



# Working with community actors to protect children

To ensure a holistic protection of children by connecting formal and informal actors



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## Tdh Approach in working with communities and connecting formal and informal actors

Tdh uses a **systemic** and **collaborative** approach to child protection systems strengthening, which puts **children at the centre**, supporting development of their capacities to be actors in their own protection and to engage with all key stakeholders, from governments to families and communities.

Tdh defines a child protection system as ‘...a **coherent set of actions and actors, in which the child is the starting point and which aims to guarantee the rights and well-being of the child by constructing synergies within and between protective**

Our work on child protection is oriented toward strengthening child protection systems in a contextualized, holistic manner that empowers and respects communities, builds on children's agency, and supports effective linkages between non-formal and formal stakeholders. Our approach is culturally sensitive, respectful, and empowerment-oriented; we vest power in local communities and organizations. Some of our approaches focus on:

- **In-depth understanding of children's situations and analysis of problems, strengths and sources of support to contextualize our programs (see our Customary Justice project)**
- **Community empowerment** and working with communities around locally-developed practices and mechanisms to address pressing children's issues.
- **Collaborations and connectedness** – we view collaboration and connections between the formal and informal actors as necessary for achieving positive results for children. We structure collaboration in ways that empower and support local groups and agencies.
- **Child participation** – as an approach that creates space for children, seeks to manage the power issues that arise between children and adults, and understands childhood in context – as illustrated in the ‘protective accompagnement’ approach in West Africa.

## Children and Customary Justice Systems

### Creating evidence-based programs

#### Situation

- Low rates of children coming into contact with formal system in developing countries (UNODC)
- Estimated 70 and 90 per cent of all disputes in developing countries solved through informal or customary mechanisms (Danida)

#### Intervention

- **1- Quantitative data collection of cases of children** in contact with customary justice mechanisms in order to develop better understanding of children's treatment in customary justice systems (2566 cases analysed through 50 variables)
  - **CJS actors:** profession; affiliation to official structures, etc.
  - **Children:** socio-demographic information; role in the dispute, antecedents, etc.
  - **Cases:** type of crime; actors who intervened; outcomes, etc.
  - **Analytical questions** re Restorative Justice: voluntariness, safety, community vs. Individual well-being etc
  - **Child's involvement:** exposure to harm, legal advice, participation

Methodology: Conduct regular, monthly meetings with IJS actors to record details of all the cases of children (civil and criminal) they have dealt with in the past month; analyse data according to international child rights and restorative justice principles.
- **2- Sensitise customary actors** about national juvenile laws, international child rights principles and restorative justice practices

### General Information

**Beneficiaries:** Children under 18, in contact with the law, and customary justice actors

**Location:** Afghanistan, Gaza, Hebron, Egypt, Jordan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Colombia, Panama, Myanmar

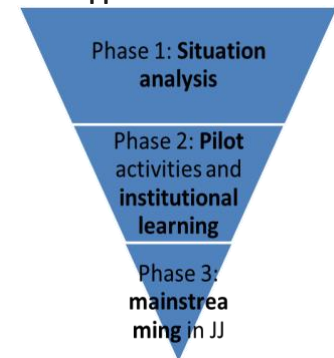
**Period:** Started in 2012

**Research:** 2566 cases of children in CJS collected and analyzed, through 50 variables between September 2013 – January 2018

## Research question:

To what extent can **programming include formal justice actors and informal, customary**, and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and processes within a rights-based and restorative approach to justice for children?

## A phased approach



Rationale: Many formal and customary actors have limited knowledge of national laws and child rights more broadly, which negatively impacts on their treatment of children.

Methodology: Regular workshops (selected based on results of situation analysis and ongoing M&E). Interactive sessions promoting reflections on concrete practices through the use of case studies, role play etc.

- **3- Coordination between formal and informal actors** to explore the ways in which improved coordination between formal and informal actors can enhance access to justice for children

Rationale: Understanding relationships amongst formal and customary justice actors; how these influence decision-making for cases of children; what are perceived obstacles and where there is motivation for change

Methodology: Provide a space for actors to come together and have structured, focused discussions about access to justice for children in respective systems, and possibly determine common action plans about reforms or changes

- **4-Child Participation** to empower marginal voices to have their perspectives heard by decision makers in formal and customary systems

Rationale: Working with actors in the community can risk reinforcing social hierarchies, and involving marginalised actors can create a balance. In addition, it can empower individuals and groups to mobilise independently of Tdh intervention to create changes in the system

Methodology: Use of a variety of techniques: psycho-social activities; child-to-child methods; artistic activities

## Some learnings

- Research-oriented actions' enable **ongoing learning** and enhance potential for interventions to respond to the lived realities of all stakeholders
- Being aware of power relations and **creating space for marginalised voices** (children, women) is essential
- **The child should remain at the centre**

## Children's voices

« We are the children of Abnoub District. We believe and demand that all children, have the right to participate to get fair sentences that meet their needs and re-integrate them into the community »  
-Assiut, Egypt



« Jirga is better than formal actors, the "white beards" [community elders] have better understanding. They keep us close to our families instead of taking us away. But they should listen to us more »  
- Kabul, Afghanistan

Thème des hommes

## Child exploitation in Gold mining sites

### Early Warning System

#### Situation

- With over 600 gold mining sites in Burkina Faso, social, health and protection issues such as child labour, develop rapidly and beyond State control
- Children represent more than 30% of the work force
- 39,3% of children aged 5 to 17 were engaged in harmful activities ; 35,8% were forced to dangerous activities; 70% of children in the gold sites were under 15 years old.

#### Intervention

Tdh has developed a mobile application to identify and monitor violations of children's rights and support access to their fundamental rights, through referral to services.

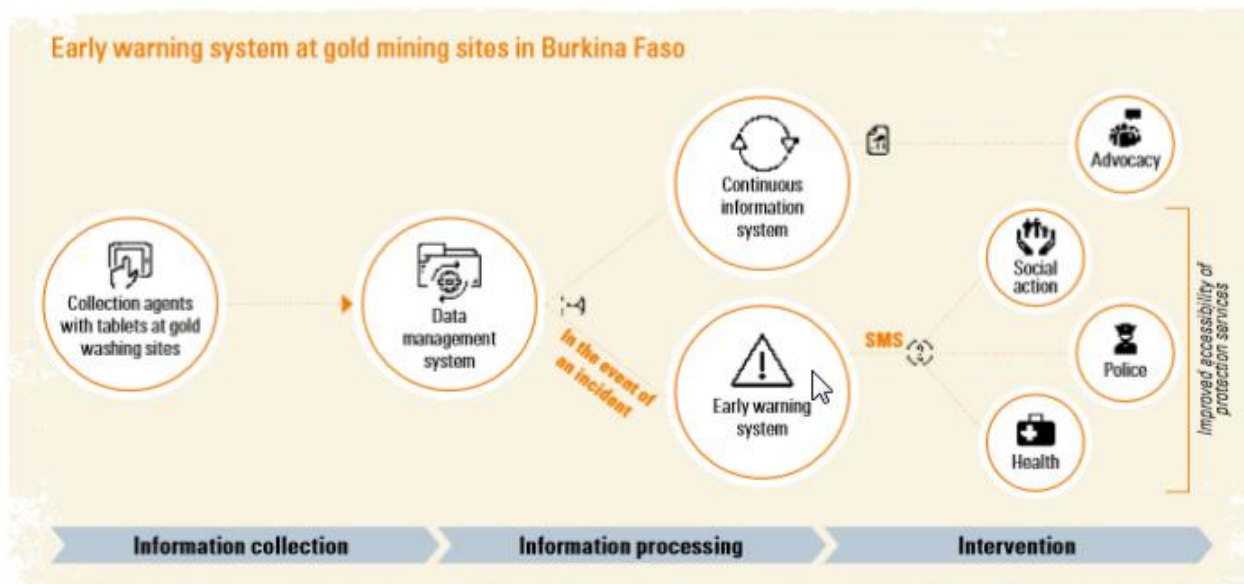
- **1- Early Warning System** through a mobile application: identified youths working in the gold mines are able to collect instant and accurate information in Ganzourgou on children and their situations. The application has an integrated early warning system which informs key local actors such as social and health workers, as well as the police, via text message
- **2- Improving access and quality of services** both institutional and community based mechanisms to ensure a holistic care of children victims of exploitation and violence
- **3- Instant data** on the situations of children and the violations of their rights in the gold mining sites to support interventions and advocacy efforts

#### Lessons learned

- The collaboration with youth working in the mines is essential to ensure access to data on an ongoing basis
- The connections of these informal actors with institutional services enable timely identification and referrals
- System-strengthening approach of Tdh through capacity development of the social actors, support to quality improvement and service delivery, and connections with local community-based mechanisms is essential to ensure sustainability

## General Information

**Beneficiaries:** Children under 18, in gold mining sites and workers from the gold mining sites  
**Location:** Burkina Faso, Ganzourgou province, in mining sites of Pousghin, Nobsin, Katanga and Kiètenga  
**Period:** January 2017 to January 2019  
**Results:** (as of April 2018) **2,201 children** identified; **356** assisted with schooling



## Protecting children on the move

### Protective Accompaniment of Children – Example in Burkina Faso (PREMET)

#### Situation

In West Africa, 80% of migratory movements by children and young people are due to poverty, insecurity or cultural factors. They migrate towards cities and production sites such as goldmines or cacao plantations. Even though migration can constitute a work opportunity, it puts children at risk of exploitation, abuse and trafficking.

#### Intervention

The project aims to promote a family, community and institutional environment that protects children (especially girls) in rural areas from early migration risks and violence, offering them opportunities for social and economic development.

#### Strengthening the Protective Accompaniment Mechanisms:

*'Protective accompaniment mechanisms represent a set of actors, actions and mechanisms organized around the prevention and response set up to meet the protection needs of children affected by mobility and enable them to seize the opportunities for their development and fulfillment that are available to them.'*

This chain of actors and actions is made up of community actors, including children, and institutional actors, who must act in synergy to form an effective and complementary safety net around children affected by mobility. The knowledge and know-how of the community actors have been valued in Tdh's interventions through the notion of "Endogenous Protection Practices". These practices are attitudes, behaviours and mechanisms for the protection of children implemented at the initiative of community actors. They can either be based on know-how, ancestral traditions and beliefs, either result from cultural crossbreeding, in other words the importation of new and modern elements in local ways of thinking and doing by community members.

The project PREMET includes 3 main components:

- **1- Preventing risky or early migration in** areas of origin through an integrated approach: protection, formal and non formal education, water, sanitation and hygiene, vocational training and food security
- **2- Strengthening formal and informal child protection mechanisms** along the migratory route of children and in destinations to reduce risks of violence, exploitation and abuse for those who migrate to Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso
- **3- Advocacy** at local, national and regional levels for a better protection of children on the move, through legislation, policies and action plans

#### Lessons learned

- Child protection agents must not only acknowledge the existence of community actors, but also give them an important place in child protection actions and systems.
- As a child protection NGO, we must ensure that the actions undertaken by the community actors in the in the context of our projects are carried out in conditions that ensure the safety of children and promote quality services.

#### General Information

##### Target beneficiaries:

- Children under 18 who migrate, and in particular girls in extremely vulnerable situations in 400 households.
- 2.000 children in areas of origin, 1.500 children from 10 to 17 years old at risk of early migration or exploitation.
- 1.500 children in destinations.
- 400 families extremely vulnerable families

**Location:** Burkina Faso, province of Sourou, Yatenga, Kadiogo and Houet

**Period:** Sept2016 to August 2019

##### Results in 2017:

Children in vulnerable situations: 5685 (including 3450 girls)

Extremely vulnerable families: 500

Community and state services: 13 776

- By collaborating with Tdh, the community actors already established in the support of migrant children have been able to develop new skills that reduce migration risks for children.