

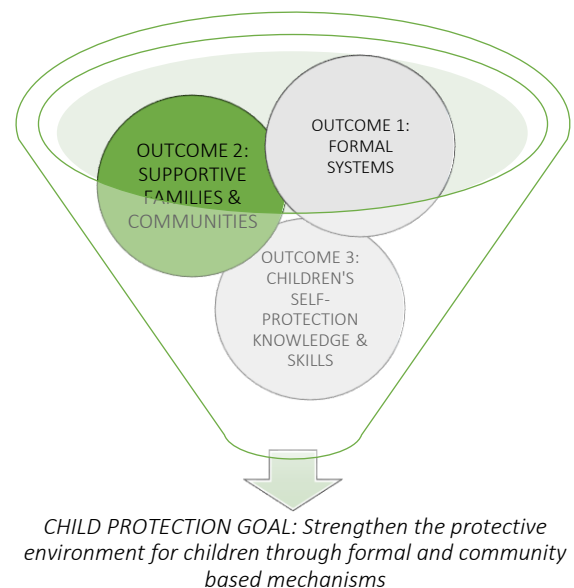
# ChildFund Australia Learning Paper

Sector focus: Child Protection

Outcome focus: Supportive Families and Communities (Outcome 2)

ChildFund Australia has identified child protection as one of the priority thematic impact areas in the *Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020*. For ChildFund Australia, child protection encompasses work and activities to prevent and respond to all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. One approach to realise children’s right to protection is through implementing rights-based and child-centred community development practices.

The new MEL framework for child protection developed in 2018 which accompanies the ChildFund Australia Child Protection Approach, sets out three outcomes to achieve overall child protection goal of “Strengthening the protective environment for children through formal and community-based mechanisms”. Under Outcome 2 of “Parents, caregivers and families provide the best possible environment for child to develop to their full potential” a community-based child protection mechanism (CbCPM) is an essential part of community child protection approach. It operates at grassroots level and is often put in place when existing social structures and processes are not operative. It is defined as a “network or group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated way towards child protection goals”.<sup>1</sup> These mechanisms can take the form of a focal point or a group or network of community members with a role in child protection. ChildFund Australia’s child protection approach encourages working with communities to develop or strengthen existing child protection mechanisms and help tailor these where necessary.



To date ChildFund Australia’s community child protection work has focused on activities to support families and communities in the ways they care for children and prevent and respond to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. Between 2015 and 2019, 50% of all (32 protection projects) ChildFund Australia’s child protection projects include a CbCPM in its main objectives. The programming experience in community-based child protection over this period was undertaken in Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and PNG and will therefore be the implementing countries of focus for this paper. The Philippines is also included, as ChildFund Australia implemented a project there in 2017. Lao PDR and East Timor have not been however part of the reflections, as there has been no history of implementing CbCPM in their projects.

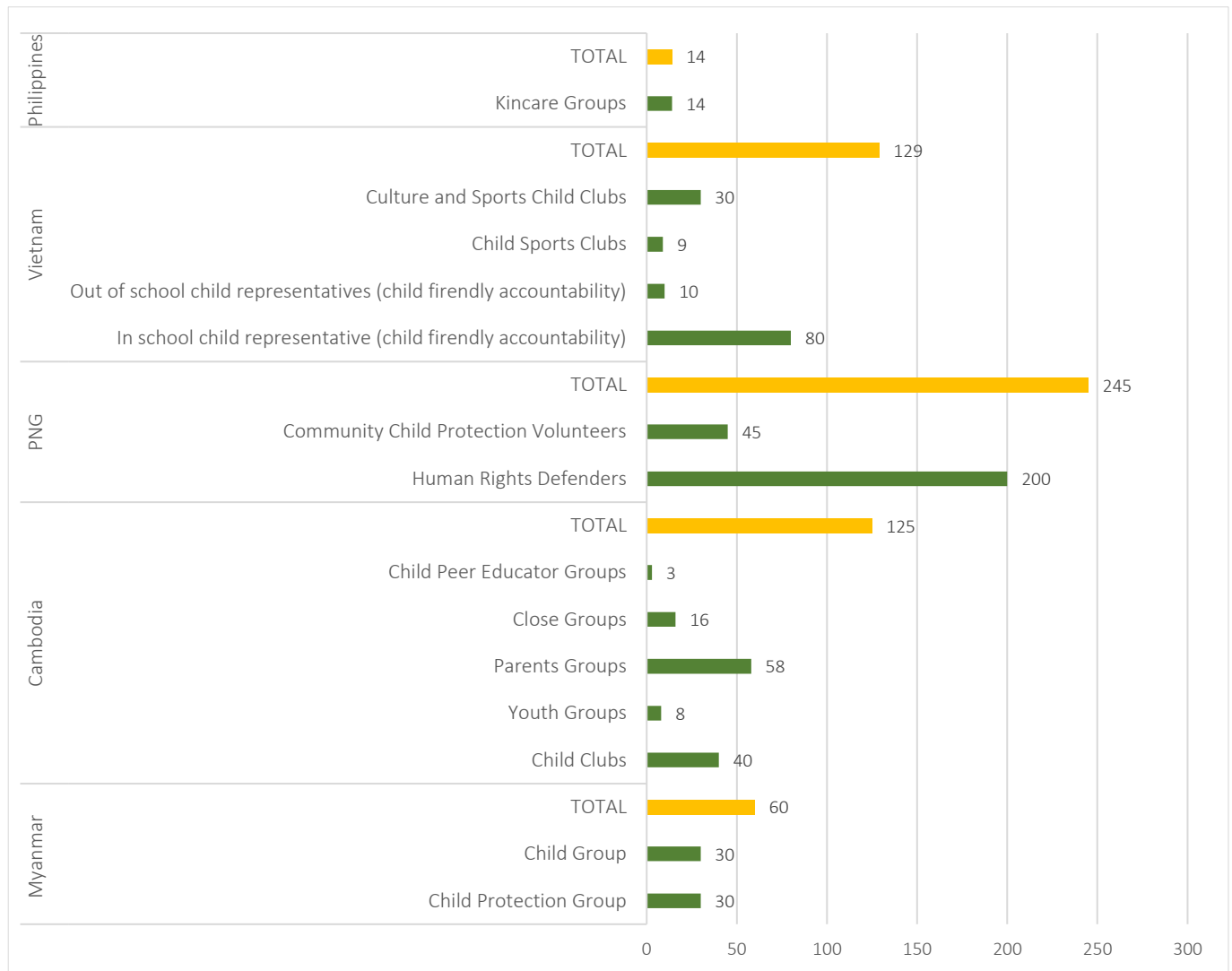
Since the development of ChildFund’s 2015 child protection approach there has been significant effort made to strengthen child protection work across all implementing countries with additional child protection specialists recruited in country offices. However, only limited data is available about the overall effectiveness of CbCPMs in South East Asia and the Pacific region. Significant number of projects under the review (7 out of 16) have been implemented as pilots, and do not include external evaluations. Hence, most of the contribution of CbCPMs to improve protection of children from all forms of violence was reviewed through ChildFund’s internal quarterly, annual and end of project reporting. Of the 16 projects across 5 countries implementing CbCPMs, 6 have been externally evaluated, and another 3 are due in June 2019.<sup>2</sup>

Based on ChildFund Australia’s extensive programming in community-based child protection since 2015, this paper aims to examine the role ChildFund Australia has played in developing and strengthening CbCPMs and provide recommendations on how such mechanisms can be most effectively used in our community child protection approach moving forward.

### Models of Community based Child Protection Mechanisms

Since 2015 ChildFund Australia has supported an estimated 573 CbCPMs across 5 countries. In line with ChildFund Australia’s focus on supporting poor communities and families, vast majority of mechanisms have been established in rural areas – up to 97%. Evidently it reflects ChildFund Australia’s approach to support communities where child protection systems are non-existent in the area or very weak. Myanmar is an outlier with some CbCPMs established in the urban areas, on the outskirts of Yangon.

The community-based approach to child protection is one that is driven by the community itself.<sup>3</sup> It refers to the extent to which communities have concerns about children's issues, they see particular work of supporting vulnerable children as their own, take primary responsibility for its success, and engage in self-motivated action to improve children's lives. A global review of community-based child protection mechanisms found that community ownership was the most important determinant of the effectiveness of a CBCPM.<sup>4</sup>



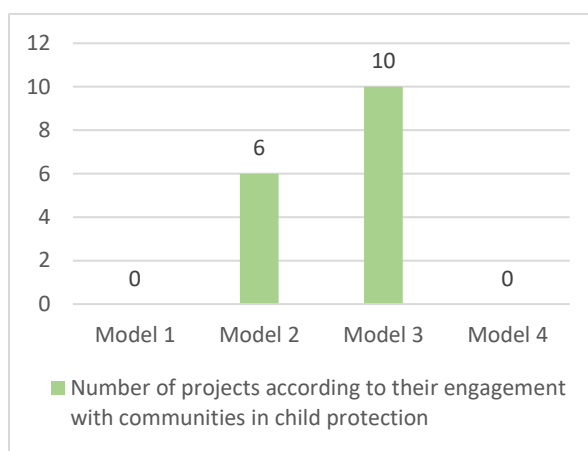
**Number and type of CbCPMs per country (2015 – 2019)**

<sup>3</sup> Benham N. (2018) AGENCIES, COMMUNITIES, AND CHILDREN A Report of the Interagency Learning Initiative: Engaging Communities for Children’s Well-being.

<sup>4</sup> Wessells M. (2009), What are we learning about protecting children in the community? An inter-agency review of evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms. Executive Summary, Save the Children.

Table below shows four broad models of community engagement.<sup>5</sup> Out of 16 projects reviewed, all had sufficient details about the mode of the community engagement to enable classification by model. ChildFund Australia’s projects currently do not have measures to monitor the level of ownership, however based on the project designs it is possible to identify the intended level of ownership.

MODEL	DESCRIPTION	COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP LEVEL
1	Direct implementation by CFA or its partner, community members are beneficiaries.	Low
2	Community’s involvement in CFA’s initiative. CFA is a planner, trainer, and community members are volunteers and beneficiaries.	Low to moderate
3	Community owned and managed activities mobilised by CFA, Community members are planners, implementers, assessors and beneficiaries.	Moderate to high
4	Community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community. CFA is capacity builder and funder.	High



The models most used in ChildFund Australia projects focused on categories 2 and 3 ranging from low to moderate and limited range in high community ownership. These models have discernible strengths such as rapid start up and time urgent response to harms to children but lack the high levels of community ownership needed for achieving maximum effectiveness and sustainability. ChildFund Australia’s consolidated data from child protection projects provide no examples of CbCPMs initiated from within the community itself. Most frequently, structures and groups are mobilized by ChildFund Australia or its implementing partners and emerge from their knowledge of a given community approaches to child protection. Structures and groups grow to become community owned and managed over time, with the support.

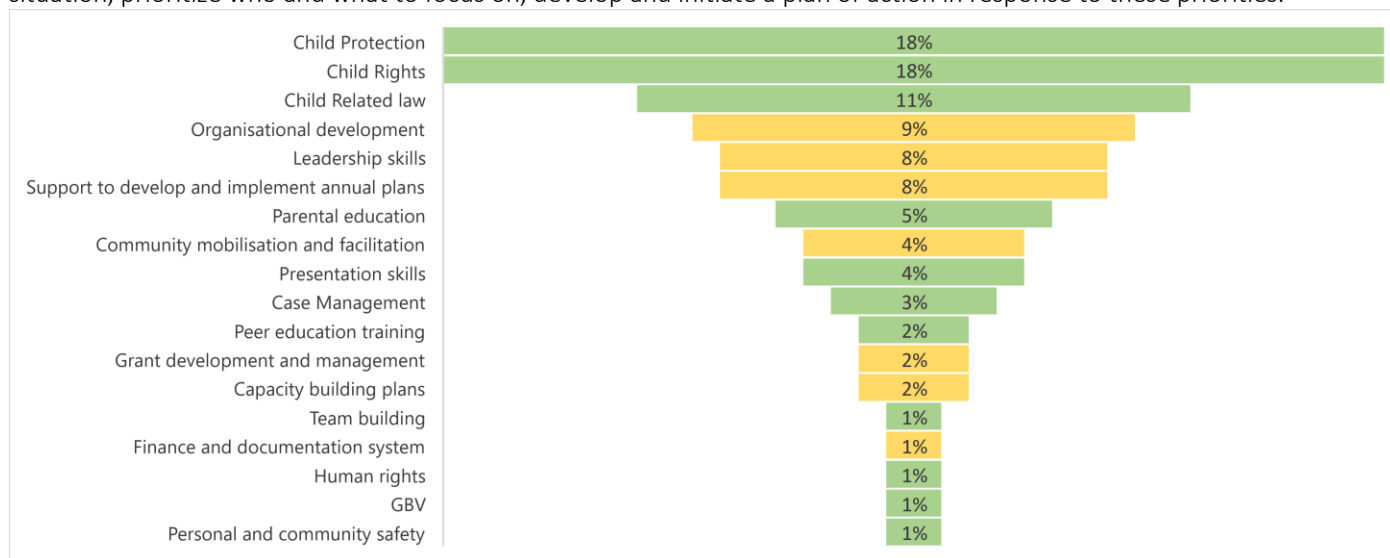
### Functions of CbCPMs and ChildFund Australia’s Interventions

Each CbCPM model establish specific roles and responsibilities for the community members. At ChildFund Australia as most of the CbCPMs are models 2 or 3, their roles are mostly decided during the project design stages, with CbCPMs’ activities often pre-determined rather than decided by the mobilized CbCPM members. Across five countries most consistently CbCPMs’ (both child or adult/parent led) members volunteer to conduct awareness sessions, advocate to authorities and report child protection concerns. None of the reviewed mechanisms have terms of reference for its operations clarifying their roles in the community. Evaluations in PNG, and Myanmar highlight CbCPM members’ feedback on the lack of formalizing these networks in order to sustain their work beyond the end of the project.

	Myanmar	Cambodia	Vietnam	PNG	Philippines
Awareness raising	*	*	*	*	*
Identifying children at risk	*	*	*	*	*
Managing register of children at risk	*	*			
Providing family and parenting support	*	*			*
Mediating in cases		*		*	
Referring cases to authorities	*	*	*	*	*
Following up cases	*	*		*	
Advocacy with the formal system	*	*	*	*	*

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Set expectations of the CbCPMs’ functions also shape the role of ChildFund Australia in its development. Most efforts have targeted increasing community members’ knowledge and skills around child rights and child protection. This is a logical intervention, as most projects’ expectations have been for community members to deliver effective awareness and advocacy activities to the rest of the community or relevant authorities. However, ChildFund Australia interventions need to aim to establish a much stronger ownership of such community mechanisms in order to sustain such efforts beyond the life of the project. There are limited but emerging good interventions, mostly in Myanmar and Cambodia through Child Protection Groups, Parents and Child clubs, where projects are developing CbCPM members’ ability to analyze its own situation, prioritize who and what to focus on, develop and initiate a plan of action in response to these priorities.



**% of total trainings delivered to CbCPMs by ChildFund Australia across all countries**  
*(In yellow highlighted are trainings related to organizational capacity building of the community groups)*

### Learnings on Sustainability of CbCPMs and ChildFund Australia’s Child Protection Approach

There is a need to build into project design a better understanding of the community ownership within ChildFund Australia’s community-based child protection work and create a framework to measure meaningful ownership through reporting and evaluations to build more sustainable community efforts.

There is some qualitative evidence of ownership emerging in Myanmar, where community members identify the child protection groups as their own and not ChildFund’s or the implementing partner’s: “We are a network. So, we help as much as we can”, “We help children who need assistance”, “We do fundraise activities like selling foods and discount stalls in the local festivals and door to door purchasing for soap liquid in neighborhood to support our activities”<sup>6</sup>. However, the ownership has not been monitored or evaluated consistently across the projects in other countries. There is no reference to ownership in any other project’s reporting or evaluations.

Due to the limited number of evaluations, it is difficult to measure other factors linked to sustainability and effectiveness of such mechanisms. This is a result of a significant number of pilots, rather than application of approach that would make child protection sector sustainable on a wider scale. Nevertheless, there has been a significant shift in project design since 2016 following two large pieces of research conducted on community-based child protection in Cambodia and Vietnam by ChildFund Australia. Both have informed most current designs of three projects, namely in Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar. These are being currently implemented with strong design of community-based child protection mechanisms and it will be important to monitor their effectiveness and sustainability. By actively ensuring that community ownership is a key measurement in monitoring and evaluation of progress now, we should be able to take these learning to subsequent project designs to ensure a movement towards better community ownership and sustainable community models moving forward.

<sup>6</sup> ChildFund Myanmar (2018) Protecting and Empowering Children and Youth Project of Precious Stone: End-line Project Evaluation.

Another significant factor in sustaining CbCPMs is also its link with the formal child protection system. Communities by themselves are not able to respond to child protection concerns and require support from the child protection authorities, such as social workers, police, courts etc. This is an important point, as ChildFund Australia’s 2015 Child Protection Approach recognizes the link between systems and community approaches not as mutually exclusive but complementary. From this standpoint, and based on the above review, more attention to community approaches is needed in order to strengthen child protection systems and achieve the wider goal of sustainability.

### Actions from the Learning

- Build into systematic and regular country evaluations for current and future projects a two-pronged specific focus: the effectiveness of CBCPM in preventing and responding to violence against children at community level on one hand, and the effectiveness of its linkages with formal child protection systems on the other.
- Further develop ChildFund Australia Child Protection Approach clearly defining the community-based child protection mechanisms, highlighting key enabling factors for its effectiveness and sustainability based on the learning of pilot projects to date.
- Future projects featuring community-based child protection mechanisms, should no longer be designed as pilots but built on the developed ChildFund Australia Child Protection Approach and findings and learnings of previous and currently being implemented projects.
- Implementing projects with CbCPM components will require further capacity building of ChildFund Australia relevant staff to increase their capacity to support community-led processes, and work in a more flexible and facilitative manner.
- In communities where ChildFund Australia mobilises and established new community groups and where there are no existing community networks, there should be a gradual phasing out of its activities to ensure the gradual increase of community ownership and exiting with the establishment of a Module 4 CbCPM.

### Annex A: Projects under review

<i>No of Projects</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Project Code</i>	<i>Year of Implementation</i>	<i>Evaluation Completed</i>
1	CAMBODIA	KH06 - 025	2015 – 2018 (finished in 2016)	Project cancelled
2		KH06 - 030	2016 – 2019	Due in 2019
3		KH01 - 058	2017 - 2018	Pilot
4	MYANMAR	MM04 - 002	2015 – 2016	Pilot
5		MM06 - 002	2016 - 2018	YES
6		MM06 - 007	2018 – 2019	Due in 2019
7		MM04 - 009	2015 - 2016	Pilot
8		MM06 - 001	2016 - 2017	Pilot
9	PHILIPPINES	PHLO13	2016 - 2018	YES
10	PNG	PG03 - 002	2015 - 2018	YES
11		PG03 - 004	2017 – 2019	Due in 2019
12	VIETNAM	VN03 - 019	2015 - 2018	YES <sup>7</sup>
13		VN03 - 020	2015 - 2017	YES <sup>8</sup>
14		VN03 - 023	2015 - 2018	YES <sup>9</sup>
15		VN03 - 028	2017 – 2017	YES
16		VN03 - 034	2018 - 2018	Pilot

<sup>7</sup> Reviewed as part of the evaluation of Sport for Development approach and include no evidence on the roles of the child groups related to addressing child protection concerns.

<sup>8</sup> Same as above

<sup>9</sup> Same as above