

## Formative Evaluation of UNICEF's Strategy and Approach to Child Protection Systems Building

### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

In April 2016, UNICEF contracted Coram International to assess the merit and worth of UNICEF's strategy and approach to child protection systems building, and in particular the development of the national, social work, case management system as a key entry point to protect children's rights in Myanmar. The evaluation covers the period from mid-2013 to August 2016.

### MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In only three years, **UNICEF has succeeded in establishing an emergent and functioning social work, case management system**, in which DSW is playing an active role. Between August 2014 and August 2016, the case management system had a total intake of 1,330 child protection cases. This figure is on the low side, comprising less than 0.05 per cent of the total population of children in the case management townships, however, the data reveals that the case load is increasing over time, particularly within DSW offices. Despite its infancy, the case management system was found to be facilitating a broad range of important child protection interventions across townships, filling a critical gap in services for children in need of protection. **The effectiveness of the case management system was found to vary widely across different regions and townships**, and this was found to be particularly the case within DSW offices. The system was found to be performing particularly well in the South East, most particularly in Mon and Kayin States, and less well in other areas, such as Rakhine and Shan. There were also significant indications that the case management system was functioning better in areas with an NGO partner supporting DSW with case management work and where MRCS were active in awareness raising.

**The decision to re-orient the Child Protection Programme to focus on case management systems building was determined to have the**

**potential to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of UNICEF's child protection work** in a number of ways. First, the new approach has made child protection activities more targeted, directing effort and resources towards those most in need; as well as increasing coverage of the system as a whole. Second, assigning case managers within DSW is building capacity and harnessing resources within Government, avoiding intensive resourcing requirements associated with funding NGOs to undertake service delivery. Third, the case management system approach is establishing a system of referrals across a network of social services, improving access to existing resources, and reducing fragmentation and duplication of efforts. Despite these positive aspects, a significantly higher level of investment, both financial and human, will be needed before the case management system can deliver real change for children.

**The evaluation revealed broad consensus that UNICEF's new approach to child protection systems building is both relevant and appropriate within the Myanmar context.** The reorientation of the Programme, and particularly the focus on building capacity within DSW, has the potential to make child protection work more systematic and promote its sustainability. DSW case managers were found to be more effective than NGOs in liaising with and influencing child protection duty bearers across different sectors, including in the justice sector, health, education and the General Administration Department, critical for the implementation of an effective child protection response.

**There are significant positive indications of the sustainability of the case management system.** UNICEF's advocacy efforts have been well targeted, building government commitment to developing a national child protection system. Additionally, there is evidence that progress is being made towards building trust in, and

demand for, the case management system at the community level, further consolidating the system's long term viability. Nevertheless, a number of threats to sustainability remain. In particular, support and commitment to UNICEF's vision of the child protection system appears to be largely concentrated within DSW.

**The protection rights and needs of children have been clearly placed at the front and centre of the Child Protection Programme.** The decision to build capacity within DSW to deliver the case management system recognises that the Government is a key duty bearer responsible for implementing children's rights within its jurisdiction, in accordance with Art. 3 and 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there are a number of cross-cutting concerns that were identified by the evaluation as requiring further consideration.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation helped identifying a number of key lessons from the findings and conclusions. First, **child protection case management is a time and resource intensive service.** Second, it was noted that **certain child protection cases are susceptible to being missed by the case management system**, which at present, is mainly picking up cases that have escalated to a crisis level, or where children are considered to be a 'social problem' and are engaged in criminal behaviour. Moreover, **child protection case management is a multi-disciplinary project**, which requires involvement from a number of government departments, particularly justice, law enforcement, health, education and local authorities, who need to understand and be committed to child protection, and work together with social welfare staff on referral and response to cases. Lastly, **well-targeted social welfare benefits and cash transfers are indispensable counterparts** to a child protection case management system, particularly where poverty and other forms of social vulnerability aggravate child protection concerns.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS ON POTENTIAL AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The main recommendations are as follows:

- **Support the Government to develop a national child protection policy and strategic plan** for scaling up the delivery of child protection services through case management in the townships. In particular, the strategic plan should address: how to reform the case management system from a system that is essentially crisis management to a pro-active system which includes early intervention when a child is at risk; and short and long term strategic measures for the use of NGO input and capacity to strengthen local delivery whilst building capacity within DSW, particularly in Chin, and other expansion townships.

- **Work with DSW to reform administration of the case management system at township level** including: devolvement of decision-making on case work to a designated supervisor at township level; appointment of full time staff to focus exclusively on child protection case management; the appointment of a Director of Child Protection, ideally with professional social work experience, in each district; support of NGO staff to DSW case management teams to build the practice and professional capacity of DSW staff; reform of financial procedures to ensure adequate and advanced provision of expenses associated with case work; and establishment of a client fund including provisions for some limited material goods for children and families.

- **Develop referral mechanisms into the case management system** through secondary legislation, including joint working SOPs with health and education providers, the Police and prosecutors.

- **Scale up training and coaching programmes on social work skills.**

- **Review and modify data collection systems** to ensure consistency of data and to include information on ethnicity, language and disability and other relevant demographic factors, in addition to age and gender (already included).

For more information, visit:

[https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/resources\\_26029.html](https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/resources_26029.html)