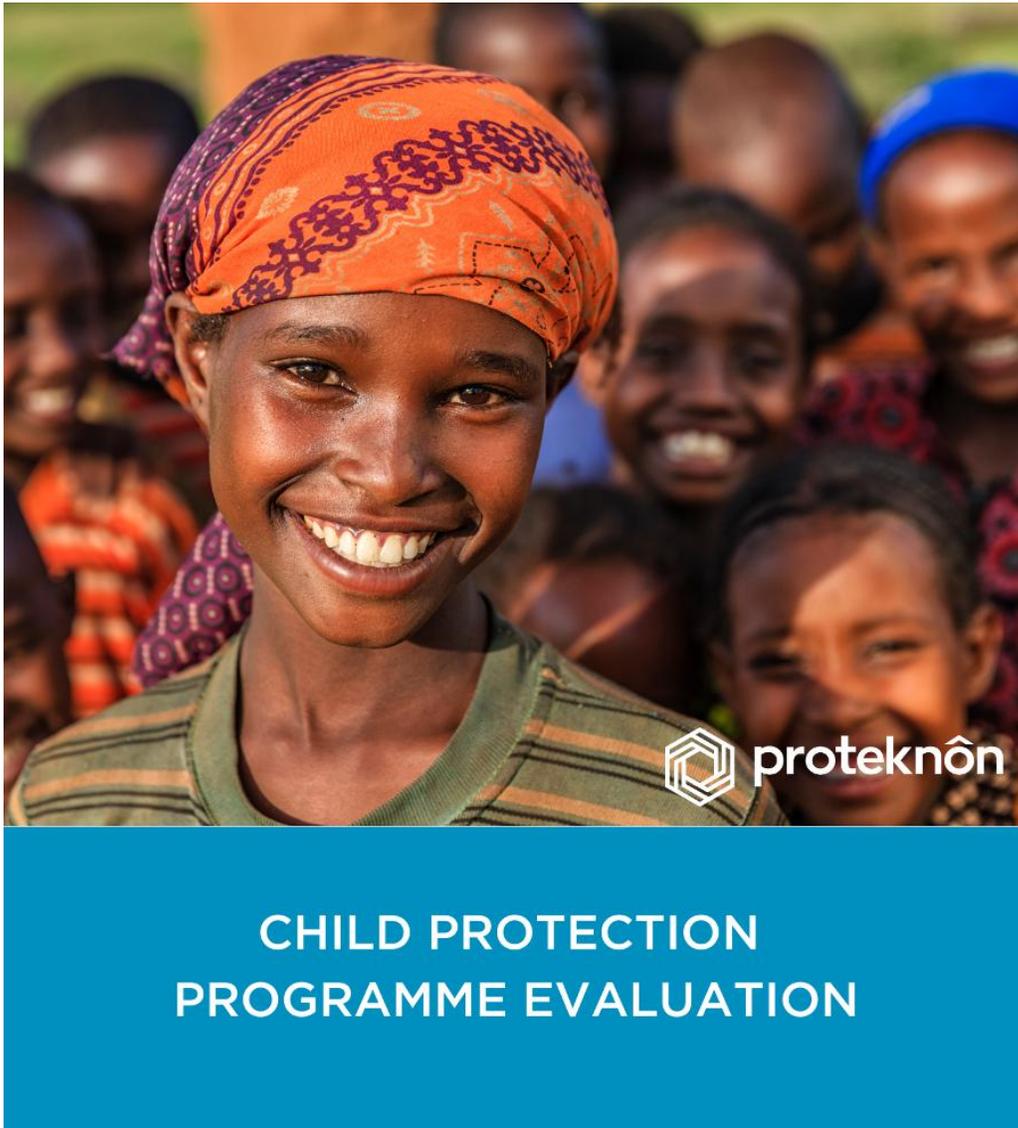


Desk-based Meta-Evaluation of Child Protection Projects in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Somaliland, and Zambia



SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND – CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMME (2022–2025)

DATE: 15 September 2025

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report is a meta-evaluation of Save the Children Finland’s (SCF) Global Child Protection (CP) programme, implemented from 2022 to 2025 in four countries in Africa - Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia - spanning development, humanitarian and peace-building contexts. The programme is now in its final year of implementation.

The meta-evaluation synthesizes findings from the programme which aimed to strengthen national CP systems, empower communities and families, and promote inclusive, gender-responsive, and child-centred approaches to prevent and respond to violence against children. Gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and climate change are key cross-cutting priorities of the programme across all four countries.

The programme was launched during the global COVID-19 pandemic and has since operated amid multiple, overlapping crises: political instability, violent conflict, economic shocks, displacement, and extreme climate events. These factors have shaped both the child protection risks children face and the programme’s implementation. The meta-evaluation’s goal was to assess cumulative progress, identify shared challenges and learning, and inform course correction and priority-setting for SCF’s 2026–2029 Global Programme.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used, combining extensive desk review, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews with staff, partners, and government actors. A structured analytical framework guided the evaluation across three outcome domains—improved access to CP services, improved child protection through strengthened child and gender sensitivity in families and communities, and improved child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes. The evaluation also embedded cross-cutting themes of gender equality, disability inclusion, localisation, and climate resilience, using qualitative coding tools and participatory principles grounded in child rights-based and ethical standards.

The meta-evaluation also adhered to established ethical standards for research and evaluation involving vulnerable populations, including Save the Children’s safeguarding protocols, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee’s (OECD-DAC) evaluation standards, and child rights-based evaluation principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with clear information provided regarding the purpose of the meta-evaluation, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and data use.

Analysis Against OECD Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation applied the six OECD criteria — relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability — to frame the assessment of the programme’s merit and inform its future direction.

Overall, the programme demonstrates strong **relevance** by aligning with the rights and needs of the most vulnerable children, grounded in global standards (e.g., United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNCRC, INSPIRE strategies), focused on systems strengthening and aligned with national priorities. Key interventions related to positive parenting, case management, social norms change, and policy/legal reform are designed to address structural and immediate drivers of violence against children (VAC). There has been good

progress in including girls and children with disabilities through context-specific adaptations; however, there remains a need to further close inclusion gaps.

The programme shows **internal and external coherence**. Internally, the three outcomes are mutually reinforcing:

- Outcome 1 reinforces access to services for children and families.
- Outcome 2 builds child agency and strengthens safe spaces.
- Outcome 3 aims at system and legal reform, reinforcing the enabling environment.

Externally, the programme has engaged in meaningful partnerships with government ministries, UN agencies, and community organisations in all four countries to avoid duplication and to contribute to a more coherent national child protection system, though external factors mean that weaknesses persist in referral and data systems and professional workforce capacity.

There is evidence of positive change across all three outcome areas, though the degree of **effectiveness** varies, mainly due to the context in the different countries. Children and families' access to services, including reach and responsiveness, has generally improved as well as case management and social service workforce support. Children—particularly girls—report increased awareness of their rights and better access to safe spaces and peer support groups. Yet they also continue to face significant vulnerabilities due to household poverty, widespread violence, and socio-cultural beliefs, highlighting persistent challenges in service reach and protection. Moreover, while the consistent use of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tools from the baseline at the beginning of the programme through to the endline is considered effective and has been appreciated by stakeholders, some data issues, lack of systematic feedback loops, and uneven platform scale-up affect full assessment of effectiveness. There has been notable progress in policy and legal reform, with new laws, SOPs, and national strategies adopted in several countries.

Efficiency was found to vary across countries and components. Overall, the programme has demonstrated an ability to use resources efficiently and deliver results in a timely manner, with several country examples highlighting good financial management and adaptive use of funds. In many cases, resource use has been strategic, leveraging SC's in-country presence to facilitate advocacy, capacity building, and systems-level change. Community-based implementation and local partnerships also contributed to cost-effectiveness. In operational terms, having a pre-designed package of programme indicators and tools (a CP Monitoring and Evaluation, M&E, framework) from the outset was instrumental, together with the training and support provided by SCF. The mid-term review undertaken in the four countries in 2023 was used to inform programme implementation, activities, key focus and target areas for the remaining two years of the programme. However, efficiency was sometimes hindered by some delays and data systems issues. Although the government structures have been actively involved, overreliance on volunteer CPCs raises concerns about long-term efficiency and institutional stability. Operational inefficiencies have also stemmed from systemic issues like donor dependency and workforce limitations. While some efficiencies were achieved through strategic partnerships, greater alignment across sectors and actors could enhance operational synergy and value for money.

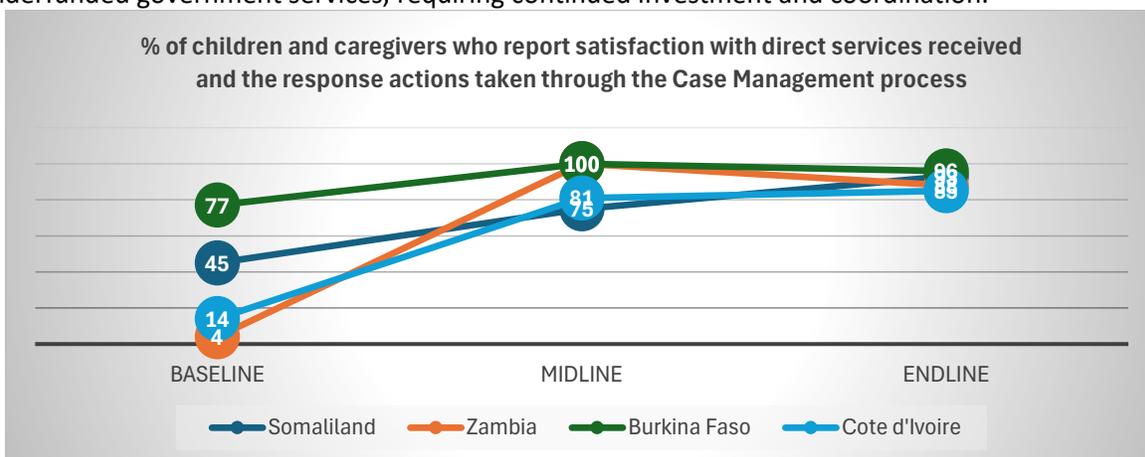
Emerging **impacts** were observed, including improved parenting practices and improved community and family protective environments, strengthened child agency (children's ability to make and influence choices that are meaningful and valuable to them, and to have a say in matters that affect their lives), increased access and improved quality of services and policy and legal reforms. The holistic, community-based and systems

strengthening approach of the programme is contributing to meaningful shifts in child protection practice. Nonetheless, impacts on deep-rooted social and gender norms remain limited, and disparities between countries in reaching targets suggest uneven impact that may be influenced by contextual, operational, or systemic factors. This highlights the need for ongoing adaptation and investment to sustain progress and scale equitable change. While full long-term impact will require further tracking and possibly a post-programme evaluation, the midline and endline data do however already point to significant transformative change in both institutional systems and individual behaviours.

Finally, the programme has promoted **sustainability** through several strategic approaches, including national system reform efforts, strong collaboration with technical government departments, collaboration, alignment with national child protection priorities, and participatory planning, joint missions and coordination mechanisms. Community-level sustainability is supported by strengthened local structures, community ownership, reinforced local capacity and shifting social norms. Inter-project learning has also contributed. However, reliance on volunteers, weak institutional systems, limited budgets, and donor dependency—especially in fragile contexts—remain key challenges – which the current programme has made considerable efforts to mitigate. For example, across all four countries, the engagement of child protection structures at local, regional, and national levels emerges as a key lever to navigate these constraints and foster long-term sustainability.

Results: Progress towards programme outcomes

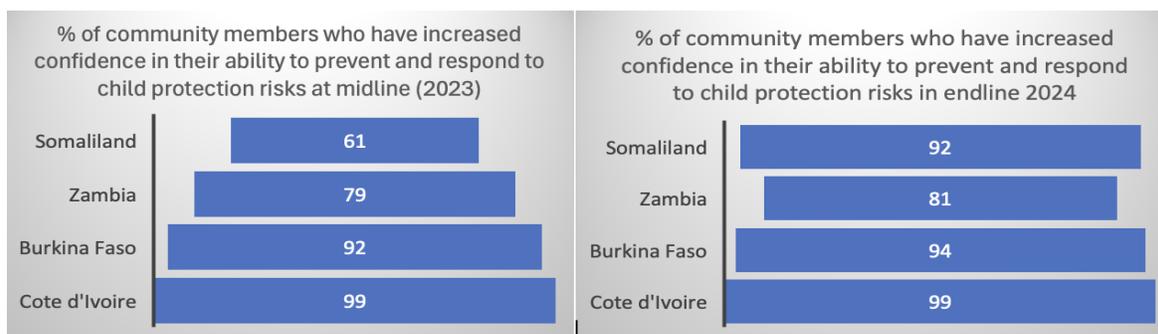
Outcome 1 – Improved access to child protection services, levels of satisfaction with child protection prevention and response services and seeking help and knowing where to go. The programme strengthened access to quality child protection services for girls and boys through community-based approaches, case management, and capacity building of social service providers. While numbers of children accessing services exceeded targets in Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire, figures in Somaliland and Zambia fell below targets but are expected to improve with pending data. Satisfaction with services rose across countries, and more children reported knowing where to seek help in cases of violence. Overall, for outcome 1, the strengthening of formal and informal social service providers has translated into increased access and improved quality of services for children and their families. However, some challenges persist in case management quality, workforce capacity, and underfunded government services, requiring continued investment and coordination.



Outcome 2: Strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children, and communities. Across the four countries and their respective projects, the way that the programme is working with families and communities and with children to support and enhance their protection is probably the most visible aspect. This translates into significant progress in supporting child and gender sensitivity in families, and communities as well as through work with local and district government authorities.

The programme supported positive parenting through Save the Children’s global parenting approach - Safe Families including community mobilisation, and children’s group sessions - leading to improved use of non-violent discipline and more positive caregiver-child interactions. However, the results for non-violent discipline are below the target values set. This suggests that a reinforced focus is needed on this in the next Global Programme, 2026-2029, to further assess what the barriers are to meeting these targets and whether the targets are realistic given that this is part of longer-term social norms change. The results for positive caregiver-child interactions generally show a positive change in children’s perceptions of their interactions with caregivers in all countries, mostly exceeding the target levels. Psychosocial wellbeing of children also improved exceeding targets in most countries. Overall and across all four countries, qualitative data shows that Safe Families has had positive impacts on caregivers and children with significant change outcomes noted as above.

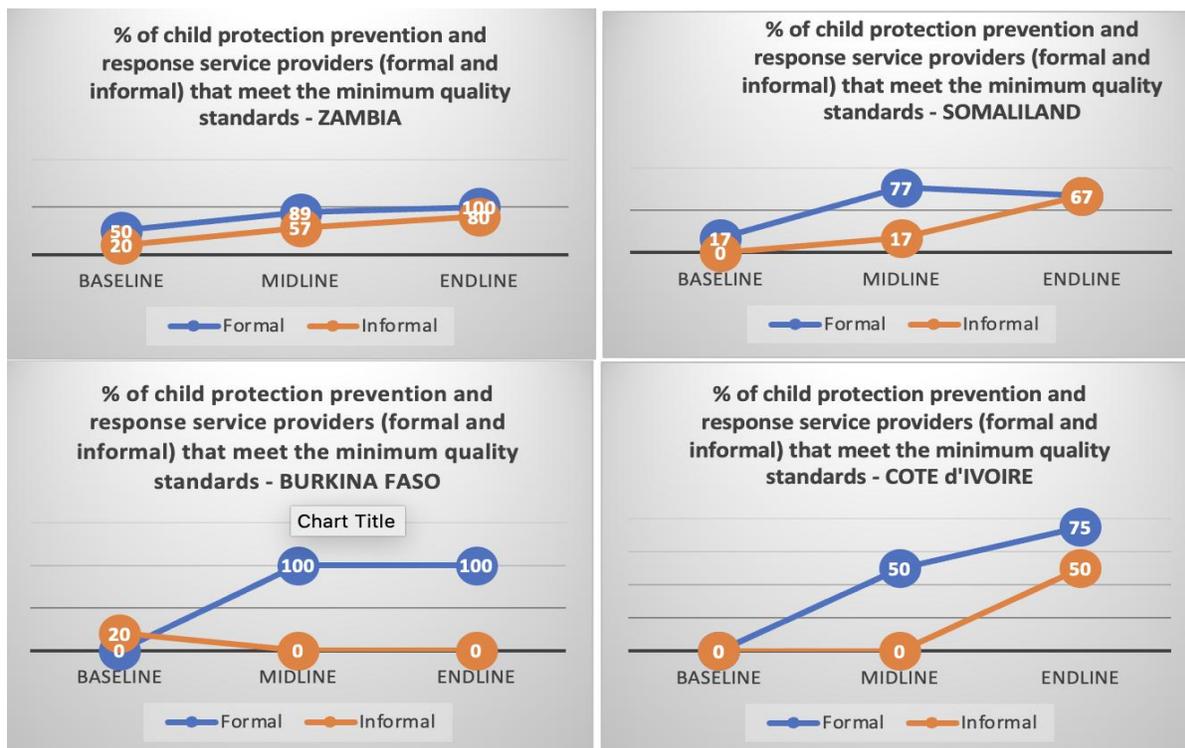
Community engagement and work with community-level Child Protection structures and mechanisms have been critical in informing the programme and have acted as a constant barometer to know and address real concerns. Community-level Child Protection mechanisms are considered to be stronger and more vibrant than at baseline with competencies in child protection prevention and response. There is also a significant improvement in referrals, and more reporting of child protection issues is noted, including children who will report to their peers or friends and family or relatives’ groups. Participation of children with disabilities and engagement of male caregivers demonstrated encouraging shifts, though these areas require further strengthening to ensure scale and consistency. Barriers to reporting violence remain, pointing to the need for further work on attitudes, social norms, and community engagement.



Outcome 3: Improved child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes.

There was notable progress in improving formal and informal child protection services. Training, capacity-building, and implementation of minimum quality standards contributed to service improvements, particularly in case management and frontline workforce capacity. The indicators relating to the quality of services generally show a good average from baseline to midline with more progress at endline – that is, those meeting the minimum quality standards. This is especially the case for formal services but less so for informal services. The operational context in all four countries, including drought, humanitarian and security situation etc., also

impacted on access to support services during the four years of the programme and has challenged the ability of the formal and informal social service workforce to respond.



There has been strong progress in reinforcing legislation, systems and structures. This has resulted in 21 laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks, and studies developed or revised to protect children from violence across the four countries, up from a baseline of 9 and more than double the target set. The development and strengthening of child protection policies included the Child Rights Act in Somaliland, the Children’s Code in Zambia, and foster care legislation in Côte d’Ivoire. Advocacy and partnerships have advanced child protection systems. A focus should remain on sustaining and implementing legislative progress that requires further resources, collaboration, and accountability mechanisms.

Cross-cutting issues: gender, inclusion, climate change

From the outset, **gender and inclusion**—particularly the rights and participation of persons and children with disabilities—were integrated as cross-cutting priorities across all stages of programme design, implementation and monitoring. This included dedicated training, accountability measures, and inclusive spaces. Projects began with gender-sensitive approaches—ensuring access, safety, and participation for all genders—and evolved toward transformative goals to more forcefully address harmful norms and root causes of inequality. These cross-cutting achievements reflect steady progress against SCF’s gender equality and disability inclusion milestones.

Some examples include:

- Engaging men’s network groups to challenge negative gender stereotypes, encouraging fathers to participate in childcare and positive parenting through Safe Families sessions (Zambia)

- Supporting girls and boys to question harmful practices like child marriage and FGM through community awareness activities, radio broadcasts, and youth clubs (Burkina Faso)
- Boys joining menstrual hygiene sessions traditionally reserved for girls, to help break taboos and promote gender equality (Zambia)
- Working with parents of children with disabilities to shift from hiding their children at home to enrolling them in schools and involving them in community activities (Somaliland)
- Increasing the reporting of gender-based violence against boys, challenging silence and stigma around male victimhood (Côte d'Ivoire)
- Training community and religious leaders to speak out against harmful traditional practices, including child marriage and FGM, and to support children's rights (Somaliland).

Progress toward full gender-transformative programming was most marked in Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia - the project in Côte d'Ivoire exemplifies strong elements of a gender-transformative approach. The Safe Families intervention in Zambia demonstrated measurable progress towards shifting gendered caregiving norms.

Climate change has increasingly emerged as a critical cross-cutting issue across Save the Children's programming contexts. Climate change was considered a cross-cutting issue in the programme's development, although it received less emphasis compared to other priorities such as gender and disability-inclusion. Data and insights gathered highlight that climate change considerations were not deeply developed and should be further integrated into the programme. In most countries, climate change adaptation is still in the early stages of integration, with important steps being taken to build staff capacity, pilot climate risk tools, engage children in advocacy, and strengthen community resilience through awareness and anticipatory action.

Programmatic approaches

Child rights-based programming, child participation and accountability approaches: The programme is rooted in a rights-based approach, integrating prevention, response, participation, and accountability at every stage. Children were placed at the centre of the programme—not merely as beneficiaries but as active agents of change. Across all four countries, the programme promoted structured opportunities for children to express their views, lead initiatives, and contribute to decision-making processes, fostering a deeper sense of agency, protection, and inclusion. Access and inclusion for marginalised groups—such as out-of-school children and children engaged in labour—however remained limited. These challenges, also including scale and adult gatekeeping—highlight the need to continue investing in capacity-building, feedback systems, and platforms that empower children to lead.

Localisation - local actors and community engagement, capacity building and alignment with local and national priorities: The programme strongly contributed to the localisation of actions and the strengthening of national systems through the active involvement of government, local actors, and communities. Rooted in national priorities, the programme's design and implementation were guided by a bottom-up approach, ensuring that interventions were not only contextually relevant but also community-owned. Across all four countries, Save the Children and its partners worked to shift local actors from passive beneficiaries to active co-creators—supporting them to lead planning, coordination, and service delivery efforts while strengthening links with public institutions and national policy frameworks.

Adaptability: The programme showed strong adaptability to evolving needs and in fragile contexts. Teams responded to humanitarian and climate-related disruptions (e.g., droughts in Zambia, conflict in Burkina Faso or

Somaliland) with flexible delivery and community-led adjustments. Long-term partnerships with local CSOs were critical in sustaining delivery and scaling impact.

Key learnings and promising practices

Gender: One key lesson learned across country projects is that **gender transformation requires deliberate, sustained, and multi-level engagement—moving beyond inclusion to actively shift social norms and power dynamics.**

Disability inclusion: Programmes applied both **targeted interventions** (i.e. tailored sessions for caregivers of children with disabilities such as the Isha Boroma Peer Support Group in Hargeisa, Somaliland) **and mainstreamed inclusion strategies** (i.e. inclusive parenting sessions, child rights groups, and case management). The programme not only increased visibility and participation of marginalized groups but also contributed to measurable shifts in community perceptions—**reducing stigma and fostering inclusive, rights-based environments for all children, regardless of gender or ability.**

Climate change: A key lesson from the country projects is the urgent need to integrate climate change adaptation more systematically into child protection programming. In general, links between climate and child protection were sometimes weak, highlighting the need for a more **holistic and environmentally conscious approach.** Future programming should **prioritize climate-informed protection systems, strengthen local-to-national coordination, and invest in inclusive, anticipatory action.**

Holistic and community-based child protection approaches: The effectiveness of Save the Children and its partners in implementing an integrated approach to child protection - centred on preventing violence, strengthening response mechanisms, and ensuring appropriate care for children affected by abuse - needs to be highlighted. A particularly powerful example is the Safe Families approach, which has led to remarkable changes in parent-child relationships within communities. In contexts where parenting sessions have been combined with livelihood activities (IGA), the impact on **family cohesion and resilience** has been even stronger, demonstrating the added value of integrated programming.

Adaptability and localisation in project implementation: The programme demonstrated that early and sustained engagement with local partners—across community, sub-national, and national levels—is critical for effective and sustainable child protection programming. When local actors are engaged from the design phase, given space to lead, and supported with targeted capacity-building, interventions become more responsive, locally owned, and system-strengthening.

Practices and transferable models or innovations: Several promising practices and models have emerged from the programme, notably:

- The programme demonstrates a proactive ability to integrate emerging issues—such as climate change—and to draw on lessons learned to continuously refine its approaches. This has enabled more inclusive and targeted responses, particularly addressing the distinct needs of girls and children with disabilities.
- *The AskKids* digital *tool*, which enhances child participation by allowing children to share feedback independently—either orally or in writing. The *SPEL* tool (used for planning, budgeting, and monitoring of project activities) has also proven valuable. It supports structured programme management and improves coordination and transparency.

- The *Safe Families* approach, also when coupled with income-generating activities (IGA) and cash transfers, has contributed to greater programme acceptance and sustainability.
- In Somaliland, SC worked with a university's social work department to provide internships for students. This is a unique element of the Somaliland project and should be considered as a model for replication in other contexts with nascent social service workforces.
- Save the Children's mentorship of civil society organizations (CSOs) has strengthened local protection systems. This collaborative framework—built on trust, technical support, and shared goals—has been instrumental and is considered a scalable model for reinforcing child protection at the grassroots level.

Conclusions

One of the key enabling factors in the achievements made in the current child protection programme 2022-2025 has been the **long-term nature of the funding (over four years) as well as its flexibility** which means that the programme has been able to adapt to changing contexts. Another factor is the work over many years with long-term partners combining active participation and local capacity building which has enabled organisational growth, continued added value and a move away from dependency towards sustainability. However, there is still a need to prioritise **localisation** within the programme and shift more leadership, power and resources to local actors.

Overall, the CP programme has laid a strong foundation for systemic, inclusive, and community-driven child protection. It is progressing well across all three outcome areas, with demonstrable impacts at family, community, and service and policy levels.

Recommendations

The programme's maturity is evolving—from foundational to developing—with opportunities to strengthen systems, simplify tools, and scale innovations in the next phase. A series of recommendations have been identified to strengthen the next SCF Global Programme 2026-2029. These recommendations are intended to guide improvements, adaptations, and areas of emphasis within programme design, implementation, and resource mobilisation as well as being useful and relevant to share externally in the sector of child protection.

Continue to invest in:

- MEAL and evidence-based programmatic approaches and interventions
- Efforts for getting evidence-based approaches and their training packages taken up at national level.
- Professional social service workforce development.
- Addressing case management capacity gaps.
- Advocacy to find innovative ways to increase budget allocations for child protection nationally and locally in the current restricted funding climate and to ensure the enforcement and full implementation of child protection laws and policies.
- Work on the centrality of protection and conflict sensitivity.

Continue to intentionally integrate the key cross-cutting issues from the start to build genuinely responsive and inclusive child protection structures for children:

- Continue with and scale up strategies that have worked in the current programme.
- Continue to strengthen disability-inclusion.

- Build on the current strength in gender-sensitive and gender-responsive work and the gains already made in gender-transformative work with the aim of being able to demonstrate full gender transformative programming in all key areas by the end of the new programme.
- Invest more strongly in strengthening work on climate change in the same intentional way as was done for gender and disability-inclusion and continue to adapt for climate change impacts.
- Prioritise localisation in the new programme and demonstrably show the shift in leadership, power and resources to local actors and strengthen flexible, locally informed programming.
- Deepen meaningful and inclusive child participation by continuing to build the capacity of frontline staff to implement safe, age-appropriate, and empowering participatory processes.

Start or expand work on key emerging issues:

- Online safety is the obvious one due to the increasing digitalisation of daily life and digital use by children as well as the increasingly recognised connection between online and offline VAC.
- Interventions and activities for issues that have emerged through the various studies conducted during the current programme should be considered in the new programme.

Enhance CP and CSSP or Livelihoods integration to bring economic elements more strongly and intentionally into Safe Families and CP elements into CSSP programming, building on work that has already been done in at least Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Somaliland across the nexus.

And finally, **keep the focus on children’s wellbeing and right to protection across the nexus and keep investing in SCF’s rights-based approach to child protection and child rights** to maximise results and impact for children. All the programme’s CP work is designed, built and implemented around the strengthening of the (national) child protection system which is government led. This approach has been key to the results that have been in the three outcome areas - access and quality of CP services, child and gender sensitivity in families and communities and the sensitivity and strengthening of systems, laws and structures – as well as being indicative of what still needs to be done.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Executive Summary	1
Table of Contents	10
List of Abbreviations	11
Acknowledgements	8
II. Introduction	9
<i>About the Save the Children Finland Global Programme 2022-2025</i>	9
<i>About the Save the Children Finland Child Protection Programme</i>	9
III. Methodology	13
<i>Data sources</i>	13
<i>Analytical and Coding Framework</i>	14
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	14
<i>Limitations</i>	15
IV. Analysis of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Criteria in relation to the child protection programme	15
V. Progress towards Outcomes Across Projects	22
<i>Progress made on improving access to CP services (outcome 1)</i>	22
<i>Progress made on improved child development outcomes and protection of children through strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children and community (Outcome 2)</i>	28
<i>Progress made on child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes (outcome 3)</i>	36
VI. cross-cutting issues and programmatic approaches	40
A) <i>Cross-cutting issues</i>	41
B) <i>Programmatic Approaches</i>	48
VI. Key learnings and promising practices	52
VII. Conclusions	56
VIII. Recommendations	58
IX. Annexes	61
<i>Annex 1. List of documents reviewed (Phase 2)</i>	61
<i>Annex 2. FGD/KII tools</i>	63
<i>Annex 3. Analytical Framework for the Meta-Evaluation (2022–2025)</i>	69
<i>Annex 4. Coding matrix</i>	71
<i>Annex 5. Term of Reference for SCF Child Protection Programme Evaluation</i>	73

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACPHA	Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action	INGO	International non-governmental organisation
AEJT	Association of Working Children and Youth	IP	International Programme
CAAC	Children affected by Armed Conflict	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CBCPM	Community-based Child Protection Mechanism	MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation	MESAF	Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family (Somalia)
CCPC	Community Child Protection Committee (Zambia)	MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Finland)
CEFMU	Child, early and forced marriage and unions	MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
CFRM	Complaint, Feedback and Response Mechanism (Zambia)	MOLSAF	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Somaliland)
COP	Conference of Parties	MTR	Mid-Term Review (conducted in 2023 in all four countries)
CP	Child Protection	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
CPC	Child Protection Committee (Côte d'Ivoire)	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CPIMS	Child Protection Information Management System	OCD	Organizational capacity development
CRG	Child Rights Groups (Zambia)	QoS	Quality of Services
CSEA	Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	SADC	Southern African Development Community
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	SCF	Save the Children Finland
CSSP	Child Sensitive Social Protection	SCI	Save the Children International
CVA	Cash Voucher Assistance	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
CWACs	Community Welfare Assistance Committees (Zambia)	SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
CWC	Child Welfare Committee (Somaliland)	SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OCED)	SP	Social Protection
DCPC	District Child Protection Committee (Zambia)	UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	VAC	Violence against Children
EVAC	Ending Violence against Children	VSLA	Village Saving Loans Associations
GBV	Gender-based violence	YOVENCO	Youth Volunteers for Development and Environment Conservation (Somaliland)
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting	YWCA	Young Women Christian Association (Zambia)
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons	ZICTA	Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority
IGA	Income-generating activity		

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This meta-evaluation has been conducted by Clare Feinstein, Dr. Laurene Graziani and Dr. Laura Lee, Senior Associates from Proteknôn Foundation.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the Save the Children International country, partner teams and government representatives in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia and the Save the Children Finland global team. You assembled considerable programme- and project-related documentation, gave your time and shared your experiences during initial Focus Group discussions and subsequent Key Informant interviews and provided comprehensive feedback on the first draft of this meta-evaluation report. Your collective and individual passion for and commitment to child rights-based programming, child protection systems strengthening, gender equality, disability inclusion and empowerment of children shone through and illuminated the discussions.

These insights have informed and influenced our work, and the evaluation team hopes that this meta-evaluation report will enhance Save the Children Finland's highly relevant global child protection programme and its four country projects as the current programme 2022-2025 is closed and you move into the next phase 2026-2029 with even greater impact and results for children, families and communities.

Special mention to Amelie Hollebecque Gnanou and Anne Kanene for your effective and diligent leadership of this meta-evaluation and for your support which was always available.

II. INTRODUCTION

This report is a meta-evaluation of the child protection (CP) programme which is now in its final year of implementation in four countries in Africa - Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Somaliland¹ and Zambia - spanning development, humanitarian and peace-building contexts.

ABOUT THE SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND GLOBAL PROGRAMME 2022-2025

In 2022 Save the Children Finland (SCF) started implementing its Global Programme 2022-2025. As a member of the Save the Children global movement, SCF's Global Programme contributes to the achievement of the three Save the Children International (SCI) breakthroughs 2030² - 1) no child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday; 2) all children learn from a quality basic education and 3) violence against children is no longer tolerated.

The expected outcomes of SCF's Global Programme are:

- Outcome 1: Children and families' access to services has improved
- Outcome 2: Improved child development outcomes and the improved protection of children through the strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children and the community
- Outcome 3: The improved child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes.

ABOUT THE SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMME

The CP programme is part of the SCF Global Programme and contributes to all three outcomes mentioned above. All the projects which form part of the CP programme, are funded by the MFA PBS-instrument.

The programme was designed and conceived during challenging times, including the global Covid-19 pandemic, although this was less of an issue in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. The CP risks were linked, to a certain extent, to this period – for example, regarding children's vulnerabilities in the home, limited or restricted access to services etc. Burkina Faso and Somalia/Somaliland are affected by humanitarian crises, including ongoing and violent conflict, instability, insecurity and displacement. The crisis in Central Sahel is directly impacting Burkina Faso and neighbouring countries such as Côte d'Ivoire with an influx of displaced people and security concerns. The project in Burkina Faso was designed in a development context which has dramatically changed in the intervening years, with regular attacks from armed groups and political instability (2 coups in 2022). All four countries face the escalating impact of climate change including recurring drought and floods in Somalia and the most severe drought in decades in Zambia in 2024.

¹ Somaliland is a self-declared republic in the Horn of Africa, which has operated with a high degree of autonomy from Somalia since 1991. While it has its own government and institutions and is often praised for its relative stability and democratic processes, Somaliland's independence has not been formally recognized by the international community, and it is still considered by the African Union and United Nations as part of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

² Save the Children's mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

Since the programme started in 2022, all four countries have also been affected by the further fallout from the COVID pandemic, the global energy and food crises, economic downturns, shrinking civic space and, from the beginning of 2025, disruption to the aid and development sector, shifting donor priorities and funding cuts.

Against this backdrop, the SCF CP programme in the four countries has consistently sought to ensure the cumulative improvement in the access and quality of CP services and in child and gender sensitivity of families, communities and systems, legislation and structures through the following results framework, which in turn contributes to the 3 outcomes of the Global Programme:

- Result 1.2.: Children and families have improved access to formal and informal high-quality CP services
- Result 2.2.: Children are able to grow in violence-free environment
- Result 3.2.: CP laws, policies and structures are strengthened to promote zero tolerance of violence against children.

Gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and climate change are key cross-cutting priorities for the country programme. They are at the heart of efforts to localise, strengthen civil society, and develop sustainable partnerships with local organizations and government institutions at the national and local levels. Save the Children's approach also places a strong emphasis on child rights-based programming and the meaningful participation of children and young people.

As above, this work is situated within SCI's Ambition for Children 2030 and SCF's Strategic Goals 2023–2024 as the table below visualises.

Table 1: Save the Children Finland Strategy for 2023–2024 and International Programme 2022-2025

OUR AMBITION FOR CHILDREN: 2030 BREAKTHROUGHS			
SURVIVE	LEARN	BE PROTECTED	
No child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday.	All children learn from a quality basic education.	Violence against children is no longer tolerated.	
STRATEGIC GOALS: What will we achieve with and for children?			
GOAL 1	GOAL 2	GOAL 3	GOAL 4
Children receive the services they need in a timely manner.	Children's right to participation is enforced.	Life without violence.	Safety nets and resilient families
EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE IP PROGRAMME 2022-2025:			
Outcome 1: Children's and families' access to services has improved <i>Thematic areas: Humanitarian health and nutrition, education, food security and livelihoods, CP, CSSP</i>			
Outcome 2: Improved child development outcomes and protection of children through the strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children and the community			

Thematic areas: CP and CSSP

Outcome 3: The improved child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes

Thematic areas: CP and CSSP

Overview of the child protection projects implemented in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia

Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Project (PROPEL/VBG) in Burkina Faso, 2022 – 2025:
<p>This project, implemented in the Balé, Mouhoun, and Nayala provinces of the Boucle du Mouhoun region, focuses on strengthening the well-being and protection of vulnerable children, particularly those facing violence, abuse, or marginalisation. It addresses key child protection challenges by improving access to quality services, enhancing the capacities of children, parents, and communities on child rights and gender sensitivity, and supporting more inclusive and responsive child protection systems and policies. The expected results are that children and families have better access to quality child protection services; the well-being and protection of children are improved through capacity building of children, parents and the community on child and gender sensitivity; and that services, systems, policies and programmes are improved and sensitive to gender and children.</p>
Towards an inclusive and violence-free environment for girls and boys in Bondoukou (BIPÊ BIGON LÊ) in Côte d'Ivoire, 2022 – 2025:
<p>The aim of this 4-year project is to contribute to the fulfilment and full development of children's potential in the Gontougo region by strengthening the formal and informal child protection mechanisms and making them more accessible to communities through the provision of quality services for girls and boys, including those living with disabilities, in vulnerable communities in the departments of Bondoukou and Tanda (Northeast of Côte d'Ivoire). The main outcomes are that children and their families have better access to formal child protection services; girls and boys live in a violence free and gender sensitive environment; and, that the programmes, policies and strategies related to the protection of the children of the Gontougo region and Côte d'Ivoire are more inclusive and gender sensitive. One of the special features of the BIPÊ BIGON LÊ project is that it integrates a strong gender-based violence (GBV) component.</p>
Working together for better protection of children in Somaliland (Wadajirka Daryeelka Ubadka Somaliland (WADUS), 2022 – 2025:
<p>The WADUS project, implemented together with YOVENCO (Youth Volunteers for Development and Environment Conservation) in collaboration with the government line ministry and local authorities, aims to strengthen child protection systems in Somaliland (in Hargeisa and in Berbera). The overall outcome is that vulnerable children in project areas are supported through quality and inclusive child protection systems with the following expected results that age, gender and disability appropriate community child protection services are strengthened specifically for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based violence (SGBV); that parents/caregivers, community-based child protection groups, traditional authorities and other actors create a safe and protective environment for children, including children with disabilities; and, that there are strengthened legislation and structures to protect children at regional level with strong linkages to national and community-based systems and mechanisms.</p>
Protecting Zambian Girls and Boys Offline and Online, 2022 – 2025:

This project is implemented with a local partner, Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), in the Kitwe and Ndola districts in the Copperbelt province. It aims to improve children’s access to formal and informal child protection services, support social and behaviour change, empower children to protect themselves from online and offline harm and strengthen the legislative framework and coordination between child protection stakeholders locally and nationally. The overall outcome is that targeted girls and boys are less vulnerable to violence and abuse, including online harm, and have better access to support with the following expected results: that there is improved access to protection services for children in target areas, including survivors of online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA); that girls and boys in target areas have improved capacity to keep themselves safe at home, in schools, communities and online spaces; that strengthened child protection legislative framework and coordination are in place and implemented to address violence against children, including internet safety and online protection; and, that there is a strengthened evidence base on the most effective approaches to prevent violence against children. One of the special features of this project is the inclusion of children’s online safety.

Purpose and objectives of the meta-evaluation

This meta-evaluation has systematically reviewed and synthesised data from the four child protection projects and brought the findings together into a comprehensive child protection programme evaluation. Its aim is to enable SCF to take stock of the separate country initiatives and use the findings of the meta-evaluation to plan interventions for the new Global Programme 2026-2029³.

The meta-evaluation has analysed how the context (including the humanitarian situation and crises and the government response to these) in each of the four countries has affected the specific projects and the programme overall and has drawn out common recommendations, key gaps, and lessons learned. The recommendations focus on what SCF needs to do to improve and strengthen its child protection programming in these countries, and more broadly as applicable, in the new programme period from 2026-2029.

Objectives guiding the meta-evaluation included both internal learning and programme improvement and external accountability and knowledge sharing as follows:

- An assessment of the programme’s performance and achievements vis-à-vis the project’s overall outcomes and outputs, the project indicators in the logical framework and the baseline data, internal mid-term stocktaking (referred to in the report as Mid-Term Review, MTR), annual and endline data for the indicators.
- An analysis of the individual projects in view of possible common findings in terms of access and quality of CP services, child and gender sensitivity of families and communities and improving child and gender sensitivity of systems, legislation and structures.
- An evaluation of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability of the programme.

³ Given that the next Global Programme 2026–2029 has already been developed and submitted to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Finland with defined outcomes and outputs, this consultancy will focus on evaluating the 2022–2025 Global Programme to: 1/ Identify key modifications, improvements, and areas for emphasis at the project level. 2/ Provide detailed recommendations based on existing data and project learnings. 3/ Inform project planning in selected countries for the 2022-2025 Global Programme, which will begin in May 2025, ensuring alignment with ongoing discussions and early insights from this meta-evaluation.

- The drawing out of common recommendations and lessons learned that will be useful for improving SCF’s child protection programming 2026-2029.

As above, there was a strong focus on the cross-cutting issues of gender equality, disability-inclusion and climate change, the localization agenda, child rights programming and child and youth participation. The adaptability and flexibility of the projects to the contexts and needs that have evolved throughout the 4-year programme have also been considered. This is especially pertinent to the humanitarian context and its impact on the projects, as relevant, has also been analysed.

III. METHODOLOGY

This meta-evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach combining desk review, focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs), supported by a structured analytical and coding framework. The design aimed to ensure both depth and breadth in synthesizing evidence across the four country child protection projects implemented in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Somaliland, and Zambia.

DATA SOURCES

The evaluation drew on multiple data sources, summarized below:

Table 2: Data Sources for the Meta-Evaluation

Data Source	Description
FGDs (Phase 1)	Five initial focus group discussions (one with the team in each country and one with the SCF global CP technical advisors) were conducted during the inception phase with: (i) SCF global technical advisors, and (ii) country office teams and implementing partners in each of the four countries. These discussions informed the scope, analytical framework, and areas of emphasis for Phase 2 (See Annex 2 for the FGD Guide and list of interviewees)
Desk Review	In-depth review of existing programme documents, including annual reports (2022–2024), log frames, monitoring plans, baseline, mid-term evaluations, endline indicator data, selected technical mission reports, national CP policies, research studies, and learning documents from each country. A full list of documents reviewed is provided in Annex 1 .
KIIs (Phase 2)	Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including SCF technical staff, representatives from SCF, programme managers, country office teams, implementing partners, and government representatives. KIIs explored programme relevance, cross-cutting issues, outcomes, systems change, sustainability, coherence, and lessons learned, using the analytical framework as a guide (See Annex 2 for the KII Guide and list of interviewees).

ANALYTICAL AND CODING FRAMEWORK

The evaluation was guided by a comprehensive analytical framework developed during the inception phase (see **Annex 3**) that integrated:

- 1) Cross-cutting issues (gender equality and social norms, disability-inclusion, climate change)
- 2) Programmatic approaches (localisation, capacity building, advocacy, child rights programming, child participation)
- 3) Outcome domains (access and quality of child protection services; child and gender sensitivity in families and communities; strengthening of systems, legislation and structures)
- 4) OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability).

Data from the KIIs, FGDs, and the full desk review were systematically coded (see **Annex 4 for the Coding Framework**) and analysed using qualitative analysis software (MaxQDA), applying a deductive approach grounded in the pre-defined analytical framework. Although deductive coding was prioritised due to time constraints, the analysis process remained attentive to emerging themes and insights that surfaced across the data. Cross-cutting issues (gender, disability-inclusion and climate change) were systematically integrated into data collection, analysis, and recommendations to ensure inclusive and context-responsive findings.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The meta-evaluation adhered to established ethical standards for research and evaluation involving vulnerable populations, including Save the Children's safeguarding protocols, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee's (OECD-DAC) evaluation standards, and child rights-based evaluation principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with clear information provided regarding the purpose of the meta-evaluation, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and data use. Interviews and discussions were conducted by experienced evaluators trained in ethical data collection and sensitive interviewing techniques.

Confidentiality and data protection protocols were rigorously applied. No personal identifiers were recorded or reported, and data were anonymized during analysis to minimize risks of indirect disclosure. The FGDs and KIIs were intentionally designed to create a safe space for participants to honestly reflect on their experiences with the programme. In line with the meta-evaluation scope and resource limitations, no primary data collection was conducted directly with children. However, children's perspectives were incorporated indirectly through review of programme monitoring data, child-led research, community action research (e.g. in Zambia and Somaliland) and participatory processes already conducted as part of programme implementation. Where relevant,

partners' and staff perspectives on children's participation and experiences, as documented through existing feedback mechanisms, were included.

Throughout analysis and reporting, care was taken to present findings in a manner that protects participants' dignity, avoids stigmatization, and accurately reflects the diverse contexts of the four country programmes.

LIMITATIONS

The meta-evaluation design was shaped by both opportunities and constraints:

- This was a meta-evaluation synthesizing existing data across four diverse contexts rather than conducting full country-level evaluations.
- Direct engagement with children and communities was limited, with reliance placed on partner, staff and government representations, existing child-led research, and documented community perspectives.
- Variability in data quality, completeness, and methodological approaches across projects required careful triangulation and interpretation to ensure consistency and credibility of findings.
- The focus on endline data caused confusion in analysis as while data was considered endline by the programme, it was collected in Quarter One 2025, so it therefore represents 2024 data. Data is therefore listed as 2024 data except for that which has been considered as endline on the basis that no more data on these indicators will be collected before the end of the programme.
- Indicator data needs to be interpreted in light of qualitative data. For example, qualitative data sometimes shows an overall positive impact whereas the indicator data is less conclusive (for example, with the Safe Families approach). While important to show the indicator data, triangulation is needed to ensure holistic and context specific conclusions.
- The limited level of effort (LoE) constrained the number of key informant interviews (KIIs) that could be conducted. For example, grouping multiple stakeholders in a single meeting may have affected the depth and quality of the data collected.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) CRITERIA IN RELATION TO THE CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMME

The OECD has defined six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. These criteria provide a framework to determine the merit or worth of a development intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project or activity). The criteria are analysed in this report based on the Key Questions outlined in the ToR (see [Annex 5](#)), as part of donor reporting requirements and to help the programme build on its strengths, address critical gaps, and enhance the effectiveness, quality, and impact of its child protection efforts in the next global programme 2026-2029. The initial FGDs and subsequent KIIs were intentionally structured to draw out issues related to the six criteria.

1. Relevance

The programme is **highly relevant** to the needs of children, families, and child protection systems in the four project countries. It demonstrates a **rights-based and systems-strengthening approach**, grounded in global standards (e.g., United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC], INSPIRE strategies⁴) and aligned with national priorities.

- The focus on **positive parenting, case management, social norms change**, and **policy/legal reform** addresses structural and immediate drivers of violence against children (VAC).
- Tailoring of Safe Families and parenting content to each country’s context reflects **adaptive design** and **local ownership**.
- While the programme demonstrates **intentional inclusion of marginalised groups**—such as children with disabilities, out-of-school children, and street-connected children—gaps remain in the actual reach and accessibility of some interventions, particularly for children with disabilities.
- **Engagement with children** in designing content (e.g. radio, group activities) enhances relevance but could be broadened to include feedback on system-level reforms.

The **relevance** of the programme is strongly evidenced across all four countries, given its direct alignment with the rights and needs of the most vulnerable children. By targeting communities with high rates of child protection risks, including violence, abuse, and neglect, and by tailoring interventions to the social, economic, and cultural contexts of each country, the programme has successfully addressed critical protection gaps. This relevance is further reinforced through the programme’s explicit focus on **child- and gender-sensitive services**, its inclusive outreach to **marginalised populations** (such as children with disabilities, girls at risk of SGBV, and children with lower levels of literacy), and its alignment with national priorities and legal frameworks on child protection.

By grounding its design in evidence-based practices like **Safe Families**, a global Save the Children approach to positive parenting, and by addressing systemic issues such as gaps in access to services and child protection system capacity, the programme is responsive to clearly identified protection risks. The inclusion of context-specific adaptations (e.g., disability-sensitive modules in Zambia or the revitalisation of CP networks in Burkina Faso) reflects a strong alignment with national priorities, child protection gaps, and evolving community needs, particularly in post-COVID and crisis-affected contexts.

The programme’s design also responds well to global priorities and commitments, such as the **INSPIRE strategies** to end violence against children and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.2 commitment to protect children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence. The alignment with government strategies, such as Zambia’s reaffirmation of positive parenting at the 2024 Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children, further reinforces the programme’s relevance.

2. Coherence

The programme shows **internal and external coherence**:

Internally, the three outcomes are **mutually reinforcing**:

- Outcome 1 reinforces **access to services** for children and families.

⁴ INSPIRE: seven strategies for preventing VAC.

- Outcome 2 builds **child agency** and strengthens **safe spaces**.
- Outcome 3 aims at **system and legal reform**, reinforcing the enabling environment.

Safe Families parenting sessions support children’s emotional wellbeing, which in turn links to improved school participation and reduced violence, while strengthened service provision and case management systems facilitate referrals and support the protective environment. The programme’s phased and community-integrated approach ensures that service delivery, community awareness, and capacity building are aligned and complementary.

The programme has been **integrated** with other SC initiatives (e.g., Child Sensitive Social Protection, CSSP), though stronger linkages between cash/income-generation interventions and child protection would enhance **impact on vulnerability**.

The programme’s **coherence** is reflected in how it complements and integrates with other development and humanitarian interventions, both within SC’s broader portfolio and through strategic collaboration with governments, UN agencies, and national civil society actors. For instance, joint planning with local Ministries (e.g. Social Welfare, Women, Family, and Children) and inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as Provincial and Municipal Child Protection Networks in Burkina Faso demonstrate coherence at the local and national levels. Furthermore, the adoption of **inter-agency tools** like the Child Protection Information Management System CPIMS+ Primero and the roll-out of **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** in Somaliland and in Burkina Faso reflect alignment with global best practices and reinforce a harmonised response among actors. In Zambia, successful coordination among child-focused ministries and community actors also confirms coherence between institutional mandates and field implementation.

Externally, the programme has engaged in meaningful partnerships with government ministries, UN agencies, and community organisations in all four countries to avoid duplication and to contribute to a more coherent national child protection system. The social work internship programme in Somaliland, for example, integrates academic institutions, government structures and community-level actors. Similarly, multi-stakeholder mechanisms such as Complaint, Feedback and Response Mechanism (CFRMs) and CP Committees provide an opportunity for alignment of civil society, government, and community efforts around violence prevention and response.

While coordination with government ministries, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and community structures is evident, limited professional workforce, staff turnover in ministries, and weak referral systems hinder system-wide coherence. External coherence with national strategies—such as VAC strategies, parenting support, and social workforce development—is good. However, reinforcing coordination with specialised NGOs working on child labour, SGBV, disability, and online safety would further strengthen action and amplify impact.

3. Effectiveness

There is evidence of **positive change** across all three outcome areas, though the degree of effectiveness varies, mainly due to the context in the different countries. Children and families’ access to services, including reach and responsiveness, has generally improved as well as case management and social service workforce support

(Outcome 1). In Outcome 2, children—particularly girls—report increased awareness of their rights and better access to safe spaces and peer support groups despite some challenges. For example, in Côte d’Ivoire, the adoption of Prefectural Order N°11/RG/PBKOU/SG-1 in 2016, driven by SCI partners NGOs Notre Grenier and Soleil Levant with SCI support, prohibited the out-of-court settlement of child abuse cases. Yet children—especially girls, migrant children, and those at risk of exploitation or gender-based violence—continue to face significant vulnerabilities due to household poverty, widespread violence, and socio-cultural beliefs, highlighting persistent challenges in service reach and protection. While there are important achievements in Outcome 2, some data aspects could be strengthened to ensure indicators are well contextualized, and targets remain realistic, particularly to capture longer-term social norms change. Outcome 3 has seen notable progress in policy and legal reform, with new laws, SOPs, and national strategies adopted in several countries. The enforcement and implementation of the reforms generally remain weak due to some resource constraints, limited follow-up, institutional fragility, and capacity to answer children’s needs, especially children with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Those external gaps have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the programme. While qualitative changes are evident, there is an opportunity for strengthening the scale and consistency of interventions to sustain and extend outcomes across contexts.

SCI takes proactive steps to enhance programme effectiveness. For example, in Burkina Faso, SCI supported the operation of the two existing listening centres (Mouhoun and Nayala) by providing funds to ensure staff presence and facilitate educational discussions. These centres aim to improve the confidentiality of social worker interviews. Analysis of quality of services (QoS) identified some limitations—particularly in Mouhoun, where the centre is sometimes used for other purposes—and SCI is actively engaging with local authorities to implement corrective measures, demonstrating a strong commitment to strengthening service quality and overall effectiveness.

In Zambia, strong coordination with District Child Protection Committees (DCPCs), community development assistants, and informal protection actors enhanced the reach and responsiveness of the child protection system. A multi-tiered approach to capacity building—including refresher trainings, community-level mapping, and improved referral linkages—helped connect formal systems with traditional and grassroots structures. Children themselves played an active role in risk mapping and advocacy, reinforcing both local ownership and the integration of children’s voices in system strengthening efforts.

In Somaliland, the Isha Boroma Peer Support Group in Hargeisa, demonstrates how community-based efforts can foster meaningful disability-inclusion. Comprising 21 parents—primarily mothers—of children with disabilities ages 3 to 15 years, the group offers emotional, material, and practical support while challenging stigma and isolation. Members contribute to an emergency fund, mobilize local donations, and advocate successfully for basic needs like housing and mobility aids. Their shared experiences have shifted individual perceptions, encouraging more loving, inclusive parenting and a sense of collective belonging. Notably, children with disabilities are becoming more visible in the community, even referring peers to the group.

4. Efficiency

Efficiency varies across countries and components. Overall, the programme has demonstrated an ability to use resources efficiently and deliver results in a timely manner, with several country examples highlighting good financial management and adaptive use of funds.

In Burkina Faso, for instance, the cash transfer programme for income-generating activities (AGR) reached 115 parents, with 98% successfully starting their activities thanks to technical capacity building for facilitators. Each parent received 55,000 FCFA to start their AGR and an additional 25,000 FCFA over three months as a stabilisation fund. This not only shows an efficient conversion of funds into tangible results but also reflects the agility of the programme to respond to specific household needs, such as clothing or hygiene kits for children. However, limited budgets in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso led to early closure of some Safe Families sessions, highlighting the need for reinforced financial resources to support inclusion, particularly for children with disabilities and other marginalised groups.

In many cases, resource use has been strategic, leveraging SC's in-country presence to facilitate advocacy, capacity building, and systems-level change. Community-based implementation and local partnerships also contributed to cost-effectiveness. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, linking Child Protection Committees (CPCs) to income-generating activities improved sustainability and engagement, showing innovation in resource use. In Côte d'Ivoire, the team also shared that the introduction of the SPEL tool has strengthened planning, budgeting and execution, ensuring closer alignment of resources with programme priorities.

In Burkina Faso, some local government partners faced challenges in implementing activities and providing timely financial justification. SCI demonstrated its capacity to address these gaps by working closely with the Regional Director to ensure proper implementation. This proactive engagement highlights SCI's ability to support partners, strengthen accountability, and maintain programme efficiency despite institutional limitations.

In operational terms, having a pre-designed package of programme indicators and tools (a CP Monitoring and Evaluation, M&E, framework) from the outset was instrumental, together with the training and support provided by SCF. This meant that nothing had to be developed from scratch and served to improve the quality of the data collected. The package of pre-set indicators and tools are now used in other projects.

"Pre-set indicators and tools were very helpful because it helped focus on what to collect and when, on the targeting process and selection criteria; they guided our implementation because you can see the changes you want to see from the beginning" (Focus Group Discussion, Zambia).

"It was easy to use the tools because at the beginning of the project there was an orientation and capacity building on how to use the template as a partner" (Focus Group Discussion, Zambia).

"Indicators were defined and clarity provided on disaggregation etc., before start of programme. Data collection tools were ready before the baseline and planning meeting held before baseline. Meant that there was a plan for the frequency of data collection and mid-year, end-year etc. This helped planning and understanding of what was needed and by when" (Focus Group Discussion, Somaliland).

The mid-term review undertaken in the four countries in 2023 was used to inform programme implementation, activities, key focus and target areas for the remaining two years of the programme.

"Mid-term review informs our programming – resulted in new activities and refined other existing activities. This is adaptive project management and demonstrates flexibility to change within available resources. We can now predict next 2-3 years and shape the context of the programme and its projects" (Focus Group Discussion, Somaliland).

However, efficiency was sometimes hindered by some delays and data systems issues. Although the government structures have been actively involved, overreliance on volunteer CPCs raises concerns about long-term

efficiency and institutional stability. Financial weaknesses in Burkina Faso as illustrated above and the lack of dedicated spaces or facilitation tools (e.g., image boxes) for some Safe Families sessions also illustrate areas where investments could be better optimised.

Operational inefficiencies have also stemmed from systemic issues like donor dependency and workforce limitations. While some efficiencies were achieved through strategic partnerships, greater alignment across sectors and actors could enhance operational synergy and value for money. In the next programme, improving cost-effectiveness will require a dual approach: (i) strengthening the financial and operational capacity of all state and community partners to manage and justify funds on time, and (ii) securing adequate and flexible resources to reinforce inclusion—particularly for children with disabilities and marginalised groups—and to ensure continuity of interventions even in fragile contexts. Investing in better supervision systems, inclusive materials, and coordination with specialised NGOs would not only reduce inefficiencies but also maximise the efficiency of the programme.

5. Impact

The programme shows emerging signs of impact, particularly:

- **Behavioural shifts** in caregivers (less violent discipline, more supportive parenting, improved community and family protective environments).
- **Empowerment of children**, particularly adolescent girls, to express concerns and seek help.
- **Policy and legal milestones**, including new Child Rights Acts, Foster Care Laws, and national SOPs.
- Improved **capacity** of social workforce (both formal and informal) delivering qualitative case management.

Substantial progress in terms of **impact** is visible in the **strengthening of national and community-based child protection systems**. This includes formalising case management structures, building capacity among social workers and community volunteers, and establishing **permanent service delivery points** such as One Stop Centres, SGBV desks, and *postes avancés des centres sociaux* (*mobile CP services provided by a social worker*). Importantly, the impact goes beyond quantitative metrics. For example, the **internship programme in Somaliland** not only reinforced case management capacity but also contributed to longer-term workforce development and localisation of child protection responses. Similarly, in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, the revitalisation and funding of local CP networks point to systems-level strengthening likely to endure beyond the current programme.

Despite contextual challenges—conflict, natural disasters, and resource constraints—the programme's **holistic, community-based, and systems-strengthening approach** is contributing to meaningful shifts in child protection practice. These include improved **confidence and trust** in services by children and caregivers, more responsive service delivery, and enhanced multi-sector collaboration.

While full long-term impact will require further tracking and possibly a post-programme evaluation, the midline and endline data already point to significant **transformative change** in both institutional systems and individual behaviours. Examples include:

- In **Outcome 2**, notable shifts in caregiver behaviour (e.g., increased use of non-violent discipline in Somaliland from 19% to 49% among women) and children’s perception of improved interactions with caregivers (e.g., from 69% to 87% in Burkina Faso) demonstrate tangible behavioural changes.
- The inclusion of children with disabilities, the creation of child-led action plans, and the reported improved gender dynamics within families indicate potential **longer-term social norm change**, which is often the most challenging to achieve.
- In **Outcome 3**, the strengthening of formal and informal social service providers has translated into increased access and improved quality of services, with, for example, Côte d’Ivoire reporting a 75% compliance with quality standards among formal workers.

However, disparities between countries in reaching targets (e.g., under-performance in service access in Zambia and Somaliland vs. over-performance in Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso) suggest uneven impact that may be influenced by contextual, operational, or systemic factors – see Table 3 ([Outcome 1](#)) below.

In addition,

- **Quantitative evidence** shows some reductions in violence (for example, using non-violent discipline), but there is limited evidence of long-term outcomes at this stage. It would therefore be important in the new programme to strengthen the evidence base to demonstrate sustained impact.
- The **most vulnerable children** are not consistently reached and impacts on **deep-rooted social and gender norms** are still limited.
- Some **impact risks** are emerging e.g. volunteer burnout, fragile foster care systems, and weak online safety coverage beyond Zambia.

These nuances underscore the need for continued investments and adaptations in future programming, particularly in fragile contexts. While it is noted that data for 2025 is not yet included in the indicator value, some indicators have fallen short of targets (E.g. number of beneficiaries accessing violence prevention and protection services in Zambia and Somaliland are still below target).

6. Sustainability

The programme has embedded sustainability through several strategic approaches. National system reform efforts—including integration of Safe Families into social centres or social workers’ practises, deployment of social services to more remote locations, legal simplification, and national volunteer policy support—have anchored activities in formal institutional frameworks. Strong collaboration with technical government departments and alignment with national child protection priorities have further enhanced sustainability. Participatory planning, joint missions, and coordination mechanisms have ensured state buy-in across the programme cycle.

At the community level, sustainability has been fostered through participatory approaches and strengthened local structures. Community ownership was enhanced using flexible scheduling and participatory planning. Structures such as children’s clubs, parent support groups (including men's groups and male champions), and CP committees have become active agents of change. Community-based actors have extended the programme’s reach to remote areas, supported trust-building, and reinforced local capacity.

Changing social norms has been another critical lever for sustainability. The programme contributed to redefining parenting roles, promoting shared responsibility between mothers and fathers, and building resilience within families. Confidence in reporting and addressing protection concerns has increased. In some communities, facilitators and families developed strong bonds, enabling real-time support and referrals. Counselling, home visits, and direct interactions ensured lasting behavioural change.

Capitalisation and inter-project learning has also helped to embed sustainability. Regular training, capacity building, and cross-country exchanges (e.g., on the AskKids tool) enabled iterative improvement and knowledge transfer. Continuity between programme phases allowed the integration of past lessons and improved practices. Stakeholders across countries expressed a strong desire for the programme to continue, underscoring perceived value and sustainability.

However, reliance on volunteers, some fragile systems (e.g., foster care), limited budgets, and donor dependency—particularly in fragile contexts—pose ongoing challenges. The current programme has already demonstrated how these deficits can be mitigated. For example, strong collaboration with social service and welfare departments has ensured institutional support and alignment. Active involvement of State services in design, implementation, and monitoring—through joint missions, participatory planning, and strengthened coordination mechanisms—has anchored the project in local dynamics. Across all four countries, the engagement of child protection structures at local, regional, and national levels emerges as a key lever to navigate these constraints and foster long-term sustainability. Capacity building of local partners is also a key component of sustainability and significant efforts have been made in the current programme in this respect, including technical support and organisational capacity development (OCD). Such sustainability measures are also key to increased localisation of projects and programmes.

V. PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES ACROSS PROJECTS

Strengthening the child and gender sensitivity of communities, caregivers and children, including the provision of services, is central to SCF's approach to programming. It is key to the three overall outcomes of improved access to CP services, child and gender sensitive support for caregivers, children and communities and enhanced child- and gender-sensitive services, policies, and programmes, including the quality of services. Results and progress in these three outcome areas, which are part of comprehensive and holistic support to enable children to grow in a violence-free environment, across the projects in all four countries are considered in this section of the report. Most of the indicator data sets have baseline, annual, midline and endline data with a few exceptions which are noted below.

PROGRESS MADE ON IMPROVING ACCESS TO CP SERVICES (OUTCOME 1)

The programme works in each of the four countries to ensure that children, girls and boys have access to quality child protection services. This is done by providing comprehensive support and services to children and their families who need this through targeted interventions and through an integrated community approach which builds on the work, expertise and commitment of community-level structures.

The anticipated result in this outcome area is that children and families have improved access to formal and informal high-quality CP services. Signature work includes improving **access** to these services, including their reach and responsiveness as well as case management, social service workforce and relevant line Ministry support in terms of capacity building, training and professionalisation. The sum of this approach is to strengthen the overall support system for children and families.

Accessing child protection prevention and response services

The first indicator (R1.2.2) in this outcome area is defined as the # of children and adults accessing violence prevention and protection services supported / provided by SC out of the # of children and adults who have been direct beneficiaries of prevention and/or response child protection services supported / provided by SC or SC partners. It is collected as annual and cumulative data reporting through service provider records as part of partner or field visits. For this indicator, there is only data until 2024 and not up to endline (still pending) so any comparison to the target is incomplete.

The total number of participants (cumulative) accessing services provided or supported by the programme, as reported in 2024 in each country can be seen in Table 3. Though some numbers are below the target for Somaliland and Zambia, and significantly over in Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire, it is important to note that data for three-quarters of the previous year is still pending, as this evaluation took place in Q1 of 2025. This means the final beneficiary reach figures may improve once complete reporting is available. This may therefore change the cumulative results. The breakdown per country is below in Table 3 and is disaggregated by gender, age and persons with disability in Figure 1.

Although, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, the reach figures for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) are low, the number accessing prevention and response services in Côte d’Ivoire are higher than in the other three countries.

Table 3. Cumulative number of children and adults accessing violence prevention and protection services supported / provided by SC - at Target and the number to date (including baseline to 2024 data) (RI 1.2.2).

	Target	2022 to 2024 (Cumulative)
Somaliland	14,600	7706
Zambia	18,000	6091
Burkina Faso	5,016	37,717
Côte d’Ivoire	19,350	41,105

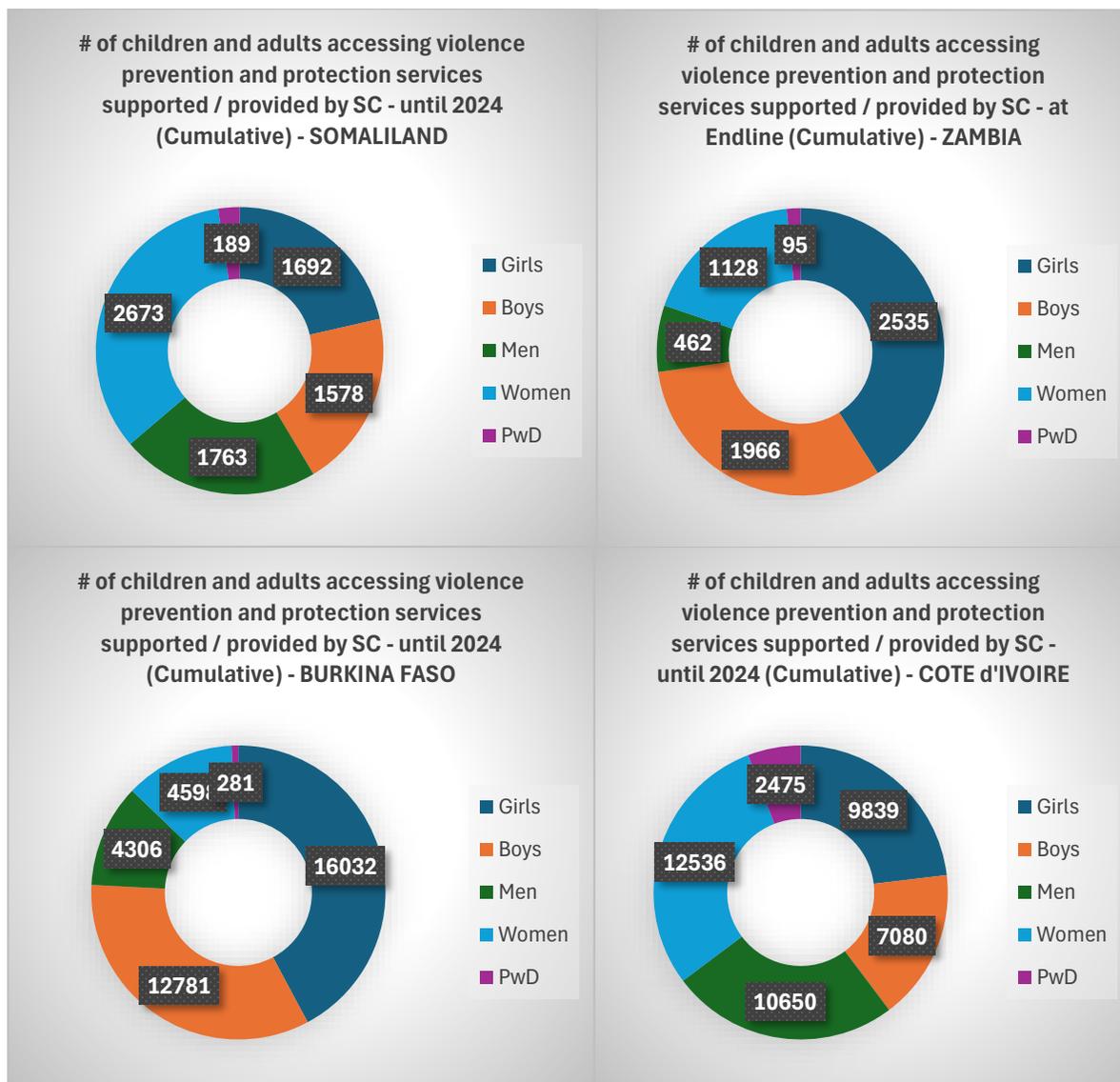


Figure 1. Number of children and adults accessing violence prevention and protection services supported / provided by SC - until 2024 (Cumulative) in each programme country (RI 1.2.2)

Levels of satisfaction with child protection prevention and response services

The second indicator in this set (OI 1.2) is defined as the % of children and caregivers who report satisfaction with direct services received and the response actions taken through the Case Management process. It refers to the # of supported children and their caregivers who report being 'happy' with direct services received and the response actions taken through the Case Management process out of the # of supported children and their caregivers who answered the satisfaction survey. It is collected through child and caregiver feedback surveys from a sample of children and their primary caregiver supported through Case Management for at least 3

months or have had their case closed (including cases that were open and closed within 3 months). This indicator is measured annually in all countries.

Out of those children and caregivers who accessed case management and response services, there was a steady progression of increased satisfaction reported from baseline, through midline and endline (see Figure 2). Participants in Zambia and Burkina Faso reported slightly higher satisfaction rates at midline compared to endline.

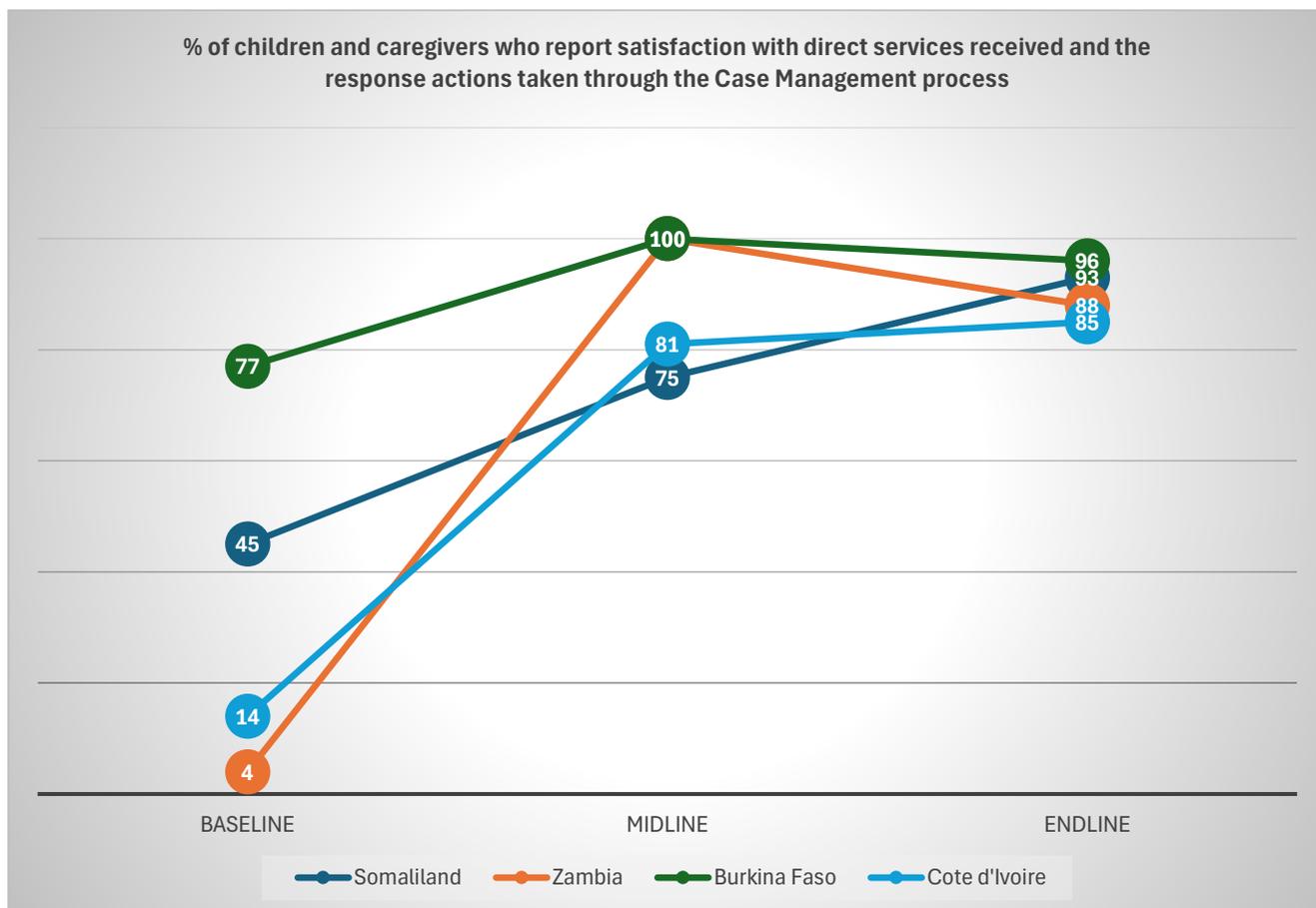


Figure 2. % of children and caregivers who report satisfaction with direct services received and the response actions taken through the Case Management process (OI 1.2)

The key focus for **case management strengthening, support and quality uplift** is through supporting the existing child protection system in each country, including the existing case management system. Save the Children’s global approach to case management - Steps to Protect – is then used to provide support to address identified gaps and improve the quality of case management. This work is also supported by the roll out of inter-agency Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) and the Child Protection Information System (CPIMS+ Primero) so that all CP case workers and service providers have the same reference point.

A recent case management capacity assessment in Somalia revealed significant weaknesses in the system despite the strong network of service providers, efficient systems and established structures. Weaknesses, caused primarily by inconsistent technical capacities and funding challenges with under-resourced government departments, included lack of evidence of outcomes for children, weak quality case work with over 60% of cases remaining open, case workers handling caseloads four or five times higher than the minimum standards, poor quality of supervision, under-use and under-engagement of community-level structures for case management, barriers of access to services, harmful social norms, and reliance on customary dispute resolution mechanisms. These weaknesses continue to limit both case identification and help-seeking behaviours, especially in remote areas where referral pathways are weakest. While the capacity assessment was not an evaluation of the Somaliland CP programme's case management work, its findings are useful in that they reinforce the need to strengthen the enabling environment for child protection, while maintaining efforts to improve the quality of case management services. It is also important to note that the findings are widespread in the sector and are not just relevant or exclusive to Somalia. They highlight the need for the next Global Programme 2026-2029 to invest not only in training but also in a comprehensive system of professional development, including structured supervision, mentorship, and workload management, to ensure quality services and prevent burnout, especially in challenging contexts.

Strengthening linkages between informal and formal CP prevention and response services, have included the establishment of community desks, also to tackle SGBV, CP committees, One Stop Centres, child- and girl-friendly spaces, complaint, feedback and reporting mechanisms (CFRMs), the identification and training of foster families as well as training for social workers, teachers and community-level structures and support to coordination between the various stakeholders at local and district levels to address VAC. The establishment of '*post avancés des centres sociaux*' (*mobile CP services provided by a social worker*) in Côte d'Ivoire has been supported by the Regional Directorate for Women, Family and Children and the Regional Directorate for Social Protection. In Zambia, SCI and YWCA worked with various government line ministries (Child Development, Social Welfare, Community Development, Health, and Education) as well as the police and community members, including children, to strengthen and set up CFRMs.

In Somaliland, community desks were established in the project target locations (eight locations in Hargeisa and three locations in Berbera). In each project location, there was a community focal person to operate the SGBV desks in their designated locations and respond to child protection concerns. The aim of this localised child protection initiative has been to strengthen the CP system and empower local CP actors (Child Welfare Committees) to identify child protection concerns, respond to cases and strengthen leadership and networking between the community and the community CP structures. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) did however acknowledge that work in support of these community desks needed to be improved and made concrete recommendations in this respect. These included a continual strengthening of case management support through Steps to Protect, securing enough trained case workers etc. Some of these recommendations led to the assessment of social work capacity mentioned previously.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the establishment of One Stop Centres in Bondoukou and Tanda has enabled the provision of legal and psychosocial support for child survivors of violence, including SGBV, – a service that previously didn't exist in these locations. However, reporting of cases remains largely underreported though there has been an increase in reporting during the project which demonstrates a slight shift in mindset. Community mobilisation, messaging and communication campaigns for behaviour change around VAC, SGBV and disability-inclusion also need further strengthening in communities.

In Burkina Faso, the focus has been on strengthening the protection system for the holistic care for children who are victims of violence or abuse: The PROPEL/GBV project contributed to the revitalization of three Provincial Child Protection Networks (RPE) (Mouhoun, Nayala, and Balé), and two Municipal Child Protection Networks (RCPE) (Safané and Siby). The action plans for these networks were also funded. In addition, the Provincial Directorates in charge of child protection benefited from technical and operational capacity building (training of Social Workers in case management and the use of the (CPIMS+). The project also supported 10 approved foster families in the three provinces.

The sustainability of CP committees without SC or external funding, however, remains an issue. In Côte d'Ivoire they have tried to overcome this by linking CPCs and their members with income-generating activities (IGAs) and Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) so that they can benefit from economic strengthening while carrying out their community work. This highlights the need to link work with local CP committees and their volunteer members with government efforts, for example, advocating for the implementation of the Volunteer Policy in Zambia.

In Zambia, the government noted success in coordination among and of key stakeholders in Ndola district, with resulting referrals of cases of children. A directory of service delivery for these referrals has been established, supported by SC.

A unique element of the Somaliland project has been the placement of social worker students/interns within the project (through the partner organisation, YOVENCO) and within the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family (MESAF) through an internship programme. It has been recognised that a joint induction programme for these interns should be developed as well as unifying guidelines etc., for such internship programmes to ensure clarity of roles between interns and established case workers and better supervision and mentorship of internees. To maximize impact, future programmes should shift from ad-hoc arrangements to creating a national, standardized internship framework with MESAF and universities. Advocating for a Social Worker's Association is a vital goal that could professionalize the sector and ensure a sustainable pipeline of qualified professionals after the project ends. This model should be considered for replication in other contexts with nascent social service workforces.

Seeking help and knowing where to go

The third indicator in this set (1.2.1) is defined as the % of female and male children and adolescents who would ask for help, and know some place they can go for help, in cases of emotional, physical or sexual violence. It refers to the # of targeted children and adolescents surveyed who would ask for help in case of (1) emotional or physical violence and (2) sexual violence and can name at least one place/person they would go to for (1) emotional or physical violence and for (2) sexual violence out of the # of targeted children and adolescents surveyed. It is collected using a survey tool with a sample of targeted children and adolescents at baseline, midline and endline.

The % of female and male children and adolescents who would ask for help and know some place they can go for help in cases of emotional, physical or sexual violence rose steadily throughout the programme in Somaliland, Zambia and Burkina Faso. In Zambia, 92% of both girls and boys reported positively on this indicator at midline, exceeding the target of 80%. All those that reported having disabilities (3.5% of overall dataset) also reported

that they would ask for help and know some place they would go to in cases of emotional, physical or sexual violence (100%). Asked if they would seek help if they were being hurt sexually, 93.85% of participants responded in the affirmative while 6.15% (23 children/adolescents) responded in the negative. This showed a significant change from the baseline where all 538 children and adolescent boys and girls interviewed indicated that they would not ask for help in case of sexual violence. (Annual Report, Zambia, 2024). At endline, an average of 81% of children and adolescents reported that they would ask for help and know some place they can get it as needed (see Figure 3).

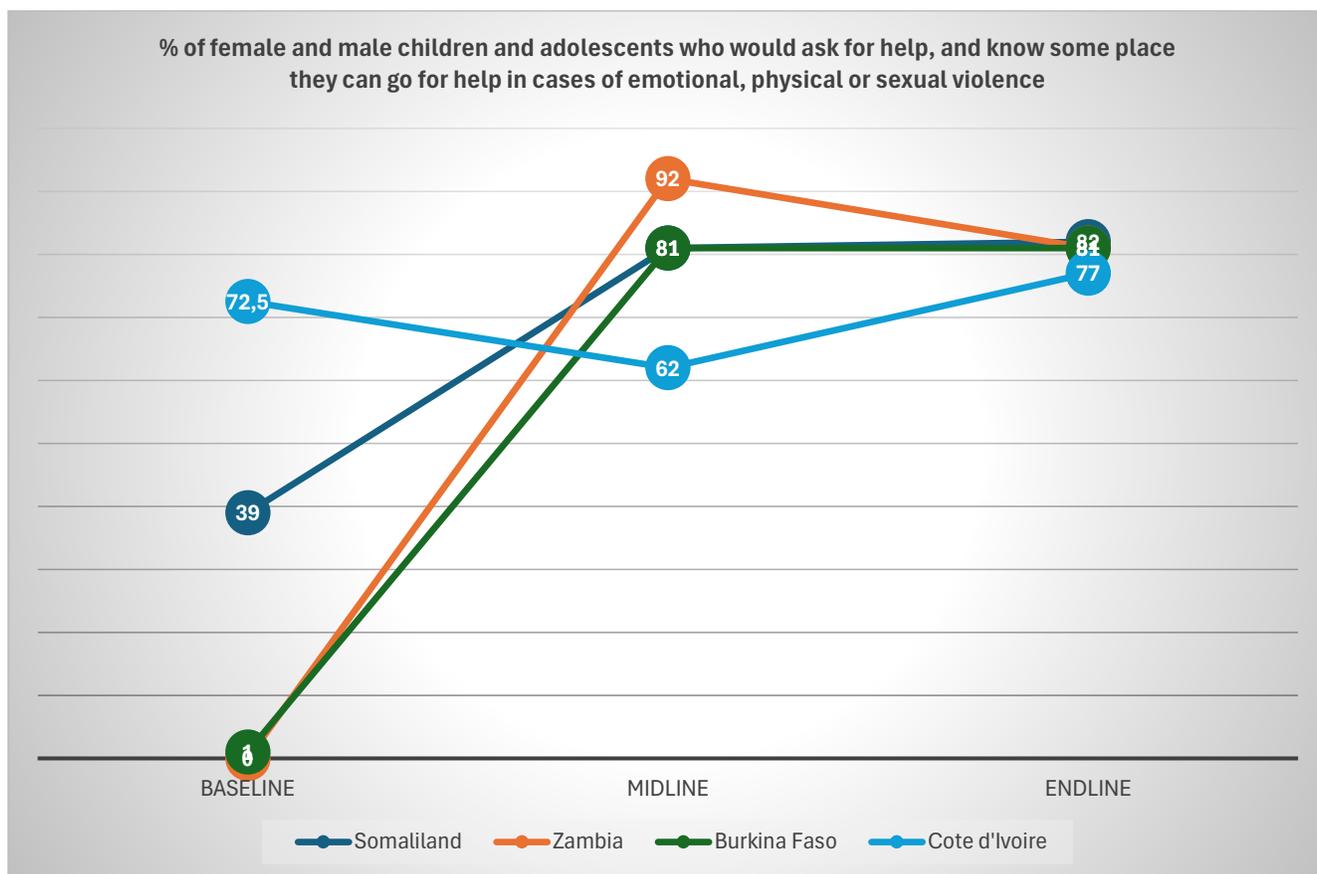


Figure 3. Percent of children and adolescents who would ask for help and know some place they can go to for help in cases of emotional, physical or sexual violence. (RI 1.2.1)

Overall, for outcome 1, the strengthening of formal and informal social service providers has translated into increased access and improved quality of services for children and their families.

PROGRESS MADE ON IMPROVED CHILD DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN THROUGH STRENGTHENED CHILD AND GENDER SENSITIVITY OF CAREGIVERS, CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY (OUTCOME 2)

The programme, and its respective country projects, has been designed to improve the capacity of duty bearers (parents/caregivers, communities and government) to protect girls and boys with and without disabilities from all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation both offline and online as well as strengthening the capacity of children to better protect themselves and their peers. The aim of this outcome is that children grow in a violence-free environment.

Signature work here includes positive parenting practices; community level interventions including mobilisation and awareness to create an overall support system for children and their families; the inclusion of boys, girls and children with and without disabilities and with diverse identities in decision making; and, evidence of positive changes in norms, awareness and behaviours in children, families and communities to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment and to address the perpetuation of violence against children, including SGBV. This includes community perceptions of violence, children's sense of safety and community reporting of child protection issues.

Across the four countries and their respective projects, the way that the programme is working with families and communities and with children to support and enhance their protection is probably the most visible aspect of the programme. This translates into significant progress in supporting child and gender sensitivity in families, and communities as well as through work with local and district government authorities.

Positive parenting is globally recognised as a critical component to ending violence against children (EVAC). This was reinforced at the 2024 Global Ministerial Conference to End Violence Against Children in Bogota, Colombia, where, for example, Zambia as the 31st Pathfinding country reaffirmed this as a key commitment. The key parenting approach used in the programme across all four countries is Save the Children's global Safe Families approach.

Safe Families Findings

There are three key indicators in this set: % of targeted parents and caregivers who report mainly using non-violent discipline methods with their children (2.2.1.), % of targeted children who report a positive change in their interactions with their caregiver (2.2.2) and % of girls and boys who have improved psychosocial wellbeing (2.5). These indicators are collected as part of work on the Safe Families approach and are based on each cohort of parents, caregivers and children participating in the parenting programme.

Caregivers reports of non-violent discipline

Indicator 2.2.1. on the use of non-violent discipline methods refers to the # of targeted parents and caregivers surveyed who report using only non-violent discipline methods with their children out of the # of targeted parents and caregivers surveyed (as above, from those participating in the parenting programme). It is measured through a pre-assessment, or baseline, and post-assessment (caregiver questionnaire) for each Safe Families cohort cycle. Figure 4 shows the results for the 2022, 2023 and 2024 cohorts, with the corresponding baseline values, noting that in Côte d'Ivoire, Safe Families activities were delayed so there was no 2022 reporting. Targets were as follows: Somaliland: 70%; Zambia: 50%; Burkina Faso: 60%; Côte d'Ivoire: 60%.

The % of targeted parents and caregivers reporting mainly non-violent discipline methods increased in all countries, however, the results are below the target values set (see Figure 4). This suggests that a reinforced focus is needed on this in the next Global Programme, 2026-2029, to further assess what the barriers are to meeting these targets and whether the targets are realistic given that this is part of longer-term social norms change. The 2024 cohort in Somaliland showed significant change with a rise from low reported use of non-violent discipline methods in baseline (19% women and 26% men) to 49% of women and 47% of men reporting non-violent discipline methods. Notably, the number of caregivers from families with disabilities rose from 8% at baseline to 54% in the 2024 cohort. In Zambia, the percent of caregivers in the 2024 cohort reporting non-violent discipline methods rose from 1% to 21%. In Burkina Faso, caregivers reported an improvement in each cohort. However, reports show that the indicator was not well contextualized, and the rates may not be accurate. In Côte d'Ivoire, the percentage of parents and caregivers who use nonviolent discipline methods in raising their children increased in the 2023 cohort from 0 to 38% and from 0 to 48% for the 2024 cohort.

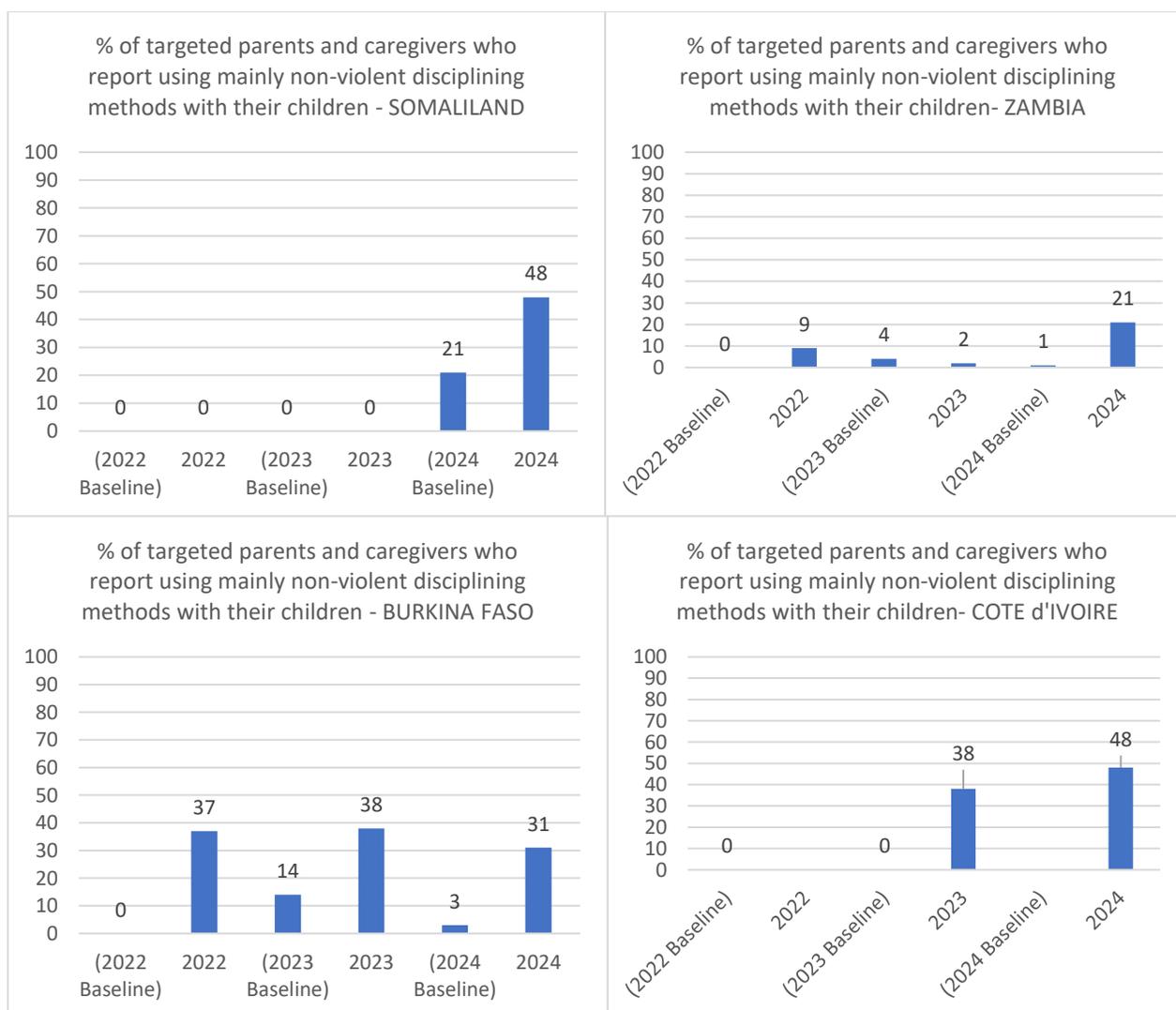
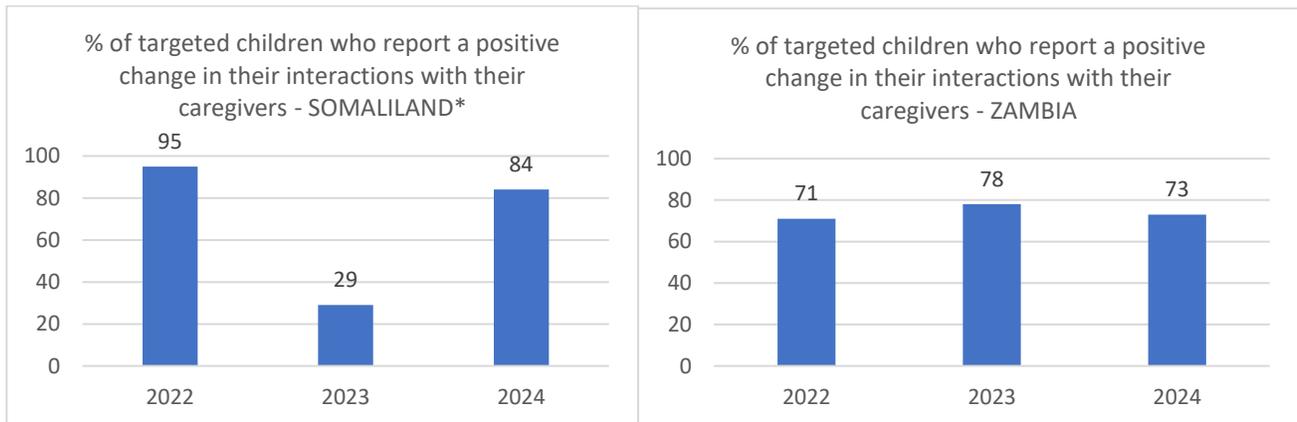


Figure 4. % of targeted parents and caregivers who report using mainly non-violent disciplining methods with their children (RI 2.2.1)

Children’s positive interactions with their caregivers

Indicator 2.2.2. on the % of targeted children who report a positive change in their interactions with their caregiver refers to # of targeted surveyed children whose post-test questionnaire score is higher than pre-test out of the # of targeted children surveyed (again from those participating in Safe Families). It is measured through a pre- and post-assessment (survey) for each Safe Families cohort cycle of children aged 10-17 of caregivers who participated in the parenting programme. The baseline (pre-assessment value) is at 0%. The targets were as follows: Somaliland: 75%; Zambia: 60%; Burkina Faso: 50%; Côte d'Ivoire: 45%.

The percentage of targeted children who report a positive change in their interactions with their caregivers was tracked from baseline (pre-assessment) at 0% through to 2024 (see Figure 5). The results generally show a positive change in children’s perceptions of their interactions with caregivers in all countries, mostly exceeding the target levels. In Burkina Faso, 69% reported a positive change in 2022 and this rose to 87% in 2024. In Zambia, 71% of children reported a positive change with their caregiver interactions in 2022, 78% in 2023 and 73% in 2024, demonstrating a consistent positive shift. In Somaliland 95% of targeted children felt that their interactions were more positive with their caregivers in 2022, but this dropped to 84% in 2024. In Côte d'Ivoire, 51% of children reported a positive change with their caregiver at mid-term and 35% at endline in 2025.



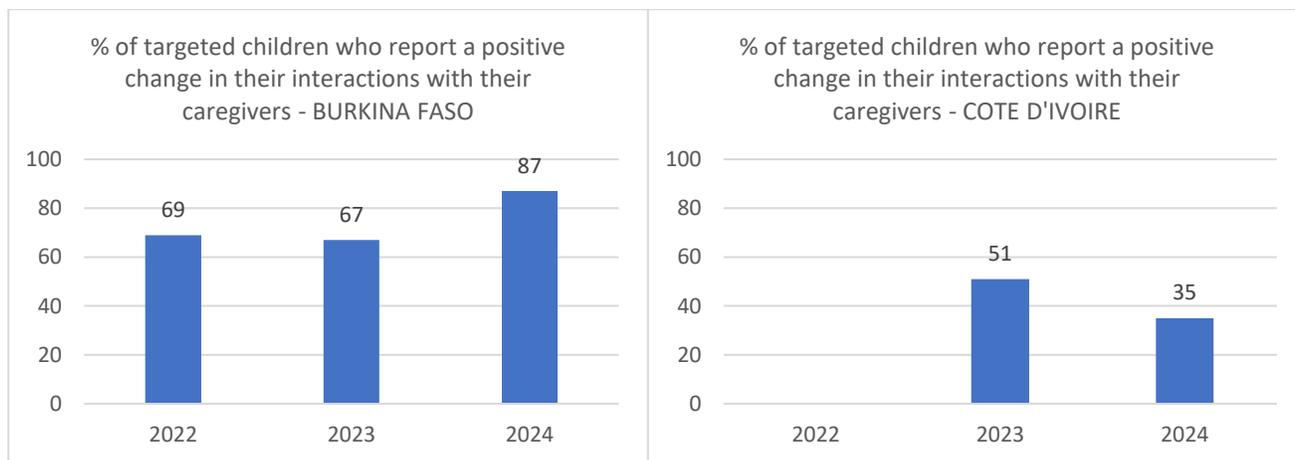


Figure 5. % of targeted children who report a positive change in their interactions with their caregivers in each country programme (RI 2.2.2)

**In Somaliland, the children scored high at pre-assessment and therefore the positive change is less in 2023.*

Children's strengthened psychosocial wellbeing

Community engagement and empowerment, perception of violence and prevention and response to child protection issues impact on children's sense of safety and wellbeing at home, in schools and communities and in online spaces.

Outcome Indicator 2.5 on the % of girls and boys who have improved psychosocial wellbeing refers to the # of children whose post-test questionnaire score is higher than pre-test out of the # of children who complete pre- and post-test. It is measured through a pre- and post-assessment (children and youth questionnaire) for each Safe Families cohort cycle of children aged 10-17 who participate in children's groups sessions. The targets for this indicator were: Somaliland: 65%; Zambia: 55%; Burkina Faso: 30%; Côte d'Ivoire: 50%.

The degree to which girls and boys, including those with disabilities have reported an improved psychosocial wellbeing was tracked in 2022, 2023 and 2024, with a 0% baseline (see Figure 6). The results are below for Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia, largely reporting significant improvements by 2024 (Zambia 71%, Burkina Faso 80%, Côte d'Ivoire 50 % and Somaliland 81%) and all above target, except Côte d'Ivoire which met the target. For Somaliland, the data for 2023 is explained by the pre-assessment scores in 2022 already being high.

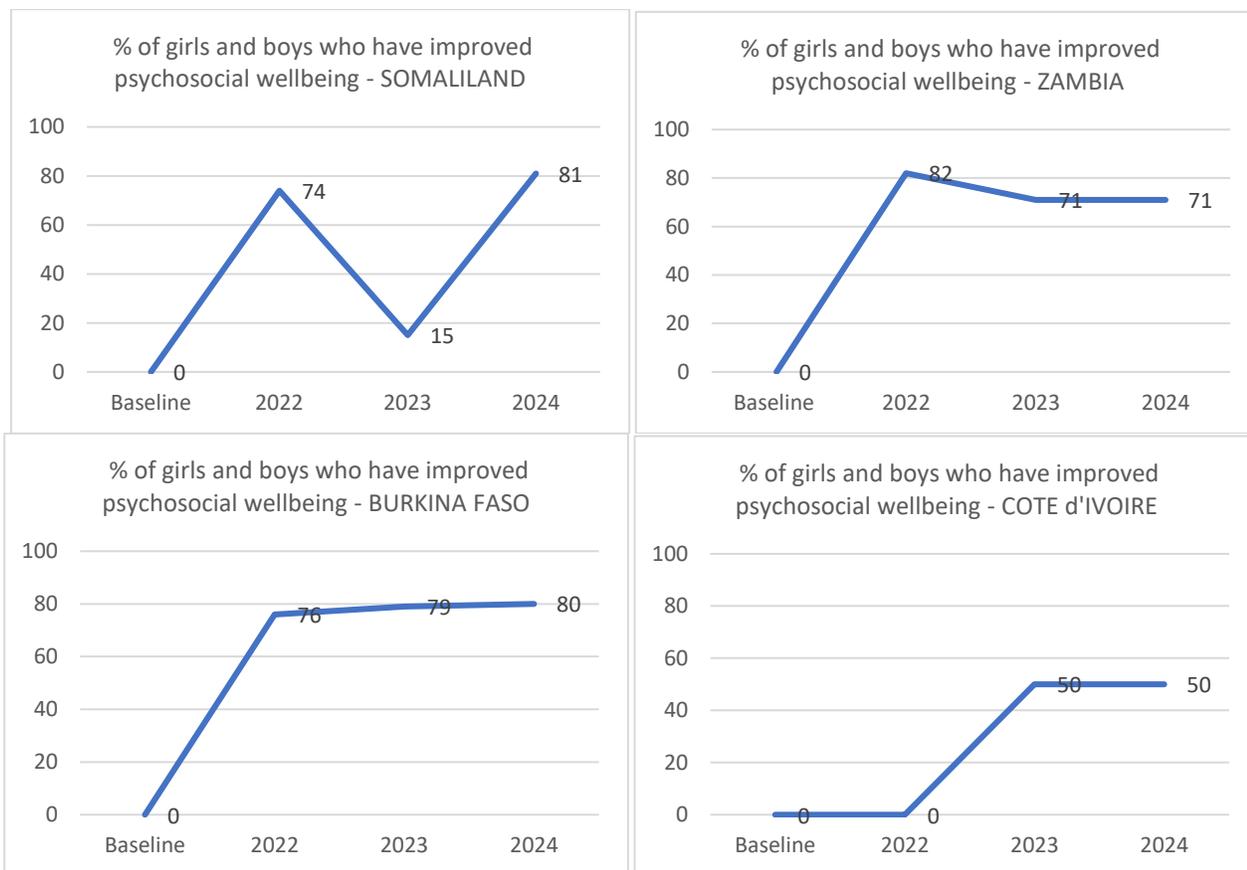


Figure 6. % of girls and boys who have improved psychosocial wellbeing in country programmes (OI 2.5)

Overall and across all four countries, qualitative data shows that Safe Families has had positive impacts on caregivers and children. It has worked well as a positive parenting approach and has been well supported in the communities in which it has been implemented with other communities also asking for it. Significant change outcomes have been noted including, improved knowledge, attitudes and practice in caregiving and non-violent discipline, improved spouse/partner relations and improved parent-child relationships.

Safe Families has also served to provide additional information to caregivers, children and communities, for example, around the availability of social protection (SP) services and the care and protection of children more broadly. In West Africa, it has also been a way to strengthen capacity in gender-based violence as part of the positive parenting work.

Programme highlight. Safe Families approach in Zambia:

In Zambia, Save the Children is recognised as a ‘go-to’ partner for parenting engaging in communities through the Safe Families approach and at national level with the government through the EVAC commitments.

The work in adapting Safe Families for caregivers of children with disabilities has been intentional and significant. Three additional guidance sessions, developed in collaboration with an Organization of Persons with Disabilities, have been piloted in the Copperbelt province – ‘We Are All Different’, ‘Communicating with Children with Disabilities and Supporting their Development and Growth’ and ‘Supporting Our Children with Disabilities’. This has been a key initiative in counteracting negative and discriminatory attitudes and practices on disability and the involvement of children with disabilities and their families in the Safe Families sessions has promoted their right to participate in community activities.

There has also been piloting of men only sessions to encourage and enhance male engagement in caregiving. This resulted in discussions on the need to engage more men in the programme as well as exploring means of having some sessions together with female caregivers.

In Somaliland, the MTR conducted in 2023 concluded that work to ensure that ‘Parents/caregivers, community-based child protection groups, traditional authorities and other actors create a safe and protective environment for children including children with disabilities’ was on track or almost achieved at the mid-way point of the project. The MTR concluded that demand for the Safe Families sessions was high, children’s confidence had increased and caregivers of children with disabilities had been included in the sessions. In addition, male caregiver only sessions were being piloted to overcome the significant challenge of male engagement in caregiving. *“One of the male CWC members tells us that he has changed his behaviour after the sessions: he used to come home after the kids were already in bed, but now he makes an effort to be home and see them before they go to sleep. The CWC members also tell about another father in whom they have seen a great change since attending: he used to be aggressive towards his children, but now he is much kinder, spends more time with his children and for example takes them to the shop to buy sweets”.* (Somaliland, Field Report, 2023).

The stories from qualitative data gathered through the programme and projects in the four countries testifies to the transformative potential of Safe Families to strengthen family ties, as well as harmony within families.

Children also note the change in themselves and between them and their parents as this testimony from Burkina Faso demonstrates *“Communication: Having the courage to explain my problems to my parents and also they take better care of us; Change of behaviour between us and parents; Respect for parents: by respecting parents, they take very good care of us; Communication: allows us to tell our concerns to parents.”* (Children’s Group Discussions, Burkina Faso).

In Burkina Faso, Safe Families, as part of a portfolio of linked and complementary activities including stipends for girls and livelihoods activities for caregivers aimed at investing more in children’s needs and lowering their vulnerabilities, has strengthened family relationships and the leadership of girls. This demonstrates the potential for the Safe Families approach to be used more affirmatively across contexts and countries to support parent wellbeing and family economic strengthening – for example, through combining with cash voucher assistance (CVAs) and access to village savings and loans schemes. For example, in Burkina Faso, it has helped reverse decisions to take girls out of school. *“We implemented the Safe Families programme, the IGAs and the children's clubs. We offered scholarships to girls every year. Students were able to resume classes, and problem-solving within the family helped a lot with the Income Generating Activities.”* (Key Informant Interview, Burkina Faso).

The project in Burkina Faso has also led to significant progress in preventing gender-based violence, encouraging children's participation, and transforming gender relations. Children, both girls and boys, report a better understanding of their rights and types of violence, how to seek help, and how to use reporting channels. The

girls are gaining confidence, developing their own action plans, and leading awareness-raising activities within their communities. The establishment of children's clubs has encouraged strong participation among girls and valued their leadership, particularly through gender-sensitive governance structures and capacity building sessions on gender-based violence, gender equality, and inclusion, not only for the children's clubs but also for the Associations of Working Children (AEJT), social workers and community leaders to equip them to recognize warning signs, report cases, and refer them to care services.

Community engagement and work with community-level Child Protection structures and mechanisms have been critical in informing the programme and have acted as a constant barometer to know and address real concerns as opposed to simply following project log frames and activities. This work has also contributed to community empowerment. Community-level Child Protection mechanisms, such as Child Protection Committees (CPCs) are considered to be stronger and more vibrant than at baseline with competencies in child protection prevention and response. For example, in Zambia, they can now identify and handle cases due to the training on case management they have received, children know where to report and now do report on violations of their right to protection and the composition of the CPCs is also more gender balanced.

Similar and linked to the positive parenting work, there is more acceptance of people with disabilities, including by caregivers of children with disabilities as this testimony from Burkina Faso demonstrates: *"The parents of these children with disabilities are more accepting of them. Thanks to awareness-raising, prejudices surrounding disability are diminishing."* (Key Informant Interview, Burkina Faso).

There is also a significant improvement in referrals, and more reporting of child protection issues is noted, including children who will report to their peers or friends and family or relatives' groups. Capacity building of local child protection actors in all four country projects - in case identification, reporting and referrals – has been essential in increased reporting. Although it is also noted that community normalisation of violence against children and harmful practices can also limit reporting of cases and, in particular, SGBV cases are less reported and supported. Despite laws in this field, survivors often hesitate to report their cases due to fear of stigma, retaliation and weak law enforcement. The lack of adequate social services may also make it difficult for victims to access support, including safe shelters and legal aid. In Zambia, work with government line Ministries (Child Development, Social Welfare, Community Development, Health, and Education as well as the police) and together with the local targeted communities (adults and children) to set up Complaint, Feedback and Response Mechanisms (CFRMs) has been aimed at strengthening child-friendly, gender sensitive and disability inclusive accountability and feedback mechanisms in schools and communities and enhance community reporting on child protection issues.

Community members level of confidence in their ability to prevent and respond to child protection risks

Related to this outcome area and improved child development outcomes and protection of children through strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children and community, the ability and confidence of community members in preventing and responding to child protection risks is critical. Indicator 2.6 defines this as the % of community members who have increased confidence in their ability to prevent and respond to child protection risks. It refers to the # of community members surveyed who have higher average confidence score than previous data collection average out of the # of community members surveyed. It is measured at baseline, midline and endline through a survey sampling of community members aged from 18-50+ who are engaged in

project activities. Targets for this indicator were: Somaliland: 60%; Zambia: 60%; Burkina Faso: 65%; Côte d'Ivoire: 60%.

Overall, across the four countries, the % of community members showed increased confidence in their ability to prevent and respond to child protection risks at midline (in 2023) and endline (2024), with all results exceeding the targets. The results from 2023 (see Figure 7) show that almost all participants in Côte d'Ivoire reported an increase in confidence (99% women, 98% men), and 92% of members surveyed in Burkina Faso (87% women, 97% men). Significant increases in confidence were also reported in Zambia (83% women, 73% men), while rates were lower in Somaliland (62% women, 59% men). While the endline results were similar to midline in Burkina Faso (94%), Zambia (81%) and Côte d'Ivoire (99%) endline results for Somaliland showed an increase to 92% from 61% of community members with increased confidence in their ability to address and prevent child protection risks.

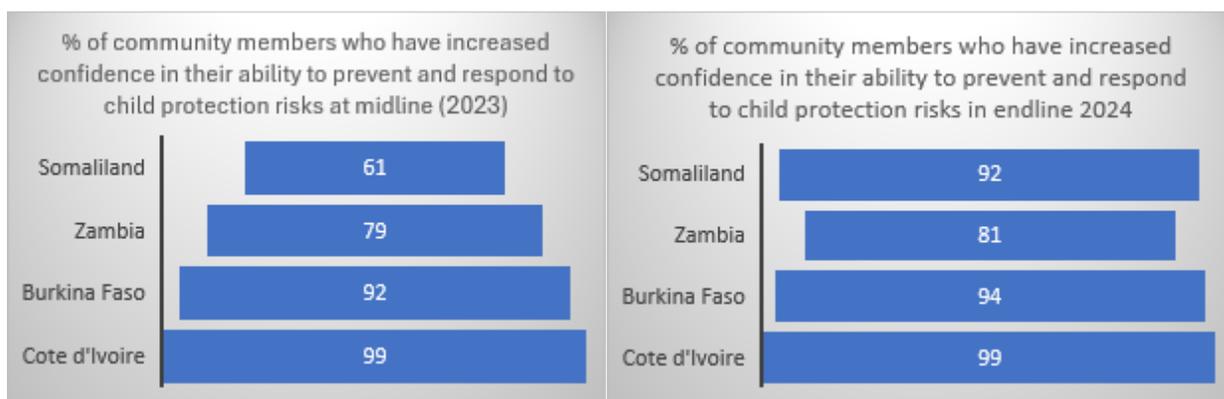


Figure 7. % of community members who have increased confidence in their ability to prevent and respond to child protection risks at midline (2023) and endline (2024) (OI 2.6)

The endline data from Zambia shows a mixed response to the confidence levels of the community to prevent and respond to child protection risks: Confidence levels of the community members’ ability to prevent and respond to the child protection risks among the middle-aged group (30-49 years) rose from 77% at midline to 82% at endline. Additionally, confidence among males increased from 73% at midline to 80% at endline. However, there was a slight decline in confidence levels for older caregivers and female participants, both of whom decreased from 83% at midline to 80% and 82%, respectively. The younger group of parents/caregivers (18-29 years) experienced a minor drop, with confidence levels at 79% at endline, compared to 80% at midline. (Endline data, Zambia, 2025).

Overall, in this outcome area, notable shifts in caregiver behaviour and children’s perception of improved interactions with caregivers is demonstrating tangible behavioural changes.

PROGRESS MADE ON CHILD AND GENDER SENSITIVITY OF SERVICES, SYSTEMS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES (OUTCOME 3)

One of the key elements in SC's child protection work is to strengthen the public structures and legal frameworks in the countries in which it works. The strengthening of child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes therefore forms part of the programme's work to support children, families, communities and the authorities (government) through a multi-sectoral and comprehensive approach. Child protection systems strengthening is key to this. The strengthening of CP laws, policies, and structures is aimed at promoting zero tolerance for violence against children. It also involves building capacity within service providers to deliver high-quality, gender- and child-sensitive services to children and their families.

Signature work in this area includes training of and support to the formal and informal social service workforce to ensure that CP prevention and response services fully meet minimum quality standards. It also includes advocacy to influence legislation or adopt inclusive policies, improved protocols and budget allocation for child protection, and strengthened coordination mechanisms; the integration of child protection, gender equality and disability-inclusion issues in national and local systems and increased localisation of these key issues; and engagement with relevant government ministries, CSOs, children's groups and community-level structures to strengthen their capacity to advocate for and implement programmes to reduce violence against children.

Quality of services

The training, motivation and support of and to the social service workforce – formal or informal, paid or voluntary – is critical to progressing the quality of CP services. The **quality of services** is measured in the programme through minimum quality standards of service.

The quality of services indicator (3.2) is defined as the % of child protection prevention and response service providers (formal and informal) that meet the minimum quality standards. It refers to the # of supported child protection prevention and response service providers that score an average of at least 3 across the quality standards across the total # of supported child protection prevention and response service providers. The data is collected qualitatively through interviews at baseline, midline and endline. The quality of services tool has 10 standards for formal service providers and 10 for informal service providers. For formal service providers (directly operated by the government, a UN agency, an NGO, an International NGO or a legally registered Community Based Organisation), the standards are: information about the service; child safeguarding; compliance with national legislation and regulations; equality and non-discrimination; child participation; staff experience, training and support; privacy; case management; information management; and, service responsiveness. For informal service providers (provided and operated by individual volunteers or community volunteer groups), the standards are information about the service; roles and responsibilities; community ownership and representation; child safeguarding; equality and non-discrimination; child participation; staff experience, training and support; referral and case management; records; and service responsiveness. The overall targets were Somaliland: 70%; Zambia: 90%; Burkina Faso: 70% (Formal: 80%, Informal: 60%), and Côte d'Ivoire: 80%.

The indicators (see Figure 8) generally show a good average from baseline to midline with more progress at endline in the quality of services – that is, those meeting the minimum quality standards. This is especially the case for formal services but less so for informal services. The operational context in all four countries, including drought, humanitarian and security situation etc., also impacted on access to support services during the four years of the programme and has challenged the ability of the formal and informal social service workforce to

respond. See examples from Burkina Faso in previous sections and in the notes related to the figure charts below.

The percentage of child protection prevention and response services providers that meet the minimum quality standards rose between baseline and midline (2023) in Zambia and Somaliland for both formal service providers (reached the target value) and informal service providers (under the target value). Endline results from Somaliland showed that 67% of all service providers met the standards. In Burkina Faso, while 20% of informal service providers met the standards, they were inaccessible in subsequent evaluations due to the security situation (thus 0%). All formal service providers met the minimum quality standards at midline and endline. In Côte d'Ivoire, during the baseline survey in 2023, 50% of formal service providers were recorded as not meeting minimum quality standards. By June 2025, these figures had changed, with 75% of formal service providers meeting minimum quality standards and 50% of informal service providers meeting them.

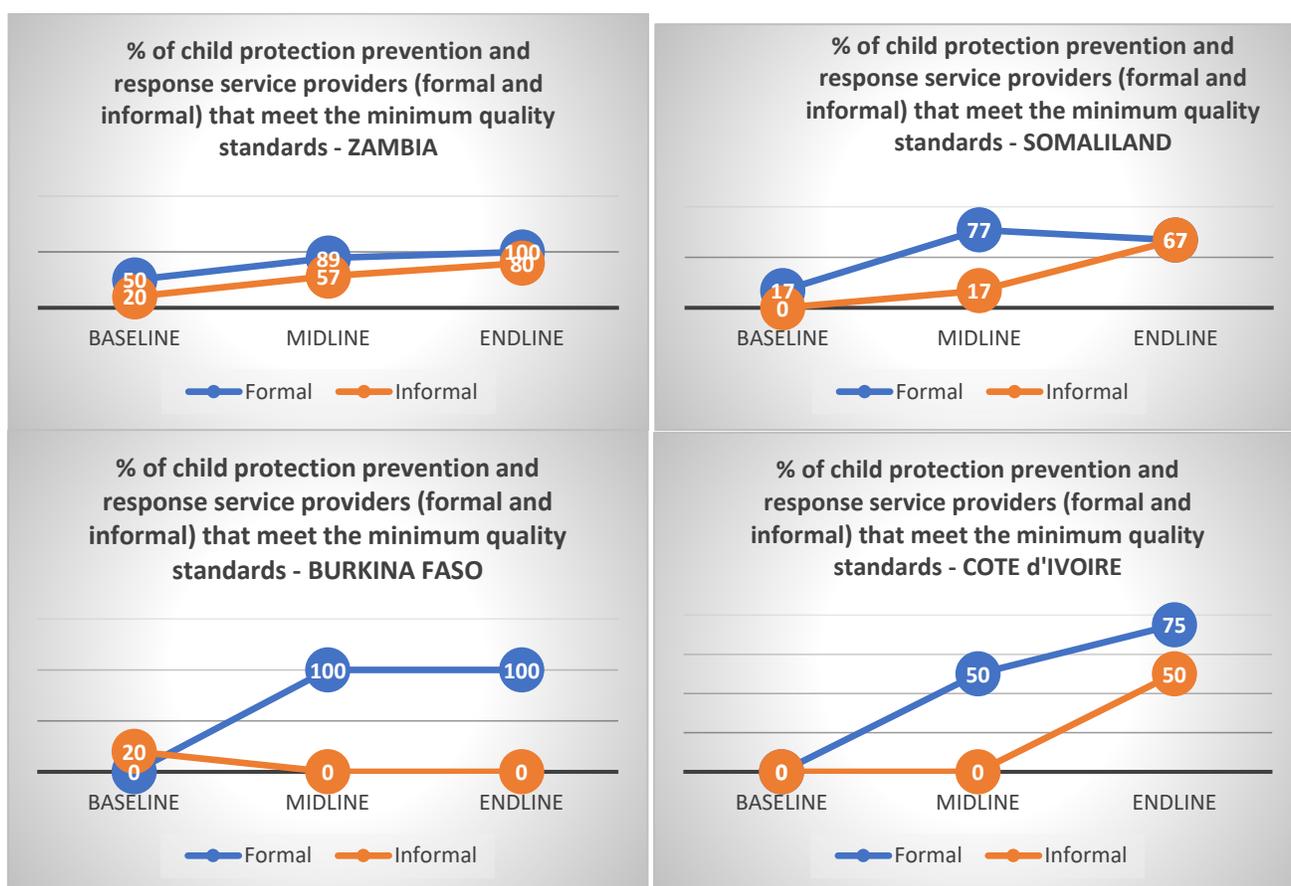


Figure 8. % of child protection prevention and response service providers (formal and informal) that meet the minimum quality standards per country⁵ (OI 3.2)

⁵ Notes: A reason for the decrease in the indicator value for informal service providers for Burkina Faso may be that some of the informal service providers assessed at baseline were inaccessible due to the security situation and are therefore not included in the midline, however some new informal service providers have been included. For Côte d'Ivoire: No formal survey was conducted at baseline for

The endline indicator report for Zambia (April 2025) shows that 94% of child protection service providers (formal and informal) met the minimum quality standards, significantly improving from 75% at midline and 33% at baseline. The 90% target was surpassed, driven by formal providers attaining full compliance at 100% from 50% at baseline and 88% at midline. Informal service providers also showed strong progress, increasing from 20% at baseline and 57% at midline to 80% at endline. The endline assessment attributed this progress to ongoing training, monitoring, and increased support to enhance the capacity of service providers, although it was recognised that continued capacity strengthening, especially for informal service providers, is still needed.

Legal frameworks

Indicator 3.2.1 defines the child protection laws, policies and structures which have been strengthened to promote zero tolerance of violence against children. It refers to the # of key laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks and studies to protect children from violence reviewed, developed or modified with support from SC and the SCF programme. Data is collected from project reports, law/policy/guideline/framework/study documents and reports, and minutes from meetings. The indicator is measured through a tracking tool through annual reporting.

Across all four countries, the mid-term review and endline data showed that work to strengthen legislation, systems and structures to better protect children through strong linkages to and between national and community child protection systems and mechanisms was progressing. A total of 21 laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks and studies to protect children from violence, had been developed or modified with support from SC and the SCF programme from a baseline target of 9, denoting substantial progress (see Figure 9).

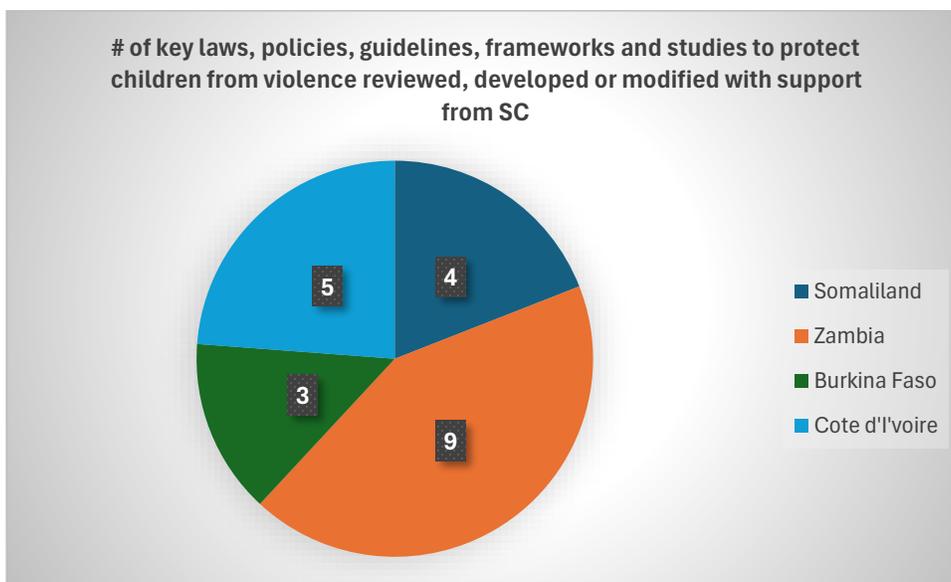


Figure 9. Key laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks and studies to protect children from violence (RI 3.2.1)

informal service providers, but baseline can be considered 0%. The informal CP Committees came into existence with the help of the project and therefore only recently started building the necessary conditions for the minimum quality standards.

In Côte d'Ivoire, SC contributed to the development of two CP laws by participating in the technical groups and supporting the Ministry of Social Affairs in drafting the technical guidance leading to these laws. The Alternative Care Law sets the norms and standards that are applicable to alternative childcare facilities. Institutions which provide childcare are now regulated and are obliged to follow minimum quality standards. In addition, the Foster Family Law, which regulates foster care and foster families, was finalised. This law ensures that there is a strict process for a family to be certified as a foster family. In Burkina Faso, the development of technical guidelines regulating child-friendly spaces was supported. This was an opportunity for SC to advocate for more community involvement in managing a child-friendly space and for improved processes in choosing the sites for these spaces, including the stronger accountability of local government in providing the land. Strategically, SC participated in the elaboration of the Child Protection Children's Code in Burkina Faso. In Zambia, SC supported the review of the Volunteer Policy (2023) and the Zambia national Information and Communication Technology survey tools. It also supported the development and enactment (2022) of the Children's Code Act that provides a platform for the legal protection of children. SC also supported the simplified version of this Code in 2024 which helps to roll it out to children in schools and communities so that they know and understand the law.

In Somaliland, one of the key achievements in strengthening the system was the approval of the Somaliland Child Rights Act in 2022 at the beginning of the programme. SC's long-term goal was to see the realisation of this Act, and they supported its development and enactment with financial and technical resources. In more recent work, SC has supported the drafting of MoLSAF's 5-year implementation plan, the Child Rights Act, the Child Protection policy and the Alternative Care policy.

The challenge remains in implementation of these legislative milestones. One way of doing this has been through advocacy related to research. For example, in Zambia, recent studies on child labour and online safety have been used to further strengthen the policy and legislative environment through advocacy initiatives with parliamentarians. SC used the findings from the study undertaken on the impact of mining on children in Kitwe district (2024) to lobby for improved implementation of laws and policies on child labour including increased resource allocation to the Ministry of Labour. There was also engagement with relevant stakeholders on the need to recognise and prioritise online safety as an integral part of broader child protection systems strengthening following the launch of the Zambia Kids Online study (2022).

The work on the child and gender sensitivity of systems, legislation and structures undertaken by the programme aligns with national child protection systems strengthening and policies – for example, with VAC priorities around parenting and caregiver support as an INSPIRE strategy, on national strategy social norms change and the strengthening of the social service workforce. Child protection systems strengthening is key to sustainability as is discussed in [Section IV](#) on the analysis of OECD criteria and in [Section VII Conclusions](#) below.

VI. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES

Key cross-cutting issues (gender equality and social norms, disability-inclusion, climate change, localisation, child participation) and programmatic approaches such as child rights-based programming, child participation, localization and adaptability are infused through each country programme, and therefore they are also prominent in [Section V](#). The section below provides some high-level reflections and considerations on how cross-cutting issues and programmatic approaches were considered and applied across contexts.

A) CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Gender and disability-inclusion as key cross-cutting priorities

From the outset, gender and inclusion—particularly the rights and participation of persons and children with disabilities—were integrated as cross-cutting priorities across all stages of programme design, implementation and monitoring (e.g. the use of SCI’s Gender Equality Marker and specific SCF tools for cross-cutting issues at planning stage and deliberate consideration of cross-cutting issues during midline and endline reporting). The programme applied a gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive lens to ensure equitable access, representation, and outcomes. This was monitored through disability and gender-disaggregated data and MEAL systems were adapted to track access and outcomes. Additionally, project staff and partners were trained on gender equality and disability-inclusion. For example, this included sign language training in Somaliland and disability rights and barrier analysis trainings in Zambia. In Zambia, the trainings were conducted for staff and partners as well as key community actors such as community CP committees. In Somaliland and Zambia, SC worked with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) who supported the training but also identified persons with disabilities who could, and should, be part of the programme activities. This aligned with a human rights based approach to disability-inclusion and SC’s Disability Inclusion Policy, although it is acknowledged that reach is still too low. In Côte d’Ivoire, project staff, social workers and members of men’s groups defending girls and women have received additional training on gender issues, and action plans have been developed to ensure the sustainability of their activities.

Accountability mechanisms and project spaces were also adapted to ensure accessibility, for example:

- Community feedback mechanisms made physically accessible and supported with sign language or accessible formats.
- Safe Families sessions adapted with transport support and disability-specific sessions.
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities in Child Protection Committees and peer support groups.
- Accessible meeting spaces and inclusive events (e.g., Day of the African Child) to ensure full participation of children with disabilities.

All countries sought to achieve gender balance for adult participation, as well as ensuring boys and girls were engaged in project activities and were able to access services. Intentional efforts were made to recruit men to participate in parenting programmes and child protection groups. Overall, across the four countries, 22% of participants were women and 18% were men (see Figure 10). For child participants, more girls participated (32%) than boys (25%) (see also [Outcome 1](#), for country-specific numbers). Although it is estimated that 15% of populations have disabilities and the programme set a 10% target for inclusion of children with disabilities, only 3% (2947 people) of participants across countries were people with disabilities.

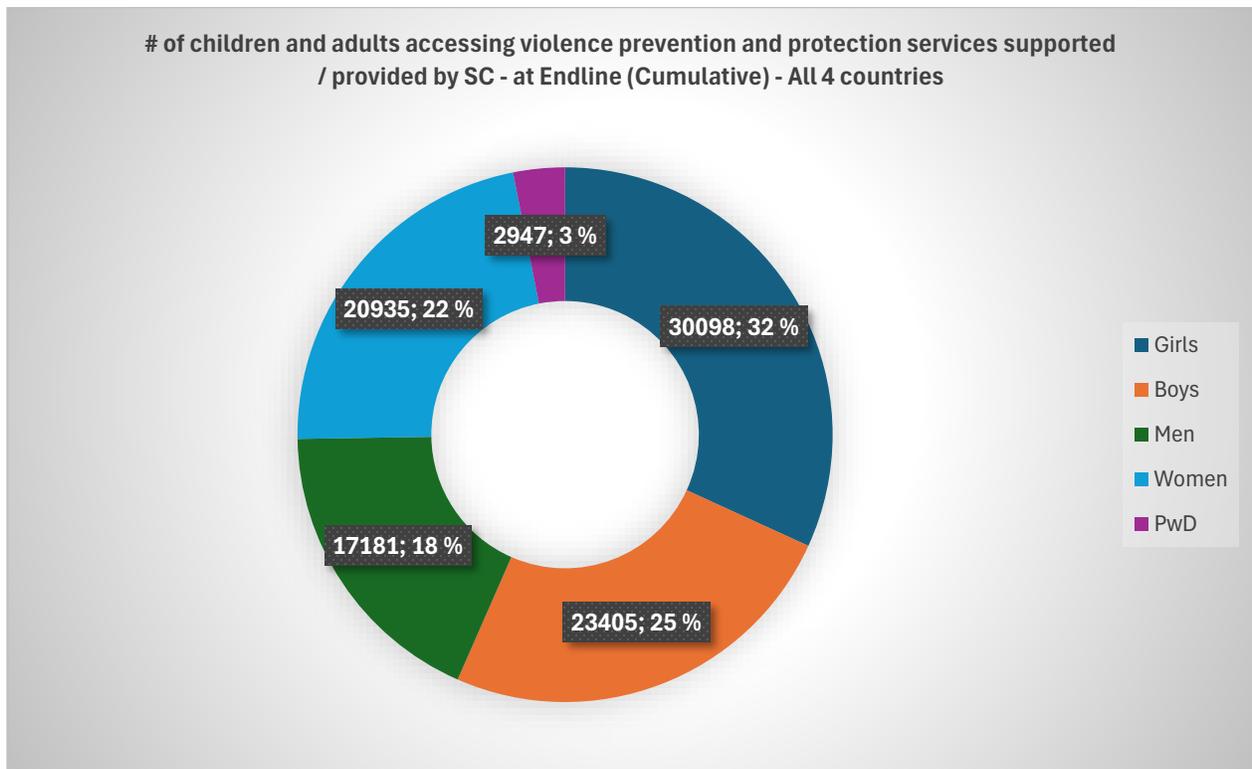


Figure 10. Number of children and adults accessing violence prevention and protection services supported / provided by SC - at Endline (Cumulative) - All 4 countries*

***Note that this data focuses on participants from prevention and response services and does not include all programmes.**

In Côte d'Ivoire, project teams made deliberate efforts to promote gender balance and inclusion at every level of implementation. Across 20 villages, activities were led by 19 women facilitators, demonstrating strong female leadership and fostering more gender-equitable community participation. The creation of 19 "Girl-Friendly Spaces" offered safe and inclusive environments where over 1,682 participants— 1560 girls (including 3 girls with disabilities) and 122 boys —could access learning opportunities, build confidence, and connect with peers. These spaces hosted a variety of activities such as reading sessions, arts and crafts (including knitting and drawing), life skills sessions based on the "Assurer Mon Avenir" ("How to Guarantee my Future") guide, as well as ballet performances and skits. Male engagement was also prioritized through the formation of male-led advocacy groups, which mobilized more than 590 community members to challenge harmful gender norms and promote the rights of women and girls. Infrastructure improvements further supported inclusion, with rehabilitated schools and play areas equipped with accessible features for children with physical disabilities. A total of 73 children with disabilities (37 girls and 36 boys) were identified and actively involved in project activities, including leadership roles in Child Groups and participation in parenting sessions, ensuring their voices and needs were central to the programme's impact.

In Burkina Faso, disability-inclusion was also treated as a core principle throughout the project. All activities were designed and implemented with attention to the participation of persons with disabilities—both children

and adults—across various components, including child clubs, working children and youth grassroots groups, and the Safe Families approach. This inclusive approach extended to individuals with visual and physical impairments, who actively participated in community structures and activities. Marginalized girls with disabilities also benefited from targeted support, such as educational scholarships, which contributed to their empowerment and inclusion. Their participation in child clubs was particularly impactful—two girls with disabilities who joined reported increased self-confidence and greater acceptance by their peers, showing tangible progress in breaking stigma and building inclusive peer environments. Gender considerations were also integrated throughout the implementation of project activities, with the field team recognizing that achieving equal rights for girls and boys requires transformative shifts in social values, as well as in public policies and practices.

“We have worked to ensure that inclusion is a core principle, and that disability and gender are taken into consideration” (Key Informant Interview, Burkina Faso).

Good Practice: Gender and Disability-Inclusion highlights in Burkina Faso	
<p><i>Gender and Disability Inclusion Highlights</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Inclusive beneficiary selection: Committees representing all social groups—including persons with disabilities—are established <i>before</i> selecting beneficiaries. ★ Partner engagement: Implementing partners are required to adopt inclusive approaches, particularly ensuring participation of people with disabilities who are often invisible. ★ Gender integration across programming: No gender discrimination in children’s clubs, case management, or violence-free parenting programmes which helps to overcome social barriers. Gender is embedded across all activity levels, including accountability mechanisms (see more on shifting gender norms). ★ Balanced participation: Women, men, girls, and boys are meaningfully represented in all programme aspects. ★ M&E with a gender lens: Gender considerations are systematically included in monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes, including in indicator collection - data disaggregated by male, female and persons living with disabilities are consistently collected. 	<p><i>Observed Changes and Impact</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Shifting gender norms: Boys are increasingly engaged in household chores, signalling transformation of traditional roles. Fathers are more engaged in parenting roles and shifting disciplinary methods. ★ Greater community reporting: Increased referrals and reporting of child protection cases by communities, associations, and at state level, enabling quicker response and reduced harm. ★ Violence prevention: Community awareness of violence causes and consequences has improved, leading to stronger local capacity for prevention and response.

Parent-led peer support groups for caregivers of children with disabilities have empowered parents, built solidarity, and facilitated access to services. This is evident in Ndola (Zambia), and in Hargeisa and Berbera (Somaliland). Members contribute to emergency funds, advocate for housing and inclusion, and engage in awareness-raising activities. Additionally, disability-focused sessions that were developed in collaboration with an Organization of Persons with Disabilities, were integrated into Safe Families parenting groups. In Zambia, these sessions helped caregivers reduce harsh discipline and build more nurturing relationships. Parents reported improved emotional well-being for themselves and their children.

In Somaliland, children with disabilities participated in Child Rights Groups and took on leadership roles. As a staff member described, *“One of these children is a boy with disabilities who... was forced to drop out of school... after participating in different child protection activities he regained his courage and re-joined school. He changed so much so he was selected the class prefect... he also advocates for [other children] and asks them supported whenever he is aware of a child who needs support”* (Somaliland Annual Report, 2022).

The Isha Boroma Peer Support Group in Hargeisa, Somaliland, demonstrates how community-based efforts can foster meaningful disability-inclusion. Comprising 21 parents—primarily mothers—of children with disabilities ages 3 to 15 years, the group offers emotional, material, and practical support while challenging stigma and isolation. Members contribute to an emergency fund, mobilize local donations, and advocate successfully for basic needs like housing and mobility aids. Their shared experiences have shifted individual perceptions, encouraging more loving, inclusive parenting and a sense of collective belonging. Notably, children with disabilities are becoming more visible in the community, even referring peers to the group. In an FGD (Somaliland Travel Report, 2023), one mother shared that the biggest change for her, being part of the group, is the change in her own perception – she now notices children with disabilities much more. Another mother shared, *“I thought I was alone, the only one with a child who has a disability. Having joined the group, I now realise there are other mothers like me, and I am not alone with my problems.”* Another mother shared that she has learned to communicate and be more affectionate with her child: *“My child is also happier and feels more loved, when I do not neglect them like I used to. I used to think they are different from other children. But now as I give them more love, they also seek this love and hugs”* (Somaliland Travel Report, 2023). However, a challenge highlighted is that most children with disabilities still cannot access school due to costs and limited inclusive options, underscoring the need for stronger advocacy and systemic change.

From a gender sensitive to a gender transformative approach

Each country's programme has worked towards gender equality through gender sensitive and gender responsive programming with varying degrees of gender transformative programming. Projects began with gender-sensitive approaches—ensuring access, safety, and participation for all genders (as explored in the section above) —and evolved toward transformative goals to begin addressing harmful norms and root causes of inequality. In year two (2023), SCF ensured that the programme moved beyond gender sensitivity and carried out a separate analysis in all projects to track progress in addressing the root causes of identified gender inequalities. Lessons learnt and best practices on gender mainstreaming and gender transformative strategies were documented and shared. Across country projects, gender transformative processes were supported through actions such as youth-led advocacy, male engagement, and dialogue with traditional and religious leaders. In Somaliland, for example, the team’s goal was to apply gender-transformative strategies to positively transform the root causes of high acceptance of SGBV among communities.

A key element of gender transformation is gender and social norms changes. Some examples of this as follows:

- Engaging men’s network groups to challenge negative gender stereotypes, encouraging fathers to participate in childcare and positive parenting through Safe Families sessions (Zambia)
- Supporting girls and boys to question harmful practices like child marriage and FGM through community awareness activities, radio broadcasts, and youth clubs (Burkina Faso)
- Boys joining menstrual hygiene sessions traditionally reserved for girls, to help break taboos and promote gender equality (Zambia)

- Working with parents of children with disabilities to shift from hiding their children at home to enrolling them in schools and involving them in community activities (Somaliland)
- Increasing the reporting of gender-based violence against boys, challenging silence and stigma around male victimhood (Côte d’Ivoire)
- Training community and religious leaders to speak out against harmful traditional practices, including child marriage and FGM, and to support children’s rights (Somaliland).

Programme highlight. Gender transformative programming in Côte d’Ivoire

The project in Côte d’Ivoire exemplifies strong elements of a gender-transformative approach. The approach adopted moved decisively beyond gender sensitivity by intentionally addressing and transforming the root causes of gender inequality. Rather than merely acknowledging gender disparities or adapting interventions to accommodate them, the programme sought to shift power relations, challenge social norms, and reconfigure traditional roles that perpetuate discrimination. Implemented in a context marked by strong patriarchal norms and cultural resistance, the project adopted a multi-level strategy to catalyse change. The approach is holistic, participatory, and intersectional, and relies on the engagement of a broad coalition of local actors.

This transformation in Côte d’Ivoire was embedded in the project design, which prioritised co-creation with communities and positioned both women and men, girls and boys, as active agents of change, through gender transformative strategies and mechanisms that could be further sustained and institutionalised within national systems. Interesting examples of this approach are:

- Community-driven empowerment of girls and women through girl-friendly spaces co-created with communities and the active engagement of women, men, and children to promote girls’ self-protection and leadership (see below).
- Transformation of social norms, and male engagement through male advocacy groups and gender-sensitized community leaders trained to prevent GBV and promote gender equity from within their communities.
- Structural change through participatory tools and advocacy, including the use of “Activity Clocks” to reveal gendered labour burdens and the formation of a civil society coalition to influence local government budgeting for gender-responsive priorities.

The Safe Families intervention in Zambia demonstrated measurable progress towards shifting gendered caregiving norms—a critical component of gender transformation—as shown in the [2025 study by Save the Children Zambia and Save the Children Finland](#). Following the intervention, the proportion of caregivers who agreed that men should actively participate in child rearing more than doubled, increasing from 29% at baseline to 60% at endline—a statistically significant change ($p < 0.001$). Notably, while initial differences between male and female caregivers’ attitudes were observed at baseline—with women less likely to endorse male engagement in caregiving—these differences were no longer statistically significant post-intervention. Furthermore, younger caregivers exhibited particularly strong shifts in attitudes, suggesting that age may play a role in receptivity to transforming gender norms. The study also found associations between more gender-equitable caregiving attitudes and positive parenting practices, including improved caregiver-child relationships and reduced use of physical and humiliating punishment.

Beyond attitudinal change, the project in Zambia made progress toward gender-transformative programming by explicitly targeting the root causes of gender inequality in caregiving and masculinities that underpin violence and discrimination. Implementation strategies such as male-only parenting groups, engagement with male faith leaders, and the formation of men’s networks created safe spaces for reflection and action. These efforts helped to normalize men’s involvement in caregiving, reduce stigma, and promote more equitable family dynamics. Parallel programming with adolescent boys and girls challenged harmful norms of masculinity and female submissiveness through storytelling, life skills training, and social norms change dialogues. A transformative dimension was also evident in the integration of intersectionality and the project’s refusal to “work around” inequalities—instead confronting harmful beliefs and structures directly and enabling community-driven shifts in power, perception, and participation.

The integration of climate change programming

Climate change has increasingly emerged as a critical cross-cutting issue across Save the Children’s programming contexts. Over the past five years, efforts to mainstream climate change adaptation (CCA) into child protection, education, and resilience work have grown, though with varied uptake and capacity across country offices. Climate change was considered a cross-cutting issue in the programme’s development, although it received less emphasis compared to other priorities such as gender and disability-inclusion. Insights from FGDs and KIIs highlight that climate change considerations were not deeply developed and should be further integrated into the programme. In most countries, climate change adaptation is still in the early stages of integration, with important steps being taken to build staff capacity, pilot climate risk tools, engage children in advocacy, and strengthen community resilience through awareness and anticipatory action.

For example, in Côte d’Ivoire, while the project itself may have limited direct environmental impact, participants noted that the northern regions of the country are increasingly affected by drought, which contributes to internal displacement. There is also a risk of flooding, although it has not yet affected the intervention zone. Unpredictable rainfall patterns were mentioned as another climate-related challenge, affecting both community and school-based activities. These climate-related disruptions are becoming more pronounced, and respondents emphasized the need to incorporate specific activities to address them. The situation in Côte d’Ivoire shows that strengthening the programme’s responsiveness to climate change impacts and embedding more adaptive strategies will be essential for future implementation phases.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of illegal gold mining, which is becoming increasingly widespread in the northern part of the country, has not spared the Gontougo region. This practice causes considerable damage to arable land and leads to children dropping out of school, exposing them to various issues (drug use, sexual and economic exploitation).

In Burkina Faso, the climate change response was more developed, combining awareness-raising, resilience-building, child participation, and institutional strengthening within a challenging security and environmental context. Key activities included awareness campaigns on disaster risks and climate change to improve community knowledge of floods and droughts, promote risk reduction measures, and encourage better prevention practices. Three training sessions in Siby, Safané, and Dédougou reached 136 community leaders (only 5 were women), alongside 30 village-level awareness sessions led by trained facilitators. Economic resilience support included cash and income-generating activity (IGA) kits for 225 vulnerable households (e.g., small livestock, petty trade), helping families cope with increasing insecurity. Children engaged in the climate theme through theatre, dialogue, and awareness activities. Emergency hotline numbers were shared to support

safety and preparedness, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) was integrated across project components to strengthen systems and institutions. Early Warning Committees supported local risk monitoring, and a project-level mitigation plan was foreseen to anticipate future climate shocks.

In Zambia, the integration of climate change into programming gained urgency due to the 2024 national drought emergency, which devastated livelihoods across 84 of 116 districts. The crisis intensified protection risks for children, particularly girls, who faced increased exposure to transactional sex, early marriage, and school dropout. The Safe Families approach worked closely with local government and disaster risk management committees, identifying community-specific vulnerabilities, and incorporating key messages on protection risks into community sessions. In Somaliland, the integration of climate change was more visible, supported by local partners with expertise in climate adaptation. Activities included community-based disaster awareness, training of child rights groups on climate change, and child-led campaigns such as tree planting and advocacy through the Generation Hope platform. The project also responded to displacement caused by droughts and floods by supporting affected children with school materials, psychosocial support, and referrals for case management.

In Somaliland, climate change efforts under the programme have included mental health and psychosocial support for children affected by droughts and floods, rapid assessments of drought-affected families, and training for child rights groups on climate change advocacy. Awareness-raising activities have been conducted with displaced communities, and children have participated in tree-planting campaigns and the Generation Hope campaign to highlight climate issues to decision-makers. While these efforts are promising, progress has been assessed as somewhat lagging, with recommendations to strengthen staff capacity, integrate climate resilience into child protection systems, and promote inclusive community-based climate adaptation strategies. Key messages on fire and flood safety were disseminated in communities, and children were engaged in peer education around climate risks. Despite these promising efforts, climate change integration was still rated as “somewhat lagging behind” in the MTR process, with gaps in structured adaptation planning, inclusion of children with disabilities in early warning systems, and inter-sectoral collaboration. These efforts reflect a layered approach to climate action that combines immediate community engagement with longer-term resilience building, which could be strengthened in future programming, with Save the Children’s stronger vision and capacities on this topic.

Progress towards gender equality and disability inclusion milestones

These cross-cutting achievements reflect steady progress against SCF’s gender equality and disability inclusion milestones. Gender analyses, action plans, and gender-transformative approaches have been systematically advanced, while disability inclusion has progressed through barrier analyses, targeted capacity building, and partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). Monitoring and adaptive practices, including disability- and gender-disaggregated data, have supported accountability and continual learning, even as further efforts are needed to close participation gaps and sustain transformative change across country projects.

Over the programme period, progress has been made toward SCF’s gender equality milestones. Gender analyses were conducted using SCF’s situational analysis tool, leading to gender equality action plans across projects. Baselines included sex-disaggregated data, and lessons learned on gender-transformative practices were documented and shared in year two (2023). Action plans were revised in year three (2024) based on progress reviews, with impact assessments and final evaluations planned to confirm transformative change in at least 75% of PBS-supported projects by year four (2025).

On disability inclusion, all MFA PBS projects used SC Finland’s disability inclusion tool to analyse barriers and assess child and gender sensitivity in 2022, with many projects committing to implement related actions. Resources for capacity building and partnerships with OPDs were allocated in 2023. Mid-term reviews in 2023 captured progress, and experiences will be further consolidated in 2025 to inform ongoing disability-transformative approaches. For non-MFA PBS projects, relevant analyses and activities to promote disability inclusion have been identified and implemented where required.

B) PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES

Child Rights-Based Programming and accountability approach

The programme is rooted in a rights-based approach, integrating prevention, response, participation, and accountability at every stage. Beginning with a contextual understanding of protection risks, the programme prioritized qualitative inquiry—such as focus groups and interviews—to surface both risk and protective factors. In Côte d’Ivoire, this included analysing how violence is perceived differently by girls and boys, informing gender-sensitive interventions focused on transforming social norms and strengthening local capacities. Community mechanisms—such as children’s parliaments, watch committees, and awareness campaigns—were revitalized to embed rights-based norms at the local level.

In Somaliland, accountability mechanisms were designed with a strong child-focus. Child-friendly portable suggestion boxes, face-to-face consultations, and accessible toll-free numbers ensured that feedback was received and acted upon, including inputs from children with disabilities. Children were trained to lead their own initiatives, from peer-to-peer education to tree planting campaigns and climate advocacy. Notably, a child representative from Hargeisa spoke at a regional Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) conference, showcasing how meaningful participation can extend from local projects to international platforms (Somaliland Annual Report, 2022). Zambia similarly applied structured accountability practices, including participatory review sessions, post-activity monitoring with children, and direct engagement in planning and evaluation. In 2024, 250 children participated in Safe Families cohorts that contributed to tracking service effectiveness and satisfaction⁶. Child rights groups led their own community awareness sessions and were involved in regional platforms such as the Digital Defenders Conference and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Summit on Democracy (Zambia, Child Rights Accountability Summary – Save the Children, 2024).

Programme highlight: Somaliland: Midterm Stocktaking workshop results reinforced the importance of multilayered programming and impacts of holistic child rights initiatives:

- Changes in You: “I learn how to be polite and listen to my parents with respect”; “I share my knowledge about child rights and being good child to other children to benefit from it and I also report if we see incident of child abuse”; “I am more social and communicative with other children and communities as well.”

⁶ The total number of children who attended the Safe Families sessions in 2024 was 250 spread between cohort 1 and 2 as follows: Cohort 1: 125 children (68G/57B) including 5 children with disabilities (3G/2B). Cohort 2 also had 125 children (65G/60B) including 7 children with disabilities (3G/4B). The overall total was 250 children (133Girls/117Boys) of whom 12 (6G/6B) were CwDs.

- Changes in Your Family: *“More connections and understanding have been made inside our family than ever before”;* *“My family supports me, and they cheer me on and give me compliments when I accomplish something well”;* *“ We solve our problems and issues of difficulties together as a family.”*

-Changes in community: *“Our community supports the children by avoiding hurting them emotionally and physically.”* *“Our community works together and supports each other”;* *“My community is aware about children's rights, and they report to the community committees if they see an abused child.”*

A variety of mechanisms—suggestion boxes, complaints systems, midline stocktaking, and visual feedback tools—helped ensure children’s views were systematically gathered and acted on. The AskKids child-friendly digital tool, used in Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso, allowed children to safely express their views without adult influence, deepening programmatic responsiveness. The AskKids tool has been intentionally designed to address issues experienced by the most marginalised and deprived children. It has an oral feature which allows children with lower levels of literacy to express themselves independently (see below).

These approaches underscore a broader institutional shift toward child-led, accountable programming that listens, responds, and adapts to the lived realities of children. Children’s voices are also actively sought and systematically integrated into programme decisions through consultations and participatory mechanisms, ensuring their views are respected and acted upon. In Somaliland, for example, child-friendly accountability tools—including portable suggestion boxes and face-to-face consultations—enabled meaningful input, even from children with disabilities.

Child participation

Children were placed at the centre of this programme—not merely as beneficiaries but as active agents of change. Across all four countries, the programme promoted structured opportunities for children to express their views, lead initiatives, and contribute to decision-making processes, fostering a deeper sense of agency, protection, and inclusion. For example, in Côte d’Ivoire, local children’s parliaments in areas like Bondoukou and Tanda have been reactivated and supported in developing their own action plans. Young journalists have been trained and mobilized to produce radio programmes and articles on child rights issues. Children have also led advocacy efforts targeting local authorities on key themes such as digital rights, environmental protection, gender-based violence, and child domestic labour. These participatory dynamics help embed children’s right to be heard more deeply into the community fabric.

In Burkina Faso, children’s participation was key to the project. As one key informant noted, *Participation is central (...) all actions are implemented with their consent or accountability.”* (Key Informant Interview, Burkina Faso). Through structured group discussions, children reflected on their experiences, shared views on issues like violence and child marriage, and identified changes in themselves and their communities. Many reported greater confidence, improved relationships with parents, reduced peer violence, and stronger friendships. A particularly notable outcome was their growing role in conflict resolution and promoting respectful communication at home and in school⁷. These testimonies highlight how meaningful child participation leads to lasting interpersonal and community-level change. Through the association Here Kadi-supported children’s clubs and youth-led action plans, over 1500 children in total received training in child rights, life skills, and leadership—

⁷ Based on Focus Group Discussions with children organized by SCI Burkina Faso.

resulting in initiatives such as school awareness sessions and community forums⁸. The evaluation of child participation conducted by Save the Children was particularly helpful to highlight the added value of child participation in this project.

The AskKids tool, mostly used in Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso, also enabled children to share feedback safely and independently in French or in local language, strengthening accountability and ethical, child-centred programming. Despite minor challenges around transcription, its national deployment was seen as a success and a motivating experience for children. As one informant noted, *“Using the AskKids tool allowed children to have their say, without influence... This tool was even rolled out nationally, and it was a success.”* (Key Informant Interview, Côte d’Ivoire).

In Somaliland, child participation was mainstreamed through child rights groups, disability-inclusive clubs, storytelling trainings, and structured peer-to-peer sessions. Children led advocacy efforts on issues such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child marriage, and school dropouts, often supported by Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and the local partner YOVENCO. Child-led initiatives included community awareness campaigns, school-based discussions on Safe Families, and environmental activities like a youth-led tree planting campaign linked to the Conference of Parties (COP28). Children also represented their peers at regional conferences on children affected by armed conflict and global forums such as the Generation of Hope campaign, voicing concerns on climate change and inequality. In Zambia, children participated in structured Safe Families sessions, school councils, and community child rights groups (CRGs), where they engaged in advocacy around violence against children, online safety, and access to education. Two children participated in the national children’s parliament, with one later presenting at the SADC summit. A child-led research initiative in Kitwe allowed children to design, collect, and analyse data on teenage pregnancy, culminating in a local action plan. Children also influenced school infrastructure improvements through feedback mechanisms and lobbied decision-makers, directly demonstrating the power of informed, organized youth to drive change.

Together, these efforts reinforced the importance of safe, inclusive, and meaningful participation, where children not only share concerns but help shape the solutions. Ongoing challenges—such as scale, inclusion of children with disabilities, and adult gatekeeping—highlight the need to continue investing in capacity-building, feedback systems, and platforms that empower children to lead.

Localisation: local actors and community engagement, capacity building and alignment with local and national priorities

The programme strongly contributed to the localisation of actions and the strengthening of national systems through the active involvement of government, local actors, and communities. Rooted in national priorities, the programme’s design and implementation were guided by a bottom-up approach, ensuring that interventions were not only contextually relevant but also community-owned. Across all four countries, Save the Children and its partners worked to shift local actors from passive beneficiaries to active co-creators—supporting them to lead planning, coordination, and service delivery efforts while strengthening links with public institutions and national policy frameworks.

In Côte d’Ivoire, for example, the project built on existing partnerships and community structures, conducting a mapping of child protection actors across 20 villages and creating a regional database of 94 local mechanisms

⁸ Based on Key Informant Interviews.

to support coordinated responses. Community participation was prioritised from the start: leaders, women’s groups, and youth representatives were consulted in design and monitoring processes, while local actors joined thematic integration workshops to ensure ownership and relevance. Capacity strengthening was rolled out at all levels: from training 44 community volunteers on positive parenting, to equipping social workers, civil society members, and frontline service providers with tools and knowledge on child protection and GBV case management. Public institutions (police, social services, education, and health) were assessed and supported to develop quality improvement plans, while collaboration with local governments (municipalities, regional councils) promoted intersectoral coordination and sustainability. The local NGO *Notre Grenier* underwent a capacity assessment and tailored support plan, enhancing its role in national advocacy platforms and local budget negotiations for child protection.

Similar localisation efforts were observed in Burkina Faso, where SC and its partners engaged families, communities, and children in Safe Families, the positive parenting programme, reaching 375 parents and 375 children in three communes. Community leaders were trained on gender equality, disaster risks, and child protection, enabling them to act as agents of social norm change. National partners - Here Kadi and the Associations of Working Children and Youth (AEJT) - benefited from the Organisational Capacity Development (OCD) programme, developing internal policies, advocacy strategies, and child-friendly tools, while enhancing their technical and institutional capacities. Local protection systems were further strengthened through support to provincial services and reinvigoration of communal protection networks, whose action plans directly reached over 2,000 children and 800 adults. These efforts collectively reinforced local leadership, accountability, and sustainability of child protection systems.

In Zambia, strong coordination with District Child Protection Committees (DCPCs), community development assistants, and informal protection actors enhanced the reach and responsiveness of the child protection system. A multi-tiered approach to capacity building—including refresher trainings, community-level mapping, and improved referral linkages—helped connect formal systems with traditional and grassroots structures. Children themselves played an active role in risk mapping and advocacy, reinforcing both local ownership and the integration of children’s voices in system strengthening efforts.

In Somaliland, Save the Children’s long-standing partnership with YOVENCO illustrates the potential of deeply localised leadership. YOVENCO’s role went beyond implementation to co-leading planning, coordination, and capacity-building efforts. The organisation worked closely with CWCs, local government, and universities to deliver training on child protection and safeguarding, while also supporting inclusive practices through disability-focused initiatives and collaboration with child rights groups. Their involvement in national coordination platforms and policy advocacy demonstrated how localisation can contribute not only to programme delivery but also to broader system reform.

Adaptability

“Because of the drought, many parents were stressed... therefore it was essential to conduct more Safe Families sessions both for children and adults.” (Somaliland Annual Report, 2022)

The programme demonstrated strong adaptability across diverse and challenging contexts—conflict, displacement, climate shocks, and economic crises—where the needs of children were high and evolving. This flexibility was enabled by the deep contextual knowledge of local partners and the agility permitted by a responsive donor, allowing interventions to be rapidly tailored and recalibrated.

In Burkina Faso, adaptability proved critical in the face of escalating insecurity and political instability. Originally launched in 2022 in three provinces, the programme had to quickly adjust its geographic scope and delivery model. In the first year (2022), the full package of activities planned for Yé was relocated to Dédougou, where a growing number of displaced families had sought refuge. Programme efforts were reallocated to focus on establishing child clubs, delivering positive parenting sessions, and distributing emergency cash transfers to address immediate protection and survival needs. Due to ongoing political instability and insecurity, activities were adjusted to include school supplies, protection kits, and additional mental health support under the positive parenting component. Flexible humanitarian funding allowed rapid response to emerging crises without undermining long-term objectives. Community engagement remained central to adaptation. Annual planning with all partners, joint review mechanisms, community consultations, and accountability systems helped align priorities. In every village, child clubs were established, trained in child rights and group facilitation, and empowered to create protective structures within their communities—ensuring children’s voices remained active despite the crisis.

In Somaliland, project teams responded to displacement, economic crisis, and recurring droughts by reprogramming activities to meet urgent needs. Safe Families sessions were expanded to support stressed families, while case management services were scaled up to assist children affected by the Waaheen market fire, conflict, and displacement. Local partnerships, including with YOVENCO and child welfare committees, ensured responsiveness and sustained services in the face of climate shocks and urban migration. In Zambia, the programme demonstrated adaptability during the 2024 drought emergency. Power outages and school closures delayed implementation, but project teams adjusted timelines, introduced solar backup systems, and worked with District Disaster Management Committees to integrate child protection into crisis planning. In Kitwe and Ndola, capacity building for local disaster teams and protection actors enabled more effective response to food insecurity, child marriage risks, and service disruptions. These examples illustrate the importance of flexible, locally informed programming that can pivot effectively in response to evolving risks—particularly when built on strong local relationships, real-time feedback loops, and multi-level coordination.

VI. KEY LEARNINGS AND PROMISING PRACTICES

“Advocacy and awareness raising on harmful traditional practices... entails national level structures working with sub national and community-based structures to ensure needs are assessed, root causes and strategies identified, and prevention and response mechanisms put in place.” (Capacity development Framework, Somaliland, Case Management Task Force, 2025)

Key learning on gender: One key lesson learned across country projects is that **gender transformation requires deliberate, sustained, and multi-level engagement—moving beyond inclusion to actively shift social norms and power dynamics.** For example, successful strategies across programmes included the co-creation of girl-friendly spaces, participatory tools like “Activity Clocks” to challenge gendered labour roles, and targeted male engagement through safe, gender-segregated spaces. Crucially, programming that fostered local ownership and intersectional approaches, including work with faith leaders and disability-inclusive platforms, proved most effective in building momentum for change. In Côte d’Ivoire, the fact that customary chiefs and youth and women presidents in communities are recognised as the guarantors of customs, meant that their involvement and commitment were essential to boost behavioural change.

These practices show that community-driven transformation is possible even in contexts with strong patriarchal norms—if interventions are holistic, participatory, and grounded in the lived realities of women, men, girls, and boys. A key lesson from the programme is the importance of **strengthening partnerships across national, sub-national, and community levels to address harmful traditional practices and child protection risks** in a sustained way. National structures must be supported to develop and enforce child protection laws and policies, while sub-national authorities require resources and training to implement and coordinate locally. Stronger linkages between formal and community-based systems—particularly with religious and traditional leaders—are essential to shift harmful norms, improve prevention and response mechanisms, and ensure child protection services are accessible, especially in rural and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) settings.

“We need to continue being gender sensitive and improve on being gender transformative. We need to tackle the root causes of gender inequality to get there – for example, through our men’s engagement work and our work with girls and boys we have already started being gender transformative.” (Key Informant Interview, SCF).

Despite these gains, several barriers remain. For example, male participation in Safe Families sessions continues to be uneven due to time constraints, gendered expectations, and reluctance to engage in mixed-gender discussions. While attitudinal shifts were observed, they did not always translate into sustained behavioural change—especially among men who still held inequitable beliefs. The percentage of male caregivers who reported using mainly non-violent disciplining methods increased in all countries in the 2024 cohort (see Figure 4) demonstrating important progress but also the need for continued support in non-violent parenting. While GBV was addressed through dialogues and men’s network advocacy, stronger links between norm change and GBV prevention are needed. Future programming should strengthen collaboration with women’s rights organizations, deepen adolescent engagement through multiple sessions, and build on successful male engagement strategies to sustain momentum for gender transformation across the household and community levels. Additionally, promising lessons from piloting the additional question set in Safe Families should be scaled up by including it in all pre- and post-assessments to generate stronger evidence on outcomes, and follow-up monitoring with caregivers and children should be prioritized to better understand how changes are sustained over time.

In Somaliland, the project combined gender-responsive and emerging gender-transformative strategies to address harmful social norms linked to GBV and child protection risks. Community dialogues, youth-led campaigns, and male-only parenting sessions helped challenge practices like FGM and child marriage, while promoting caregiving roles for men. Inclusive approaches—such as disability champions and safe spaces for girls—supported intersectional gender equality. Although challenges remained, including limited engagement with women’s rights groups and sustaining male participation, the project laid critical groundwork for norm change and demonstrated the potential for localized, participatory approaches to shift attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate inequality and violence.

Key learning on disability inclusion: Programmes applied both **targeted interventions** (i.e. tailored sessions for caregivers of children with disabilities such as the Isha Boroma Peer Support Group in Hargeisa, Somaliland, highlighted above) and **mainstreamed inclusion strategies** (i.e. inclusive parenting sessions, child rights groups, and case management). This approach ensured that the specific needs of children with disabilities and their caregivers were addressed, while also promoting their full participation alongside peers in broader child protection and parenting initiatives. As a result, children with disabilities were not only included but also empowered to take on leadership roles and advocate for their rights.

The programme not only increased visibility and participation of marginalized groups but also contributed to measurable shifts in community perceptions—**reducing stigma and fostering inclusive, rights-based environments for all children, regardless of gender or ability**. In Burkina Faso, to ensure effective inclusion, the project prioritized collaboration with local social workers, who supported the identification and referral of children in need of protection, including those with disabilities. Community-based processes, such as participatory listing and validation (procès-verbal), helped stabilize and monitor vulnerable groups. Capacity-building efforts focused on making inclusion a guiding principle, integrating both gender and disability into programming and monitoring. However, challenges remained, particularly in addressing parental reluctance and ensuring that facilitators had the necessary skills to effectively communicate with and engage children with disabilities. These gaps underscore the need for continued investment in inclusive training and sensitization to fully realize the rights and potential of all children, regardless of their abilities.

Another promising practice from Somaliland is that **child and youth disability champions** were trained to raise awareness, identify peers with protection needs, and represent their voices in community forums, helping shift norms and enhance peer support. In Zambia, SCF and Abilis (a Finnish Organization for Persons with Disabilities) piloted three disability-focused parenting sessions to supplement the core Safe Families model. These sessions were well-received and created a space for peer learning among caregivers. This approach could be applied in other settings.

Key learning on climate change: A key lesson from the country projects is the urgent need to integrate climate change adaptation more systematically into child protection programming. In general, links between climate and child protection were sometimes weak, highlighting the need for a more **holistic and environmentally conscious approach**. Climate-related shocks—such as droughts, floods, and crop failure—are increasing in frequency and severity, and intensifying existing child protection risks, particularly for girls, children with disabilities, and displaced populations. In Zambia, the 2024 drought revealed major preparedness gaps, with harmful coping strategies like child marriage and transactional sex emerging in response to food insecurity. While initial steps—such as coordination with disaster risk committees and community awareness-raising—were taken, the approach remains largely reactive. In contrast, in Somaliland, promising efforts included child-led climate advocacy, integration of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) support for climate-affected children, and community awareness campaigns on fire and flood risks. However, challenges persist, including limited staff capacity, weak linkages between community action and national policy, and a lack of inclusive planning that ensures the voices of children, youth, and persons with disabilities are represented. Future programming should **prioritize climate-informed protection systems, strengthen local-to-national coordination, and invest in inclusive, anticipatory action**. The experience in Burkina Faso offers further insight into addressing climate change in a context of insecurity. Community awareness campaigns—timed before the rainy season—received strong feedback, and children’s participation in playful, practical climate activities proved effective. Income-generating activities (IGAs) helped bolster household resilience (Key Informant Interview, Burkina Faso).

Key learning on the holistic and community-based child protection approaches: The effectiveness of Save the Children and its partners in implementing an integrated approach to child protection - centred on preventing violence, strengthening response mechanisms, and ensuring appropriate care for children affected by abuse - needs to be highlighted. A particularly powerful example is the Safe Families approach, which has led to remarkable changes in parent-child relationships within communities. The positive parenting approach has enabled families to foster open dialogue, reduce conflict, and rebuild trust. Parents, once distant or authoritarian, now communicate more effectively with their **children—who are increasingly seen as active**

contributors to family life rather than passive dependents. This shift has revived traditional African values that emphasize the central role of the child in community life, which had weakened over time. **Children are once again viewed as a collective responsibility,** and violations of their rights now trigger community-wide responses. The community feels valued and engaged in protecting children, and child protection is no longer perceived as the sole responsibility of mothers, but of both parents equally. Testimonies reveal that this approach has restored harmony in many households, even those facing compounding challenges such as poverty. The role of trained community volunteers has been critical in supporting this transformation, and there is growing demand from other villages to adopt the same approach. In contexts where parenting sessions have been combined with livelihood activities (IGA), the impact on **family cohesion and resilience** has been even stronger, demonstrating the added value of integrated programming.

Key learning on adaptability and localisation in project implementation: The programme demonstrated that early and sustained engagement with local partners—across community, sub-national, and national levels—is critical for effective and sustainable child protection programming. When local actors are engaged from the design phase, given space to lead, and supported with targeted capacity-building, interventions become more responsive, locally owned, and system-strengthening. Key lessons include:

- **Engaging local actors from the start** enhanced ownership, improved the relevance of activities, and built stronger relationships with communities. In Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso, involving community leaders, women’s groups, and youth in design and delivery helped align interventions with local priorities.
- **Partner autonomy and accountability** were reinforced through clear responsibilities and flexibility in implementation. In Zambia, this contributed to stronger district-level coordination and more responsive case management systems.
- **Capacity strengthening combined with joint implementation** increased both the credibility and effectiveness of local actors. In Somaliland, YOVENCO’s leadership in training, coordination, and advocacy shows how long-term partnerships can elevate local influence and sustainability.
- **Child and youth participation in implementation**—from risk mapping in Zambia to youth-led campaigns in Somaliland—contributed to more inclusive and responsive programming.
- **Regular reflection and review**, including midterm workshops and partner-led self-assessments, created space to adapt strategies and ensure continuous improvement across all four countries.

Promising practices and transferable models or innovations: Several promising practices and models have emerged from the programme, notably:

- The programme demonstrates a proactive ability to integrate emerging issues—such as climate change—and to draw on lessons learned to continuously refine its approaches. This has enabled more inclusive and targeted responses, particularly addressing the distinct needs of girls and children with disabilities.
- *The AskKids digital tool*, which enhances child participation by allowing children to share feedback independently—either orally or in writing. This autonomy fosters their confidence and reduces social pressure, especially from adults. Despite challenges related to the time-intensive transcription and analysis of vocal data, AskKids is widely appreciated for its ability to capture authentic child voices. The oral submission of questions enhances data reliability by reducing translation errors by enumerators, making it a valuable tool to scale and integrate further.

- The *SPEL* tool (used for planning, budgeting, and monitoring of project activities) has also proven valuable. It supports structured programme management and improves coordination and transparency.
- The *Safe Families* approach, also when coupled with income-generating activities (IGA) and cash transfers, has contributed to greater programme acceptance and sustainability.
- In Somaliland, SC worked with a university's social work department to provide internships for students. As above, this is a unique element of the Somaliland project and should be considered as a model for replication in other contexts with nascent social service workforces.
- Save the Children's mentorship of civil society organizations (CSOs) has strengthened local protection systems. This collaborative framework—built on trust, technical support, and shared goals—has been instrumental and is considered a scalable model for reinforcing child protection at the grassroots level.

Finally, the experience of cross-country exchange demonstrated the **added value of learning from experiences in other countries**. In particular, good practices from Côte d'Ivoire—such as the establishment of child-led advocacy groups—offered valuable insights to strengthen child participation at the local level in Burkina Faso. The peer exchange on the use of the digital feedback tool AskKids fostered mutual learning and built technical capacity across both country teams⁹.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

“We want to expand to other communities. Our hope is to see the project launched in other areas but also continued in these communities: continuity is essential—it's a long-term project.” (Key Informant Interview, Côte d'Ivoire).

SCF's global programme 2022-2025 drew its learning and inspiration from the previous 2017-2021 programme which noted that one of the key focus areas to improve was disability inclusion. As this report has noted this has been done very intentionally in the current programme although there is still room for improvement, particularly in numbers reached.

In a similar vein the new SC global programme 2026-2029 is building on the current programme's experience of community-level child protection prevention and response work including strengthened coordination mechanisms, the strengthening of the formal and informal social service workforce, continued investment in the various programmatic approaches and continued advocacy for the implementation of laws and policies, better resource allocations and systems change.

One of the key enabling factors in the achievements made in the current child protection programme 2022-2025 has been the **long-term nature of the funding (over four years) as well as its flexibility** which means that the programme has been able to adapt to changing contexts. Another factor is the work over many years with long-term partners combining active participation and local capacity building which has enabled organisational growth, continued added value and a move away from dependency towards sustainability. However, there is still a need to prioritise **localisation** within the programme and shift more leadership, power and resources to

⁹ Based on the Burkina Faso Annual Report.

local actors. The global SC **programmatic approaches** – for example, Steps to Protect and Safe Families - have had an impact at community level due to community acceptance and ownership.

Reflections on performance and maturity across the programme:

Resource use can impact **programme performance** overall and especially at the project level in the four countries. An overall conclusion from key stakeholders is that there is a need for strengthening financial resources especially in terms of the sustainability of child protection mechanisms, work on disability-inclusion and the ongoing capacity building of local actors. Delays in the disbursement of funds by Save the Children International to local partners sometimes impeded service delivery and the efficient planning, timing and coverage of activities. This has resulted in project underperformance in some years although adaptative management has been used to mitigate some of these difficulties.

The consistent use of **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)** tools from baseline to endline has been effective and valued by stakeholders, ensuring systematic data collection. However, some issues remain, highlighting the need to further strengthen data reliability while building on this solid foundation. The Quality of Services (QoS) excel-based tool is particularly appreciated for its ability to assess service providers although technical investment is still needed to improve minimum standards in indicators on child safeguarding, child participation, confidentiality and documentation. The AskKids tool is widely recognized as empowering and a key enabler of meaningful child participation, especially for the most marginalized children, including those who have lower levels of literacy or are living with disabilities, by allowing them to express themselves freely in their own language. While this significantly improves the quality and inclusiveness of feedback, it requires additional resources—particularly staff time and language expertise—to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

With regard to **programme maturity**, the programme can probably currently be considered at a "developing" stage: systems and tools are in place but not yet consistently functional. Community ownership and capacity may sometimes remain limited and needs strengthening through structured coaching, simplified tools, and better resource alignment. Some examples of this include **conceptual barriers and facilitation challenges** with the implementation of programmatic approaches and interventions with difficulties noted in translating key concepts and limited understanding of key topics - an example being Psychological First Aid; and the **transition from manual to digital systems** with inconsistency in use, access and training which limits scale-up and effectiveness. Finally, **community forums and feedback systems** are not always fully operational and **confidentiality and low levels of GBV case reporting** show persistent sociocultural barriers and trust gaps.

Insights into systemic change and sustainability:

Several factors have contributed to the successful implementation of the programme across intervention areas.

Involvement of state actors and alignment with national priorities: A key enabler has been the strong collaboration with technical services, particularly the social service/welfare departments, which have ensured institutional support and alignment. The active involvement of State services in the design, implementation and monitoring of activities has anchored the project in local institutional dynamics. Joint missions, participatory planning workshops and strengthened coordination mechanisms have fostered better anchoring. Across all four

countries the engagement of local, regional and national child protection structures and mechanisms is a strong lever for sustainability.

Community approach and strengthening of local structures: Community involvement—through participatory planning and flexible session scheduling—also played a central role, allowing activities to adapt to local dynamics and increasing ownership. The establishment or strengthening of community structures such as children's clubs, facilitators' groups, parent support groups including men's groups and committed male champions, CP committees etc., have ensured the continuity of work beyond the normal project cycle. The use of community-based actors and voluntary resource persons was critical in extending programme reach to hard-to-access areas. These individuals facilitated local implementation, increased trust, and helped bridge gaps in service delivery. Home visits and direct interactions further strengthened the connection with families and allowed real-time observation of behavioural changes among participants and regular training, and capacity building has enabled State and community actors including children to acquire sustainable skills.

Changing social norms and shared responsibilities: the programme has helped to change the way people think about parenting and child protection. Responsibility for children is no longer borne exclusively by women but is now more shared by both parents. This change has strengthened family cohesion and resilience in contexts marked by poverty and other vulnerabilities as well as strengthening local empowerment, community dynamics and ownership. This can be seen in increased confidence in communities in identifying and reporting child protection issues. In some cases, the programme directly addressed family issues—either through counselling or referrals to social services—demonstrating its practical and immediate relevance. The establishment of trust between facilitators and beneficiaries created a safe and open environment for change to take place.

Capitalisation, learning and inter-project collaboration: Capacity building emerged as a cornerstone of the programme's success. Training provided to facilitators and stakeholders enhanced programme quality and impact. As stated at the beginning of this section, continuity between the previous programme and the current one has enabled recommendations to be integrated and practices to be improved. Experience sharing between projects – for example, with the AskKids tool - and between countries has strengthened technical and operational capacities.

To conclude, there is a need to continue and reinforce the last years' work in the new programme. Partners and local actors have stated that they want the programme to continue to have more and better results.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that the next Global Programme 2026–2029 has already been developed and submitted to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) Finland with defined outcomes and outputs, the recommendations made here are targeted at any course correction in terms of modifications, improvements and areas for emphasis. It is hoped that these recommendations can inform global level programme and country level project planning and resource mobilisation in 2025 in time for the start of the new programme in 2026 as well as being useful and relevant to share externally in the sector of child protection.

Continue to invest in:

- **MEAL and evidence-based programmatic approaches and interventions** (such as Safe Families) with technical and financial resources to build on the achievements made during the current programme. This includes tools such as Quality of Services and AskKids. Work in these areas should continue to be leveraged to influence the wider work of SCI.
- Efforts for getting evidence-based approaches and their training packages **taken up at national level** - online safety, Safe Families etc. Consider setting goals or targets for this.
- **Professional social service workforce development** through case management training, structured supervision, mentoring, and workload management to safeguard quality services and protect staff wellbeing, as well as deepening and standardising the social worker internship framework in Somaliland and adapting and expanding it to other contexts.
- Addressing **case management capacity gaps** through stronger, harmonised coordination, enhanced referral systems, and decentralised services such as community desks and mobile outreach. Enhance technical supervision and stress management of social workers.
- **Advocacy** to find innovative ways to increase budget allocations for child protection nationally and locally in the current restricted funding climate. Through broad collaboration and resourcing from governments, donors and allied actors, build on EVAC and INSPIRE momentum from the global conference 2024 to secure funding and build on the work of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (ACPHA) to prioritise the protection of children in a changing humanitarian landscape. It is obvious from all the country projects that comprehensive legislative action is needed to ensure the enforcement and full implementation of child protection laws and policies.
- Work on the **centrality of protection and conflict sensitivity**. Accelerating work in these areas is critical to deal with changing contexts and the humanitarian landscape.

Continue to intentionally integrate the key cross-cutting issues from the start to build genuinely responsive and inclusive child protection structures for children:

- Continue with and scale up strategies that have worked in the current programme.
- Continue to strengthen **disability-inclusion**, especially the participation and representation of children with disabilities in the new programme, the building of institutional capacity, the tracking of data and advocacy for systemic change on disability-inclusion. The meta-evaluation revealed only 3% participation of persons with disabilities against a 10% target, which highlights systemic challenges. Future programming should analyse if targets were realistic, whether training was sufficient, if budgets were adequate, and how strong partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs) truly were.
- Build on the current strength in **gender-sensitive** and **gender-responsive** work and the gains already made in **gender-transformative** work with the aim of being able to demonstrate full **gender transformative programming** in all key areas by the end of the new programme. This calls for more work to tackle the root causes of gender inequality to get there, for example, accelerating work on men's engagement work, deepening work on children's engagement and strengthening collaboration with women's rights organisations.
- Invest more strongly in strengthening work on **climate change** in the same intentional way as was done for gender and disability-inclusion and continue to adapt for climate change impacts. This could include systematic use of SC's Climate Risk and Anticipatory Action tools, the building of capacity of staff and systems, the deepening of strategic partnerships and the deliberate integration of climate resilience and

sensitivity into child protection systems strengthening and programmatic approaches to anticipate, rather than react to, shocks.

- Prioritise **localisation** in the new programme and demonstrably show the shift in leadership, power and resources to local actors (including improved processes for funds transfer and funds management) and strengthen flexible, locally informed programming.
- Deepen **meaningful and inclusive child participation** by continuing to build the capacity of frontline staff—such as social workers, animators, and facilitators—to implement safe, age-appropriate, and empowering participatory processes. Ensure child participation is not only present but actively informs programme design, implementation, and adaptation. This includes investing in capacity building, participatory tools, strengthening feedback mechanisms such as AskKids, and creating more space and platforms that empower children to lead, especially girls, children with disabilities, and those from marginalized backgrounds.

Start or expand work on key emerging issues:

- **Online safety** is the obvious one due to the increasing digitalisation of daily life and digital use by children as well as the increasingly recognised connection between online and offline VAC. Strengthen work on this in the Zambia project, including issues of equitable access to the online world, and leverage learning initiatives to expand the experience to the other country projects, including increasing opportunities for children to participate in and inform this work and to better understand how they use this media and what they think about it. Bring work on online safety more strongly and intentionally into work with families, communities and governments and consider investing in more studies like Zambia Kids Online to understand this better.
- **Interventions and activities for issues that have emerged** through the various studies conducted during the current programme should be considered in the new programme – for example, children connected with the street based on the Somaliland study and the child-led research in Somaliland and Zambia – and the recommendations from these studies should be acted upon.

Enhance CP and CSSP or Livelihoods integration, such as girls' stipends for education/going back to or remaining in school, income generating activities for families and strengthening linkages with Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) programming (e.g. support to Village Saving Loans Associations, VSLAs) to bring economic elements more strongly and intentionally into Safe Families and CP elements into CSSP programming, building on work that has already been done in at least Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Somaliland across the nexus. This previously worked well in the Burkina Faso family strengthening programming and could be used as a model for taking this integration forward.

And finally, **keep the focus on children's wellbeing and right to protection across the nexus and keep investing in SCF's rights-based approach to child protection and child rights** to maximise results and impact for children. All the programme's CP work is designed, built and implemented around the **strengthening of the (national) child protection system** which is government led. This approach has been key to the results that have been in the three outcome areas - access and quality of CP services, child and gender sensitivity in families and communities and the sensitivity and strengthening of systems, laws and structures – as well as being indicative of what still needs to be done.

IX. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED (PHASE 2)

Programme reports:
<p>SCF International Programme Reports 2022-2023-2024</p> <p>Burkina Faso Annual Reports 2022-2024</p> <p>Côte d’Ivoire Annual Reports 2022-2024</p> <p>Somaliland Annual Reports 2022-2024</p> <p>Zambia Annual Reports 2022-2024</p>
Programme plans:
<p>SCF Global Programme 2022-2025</p> <p>SCF Gender Equality Milestones 2022-2025 (PDF and PowerPoint)</p> <p>SCF Disability Inclusion Milestones 2022-2025</p> <p>SCF Global Programme 2026-2029</p>
CP programme indicators, tools, data:
<p>SCF IP Monitoring Plan 2022-2025</p> <p>Burkina Faso - Log Frame</p> <p>Burkina Faso – Rapport de la baseline</p> <p>Côte d’Ivoire - Rapport de la baseline</p> <p>Côte d’Ivoire - Log Frame</p> <p>WCA - Capitalisation et leçons apprises des projets CI et Burkina Faso</p> <p>Somaliland log frame CP 2022-2025</p> <p>Zambia - log frame</p> <p>Detailed documentation on the global indicators - endline data</p> <p>1.2. Caregiver and Child Feedback Services</p> <p>1.2.1 Knowledge Help</p> <p>1.2.2 Services Tracking</p> <p>2.2.1 Non-violent Discipline</p> <p>2.2.1 Positive Interaction</p> <p>2.5 Psychological Wellbeing</p> <p>2.6 Community Member Confidence</p> <p>3.2 Quality of Services</p> <p>3.2.1 Legal Framework</p>
Mid-term Reviews and Endline data reports:
<p>Burkina Faso - Rapport de l’évaluation à mi-parcours</p> <p>Côte d’Ivoire - Rapport d’évaluation à mi parcours 2024</p> <p>Côte d’Ivoire - Rapport final d’évaluation du projet 2025</p> <p>Somaliland CP Mid-term Stocktaking (PDF and PowerPoint)</p> <p>Somaliland WADUS Project MTR Stocktaking Workshop Report</p> <p>Somalia - Endline Indicator data</p> <p>Zambia CO Mid-term Stocktaking Final March 2024 (PowerPoint)</p>

<p>Zambia Final Report Midline Indicator Data Zambia Mid-term Stocktaking Workshop Report Zambia - Final Report Endline Indicator SCF - International Programme Report 2024</p>
<p>Country Project documents/Case studies</p>
<p>Burkina Faso – Child participation approach Burkina Faso _ CPIMS guidelines and SOPs Côte d’Ivoire – SGBV approach Côte d’Ivoire - Rapport de l’analyse de la situation des filles domestiques de Bondoukou Côte d’Ivoire - Rapport de l’analyse de genre de Bonkougou Côte d’Ivoire - Rapport de l’analyse du budget alloué à la protection de l’enfant aux départements de Tanda et Bondoukou Côte d’Ivoire - Rapport de l’atelier d’évaluation et de leçons apprises Mars 2025 BF and Cdl - Safe Families lessons learnt + travail sur les familles d’accueil Somaliland - Qualitative data collection on male engagement and disability inclusion (currently ongoing) Somaliland – Study on children connected to the street and an assessment of CBCP structures Somaliland - End of year assessments 2024 (community CP structures in 3 areas; capacity building assessment of case workers with CP AoR) Zambia – Study on measuring gender transformation in implementation of Safe Families Zambia - Lessons learned on male engagement and disability inclusion in Safe Families and on engagement with social media influencers in support of online safety work with children and adolescents (currently ongoing) Zambia – Guidance from Safe Families sessions with parents/caregivers of children with disabilities Zambia -A compendium of case studies with children working in so called “Black Mountain” (impact of small-scale mining on children) Zambia – Zambia Kids Online study Zambia - Harvesting outcome report Zambia – Child led research, community action research All countries - a selection of carefully curated and most relevant field visit/mission reports</p>
<p>National documents – all countries (as relevant and within limitations of timeframe and LoE)</p>
<p>Child rights situation analyses National CP policies and guidelines</p>

ANNEX 2. FGD/KII TOOLS

Guiding questions for the initial FGDs (Phase 1)

Would you please briefly introduce yourself/yourselfs, where you are based?

Please describe your role in relation to the current Save the Children Finland – Global Programme 2022–2025

Question 1: Previous evaluations, midterm reviews, annual reports, etc. related to this programme

Start by sharing what we have in the folder: Is there anything missing?

Question 2: What are the main challenges faced in terms of methodology and contextual appropriateness?

- Were there any specific contextual factors (political, social, economic, humanitarian) that significantly impacted the programme? How should these be considered in the meta-evaluation?
- How was stakeholder participation ensured during the process, including at the beginning for the baseline study?
- How well were local and marginalized voices (e.g., children with disabilities, girls in vulnerable settings) integrated into the programme?
- Were there any ethical considerations or challenges in data collection (ex. regarding child participation and safeguarding)?
- Was there sufficient focus on cross-cutting issues such as gender, inclusion/disability, and climate change? If not, what improvements would you suggest?

Question 3: Data quality

Were there any known data gaps or challenges in terms of data availability or quality? Ex. Any gaps or inconsistencies in data collection methods? Any limitations or challenges noted regarding data reliability?

Did the use of defined thematic indicators, milestones and tools work well? How?

Question 4: Alignment with national and organizational priorities

How does the programme align with national & organizational priorities? How useful were the baseline / midterm reviews in shaping the programme / country programmes?

Question 5. Priority for the meta-evaluation

What are the SCF / country office's objectives and priorities for this meta-evaluation? What areas need further analysis or synthesis in the meta-evaluation? In your point of view, how can this meta-evaluation be leveraged to enhance learning and improve future programming?

Question 6. Data validation and sharing

What were the main recommendations from the mid-term reviews? To what extent have they been implemented? Were they actionable enough?

How can the meta-evaluation ensure its findings will be used effectively at the country and organizational levels? What challenges or risks should be considered in synthesizing evaluation findings? What formats or processes would maximize the usefulness of findings? What formats of reporting and communication would be most useful for country offices?

Question 7. Key stakeholders to be consulted during the meta-evaluation

Who should be engaged during the meta-evaluation to ensure relevance, credibility, and uptake of findings?

Is there anything else you would like to add that we didn't cover today with our questions but which you feel is relevant to this work? Do you have any questions for us?

Interviewees for the initial FGDs (Phase 1)

Location (country/global), type of interviewee and date	Names, organisation, job title
Burkina Faso country office and partners, 23 March 2025	<p>Amelie Hollebecque Gnanou, SCF, Senior Child Protection Advisor Jean Marie Tankoano, SCI Burkina, Chef de projet PROPEL/VBG Florentine Kologo Traore, SCI Burkina, Senior Awards Coordinator Nina Kantagba Meda, SCI Burkina Lisa Vader, SCF, Programme Manager Emmanuel Diarra, SCI Burkina, Director Programme Development and Quality Ilias Ludovic Belemsigri, SCI Burkina, Director of Strategic Portfolio Award Management & Partnership Moumouni Sawadogo, SCI Burkina, Child Protection field Officer PROPEL/VBG Yacouba Kabore, SCI Burkina, Field Office Manager Zone Ouest Mamadou Yougbaré, SCI Burkina, Child Protection Technical Advisor Serge Andriamandimby, SCI Burkina, Director of Program Operations Sier Kambiré, SCI Burkina, MEAL Coordinator</p>
Côte d'Ivoire country office and partners, 24 March 2025	<p>Amelie Hollebecque Gnanou, SCF, Senior Child Protection Advisor Maminata Sanou, SCI Côte d'Ivoire, Project Coordinator Esse Igor N'gbesso, SCI Côte d'Ivoire, MEAL & Research Coordinator Maxime Yapo, SCI Côte d'Ivoire, Child Protection Technical Advisor Digbeu Yohou Marie Fidèle, SCI Côte d'Ivoire, Program Operations Manager Cho Aline Yapo, SCI Côte d'Ivoire, Assistant Protection Program Ulrich Don, sci Côte d'Ivoire, Head of MEAL Irie Drinin Simone, SCI CI, MEAL Officer</p>
Somaliland country office and partners, 03 April 2025	<p>Aqli Mohamoud, SCI, Sr CP TS Mohammed Ismail, SCI, MEAL Advisor Abdirazak Ahmed Yassin, SCI, Accountability Assistant (MEAL) Mohamed Abdirahman Ismail, SCI, MEAL Coordinator Abdishakour Ahmed, SCI, CP Coordinator Muhiyadin Omar, SCI, CP Officer Abdirahman Adam, YOVENCO, Programme Manager Nimco Ali Mohamed, YOVENCO, CP Officer Anne Kanene, SCF, Sr CP TA</p>

Zambia country office and partners, 03 April 2025	Katongo Mwansa, SCI, CP TS Eleanor Kaonga, SCI, MEAL Manager Laguma Nyau, SCI, Acting PM & CP Coordinator Brian Mkandawire, SCI, MEAL Officer Sharon Mambo, YWCA, Regional Coordinator Besa Kambafwile, YWCA, Project Officer Anne Kanene, SCF, Sr CP TA
SCF global advisors	Amelie Hollebecque Gnanou, SCF, Sr CP TA (based in Burkina Faso) Anne Kanene, SCF, Sr CP TA (based in Zambia)

Guiding questions for the Key Informant Interviews (Phase 2)

Purpose: To gather insights from SCF staff and partners, where relevant, on programme relevance, performance, cross-cutting issues, systems change, and lessons learned.

Length: One hour

Number of participants: 1-3 interviewees per session

1. Programme Relevance & Context (5–7 min)

- How have child protection needs changed in your context since 2022 (e.g. due to COVID, humanitarian context, climate events)?
 - *Prompt:* Have global crises (e.g. energy and food crisis, economic downturn) or shrinking civic space played a role?
 - *Prompt:* How did these shifts affect your programme’s design or delivery?
 - *Prompt:* Were there adaptations to implementation, target groups, or focus areas?

2. Cross-Cutting Issues (10 min)

- How were gender and disability inclusion integrated into your activities? What worked well, and what could be improved?
 - *Prompt:* Were there specific efforts to strengthen child- and gender-sensitive systems, including systems for disability inclusion? What were the outcomes?
- How were adults and children with disabilities, as well as caregivers of children with disabilities, meaningfully engaged in your programmes?
 - *Prompts:* Did you collaborate with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)? Have you observed any changes in attitudes or practices related to disability inclusion within communities or institutions?
- Did you observe changes in community attitudes or behaviours around child protection and gender norms?
 - *Prompt:* Can you share any examples from parenting or community awareness work?
- How has climate change impacted your programme or target population?
 - *Prompt:* Were adaptations made to ensure outcomes remained achievable in changing environmental conditions?

3. Localisation & Partnerships (10–12 min)

- (For all) How have local actors (formal and informal) been meaningfully involved in decision-making?
 - *Prompt:* including implementing partners and also other civil society actors (child rights focused), national government, local governments, CSO networks/structures (like CP committees, AoR)
 - *Prompt:* Were mechanisms in place for joint planning, accountability, or shared learning?
- (For partners) Do you feel your organisation had real influence over programme design or direction?
- (For partners) What kinds of support from SCF—technical, financial, or relational—were most helpful to your work?
- (For partners) What has the partnership with SCF enabled you to do that would have been difficult alone?
- Do partners and communities feel a sense of ownership over programme outcomes?
 - *Prompt:* What would you change about the current partnership model to improve ownership?

4. Implementation & Outcomes (15 min)

- What programming approaches (e.g., parenting/Safe Families, CVA/livelihoods (IGA), assistance (school kits, food assistance, etc.), case management, community-based child protection mechanisms/systems, digital tools, online safety programming) worked best—and why?
- What were the most significant outcomes or changes for children and families?
 - *Prompt:* Did you see changes in wellbeing, access to services, or safety?
- Were there notable impacts on systems, laws, or policies
 - *Prompt:* Any influence on national strategies, CP frameworks, or local coordination?
- Were any groups (e.g., children with disabilities, girls, displaced children) left out or underserved?
- *Prompt:* What were the main barriers—economic, social, geographic?

5. Data, Learning, and Promising Practices (10 min)

- What tools or methods helped improve data quality and use?
 - *Prompt:* Were the thematic indicators useful? Were there any tools that really supported learning?
- Can you share any innovations, models, or partnerships that stood out and could be scaled?
- Can you share a success story or example from the programme that really stands out to you? What do you think made it work well?
 - *Prompt:* What helped—strong relationships, right timing, flexible funding?
- What key lessons should SCF, and partners carry forward?
 - *Prompt:* What should be kept, strengthened, or done differently?

6. Looking Ahead (5–7 min)

- What elements of the programme are likely to be sustained or taken up by government or local actors?
 - *Prompt:* Have there been efforts toward integration into national systems?
 - *Prompts (for government):* What are your plans or strategic priorities related to child protection in the coming years? Are other like-minded agencies or partners planning similar initiatives, and if so, how are you coordinating or planning to align efforts?
- What should SCF and partners keep, adapt, or stop doing in the next programming cycle?
- (For partners) What would an ideal partnership with SCF look like moving forward?
- What lessons have you learned, or recommendations do you have for the wider child protection sector?
 - *Prompt:* Are there practices, policies, or approaches you think should be scaled or shared more broadly?

- *Prompt:* Is there anything that should be left out as there is poor impact or poor sustainability or poor reach etc.?

Interviewees for the KIIs (Phase 2)

Location (country/global), type of interviewee and date	Names, organisation, job title
Burkina Faso country office, 14 May 2025	Jean-Marie Tankoano, SCI Burkina, Chef de projet PROPEL/VBG Moumouni Sawadogo, SCI Burkina, Child Protection field Officer PROPEL/VBG Mamadou Yougbaré, SCI Burkina Child Protection Technical Advisor Salam Kondombo, SCI Burkina, SCI Burkina, Food Security & Livelihood Advisor Serge Andriamandimby, SCI Burkina, Director of Program Operations Adama Rouamba, SCI Burkina, Case Management Coordinator
Burkina Faso, partners, 16 May 2025	Directions provinciales (DP, Chefs de services enfance et Gestionnaires de cas) Association Heere Kadi (Coordonnatrice, Animateurs, financier) Coordination Nationale des Associations des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs du Burkina (CN/AEJTB) Réseau de protection de l'enfant du Mouhoun
Côte d'Ivoire partners, 14 May 2025	L'ONG Notre Grenier Directeur régional de la protection sociale du Gontougo Direction régionale de la Femme, de la Famille et de l'Enfant du Gontougo Mécanisme régional de protection de l'enfant
Côte d'Ivoire country office, 15 May 2025	Maxime Yapo, SCI Côte d'Ivoire, Child Protection Technical Advisor Ulrich Don, sci Côte d'Ivoire, Head of MEAL Maminata Sanou, SCI Côte d'Ivoire, (Projet Coordinator) Cho Aline Yapo, SCI Côte d'Ivoire, Assistant Protection Program Irie Drinin Simone, MEAL Officer
Somaliland country office and partners, 20 May 2025	Mohamoud Aqli, SCI Snr CP TS Yahya Abdillahi, SCI MEAL Manager Ahmed, Ayan Jama, SCI MEAL Officer Abdishakour Ahmed, CP Coordinator Abdirahman Adam, YOVENCO Program team Nimcohoodo, YOVENCO Program team Khadra Ali, Somaliland CPAOR Chair and Head of CP at MoLSAF

Zambia country office and partners, 20 May 2025	Eugenia Hansakali, District Guidance and Counselling Coordinator Cosmas Banda, Provincial Child Development Officer Christabel Simbulo, Regional Officer- ZICTA Melody, Senior Child Development Officer – Ndola Pastor Mambo Chance, District Child Protection Chairperson – Ndola Andrew Kitwe, District Child Protection Chairperson
SCF global advisors	Anne Haaranen, SCF IP Director Jonna Haapanen, SCF PDQD Katja Selkimaki-Gray, SCF Head of International Portfolio Anne Kanene, SCF, Sr CP TA Amelie Hollebecque Gnanou, SCF, Sr CP TA Lisa Vader (PM) Adjoua Aka-Lacquement, Programme and Partnership Advisor

ANNEX 3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE META-EVALUATION (2022–2025)

This framework provides a structured lens for analysing programme performance across the child protection projects in the four countries. It aligns with the cross-cutting issues, programme outcomes, and OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, enabling a comprehensive and consistent approach to data coding and analysis. *Please also refer to [Annex 4 - Coding Framework](#).*

Cross-Cutting Issues: These dimensions intersect with all thematic areas of programming and influence both outcomes and sustainability.

- **Gender Equality:** Integration of strategies that promote equal outcomes and participation for girls and boys.
- **Social and Gender Norms Change:** Shifts in community attitudes and behaviours that positively affect child protection; evidence of gender sensitive and, wherever possible, transformative programming that addresses the root causes of gender inequality).
- **Disability Inclusion:** Accessibility and responsiveness of services and systems for children with disabilities (linked to Save the Children International’s [SCI] disability-inclusion policy and based on a human rights based approach, meaningful participation, the removal of barriers and partnerships with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, OPDs).
- **Climate Change:** Consideration of environmental shocks and their implications for CP programming.

Programmatic Approach: Analyses how programming strategies were implemented and adapted.

- **Localisation & Partnership:** Degree of ownership, leadership, and capacity of local actors.
 - **Child Rights Programming:** Application of child rights principles in programme design and delivery.
 - **Child & Community Participation:** Extent and quality of involvement of children and communities in decision-making.
 - **Advocacy:** Use of evidence and engagement to influence policies or systems.
 - **Adaptability & Resilience:** How the programme responded to political, economic, and environmental shocks and the humanitarian context.
- Migration & Displacement:** Relevance of programming for mobile or displaced populations.
- **Capacity Building:** Efforts to strengthen the skills and systems of implementing actors.

Outcome Domains: These assess changes resulting from programme interventions, including unintended consequences.

a. Access and Quality of Child Protection (CP) Services

- **Children’s and Caregivers’ Perceptions:** Feedback on service quality and relevance.
- **Staff Capacity:** Training and preparedness of CP workers (formal and informal).
- **Barriers to Access:** Socio-economic, cultural, or logistical challenges.
- **Violence Against Children (VAC):** Changes in incidence, reporting, and response.

b. Child and Gender Sensitivity in Families and Communities

- **Social and Emotional Skills:** Children’s self-awareness, empathy, and coping abilities.
- **Psychosocial Wellbeing:** Mental and emotional health outcomes.
- **Community Reporting and Prevention:** Local engagement in protecting children; Confidence of community members in their ability to prevent and respond to child protection risks; Perception of families and communities on what is violence.
- **Parenting Support:** Strengthening family relationships and parenting.
- **Children’s Sense of Safety:** Perceived security at home, school, and in the community.

c. Sensitivity and Strengthening of Systems, Laws, and Structures

- **CP Standards Compliance:** Whether services meet international and national child protection norms.
- **Legal and Policy Reform:** Changes supporting CP and child rights.
- **System Integration:** Coordination between formal/informal systems, including budget and protocols.
- **Sustainability and Local Ownership:** Prospects for long-term continuity and national uptake.
- **Funding Diversification & Scalability:** Readiness to expand or replicate models.

Promising Practices and Learning

- **Effective Practices to Address VAC, including SGBV:** Models or interventions with proven impact.
- **Evidence of Change:** Demonstrated improvements in children’s lives.
- **Cost-Effective Strategies:** Efficient use of resources with high impact.
- **Digital Safety and Innovation:** New technologies or methods for protection and engagement.

Methodological Integrity

- **Limitations:** Constraints affecting the reliability or generalizability of findings.
- **Data Quality:** Rigor of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) systems and the usability of indicators.
- **Ethical Standards:** Safe, respectful, and participatory approaches to engaging children and communities.

ANNEX 4. CODING MATRIX

This matrix is aligned with cross-cutting issues, and programmatic priorities and taking into account the OECD-DAC criteria.

MAIN CODE	SUBCODE 1	SUBCODE 2
Cross-cutting issues	Gender equality	Social and gender norms change; Gender transformative programming; Gender sensitive programming
	Disability inclusion	
	Climate change	
Programmatic Approach	Localisation & partnership	Alignment with national and local networks
	Child Rights Programming	
	Child Participation	
	Community Participation	
	Advocacy	
	Adaptability and resilience (in crisis)	Political & Economic context Migration, Displacement Climate, humanitarian context
	Capacity building	
Outcomes	Access & quality of CP services	Children’s perception of CP services – IND Caregivers’ perception of CP services - IND Staff capacity Barriers to access -economic, social, etc. Violence against children, including SGBV
	Child & gender sensitivity of families and communities	Social and Emotional Skills - IND Psychosocial Wellbeing - IND Community reporting on CP issues & prevention - IND Community perception of violence Family strengthening & Parenting Support Children’s sense of safety Community empowerment
	Child and gender sensitivity of systems, legislations and structures	Service providers meet minimum CP standards - IND

		Legislations and policies to support CP & government reforms Alignment with national priorities
	Challenges and limitations to achieving outcomes	
Sustainability (Short, midterm or long term)	System integration (formal & informal, incl. protocols, budget, capacity building)	
	Local ownership (CSO/government-led implementation)	
	Funding diversification	
	Scale up potential & Transferability	
Promising Practices	Key learnings for SCF programming	
	Added value of the programme	
	Digital safety and innovations	
	Cost-effective strategy	
	Resource use	
Recommendations	Strategic recommendations SCF	
	Strategic recommendations External	
Key Quotes	Children's testimonies	
	Parents & Caregivers	
	Partners & Officials	
	Staff	
	Key statistics or numbers	
Methodology	Limitations of evaluation	
	M&E Data quality	
	Ethical considerations	
	Accountable methods engaging children and community	

ANNEX 5. TERM OF REFERENCE FOR SCF CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Terms of Reference for SCF Child Protection Programme Evaluation

Focusing on four Child Protection projects implemented in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Somaliland and

Zambia

March - June 2025

Commissioned by: Save the Children Finland

1. Background of Save the Children Finland's Global Programme 2022 - 2025

Save the Children Finland (SCF) is a member of the Save the Children global movement and world's leading independent organisation for children. Our mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. We are working to achieve our three global breakthroughs by 2030: 1) no child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday; 2) all children learn from a quality basic education and 3) violence against children is no longer tolerated. Our primary focus is on reaching the most deprived children.

Save the Children Finland's Global Programme for 2022-2025 contributes to the achievement of all the three SCI breakthroughs. However, the main focus of our programme lies within two core themes both in humanitarian and development context: child poverty and child protection (CP).

The expected outcomes of the SCF's Global Programme are:

Outcome 1: Children and families' access to services has improved

Outcome 2: Improved child development outcomes and the improved protection of children through the strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children and the community

Outcome 3: The improved child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes

The CP-related expected results are:

Result 1.2.: Children and families have improved access to formal and informal high-quality CP services

Result 2.2.: Children are able to grow in violence-free environment

Result 3.2.: CP laws, policies and structures are strengthened to promote zero tolerance of violence against children

The mentioned outcomes and results are to be reached by using the following approaches:

- Partnering with national CP structures to strengthen the overall CP system, both its formal and informal elements. Since digital technology and the use of the internet are becoming an internal part of children and young people's lives in less developed countries, we aim to promote inclusion of children's online risks into CP system components when feasible.

- Improving access of girls and boys of different ages and background to formal and informal CP services by ensuring that both formal and informal service providers know how to provide their services in a gender-sensitive and child-friendly way, and by implementing Save the Children's Steps to Protect Common Approach on case management and the Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse Approach.
- Strengthening the child sensitivity of communities, caregivers and children by implementing Save the Children's Safe Families Common Approach, and by working with children of different ages for them to know how to protect themselves and their peers and by engaging with communities to facilitate their promotion of gender- and child-sensitive communication and behaviour in all setting
- Advocacy and capacity building with key like-minded organisations in order to influence CP laws, policies and structures so that they are more child and gender sensitive.

We follow a rights-based approach called child rights programming (CRP) and give a special focus to gender equality and disability inclusion. Our working method is strongly supportive of the localisation agenda, in which we are specifically focusing on strengthening civil society and promoting partnerships with local civil society organisations (CSO) as well as government institutions. Participation, especially child participation, is fundamental to the way we work. Climate change, migration and displacement are realities in the context we work in, and thus they need to be taken into consideration.

The SCF Global Programme is being funded from different funding sources. One of the most important long-term funding is received from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) through its Programme Based Support funding instrument. During the 2022-2025 funding period, SCF has received funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland for four child protection projects in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia. While each one of them have different project plans and results frameworks, each one of them contribute to implementation of the SCF's Global Programme outcomes and its child protection results.

SCF is looking for an international consultant to carry out the meta-evaluation of its child protection programme level evaluations that will be based on data from the 4 child protection projects implemented in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire (CIV), Somaliland and Zambia. The methodology used will be desk review and KIIs. The international consultant will work remotely from her/his home base and will not need to travel any of the mentioned countries.

2. Background of child protection projects implemented in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia

Projet De Protection De L'enfant Et De Violences Basées Sur Le Genre in Burkina Faso, 2022 - 2025

Save the Children is implementing the Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Project (PROPEL/VBG) in three (03) provinces of the Boucle du Mouhoun region (Balé, Mouhoun and Nayala). The aim of this project is to contribute to ensuring the well-being of children, particularly the most disadvantaged and/or marginalised and those at risk or victims of violence or abuse in the Boucle du

Mouhoun. The expected results are Output 1: Children and families have better access to quality child protection services. Output 2: The well-being and protection of children are improved through capacity building of children, parents and the community on child and gender sensitivity. Output 3: Services, systems, policies and programmes are improved and sensitive to gender and children.

BIPE BIGONLE in Cote d'Ivoire, 2022 - 2025

Save the Children in Ivory Coast has been implementing a child protection project called 'Towards an inclusive and violence-free environment for girls and boys in Bondoukou'. Funded by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA FINLAND), the aim of this 4-year project is to 'Contribute to the fulfilment and full development of children's potential in the Gontougo region by strengthening the child protection mechanism. To achieve this objective, the project carries out prevention, response and prosecution activities. The persistence of socio-cultural constraints is often a risk factor for violence against children and an obstacle to the proper management of various cases of violations of children's rights. One of the special features of the BIPÉ BIGON LÊ project is that it integrates a strong gender based violence component.

Wadajirka Daryeelka Ubadka Somaliland (WADUS) - Working together for better protection of children in Somaliland, 2022 - 2025

The WADUS project, implemented by SCI Somalia/Somaliland CO and YOVENCO (Youth Volunteers for Development and Environment Conservation) in local collaboration with the government line ministry and local authorities, aims to strengthen child protection systems in Somaliland (in Hargeisa and In Berbera). More specifically, the project focuses on the provision of high-quality response and prevention services (both formal and informal), as well as capacity development of the social service workforce. The project advocates for the creation of a policy and legal framework conducive to addressing the rights of children. It builds capacity and action of local government officials on child-focused budgeting, budget transparency and investment in disability-inclusive child protection systems at national and local levels. Community-based approaches are used to increase capacities for violence prevention and response amongst children, parents/caregivers, and community-based child protection structures to ensure that children are safe and protected on all levels -at home, in the community as well as in school.

Protecting Zambian Girls and Boys Offline and Online, 2022 - 2025

SCI Zambia CO and the local partner, Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), are implementing the project in Kitwe and Ndola districts in the Copperbelt province. The project targets children, parents/caregivers, and service providers by improving children's access to formal and informal child protection services, specifically through improved case management for survivors of offline and online SGBV and strengthened school-based guidelines and structures. Social and behaviour change among caregivers, community members and children will be achieved by promoting positive, non-violent and gender-transformative parenting practices and by empowering girls and boys, and adolescents to protect themselves from online and offline harm. Children are supported to challenge masculinity

norms that accept violence against girls and women and to actively advocate for children's protection. By working closely with the government and CSO actors, the project will strengthen the legislative framework and coordination between key child protection stakeholders at local and national levels, including the inclusion of children's online safety.

3. Objectives of the evaluation

3.1. Purpose

To conclude the current SCF programme phase and support SCF and SCI in the countries where we engage to plan the interventions for a new phase starting in 2026, a broader programmatic evaluation of the overall CP approach will be carried out. The purpose of the evaluation is thus to take stock of the separate country initiatives, bring the findings together into a CP programme evaluation.

The international consultant will carry out the evaluation as a desk review combining the information gathered through the project implementation, monitoring and evidence creation in Burkina Faso, Code d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia. There is no travel included to any of the countries covered in the evaluation.

3.2. Specific objectives of the CP programme evaluation

In all analyses, a strong understanding of the context should prevail (including humanitarian situation, crises, etc.) to understand how it has affected the projects and programme as whole.

Specific objectives are as follow:

- To assess the programme's performance and achievements vis-à-vis the project's overall outcomes and outputs, the project indicators in the logical framework and the baseline data, internal mid-term evaluation, and endline data for the indicators.
- To analyse individual projects in view of possible common findings in terms of access & quality of CP services; child & gender sensitivity of families and communities and improving child and gender sensitivity of systems, legislations and structures.
- To draw common recommendations and lessons learned that will be useful for improving SCF's child protection programming 2026-2029.
- To draw common recommendations and lessons learned that will be useful to share externally in the sector of child protection.

3.3. Key Questions

Relevance:

Is the CP interventions responding and relevant to the child protection contexts in the countries, i.e. child protection issues, policy, programme, institutions, and beneficiaries. Is the intervention designed to augment the impact of child protection in the country?

Coherence

How well do the interventions fit within the existing child protection frameworks (policies, programmes) of the governments in the respective countries? Is the SCF supported CP interventions providing complementarity/ coordination/ adding value to what the governments and other actors do on child protection?

Effectiveness

Are the CP interventions effective in achieving objectives and results and impact for children? Are the CP approaches developed effective and sustainable?

Efficiency

How well are resources being used? The extent to which the interventions deliver, or are likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. Can the current interventions become more cost effective in the coming programme phase?

Impact

What difference do the CP interventions make for children and their families? Is there an impact on gender equality, disability inclusion and child participation? Is the impact and learning on the ground leading to larger impacts, i.e. beyond the project area (programme design, norms, systems)?

Sustainability

Will the benefits of the CP projects last? Are they designed and implemented in a way that promote the benefits accrued to last beyond the project at different levels (child, family, community/ local government, national level)? Has our CP programme approach resulted in sustainable changes for the national child protection systems or are there opportunities to build on achieved results to achieve sustainable changes?

4. Methodology

The process and KIIs to be used for the evaluation will be participatory in order to make the activity a positive learning process. Hence, a team that consists of staff from SCF, Save the Children Country Offices, relevant line Ministries, and the local implementing partner NGOs (in Burkina Faso Here Kady and MAEJT; in CIV Notre Grenier, in Somaliland YOVENCO and in Zambia YWCA) will be involved in the exercise.

The desk review should include analysis of at least the following documents (the list to be complemented)

- SCF Global Programme Plan
- Project documents, bi-annual and annual reports (including financial reports) for each of the project

- Baseline reports, annual and endline indicator data, mid-term analysis for each of the project
- Projects' MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning) plans and reports
- TAs' missions report and field exchange visit reports
- Any research or other documentation carried out in any of the projects
- Communication materials (videos, photos, toolkits, etc.)
- Child Rights Situation Analyses (CRSAs), SCI Country Strategic Plans
- Key laws, policy documents and guidelines in regard to the implemented projects

The international consultant(s), SCF, SCI and partners' staff will discuss and agree on the methodology and data collection approach before the commencement of desk review and KIIs.

5. Deliverables

5.1. Inception report and data analysis and data collection tools

The inception report will be delivered to Save the Children after the initial meetings and initial desk review have taken place and will be presented to the key Save the Children and partners' representatives in an online meeting separately for each county. The inception report should include the purpose and objectives of the evaluation, clarifications, detailed meta-evaluation questions, and proposed guiding questions for semi-structured KIIs interviews, and proposed list of documents for the secondary data review, proposed list of KIIs to be conducted, and methodology to analyse the secondary data and KIIs. Methodology to address data quality issues should be explained in the report.

A detailed work plan should be annexed to the report. The main text of the inception report should not exceed 10 pages. The inception report as well as all the suggested tools should be delivered in English for Somaliland and Zambia and in French for Burkina Faso and CIV.

5.2. Draft meta-evaluation report of the child protection programme

A full report with main text of maximum 30 pages excluding cover page, table of contents, abbreviations, executive summary and annexes. The draft report should be delivered in a soft copy in English and in French. References should be fully cited after all important facts and figures. The report should as a minimum include the following elements:

- Front page with the title of the meta-evaluation, Save the Children name, date and authors of the report
- Table of contents
- List of abbreviations used
- Executive summary (2-3 pages) that presents the key points of the different sections
- Background and description
- Objectives and the intended use of the CP programme analysis
- Methodology and limitations of the meta-evaluation
- Findings
- Conclusions

- Recommendations
- Relevant annexes (Project Evaluation reports, Terms of Reference for the evaluation)

The draft report should be presented in two online meetings (one in English and one in French) to SCF, SCI COs and partners and discussions should support integration of comments and feedback (who would also have been shared in writings).

5.3. Final meta-evaluation report

The meta-analysis report will be considered final only after incorporating the feedback from SCF.

5.4. Power point presentation with the main findings of the CP programme meta-analysis.

6. Ethics and child safeguarding

The consultant must respect the rights and dignity of participants as well as comply with relevant ethical standards and Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. The research must ensure a voluntary, safe and non-discriminatory participation and a process of free and un-coerced consent.

7. Submission of Proposals

Candidate(s) interested in the position of the international consultant will be expected to provide the following documentation:

- Cover letter
- Technical proposal aligned with ToR, presenting the background, objectives, proposed methodology to carry out the meta-analysis of SCF CP programme evaluation
- CV of the consultant(s)
- Example of report covering a similar piece of work
- Daily rate (including number of dates proposed to carry out the assignment)
- References – at least two credible and traceable referees

Interested and eligible applicants can send applications by **20th February 2025**. Please write "SCF CP Programme meta-evaluation" in the e-mail subject line. Note that only those who fulfil all the requirements stated above will be considered.

8. Qualification and experience required

- Higher university degree in relevant field (e.g. child protection, development or social sciences)
- Substantial experience in qualitative and quantitative methodologies
- Proven experience in conducting quality meta-analysis and assessing development programmes (preferably in child protection and also in fragile states)
- Thorough knowledge on the relevant thematic area and Africa context, preferably from Western Africa or/and East or/and Southern Africa
- Strong child rights programming skills
- English and French essential
- Excellent oral, and effective presentation and report-writing skills

9. Management of the study

The consultancy will be contracted by and report to Save the Children Finland.

The international consultant shall will work closely with SCF, SCI COs' and local partners' staff.

SCF focal points:

Name: *Anne Kanene and Amelie Hollebecque Gnanou*

Title: *Child protection technical advisors*

E-mail: anne.kanene@savethechildren.fi and amelie.hollebecque@savethechildren.fi

● Payment terms

The consultancy fee will be paid in three instalments: 10% upon signing the contract, 20% upon approval of the final inception report and 70% when the final meta-evaluation report is approved. The consultant shall be responsible for covering her/his insurance and all taxes arising from fees paid under the Agreement (according to the consultant's home country laws).

10. Timeline

The whole consultancy is estimated to take in total 40 consultancy days during March – June 2025 with the proposed tentative timeline:

Time	Task	Proposed # of days
20 th February 2025	Submission of an application	-
By 28 th February 2025	Selection and signature of contract	-
Between 3 rd to 14 th March 2025	Initial meetings with SCF, SCI COs and partners	2,5
By 28 th March 2025	Submission of a draft inception report (both in English and in French)	7
By 4 th April 2025	Comments on the draft inception report shared with the consultant	-
By 11 th April 2025	Submission of a final inception report (both in English and in French)	2,5
By 23 rd May 2025	Programme meta-evaluation (includes in-depth desk review and KIIs) and submission of a draft report (both in English and in French)	22

By 30 th May 2025	Two online presentations (one in English and one in French) on draft meta-evaluation report presented	1
By 30 th May 2025	Comments on the draft meta-evaluation report shared with the consultant	-
By 16 th June 2025	Submission of a final meta-analysis report and a PPT (both in English and in French)	5