentiality, insuring informed consent, and requiring adherence to a Code of Conduct.

6. Best interests of the child. The research will respect and protect the best interests of children, defined under international law as people under 18 years of age. It is recognized that the well-being of children is closely interconnected with that of their parents, extended family, and community.

Review and Monitoring Process

In the health sector in Sierra Leone, a formal process has been established for the review of the ethical appropriateness of research. However, the Chair of this process indicated that this research would not undergo the ethics review in the health sector since it pertains to child protection. A more appropriate modality for review would occur through the social welfare sector and would engage actors who have expertise in areas such as child protection, gender issues, and ethics. Accordingly, the ethical appropriateness of this research will be reviewed and monitored through a multi-step process.

Ethics Advisory Committee

An Ethics Advisory Committee in Sierra Leone will review the research for ethical appropriateness. This Committee will consist of one representative from the Ministry of Social Welfare, one representative from UNICEF/Sierra Leone, one member of the Child Rights Act Steering Committee, one religious leader from the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, and the Gender Advisor[43] for the project. This Committee will also be consulted during the project if the need arises.

Ongoing Ethics Monitoring

On an ongoing basis, monitoring for ethical appropriateness will be conducted by the lead national researcher,[44] the Moyamba Team Leader,[45] and the Principal Investigator,[46] who will consult regularly with the Project Manager for Save the Children[47] and the Inter-Agency Reference Group.

Policies and Practical Guidelines

Child Safeguarding Policy

The researchers and any of their support staff (e.g., drivers, translators) who have contact with children will adhere to Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures (see attached). Cases of abuse, exploitation, violence, or neglect will be reported via the Lead National Researcher, who in turn will notify the Save the Children focal point in Sierra Leone and the Principal Investigator.

Specific steps to take include:

- Adhere to national laws and policies.

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[43] Aisha Ibrahim of Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone
[44] Dora King
[45] David Lamin
[46] Mike Wessells
[47] Sarah Lilley

- Support the rights of children.

- Report suspected infractions of the child safeguarding policy to the Lead National Researcher and the Principal Investigator.

- Avoid all actions that could count as abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect toward children.

- Avoid all forms of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect in relations with adults since these, too, violate human rights and create an enabling environment for violations against children.

Supporting People's Dignity

The way in which researchers conduct themselves and interact with local people can support or undermine people's dignity and well-being. It is vital to respect local people and customs and to avoid behavior, dress, or attitudes that local people may regard as demeaning or inappropriate. Specific steps for supporting people's dignity are to:

- Treat each individual in a respectful manner.

- Be friendly and kind in all interactions.

- Dress and behave in ways that are locally appropriate.

- Be aware of and respect gender norms.

- Take a stance of participant observation and learning about local practices, avoiding passing judgment on local beliefs or practices.

- Be sensitive to people's schedule. For example, it is best not to ask people for interviews at the time when they normally go to tend their fields.

- Avoid political debates, criticizing others, or imposing your own views.

Informed Consent

Participation in research must be voluntary, and people must be free to decline or end participation without any negative consequences. Decisions to participate should be informed by an understanding of the purpose of the research, how and what information will be collected, how the information will be used, and potential risks and benefits to participants. Where participants are children, informed consent must be obtained from the children themselves and from their parents.

Obtaining informed consent is inherently difficult for many reasons such as the power imbalance between researchers and participants, the pervasive expectations that participation will bring material improvements now or subsequently, the prevailing norms of hospitality, and the perceptions of local people about the Chief's expectations, among others. In many situations,

obtaining written consent is infeasible because of low literacy levels and prospective participants' fears that written documents will be used against them. Because of the fluid, unforeseeable nature of the situation, it is important to treat informed consent as an ongoing process rather than a one-off action.

Specific steps to insure informed consent are to:

- Use a child friendly approach in explaining to children the purpose of the research, what and how information will be used, their right to say "No" without negative consequences, etc.

- If the participant is a child, obtain the informed consent of both the child and his or her parent or caretaker.

- Tailor to local circumstances the approach to obtaining informed consent. Where appropriate, use the letters below and request signatures to indicate voluntary and informed consent.

- Do not accept the Chief's statement that everyone will participate as informed consent. The process of obtaining informed consent must be implemented for each individual.

- Avoid the tacit coercion that can occur, for example, if a parent tells a child 'you should participate' or if a Chief says 'we should welcome the researchers and answer their questions.' Explain informed consent to the person in power and ask them to explain to others that they are free not to participate and that there will be no disadvantages or penalties for people who elect not to participate.

- Manage expectations by explaining in simple, clear language that no material benefits will come through participation in the research. Add, however, that the information collected will be fed back to communities, which may find the information useful in taking stock of and improving community-based mechanisms of child protection.

Confidentiality

The research participants will be informed that the information they provide is confidential. The researchers will not share publicly information such as names that could be used to identify specific individuals or sources of information. Where identity information is collected, it will be maintained in a separate, locked file, and will be made available only to people who have a legitimate need to know. Specific steps to insure confidentiality are to:

- Conduct discussions in a private setting. If there are departures from privacy, make sure all the participants know who else is present and listening or observing and give their informed consent to continue.

- Keep any records of names and other identifying information in a safe, locked place that is not open for public access.

- Do not leave confidential files open on a desk or computer. Always close them and put them out of public access even if you leave your desk only for a minute or two.

- Use general descriptors (e.g., 13-year-old girl) rather than a specific name or other identifying information in writing up one's data and reports.

- Share information from one's field notes, including identifiers, with members of the research team but not with people outside the research team.

- Hold in strict confidence information about specific cases of abuse, exploitation, violence, and neglect, sharing information only with the Lead National Researcher or the Save the Children Focal Point.

Psychosocial Support

The research is not designed to collect information about particular cases since the questions asked will pertain to hypothetical situations and who a girl or boy would usually go to for help or support in such situations. Nevertheless, it is possible that in the course of discussions, a participant might become upset because she recalls painful events such as having been abused herself. Key steps in preventing and handling such a situation are to:

- Identify in advance of the research a natural helper or social worker who could provide psychosocial support to someone who is distressed by the discussions.

- Attend to people's nonverbal reactions, and discontinue the discussion if the participant becomes upset.

- Provide compassionate listening and accompaniment to someone who is distressed.

- If a participant has been distressed by a discussion conducted as part of the research, notify the natural helper or social worker so that they can provide follow up support for the participant.

Working Tool for Participant Observation in Bombali and Moyamba Districts

Purpose: To make first hand and detailed observations of the various contexts in which children interact with peers, family, school, work, community life, and religious practice. As a participant observer, you will go into these contexts to observe, make notes when necessary without being intrusive, and compose detailed field notes soon after the observation. The aim is to observe and describe, without judging whether people's activities, practices, norms, or values are good or bad or whether their beliefs are accurate or inaccurate.

Participants: The national researcher; the members of a household, classroom, mosque or church; participants in a community gathering; the traders and customers in a marketplace; officials in a traditional or local court; police stations; any other contexts in which children interact.

Materials

- A small notebook where you can jot down your observations
- A larger notebook for field notes to be written at the end of the day
- A log book to plan and keep track of your activities
- A pen
- A tape recorder

Length of Activity

Participant observation lasts as long as the activity you are observing. You may want to stay and ask the participants questions after the activity is over or linger to capture more details.

What is participant observation?

"The final goal ... is to grasp the [informant's] point of view, his or [her] relation to life, to realize his [or her] vision of his [or her] world." Bronislaw Malinowski

"Participant observation involves establishing rapport in a new community, learning to act so that people go about their business as usual when you show up, and removing yourself every day from cultural immersion so you can intellectualize what you've learned, put it into perspective and write about it convincingly." H. Russell Barnard

Participant observation involves two main components: (a) participation in the culture and life of a community, and (b) observation of its members' behavior, language, and material culture, that is, the objects and artifacts they use to conduct their lives.

What will you do as a participant observer? You will:

- Pay attention to everything you see, hear, and observe about children.
  - Listen to what is said to, and about, children. What do adults say to children about what they should and should not do, and how is it taught and enforced in the classroom or in the home? Do they say or expect the same things from boys and girls? Are these things enforced and taught in a gender neutral manner?
  - Document the objects that pertain to children's lives in each setting you are in. What objects do men, women, and children use in the home, in the marketplace, at the river?
  - Listen to what children say to each other. Listen to what adults say to children. What happens during moments of tension or conflict between adults and children, between children and their peers? What do they say? What do they do? Pay attention to gender
  - Observe the activities that adults and children engage in together during the course of the day? What are their respective roles?
  - How and why are children punished? Pay attention to gender in terms of forms of punishment and who (male or female head) has the authority to administer what forms of punishment.

- Immerse yourself in the day to day lives of the people in your village as they cook, play, go to the market, sit outside in the evening, or go to the local court.
  - It is helpful to act in ways that make you a part of the setting. You can participate in activities by helping out a seller at the market. Accompany him or her to set up the stall or prepare the soap they will sell. Ideally, the people you are observing will go about their daily lives as if you are not a stranger. Understand the gender dynamics of participating. Some villagers may welcome and encourage your full participation, while others may not. Be aware of class, religious and ideological differences.
  - Have casual conversations as often as you can. It will be helpful to do so before you have more formal interviews. Casual conversations will lead to helpful insights and establish rapport.
  - Before you go to a local court, meet the officials involved in the case. If you can, meet the people in involved in the case. Introduce yourself and the purpose of the research you are conducting. Be careful to maintain neutrality while you show empathy.

- Have casual conversations with individuals and groups. Always stay focused on the questions about children and how they are protected from harm or abuse or exploitation.

- These will be done in the compounds of households, at the market, at family meetings and other settings.
- Listen closely to what is said so that you can remember what you hear.

- Take good notes
    - Jot down what you see and hear using key words and phrases. They will jog your memory later as you write up your notes.
    - Make mental notes when you cannot write immediately. You can devise your own system to help you recall the observations you made earlier in the day. When you return to your room in the evening, make detailed notes about what you've seen, heard, and observed.

Indigenous Ethnography

You are what is referred to as an indigenous ethnographer because you have some familiarity with the way of life of the people you are going to be working with. This means that you can speak the language, you may behave in similar ways, and will have facility with the objects used in the village.

So, how do you study something you believe you already know?

- Approach what you are observing as if you have encountered it for the first time. This is your role as an indigenous ethnographer.
- Distance yourself from your cultural know-how. Become naïve. Assume that you do not know how things will unfold or what people mean. This will help you listen more closely, and observe more carefully. This is especially important in relation to gender, because depending on context, male researchers could be expected to know and to lead and give opinions, while female researchers will be not be expected to do any. Or there could actually be a backlash against what is perceived as an articulate and "pushy" female researcher.
- Become a student of your informers. Let them teach you about childhood in Bombali or Moyamba District.
- Ethnography studies the point of view of a community. When you listen to group discussions in the compound or during a community meeting, set aside your own ideas and opinions. Be completely attentive to what is unfolding.

The stages of participant observation

These are the four stages of participant observation. It is not a rigid prescription, nor is it exhaustive. Use it as a guide when you enter your field site or when you arrive to observe an activity. It is a process that has been used successfully by many ethnographers.

Stage I. **Entering the field** It is helpful to introduce yourself to the people who are in authority in a community or a home when you start fieldwork, like, the Chief, the headman, the women's leader/section Chief, or the district Chief. Introduce your project and get the necessary permission to do research in the village. It will ease your ability to live and work in the community.

Stage II **Establishing rapport** Rapport means the presence of trust between researcher and informant. In order for your informants to trust you and share information with you, they should not feel judged, put down, or discriminated against. How can you build trust? Here are three techniques:

- Become a student. *A good ethnographer approaches his or her informants with the openness of a student. Whether they are young or old, poor or rich, male or female, disabled or abled, your informants are always your teachers. You are there to study their stories, their views, their experience.*

- Do not judge your informants lives or opinions. *A good ethnographer is not judgmental of the people he or she is studying. S/he works to make them feel safe and respected, no matter what they think or believe or do. This will give them the confidence to answer your questions and to share information that may be sensitive.*

- Become aware of your own biases and your own cultural assumptions. Pay particular attention to your own cultural and ideological assumptions about masculinity and femininity, or maleness and femaleness *This is called reflexivity. Reflect on your own views and cultural assumptions about childhood and how children should be protected. Then put some distance between your views and the views of your informants about what is right or wrong, what is moral or immoral, what is just or unjust, what is normal or abnormal*.

- Practice neutrality *A good ethnographer will endeavor to stay neutral when there is conflict between people in the community they are studying.*

Stage III. **Mapping** Once you begin to visit schools or markets or community discussions to observe the risks to children and their protection, make social and physical maps of the settings.

- Physical mapping: What is the layout of the market or local court or school? If you have difficulty drawing this, describe it in your fieldnotes.

- Social mapping: Who sits next to whom in the local court? Where do children who are traders sit or stand or walk in the market? What is the physical location of children in other social contexts? Are these physical locations gender specific, and do they provide special forms of protection?

- Transect walks: When you enter a setting, for example, a market, pick a path that you will walk as you make observations. You can take a census of this circumscribed path. How many children and adults trade on this path? What are the physical attributes of the transect? The people in

this transect can become your informants. Which gender uses this path the most and why? There could be issues of safety, cultural taboos and superstitions

Stage IV **Immersion** At this stage, you should already have a sense of the layout of your village, and the people who you are studying. You will immerse yourself in the culture of your village by participating and observing events, activities, and interactions that will answer your research questions about childhood and children's protection from violence. Immersion requires repetition. For example, you will visit the same market several days in a row. You will observe the same classroom several days in a row. When you spend the night in the village you will sleep in the same household each night. This gives you access to detail and helps build your memory.

Note taking

Writing notes are the most important and time intensive aspect of ethnographic practice and require consistency.

Field notes happen in two stages, every day.

1. Jottings: While you are out in the field, jot down what you hear and see. Keep a pen and a small notebook with you always. Record key phrases, key words, the stages of a proceeding, major actors and parts of an event.
2. Detailed notes: At the end of the day, you will make detailed notes. These include
   i. Descriptions of scenes, including, characters, actions, and conversations.
   ii. Descriptions of activities, including the plot and the actions of the participants. How did the proceeding begin? How did it end? What happened in between? What was said?
3. Log Use your log to keep track of your activities and to plan follow-up activities. Start off the first day filling up the right hand side with what you saw, who you met, and what you did. Repeat for the second day. On the third day, fill out the left hand side of the log with the people you would like to talk to again, others you may want to approach, or events you want to attend.

Helpful tips on conducting participant observation

The following settings are examples of contexts where you will practice participant observation. Use the four stages of participant observation outlined in the previous section to guide your research. These steps suggested here are provisional and not prescriptive. Ethnographic research requires flexibility and the willingness to respond to the situation as it unfolds.

Because you are working on a focused, short-term project, always keep the key questions in mind when you enter a research site, and as you make mental and written notes. (For the full set of key questions, refer to the Research Protocol and the Workshop agenda.)

Marketplaces

Marketplaces are ideal settings to conduct ethnographic research on child protection. It is possible to observe children at work and interactions between adults and children in a natural setting that can demonstrate implicit beliefs about childhood and children's exposure to risk. Find out the types of markets villagers frequent: daily markets, one a month markets, small or large markets, with different activities

- Visit the market 3-4 days in a row each week.
- Using a transect walk, identify a section of the market and the sellers you will study.
    - Choose either, a child, a group of children, or adults and children who work together.
- Introduce yourself and explain what you are doing in the village.
- Begin a casual conversation. These traders will become your informants.
- Offer to help the traders with small tasks, for example, looking for change or adding items to the stall. Let them show you what they need done. Remember that you are their student.
- After a day or two of going to the market to sit with the children or adults at work, you can begin to ask probing questions about their experience and their views.
- If you find that a particular child or adult answers your questions with a lot of information, you can choose to spend a lot of time with them. They could become your primary informants.
- When you make your notes at the end of the day, map out the scene. Describe the interactions you observed, the items that were being sold, the conversations that you witnessed, and any threats and responses to children's safety.

Classrooms and Schools

- Request to meet some teachers in the village. Introduce yourself and the project.
- Is there a particular teacher with whom you developed good rapport? He or she might make a good informant for your questions about child protection.
- Choose one of the teachers as a primary informant. You will visit their classroom multiple times during your stay. Attempt to visit a male led and a female led classroom. Students may respond to a teacher's "discipline," "empowerment, etc., differently, based on gender

- As you observe the classroom make detailed notes during and after the class on the interactions between teachers and students and between students. How is the physical space arranged? Are classrooms safe environments for children and youth? What occurs inside and outside of class that compromise the dignity of students, or that makes it difficult for them to learn without fear?
- Pay attention to what is done and said. How do actions and words change based on the gender or age of the person?
- Observe the wider school environment and how children travel to school. What protection and safety concerns might arise on the way to school, outside the school, or between classes? How do these concerns differ for girls and boys?
- Observe the sanitary conditions – latrines/toilets – whether separate for boys and girls. (This has been found to affect the attendance of girls, especially those who have started their menses.)

Local courts

- Request permission from the appropriate officials to sit in on the proceedings of a court case if there is a case going on or that will go while you are in the village.
- Request permission from the people involved in the case.
- Establish trust using some of the suggestions made earlier. For example, communicate your neutrality in verbal and non-verbal ways. You could say to court officials and to families involved in the case: "I am interested in learning how the court system functions in an effort to protect children from violence. For my research to be valid and so that we can strengthen the systems we have now, it is important to hear the views of everyone involved in a case like this." Non-verbal cues of neutrality could be choosing where you sit in a room, or showing the same level of courtesy to everyone.
- Do social and physical mapping of the room where the case is being heard.
- Follow the proceedings from its beginning to its resolution, or as your time in the field permits.
- As you make your notes, use your log well. A court setting is a rich social field with multiple actors, various plot lines, and a combination of traditional and civil rules and processes. It can yield a lot of data and suggest possible avenues for follow up research with individuals or events.

Dealing with the anxieties of fieldwork

Fieldwork can be an anxiety inducing experience. It is common to feel overwhelmed by the social demands of research, and to worry about whether you are getting enough or the right data. There are two helpful responses to these anxieties.

- **Make detailed notes**. This cannot be overemphasized: write all the time and write everything down.
    - Do not let time elapse between an event or an activity and when you make your fieldnotes. Never leave the writing of your fieldnotes for the next day.
- **Use the support of the research team**. Talk to the lead researcher and your other team members about the research process. Ask questions when you are not sure what to do.

Ethical issues

Participant observation as a field research method raises basic ethical questions about conducting research. Unethical research is research that causes harm to the people with whom researchers are working. How can researchers ensure the wellbeing and the rights of the people they are observing? There are many ways, including the following:

- **By always striving to not cause harm.** As ethnographic researchers, we are bound by the code of conduct of our profession to not cause harm to any of our informants or the people we are observing as a result of our research.
    - It means being aware at all times of the possible impact and meaning of what you are doing as a researcher. Always strive to not cause harm. For example, when dealing with sensitive issues, how do you balance your need for information and the potential negative impact it may cause your informant? Your first obligation is to the welfare of your informant.
- **Respecting people's dignity**. One of the ways we show respect for the dignity of the communities and individuals who we work with is to disclose our research agenda. A researcher must always request permission to enter a community from relevant officials. Without doing so, we compromise the legitimacy of our work and of our profession and jeopardize the ability of other researchers to conduct research or realize their long term projects.
- **Respecting all persons equally** regardless of their age, social class, gender, religion or other identity. Strive to build good relationships by showing respect and always communicating your intentions.

(Please refer to the Research Ethics Tool for a more extensive discussion on the ethical questions of research.)

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Working tool for conducting in-depth interviews on local CBCPMs in Bombali and Moyamba Districts

Purpose: To have open-ended, in depth interviews with youth and adults about their views of childhood, the threats to children's wellbeing and the responses to those threats in their village or town; to use good listening and probing skills as you speak with adults and youth about how they respond to and prevent threats to children's safety.

Participants: A national researcher and individual members of a village, community group, local government or non-governmental organization.

Materials

- Notebook
- Pen
- Tape recorder

Length of Activity

The length of an in-depth interview should last long enough to answer the key questions of the research project. It is important to stop an interview if the interviewee is tired.

What is an in-depth interview

An in-depth interview is an intensive exploration of an individual's perspective or experience of the key questions of a research project. It should give you detailed information about an individual's perception of childhood, children's safety, and the responses to threats to children's wellbeing that he or she is aware of.

What are the characteristics of an in-depth interview?

- **It is unstructured:** This means it is guided by a set of questions, but it is not administered as a questionnaire. It is more flexible than the formal, structured format of the questionnaire. The questions are there to guide the conversation and to gather the information relevant to the purpose of the research. Translate the key questions to make them understandable while keeping them intact.

- **It is controlled by the participant:** It follows the lead of the participant. Allow the interviewee to determine how he or she will respond, while you pay attention to the key questions of the

research project. The goal is to give the participants a lot of room to express themselves and go into depth about their views, perceptions, and knowledge. Make use of good interviewing techniques to arrive at your answers, like, listening actively, using prompts, and asking interviewees to tell you more about a response.

- **The interviewee's responses have depth** Simple yes or no answers are not adequate in an in-depth interview. Ask your questions in such a way that the respondent offers rich, complex answers. This can be achieved by asking good open-ended questions. A closed question only has a yes or no answer, whereas an open ended question gives the respondent the opportunity to fill in the content of his or her answer. Probes should be used as much as possible: to clarify issues or to understand more and elicit adequate answers from respondents; help to structure and direct the interview and reduce irrelevant and ambiguous answers.

What are the Key questions of the research project?

The key questions of this research project are listed below and should guide your interviews. Read them as often as you can so that they inform what you look for as you do participant observation, what you listen for as you conduct interviews, and what you write down as you make notes.

The questions are **not** a questionnaire and should not be administered as such. Phrase the questions in the best way possible for your interviewees to understand them and be able to offer details.

- How do local people understand
    - What is childhood and children's development? Researchers should be aware that a response could, to a certain extent, focus mainly on boys. They should therefore try to probe deeper by asking what childhood is for boys as opposed to girls and how they develop differently. For example, some communities may not see menstruating girls as children and could have a different set of expectations and rules for this group. The same can happen for a well-developed 12 year old boy.
    - What are girls' and boys' normal activities, roles, and responsibilities? What can, and cannot, boys and girls do? What are the taboos? Do boys and girls start working at the same age? Are the time and location for recreation the same?
    - What are the main child protection risks or sources of harm to children?
    - What processes or mechanisms are used by families or communities to support children who have been affected by various protection threats? What are the outcomes of those mechanisms, and how satisfactory are the outcomes in the eyes of different stakeholders?
- How do child protection risks vary by gender?
- Whom to girls or boys turn to for help when protection threat X arises?
- Who are the natural helpers and what networks do they have? Attention needs to be paid to the make-up of these natural helpers. Are they mainly men or women? How did they come to occupy such a position in the community? How many women are in the decision making structures in the community?
- What are the indigenous, 'traditional' mechanisms of protection and how are they regarded by different groups?

- Apart from indigenous mechanisms, what groups or structures (e.g., Child Welfare Committees or CBCPMs facilitated by NGOs) exist in communities and/or Chiefdoms? How are they perceived by local people? What are their roles, responsibilities, and functionalities? Be aware that the gender of the service provider could affect how they are perceived in the community and even how they provide services to boys and girls.
- How are very sensitive/complex issues addressed ?
    - Who has or does not have access to existing protection mechanisms (e.g., do the poorest of the poor or orphans or people not related to the Chief have access?) Also look out for women stigmatized as "witches," "free women" and those with "bad luck." Their children may be protected differently.
- What do government and NGO actors see as their main roles and responsibilities in regard to CBCPMs?
- What are the linkages of community mechanisms with the national child protection system? How do communities perceive government mechanisms such as FSUs?
- What are the gaps in those linkages?
- How should those gaps be bridged, and by who?

Planning for and carrying out an in-depth interview

The following sections will give you some tips and tools on carrying out an in-depth interview. It is structured as a 'before' 'during' and 'after' guide.

Before the interview

It is recommended that you spend the first week in your assigned village doing participant observation, facilitating group sessions, and constructing timelines, and the second week conducting interviews and functional network analyses.

During your first week of participant observation, you will meet the people of the village in different settings. Begin to think about and schedule your in-depth interviews.

- While you are conducting participant observation, you will have plenty of casual and open conversations with your informants. Pay attention to those children, youths and adults who will be good candidates for in-depth interviews. Choose them so that you will have a range of perspectives from different social groups: men, women, boys, girls, officials, traders, school teachers, etc. They may be members of community groups or they may be grandmothers or grandfathers who are knowledgeable about the goings-on the village.
- Schedule your interview. Explain the purpose of the interview to the interviewee and why you have chosen to speak with them. Tell them approximately how long the interview will last.
- Also pay attention to work schedules for both men and women in the community and work around their schedules. Since a majority of women work around the clock, go to the farm, and then come back home to prepare the evening meal, it will be useful to observe when they are a bit relaxed and to enquire about what they see as free time

What to bring to an interview

- **Tape recorder**
    - Before you arrive for your interview, always check your tape recorder to make sure that the batteries are charged. You do not want to run out of power during a very interesting or important conversation.
    - Check the tape to be sure it is functional. If it is being reused, make sure you have finished writing the notes from the previous recorded interview.

- **Notebook and pen**
    - Take running notes during your interview. Write down your interviewees' responses verbatim as much as you can. The tape will help you fill in the blanks later. Running notes will save you time as you write up the transcript from the interview.
    - Do not let time elapse between the time of the interview and the write up of the notes or transcript.

Beginning the interview

- **Find a comfortable place to talk** Make sure that you and your interviewee are in a quiet place, or in an environment in which you are both comfortable and can speak without fear or hesitation. Avoid secluded places.

The first tasks of an interviewer are ethical. Following the ethical protocol will help to build trust between you and the interviewee.

- **Informed Consent** Inform the interviewee about the purpose of the research. Ensure that the interviewee understands the aims and limits of the project. Get oral or written consent from the interviewee to participate in the research.

- **Confidentiality** Inform the interviewee that anything shared during the conversation will be kept confidential and be used only to meet the goals of the research project.

- **Permission to tape** Some interviewees may be uncomfortable about being taped. This is not common in Sierra Leone but nevertheless ask the interviewee's permission to tape the interview.

During the Interview

You will be able to have successful in-depth interviews if you use good and effective interviewing techniques.

The most effective techniques are **active listening skills** and **knowing how to ask good questions,** particularly the use of probing questions.

- **Active listening skills** An active listener is an alert and engaged listener who communicates interest in and respect for what an interviewee has to say. Active listening also communicates empathy for the interviewee and builds a relationship of trust.

- Be attentive and alert – While the participant is speaking, use verbal and non-verbal expressions of attention that are appropriate for the setting. In krio, you can intermittently say ‘yes’ or ‘ehn henh;’ use what is linguistically and culturally appropriate. Non-verbal cues often use body-language. This could be expressed by nodding your head, having an open facial expression and not crossing your arms.
- Use silence to listen effectively – Do not overdo the expressions of attention. Silence can allow space into the communication and give the interviewees room to hear themselves and think more clearly. While being silent, remain engaged and attentive by using open and friendly facial expressions and body language.
- Do not interrupt the flow of your interviewee’s responses – Allow the speaker to get to the end of his or her sentence. Jot down an interesting or important question and ask it later.
- Keep your opinions and personal stories to yourself – Sharing your personal opinions takes the focus from the research project and the goals of ethnographic enquiry, which are the views and opinions of the people who live in Bombali and Moyamba on childhood and the threats to children’s safety

- **Asking good questions**
    - Ask open-ended questions – Open questions do not have yes or no answers. An example of a closed question is “Are girls more likely to work in the kitchen than boys?” The answer here is yes. An open question would be “How do the responsibilities of girls and boys differ in the home?”
    - Do not ask leading questions – leading questions contain the answers in the question and do not give the respondent a choice in the answer. For example, a leading question would ask “Is child beating one of the ways in which children’s well-being is threatened in the village?” A non-leading question would be “Tell me about one of main child protection risks in this village?”
    - Ask probing or exploratory questions – This is useful when you are looking for information that has been left out of a respondent’s answer. For example, you can say, “Tell me more about that.” “Anything else?” “What do you mean?”
    - Use prompts – They can communicate that you are listening, like the non-verbal “enh henh” or a more verbal prompt like “Really?” They can also help the interviewee to continue their train of thought and deepen it.
        - What are the prompts of the language you will be using?
    - Use repetition as a form of feedback – Repeat the last word or phrase of interviewee’s answer. This can encourage them to say more, and it indicates that you are listening.
    - Don’t editorialize i.e. do not add comments to the key questions that express your opinion about them. For example, an editorial question would say “It must be very difficult for children in foster care who are regularly punished. Is foster care a child protection risk?” This is also a leading question.
    - Ask naïve questions – Naïve questions allow you to set aside your prior assumptions about the subject you are researching. They are basic questions that can lead to in-depth answers with information you may not get otherwise. For example, a naïve question is “What makes someone a child?”

Working with difficult informers

- Be patient – The most effective response to difficult interviewees is patience. Be patient and communicate empathy.
- Show respect for their time and opinions even if you disagree with them.
- What are their concerns? – If their concerns are about the project itself, give them some room to discuss their concerns about the research project. It could be helpful information.
- If an interviewee is resistant or unresponsive – Ask them questions about their lives or about another topic that is easier to talk about. Then return to the research questions.

Other things to consider

- When women/girls or men/boys cannot speak freely in front of the other group, arrange for separate interviews and, if necessary, arrange for each group to be interviewed by a researcher of the same sex/gender.
- Be sensitive to other factors that may influence gender relations in the families and communities--lack of services, migration, politics, etc.
- Be aware of the power dynamics between researcher and participant, even if of the same gender and ethnic group.

Concluding the interview

- Thank your interviewee for his or her time
- Ask them if you can follow up with them if you need to make clarifications.

Working Discussion Guide on Protection Risks and Functional Responses[48]

Purpose: To identify the main protection risks to children, the networks that support affected children, the outcomes of various channels of help and action, and the level of satisfaction with the networks and outcomes by children, parents, community.

Participants: Seven to ten participants with attention to diversity (for example, different economic status, including the poorest of the poor; different social status, those living in difficult circumstances, etc**.**

Separate groups are needed for the following categories, ideally with women interviewing women and men interviewing men:

-Adult men
-Adult women
-Young women (14-19 years old)
-Young men (14-19 years old)

Time: 2 hours

-Introduction: (15 minutes)
-Activity 1: (45 minutes)
-Break, (10 minutes)
-Activity 2: (45 minutes)
-Wrap up and thank group: (5 minutes)

Materials needed:

-1 facilitator
-1 note taker with notepad and pens
-Audio-tape recorder (test battery beforehand)
-Spare battery for tape recorder
-10 different items (stone, stick, cup, etc.)

I. Introduction (by David Lamin):

Good morning. I am very happy to see all of you. Your attendance shows how much you care about your children. And as I had said earlier, this meeting is about children's welfare, and we'll be discussing your children--not other children, but your children.

[48] With permission, this discussion guide draws extensively on a guide developed by Child Frontiers as part of their research on mapping national child protection systems in West Africa.

My name is David Lamin. I am a researcher, and I work for the Columbia Group. The full name of the group is The Columbia Group for Children in Adversity. This organization works on behalf of children who are in situations that pose a threat to their wellbeing and safety. But Columbia Group itself is conducting this research on behalf of an interagency group made up of other NGOs and UN organizations that work on behalf of children. They collaborated to form the interagency group, which does research to learn which interventions can best help children, because without the right information it is not possible to address someone's need. It's like going to the doctor. If you just say to your doctor, "I am sick," he or she will not know which medicine to use to treat you. He or she first needs to know the precise nature of your illness to be able to give you the right medication. Working for children's safety is the same. If we do not have the right knowledge, we will not know what to do.

So, as I said before, my name is David Lamin and I am a researcher with the Columbia Group. We work on children's issues and want to learn how communities, how villages and towns, ensure their children's wellbeing, what they do when their children are in trouble, how they support their children's development. This is the goal of our research. The research is not limited only to your village. It is being carried out in three countries, and Sierra Leone was chosen as one of the countries to conduct this research. And in Sierra Leone, the Group chose two districts: Moyamba District in the South and Bombali District in the North. Here in Bombali District, we chose two Chiefdoms: Magbainba Ndorhahun and Liebesegahun. We also chose two Chiefdoms in Moyamba. We chose Kombora and Upper Banta. Within the Chiefdoms, we also chose three villages, because we cannot go everywhere. And your village was one of the villages we chose for the research.

But before we begin the research itself and begin to talk to you about how you care for your children, first, I want to tell you something very important. I want to request your permission to talk to you, to ask you questions, and record your answers. If there is anyone here who would prefer to not take part in this discussion, you are free to say that you would not like to participate. And you are free to leave.

In addition, everything that we will say to each other is confidential and will stay between us. We are not going to take anything that is said here and share it with anyone else. The people who will get a report of our discussions are the ones who will pick it apart and tell us what is good, what is helpful, or will tell us this is what happened, and that is what happened. In English, they are called analysts. And when we have collected information that will tell us how to better help children, we will not identify the speakers in our report and say Mr. Joe said this, or Mr. Y said that, whether we use it to teach or to inform others. The report will be about Sierra Leone and how people respond when things go wrong or when the wellbeing of children is at risk; these are the ways that people respond. This is the kind of research we do. It is confidential. So, I'm going to ask each of you for permission before we continue with our discussion. So, Mr. George, what do you say? Okay, Mr. George has agreed. Mrs. Isata has agreed. Everyone has agreed. So, we can now continue with our discussion because everyone had given their consent.
But again, before we start, it will be good for us to get to know each other. We cannot be here for an hour or an hour and a half, and we don't get to know each other, because we are one in this work on behalf of children. So, as I told you before, my name is Mr. David Lamin. Please

introduce yourselves so I can get to know you. Okay, everyone has now introduced themselves. Thank you.

Now, we are going to begin the discussion we came here for about children and their wellbeing. Now, we all know that how you see it here may perhaps be different from how it is seen in Freetown. That is why, today, we are going to discuss what happens here, in your village, where we are now. Not what someone from Freetown may have seen, but what happens here that we know, that we see. That is what we want to discuss. We want to talk about the things that hurt children; we want to talk about the things that hurt their development. We want to talk about the things that happen to children that make them unhappy, that they do not like to experience. We want to discuss the things that happen to children that make even you their mothers unhappy. We want to talk about the things that make you as a community come together to discuss what you want for your children. So, all of those things that are not good for your children, that make you unhappy, that make your children unhappy, these are the things we want to discuss today.
But before we begin our discussion, I want you to know a couple of things. Everyone here is free to express themselves, and whatever anyone says it right. No one here is wrong, anything anyone says is right. That is the first thing. We should respect the views of everyone here because everyone is right, no one is wrong. Secondly, as I said, it is a good thing for everyone to express themselves. But if we all talk at the same time, my colleague who is taking notes here will not be able to write everything down. He will miss some of what you say. I myself will not be able to listen to all of you, and I will miss what you say. So please, as we speak, let us speak through the chairperson. Let us ask the chairperson, who is me, and we will call on who wants to speak. That way, the discussion will go well, and everyone will have a chance to speak, and everyone will get a chance to hear what their neighbor is saying. Please, don't be shy, I want all of us to be comfortable, and for all of us to speak freely. Whatever we say here will remain here.

II. Activity One: Listing and Ranking of Child Protection Risks (45 minutes)

Steps:

1. To provide a framework for the discussion, provide this explanation about the first part of the discussion:

So let's begin. The things that make children unhappy, that affects their development, that ruin their ability to be successful, that make us, their mothers, unhappy on their behalf. We don't want to talk about poverty, because poverty affects all of us. And we can talk about it today, or even for a month, and we can go on talking. So, let us put poverty aside for now. And the problems with health care and hospitals, we know that that is a problem everywhere. We, in fact, know that there aren't enough hospitals for all the areas that need them. So, please let us put that issue aside for now. There are other things, like the *okadas* (motorcycle taxis) that hit children, we know that happens. So, let us put that one aside, as well. Let us not discuss it, because those things are things that are out of our control. Those are things that people who do not live in this village are responsible for. They have not done what they should do. But let us look at our children, at the things that we do and that we do not do that make them unhappy, that affects

their development. Those are the things we want to discuss. So, who wants to start? Who wants to be the first person to tell us about one of the problems?

2. **Ask participants**: *What makes children feel unsafe or insecure*?

3. **Ask participants**: *Are there additional problems that children experience:*

-At home?
-At school?
-In the community?

4. Continue until at least 5 risks have been identified. Let the process continue up to 10 items if the group is very energetic and then explain that we need to close this discussion now and decide which are the biggest or most important risks to children in their village/area.

5. Identify Objects. With the list of problems/threats/risks in hand, have the group identify for each problem an object that represents the problem (for example, a stick might represent a problem such as severe physical punishment). Place it on the floor/ground so that all can see it. As risks are named and objects identified, be sure that the objects are spread out to allow room for the subsequent voting/ranking process. The notetaker should record which object goes with which problem.

6. Ranking— Explain to the participants that they will using pebbles to rank the objects/issues in order of importance. Remind everyone what risk each item represents.
Give each participant one pebble (or locally available item such as a seed) and ask him or her to place the pebble in the basket (or circle) by the object they think is **most** important. The recorder should record how many pebbles had been placed in each basket or circle. If participants talk with each other or speak out loud, it is useful to record what they say since it can be revealing.

Identify the issue with the most votes, and report this to the participants. Then set the object representing the top ranked issue aside, and return all the pebbles to the participants (one per person). As this occurs, be sure to listen to (and record) what participants say, since some will likely make useful statements about why they see a particular issue as most important. You can also probe by asking out of curiosity why some people voted for a particular issue/object.

Ask participants to repeat the process at least two more times, with each person placing their pebble beside the remaining objects/issues that they think is most important. Continue to record how many pebbles had been placed in each basket for each object.

7. Announce the outcomes for the top-ranked issue, the second ranked issue, the third ranked issue, etc. At the end, there should be three at least three issues ranked as most important/biggest problem, second most important and third most important. If ties occur in voting, there should be another vote which involves only the tied items.

Short break (optional) – Icebreaker and small refreshment (if available). Note that although participants are not asked to talk about child protection issues during the break, they may do so spontaneously. It is valuable to listen and capture through notes what people say.

III. Activity Two (45 minutes)

Purpose: This activity provides a broad, preliminary mapping of the functional networks for support/action/services available to children and the outcomes and levels of perceived satisfaction associated with each line of support/action/service. For each of the three top-ranked child protection threats identified in Activity 1 above:

The focus will be on:

- which steps would be taken
- the people who would be involved in making the decision
- the likely outcomes of the response
- the level of satisfaction of different stakeholders with those outcomes
- which other alternatives might have been available and why they were not utilized
- recommendations for improvement of supports for children exposed to the three top-ranked child protection threats that had been identified in Activity 1 above.

Steps:

1. Tell participants: *I'd like to ask you what would happen if a child were affected by one of the three main risks/sources of harm you identified. Let's take your first ranked item, which was— [NAME the top ranked item]. Suppose this had happened to an 8-year-old girl in your village.* (Or if the risk is specifically related to a boy, the example would be a boy).

2. Ask the group the following questions:

Q: Who can a child who has been affected by this issue go to for help? Who is told about the issue?

Make a list of all the people and places that may be told about the issue or that may respond. Ask which of these is MOST TYPICAL, and explore this one by asking the following questions.

Q: What are the key steps?

Probes: Describe what would happen step by step.

Who could the child go to for help?

What would the family do?

What would the community do?

Who would be involved?

What supports would actually be provided for the child and family?

Q: Who would be the key decision makers about what would happen?

Who would be involved?

What role would be played by people/services outside the community?

Who takes the decision?

Q: What would be the likely outcomes of the responses to the problem?

Probes: What would likely happen to the child?

What would likely happen to the family?

What would likely happen to the perpetrator?

Q: How satisfied with this outcome would various stakeholders (child, family, community, people outside the community) be with this outcome? Why?

ON THE SAME PROBLEM/ISSUE, REPEAT FOR ONE OTHER PERSON OR PLACE IN ORDER TO TRACE OUT A SECOND PATHWAY, REPEATING THE QUESTIONS ABOVE.

Q: What other options did the child/family have?

Probes: Describe what would happen step by step.

Who could the child go to for help?

What would the family do?

What would the community do? Who would be involved?

Who would be the key decision makers about what would happen?

What role would be played by people/services outside the community?

Q: Why wouldn't other named options be used?

Probes: Would children, families, community leaders know about this option?

Why or why not?

Would it be viewed as less safe? Less appropriate? Less effective? Please explain why.

Q: Is there a legal responsibility related to this problem?

Probes: Who would it be reported to? (for example, Police? FSU? Social workers?)

Who would report this problem?

What would be the response of the agency/person it was reported to?

If not reported, why not?

Q: What recommendations would you make for better ensuring that the child is protected from harm and that the risks of the harm re-occurring are minimized?

Probes: What might have made it easier for the child to seek or access help?

How could the help/services that the child received have been made better?

Who else should have been involved in the process? What could be changed so that they become involved in the future?

Is the risk that the harm will re-occur still present? If so, what could be done to minimize this risk?

3. Repeat the process, focusing on the second-ranked item.

4. Repeat the process, focusing on the third-ranked item.

Don't worry if you run out of time since other risks and responses can be explored in the in-depth interviews.

5. **Conclude** by thanking the participants for their time.

Working Guide on Learning About the 'Typical' Childhood Development of Girls and Boys in Sierra Leone

Purpose

In order to learn about community-based child protection mechanisms, it is essential to gain an understanding of how people understand children and childhood, the usual course of children's development, and children's activities and roles at different stages. Rather than impose outsiders' views on these issues, it is useful to take an approach that elicits local understandings of childhood and child development.

The purpose of this timeline method is:

- To understand the 'typical course of development' for boys and girls by learning at what age, and in what order stages of development and markers of development usually occur;
- To understand when childhood ends and what marks the transition to adulthood;
- To understand the typical roles and activities of children at different stages of development.

The method uses a narrative methodology that invites informants to tell the life story of a fictitious girl or boy in their village and sets the stage for discussion and probing questions. It also includes more directed questions that aim to learn about age- and gender-appropriate activities and roles.

Participants

This activity can be conducted with a range of key informants including girls, boys, elders, teachers, religious and community leaders, etc. It is important is to solicit this information from a diverse range of informants – young, old, male, female, leaders, community members, those particularly knowledgeable about children, etc.

There is no clear sample size for this activity, which should be conducted until saturation is reached, that is, until the stories and discussions do not elicit any new information.

Materials

A notebook and pen to record the time line and the respondent's narrative

Recommended: a piece of paper and markers to draw an actual timeline with the respondent. These items are listed as recommended because in some cases a respondent may feel more comfortable telling the story of typical childhood development verbally, and in other cases respondents may enjoy having a physical, tangible timeline to chart the development of the child whose story they are telling. The interviewer should monitor whether the material aids are helpful to the participant and decide whether to use narration plus visual timeline or narrative methods only..

Length of activity

Approximately 45-60 minutes.

Process

This activity is conducted with individual respondents, and it occurs in two parts. The first part involves learning about the normal life and development of a typical girl, and the second part involves learning about the normal life development of a typical boy. In each part, you will initially work with respondents to develop a timeline and then ask questions about the activities of roles of a typical girl or boy at different ages.

Explain to the respondent that you are interested in learning about the childhood and life development of a normal girl and a normal boy from that village. Explain to them that they are going to tell you the story of 'Isatu' and 'Ibrahim', a made-up girl and a made-up boy, respectively, from their village.

(A) Girls' Development

Child Development and Timeline. Begin with Isatu, and explain that you are interested in knowing about Isatu's life from the time she is born until the time she becomes a woman (i.e., an adult). You are interested in knowing what her life is like, what important events happen along the way, what good things happen to her and what bad things happen to her. Explain to the respondent that they can think of real girls from their village and use parts of their stories to tell the story of Isatu. The real girls that they think about should be neither the very best off nor the very worst off girls in the village, but should be 'typical' girls.

If you are using the visual timeline to help tell the story of Isatu, take out a piece of paper and draw a long line on the paper. At the left hand side of the paper, draw a figure and explain that this is the baby Isatu, who has just been born. Now ask the respondent to tell you the story of baby Isatu.

The respondent may need a bit of help to get started with the story. If the respondent appears confused or does not know where to begin, ask probing questions such as:

> "How is life for this baby when she is first born?"
> "Where does she sleep?"
> "Who takes care of her? *How* does that person/do those people take care of her?"
> "What does she eat?"
> "What is the first important thing that happens in this baby's life?"

You may also make clear that baby Isatu has not yet been named when she is first born, and probe about how she will acquire her name. This will normally lead respondents to discuss a naming ceremony. If the respondent starts discussing the naming ceremony, it is appropriate to

say that these are the types of important events and markers of childhood that we are interested in knowing about.

As the respondent identifies important events—events such as naming ceremony, going to school, initiation, etc.—ask probing questions about why these are important. This will increase understanding of how local people think of the process of child development.

As the respondent continues telling the story of Isatu, the respondent can continue identifying events and life skills on the timeline. This can be done using pictures or words, and every time an activity or event is described, the interviewer should probe to understand Isatu's age at the time of the event or activity. This age information should also be included on the timeline.

If the respondent is still having trouble identifying the kinds of information of interest, it may be helpful to stop the narrative and first have the respondent generate a list of events (both good and bad) that happens to most girls in the village (e.g. naming ceremony, begins taking solid foods, begins or helps with household chores, starts school, initiation into Bondo, menstruation, etc.). After the list has been generated, the respondent can go back with the interviewer's help, and place all of the events on the timeline.

When the narrative has been completed, the interviewer should review the timeline with the respondent, checking for any information that has been left out. To identify clearly the transition to adulthood, you should ask the respondent at what point along this timeline Isatu is considered an adult. The respondent may associate this moment with age, or with a certain event such as initiation to Bondo or marriage. The interviewer should make sure to record this marker of 'end of childhood', either in the written narrative, or on the timeline itself.

Age-appropriate activities and responsibilities. The next step is to learn about age-appropriate activities, recognizing that people may be uncertain about the actual age of children. Explain that you would now like to learn about Isatu's normal activities and responsibilities at three different times.

Ask:
(1) Just before Isatu became of age to go to school (around age 5 years), what were her usual activities each day?
- What did she do after waking up?
- What did she do later in the morning?
- What did she do in the afternoon?
- What did she do in the evening?
- What were Isatu's responsibilities? For example, what did her family expect her to do?

(2) When Isatu had gone to school for three years (around age 9 years), what were her usual activities each day?
- What did she do after waking up?
- What did she do later in the morning?
- What did she do in the afternoon?
- What did she do in the evening?

- What were Isatu’s responsibilities? For example, what did her family expect her to do?

(3) Before initiation, after Isatu had begun menstruating (around age 12-13 years), what were her usual activities each day?
- What did she do after waking up?
- What did she do later in the morning?
- What did she do in the afternoon?
- What did she do in the evening?
- What were Isatu’s responsibilities? For example, what did her family expect her to do?

B. Boys’ Development

Child Development and Timeline. When Isatu’s story is complete, repeat the process, this time asking about Ibrahim. The interviewer may preface this by saying something along the lines of:

> “We know that boys and girls have some similar experiences and some different experiences growing up. Now that you have told us the life story of Isatu, I would like you to tell me about Ibrahim, a typical boy in this village. I would like to understand his life story, and to know what is the same about his childhood and life, and what is different compared with Isatu’s.”

Repeat the process, collecting details about typical child development for boys in the village until the timeline and/or narrative is complete.

Age-appropriate activities and responsibilities. The next step is to learn about age-appropriate activities, recognizing that people may be uncertain about the actual age of children. Explain that you would now like to learn about Ibrahim’s normal activities and responsibilities at three different times.

Ask:
(1) Just before Ibrahim became of age to go to school (around age 5 years), what were his usual activities each day?
- What did he do after waking up?
- What did he do later in the morning?
- What did he do in the afternoon?
- What did he do in the evening?
- What were Ibrahim’s responsibilities? For example, what did his family expect him to do?

(2) When Ibrahim had gone to school for three years (around age 9 years), what were his usual activities each day?
- What did he do after waking up?
- What did he do later in the morning?
- What did he do in the afternoon?
- What did he do in the evening?
- What were Ibrahim’s responsibilities? For example, what did his family expect him to do?

(3) Before initiation (around age 12-13 years), what were Ibrahim's usual activities each day?
- What did he do after waking up?
- What did he do later in the morning?
- What did he do in the afternoon?
- What did he do in the evening?
- What were Ibrahim's responsibilities? For example, what did his family expect him to do?

Thank the respondent for their time, and make sure to collect and save any timelines that have been created during this process.

Optional

It there is time and interest; this method can be adapted with elders. Instead of asking an elder key informant to talk about a girl (Isatu) and a boy (Ibrahim), the interviewer may choose to ask about *two* girls or *two* boys – one who is growing up in current times, and one who grew up when the elder him or herself was young.

So for example, the interviewer might begin the activity by asking a female elder about Isatu, as usual. Once the respondent completed Isatu's story, the interviewer would now explain that she would like the elder to now tell her the story of Aminata, a typical girl who had grown up before the war (when the respondent was a girl). The interviewer can explain that she is interested in hearing how things were the same or different for Aminata compared with Isatu. Did they experience the same events, stages, etc. and did they have similar responsibilities? Did these events and stages happen at the same age for Isatu and Aminata?

Analysis (For reference only*)**

When it comes time to analyze the results of the timeline data that has been collected, it may be useful to think of the following 'types' of data:

- EVENTS, STAGES or CATEGORIES of child development as defined by the community.
- FREQUENCY of times these events, stages and categories are mentioned by different respondents.
- The AVERAGE AGE at which these events, stages and categories occur.
- Vivid STATEMENTS that clarify the MEANING of these events, and that justify and contextualize the importance of these events, stages and categories.

EVENTS, STAGES or CATEGORIES

Make a list of all the events, stages or categories identified by respondents. Some respondents may have used exactly the same words for events and stages, others may be slightly different, but basically saying the same thing. These can be grouped together. In other cases it will be harder to decide if stages or categories should be grouped together or listed separately. Discussions amongst those who conducted the interviews will be helpful to decide which categories should be put together, and which should kept separate. If the additional optional element is included where a respondent is asked to tell the story of a child pre-war and post-war, it will be important to identify whether events, stages and categories differ, and if so, how they differ.

FREQUENCY

After you have established the events, stages, events and categories, count the number of times each one was mentioned across all interviews. Using the same categories, you can compare the frequency by different groupings in the same community. For example, do females and males discuss the same events and stages and with the same frequency? Do elders identify certain stages that are not discussed by children? This indicates whether there are similar understandings of childhood development across all members of the community, or whether certain groups have particular insights or particular concerns about certain stages of development. If the optional element is included, frequency of events pre-war and post-war should be examined.

AVERAGE AGE

Similarly, after you have established the events, stages and categories, you can calculate an average age to understand when these events typically happen in a child's life. As with the frequency, you can analyze whether the average age for certain life events is estimated to be the same when reported by children versus adults, males versus females, etc. If the optional element is included, age of events pre-war and post-war should be examined.

STATEMENTS CLARIFYING MEANING

Arguably the most important part of the analysis, key descriptive statements are both a key source to illustrate the themes identified and prioritized by respondents, and also provide greater insight into the experience and meaning of childhood events and stages. Vivid quotations can ‘give voice’ to the experiences being described and can be used to ‘tell the story’ of child development in Sierra Leone. If the optional element is included, special attention should be paid to how respondents discuss pre-war childhood development and post-war development. Do respondents use different words, phrases or ideas to describe these two time frames? What is similar about pre and post-war development? What is different?

Key Informant Interview Questions—Chief

Child Protection Issues

- What are the main sources of harm to children in this village/town?

- Are the sources of harm the same or different for girls and boys? Please explain.

- Are the sources of harm the same or different for children of different ages? Please explain.

Child Protection Mechanisms

Traditional mechanisms
- What are the traditional mechanisms/processes for responding to the harms to children you have identified? (Probe in regard to other harms not mentioned.)
- What is your role in the process? What guides your decisions and whom do you consult with?
- How effective are the traditional mechanisms/processes? Please explain or give examples (without names or identifying particular individuals).
- When do you make referrals (what kinds of cases) and to whom (e.g., Family Support Units)?

Child Welfare Committee (CWC)
- Does your village/town (or Chiefdom) have a Child Welfare Committee?
- Who are the members and how were they selected?
- What are their roles and responsibilities? How are they intended to work?
- What is your involvement with cases handled by the CWCs?
- How well do the CWCs work at present? What challenges do they face?

NGO facilitated child protection mechanisms or initiatives
- Are there any international NGOs that work on child protection in your village/town?
- What are their child protection activities?
If the NGO(s) facilitate child protection mechanisms not called CWCs, ask as above about who participates, roles and responsibilities, the Chief's involvement, and effectiveness and challenges.

Government mechanisms and social workers
- How well or poorly enforced are the national laws regarding children's well-being in this village or town?
- Do you and your village/town have access to a government child protection mechanism (e.g., an FSU)? If so, ask:
- What kinds of cases are referred to them and how (e.g., via referral from the Chief, direct contact by the family, etc.)?
- What are their roles and responsibilities? How are they intended to work?
- What are your roles and responsibilities with respect to the mechanism?
- How well does the mechanism actually work? What challenges does it face?

- Does your village have access to a government trained or employed social worker? If so, ask:

- How often are they in your village/town?
- What are their roles and responsibilities, activities?
- What is your involvement with them?
How well do they accomplish their goals? What challenges do they face?

Relations between Government and Traditional Mechanisms of Child Protection
- At present, what is good about relations between government employed people or mechanisms of child protection and traditional mechanisms and leaders on child protection?
- What gaps or problems are there in the relations or connections between the two?
- As Chief, do you feel well respected and supported by the Government (e.g., by District officers in the Ministry of Social Welfare, by police, by Magistrates)? Please explain.
- What should be done to improve the linkages between traditional mechanisms and government mechanisms of child protection and well-being?

Key Informant Interview Questions—Community Social Worker[49]

Child Protection Issues

- What are the main sources of harm to children in this village/town?
- Are there any harmful traditional practices in the community, including elements of traditional protection and justice mechanisms?
- Are the sources of harm the same or different for girls and boys? Please explain.
- Are the sources of harm the same or different for children of different ages? Please explain.

Social Worker

-What are your main roles and responsibilities as a social worker?
- How have you been trained?
- If you do case management, please describe the process, including referrals.
- How do you connect with or coordinate with community-based child protection mechanisms such as indigenous processes, CWCs, or committees facilitated by external NGOs?

Child Protection Mechanisms

- Please describe the community system or mechanisms of child protection. Ask probing questions about what happens when issue X occurs—who does a child go to for help, what happens next, what are the perceived outcomes, and who is happy or not happy with the outcomes.

- What do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of the traditional community mechanisms for protecting children?

- What NGO or other externally facilitated or supported child protection mechanisms are there in the community? For each, ask:

    Who are the members and how were they selected?
    What kind of training or capacity building have the members received?
    What are their roles and responsibilities? How are they intended to work?
    When does the Committee or mechanism make referrals and to whom? Please describe the process.
    What are the strengths and weaknesses of this mechanism? How effective is the mechanisms and what challenges does it face?

- How does coordination occur across the various community mechanisms for child protection?

- What are the main gaps in the community system of child protection?

- What should be done to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms?

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[49] This is not necessarily a government employee since many people who are called social workers at community level have been trained by NGOs and are not employed by the government.

Linkages With the National System

- Does this community have access to any government mechanisms/services (e.g., FSU's) that are active on child protection? If so, ask:

What kinds of cases are referred to them and how (e.g., via referral from the Chief, direct contact by the family, etc.)?
What are their roles and responsibilities?
How are they intended to work?
How do relate or connect with them?
How are they viewed by community members?
How effective are they?

- How effective is the mechanism? What challenges do they face?

- How would you describe the relationship and connections between community-based child protection mechanisms and aspects of the national child protection system such as district workers or services?

- What should be done to strengthen the linkages between community-based child protection mechanisms and the national child protection system?

Key Informant Interview Questions—CWC Member

Child Protection Issues

- What are the main sources of harm to children in this village/town?

- Are the sources of harm the same or different for girls and boys? Please explain.

- Are the sources of harm the same or different for children of different ages? Please explain.

Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and Linkages

- Who are the members and how were they selected?

- What kind of training or capacity building have the members received?

- What are their roles and responsibilities? How are they intended to work?

- When does the CWC make referrals and to whom? Please describe the process.

- How do the CWCs link and coordinate with the Chief and traditional mechanisms?

- Are there any international NGOs that work on child protection in your village/town? If so, ask who participates, what are their roles and responsibilities, how are they linked with or involved in the work of the CWC, how effective are they, and what challenges do they face?

- Do people in your village/town have access to any government employees (e.g., Social Workers) or mechanisms (e.g., FSU's) that are active on child protection? If so, ask: what kinds of cases are referred to them and how (e.g., via referral from the Chief, direct contact by the family, etc.)? What are their roles and responsibilities? How are they intended to work? What are your roles and responsibilities with respect to the mechanism or worker?

- How effective is the mechanism or worker? What challenges do they face?

Effectiveness and Recommendations

- How well do the CWCs work at present? What challenges do they face?

- What should be done to strengthen them?

Key Informant Interview Questions—
NGO Child Protection Workers

Child Protection Issues

- What are the main sources of harm to children in this village/town?

- Are there any harmful traditional practices in the community, including elements of traditional protection and justice mechanisms?

- Are the sources of harm the same or different for girls and boys? Please explain.

- Are the sources of harm the same or different for children of different ages? Please explain.

Child Protection Mechanisms

- Please describe the community system or mechanisms of child protection.

- What do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of the traditional community mechanisms for protecting children?

- What NGO or other externally facilitated or supported child protection mechanisms are there in the community? For each, ask:

    Who are the members and how were they selected?
    What kind of training or capacity building have the members received?
    What are their roles and responsibilities? How are they intended to work?
    When does the Committee or mechanism make referrals and to whom? Please describe the process.
    What are the strengths and weaknesses of this mechanism? How effective is the mechanisms and what challenges does it face?

- How does coordination occur across the various community mechanisms for child protection?

- What are the main gaps in the community system of child protection?

- What should be done to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms?

Linkages With the National System

- Does this community have access to any government employees (e.g., Social Workers) or mechanisms/services (e.g., FSU's) that are active on child protection? If so, ask:

    What kinds of cases are referred to them and how (e.g., via referral from the Chief, direct contact by the family, etc.)?
    What are their roles and responsibilities?
    How are they intended to work?

How are they viewed by community members?
How effective are they?

- How effective is the mechanism or worker? What challenges do they face?

- How would you describe the relationship and connections between community-based child protection mechanisms and aspects of the national child protection system such as district workers or services?

- What should be done to strengthen the linkages between community-based child protection mechanisms and the national child protection system?

TOOL ON NOTE-TAKING TIPS AND STRATEGIES

In order to take good notes, practice active listening.

Take notes during interviews and group discussions using one of the following strategies:

1. Running notes or a close-to-verbatim record of what has been said
2. Jottings of key words and phrases as the interviewee states them
3. Categories, e.g., (a)main points, (b) related points, (c) examples

What you should listen for:

The main points: When an interviewee responds to a question, what are the main points he or she makes?

Key words and phrases: What are the key words and phrases that express these points?

Elaboration: How does s/he elaborate on those points?

Examples: Does s/he give examples? Does she explain what she means?

Repetition: Does s/he repeat words? Repeated words and phrases are important. ***Do not*** reproduce them when you reconstruct your jottings or notes into a compressed transcript.

Non-verbal cues: What is the body language of the respondent? What does his or her body language express?

Writing a condensed transcript

The document you are expected to prepare for each in-depth interview or group discussion is a condensed transcript. A condensed transcript is an accurate, comprehensive, reconstruction of the respondent's own words from your jottings or running notes. Use the tape recorder to fill in omissions and to check that you have used the exact terms used by the respondent.

Don'ts

- Don't rephrase the respondent's words in your own words.
- Don't describe the interview.
- Don't omit vivid, concrete statements.

Dos

- Use the respondent's own words
- Use verbatim quotations
- Make running notes
- Use abbreviations to speed up your writing

The best way to understand how to build an accurate condensed transcript is to consider a verbatim transcript and examine possible jottings that an alert interviewer might have taken during the interview. Then we will consider one unacceptable example and one acceptable example of a condensed transcript that was prepared following the interview. These are presented in order below.

Full Verbatim Transcript

I: Mary, I understand that, you told me that you had spent time with the RUF in the bush, and that now you're back home in your village of origin. I'd like to learn a little bit more about your situation. What can you tell me about your situation and the kinds of challenges you face.

R: It has been so hard since I came back. I came back I did not even have a piece of cloth to cover myself, and when I came back, the people they treated me like dogs. My baby is sick, he has malaria, and how can I get the medicine. The health post is far, and I don't even have 10 Leones. How can I take him to the health post? How can I get him to be well? My parents, they reject me and they reject my baby. They call him rebel child. They do not even call him by his name. And then his father, he does not help, he has gone back to the bush, but he comes around and he want me to come with him and to have sex with him. And what can I do I do not want to be with him. He raped me. He has treated me badly and has beaten me. But what can I do, I need something. Sometimes he has given me money but most times he gives me nothing, he just abuses me. He says bad words. He beats me. There was a man I met on my way back when coming to Freetown, he took me into his house and he gave me food and let me sleep on his bed, but now he went out and one day he was cutting a tree and it fell on him and now he's dead and I have nothing. And I come back and my parents won't even let me eat off the same plate, they throw me in the corner like dogs. They're afraid of me, and what have I done. They say that I'm . but what have I done, I'm a child, I'm only 16.

I: What does this mean, you cannot eat off the same plate? What does that mean to you?

R: They've rejected me. When they eat, they eat all the best parts and they just throw me in the corner like a dog.

Jottings – an example

- Understand. Time. RUF. Bush. Family. Challenges.
- So hard. Cloth cover. Treat like dog. Baby sick malaria. Health post. 10 Leones. Parents reject me. Baby rebel child. Father wants me sex. Treated badly raped. Sometimes money. Beats me. Abuses me. Man took me in. house. Food. Sleep in his bed. Man dead. Tree fell. Parents afraid of me. Throw me in corner. Eat off the same plate. Afraid of me. What have I done? I'm a child. Only 16.
- Mean? Same plate
- Rejected me. Throw in corner like a dog.

Below are two examples of reconstructed interviews. The first is an unacceptable transcript. The second is a condensed version of the full transcript. Notice the format of the second.

Unacceptable

The interview said to the respondent that he understood that she spent time in the bush with the RUF. He asked her, "What are the challenges of your situation?" She said her life has been difficult and she doesn't even have a blanket to cover herself and her baby at night. She looked angry and traumatized. She said she was treated like a dog and her baby was sick with malaria. She could not even take him to the hospital. The respondent said she had been rejected and disowned by her parents and her baby was called a rebel child. The father of her baby was a rebel man and he came around sometimes but he only came to have sex and he treated her badly. She came back to her parents but they said they were afraid she would bring them bad luck. They threw her food in a corner and gave her leftovers. She was treated like a dog. She has been rejected by her parents.

What is wrong with this reconstruction? Identify the following:

- What words are not the respondent's words?
- What important points did the interviewer leave out?
- What facts have been altered?
- What statements are inferences and reflect the analysis of the interviewer?

Acceptable

In-depth Interview 1.0
Freetown, Sierra Leone
January 26, 2011

I: I understand you spent time in the bush with the RUF. Now you are back in your village. Tell me about your situation and the challenges you face.

R: (Respondent is agitated. She is seated upright and speaks loudly.) It has been so hard since I came back. I do not even have a piece of cloth to cover myself. People treated me like a dog. My baby is sick with malaria, but I don't even have 10 Leones to take him to the health post. My parents have rejected me and my baby. My baby is called a rebel child. His father has gone back to the bush, and when he comes around, he wants sex, but I don't want to be with him because he raped me and beat me. Sometimes, he gives me money. On my way back to Freetown, another man had taken me in, gave me food and let me sleep on his bed, but a tree fell on him and he died. I came back but "my parents won't even let me eat off the same plate." They are afraid of me. "What have I done? I'm a child, I'm only 16."

TOOL ON BODY MAPPING ACTIVITY

Purpose:

To understand the perspectives of children, including younger children, with regard to their likes and dislikes, as well as sources of harm and support for them.

Parents' permission

Before beginning the body mapping activity, get informed consent from the child's parent/guardian before talking with the children. Explain to the parents that you will be playing a game with children that asks them what they like and don't like, to understand children's sources of well-being and distress.

Materials:

Sheet of paper, approximately 1 meter by 1.5 meters. Poster paper

1 box of crayons

Participants:

Approximately 10-12 children ages 6 to 10, with separate groups for boys and girls.

Before beginning, get informed consent from the children.

Procedure:

1. Gather the group of children
2. Ask for one child to volunteer to have their body traced
3. Ask for a child to volunteer to trace the outline of the child as s/he lies on the paper
4. Ask the children to color the drawing (give each child one crayon)
5. Ask the children to make up a name for the figure that was drawn
6. Ask the following questions and write all the answers on a separate sheet of paper. Encourage all children to provide an answer. Tally the number of children who reported each answer.

Questions: (For each question, point to the part of the body that the question is asking about)

1. What do eyes like?

2. What do eyes not like?

3. What do ears like?

4. What do ears not like?

5. What do noses like?

6. What do noses not like?

7. What do mouths like?
8. What do mouths not like?

9. What does the head like?

10. What does the head not like?

11. What does the heart like?

12. What does the heart not like?

13. What does the stomach like?

14. What does the stomach not like?

15What do hands like?

16. What do hands not like?

17. What do feet like?

18. What do feet not like?

Thank the children for talking with you!

LIKE		DISLIKE	
Eyes	(Number)		(Number)
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
Ears			
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
Nose			
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
Mouth			
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
____________		____________	
Head			
____________		____________	
____________		____________	

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

Heart

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

Stomach

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

Hands

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

Feet

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

____________ ____________

Functional Network Matrix

Note: There will be one matrix per protection risk, and by the end of the research, all the main protection risks (typically ten or more) should have been covered.

<table>
<tr><th>Protection Risk</th><th>Questions</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Name of risk:

Victim/survivor (e.g., girls)

Definition: (as understood by participants)

Brief description or example:

Context information: (e.g., did participants vary in the definition of this risk; was it gender specific, when and where did it tend to occur, who was the likely perpetrator (e.g., teacher, parent, community member, etc.))</td><td>(1) If the child lived in your community, what do you think might happen to him or her?
Please describe what would happen step by step.
Who could the child go to for help?
What would the family do?
What would the community do? Who would be involved? What supports would actually be provided for the child and family?
Who would be the key decision makers about what would happen?
What role would be played by people/services outside the community?</td></tr>
<tr><td>(2) What would be the likely outcomes of the responses to the problem?
What would likely happen to the child/perpetrator/family?
How satisfied with this outcome would various stakeholders (child, family, community, people outside the community) be with this outcome? Why?</td></tr>
<tr><td>(3) What other option did the child/family have?
[Use same probes as in question (1) above.]
Why wouldn’t this second (or third) option be used?
Would children, families, community leaders know about this option?
Why or why not? Would it be viewed as less safe? Less appropriate? Less effective? Please explain why.
Note: If they have not been mentioned already, ask whether the child/family could have gone to the police, a social worker, or a Child Welfare Committee?</td></tr>
<tr><td>(4) What recommendations would you make for better ensuring that the child is protected from harm and that the risks of the harm re-occurring are minimized?
What might have made it easier for the child to seek or access help?
How could the help / services that the child received have been made better?
Who else should have been involved in the process? What could be changed so that they become involved in the future?
Is the risk that the harm will re-occur still present? If so, what could be done to minimize this risk?</td></tr>
</table>

ANNEX 4: Summary By Village of Main Research Activities

Location			Key Informant Interviews	Focus Group Discussions	In-Depth Interviews	Time Lines	Body Mappings
Bombali District							
Liebesaygahun Chiefdom			3				
	Village						
		Mashebra		3	15	8	4
		Sendugu		3	14	5	4
		Simbaya		3	14	10	4
Magbaimba N'dorhahun Chiefdom			3				
	Village						
		Hunduwa		4	15	8	4
		Pelewala		3	13	7	3
		Robanka		3	15	6	5
Moyamba District			4				
Kombora Chiefdom							
	Village						
		Levuma		4	14	10	4
		Senehun		3	14	4	4
		Gondama		3	12	1	4
Upper Banta Chiefdom							
	Village						
		Mongerewo		3	15	11	2
		Gondama		3	6	9	4
		Morgongbay		3	15	10	4
		TOTALS	10	37	162	89	46