



Save the Children  
Australia

**2014**  
**ANNUAL**  
**LEARNING**  
**REVIEW**



Justin, nine, received a back-to-school kit from Save the Children following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Photo: VJ Villafranca/Save the Children

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Children don't ask to be born into poverty. They don't ask for terrible things to happen around them. They don't ask to live on the frontline.

The frontline can be anywhere that a child's rights are at risk – from a civil war in a child's country, to abuse in their own home.

Save the Children protects children from the threats of today. And gives them the potential to make a better tomorrow.

Ultimately, we will do whatever it takes to fiercely protect children on the frontline.

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# ANNUAL LEARNING REVIEW 2014

## Introduction

Save the Children Australia is one of 30 members of Save the Children International – the world's leading independent organisation for children. Globally, Save the Children supports children in 124 countries around the world.

One of Save the Children Australia's core values is **accountability** – to the children, families and communities we seek to benefit as well as our donors and supporters. We are committed to continuous improvement in what we do and to building an organisational culture of inquiry and learning. This learning review is the first of an annual process of reflection – celebrating our success in improving the lives of children and openly considering our challenges and shortcomings. The work of tackling poverty and creating sustainable opportunity is complex and difficult. We – and the people we serve – will benefit from thoughtful deliberations about what we are doing well and where we can do better.

The principles, rights and obligations set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provide a fundamental framework for the work Save the Children carries out around the world. We are committed to developing and supporting effective programs and policies that deliver positive outcomes and the fulfilment of all children's rights. And we are committed to leveraging our knowledge to ensure sustainable impact on a large scale. To do this, we need to be able to clearly articulate, demonstrate and document the results we are achieving to save, protect and improve children's lives.

All Save the Children Australia projects are reviewed and evaluated on a regular cycle. During 2014, a series of evaluations were conducted across our Australian and International Programs to assess their effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> We also undertook internal reviews of our policy, advocacy and campaign work. This learning review presents 10 case studies that offer diverse learning opportunities. The case studies take in Save the Children Australia's work in Australia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and bridge humanitarian response and long-term development contexts. Each case study presents unique opportunities and challenges – but there are also some recurring themes.

The importance of working closely with local stakeholders is highlighted consistently throughout the case studies. Where we have done this well, we have been able to make notable

policy gains such as the Early Childhood Care and Education project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in Pakistan and the Sayaboury Integrated Hazard Mitigation Project in Laos.

Another issue that is raised by almost all of the case studies is the importance of matching our ambition with our resources. In many instances, we set overly ambitious objectives compared to our available resources, the capacity of our partners, and the timeframes we are working within. Being ambitious is a good thing – but we need to get the balance right in terms of how much we stretch ourselves and our partners or we risk overwhelming them or spreading ourselves too broadly. We need to bring local stakeholders along with us and set them up for success, and we can't do that if we set unrealistic targets. Policy and system changes can take many years to achieve yet project timeframes are often for limited periods of three to five years. We need to plot our path thoughtfully, determine where we can have the most effect at any given time, and build continuously and sustainably from there.

Ensuring projects are appropriately tailored to the local operating context goes to the heart of project design – the stage where projects fall down if we don't invest in a comprehensive situational analysis that involves local stakeholders. Strengthening local systems is complex work, especially in areas such as child protection, which is relatively new for many countries. It is simply not possible to take a global approach and expect it to work in highly contrasting settings with no adaptation. We know this but we still get it wrong on occasion. To address this, we need to embed robust project planning, design, review and approval systems into our practice. We need to engage people who have a strong understanding of the local context and ensure adequate time and resources are invested to set projects on the right course from the outset.

We also need to make sure our staff and partners have the right skills to take on some of the challenging work we are embarking on, and we need to provide them with appropriate training, support, mentoring and supervision. Our frontline workers need strong human resource systems behind them and we must recruit the right people and provide the necessary support, guidance and professional development for them to be successful in their roles. We have an experienced team of thematic technical specialists, program quality advisors and program managers who work closely with our Australian and international country teams to design projects, provide support to ensure they stay on

track, and help troubleshoot issues when they arise. If we are going to achieve impact on the scale we are aiming for, we need to continue to invest in our organisational capacity and ensure staff receive appropriate supervision and professional development to fulfil their responsibilities. And we need to bring our donors and supporters along with us on this to build understanding about what it takes to deliver the outcomes we are striving for.

Understanding why we don't always achieve our goals is as important as celebrating success. We need to build our collective capacity to explore why things are or are not working and share our learning. This requires systematic investment in strengthening our capacity to collect, analyse and utilise our program data. Save the Children is currently exploring a new data management system that will enhance organisational project management and monitoring and evaluation capacity. Our Program Quality team is also developing toolkits and training packages to assist program teams to strengthen project monitoring and analysis of findings.

In 2015, we will introduce a mechanism of peer review for all new projects. The peer review process will formalise Save the Children Australia's current project appraisal process and ensure all new projects are reviewed by a range of experts with relevant and broad-ranging expertise from across the organisation, as well as external experts where appropriate. The review process and number of people involved will be tailored to the size, scope and complexity of the project. It will enhance opportunities for early and effective engagement of expertise, with a focus on strengthening project delivery. In addition to serving as an important quality assurance and risk management mechanism, peer review is intended to enhance analytical and critical thinking skills among staff and promote transparent and constructive discussion about our programs. Beyond review of new projects, a select number of projects will be monitored by a peer review panel throughout their project lifecycle to ensure we are maximising our learning from the projects that have greatest potential for scale-up as well as providing appropriate support to our most challenging projects.

Save the Children Australia is committed to strengthening performance, accountability and learning. This first annual learning review is intended to stimulate discussion and increase understanding of our achievements as well as the complexities we face in trying to achieve positive outcomes for children, their families and communities.

# SNAPSHOT OF OUR PROGRAMS

**A Protecting children by night**  
 In the first three months of 2014 there were 35% less children on the streets in Kununurra, Australia, compared to the same period in 2013, thanks in part to our youth program

**Family Focusing on families**  
 80% of families involved in the Intensive Family Support Services project in the Northern Territory, Australia, improved their parenting skills and family functioning

**Shield Getting child protection right**  
 Training on positive parenting and positive discipline was delivered to 1,464 parents, caregivers, village volunteers and government officials in Cambodia, Laos and the Solomon Islands

**Books Early learning in Pakistan**  
 Early Childhood Care and Education classes have reached 276,272 children – 44% of them girls

**House After the floods**  
 1,268 children affected by the floods in the Solomon Islands accessed Save the Children's Child Friendly Spaces

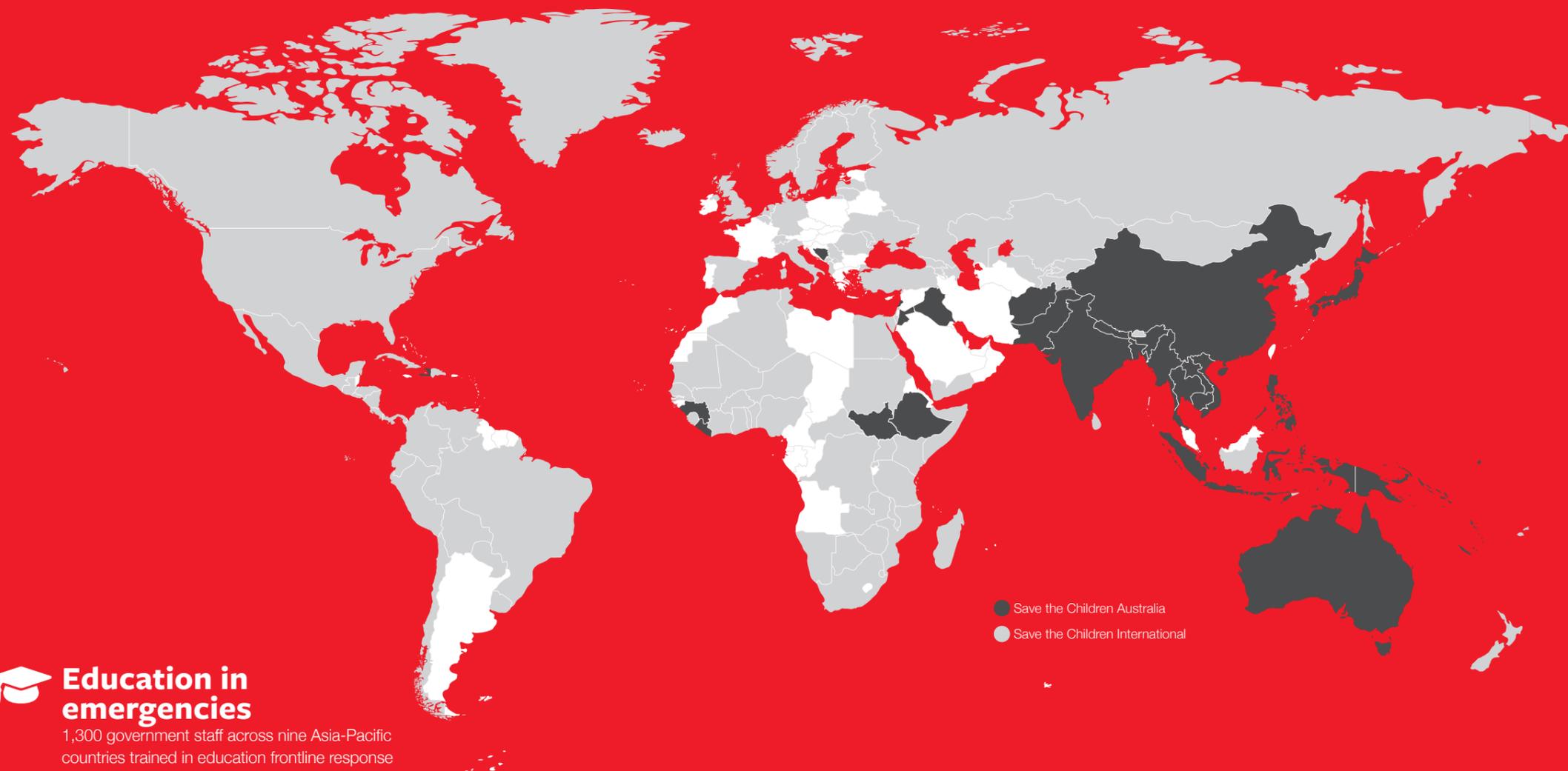
**Warning Changing the disaster narrative**  
 19,181 people in Laos are better prepared to respond to disasters

**Medical The case for primary healthcare in Laos**  
 The total estimated cost of the Save the Children Primary Healthcare model for 30,000 people over eight years is USD \$1,557,900. This comes to \$6.49 per capita per year

**Graduation Education in emergencies**  
 1,300 government staff across nine Asia-Pacific countries trained in education frontline response

**People Taking on the G20**  
 One-to-one engagement with 30 top politicians and senior officials world-wide on economic issues that affect children

**Group Leading the way**  
 200 students from more than 35 organisations and 45 countries have participated in the global Humanitarian Leadership Program



● Save the Children Australia  
 ● Save the Children International

**“Measuring our impact is critical to understanding our performance – and we need to be able to communicate it effectively and transparently to all our stakeholders. We have to use the evidence we gather to learn and continuously improve our program outcomes.”**

Paul Ronalds, CEO Save the Children Australia

# PROTECTING CHILDREN BY NIGHT

**Project name:** Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service (KNPYS)

**Location:** Kununurra, Western Australia

**Project theme:** Child protection

**Objectives:**

- Ensure children and young people who are on the streets at night are cared for by a responsible adult
- Support children and young people to be safe when they are on the streets at night

**Project cycle:** 2012–2016

**Total budget:** AUD \$1.35 million



Since 2013 the project has engaged 1,331 children



881 late night recreation activities and life-skills sessions have been conducted



More than two-thirds of night patrol staff are Aboriginal



In the first three months of 2014 there were 35% fewer children on the streets compared to the same period in 2013

Young people learn how to prepare healthy food as part of Save the Children's youth programs in Kununurra. Photo: Save the Children

## When the sun sets

The landscape around the remote town of Kununurra is breathtaking. It's a scene of waterholes, red cliffs and open spaces, and the people who live here have a strong connection to country. Yet there are social problems stemming from historical trauma and poverty that make Kununurra a difficult place to live.

Dusk can be a risky time for children and adults alike. After dark, many children find themselves on the streets well into the night when home isn't offering peace and safety. The longer children and young people stay out on the streets in Kununurra, the more likely they are to be involved in crime and high-risk activities like drug and alcohol abuse, sexual behaviour and truancy when they are too tired to go school the following day. In Western Australia, Aboriginal young people made up 77 percent of juveniles in custody at the end of June 2014<sup>2</sup>, highlighting the desperate need to address how Aboriginal children are supported in their communities during these times.

To help prevent Kununurra children getting caught up in negative patterns, Save the Children runs a night patrol bus as part of the Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service (KNPYS). Staffed by local Aboriginal people, the bus does rounds of the town on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, offering lifts to young people who are out on the streets. Once on board, a child nominates a 'safe place' where they want to be dropped off for the night. It may be home, a relative's house or the youth centre (Youth Hub). The bus staff check the nominated place is safe. If it's not, they will try somewhere else. There is always a female staff member on board offering specialised support to girls.

After school hours, with few activities available to them, children have a greater chance of becoming involved in crime. The project runs an after-school chill space from 3–6pm, along with day and night-time activities for all children at the Youth Hub, like sport, art and movies, as well as group dinners, back to country day trips and mentoring for the most at-risk children. Group girl dinners, for example, are great avenues for informing girls about how they can protect themselves when they are out late on the street. The project uses the Youth Hub to provide one-on-one support for high-risk children in the form of mentoring and counselling. In this space, staff can provide guidance on alcohol and drug use, avoiding crime, and safety and protection from bullying, child abuse and violence.

**“Investing in young people over many years is critical to really affect their lives and contribute to generational change.”**

## Changing the nightscape

KNPYS emerged in response to high levels of crime, substance abuse, neglect and poor school attendance – all issues that affect children's rights, growth and development. KNPYS is the only night service in the community for children, even though taking children and young people off the street is seen as a community priority, as it removes them from being both the victims and perpetrators of crime.

From the perspective of community stakeholders, the project is having a positive impact. They say without KNPYS, children and young people would sleep on the streets or stay out all night. Girls and young women would experience more assaults, crime levels would remain high and young men and boys would be more likely to offend, leading to time in juvenile detention. The success of the KNPYS is evident in the numbers. In the first three months of 2013 there were 483 pickups, while during the same period in 2014 this had dropped to 227 – less than half, which means fewer children on the streets at night.

Much of the project's success is attributed to the hiring and training of local Aboriginal staff. It's a tight-knit community. With skill development in child protection, first aid, and drug and alcohol support, these local staff members now have the knowledge to better support young people, building on existing trusted relationships.

The project's success is also attributed to linking with other local groups. KNPYS works with Community Response for Our Children (CROC) – a local child-protection working group – by sharing information that can help them identify community needs and special cases. This has been key in identifying the most at-risk youth.

“The tie in with CROC is the greatest success...it streamlined our ability to have better and pointed targeted services,” said a local community worker.

There has been local recognition surrounding the importance of the project – 75 percent of local service providers interviewed as part of a program review in 2014 agreed the project was a good response for child neglect and street presence.

“Prior [to this project] children were being brought to the prison lock-up because there was nowhere else to bring them,” said a Save the Children staff member.

For young women and girls, they feel the night patrol keeps them safer at night, while boys often report it keeps them out of trouble. Perhaps unsurprisingly, girls are recorded as using the service twice as much as boys.

## Acknowledging the gaps

While there is no doubt KNPYS is valuable and much-needed in Kununurra, the long-term sustainability of the project needs to be addressed for it to have the best impact for children.



Young people at a Save the Children activity in Kununurra.  
Photo: Robert McKechnie/Save the Children

There was limited community consultation when the initial project was designed, leading to two project designs and two theories of change in two years. The first design came from Save the Children's Perth office with inadequate local participation. Outcomes were difficult to measure, and staff did not have access to external data or the training to collect data. As a result, the local project team never adopted this first design, finding it to be unrealistic and overly ambitious. In June 2014, a second theory of change was developed by the local team: *To protect young people and improve their resilience by building their capacity to respond positively to adversity and enhancing fortitude.*

A second gap became evident around the engagement of parents and caregivers. The stretch on resources and the lack of time staff had to engage with parents resulted in insufficient local stakeholder engagement when the project was designed, and this gap has persisted when it comes to parent and carer involvement. They know about the night patrol bus but not much about the other project activities. Some community stakeholders also caution the project may be removing parental responsibility to supervise their children. What is emerging is recognition that increased participation of parents and carers in KNPYS would improve the ownership of the project in the community and provide more holistic support to children and young people.

Likewise, greater engagement of local staff could create greater change with limited investment. One of the most celebrated achievements of the project is the predominant hiring and training of local Aboriginal staff. Yet there has also been some criticism that these workers are from just a few families and that they are not representative of the community, which could impact who uses the service.

A big limitation of KNPYS is its ability to meet the full needs of the most at-risk children. To provide a better service, the project needs more dedicated engagement with these children, which of course requires more staffing hours. Currently, the most at-risk youth receive less than one hour of one-on-one guidance each week. Importantly, more staff hours would mean there would also be time for staff to meet and build relationships with families and other community agencies, strengthening the systems that are needed to start to embed this service in the community and bring about long-term change.

## Building on what we know

KNPYS has taken two years to build the trust of children and young people in the community. These things take time. But with just two years left of the project cycle, we recognise there is a need to reassess how we approach the project if we want to meet our objectives by 2016. While the project

has gotten to the heart of after-dark and long-ignored issues facing children on the streets in Kununurra, the lack of other services, a permanent safe place for children and young people and a lack of community ownership will compromise the sustainability of the project.

Investing in young people over many years is critical to really affect their lives and contribute to generational change. A project like KNPYS shows that great work can be done and that this work is supported by the community workers and Elders. But, as so often happens, these projects don't receive funding for the time it takes to really instill the work and bring about community ownership.

## Talking to parents

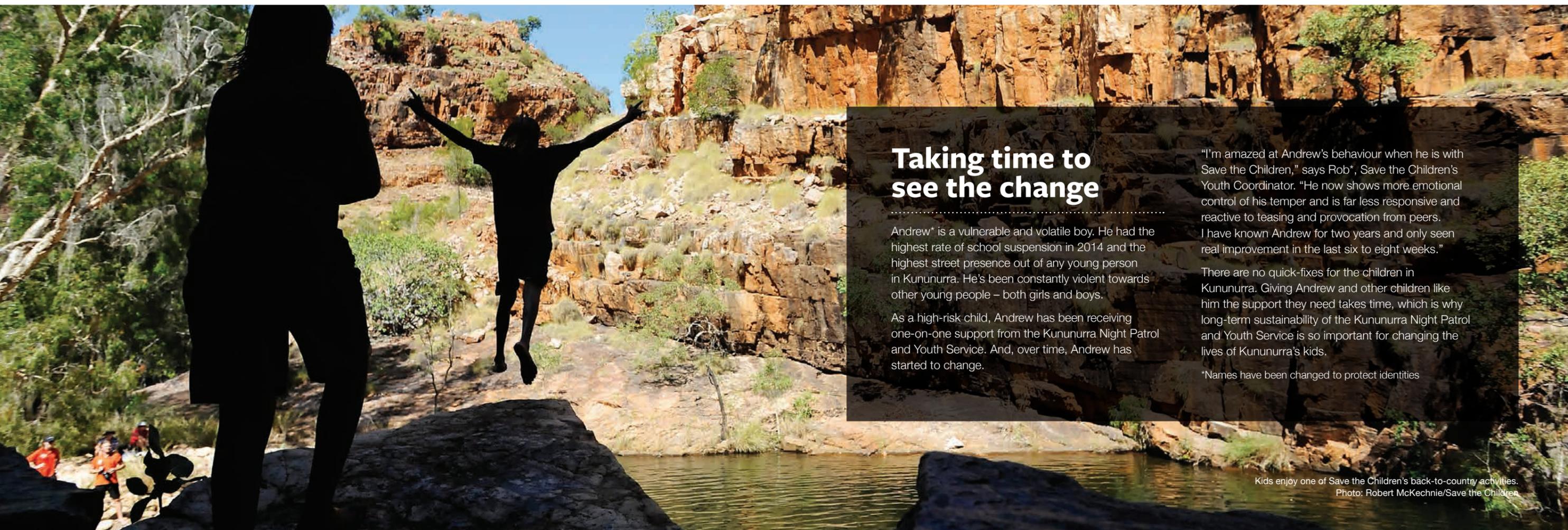
It's the local community stakeholders who have the best solutions for how to engage parents and we are listening to them. They believe it will take a concerted focus on communicating project objectives and outcomes with parents, and building a relationship with them. In this way, parents and carers would become more aware of their child's circumstances and the project could better assist families in a holistic way – instead of just focusing on the needs of young people. But we recognise this also requires stronger local support systems and greater resources – a constant challenge.

"You should physically go to the house – build that relationship. Talk to the person, understand where the families are coming from. You can't get that through a report," said a local community worker.

## Embedding systems

At this stage in the project we need to focus on building the systems that will enable local ownership, and sustain the services beyond Save the Children's involvement. This means working more closely with local staff to both train and involve them in the long-term objectives of the project. It's also about working better with parents and carers, and finding a way to make them part of the project so their sense of responsibility for these children is nurtured.

It's time to really leverage our position with local actors, like the CROC working group and others, to formalise referral pathways, strengthen outcomes in individual case management and build a stronger evidence base for change. There's a strong case for increased focus on local schools to offer traineeships and leadership development, building ownership from the ground up. There also needs to be greater advocacy to engage government bodies and private sector investment. Their involvement could generate greater community engagement and keep valuable spaces, like the Youth Hub, open for all children to access.



## Taking time to see the change

Andrew\* is a vulnerable and volatile boy. He had the highest rate of school suspension in 2014 and the highest street presence out of any young person in Kununurra. He's been constantly violent towards other young people – both girls and boys.

As a high-risk child, Andrew has been receiving one-on-one support from the Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service. And, over time, Andrew has started to change.

"I'm amazed at Andrew's behaviour when he is with Save the Children," says Rob\*, Save the Children's Youth Coordinator. "He now shows more emotional control of his temper and is far less responsive and reactive to teasing and provocation from peers. I have known Andrew for two years and only seen real improvement in the last six to eight weeks."

There are no quick-fixes for the children in Kununurra. Giving Andrew and other children like him the support they need takes time, which is why long-term sustainability of the Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service is so important for changing the lives of Kununurra's kids.

\*Names have been changed to protect identities

# FOCUSING ON FAMILIES

**Project name:** Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS)

**Location:** Northern Territory, Australia

**Project theme:** Child protection

**Objectives:**

- Increase child safety
- Increase caregivers' parenting skills and knowledge, their access to support services available to them, and their awareness and understanding of neglect
- Establish formal and informal support networks for families

**Project cycle:** 2011–2014

**Total budget:** AUD \$2.2 million



In early 2015, IFSS reported 80% of families involved in the project had improved their parenting skills and family functioning



All of the parents and caregivers involved in IFSS said they were satisfied with the service

## A difficult reality

In the beautiful expanse of Australia's Northern Territory, many Aboriginal communities face the difficult realities of stress, cultural disconnection, remote living and substance abuse – all serious factors that can contribute to child neglect. These are the communities that experience the highest levels of poverty in the Northern Territory. They are also the communities with the highest use of child protection programs in Australia.

When it comes to caring for children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can face challenges due to intergenerational trauma. This has resulted in top-down interventions from the Federal Government, such as the Child Protection Income Management (CPIM) initiative. CPIM was designed to help families identified by government child protection agencies to manage their expenses in the interest of their children, and to address widespread child neglect in the communities where it was introduced. However it was perceived by many as a punitive initiative and was not well received by local governments or communities.

To complement the CPIM, the Federal Government also engaged the Parenting Resource Centre to develop a model of family support that worked with families on CPIM to address issues of child neglect in the home at a more personal level. In 2010, the Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) practice model was launched. In stark contrast to the CPIM approach, the IFSS model drew on bottom-up grassroots research and input from service providers and families using child protection services to develop a systems-based design that addressed the direct needs of families and children but was flexible enough to be adapted as the model evolved.

The IFSS practice model was trialled by five service providers in the Northern Territory – Save the Children Australia, Good Beginnings Australia, NPY Women's Council, Central Aboriginal Congress and Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation.

## Looking at the big picture

Protecting children is paramount, but without a holistic approach that also supports families, there is only so much a focus on children can achieve. The last 10 years has seen a huge change in child protection in Australia, with reforms that are increasingly focused on creating a lasting impact for children, families *and* communities. Part of this is about reshaping the approach of frontline health workers.

Even so, the frameworks around family support remain fragmented across different providers. Often project timelines are too short, meaning changes do not have time to take effect and be properly embedded. Projects can also lack evidence-informed models and thorough evaluation. For example, there is still very little research done to truly understand the impact of home-visit programs on Aboriginal communities.

The IFSS practice model was specifically offered to Aboriginal and non-Indigenous families with children under 12 where

neglect had been identified. Local workers from the community regularly visited these families, usually in their home, and worked with them to address the physical, health, educational, emotional and developmental needs of their children.

IFSS service providers also worked with families on parental responsiveness, basic parenting skills, home management skills, difficult child behaviour, daily hassles and the personal and social resources of caregivers. The model offered family safety planning, parenting skills training and stress management training, all of which were delivered through the lens of the best interests of the child.

## Integrating the practice model

The Parenting Research Centre supported IFSS service providers with training, coaching, supervision and monitoring and assessment. The initial training included the principles and philosophy of the practice model, the different stages of the model and hands-on experience. Next, staff received ongoing intensive coaching, which included regular case reviews, field observation and action plans.

The model incorporated important cultural elements, too, such as the introduction of the Yarning Mat as a communication tool. In keeping with traditional Aboriginal practice of yarning or storytelling circles, the Yarning Mat tool is applied by IFSS workers as a space to prompt discussion between family members about child neglect, and to support the development of strategies to address these concerns.

While IFSS focuses on the immediate issues of child neglect, the practice model also includes a broader understanding of 'systemic neglect', such as lack of appropriate housing, physical and social isolation and limited service options that impact the health and wellbeing of children and families. Although IFSS doesn't directly address these broader issues, it's important that frontline workers are trained to understand all the factors that contribute to child neglect.

One of the unique elements of IFSS is the embedding of a data system that provides meaningful information for the ongoing and continuous improvement of the service. This data system helps the Parenting Research Centre make informed project management decisions, and tailor monitoring, training and coaching for the IFSS workers. Regular meetings allow frontline IFSS workers to feed themes and issues to the Parenting Research Centre. The Parenting Research Centre then brings all the service providers and government representatives together to review the project, using the data gathered by the IFSS workers. It's this ongoing analysis that allows the ability to change, which is essential for keeping the practice model relevant and effective.

## Engaging with families

IFSS promotes a strengths-based approach, which focuses on the assets, capacities and potential of children and families. For the most vulnerable, it can promote self-worth in individuals and staff recognise the power this has for many

people. Staff like this way of working and the approach is also greatly appreciated by the families IFSS reaches.

"I like that the IFSS workers don't look at problems but address them as possible barriers stopping me from moving forward," said one participant.

IFSS also employs an 'Observe, Practice, Feedback' component where workers are required to describe and demonstrate a skill to a caregiver and then encourage the caregiver to practice that skill. While staff were great at giving praise, many found it difficult to assume the role of expert or teacher for the families they worked with.

"There is some anxiety around being the teacher...if you're teaching something you don't feel an expert on," explained one local staff member.

However, Save the Children has been able to use the IFSS approach to reach families at a more personal level. For example, one family became engaged with IFSS due to external concerns their child's needs in education, health and emotional care were not being met. Despite initial resistance from the family to work with the service, changes to the child's school and the mother losing her job, the service was able to develop a Family Support Plan. The relationship between the family and IFSS workers continued to strengthen and, after seven months, the case was closed with the family achieving all their goals.

## Building on what we know

### Remaining responsive to change

For Save the Children, the IFSS practice model offers huge potential for learning and improving our approach to child protection and family support. A 2014 evaluation of the integration of IFSS into support services confirmed the model is achieving results. The evaluation found a decrease in child neglect but the sample size of families for this exercise was small and we need to undertake a broader assessment to truly understand the effectiveness of the model and any gaps.

When the IFSS model was first rolled out, the selection criteria for families to access the model was very strict. On one hand, this allowed the service to reach clients who really needed support. Yet it also prevented other families in need from accessing the program, for example, families where children experience neglect but who are not subject to CPIM. Some families also accessed IFSS too late, because they did not meet the established selection criteria at the time when it would have made a bigger difference to the lives of children in that family.

In mid-2014, all parties involved in IFSS acknowledged the project was not receiving the referral numbers anticipated when it was established. To address this, a two-tiered referral process was introduced during the second half of 2014. The aim was to allow more families in need to access services by removing the requirement for families to be on CPIM. This change resulted in an increase in referrals from the Northern

Territory Department of Children and Families and more families benefiting from IFSS. This highlights the value of remaining responsive to evolving contexts.

## Rethinking the frontline

The IFSS practice model requires comprehensive staff support including recruitment, training, retention and support. In line with Save the Children's community development approach, we recruited mostly Aboriginal paraprofessional staff from the local community, understanding they are the most capable of accessing local families, building trust and relating culturally. But the IFSS model was new for the organisation and the team and, while the role of the Parenting Research Centre in providing coaching for staff was a great support, Save the Children also needed to provide better support to the team, such as clinical supervision.

IFSS staff were required to do things that were incredibly uncomfortable for them such as going into families' homes in their communities to assess them on various aspects of the Child Neglect Index. Not surprisingly, this complexity created a certain level of bias in some of our assessment data. One of the other service providers, Good Beginnings Australia, took a different approach to staffing the IFSS practice model, recruiting a mix of less experienced staff, together with qualified staff as team leaders to provide supervision. Save the Children and Good Beginnings are now blending their teams in a merger, which will enable us to achieve far better outcomes for the children and families we are working with.

## What's next?

The energy invested in designing and refining the IFSS practice model demonstrates just how essential time is to understand and embed change. The pilot phase has delivered some of the results we were aiming for but there is further to go to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families. Save the Children, along with the other project partners, have secured five more years' funding that will enable us to continue to improve the model and create better outcomes for children and families.

We already know where we need to change our approach. We need to review our staffing and supervision model and ensure we have people in the right roles and provide them with appropriate support and supervision. In particular, we need to look at how we provide staff with appropriate clinical supervision. Parenting Research Centre coaching and mentoring filled this gap in the pilot phase but this support will not be provided in the next phase. Our merger with Good Beginnings Australia will enable us to blend our two approaches to the IFSS practice model and take the best of both to enhance support for our staff.

We also need to focus on building staff understanding and skills in assessment. In addition to providing support and supervision, Team Leaders need to be more involved in data collection and management. We already have new Team Leaders in place, ready to take this on.

# GETTING CHILD PROTECTION RIGHT

**Project name:** Save the Children  
Child Protection

**Location:** Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos), Solomon Islands

**Project theme:** Child protection

**Objective:**  
Strengthen child protection systems to promote safe and protective family and community environments for children

**Project cycle:** 2013–2017

**Total budget:** AUD \$7.13 million  
across three countries



**25,717 adults and children benefit directly from Save the Children's child protection programs**



**Training on positive parenting and positive discipline was delivered to 1,464 parents, caregivers, village volunteers and government officials in Cambodia, Laos and the Solomon Islands**

**“During the child rights and protection training, I gained a lot of knowledge on how I should communicate with children and better understand them, this has really assisted me. I now see that it is very important to look after our children, I also apply the knowledge gained to better look after my daughter.”**

Florence Kokoi, Solomon Islands

Children read in class in Cambodia.  
Photo: David Wardell/Save the Children

## Understanding child protection

Save the Children defines child protection as a set of measures and structures that prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation affecting children. Protecting children is essential for them to enjoy their rights to survival, development and participation, and every failure to protect children has negative effects that continue into their adult life. Where children are protected, their health, access to education and wellbeing are improved, as is their ability to contribute to society throughout their life.<sup>3</sup>

Save the Children Australia is implementing diverse child protection projects throughout Asia and the Pacific. In 2013–2014, in response to internal concerns about the focus of our child protection projects, we commissioned an independent evaluation to understand how effective our projects had been in strengthening child protection systems at the community, provincial and national level across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) and the Solomon Islands.

While we always love to document success, it's also important to recognise challenges and gaps. The evaluation confirmed we have built strong relationships, we have the trust of local authorities, we are respected in communities and we enjoy a positive image at the national level. But it also identified some critical gaps in our child protection programing. This case study is very much about recognising where things can get confused in the realm of child protection. It's also about learning from this.

## Three different contexts

Cambodia, Laos and the Solomon Islands are three very different contexts but each face challenges when it comes to keeping children safe from harm. In Cambodia, there is a lack of alternative care and social welfare services that respond to the needs of children. In Laos, only a few international non-government organisations (NGOs) and local organisations work on child protection. The topic itself is new to Laos and discussion on child protection is only now emerging. In the Solomon Islands, where communities are separated by water and customs play a huge role in daily life, Save the Children is one of the only large NGOs working in child protection. Despite the differences between these three nations, there are similarities, too. In all three countries there is limited government capacity, a shortage of services and an underdeveloped discourse on child protection.

Save the Children Child Protection projects across these three countries follow a common approach. They are similar in design, expected results and activities. They are also in keeping with Save the Children's theory of change and global child protection strategy, which prioritises four areas: children without appropriate care; child protection in emergencies; physical and humiliating punishment; and children and work. They all focus on positive parenting, child rights, raising awareness on child protection, children's clubs, child

participation, and child protection training for local community groups as a general programming blueprint.

But Save the Children is now questioning how well we have been tailoring our global approach to effectively strengthen child protection systems in these three unique contexts.

## The ambiguous nature of child protection

Child protection, child rights and child participation – how does Save the Children define the work it is doing? In Cambodia, Laos and the Solomon Islands the three Save the Children Child Protection projects were defined as 'child protection', and yet in reality these projects were prioritising an emphasis on child participation and the promotion of child rights. The child protection element itself often became lost, limiting local understanding of what child protection really is and limiting the ability of Save the Children to embed effective child protection systems into local ways of working and governance.

In fact, the evaluation revealed there was no clear distinction in any of the three projects between child rights and child protection and there was often confusion about the relevance of these two components. Our child protection projects largely responded to a wide range of child rights issues but they were limited when it came to addressing core child protection issues, such as child abuse and neglect. This finding signalled a need to reframe our programing approach to reach exactly what we are trying to achieve in our child protection programing. We realised we needed to stop classifying activities such as children's clubs as child protection without a strong rationale for their purpose. This is not to say that child rights, awareness-raising and child clubs are not necessarily good program components for child participation and empowerment. But there was little evidence these activities had any impact on strengthening the systems designed to protect children.

## Localising system-building

To truly influence child protection issues, projects need to include a systems-building approach. This is not about applying a Save the Children global program template, it's about recognising the importance of local systems and what they have to offer. Without the inclusion of local systems and solutions, our projects will have limited effect when it comes to child protection – particularly in contexts like the Solomon Islands, which have strong local customs and cultural systems. While we recognise and acknowledge this in theory, in practice our child protection projects in Cambodia, Laos and the Solomon Islands were lacking local relevance and the integration of local solutions. We were simply not collaborating with local actors as much as we should have been.

In the Solomon Islands, there have been government-led national efforts to create a system of child protection that builds on community strengths. Importantly, the system aims to be congruent with local customs while realising

human rights. Save the Children was one of the main initial contributors to this initiative, working alongside the government. But over the last few years our engagement had diminished and our child protection project neglected to build this system into our programing. Instead, we fell back on generic project activities – such as child protection committees – that were not grounded in local concepts, beliefs and principles, and that did not prioritise interaction with national actors. We went off track.

There is evidence that communities in Laos and the Solomon Islands have their own solutions to child protection issues and we need to take these into consideration when we design our child protection projects. Our perspectives might sometimes differ but we need to find common ground and focus on strengthening child protection systems through combining Save the Children's approach with local and unique socio-cultural constructs. We need to go beyond the reliance on activities that we are used to, and comfortable delivering, and thoroughly analyse context, local systems and community practice, beliefs and world views.

What we are also starting to understand is that global strategies do not always provide affordable, meaningful or realistic solutions where local social welfare systems are weak and limited. Nor do they always deal with the greater issues at hand. For example, one important feature of the Save the Children global model for child protection is positive parenting – an approach to parenting that teaches children and guides their behaviour while respecting their rights to healthy development, protection from violence and participation in learning. Positive parenting is founded on child rights principles. Yet in contexts like Cambodia, Laos and the Solomon Islands there was an over-reliance on this as an answer to child protection challenges, diverting attention from the full range of issues that need to be dealt with, such as children living without care or children involved in child labour and sex trafficking. Positive parenting is a valuable component of child protection programing but it needs to be part of a broader package of tailored activities.

There are also limitations in delivering complex child protection projects that do not align with local systems when local staff are themselves new to the discourse around child protection. This highlights a common problem in project design – ambition. Often when teams are under pressure to deliver overly ambitious projects in limited timeframes there is no room for them to step back and assess where things are not really working.

## Building on what we know

Recognising flaws in our project design allows us to also accept that our universal child protection programs are not as sustainable as we would like. Without clear understanding of what we mean by child protection, without localising child protection systems in context and place, and without reducing strain on Save the Children and local government staff capacity there can be little hope of government take-on or a scale-up of our projects. Across Cambodia, Laos and the

Solomon Islands there seems to be a common conviction by officials that the moment Save the Children transitions out of a project, everything disappears. For child protection projects in these countries, it's too early to know the full potential of their impact. Yet taking stock of our gaps and failures will help us to make necessary changes to address this challenge of sustainability and create lasting change in the interest of children.

Our child protection projects need to tailor designs to meet local needs if we are serious about creating system change. Going forward, we need to ensure we are focusing on protecting children, not just promoting their rights and participation. And we need to recognise the human resource limitations in terms of what we are trying to achieve.

## Changing our approach

There are considerable opportunities in the Solomon Islands with the recently developed national Child and Family Welfare System policy on child protection principles. We have since repositioned ourselves as a promoter of the local system, and contribute to its testing and adjustment as part of the national effort. Similarly in Laos, new research on their Child and Family Welfare System brings increased understanding of the existing systems, perspectives and opportunities for Save the Children to adjust to more realistic objectives and appropriate approaches. In Cambodia, we can contribute to national processes on child protection system strengthening, fostering an agenda of convergence and relationship with others.

In response to the evaluation, we have already started to reframe our approach in these three countries. Each of the project designs has been reviewed and there is increased emphasis on contextual analysis, working with local actors and structures, being guided by local priorities, and setting realistic targets for change. In the Solomon Islands we are once again actively involved in the National Action Children's Committee to ensure our child protection project is aligned with and influencing government policy. We have recently completed a comprehensive analysis on the issue of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children to better understand the nuances of these issues in the Solomon Islands, and ensure future programing is responsive. In Laos we are working with national and provincial government officials to ensure they have the capacity to lead on child protection initiatives with our support rather than Save the Children driving things. And in Cambodia, we have built in an explicit focus on advocacy for national level policy makers, which was absent from the original project design.

Our child protection technical specialists are providing regular mentoring and support to their in-country colleagues, building their skills and confidence, and ensuring project designs are tailored to meet local capacity. We're monitoring these projects closely and making necessary adjustments as we go. Strengthening local child protection systems is a long-term investment and we are committed to this – but we need to work closely alongside local actors to ensure local ownership and sustainability.

# EARLY LEARNING IN PAKISTAN

**Project name:** Early Childhood Care and Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – Pilot Project (ECCE-KP)

**Location:** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

**Project theme:** Education

**Objectives:**

- Provide children with access to early childhood care and education, leading to improved transitions into primary school and better educational outcomes
- Develop a low-cost early childhood care and education model that can be replicated by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

**Project cycle:** 2011–2015

**Total budget:** AUD \$18.4 million



 **2,273 teachers have been trained in ECCE**

 **Community-based ECCE has been set up in 121 homes**

 **ECCE classes have reached 276,272 children = 44% of them girls**

 **158 Community Learning Workers and 161 Community Educators have been trained**

 **401 ECCE classrooms in mainstream primary schools have been refurbished or built**

## The challenge of learning in Pakistan

Malala brought the challenges of education in Pakistan to the world stage. Her story is about girls' right to education, but her struggle translates to all children in Pakistan for all kinds of reasons. Children in Pakistan today – both girls and boys – still face issues of security, risk of natural disasters, lack of inclusion of girls and children with a disability, and little access to important early childhood care and education (ECCE) services. Only 56 percent of boys and 44 percent of girls are enrolled in primary school and, while literacy rates in youth are increasing, the average literacy rate in Pakistan is only 56 percent.<sup>4</sup>

Pakistan has more than 7 million children aged between three and five, most of whom are missing out on ECCE. The Pakistan Government offers pre-primary education, known as *katchi* classes, but these early childhood classes were only formally included in the school system in 2014. Their reach in remote communities remains limited and girls are often excluded.

Early schooling and learning can have a lasting impact on children's development. Children who get access to early childhood care and education are more likely to stay in school, become emotionally stable and become active members of their families and communities. Studies have found the investment in the early education of children brings about greater adult productivity later in life, making education a highly cost-effective means of strengthening society.<sup>5</sup> The quality of life for a child and the contributions the child makes to society can be traced back to the first few years of life.

## A focus on young children

The Australian Government is the only international donor explicitly supporting early childhood education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province, bringing classes to some of the most remote and disadvantaged communities through Save the Children's ECCE project. The project was designed to create a holistic school system for children aged three to eight, helping to ensure children are ready for school and schools are ready for children. In addition to establishing ECCE classes and providing training to ECCE teachers in existing schools, the project trained community-based teachers to establish home-based pre-schools, which increased opportunities for girls to learn in safe and nurturing

spaces within their communities, and mostly with women teachers. These pre-school centres were also designed to be easily accessible to children with disabilities. And, being close to home, children are at less risk of security threats from walking to another village or town to attend school.

From 2011–2014, the project trained 2,273 teachers in child-centred teaching skills and reached 276,272 children – 44 percent of which were girls. Importantly, the project was powerful in its creation of community support and demand for early education for all children, including the most disadvantaged. The project refurbished 401 ECCE classrooms in primary schools – including toilets, hand-washing facilities, and safe drinking water – and set up 121 community-based ECCE pre-school centres in homes. Teaching and learning materials were also developed in the local languages with a focus on health and literacy, and included modules related to disaster risk reduction – an important contribution in a province that is disaster prone and frequently experiences severe earthquakes and floods that threaten communities and destroy school facilities.

A key approach that improved learning outcomes was Literacy Boost, Save the Children's innovative, evidence-based response to the global reading crisis. Literacy Boost identifies four key elements fundamental to children's learning and includes regular, fun reading activities, cooperation between parents, teachers and community members, and teacher training. Students in the 401 primary schools involved in the project made statistically significant gains in letter identification, Urdu reading fluency, Urdu and Pashto reading accuracy, and Urdu and Pashto reading comprehension compared to their peers in schools not involved in the project. The project also notably improved girls' learning outcomes, with girls outperforming boys in Urdu comprehension in the project schools.

## Bringing learning into the home

Home-based ECCE pre-school classes have been one of the biggest successes of this project. The project invested in training both women and men teachers to establish the ECCE classes in their homes – bringing early learning to many villages for the first time. Home-based classes meant ECCE came to the children, better preparing them for the transition to formal school in the next village when they are older. The classes also encouraged children to transition into formal school when they reached primary school age, engaged parents and promoted trust in the community, so much so that the demand for ECCE home-based pre-school classes is increasing. One of the big impacts of this approach is that more girls are getting a start in education, increasing the chance they will go on to mainstream school.

The use of homes for ECCE has emerged as a viable way to provide early childhood care. This, coupled with parent education, will hopefully become a catalyst to long-term positive change. Sixty-nine of the 101 home-based centres established are now locally sustained by the communities themselves.

## A tenuous future

One purpose of the ECCE pilot project was to influence education system reform by developing a school-based ECCE model that could be adopted, replicated and scaled-up across the province by local government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Government officials participated in ECCE training activities, and a specific advocacy effort was launched for district education officials. This process enabled the ECCE project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to influence policy discussions and initiatives – contributing to the formalising of *katchi* classes into the school system and resources for ECCE being included in the 2015–2016 Provincial Annual Development Plan.

The project undoubtedly contributed to a shared understanding across government and educators of the importance of early childhood education in the future lives of Pakistani children. Yet getting adequate resources for ECCE within the education system has proved far more challenging.

Although there has been good support from local officials and an increased understanding on their part about the value of ECCE, they are yet to give it priority in their regional agenda. There is an approved ECCE Implementation Strategy for the province to roll out ECCE components in all primary schools by 2021, but due to other priorities in basic education and limited provincial resources, there is a shortfall in funding to implement this plan. The reality is that, for now, the government's top priority is to get more children, especially girls, into primary education classes. They also need to address the poor levels of learning for those already in school.

It's also important to acknowledge that four years is an incredibly short timeframe to achieve lasting system-based change. Yet the fact the project has managed to significantly influence the policy of local government demonstrates potential – it's a start and shows we are on the right path. There is commitment on the part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government, even if the actual implementation remains limited. It's a sign that longer-term donor support for this project could see the full aims of the ECCE-KP project eventuate.

## Building on what we know Systems and sustainability

The success and challenges of the ECCE-KP pilot project have revealed some learning around systems and sustainability that can inform the future of the project, and other similar Save the Children programs.

The long-term educational advantages and cost-effectiveness of ECCE is clear, and there is a need for the institutionalisation of ECCE in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province to provide high-quality learning experiences for all young children. Yet in light of competing local education priorities, it will not be possible to expand this pilot initiative in the immediate term without continued external donor assistance.

The project's successes are remarkable and worth pursuing in a country such as Pakistan where early education is in increasing demand. To respond to this, we need to reframe our design and extend the project for a few more years. Building the capacity of district and provincial government education officials is a long-term process and we don't want to lose the momentum we have gained.

To continue to influence government on the systematic roll out of ECCE, Save the Children has designed a Phase 2 project, which aims to build on the gains made and institutionalise standards for quality learning environments, provide adequate training and support for ECCE teachers, strengthen the role and leadership capacity of head teachers with a focus on women, and strengthen ECCE governance and management in mainstream schools.

Recognising the current limitations of government as the sole provider of ECCE, the proposed Phase 2 project also includes continued support for community-led ECCE classes, thus increasing access for children who would otherwise miss out on early education. The project will explore public-private partnership approaches to identify alternative channels of financing for community-led ECCE.

We also need to be more specific in our research to continue to build the evidence base for advocacy and wider ECCE policy dialogue at a provincial and national level in Pakistan. As with all efforts to influence government policy, there is the issue of time. To integrate ECCE fully into the education sector and to build sustainability will take years. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has made an initial allocation of resources for ECCE in its 2015–2016 Annual Development Plan but we need to keep advocating for additional investments to realise the ambition of a province-wide scale-up. A second phase of the ECCE-KP project will enable investments to be maintained and create a strong platform on which the government can build greater ECCE opportunities for the children of Pakistan.<sup>6</sup>

**“The quality of life for a child and the contributions the child makes to society can be traced back to the first few years of life.”**

## For the love of books

For Aya\*, school was a drag. At just seven, she was struggling with reading at her small village school, and she preferred to stay at home and help her mother with the household chores. Her parents worked hard to maintain their small shop. They weren't engaged with Aya's progress at school. And, in the classroom, Aya started to fail.

"I couldn't understand in class, especially when it came to words in Urdu and English alphabets. I had no vocabulary of words and I read very slowly. I felt burdened and I was scared of punishment from my teachers because I mostly forgot lessons soon afterwards. I didn't enjoy school," Aya says.

Children growing up in Pakistan struggle to learn to read, and for girls, it's even tougher. As part of the Save the Children Early Childhood Care and

Education project, we've been training teachers in engaging child-centred teaching methods through our Literacy Boost program. We've also been working with parents to help them support their children's learning at home.

Aya's teacher, Parveen, learnt how image cards and objects can help children learn. And for Aya this made all the difference.

"I started enjoying school because I became able to understand words and their identifications. With interesting activities I improved my reading skills and speed," Aya says.

"My mother also attended a few parents' sessions... [she] started encouraging me to read books and giving me time for studies at home. Now, I love reading storybooks and poems at school and even at home. I like the Reading Camp because we play, make drawings and sing poems there."

\*Name has been changed to protect identity



# AFTER THE FLOODS

**Project name:** Flood Response Program

**Location:** Solomon Islands

**Project theme:** Emergency Response, Education, Child Protection

**Objectives:**

- Strengthen the ability of communities, parents and children to cope and build resilience, while ensuring severely affected children receive appropriate support
- Ensure educational continuity, psychosocial support and protection for children affected by floods, and ensure their return to school
- Promote early recovery and reduce vulnerability of children and their families to future disasters in flood-affected communities

**Project cycle:** April–December 2014

**Total budget:** AUD \$313,000



**15 Child Friendly Spaces** were established



**40 teachers trained** in psychosocial support and education in emergencies



**120 community members** joined Child Protection Committees



**1,268 children** accessed these Child Friendly Spaces

## Living in a disaster zone

In April 2014, torrential rainfall caused some of the worst flash flooding in the history of the Solomon Islands. More than 50,000 people were affected in the capital of Honiara and surrounding Guadalcanal Province. Floodwaters washed away homes, contaminated drinking water, damaged schools and health facilities, and destroyed livelihoods. More than 10,000 people evacuated their homes and took shelter in 27 evacuation centres.

With funding from our Children's Emergency Fund, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and the USA's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), Save the Children reached more than 20,000 people with non-food items (such as cooking utensils and tarpaulins), clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, child protection services and education projects.

Save the Children's presence in the Solomon Islands is long-held and we have strong relationships with many communities and local governments. Our role as an emergency responder is also well-known, not just in the Solomon Islands, but globally. We are a member of the Humanitarian Partnership Agreement – the formal mechanism for engagement between DFAT and selected Australian NGOs during an emergency response, and our response to the Solomon Islands flood emergency was supported by this arrangement. In collaboration with Oxfam and World Vision, Save the Children delivered emergency aid from mid-April to December 2014.

## Meeting the needs of children

In late 2014, we reviewed two of our emergency response components funded by DFAT – child protection and education. As part of our child protection approach, our role was to establish Child Friendly Spaces and Child Protection Committees in 15 locations selected by the Solomon Islands Government. Child Friendly Spaces provided children affected by the flooding with access to dry, warm and welcoming places where they could play and learn. The Child Protection Committees, made up of 120 community members, were responsible for referring child protection concerns in the communities to appropriate organisations as well as assessing new risks that were present in communities and schools. The child protection committees also helped ensure Child Friendly Spaces were a safe place for children.

**“The [Child Friendly Spaces] helped us relieve fear, anger and other emotional feelings...They also lifted our morale – forcing us to go to school and read books and ask questions...”**

Joseph\*, young boy affected by floods

\*Name has been changed to protect identity

Child Friendly Spaces are a flagship Save the Children response in emergencies. They are designed to reduce the trauma experienced by children as a result of losing their homes and schools, and are a widely recognised child protection strategy. Children are the most vulnerable during disaster. Ensuring they are safe and have their basic needs met in a structured environment is incredibly important to reduce stress, and to increase resilience to future disasters. The spaces also protect children from abuse, exploitation or violence during the chaos that often follows a disaster. And they're fun. Children are engaged through songs, drawing, play, storytelling, sport, literacy and numeracy.

We established 15 Child Friendly Spaces – all of which remained open for three months. More than 1,200 children across flood-affected areas of the islands accessed the spaces, and 57 percent of those children showed decreased psychological distress over the period.

Education during the aftermath of a natural disaster is also essential, and getting children back to school helps life get back to normal as quickly as possible. Save the Children's project employed 24 local community members in a cash-for-work program to help clear and rebuild schools. We established school disaster committees, provided materials to schools and trained teachers on running classes during emergency recovery phases.

The intention was that all children were able to access safe learning facilities as soon as possible after a disaster – and that school communities are part of the process of rehabilitation. In 16 schools, 606 children and 40 teachers were taught skills in hazard risk mapping and how to create action plans in the case of future disasters. Children role-played what they would do in an earthquake or flood, and they loved planting trees to keep riverbanks strong and create windbreaks.

## Building on what we know

### A slow start

There is no doubt the Child Friendly Spaces were well received and program evaluations reveal our work contributed positively to the coping mechanisms and resilience of communities, parents and children as outlined in our objectives. Yet when it came to achieving our objectives within a relevant timeframe for an emergency response we were slow off the mark.

The Child Friendly Spaces were established between April and June, with most opening in May. Yet by this time – several weeks into the response – many of the schools had reopened and children's routines were re-established in other ways. This slow start meant that when it came to providing educational continuity, psychosocial support and child protection, we fell short because we were not ready to provide these things when we would have had the biggest impact.

This is not to say the Child Friendly Spaces were ineffective. They filled a gap while schools were rebuilding and reorganising. And they offered emotional support not always available in the school environment. Yet being able to set up

Child Friendly Spaces in the first 48 hours after a disaster is critical for their effectiveness and for the protection of children left vulnerable after disasters.

The cash for work component also had a slow start. It was originally intended to boost incomes for local communities, and ensure cash reached them when there was a shortage of food and other resources. Yet things didn't get underway until August – a good four months after the floods. By this time most of the clean-up had been done by volunteers and communities. As with the Child Friendly Spaces, early mobilisation would have provided enormous benefit to the most affected communities and children.

## The challenges of coordination

Coordination among aid agencies following the 2014 Solomon Islands flood response was difficult and complex. With agencies working to reach the flood-affected communities while adhering to government guidelines, there was not always good communication about what each agency was planning. Meetings clashed or were delayed. This reduced the ability of agencies to coordinate their response and ensure all needs were addressed.

A challenge agencies faced in this response – which is not uncommon in humanitarian contexts – was balancing adherence to the Solomon Islands National Disaster Risk Management Plan, which was important for building local capacity and ownership, and getting aid quickly to the communities that needed it. We want to get behind local governments and for them to take the lead but when national systems become overwhelmed, we need to understand how we can act without undermining local authority. This is a highly complex issue and something the international community is currently grappling with.

Many of the delays in the Solomon Islands flood response came down to waiting for the government authorities to identify and allocate schools and communities in which to work. This removed any flexibility we may have had to realign our focus. For example, as the weeks dragged on and the need for Child Friendly Spaces was reduced, it could have been a good opportunity to adjust our project objectives and invest more resources in incorporating WASH in our education response instead. The challenges of addressing WASH was a recurrent theme raised by communities and stakeholders, and

### “The children love it”

When the floods hit his school, Brother Samson remembers there were 40 children in his kindergarten.

“We were all scared...when the floodwaters came. It was hard to know where to go,” he recalls. They all ran and hid some of the children in the roof of a nearby church for protection.

“Our school was badly damaged but luckily no-one

community members questioned why better sanitation and access to clean drinking water was not provided in schools when this was clearly one of the biggest needs for children.

## Mitigating delays

The setbacks in this project highlight the tensions between adhering to rigid government emergency response management plans, while responding to the evolving needs of the individuals and communities who are affected. But no matter what conditions we are working in, we need to be faster at getting responses like Child Friendly Spaces up and running following a disaster.

Refining our Emergency Preparedness Plan for all disasters and natural hazard events, so we can always operate quickly and effectively on the ground, will help mitigate many of the challenges we came across in the Solomon Islands flood response. Part of this is about being clearer and more consistent in our project designs and timeframes – especially taking into account available local resources and how to work around slow government responses. We realise that prioritising the sharing of information with the Solomon Islands Government on an ongoing basis would have also helped prevent some of the delays and possibly allowed Save the Children to reframe its response to meet changing community needs. Although it's important to collaborate with local government, waiting on them before taking action presents some serious drawbacks in conducting an effective emergency response.

A key lesson learnt within Save the Children was the importance of having clear roles and responsibilities assigned in advance of any emergency situation. In November 2014, two Humanitarian Advisors from Save the Children's Melbourne Office conducted an Emergency Preparedness Plan training workshop in Honiara to better prepare the team for any future emergencies. This included minimum standard actions, mapping of all key stakeholders and cluster representatives, as well as preliminary plans for potential responses to a variety of emergency situations across the four provinces where Save the Children works.

In the future, we know we need to advocate for more clarity from the outset of a response about the various activities and contributions different actors bring to the table and the roles each will play. This will enable better coordination and a faster response.

was injured. We lost a lot of school materials and the garden was damaged,” says Brother Samson.

Save the Children set up a Child Friendly Space next to the kindergarten in May. We trained the teachers on how to provide education in emergencies and how to offer psychosocial support to children. We also provided books, toys and other learning materials.

“The children love it when they visit,” Brother Samson says of the Child Friendly Space. “They feel happy that someone cares for them.”

# CHANGING THE DISASTER NARRATIVE

**Project name:** Sayaboury Integrated Hazard Mitigation Project (SIHMP)

**Location:** Lao People's Democratic Republic

**Project theme:** Disaster risk reduction

**Objectives:**

- Build the disaster risk reduction (DRR) capacity of partners in government
- Improve planning and operations at all levels
- Reduce the impact that disasters have on communities through disaster mitigation

**Project cycle:** 2007–2014

**Total budget:** AUD \$2.3 million



**19,181 people are better prepared to respond to disasters**



**50% of children in villages where we work were able to voice their knowledge on disaster risk reduction**



**75% of villagers where we work now have known evacuation routes**

## The intersection of poverty and natural disaster

In the small land-locked country of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos), many families are struggling to survive. With the country's exposure to frequent small-scale disasters, it's the most disadvantaged who bear the brunt of ongoing floods, drought, landslides and strong winds. These events – no matter how small – have significant economic impacts that only increase the level of vulnerability of disadvantaged communities and undermine their ability to cope. It's the space where poverty and disaster meet and it's a hard place for anyone to come back from.

In response to these challenges, the Australian and Laos Governments forged a partnership in 2007 known as the Laos-Australia NGO Cooperation Agreement (LANGOCA). The partnership was designed to reduce the vulnerability of the most disadvantaged by integrating poverty reduction programs with disaster management and unexploded ordinance (UXO) mitigation in Laos. Save the Children, Oxfam, Care and World Vision were selected to deliver the LANGOCA partnership program. Each NGO had a specific area of focus based on their existing work and relationships, and their area of expertise.

The aim was for the projects to not only change the way communities responded to disaster, disadvantage or the threat of UXOs, but to influence best practice and policy in Laos at the government level. Save the Children's work was set in northern, remote and mountainous Sayaboury Province and was centred on disaster risk management and poverty reduction – known as the Sayaboury Integrated Hazard Mitigation Project (SIHMP).

## An integrated approach

Save the Children's SIHMP project aimed to build the ability of communities to prepare for and respond to disaster by raising their awareness and capabilities, and by building a more proactive practice within mid-level government on disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management. It was about training local officials in methods like participatory risk assessments, risk and hazard mapping and disaster risk action planning. These activities made sure local officials worked with communities to collect valuable information and understand their needs. Local officials were also made responsible for establishing Sayaboury's first early warning system in 2011, and ensuring community members knew how to respond when the system was activated. The system, known as the Preparedness Response Mechanism, will save lives and incomes for those who are most vulnerable.

At the same time, the project trained officials on different ways they could help members of their communities diversify their income. Fruit trees, vegetable crops and raising livestock were all alternative incomes that would remove reliance on a single source of income and increase people's ability to cope in times of disaster. Farmers were also trained on how to improve their existing crop production.

Involving children in the dissemination of disaster risk reduction information within communities was a key tool for

raising community awareness. It also recognised the voice of children in the disaster dialogue. Building their understanding and resilience is important for bringing about long-term change in managing and responding to disasters. Both girls and boys actively participated in the project, which gave them a platform to voice their perspectives on disaster management and which increased their confidence to speak out about issues that affect them.

The SIHMP project brought into effect four key best-practice models that were adopted by the local government and local communities:

### Methodology for risk assessment

This was one of the earliest attempts in Laos to apply new thinking on understanding people's vulnerability to disasters and their capacity to build resilience.

The methods and tools were developed by the Asia Disaster Preparedness Center and field-tested by Save the Children. Laos' National Disaster Management Office confirmed these assessments have provided a crucial foundation for strengthening disaster response and preparedness across the country.

### System for disaster data management

Save the Children introduced the 'DesInventar' information system, which has been endorsed by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The system is used to compile local and national databases on the damage and loss caused by disasters. The Laos National Disaster Management Office has adopted DesInventar as a national standard and arranged for at least 15 visits for representatives from other provinces to Sayaboury to see the system, while providing training activities on it for all other provinces.

### Disaster risk education in schools

Building on work that was initially supported by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, Save the Children developed a set of practices and procedures for disaster risk reduction education that have now been accepted as a model by the Laos Ministry of Education.

### Establishment of emergency response funds

This was an idea developed by local partners in Sayaboury following flooding in 2010. Getting emergency funds from Vientiane was delayed after the floods, so local funds were set up that included contributions from the salary of government officials. The practice has since been adopted by at least three other provinces, and is close to being adopted by the national government.

## Success in sustainability

The final two years of the project focused on Save the Children's handover of the key program activities to local government. This phase included a strong focus on identifying remaining gaps, and increasing the knowledge and skills of the government to apply disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management. In these final years, Save the Children achieved positive changes in government policy and practice.

We saw the establishment of a Provincial Disaster Management Committee, District Disaster Management Committees and Village Disaster Management Committees, all of which operated effectively in response to the heavy damage caused by the fallout of Typhoon Haiyan. The final report for the project also revealed families and farmers experienced improvements in food security, and health and economic wellbeing. Communities were found to have better resilience, preparedness and mitigation against disaster. We also saw an integration of disaster risk reduction into the national school curriculum and increased school attendance.

## Building on what we know

### Taking participation seriously

The activities that made up the SIHMP project were identified through a participatory process of planning and assessment. The design logic was a collaborative partnership involving government partners and village committees. These structures were linked by a common purpose, which was prioritised by villagers rather than Save the Children. Using both a bottom-up and top-down planning approach was considered to be fundamental to the success of the SIHMP project.

The effectiveness of the project was enhanced by continued long-term engagement in Sayaboury where Save the Children has built strong relationships with government staff. Almost 20 years of field office presence in Sayaboury has undoubtedly earned Save the Children the trust and credibility of key officials, who in turn have taken a lead role in implementing disaster risk reduction at the village level. These relationships have resulted in higher levels of efficiency in a local setting, where administrative and logistical matters can be fast-tracked and access to officials made easier because of the rapport built up over the years.

The LANGOCA partnership conducted their own independent review of the work of all NGOs involved in the collaboration. One of the biggest findings was the importance of working with governments to change policy and practice in Laos. Without this approach, work at the ground level proved to be less effective or sustainable. Essentially, the review found that if development programs want to influence policy they have to work with those in power as well as those at village level, which was very much the approach of Save the Children.

**“It seems that, as a result of disaster risk reduction activities, a profound shift is taking place in the way people think about their relationship with the natural world. Hundreds of thousands of people have been empowered, from school children and villagers, district and provincial staff, up to national policy makers.”<sup>7</sup>**

The review also highlighted some of the challenges to working in Laos. Fundamentally, Laos' political environment offers limited potential for critical analysis and public debate, coupled with a lack of clarity in the policy-making process and implementation. There is disparity in terms of who those policies reach, particularly when it comes to different locations and ethnic groups.

Nonetheless, the Save the Children project in Sayaboury was hailed as one of the most successful projects within LANGOCA. It was able to navigate the complexities of the Laos political system to bring about significant policy change, and significant change for the women, men and children most vulnerable to the impact of disaster. Save the Children's work was very much about starting locally, and designing innovations that suited the Sayaboury people and government. Once this was found to work, there was potential to scale-up the model and for it to become best-practice on a wider scale.

## Understanding our success

The LANGOCA review found there were five factors that had most influence on government policy and practice: presence, partnerships, power, pragmatism and professionalism. Where Save the Children fitted into these categories of influence is important in terms of understanding our success. We have been based in Sayaboury Province for many years, and we have always provided immediate support during disasters. This has built trust in our organisation. We work with various government departments and our field work is linked with regional and national disaster networks. We also have champions within the National Disaster Management Office.

Also integral to our success was the seven-year project cycle. Finding an effective balance between breadth and depth is never easy, but it is likely to be easier in projects that have a longer timeframe because adjustments can be made as the project progresses. Specific disaster events cannot be predicted and put into a work plan, but projects can be designed to 'expect the unexpected'. In particular, they can have a broad enough coverage and a long enough duration, so that adjustments are possible. The lesson from the SIHMP project is that focus, flexibility and sufficient time is needed to generate successful outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

The nature of Save the Children's participatory approach to disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management for government and communities is key for collaborative policy development. This approach has allowed officials, farmers and school children to gain greater control over their understanding of and response to disasters.

“Typhoons are not a new thing,” says a district official in Sayaboury. “We had floods and landslides in the past, houses were destroyed and people killed. But we didn't know these were disasters.”

Understanding that natural disasters and hazards are something people can prepare for and become more resilient to, rather than acts of nature over which they have no control, has the power to change the most vulnerable people's ability to take care of themselves and their communities.



# ເຂດອາໄສ

# ແຜນທີ່ຄວາມສ່ຽງພະພິພັດ ບ້ານປູ່ງເລີ້ນ

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-  = ກຸ່ມອັນຕະລາຍ
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-  : ວິໄນ
-  : ເວັ້ນມາຍປ່ຽນ
-  : ພຽງປາ ບ້ານ
-  : ມິດເສຍລິນ



## Involving children in disaster preparedness

It's children who will face the biggest force of disasters, both now and in the future. In Sayaboury, we trained children to conduct hazard risk maps of their community to increase their awareness and understanding of disasters. The children interviewed villagers to learn more about high-risk flood areas and locate the most vulnerable households, including homes of the elderly and disabled.

"We learnt about disaster risk reduction through the production of a map which shows risk areas and relocation routes. We went to gather information in the community and produce the map and then went to report back to the community," explained one participant.

With this information, they produced a community disaster risk map and chose safe places for evacuation. They presented the hazard-map to the village and held a community meeting to share what they had learnt through songs, theatre and puppetry.

Involving children in disaster preparedness now will help change how future generations adapt to disasters.

Children in the kids clubs at Pongpen Primary School, Laos, show a map of their village and point out areas that are vulnerable during flash floods. Photo: Conor Ashleigh



# THE CASE FOR PRIMARY HEALTHCARE IN LAOS

**Project name:** Primary Healthcare (PHC)

**Location:** Lao People's Democratic Republic

**Project theme:** Health

**Objective:**

Improve access to and quality of health services, and the health status of communities in selected districts in northern Laos

**Project cycle:** 1992 onwards

**Total budget:** AUD \$3.27 million (2013–2017)



The total estimated cost of the Save the Children Primary Healthcare model for 30,000 people over a period of eight years is USD \$1,557,900. This comes to \$6.49 per capita per year



In 2014, we trained 234 health workers and 1,371 village health volunteers



Our mobile outreach clinics reached 148 villages in 2014

## Turning healthcare around

Despite impressive improvements and investments in healthcare over the last decade, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) continues to have the poorest public health indicators – such as child mortality rates, birth weight and average life expectancy – in Southeast Asia.

With chronic malnutrition in children under five and persistently high maternal mortality rates, Laos remains in need of a stronger health workforce – particularly one that reaches the 68 percent of the population that live in remote and rural areas.<sup>9</sup>

But it's early days in Laos' health sector mission. In recent years, the Laos Government has brought in health sector reform that aims to introduce a systematic approach to address its healthcare issues and achieve a common goal in the health sector: affordable, reliable and accessible health services for all.

Save the Children has been supporting the delivery of primary healthcare in 16 districts across Laos for more than two decades – 23 years in Sayaboury Province and eight years in Luang Prabang Province. In the districts where we've worked, infant and maternal mortality rates have significantly dropped. This means fewer mothers are dying as a result of childbirth, and fewer babies are dying before they reach one year old. Between 2009 and 2012, the infant mortality rate dropped an average of 46 percent.

## Saving lives in Sayaboury

It was in Sayaboury Province in 1992 that Save the Children introduced its comprehensive primary healthcare model in partnership with the Provincial Health Department. This helped fuel the Laos Government's official development of primary healthcare, which did not come about until 1998. Laos' first official policy on primary healthcare was introduced in 2000.

Yet Sayaboury was already steps ahead by then, and the model was making tracks towards achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 (reduce child mortality and improve maternal health). By 2007, these goals had been reached in Sayaboury, and the Laos Government invited Save the Children to expand the model in Luang Prabang Province.

**“Over time people are increasingly accessing health centres rather than relying on traditional practices. And, as they do, their confidence in the new health system increases.”**

## How the model works

The model promotes a health systems approach. It supports provincial and district government health services to deliver a package of comprehensive primary healthcare – prioritising maternal and child health – with the objective of increasing access to health services and improving the overall quality of care.

The package targets public education and participation, nutrition promotion and enough clean water and sanitation for everyone. It includes comprehensive maternal and child healthcare, family planning and immunisation against major infectious diseases. It also ensures there is appropriate and accessible treatment for common injuries and illness, there are medications available for all people and there are constant improvements in the quality and expansion of the network of health facilities. In all of this, we don't work in isolation as an agency. All these activities are delivered by Laos Government staff and local health workers, which develops the skills and knowledge of local and provincial government health agencies.

As a general framework, there are five key activities that work towards better primary healthcare. These are improving access, quality and demand for healthcare, training health workers and addressing chronic malnutrition. These key activities fit under four phases, which are rolled out over eight years.

### Intensive phase

Collection of baseline data and needs assessments to understand the health situation in districts. In this phase, there is significant investment in infrastructure at district and sub-district levels and the formation of provincial and district health management teams. Technical training starts immediately and mobile outreach clinics to remote villages commence.

### Strengthening phase

Focus on ensuring provincial and district health management teams are functioning well and building competency in data collection, analysis, interpretation and utilisation for health program planning. In this phase, advanced technical and management training is provided for health staff on understanding the local health situation and improving the quality and coverage of services to meet community needs. Integrated outreach mobile clinics and community health promotion days are conducted on a regular basis to all villages in the district.

### Consolidation phase

Focus on quality improvement, utilising data to inform health service delivery planning and decision-making. This phase includes refresher training for frontline health staff and deepens health planning and management skills.

### Recurrent funding phase

Focus on monitoring results and key indicators, continued strengthening of service provision and management. This phase also envisages a transition from recurrent external funding from Save the Children to the allocation of recurrent

local (government) funding to sustain service delivery. This latter phase has not yet been fully achieved in any of the districts.

## Costing our approach

Despite the success of the Primary Healthcare project, and numerous studies that showed the model was effective, we didn't truly understand how much it cost to implement until recently. As Laos stepped up to strengthen its primary healthcare, it became timely to examine the value of our investment.

In 2014, we undertook a study to examine the costs and effectiveness of the Save the Children Primary Healthcare model. We wanted to provide some important evidence for decision-making in the context of the Health Sector Reform and highlight the potential for our model to be taken up nationally as part of Laos' greater systematic approach.

The costing study estimated that for a province comprising 30,000 people, the total cost of rolling out our model over eight years was USD \$1,557,900. This comes to USD \$6.49 per capita per year over the entire multi-phase Save the Children Primary Healthcare model. Importantly, this also includes the provision of clean water and sanitation, which many other primary healthcare models don't include. If you remove these items, our model costs USD \$5.19 per capita. It's a seriously small difference and we've found that water and sanitation are imperative to a successful healthcare program.

Often the biggest expenses are for mobile outreach clinics, clinics at health centres supported by district level health staff – known as 'health days', district monitoring and evaluation and ongoing equipment and facility maintenance. Of course, each district and province will vary slightly depending on their needs but the costs won't vary significantly. The model is flexible but incredibly refined and replicable. In addition, the model costs more in the initial phase, with costs decreasing significantly in the final phases.

## Our standing in the global context

As the Laos Government starts the implementation of its health sector reform, and aligns with it the Laos Health Financing Strategy 2014–2025, understanding the costs of primary healthcare is significant. The cost data of the Primary Healthcare model as implemented by Save the Children can provide important evidence for decision-making in this context.

Although the components of such packages differ from country to country, the overall emphasis of a basic healthcare package is to provide fundamental maternal and child health services and essential primary healthcare services including antenatal care, immunisations and family planning.

At USD \$6.49 per capita per year for the Save the Children Laos model over eight years, including investment in clean

water and sanitation, our costs are comparable with basic primary healthcare packages being delivered in other countries that face similar healthcare challenges to Laos.

A recent study in Kenya conducted by the University of Nairobi estimated the cost per year per capita for outpatient care was USD \$8.60.<sup>10</sup> In Afghanistan, the well-known basic package of health services is estimated to cost USD \$5.50<sup>11</sup> per capita annually and includes important maternal health, child health, mental health and disability services such as antenatal care, vaccinations and counselling services. In 2010, funding paid by development partners and the government of Malawi to fund a more extensive essential health services package reached US \$13.5 per capita per year.<sup>12</sup>

As an important early step in understanding the economics of primary healthcare in the 1980s, Drummond and Mills<sup>13</sup> found the best estimate of the cost of effective primary healthcare (including the recurrent and capital costs of basic and village-level health services but not clean water and environmental sanitation) to be two percent of annual per capita GNP (now known as Gross National Income).<sup>14</sup> The World Bank estimates the Gross National Income per capita in Laos as USD \$1,270.<sup>15</sup> If we apply the two percent calculation as proposed by Drummond and Mills, the best estimate for a cost-effective primary healthcare service in Laos would be USD \$25.40 per capita.

The Taskforce on Innovative Health Financing for Health Systems has suggested that basic health systems need to achieve an annual spending of approximately USD \$54 per capita per year on average to achieve stated health systems goals. Health spending in Laos, including spending for primary healthcare, remains well below this level and more resources are needed to achieve Laos' health sector reform by 2025.<sup>16</sup> Yet it is also important to highlight that actual spending on primary healthcare is less than adequate in many countries, including Laos and, as a result, decision-makers are forced to make difficult choices in resource allocation by identifying what is most cost-effective. The Save the Children model is demonstrably cost-effective and a sound platform that we believe the Laos Ministry of Health can build on to progress their health sector reform.

## Building on what we know

Our research into how the women, men and children using the model respond to the clinics has shown that over time people are increasingly accessing health centres rather than relying on traditional practices. And, as they do, their confidence in the new health system increases. The model has been well received by health workers too, especially the training components that give them new skills in frontline healthcare. The program has established a systemic reporting system between villages, district health centres and the province level, allowing for the collection and sharing of valuable data on local health statistics and how services are being used.

At the village level, volunteer health workers and traditional birth attendants are trained on primary healthcare promotion,

and it's these workers that have the access to remote areas and valuable data for the health sector. Central to the model are the integrated mobile outreach clinics, which are critical for making sure health services reach the most remote communities.

Another key component of the model is the inclusion of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in primary healthcare. WASH is now a fundamental component of our primary healthcare work in Laos and, at such a low cost, presents a compelling argument for including it in all primary healthcare projects.

Health monitoring data from Sayaboury and Luang Prabang provinces confirm that the project is addressing identified needs and is clearly relevant. In a national survey conducted in 2012, Sayaboury ranked impressively for key primary

healthcare indicators (see Table 1 below). Given the level of investment, we can confidently say Save the Children has made a significant contribution to the gains in maternal and child health in the two provinces where the project has been implemented.

This project has built a solid evidence base that Save the Children can use to influence broader policy change. Strong and effective partnerships have been established at provincial and district levels – we now need to make inroads at national level for the model to be adopted more broadly. The findings from the Save the Children costing study were presented to the Ministry of Health Technical Working Group on Health Financing in September 2014 and we are working to ensure they will be considered in framing the health sector reforms.

**Table 1:**  
Sayaboury ranking among Laos provinces<sup>17</sup>,  
Laos Statistical Indicator Survey (LSIS) 2012

Sayaboury ranking among Laos provinces, 2012			
Indicator	Sayaboury ranking among Laos provinces	Actual indicator	Source
Fertility rate	2nd lowest	2.2%	LSIS/2012
Use of contraception	highest	69.8%	LSIS/2012
Antenatal care received	2nd highest	78.6%	LSIS/2012
Antenatal care 4+ visits	2nd highest	62.5%	LSIS/2012
Assisted delivery	5th highest	44.0%	LSIS/2012
Percent of children vaccinated	highest	79.0%	LSIS/2012
Percent of children sleeping under mosquito nets	2nd highest	94.70%	LSIS/2012
Nutritional status of children <2SD (Weight for age)	6th lowest	23.2%	LSIS/2012
Child mortality (<5)	3rd lowest	65/1000	LSIS/2012



A baby and his mother at a Save the Children-supported health clinic in Laos.  
Photo: Jim Holmes/Save the Children

# EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

**Project name:** Education in Emergencies Capacity Building Project

**Location:** Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Vietnam

**Project theme:** Education, disaster risk reduction

**Objective:**

Children affected by emergencies in selected countries are able to access quality education during emergency and early recovery phases

**Project cycle:** 2011–2014

**Total budget:** AUD \$2.9 million



**400 local Save the Children staff trained on Education in emergencies**



**1,300 government staff trained in frontline response**



**100 staff from local governments trained on cluster coordination**

## Stopping education in its tracks

Education is a fundamental human right, and when disasters hit communities a child's right to education often suffers. Disasters kill children. But devastating too is the prolonged absence from school for the many children who survive. Missed education can severely impact a child's progress to develop. For some children – often girls – a closed school encourages higher dropout rates.

Worldwide, approximately 1.2 billion students are enrolled in primary and secondary school and, of these, 875 million school children live in earthquake-prone zones while hundreds of millions more face regular floods, landslides and extreme wind and fire hazards.<sup>18</sup> Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Vietnam all struggle with high-impact disasters such as flooding, earthquakes, cyclones and tsunamis. They also have to deal with frequent small-to-medium-scale disasters and various slow-onset disasters such as droughts.

A recent global risk analysis revealed Port Vila to be the most exposed city to natural disasters in the world,<sup>19</sup> reinforcing a United Nations study that placed Vanuatu as the world's most at-risk country for natural hazards. The study showed that a lot of the risk stems from the country's lack of capacity to cope during disasters, inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure and a lack of change at a social and policy level.<sup>20</sup>

In response to disasters, the humanitarian sector has traditionally been survival focused. But more recently there have been moves to explore how people and governments can be better prepared for a disaster. There has been a huge shift towards risk reduction and adaptation, in addition to humanitarian responses. Part of this new trend includes looking at the need to maintain educational continuity following a disaster, focusing on systematic approaches to education in emergencies as part of the humanitarian response. Now, with the number and intensity of disasters growing, the importance of resilient education has never been greater.

## Education in emergencies

The Education in Emergencies Capacity Building Project was designed to ensure children still have access to education during and after disasters by strengthening the education system through all levels of government in nine selected countries across Asia and the Pacific. It also aimed to build the internal capacity of Save the Children country offices to deliver a quality education response during an emergency. Save the Children stand as the only NGO co-leading the Global Education Cluster<sup>21</sup> – along with UNICEF – and our responsibility to fulfil our role across all our offices is incredibly important to us.

The project worked with Save the Children offices in the nine countries to assess their level of preparedness, provide training and position supplies and resources in each country to ensure educational continuity in an emergency. The project

also conducted research and discussions with national stakeholders responsible for strengthening the cluster. There was great emphasis placed on working with Ministries of Education to strengthen their leadership in ensuring educational continuity in emergencies.

The project was the first attempt to pull together a multi-country initiative that brings together humanitarian and development approaches to protect children's right to education post-disaster. It aimed to employ a flexible approach to the field of education in emergencies to bring about the greatest change.

## Building on what we know

### What changed?

The project was instrumental in helping Save the Children strengthen its external reputation regarding the Global Education Cluster co-leadership, and to raise the profile of disaster resilient education. More local Save the Children and government staff are now trained across the nine participating countries in education in emergency tools and approaches, increasing the availability of skilled women and men who can work towards educational continuity in their countries. During the life of the project there were 23 emergency responses – 19 of these included education in emergency components. At the school level, the project made significant inroads into emergency response and raised the awareness of disasters within the school community context.

In terms of systemic change, the project has supported the education clusters in each of the participating countries to remain active during non-disaster times. Part of this process included clarifying the roles of each of the clusters, specific to their context, and converging disaster risk reduction education into the cluster's programs.

In Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vanuatu, education in emergencies was prioritised at the national level, and increasing political commitment to education in emergencies is emerging in these countries. In fact, one of the biggest achievements of this project has been the ability to change the laws and policies in some of the participating countries.

In Vanuatu, for example, the project helped implement a law that states the minimum quality standards for new primary schools must be safe, secure and maintained. School buildings must comply with the Ministry of Education's National Infrastructure Guidelines for Primary Schools and the Ministry coordinates the design and construction of the classroom buildings. At the conclusion of the project, the government was in the process of developing minimum infrastructure guidelines for classrooms, toilets and water facilities that stipulate all new school buildings should be disaster-resilient.

In the Philippines, the already high political commitment to education in emergencies was maintained and supported by partner non-government organisations (NGOs). During Typhoon Haiyan, for example, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) placed education as one of the five priority areas for response. It was

the first time education was ranked as a priority by UNOCHA in the Philippines, representing a huge advocacy achievement for the cluster.

## Shifting frameworks

The original purpose of the project was to strengthen the preparedness of governments and NGOs to manage education in emergency responses. Yet, over the course of the three years, this shifted to the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in education. Education in emergency preparedness was repositioned within a broader overall disaster risk reduction framework that brought together humanitarian and development agencies to provide educational continuity, while protecting children's safety in emergencies.

Including both emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction provided greater sustainability in terms of project gains, but also required more resources than initially factored into the project. The dual focus stretched the limits of the design, resources and the ability of the project to bring about change at all its intended levels.

There was great effort to coordinate the strengthening of education in emergencies between Save the Children, the Ministries of Education and Global Education Cluster members in all nine countries. However, these efforts are far from being fully embedded in national systems and their sustainability prospects remain weak. Often there was a lack of follow-up and project activities did not always align with Global Education Cluster recommendations. With the notable exception of the Philippines, Ministries of Education in all participating countries have been slow to actually implement changes in support of education in emergencies and disaster risk reduction.

At the senior management level in some of our country offices there was also a reluctance to understand and fully embrace our role as a co-lead in the Global Education Cluster and to invest necessary time and resources in the project. On reflection, the project probably reached too high in terms of expectations – and the assumptions around what it takes to build capacity were weak. The original aims were ambitious given the time and resources available – and then we expanded the focus even further.

While the project was able to increase awareness and knowledge it did not trigger sustainable institutional change within Ministries of Education in any of the countries, except the Philippines. The challenges we face in embedding policy change in Ministries of Education signify the need for long-term investment if we are serious about sustainable educational continuity in disasters.

## Talking about inclusion

Gender and the inclusion of other marginalised groups were not integrated into the project as much as they should have been and there was insufficient analysis on how education in emergencies projects could be more inclusive. As so often happens, as the project got more stretched, gender sensitive

practices and the different needs of women and men, girls and boys were not adequately prioritised, nor were other pressing issues like the inclusion of people with a disability. Yet, Save the Children's own policy and this specific project called for "increased attention to gender, child protection and psychosocial issues as part of an emergency response."

Only Myanmar and Bangladesh made progress on including gender sensitive practice in cluster preparedness plans and Save the Children emergency preparedness plans, with an emphasis on providing safe toilets for girls and women, sanitary materials for girls, and consultation with girls and women when it came to placing toilets. For the other participating countries, gender was sidelined and the lack of focus on this area was blamed on the lack of dedicated gender resources and sometimes simply a lack of time. Of course this explanation runs deeper than this particular project and we need to ensure all our programs are taking an inclusive approach. This requires a concerted investment in building the knowledge and capacity of *all* our staff.

The inclusion of people with a disability fared better where in-country clusters – Fiji and Indonesia – reached out to local disability focused organisations for guidance in cluster planning. This demonstrates the need to understand the contexts we are working in and identify appropriate partnerships and support pathways to ensure projects do not exclude marginalised groups.

## Sustaining momentum as a leader

Different country programs require different levels of investment to fulfil the role of Save the Children as co-lead in the Global Education Cluster. Country Offices are at various stages of development and need tailored support to embed effective strategies for education in emergencies. They need to ensure dedicated staff have time to nurture the cluster and oversee and support the co-leadership role. The cluster support role within the country office needs to be placed at a senior level to ensure it can deliver on its mandate.

Save the Children also needs to agree how education in emergencies, cluster leadership, school disaster management and disaster risk reduction in education come together at country office and international levels. Clearer focus and understanding across the board will strengthen the partnership between UNICEF and Save the Children and ensure the Global Education Cluster can provide necessary leadership on educational continuity in emergencies.

**“With the number and intensity of disasters growing, the importance of resilient education has never been greater.”**

## Why school matters in a disaster zone

After any disaster, there is likely to be chaos. Until, very slowly, the pieces get put back together. But in extreme cases it can take years for things to get back to normal.

In countries where disasters kill thousands, school really matters because often getting a chance to go to school in the first place is a battle. To have an education ripped away from a child has negative effects on their life that last beyond the recovery and rebuild.

This has inspired us to work globally to ensure schools and communities are also more resilient and can get up and running again quickly after a disaster.

When Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc in the Philippines in November 2013, schools were one of the many things that were completely destroyed. Yet, Save the Children supported teachers to re-open classrooms in whatever way they could as soon as possible. Because for children in the Philippines, school was important.

"I felt worried when I discovered that my school things were wet and damaged," said 11-year-old Maria\*. "My maths, Filipino and science books are still all wet but I plan to dry them outside in the sun. I'm going back to school."

\*Name has been changed to protect identify

Maria, 11, dries her books and notebooks after rain-water soaked them during Typhoon Haiyan. She aims to graduate and become a teacher. Jerome Ballinton/Save the Children



# TAKING ON THE G20

**Project name:** G20 Strategy

**Location:** Australia

**Project theme:** Advocacy

**Objective:**

Use G20 as a channel for achieving select policy outcomes

**Project cycle:** 2014–2016

**Total budget:** AUD \$10,000 (2014)



 60,000 Australians reached with media coverage on inclusive growth

 A standalone statement on the Ebola crisis delivered by G20 leaders

 160,000 signatures for more action on the Ebola crisis obtained in the lead up to the G20 Summit

 The issues of inclusive growth and the Ebola crisis included in the G20 official communiqué

 One-to-one engagement with 30 top politicians and senior officials world-wide on economic issues that affect children

## Challenging world leaders

The annual G20 Summit of world leaders was held in Brisbane in November 2014, providing Save the Children Australia with a unique opportunity to urge the Australian Government to make important policy changes.

On behalf of the global Save the Children movement, in 2014 we launched an advocacy campaign on the topics of inclusive growth, tax transparency and youth unemployment. The campaign also pushed for action on a current global crisis, which in 2014 was Ebola. The overall campaign strategy was designed for a three-year cycle, with our focus changing slightly each year in response to the G20 theme. This was the first time Save the Children Australia led the Save the Children movement on a global advocacy campaign.

## Why engage with the G20?

The G20 presents an important platform for progressing Save the Children advocacy objectives, especially when it comes to development. G20 member countries are home to more than half of the world's poor and make up two-thirds of the world's population. It's also a source of global leadership and an important forum to advocate for positive policy-making that supports the wellbeing of children.

The 2014 G20 Summit was a poignant space to raise important advocacy issues. There was already awareness among G20 members that its development focus had lost momentum. And in the wake of a new Australian Government and a significantly reduced aid budget the Summit presented an opportunity to raise issues of how these cuts will affect the development agenda.

## Being heard

Throughout 2014, we engaged closely with 30 senior decision-makers in the Australian Government (including Treasury and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet) and international organisations (such as the International Monetary Fund).

We emerged as a credible voice on economic policy issues during the 2014 G20 in the three specific areas of inclusive growth, tax transparency and the human and economic impact of the Ebola crisis. Our aim to raise the issue of

**“The G20 presents an important platform for progressing Save the Children advocacy objectives, especially when it comes to development.”**

youth unemployment is on hold for the moment. We are still collecting information on youth unemployment and childhood poverty, and feel the 2016 G20 will provide the best platform to raise these policy issues.

## Inclusive growth

Inclusive growth is defined differently by different organisations. It encompasses anything from reducing income inequality to improved living standards across a range of measures including health, environment and civic participation. But for Save the Children, we define inclusive growth as meaning all children and their families have the opportunity to participate in economic growth (equal opportunity) and benefit from economic growth (more equal outcomes).

In 2014, we advocated for the G20 to ensure everyone shares in the benefits of its two percent economic growth target. Our tactics included:

- Publishing a report card on how well G20 countries were tracking on key outcomes for children. Media coverage on the report reached more than 600,000 people.
- Co-authoring a report for the C20<sup>22</sup>, showing that almost one billion of the poorest people in G20 countries would be better off if the G20 committed to an inclusive growth target. Our report was quoted extensively by C20 spokespeople and covered by major news outlets.
- Although falling short of setting an inclusive growth target, G20 leaders explicitly recognised inclusive growth in their official communiqué, paving the way for more children and their families to benefit from economic growth in the future.

Prior to the G20 Leaders' Summit, Australia had been reluctant to mention inequality or inclusive growth as important for future prosperity. We received strong feedback from senior G20 officials that our work on inclusive growth, together with other civil society organisations, was influential.

Recognising inclusive growth was an important step forward for the G20 and paved the way for Turkey to build on this agenda in its 2015 Presidency, in which inclusive growth has been identified as one of the top priorities for the G20.<sup>23</sup>

## Tax transparency

A fair and functioning tax system is critical to financing investment in children – both in Australia and in developing countries.

In July 2014, we released a report *Tackling Tax and Saving Lives* that showed how curbing illicit financial flows and mobilising greater tax revenue could help reduce preventable child deaths in developing countries. We called for greater transparency around company ownership, reporting of profits generated in each country and cross-border sharing of tax

information. We had good media coverage in Australia and on international blogs.

By working together with other organisations such as Tax Justice Network, Transparency International and ONE, we highlighted issues on tax transparency and clamping down on harmful tax practices and we were pleased to see the G20 leaders commit to:

- Introducing principles on beneficial ownership (real owners rather than a legal entity) to prevent misuse of companies and trusts for corruption, tax evasion and money laundering.
- Preventing cross-border tax evasion via a Common Reporting Standard for the automatic exchange of tax information between different countries.
- Modernising international tax rules and moving tax profits to where economic activity takes place.

## Ebola crisis

As West Africa suffered under the 2014 Ebola Crisis, many G20 nations were relatively hands-off in their reaction to the crisis.

We leveraged from Save the Children's Ebola response and used materials from our Global Media Unit to call on G20 leaders to:

- Immediately scale up their response in line with rapidly increasing transmission rates.
- Contribute their fair share of funding.
- Send vital health workers and support staff with expertise in logistics, sanitation, psychosocial support and community mobilisation to West Africa.

Further action and consensus was also demanded on medical evacuations, return of international responders to their home countries, and air-bridges to decrease heavy restrictions on commercial flights to and from West Africa, all of which were hampering the international response.

In addition to our work in the field, we lobbied the Australian Government and produced advocacy briefing papers highlighting the situation on the ground, the particular needs around health workers and required support staff, and key asks for further contributions.

In the lead-up to the G20 Leaders' Summit, we gained extensive media coverage on Ebola and launched a global petition in partnership with other agencies, attaining more than 160,000 signatures.

Following this advocacy in the lead up to the summit, we were pleased to see the G20 leaders make a standalone statement on the Ebola crisis, as well as including a reference to it in the official G20 communiqué. Our inclusion of the Ebola Crisis in our 2014 G20 strategy was very much an advocacy message on the topic of the moment. Our decision to use the Ebola Crisis was in sync with other agencies. It also served as the best way to gain attention of world leaders on the

shared responsibilities of the global community to act in all humanitarian crises, regardless of their location.

## Building on what we know

### The resource issue

In 2014, Save the Children Australia's G20 advocacy campaign was under-resourced compared with our ambition. Ambitious strategies are fabulous when there is equally matched resourcing. Yet our advocacy efforts had to fit in with our existing staff's workload, removing the dedicated focus we would have liked to see. Participation within our global G20 Advocacy Working Group was also lower than we needed it to be, despite the 33-member base.

Our engagement with the G20 would have been more strategic and effective if we had stronger capacity for economic analysis and policy development to suit the nature of the G20 – a mainstream global finance and economics forum. Going forward we need to either narrow our scope or expand the number of policy-relevant people actively working on G20 advocacy. Whichever path we choose, our strategy needs to intersect more closely with our available resources. Globally, Save the Children's new thematic focus on child poverty and our upcoming equity campaign will provide a greater evidence base and policy platform for engaging with the G20.

## Adapting to changes and challenges

Our G20 strategy initially set out to work on the key themes of inclusive growth, tax and youth employment. We sought support from Save the Children country offices in each G20 member country – 19 in total plus the European Union – to inform our campaign. Yet our need for support from other Save the Children International members was met with little engagement. The G20 simply was not a priority for many of our member countries. For some, the policy recommendations did not meet their domestic agenda. For others it was a case of not knowing how they would benefit. Narrowing our focus and gauging support early on from member countries could be the way forward to pool resources and create a stronger global advocacy message.

Limited engagement in 2014 meant we were unable to gather country-specific policy asks to promote equitable and sustainable growth. It also meant that, without support on global youth unemployment from member countries, we had to hold off on that issue until further into the campaign.

Weak international collaboration also impacted the potential of a global media reach. In Australia, our media reach on the G20 summit and the obligations of G20 leaders was extensive. Outside of Australia there was basically no media push or media hook despite great opportunities to raise our

policy demands on the international stage. For the G20 to be considered newsworthy by other member countries, Save the Children International needs to lead on a global media push with a strong news hook – taking the issue out of the host country and into the global village.

As the first time Save the Children Australia had led on a global campaign, we are proud of what we achieved. On a domestic front, it enabled us to build our brand, forge new partnerships and actively engage in the economic growth conversation. We feel we made our mark with limited resources.

Where in the past we have relied on reports from Save the Children International, we developed a new report: *Economic playgrounds: Comparing the lives of children in G20 countries*. We also led a key policy paper for the C20: *Inclusive growth: Ensuring everyone shares in the benefit of G20's 2% growth target*.

## 2015 and beyond

Save the Children's global strategy for 2016–2018 will be focused on health, education and child protection, and a big part of this is child poverty and the inequality surrounding children's right to survive, learn and be safe. For child poverty, we will be looking at poverty at the household level and how it impacts on children. In response to our new strategy, we are narrowing our advocacy and policy focus to resonate more closely with these core values and at a micro level, rather than big-picture economic growth at a macro level. This will allow us to play to our strengths when it comes to advocacy. But it also could mean being less intense and more strategic in our engagement with global economic forums like the G20 after 2016.

The next G20 is in 2015 in Turkey, and so far Save the Children's engagement remains relatively small-scale compared to 2014. The prime focus for Turkey is 'inclusive and robust growth' and development issues will be prominent as the world agrees to the post-2015 development goals. Yet without a Save the Children office in Turkey and a lack of take-up by members in leading on the 2015 agenda, Save the Children Australia envisions a lighter approach for 2015.

We have committed to Save the Children International's Advocacy and Global Campaign linking up with strong C20 groups in Turkey. And our Australian Senior Economist who was heavily engaged in the 2014 Summit will continue to engage with multilateral organisations on inclusive growth – such as the International Monetary Fund, International Labor Organisation and the World Bank. There will also be greater input from Save the Children member offices in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). The UK's Head of Inequality and Sustainable Development is well placed to investigate research partnerships for inclusive growth, while the USA advocacy team would be suited to link with Interaction G8 and the G20 Advocacy Alliance to keep close to information sources and networks.

With these strategies, Save the Children can maintain momentum and engagement in the lead-up to the 2015 Summit in November and use our global voice on these issues to once again target the G20 on advocacy issues – particularly around the 2015 development agenda.

In 2016, the G20 will return to the Asia-Pacific region and be held in China. This will present greater opportunities for engagement by Save the Children Australia. There is a Save the Children office in China, and by then we hope to have a strong body of work on child poverty that will allow us to push a strong policy agenda.



# LEADING THE WAY

**Project name:** Humanitarian Leadership Program

**Location:** Global

**Project theme:** Humanitarian

**Objective:**

Developing leadership to transform humanitarian response

**Project cycle:** 2012–ongoing

**Total budget:** AUD \$2.62 million



200 students from more than 35 organisations and 45 countries have participated in the Humanitarian Leadership Program

“People need a purpose and direction to channel their energies and it is a leader’s responsibility to provide that, even if they are small goals that change on a weekly basis as the context and capacity of the team builds.”<sup>224</sup>

## When disaster strikes

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In a humanitarian emergency, strong leadership and coordination is needed to ensure help gets to those who need it as fast as possible. When Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines in 2013, there were 30 humanitarian workers on the ground who had graduated from or were close to completing the Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership – a new course developed by Save the Children and Deakin University. They were all working in leadership positions and were responsible for coordinating aspects of the humanitarian response, among hundreds of humanitarian workers and aid agencies.

The Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership was born out of Save the Children’s Humanitarian Leadership Program. The program aimed to transform the humanitarian sector to deliver more effective and efficient responses in complex emergencies, through a focus on leadership. This need for strategic thinking in humanitarian responses arose following the Haiti and Pakistan earthquakes in 2010, both of which presented some big challenges for aid agencies when it came to coordination and operations. The sector wanted a high-quality program that targeted the needs of senior managers and leaders.

Leadership in humanitarian response is a topic of much discussion in the international community with much of the rhetoric in recent years focusing on the need to ‘localise the humanitarian response’. The role of international actors needs to be providing surge capacity, technical advice and expertise to national actors to enable them to lead and coordinate disaster response in their own countries. This will require significant efforts to fit in with and support national actors, and to adopt approaches that are genuinely tailored to national contexts. There will also be occasions where national systems are overwhelmed and the international community needs to step up. The Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership is focused on developing leaders who can operate in such complex and dynamic environments.

The course builds leadership communication and seeks to give participants the skills they need to manage teams with confidence. It also fosters a more supportive organisational environment where leaders feel their decisions will receive the positive reaction they need to maximise outcomes and deliver results. Since the Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership started in 2012, there have been 200 students from more than 35 organisations and 45 countries – to date 120 students have graduated.

The 30 graduates and students in the Haiyan response were spread across seven organisations and their roles extended from Response Leaders to Sector Specialists, Logistics Managers and Regional Advisors. Having these students as an integral part of the Haiyan response allowed us to explore how the training from the Humanitarian Leadership Program played out in a real humanitarian response setting.

## Working in partnership

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The Humanitarian Leadership Program started out as a partnership exclusively between Save the Children Australia and Deakin University. However, it soon extended its reach to include other organisations in the sector to increase the impact of the partnership. World Vision Australia, Oxfam Australia, CARE and Plan were included in the initial planning and their staff were invited to apply for the Graduate Certificate. Since then, other big players in the humanitarian sector have joined in the partnership, including RedR Australia, UNICEF, Action Contre La Faim, Humanitarian Advocacy Group and the Asia Disaster Reduction and Response Network.

## The course structure

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The course can be completed from anywhere in the world. It uses cloud-based and intensive learning to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of participants. It integrates the wisdom of experienced humanitarian practitioners with the rigour and focus of university education. Online technologies mean guest speakers can present and students can access lectures and course notes from wherever they are. It also allows online discussions between course participants and lecturers.

The course includes two live virtual simulations that last for days. The simulations contain demographic and geopolitical information and are designed to test students’ leadership and coordination. Often applying learnings in the real world can be challenging, especially in intense situations. The simulations provide a space for students to try out new ways of working that won’t impact any real-world operations. It’s the ideal place to make mistakes and learn from them.

## Building on what we know

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The Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines presented an opportunity for recent graduates and current students to apply what they had learnt. It also allowed us to better understand how the course was benefiting the sector in the context of a real humanitarian response. This section shares some of the reflections from students who were on the ground during Haiyan.

## Growing from managers to leaders

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One of the key shifts felt by graduates was the change from manager to leader in terms of how people acted and reacted to situations during the crisis. Managers are most often focused on implementing existing plans and visions, while leaders create opportunities for generating visions and direction setting – focusing on the big picture and a more strategic vision.<sup>25</sup>

For some graduates and students, this model of leadership development changed the entire focus of their work in Haiyan.

“I have never been in a response...where I have spent my entire day just talking to people, helping to solve problems, reassuring and making decisions rather than just sitting behind a computer.”  
– Humanitarian Leadership Program participant

Students were also taught that much of good leadership can come down to developing relationships and making people feel valued – known as ‘soft’ leadership skills. With this new perspective, respondents in Haiyan were able to reassess how they related to their colleagues in an intense situation. It was also about training people to step out of their team environments and reflect on the workings of their response unit, taking in the bigger picture and allowing time for innovation.

“[Leadership] is more about how you make individuals feel... and I think we miss a trick because we assume it’s about delivery, getting through tasks and demonstrating numbers. Yes it’s all of those things...but they are secondary...if you get the other stuff right.”  
– Humanitarian Leadership Program participant

Graduates and students involved in Haiyan almost all emphasised the importance of feedback as part of their development. This is about giving feedback *and* receiving feedback – not always an easy thing for a leader to receive from a team but incredibly valuable for a leader to understand how they are perceived and what they need to work on. This process can help build both self-awareness and self-confidence.

“There has been a massive shift in my thinking. I think it’s about confidence. It’s getting to know yourself.”  
– Humanitarian Program Leadership participant

## Strategic thinking

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During the course students learnt that leaders can demonstrate a high level of strategic thinking by aligning ideas and solutions to strategic imperatives, evaluating the opportunities and risks to make informed strategic decisions and putting in place structured opportunities for others to generate alternative ideas.<sup>26</sup> After their experience in Haiyan, some graduates and students emphasised the importance of including their team members in the initial discussions and design of the response strategy.

Another reality in Haiyan was the lack of information available to response teams – especially at the onset of the emergency. Getting around this required some serious strategic thinking.

“Those hours and hours of going through [strategic thinking] and discussing it in the Humanitarian Leadership Program definitely did add value in terms of how I would then think a bit more strategically about the way I was approaching situations...strategic thinking is definitely something that has influenced my way of thinking and prioritising things.”  
– Humanitarian Leadership Program participant

## Managerial courage

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The course trained participants to be brave in their decision-making – not always easy when there is limited information available in an emergency. In the context of Haiyan, students and graduates found their training in making decisions helpful and drew on a combination of common sense, experience in the sector and learning. Part of this was about trust and confidence that they were only making the best decision they could at the time.

A big learning for students was giving the space to analyse the decisions they had made and being prepared to change things if the decision wasn’t right for the situation. By the same token, students also realised the value of sticking with a decision if they were sure it was the right one, despite opposition or questioning from team members.

“One of my learnings was about having the courage to stick to the decisions that you make. When you’re very clear in your mind that it’s the right decision and you can very clearly justify it, that’s not a problem.”  
– Humanitarian Leadership Program participant

Interestingly, ‘courage’ also related to how students reached out to get what they needed for the response. Many said they were forced out of their comfort zone. For some this meant reaching out to external stakeholders, going to the field or asking their organisations for additional support. This very much played out in Haiyan when students found they needed to communicate the needs of their field offices with headquarters. Where previously they may have accepted difficult situations, the Humanitarian Leadership Program gave them the skills to ask for what they needed to support their teams.

## Transforming teams

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When it came to delivering results, students were taught that for a leader to deliver results, they need to remove barriers and constraints, actively manage risks, make changes to improve performance and track performance using measures and metrics. On the ground in the Haiyan response, these learnings enabled students to delegate and empower teammates to take initiative for delivering results. However, it was also found that focusing too heavily on delivery of results caused communication or strategy to suffer.

“Because I was focused on delivering results...I wasn’t taking the time to communicate some of the challenges after the training and getting that extra support could have really helped the response.”  
– Humanitarian Program Leadership participant

Building a high performing team in an emergency is not an easy task. There needs to be strong leadership, strong relationships and great communication. One of the main findings after Haiyan revealed leaders who set a positive tone from the onset of the response will influence the entire response, creating highly motivated and collaborative team members. Another interesting finding was the importance of

including both national and international staff in discussions, building trust and giving them a sense of ownership over some of the decisions made by leaders.

“...It’s so much about just setting the tone in the right way, being positive, being enthusiastic, people will want to work for that. People will want to be part of that success.”

– Humanitarian Program Leadership participant

The need to embrace the understanding of almost constant change and transformation implicit in a humanitarian response is imperative for a leader. Yet many of the Humanitarian Leadership Program’s participants found this the hardest outcome to reflect on and implement. The importance of keeping everyone informed of change can help people accept and accommodate change.

“Start it from day one...start trying to help people understand what this is going to mean for them...try to get people excited about it because change always comes with this negative connotation as opposed to a ‘wow, look at the opportunities’.”

– Humanitarian Program Leadership participant

## Growing humanitarian leadership

The Humanitarian Leadership Program has had some great impacts in growing leadership in the sector. It’s been able to bring together a wide range of students from around the world, with various areas of expertise. And the responses from graduates and students in Haiyan demonstrated they had a new perspective and skills to bring to the sector. They promoted teamwork and peer learning and were also willing to continue to develop their critical reflective practice, with an enhanced sense of self-awareness.

Many students reported an increased capacity to deal with pressure and handle difficult situations, they felt better equipped to make decisions and consult when needed, and they gained greater understanding of the context and rationale behind humanitarian work.

## Learning as we go

The evolution of the course over the last four years has incorporated much of the feedback from students and faculty. For example, one of the requests after Haiyan was for greater learning on negotiation, coordination and external representation, crisis management and civil-military coordination skills. Continual critical appraisal has enabled the course to remain at the leading edge of change in the humanitarian sector.

One of the areas for further development – identified by the University of Indonesia, the University of Nairobi and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) – is the opportunity to expand the course into different contexts. The content of the course has been recognised by these representatives as cutting edge and they would like to develop the course with partners in Indonesia, Kenya and areas of Africa where ACF is working.

Expansion of the course into other regions and languages will make it more accessible to a greater variety of humanitarian actors. This would enable greater local capacity to lead responses in serious disasters. In a time when disasters are becoming more frequent, we need to localise responses to make the humanitarian sector more sustainable and better at coping with the increasing demands.



Participants take part in the Humanitarian Leadership Program. Photo: David Wardell/Save the Children

## Conclusion

Many of the lessons highlighted in this learning review are not new – and they are not unique. The fact we are still grappling with them underscores the complexities and difficulties we face in our work. It also tells us we haven't sufficiently learnt from our past mistakes and we need to address this. Our challenge now is to creatively and purposefully apply the lessons we have learnt so that we are more effective in improving the lives of children everywhere.

As Save the Children moves into a new 2016–2018 strategy phase, the organisation is reflecting on the challenges of delivering quality programs that have the potential to achieve impact on a large scale. The global development model is evolving rapidly. Technology and improved education mean that a more informed population will have increasingly higher expectations of program quality and hold international organisations such as Save the Children increasingly accountable for results. And our donors and supporters expect results as a return on their investment – seeing this as a key measure of our value add.

The new strategy phase offers an opportunity to rethink how we measure our progress. We need to be able to clearly articulate the outcomes we are achieving and demonstrate our contributions to broader change in the countries where we work. At a global level, Save the Children is developing a new results architecture that aims to collect and analyse more meaningful data at the country level, and a better understanding of Save the Children's contribution to broader development initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. Save the Children Australia will support the roll out of this new results architecture. But if we're to be successful, we need to allocate appropriate resources (people, money, time) to providing our staff and partners with training, tools, mentoring and support to continuously improve and measure the quality of our programs, document our results and share our knowledge with others – the successes and the challenges.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See Annex A for a full list of evaluations conducted in 2014.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Corrective Services (2014) *Weekly Offender Statistics Report*, Government of Western Australia. Accessed 19 June 2015: [http://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/\\_files/about-us/statistics-publications/statistics/2014/cnt140626.pdf](http://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/_files/about-us/statistics-publications/statistics/2014/cnt140626.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Save the Children's Child Protection Strategy (2013–2015).

<sup>4</sup>Education for All (2015) *National Review Report*, Pakistan.

<sup>5</sup>World Bank (2015) *Why invest in early child development*. Accessed June 2015: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTCY/EXTECD/0,,contentMDK:20207747~menuPK:527098~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:344939,00.html>

<sup>6</sup>Since writing this case study, changes to the regulatory environment for NGOs have threatened the continuation of Save the Children's programs in Pakistan and it is not known what the future holds, including for this project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

<sup>7</sup>Bartlet, A (2014) *LANGOCA Programs Outcomes Research Report*, pg. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Bartlet, A (2014) *LANGOCA Programs Outcomes Research Report*.

<sup>9</sup>World Health Organization (2014). *Country Cooperation Strategy: At a glance*, Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic. Accessed June 2015: [http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation\\_strategy/ccsbrief\\_lao\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_lao_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>Blaakman, A, Kioko, U and Korir, J (2013) *Results from the Dynamic Costing Model in Kenya (2012–2013)*, International Health Economics Association Conference, Sydney, Australia, 7–10 July, 2013.

<sup>11</sup>Blaakman, A, Salehi, AS and Boitard, R (2013) 'A cost-efficiency analysis of two alternative models for implementing the BPHS in Afghanistan', *Global Public Health*, 5 September, 2013.

<sup>12</sup>Bowie, C and Mwase, T (2011) 'Assessing the use of an essential health package in a sector wide approach in Malawi', *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 2011, Chapter 9, pgs. 4–13.

<sup>13</sup>Drummond, MF and Mills, A (1987) *Cost effectiveness of primary healthcare: A review of evidence*, London, Commonwealth Secretariat. This foundational work is still relevant when applied to current economic conditions, particularly when compared with WHO financing estimates outlined in World Health Organization (2010) Health systems financing: The path to universal coverage, *The World Health Report*, Geneva.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>The World Bank (2015) Accessed June 2015: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/lao-pdr>

<sup>16</sup>World Health Organization (2010) Health systems financing: The path to universal coverage, *The World Health Report*, Geneva.

<sup>17</sup>Laos is divided into 17 provinces and one prefecture

<sup>18</sup>InterAgency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) at the World Bank (2009) *Guidance Notes on Safer School Construction*, Pg 1

<sup>19</sup>ABC (2015) Accessed May 2015: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-10/port-vila-identified-worlds-most-exposed-city-natural-disasters/6295608>

<sup>20</sup>Prevention Web (2015) Accessed May 2015: <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/news/v.php?id=43276>

<sup>21</sup>Established in 2007, the Global Education Cluster brings together NGOs, UN agencies, academics and other partners under the shared goal of ensuring predictable, well-coordinated and equitable provision of education for populations affected by humanitarian crises. Accessed June 2015: <http://www.educationcluster.net>

<sup>22</sup>The C20 (or 'Civil Society 20') is a platform for dialogue between the political leaders of G20 countries and representatives of civil society organisations. Accessed June 2015: [www.c20.org.au/about-c20/](http://www.c20.org.au/about-c20/)

<sup>23</sup>Turkish G20 Presidency Priorities (2015) pg 3. Accessed June 2015: <https://g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2015-TURKEY-G-20-PRESIDENCY-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>24</sup>Connors, P and Perreard, S (2014) *Leading the way: Applied humanitarian leadership learning in the Haiyan Response*, Deakin University, Australia.

<sup>25</sup>Hoschschild (2010) in Connors, P and Perreard, S (2014) *Leading the way: Applied humanitarian leadership learning in the Haiyan Response*, Deakin University, Australia, pg 21.

<sup>26</sup>Connors, P and Perreard, S (2014) *Leading the way: Applied humanitarian leadership learning in the Haiyan Response*, Deakin University, Australia, pg 29.

## Annex A: Evaluations 2014

The following is a list of all evaluations conducted by Save the Children Australia in 2014.

### Australian Programs

- **New South Wales Mentoring Support**, May 2014
- **Intensive Family Support Service** (Northern Territory), July 2014
- **Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service** (Western Australia), December 2014

### International Programs

- **Child Protection Systems-strengthening** (Cambodia, Laos, Solomon Islands), March 2014
- **Early Childhood Care and Education** (Pakistan), Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) independent evaluation, April 2014
- **Education in Emergencies**, April 2014
- **Sayaboury Integrated Hazard Mitigation Program** (Laos), Australian DFAT independent final review of the LANGOCA Cooperation Agreement, April 2014
- **Newborn Child Survival** (Cambodia), May 2014
- **Climate Based Adaptation Project** (Vietnam), Australian DFAT independent mid-term review, May 2014
- **Children Affected by Conflict** (Nepal), June 2014
- **Primary Health Care Program Costing Study** (Laos), August 2014
- **Village Health Worker Mapping** (Vanuatu), August 2014
- **Preparing for Reintegration through Education and Participative Solutions** (PREPS), (Thailand), Australian DFAT independent review, November 2014
- **Floods Response** (Solomon Islands), December 2014
- **Home-based Malaria Management** (Papua New Guinea), December 2014
- **Disaster Risk Reduction Consortium** (Laos), December 2014

### Strategic Partnerships

- **Humanitarian Leadership Program** (Global), December 2014

### Policy and Public Affairs

- **G20 Campaign** (Australia), December 2014

Save the Children Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to elders past and present.

Save the Children Australia is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and a signatory to its Code of Conduct. The Code requires members to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management.

Save the Children Australia is fully accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Government department responsible for managing Australia's overseas aid program.

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Front cover: Sameena from Pakistan now excels in school, thanks to Save the Children's Literacy Boost program. Photo: Asad Zaidi/Save the Children

Back cover: Yumna from Indonesia attended an Early Childhood Care and Education Centre supported by Save the Children for three years. Photo: Robert McKechnie/Save the Children