Child-Friendly Accountability
Pilot: Mexico, Paraguay, Vietnam, and India Evaluation Report

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On behalf of ChildFund Secretariat

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Context

Target 16.2 of the SDGs has provided us with an opportunity; an opportunity to ask more of ourselves and our governments; to work together and with children and their communities; to make child protection a daily reality for children across the world; to end violence against children.

In response to this call, ChildFund Alliance spent 2016-2017 developing an innovative approach, called Child-Friendly Accountability. This methodology works on the local level with youth and their communities to help them understand, monitor and work with local authorities to improve child protection. As time goes on and the number of involved youth and communities expands, this local monitoring can and will have a cumulative affect and allow for national monitoring and change.

To support safe and informed implementation of Child-friendly Accountability, ChildFund developed a Toolbox with action-training materials and a Field Manual for local implementers working with children, youth and their communities.

Pilot Projects

Between May and August 2017, four ChildFund country programs agreed to pilot test the Child-friendly Accountability methodology, the Toolbox, and the Field Manual. The country offices in Mexico, Paraguay, India and Vietnam implemented the child-friendly accountability process with one or two groups of youth in schools and another one or two groups of youth 'out-of-school'.[1] The children and youth were selected as per the guidelines in the Field Manual.

The results of the short pilot projects were remarkable. The children and youth were excited about participating and were able to meet the majority of the learning objectives within the pilot timeframe. The results to date strongly indicate that the child-friendly accountability methodology does not require revision and that the Toolbox and Field Manual were clear and useful tools. The positive results are also largely due to the dedication and excellence of the country programs in the pilot countries.

Evaluation

Pilot countries completed and submitted an evaluation form following each training session.[2] At the end of the pilot, all four pilot countries submitted summary evaluations forms,[3] describing the results of the pilot and the participants' feedback.[4] All evaluation forms, in addition to the minutes of the 'Webinar follow-up calls'[5], were entered into a global Analysis Chart in Excel. This evaluation is based on the results of this analysis. The Analysis Chart will be available shortly and appended to this report.

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[1] There were different interpretations of 'out of school' children; some countries took a strict approach, only selecting children who were completely outside of formal education and others involved children who were in 'vocational training' programs or simply not in the school context. The consultants on several occasions explained to implementing country programs that the objective was to involve 'vulnerable' children in every context (the definition would change slight in each locality), rather than to target a specific group of children.

[2] Some pilot countries submitted forms for every training activity, for every group of young people. Other countries submitted one form per module (as per the instructions during the training).

[3] Mexico's evaluation report summarized their analysis of the training modules but did not provide a global analysis. All the other pilot countries provided a global evaluation report.

[4] Only a few used the requested format.

[5] During the pilot phase, there were monthly 'webinar' calls with the pilot countries, during which progress was discussed as a group.

This report identifies successes and lessons learned from the pilot and lays out general recommendations to improve the Toolbox and Field Manual.

Positive Results

The child-friendly accountability pilot shows successful results, on all accounts. The methodology is operational and the child-friendly accountability tools were largely able to support implementation. All the pilot countries attained the desired outcome for field-testing. A few examples of best results are described below:

In *India*, District Child Protection actors were very supportive of the program. They requested that the program be replicated and scaled-up in other parts of the District. As a direct result of the child-friendly accountability pilot, the District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) planned to put in place a 'complaints' box in schools across the Poondi district and to started conducting teacher trainings on child protection.

In *Paraguay,* the in-school youth concluded that their peers did not have enough information about existing child protection mechanisms. They, therefore, decided to paint murals throughout the school with messages about child protection systems, including contact names and numbers for child protection actors. They also held 'open-classes' for students and teachers to share what they had learned through child-friendly accountability activities and to provide them with information about how they can access child protection services. The out-of-school group of youth could get the Mayor to commit to installing a CODENI office (Children's Rights Counseling – a free Government service) in their community for faster response to protection issues. Adult community members reported that they saw a big change in participating children's' understanding of rights and protection.

The *principal of the school in Paraguay* was excited about the results of child-friendly accountability. She has pulled together a group of seven other principals and is encouraging them to implement child-friendly accountability in their schools. She believes that child-friendly accountability should be implemented in all schools in her region and has approached the Minster of Education for support.

Successes

Children and youth seem to have enjoyed child-friendly accountability activities in all of the pilot countries and participated at a very high level. There are examples of children taking extraordinary action to ensure their participation, including walking long distances (Vietnam). Children and youth expressed interest in continuing the project. The child-friendly accountability methodology seems to have engendered improved gender relations and caste relations (India) where the children and youth report feeling "united."

Adult stakeholders were, by the vast majority, supportive of child-friendly accountability activities. By all accounts, the pilot countries did not have difficulty obtaining informed consent from parents, youth, schools and local authorities. Authorities were engaged, by and large including many examples where local authorities, principals and teachers expressed excitement about the results of child-friendly accountability. In some countries, child-friendly accountability activities helped to consolidate a child protection referral network.

Children and youth met expected learning objectives. They gained knowledge about rights, duties, child protection and key duty bearers. Most notably, they reported feeling like they had improved knowledge about how to protect themselves. Children seemed to have grown in confidence and were able to articulate protection problems facing their community and school. They were reported to have increased ability to question adults, to express their opinion and to make appropriate demands from the decision-makers in their context. They reported feeling empowered to act on child protection issues in their community.

Children and youth achieved desired outcomes. They could develop child-friendly materials, although this was difficult for many of them. They were able to map child protection actors in all pilot countries and the tools were reported to be clear and useful. Children and youth could identify protection gaps and develop and implement action plans to address these gaps.

The Toolbox and Field Manual were reported to be easy to use, clear and well received by participants.

Lessons Learned

The pilot evaluation highlighted several ways in which the child-friendly accountability methodology and tools could be strengthened in preparation for the global roll-out. None of the results indicated that major revisions were necessary.

Some activities were more difficult for the youth. Many pilot countries reported that the children and youth had a difficult time reading and understanding the laws with a notable focus on the short time available during the pilot for this activity. A critical contributing factor is that it appears pilot countries by and large provided the children and youth with a significant quantity of legal material, including the full text of national child protection laws, etc. The instructions in the Toolbox and the Field Manual required facilitators during the first iteration of child-friendly accountability to focus on laws that are directly related to the specific setting (e.g. protection in schools). Child-friendly accountability is a cycle. With each cycle, it is intended that children and youth would be asked to read more laws and to expand their focus to other settings. Despite the reported difficulties, it should be noted that in all cases youth were able to complete the 'complex' activities and reported growing confidence in their ability and knowledge by the end of the pilot, in part due to their ability to tackle and understand such complex information. That said, these activities and corresponding modules need to be revised, as per the recommendations from the youth and facilitators to ensure that the instructions are clear.

- *Examples of required modification:* In the Module related to mapping protection actors, more information needs to be provided to facilitators to support them in developing context specific mapping of local structures for youth particularly related to child protection services. Several pilot countries also requested that 'ice-breaker' games be added to the Toolbox to break-up the sessions. Many youths in pilot countries also requested more pictorial illustrations, audio-video materials, etc. Activity 2 in Module 3 is reportedly like Activity 9 in Module 4 and Activity 1 in Module 3 is like Activity 5 in Module 4. These activities need to be refocused.

Modules needed more time and flexibility of scheduling. In some cases, the time constraints described were specifically related to the time limitation of the pilot and thus should not pose a problem in the global roll-out. Some activities, however, need to be divided into shorter sessions. The children and youth had difficulty maintaining focus for the duration of some activities. For this reason, all modules

need to be reviewed with attention to timing. Similarly, a few pilot countries faced scheduling conflicts with the schools. The Field Manual needs to be revised to specifically remind implementing countries that child-friendly accountability activities should enhance school, not conflict with it. If possible, child-friendly accountability should be integrated into the school curriculum.

Modules need to be adapted to local context. There were a significant number of comments focused around either the need to adapt Toolbox materials to the local context or frustration that the materials were not adapted. It is not possible to develop at the global level a Toolbox that fits the context and needs of every country office and local situation. Country teams and facilitators will, therefore, need to put time and energy into shaping the toolbox to their specific needs, including regarding who should sign an MOU or which adult stakeholders should be involved,[6] the selection of training activities, the preparation of trainings, collecting local information such as laws, videos in the local language, etc. It appears that the pilot countries implemented verbatim all the activities in almost all modules. They may have understood verbatim implementation as an objective of the pilot.[7] A few countries developed local materials to complement the Toolbox and organized the sequence or length of the activities to meet their needs. Although local adaptation is encouraged, in a few cases, the new material included incorrect child protection information suggesting the need for primary oversight of new materials for purposes of quality assurance and child safeguarding. The Toolbox and Field Manual need to be revised to make sure that there is a clear instruction for local adaptation of child-friendly accountability materials and coaching support from the Secretariat for quality assurance.

More Toolbox materials needed to engage adults and community members. A number of pilot countries reported low participation from adults. They requested additional Toolbox materials specifically aimed at adults in for preparing the stakeholders for child-friendly accountability before activities begin. There was also a specific finding that mixing teachers and parents in some cases was unsuccessful because teachers dominated the parents. Though this should form a part of the Context Assessment and local adaption, it needs to be noted as a risk in the Toolbox and Manual. Additionally, a new module needs to be added to the Toolbox for key adult stakeholders.

More materials are needed to support involvement of peers. Some of the pilot countries reported that they did not feel like other youth especially the most vulnerable and disabled had been adequately involved in child-friendly accountability activities. They believed that this was due to insufficient Toolbox materials for peer-to-peer engagement. Other countries were, nevertheless, successful in peer outreach, citing examples of youth-led 'information sessions' and other information materials specifically aimed at improving their peers' access to information such as murals with contact details for protection mechanisms in Paraguay. An additional Toolbox module needs to be introduced to strength peer outreach.

In some cases, the idea of 'setting' and 'phased implementation' seems to have been missed. There are a number of examples where the pilot countries presented youth with laws and information unrelated to the setting. As a result, youth struggled to understand the complexity of laws and protection actors, etc. As described in the Field Manual and Toolbox, child-friendly accountability should be a spiral, which begins with a specific set of local issues in a specific setting. Once youth have gone through the entire

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[6] There was a rigid application of the Toolbox by some pilot countries. For example, only signing an MOU with schools because that was given as an example in the Toolbox when in their local context MOUs needed to be signed with other organizations/government authorities as well. In another example, CBOs were not targeted for training because that was not explicitly instructed by the manual but facilitators found that it would have been useful to have their support for follow-up, etc.

[7] Refer to minutes

cycle - from developing child-friendly information to action - they should begin again, looking at new laws, a little less local if necessary. Over time, they may wish to expand to other settings. This is a fundamental aspect of the child-friendly accountability methodology and the fact it was misunderstood is of major concern. The Toolbox and Field Manual need to better articulate this point and make it clearer in the Training.

In some cases, there were child safeguarding issues. This included the fact that the referral networks were weak and/or were incorrectly used to report violence and that there were direct discussions about incidents of violence including sexual abuse. In one country, the referral network was used "to create a space for the participating youth to ventilate their problems with the referral network authorities face-to-face". This same country reported that child protection actors were not able to take immediate action due to their routine protocols and limitations in the government set-up. Incidentally, in this same country, children reported teacher-abuse through the referral network "complaints" boxes. These were opened by the teachers and the students/parents put under intense pressure to discontinue child-friendly accountability activities. Although it appears that the outcome of this situation has been essentially positive there are significant immediate and potential future risks with how the complaints boxes were used, the absence of a real referral network supporting the project, and the use of child-friendly accountability activities to directly report incidents of violence. It was also reported that some teachers found the project 'threatening'. This suggests that adequate time was not allocated to preparing adult stakeholders for the project before it began. From this perspective, child safeguarding materials must be made stronger throughout the Toolbox and Field Manual, as well as incorporated as a systematic component of all training both of trainers and facilitators. Also, expert coaching should be used systematically to ensure close follow up and support to facilitators to ensure child safeguarding standards are being met.

Coaching and reporting was not provided in a systematic way. Although the group webinar calls with the pilot countries were useful to keep the Secretariat informed about progress, key issues did not become apparent in time or were not adequately addressed during these calls (e.g. safeguarding issues). The evaluation finds that one-on-one coaching may be required, at least during the first iteration of child-friendly accountability activities in new countries.

Information was not uploaded into TeamWorks correctly. For the purposes of the pilot, this was not problematic. However, in the long-term interest of building a central database of information and monitoring, it is important that stronger instructions are given to ensure that the child-friendly accountability website/App used for the global roll-out more clearly shows what information should be uploaded and to which location. Additionally, better training, monitoring and support need to be given to roll-out countries with regards to their use of the electronic platform to prevent the loss of information.

In come cases, country offices had difficulty identifying 'out-of-school' youth. The principal objective of ensuring that vulnerable children are included in the first iteration of child-friendly accountability activities appears to have been lost in some cases, with country offices attempting to closely follow the instructions. The Evaluation finds that there is a need to make both the module on out-of-school youth and the corresponding instructions stronger.

Spanish translation should be checked. Some of the results of the evaluation suggest that there may have been problems with the Spanish translation, including a lack of clarity about key terms that were clearly understood by English-speaking pilot country teams.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the pilot, we recommend the following actions:

1. *Child Safeguarding*
   - Include additional child safeguarding information in the Field Manual, including a child protection plan (CPP), checklists, and other basic information
   - Strengthen training-of-trainer materials with specific focus on child safeguarding, both in principle and in practice
   - Develop training materials for facilitators that focus specifically on safeguarding, both in principle and practice
   - The ChildFund Secretariat will need to provide on-going expert coaching to implementing country offices

2. *Referral System*
   - Ensure all training-of-trainer materials include a specific focus on the Referral network, including on key concepts as well as functional aspects
   - Include training material in the Toolbox for facilitators explaining the Referral network in principle and practice
   - Revise and strengthen the instructions in the Toolbox related to the establishment of the Referral network for clarity
   - Include additional training materials in the Toolbox to train members of the Referral network

3. *Peer-to-Peer Outreach and Community engagement*
   - Add new materials in the Toolbox to support peer-to-peer engagement
   - Add new training materials in the Toolbox to use with adults and community members likely a new module

4. *Child-friendly Accountability Facilitators*
   - Develop training material to be included in the Toolbox for in-country use to prepare facilitators for child-friendly accountability activities with a focus on child safeguarding, Child-friendly accountability methodology, and good practice in action-training
   - The ChildFund Secretariat will need to provide on-going expert coaching to implementing country offices

5. *Ensuring Training is Interesting and Child-Friendly*
   - Refer to Annex 2 for a detailed list of proposed revisions
   - Add child-friendly information to enhance the Toolbox including audio-visual materials
   - Add new module in the Toolbox containing ice-breaker games for facilitators

6. *Ensuring child-friendly accountability activities enhance not compete with school*

- Include explicit instructions in both the training material (TOT and for facilitators) as well as the Field manual stressing the importance of working with schools, not in competition

7. *Adapting child-friendly accountability material to the local context*
   - Hold training-of-trainers and coaching support for country offices during the preparation phase, with a focus on adapting materials to the local context

8. *Adapting to vulnerable groups of children including out-of-school youth*
   - Revise instructions for selecting youth participants, to focus on children engaged in the formal setting (e.g. schools for the first iteration) and 'vulnerable children' who have less access to services
   - Add a new Module in the Toolbox specifically for vulnerable youth, adapted for youth that have less education, literacy, etc.

9. *Website/Child-friendly accountability App*
   - Customize the child-friendly accountability Website/App for scale-up, national monitoring, advocacy - beyond anecdotal advocacy and consider the lessons-learned regarding the clarity of instructions for uploading, the need for training and close follow-up on use of the electronic platform
   - Include instructions on using the child-friendly accountability Website/App in all training-of-trainer materials as well as training materials for facilitators

10. *Scale-up*
    - Emphasize in all training activities and Toolbox/Field Manual revision that child-friendly accountability is a spiral requiring that Toolbox activities be modified only slightly but essentially used again and again with the same group of children - expanding over selected child protection settings and subjects. The children and youth will become accustomed to the activities over time and the process will become easier
    - Encourage all ChildFund staff to continuously working to build relationship with other organizations towards mainstreaming the use of child-friendly accountability to scale up impact
    - Invest in a child-friendly accountability Newsletter to disseminate innovation and carry the voices of children