

**Communiqué**  
Interagency Learning Initiative (ILI)  
on Community-based Child Protection Mechanisms and Systems

Entebbe, Uganda  
November 13-15, 2018

We came together as child protection actors from global, regional, national and local contexts to reflect on progress to date, and to identify next steps, in supporting stronger community-led or “bottom-up” approaches to strengthening child protection systems. We renewed our commitment to putting communities in the driving seat to protect their own children and we successfully agreed at the meeting how we would take action forward.

We believe that externally driven, “top-down” approaches to community level child protection (community-based rather than community-led) should not be the default approach. The child protection sector has struggled to engage deeply with the positive strengths in communities and to support community ownership of their own child protection work. Nevertheless, the emphasis on deficits and problems is gradually being balanced with a focus on children’s resilience and community assets and capacities. Going forward we want to achieve a more contextually informed balance between “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches. Families and communities already shoulder the responsibility for most child protection work, and policies and programmes which acknowledge this, and are strength-based, are better placed to support locally led child protection.

The Entebbe meeting identified a number of priorities and strategies which should guide stakeholders undertaking community-level child protection work in the future. These include:

- Policy, and programming approaches to child protection should support stronger bottom-up policy and programming work which builds on community resources and assets and enables community ownership.
- More extended, flexible and supportive funding for community-led child protection work is required, with less emphasis on early results and short-term engagement.
- Wherever possible, approaches should ensure adequate space, time and flexibility to allow communities to identify their own priorities and lead on subsequent work
- “Bottom-up” approaches to child protection will require agencies to equip themselves with different skill sets, especially when undertaking training and facilitation activities
- Humanitarian emergencies frequently evolve into (or exist within or alongside) long-term development settings, requiring greater exchange of learning and coordination around effective approaches to community-led child protection; such learning should also inform integrated programming, accountability and conflict sensitive responses
- There should be an emphasis on supporting and developing research which aims to strengthen practice, with fewer extractive approaches which do not give back to communities
- Contextually relevant guidance, tools and platforms should be further developed, especially those which can support child protection practitioners to share and access learning around community-led approaches including guidance and tools in humanitarian settings.
- Collaboration across agencies in learning and the development of sustainable and contextualised community-led child protection approaches is essential.
- The emerging regional collaboration initiative in East Africa was strongly endorsed at the meeting. This will support greater development of contextualised east African approaches and build regional capacity for effective community-led child protection.
- International agencies at the meeting agreed to work together to support coordination of learning and sharing in this area of work through a central hub, to build links to regions beyond Africa and to broaden the conversation to bring in new actors to work towards fundamental change in practice.
- The Community Child Protection Exchange (<http://childprotectionforum.org/>) will continue to act as a repository of knowledge and learning on community-led child protection in all contexts