

REGIONAL REVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION AND MONITORING SYSTEMS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

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Executive summary

Introduction

The documentation and monitoring of vulnerable children are essential components in the development of effective prevention and protection policies. Improving data collection and supporting child protection information systems are indispensable in planning interventions and improving monitoring of child protection services and systems. This is one of UNICEF's strategic priorities.

Since 2002, with the support of partners at the global level,¹ UNICEF has endeavoured to develop indicators related to certain issues of child protection. Despite some progress in data collection, available data remains limited. The region of West and Central Africa lacks necessary research capacities and systematic child protection information and monitoring mechanisms. As a result, it is one of the regions that suffers most from a lack of visibility and evaluation of protection situations and interventions.

The objective of this report is to review the initiatives carried out in the last four years in West and Central African countries with regard to child protection information and monitoring systems. An analysis of the different options available in the region reveals i) the advantages and limits of each approach; ii) the difficulties experienced in collecting, analyzing and disseminating protection data; iii) the lessons learned and the challenges in this area; and iv) a proposal for a UNICEF framework of intervention to strengthen national child protection information and monitoring systems in the region.

Context

Within the framework of UNICEF priority regional strategic commitments, a list of 126 protection indicators, developed jointly with headquarters, the regional office and country offices, was adopted in November 2005. The list is classified according to protection themes and comprises i) indicators of situation, which measure the scale of rights abuses; ii) indicators of environment, which identify gaps in the protection environment (e.g. laws, sentencing, monitoring mechanisms, access to services); and iii) indicators of the results or coverage of interventions.

The adoption of a regional list of protection indicators, together with monitoring tools for the region, have without doubt led to a mobilization of available information to supply the indicators in all country offices, and, in a few countries, have encouraged the development of national systems for the collection and management of child protection data. This upsurge in activity at the national level has not always been shared with other partners in the field of protection, and its scope has been limited. The experience of using the regional list of indicators has revealed the need for its revision on the basis of i) more recently developed directives and manuals, at the global level, regarding thematic protection indicators, as with, for example, juvenile justice; ii) difficulties experienced by country offices in the acquisition, calculation and utilization of the indicators; and iii) a harmonization of concepts and variables. This revision would result in improved inter-agency collaboration and results analysis.

The availability of protection data is currently more a reflection of programme priorities or actions rather than a tool for monitoring and information, or as an aid in strategic planning regarding child protection. Data come from a wide variety of sources, and are gathered in an uncoordinated manner and on the basis of variable concepts, which makes consolidation and comparison difficult. Most countries in the region have difficulty in producing reliable quantitative information in this field. Consequently, only a limited number of indicators of situation were available in 2007.

National experiences of child protection information and monitoring systems

A large number of initiatives have been undertaken by governments in West and Central Africa, with the support of UNICEF and other child protection partners, in order to improve information and monitoring related to child protection. Different countries have focused on different protection themes or particular geographical areas, which has led to the development of a child protection database that is sectoral and compartmentalized. At the same time, eight countries have carried out initiatives, based on different approaches that have supported the creation of a national child protection information and monitoring system: Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Niger and Nigeria.

The information and monitoring mechanisms developed by countries in a stable situation therefore take different forms:

- 1 *Internal information systems*, established at the level of social services, the courts, and/or the police, which register and produce information regarding children in relation with their mandates and activities, according to their framework, in varying forms and frequency. The information collected in this scattered and unsystematic way is of

¹ WHO, ILO, UNDP, ISPCAN, Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice

low value and flows in a vertical and compartmentalized fashion in the form of monthly, bi-annual and/or annual reports within the sector hierarchy. In most cases, the data destined for the central level are insufficiently disaggregated. In this context, and in the absence of a national register of children's rights abuses, the production of national child protection statistics will be limited.

- 2 *Targeted monitoring systems (geographical/thematic):* the integrated monitoring system in convergence zones (Gambia, Togo); the monitoring and information management system on child trafficking set up in Togo and coordinated by the National Commission of Reception and Social Rehabilitation of Children Victims of Trafficking (CNARSEVT), which relies on monitoring activities of neighborhood watch groups and public services (police, social services).
- 3 *National routine monitoring system.* Four countries have committed themselves to setting up a permanent national system for routine monitoring and data management related to child protection: Benin, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Relying on those services most often called upon to be aware of and identify cases of special protection, this approach aims to organize current systems of recording and internal archiving of individual files in such a way as to extract information and statistical data, based on the activities of the service, to national range. In these four countries, the objectives of these mechanisms are i) to produce reliable information that is sufficiently disaggregated at the local level according to common frameworks adapted to the different sources of information that are supported; ii) to ensure that this information periodically rises to higher levels based on a pyramid-shaped flow of data; and iii) to consolidate this information at the central level and to make it accessible and usable for surveillance, evaluation, planning, programming and monitoring.
- 4 *National survey of basic child protection* (Cameroon, Nigeria). The aim of implementing a national statistical survey is to create a national database on child protection that can serve as a reference and that can be updated. Collecting data on protection is based on periodic data collection from key information sources. In this sense, it can be considered *active* monitoring. It has particular relevance in collecting data on all cases of abuse, violence or exploitation that cannot be reported legally; when data are not available; or in the absence of a routine monitoring system.
- 5 *Empirical approaches.* A number of countries have adopted a more progressive step towards setting up a national child protection information and monitoring system by improving current information systems so as to generate and centralize protection data more systematically and more frequently. In this light, the approaches adopted by Liberia and Niger, although very different in their organization and mechanisms, do share the common characteristic of flexibility, with the short-term objective being the organization of an information flow from existing information systems while waiting for the development of more elaborate information systems. In Liberia, the approach consists of bringing together different information management systems, set up with support from partners, into a single inter-agency database. In Niger, the annual inter-ministerial mission to the regions enables the collection of consolidated information and data that have previously been derived from annual reports of the activities of the different technical services concerned, according to a pre-established framework.

In countries affected by an emergency situation, four main types of child protection information mechanisms have been developed in the region:

- 1 The monitoring and reporting mechanism on serious violations of children's rights (MRM 1612): In the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Sierra Leone, a national monitoring and reporting mechanism on serious violations of children's rights has been established in line with Security Council Resolution 1612. It is based primarily on the reporting and registering of serious violations of children's rights by community-based child protection organizations, as part of their routine activities.
- 2 The regional integrated system for information on rights abuses in border areas (Mano River Union countries). As part of the integral activities of national NGOs in partnership with international protection agencies (UNICEF, International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], Catholic Committee against Hunger [CCF], International Rescue Committee [IRC], United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] and the Save the Children Alliance), this system organizes the monitoring of rights violations and protection and supervision activities on both sides of the borders of Mano River Union countries, as well as the management of a common database. The system aims to produce reports on observed trends in rights abuses in the sub-region in order to improve and support the programming, responses and advocacy; and on the nature and quality of protection interventions that have been developed in the sub-region. The originality of this approach is the simultaneous registering, processing and dissemination of the information, which ties in the collection, access and analysis of the data by actors at all levels (local, national and regional).
- 3 Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (Liberia and Sierra Leone). These Commissions are responsible for the impartial collection and recording of testimony (from victims, witnesses and offenders) relating to rights violations carried out during the period of conflict, and are an essential process in national reconciliation. The unique experience in Sierra Leone lies in the special attention given, for the first time in this type of forum, to the participation of children in the undertakings, according to specially adapted procedures.
- 4 Inter-agency system of monitoring and information management regarding children affected by armed conflict. Within the framework of the inter-agency working group on separated children, Save the Children, IRC and UNICEF

have developed a common and standardized information management system for separated children, children associated with armed groups and other vulnerable children, in order to facilitate i) the collection of information, communication and sharing of data, in particular with regard to activities related to the search and reunification of families; ii) individual monitoring of children. At the beginning of 2006, the inter-agency project was launched in West Africa, in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia.

Periodic population surveys

In national contexts characterized by dispersed internal information systems, protection databases with limited coverage, and the almost total lack of national systems for recording or monitoring rights abuses or vulnerable situations for children, national population surveys, carried out periodically by national statistics institutes, with donor support, constitute a valuable source of information regarding child protection. Two programmes of periodic household surveys currently integrate questions of protection: i) Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), supported by UNICEF; and ii) Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), supported by USAID. Data collected at the household level enables estimations at the national level of the scale of certain vulnerable situations for children, and verification of trends, based on a certain number of variables. In 2006-09, only half of the countries in the West and Central Africa region (12) carried out a MICS. At the same time, during the same period, six countries carried out a DHS. In other words, a total of 17 out of 24 countries in the region have carried out a national survey at the household level, which has enabled the recent collection of convergent data relating to protection issues. Optional modules related to protection, such as disability, are not systematically included by countries. Although the survey results are widely disseminated, the corresponding data are not sufficiently exploited in planning and monitoring, while access to corresponding databases for further research is often limited in practice.

Child protection research and studies

The sensitive and taboo character of certain protection issues, the multidimensional nature of situations, and the complexity of vulnerability factors, require targeted research and studies. The launch and implementation of these studies result in government programme priorities, with each financial and technical partner. Whatever the case, these studies add to and complement efforts to develop national information and monitoring mechanisms on protection. The generally combined approach of qualitative and quantitative methods has enabled a better understanding of the factors and dimensions of targeted protection situations, without being able to establish reliable estimations of observed phenomena, or to extract the main determining factors/levers that merit priority attention in protection interventions. Quality and utilization of the studies remains an issue, while partnering with university departments and research institutes is still marginal in the region.

Challenges, constraints and lessons learned from systems and methods of data collection

The experiences in the region have highlighted a number of challenges and lessons learned, related to i) institutional hosting and coordination; ii) the capacities of child protection systems; iii) the quality of the data collected; iv) monitoring/evaluation; v) information sources; vi) the analysis and utilization of data; vii) the financing and durability of systems; and viii) the scope and quality of specialized research and studies.

The issue of the institutional hosting of the information system at the central level is fundamental. Its location determines the impact of the monitoring and information systems that have been set up, in particular the mobilization and coordination of the actors involved in data collection, but also the subsequent access to the database and the analysis, dissemination and utilization of the data. Throughout the countries in the region, the establishment of the database and the management of the system have been considered jointly. Experience in the region shows that coordination depends on the objectives and methods of data collection, as well as on the support from technical and financing partners. In any case, the challenge is to ensure the commitment of the government, by overcoming institutional tensions, whether between or within ministries. This also concerns the need to strengthen the involvement and coordination with state statistical services, both at a central and decentralized level.

Data collection concerning child protection in the region faces a number of major structural constraints, related to i) limited operational capacities of decentralized public services working on social and child protection, with inadequate financial, material and human resources to provide even basic services, let alone data collection; and ii) limited expertise and capacities in terms of the production, management and dissemination of information related to child protection, both in centralized and decentralized services. Furthermore, a weak systemic organization of those services responsible for or concerned by child protection is a serious obstacle to the establishment of integrated child protection information systems, to the synergy of existing information systems, and to the coordinated involvement of actors from different sectors, kinds and levels of intervention in collecting child protection data. Child protection information and monitoring mechanisms should be developed as integral components of child protection systems, rather than as separate mechanisms.

The different methods of collection raise specific problems with regard to the quality of the data. The reliability of the data is threatened by underestimation or by double counting. The quality of the data depends on i) the probabilities of declaration, recognition and registering cases of rights violations; ii) the support, motivation and engagement of those responsible for collection; iii) the accuracy of collection mechanisms and tools in place; and iv) the capacity for the centralization and periodic processing of the data by the relevant services.

The isolation of certain geographical areas, and the difficulty for central services to organize regular monitoring and evaluation missions to those involved in collecting and processing the data, also impede the production and consolidation of the information. Close monitoring of data collecting and centralizing activities constitutes an essential factor in the success of the system, particularly in the first few years of operation.

Organization of monitoring systems in the region is based on social services, supported by community-based organizations working on child protection. Community involvement has been shown to be of limited value for the generation of child protection data, because of the poor quality of the data provided. The decentralized Justice and Security (police) services constitute two other sources of information, while Health and Education sectors are not yet involved in the collection of child protection data. This absence is part of an approach that is voluntarily progressive, but is also the result of the difficulty in promoting an integrated and systemic approach to child protection in the region, and in convincing ministries to allocate resources to monitoring activities not directly related to their core objectives. Yet the integration of decentralized sectoral services, in particular those of health, is essential in collecting statistics and in the monitoring of violence against children, as well as children with disabilities.

Initiatives undertaken in the region concerning information and monitoring of child protection have come up against limited understanding among stakeholders of the usefulness of data collection, and the limited capacities for analysis among those in charge, both at central and regional levels. This means there is i) no prior in-depth reflection on the strategic data to be collected, with a view to contributing to the planning and programming of child protection issues; ii) a limited capacity of the ministry responsible for child protection to exploit and use the data collected; and iii) limited capitalization of the information and data collection activities due to problems of access and using the database.

Whichever approach is chosen, data collection is an activity that comes at a cost. A good collection and information management system requires financial investments for infrastructure (IT equipment, software, database, etc.), training, maintenance, monitoring, analysis and periodic reports. Establishing routine monitoring systems depends mainly on outside technical and financial support, because operating expenses are not covered by national budgets, training is called into question because of personnel changes and frequent turnover of government staff, and sources of external funding remain limited.

Research related to protection in the region is mainly affected by the difficulty for universities to carry out independent research and by the limited and dispersed research capacities and expertise on issues of child protection. The type of technical support is a determining factor in the quality of studies, as is resorting to institutional contracts. Information production remains empirical, limited in scope by the isolated priorities and programme resources of actors and their partners, while access to the information is uncertain. The absence of a permanent and formal mechanism for consultation, coordination and sharing of resources, and of studies and research on protection hampers production of strategic knowledge.

Main benefits of each approach

The approaches in use in the region for protection information and monitoring each have specific advantages and drawbacks.

- 1 The main benefit of *joint missions* (example from Niger) is to establish data collection within the framework of monitoring/evaluation activities and require little investment. This approach favours mobilizing those responsible for decentralized levels in the production and analysis of data. However, the main drawback of this approach lies in the limited coverage and the varying quality of the data collected from one region to the next, and from one department to the next. It can be considered as an intermediate step that enables the consolidation of coordination functions in the ministry responsible for protection, as well as the interests and involvement of other sectoral ministries in collecting protection data, while waiting for the input of more significant technical and financial resources in setting up a permanent system of monitoring and information.
- 2 The main benefit of *recording and monitoring systems* is to establish data collection as part of routine activities for departments and institutions in charge of or concerned with protection. This approach produces a permanent collection of information, associated with registering cases, that is disaggregated and can be consolidated at the national level; that can highlight statistical data that is accurate enough to analyse vulnerability factors. It can also provide information about how the services operate. However, the main drawback lies in the high initial investment

necessary to organize the information flow and the need for internal information systems organized by motivated actors, and firm operational coordination by relevant services. The risk of under-estimation is high.

- 3 *Periodic population (household) surveys.* These surveys have the advantage of being able to provide conclusive reference data, in an ad hoc manner, for policy-making, programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy at the national level. In the context of weak institutional capacity regarding information, these surveys enable checking of trends. However, they are too infrequent and the data collected only produce estimates, as regards basic factors. The information therefore does not take into account the complexity of protection situations, and only considers certain protection situations.
- 4 *Specialized research and studies.* Better targeted research that is exclusively qualitative or both qualitative and quantitative, depending on the objectives, is invaluable in determining the scale and nature of sensitive issues or informal protection systems; in better understanding individual and group dynamics, and the factors that underlie certain situations; in determining the needs of vulnerable children regarding prevention, protection and reintegration; and in evaluating the quality and range of measures taken with regard to prevention, protection and reintegration services.

Main recommendations to strengthen national capacities in child protection information and monitoring in the region

Any national child protection information and monitoring system in the region will have to be developed gradually over time. Based on a number of general principles, UNICEF focuses on three complementary areas of intervention: i) improving and consolidating systems for recording routine data and information on a national level; ii) broadening the child protection scope of periodic household surveys; and iii) promoting research into child protection. The use of each of these approaches depends on the objectives and the indicators covered, the state of existing services and sources of information, as well as on institutional capacities and available resources. These options complement each other in order to provide fuller coverage of information and/or monitoring needs, by addressing different kinds of actors at different levels.

More specifically, UNICEF should concentrate support on the following key points:

- i) elicit and guide the definition of needs and objectives related to child protection information and monitoring;
- ii) strengthen coordination of information and monitoring activities and systems;
- iii) support the establishment of protection monitoring as a strategic part of existing or consolidated routine sectoral recording and/or monitoring systems;
- iv) consolidate targeting of periodic surveys;
- v) provide technical and financial support for specialized research;
- vi) develop an integrated approach to protection monitoring and surveillance: link data collection to detection and intervention;
- vii) ensure processing and utilization of information and data;
- viii) develop partnerships and research planning.

1. Introduction

Justification and strategic framework

A good child protection information system is not in itself an indicator of the level of child protection, but it is an indication of the place of children in a given society and in a country's policies. The generalized or systematic absence of information on children in danger indicates a society that is centred on adults, with little regard paid to children, and a limited awareness of children's rights.

Documenting and monitoring vulnerable children is an essential component in the development of effective prevention and protection policies. A child protection information system is therefore indispensable in planning and in improving monitoring of child protection services and systems in a country.

Information concerning child protection would therefore allow us to i) increase the level of awareness of child protection rights and of observed abuses; ii) inform about professional practices; iii) improve understanding and knowledge; iv) determine decisions related to prevention and protection measures, training and capacity building, priorities and financing.

Providing support for the production of quality information and ensuring that this information is applied in the formulation and adoption of policy, as well as supporting the planning and monitoring of child protection interventions, all constitute strategic priorities for UNICEF.

UNICEF strategic priorities

1. *Key component in the protective environment*: Monitoring systems that include data collection and monitoring of trends and responses
2. *MTSP (2006-09)*: government decisions are influenced by increased awareness of child protection rights, as well as by improved information and analysis of child protection
3. *Recommendation of the UN Study on Violence against Children (2006)*: States are responsible for improving data collection and information systems in order to identify vulnerable sub-groups, to influence policy and to measure progress in the prevention of violence against children.
4. *UNICEF's Global Strategy for Child Protection (2008)*: Improved monitoring of child protection issues constitutes one of the priority cross-cutting strategic areas, and includes:
 - National collection of routine child protection data
 - Disaggregation according to sex, age and other factors related to vulnerability
 - Consensus among partners regarding protection indicators
 - Regional monitoring mechanisms in partnership with regional bodies and research institutes
 - Strengthening child protection modules in MICS and other routine surveys
 - In emergency situations, develop and set up standard evaluation indicators of protection situations and monitoring and reporting mechanisms (1612)

A national child protection system comprises a package of laws, policies, regulations and services in all social sectors – especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to support prevention and response to protection-related risks. The coordination of these multiple services, and of the different kinds and levels of institutional responsibilities, constitutes a key element for a

systemic approach to protection, and relies as much on the existence of a system of routine reference as on an information and monitoring system of situations and of protection services.

At the same time, research into child protection can provide an in-depth analysis of the risk factors and the existing policies, as well as of the services and structures, in order to strengthen national protection capacities in an adequate and targeted manner. UNICEF's priority in this area² is to:

- Develop and standardize child protection evaluation in order to demonstrate impact and help replicate successful approaches;
- Improve child protection situation analysis to include law and policy review; and gender and political environment analyses;
- Identify and initiate research into the main evidence gaps, including cost effectiveness of various interventions, costing of child protection, assessment of child reintegration programmes, longitudinal research, global security agenda and child protection, and child protection and the changing physical environment;
- Convene a high-level child protection advisory group to identify and support global, regional and national research needs;
- Consolidate, analyse and disseminate information on child protection in emergencies, and promote further research;
- Review the adoption and application of laws relating to child protection;
- Undertake a comparative analysis between national laws and international conventions.

The issues at stake

In the area of child protection, the issues related to the development of information and monitoring systems for situations and interventions concern:

- the sensitive nature – sometimes illegal or clandestine, and always multidimensional – of protection situations;
- the importance of local social factors in child protection;
- the scarcity and varying quality of research/studies in this area.

Since 2002, with the support of partners at the global level,³ UNICEF has endeavoured to develop protection indicators related to certain issues of child protection. Despite progress in data collection, the availability of child protection data remains limited.

The West and Central Africa region lacks necessary research capacities and systematic child protection information and monitoring mechanisms. As a result, it is one of the regions that suffers most from a lack of visibility and evaluation of protection situations and interventions. This low visibility means that the definition of objectives and planning of interventions have limited impact; the appropriateness of prevention measures and responses to protection needs cannot be guaranteed; monitoring progress and results achieved is difficult; and finally, that donors are more reluctant to support national initiatives.

² UNICEF Child Protection Strategy, June 2008.

³ WHO, ILO, UNDP, ISPCAN, Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice

One of the issues for West and Central Africa is the recognition of the importance of monitoring and data collection for greater institutional accountability, improved awareness and strengthened programming. The difficulty lies not only in the expressed need for and the coordinated production of reliable information, but also in its use as a recognized benefit that is shared both by political decision-makers and other actors involved in child protection.

More specifically, it concerns the ability of governments, with the support of UNICEF and other partners, to:

- systematically monitor protection situations and progress made in this area;
- produce quality technical information for the development of policy and planning related to child protection;
- establish a database to facilitate both national and local programming, and to measure progress and gaps in child protection in order to facilitate decision making;
- use the results of research.

Objective

The objective of this report is to review the initiatives carried out in the last four years in West and Central African countries with regard to child protection data and monitoring systems. An analysis of the different options available in the region reveals i) the advantages and limits of each approach; ii) the difficulties experienced in collecting, analyzing and disseminating protection data; iii) the lessons learned and the challenges in this area; and iv) a proposal for a UNICEF framework of intervention to strengthen national child protection information and monitoring systems in the region.

2. Regional initiative on child protection indicators

Within the framework of UNICEF priority strategic commitments, as contained in the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) and the regional strategy document on child protection in West and Central Africa, which stress the need to strengthen awareness and monitoring of protection situations to improve the coherence of programmes in the region, a list of protection indicators, developed jointly with headquarters, the regional office and country offices, was adopted in November 2005.

Objectives

The development of a regional list of indicators was intended to stimulate information on common grounds, and to encourage and support countries in improving monitoring and documentation of child protection and in developing national monitoring systems. At the same time, the regional objective was to:

- Facilitate the monitoring of protection situations in the region
- Identify the achievements, gaps and challenges for the region:
 - ✓ In terms of documentation/monitoring of situations
 - ✓ In terms of developing programming responses
- Facilitate the development of comparative analyses
- Improve the visibility of the region at the global level with respect to child protection

The list contains 126 indicators, classified according to protection themes and divided into three parts: i) indicators of situation, which measure the scale of rights abuses in terms of the number of children affected; ii) indicators of environment, which identify gaps in the protection environment (e.g. laws, sentencing, monitoring mechanisms, access to services); and iii) indicators of the results or coverage, which measure the impact of interventions.

Regional list of protection indicators (2005)

126 indicators divided into ten thematic sections:

- Protective environment (12)
- Sexual abuse and violence (11)
- Economic exploitation (13)
- Orphans and other vulnerable children (7)
- Children in institutions (12)
- Children in conflict with the law (17)
- Harmful practices (19)
- Children affected by armed conflict (17)
- Development of adolescents (10)
- Observing international conventions (8)

The objective was to ensure that, by the end of 2007, at least 50% of the indicators common to the region would be integrated by at least twelve country offices.

The tools

At the regional level, monitoring was carried out on the basis of an individual country form, prepared for reporting and periodic updating of data collected at the national level for each indicator, disaggregated according to sex and age, and, if necessary, according to nationality, zone (urban or rural), or any other relevant variable that is available. The country form specifies the source(s) of the data, the geographical coverage and the reference periods. A matrix (Excel) merges all the indicators

given by country for each thematic section, to which is added a section on basic economic, health and social data (19) that enables the protection situations to be viewed in a wider context.

A user's guide for this common list of child protection indicators for West Africa was developed to clarify the concepts used and the data to be collected.

Follow-up

The regional matrix of indicators has been updated annually. Shared with the country offices, the matrix has allowed the regional office and the UNICEF regional child protection network in West and Central Africa to measure progress, identify gaps and technical support needs, to discuss and adopt recommended follow-up actions in 2006 and 2007.

The regional review in 2006 and 2007 reflects the efforts, but also the strategic choices, made by countries to generate and communicate data relating to the list of indicators common to the region. In this respect, in 2006, in order to draw up a baseline reference and to identify the needs and challenges to be met, the data provided by the country offices were mainly quantitative, and had been recorded independently of their current status, or of the quality of the source, or even of their national coverage, for certain indicators. The priority was to determine the common level of visibility of protection in countries in the region, before presenting reliable and definitive national indicators. In 2007, there was a demand for higher quality indicators, with the objective being to measure progress in the region in terms of the production of reliable and up-to-date data – within the framework sketched by the common indicators. As a result, only the quantitative data after 2000 were included in the regional matrix. This choice was motivated by two concerns: i) to reflect the most up-to-date reality of protection in the region; and ii) to continue to encourage countries to produce updated data. Eventually, the reference period should cover the previous 12 months.

3. Main results, challenges and lessons learned from child protection data and indicators

The adoption of a regional list of protection indicators, together with monitoring tools for the region, have without doubt led to a mobilization of available information to supply the indicators in all country offices, and, in a few countries, have encouraged the development of national systems for the collection and management of child protection data.

The list of protection indicators prepared by UNICEF at the regional level has served as a basis for discussion at the national level. However, when the protection indicators were developed and adopted, impact has been variable, depending on the country.

Discussion of child protection information and monitoring at the national level is based on the regional list of indicators, between government representatives and UNICEF, but not systematically with other protection partners. While such an approach has facilitated regional monitoring by identifying national indicators common to all countries, it has, however:

- Restricted national discussion of protection monitoring, the choice of indicators and the selection of available information. This has prevented more in-depth consideration of the needs, the strategic choice of data to collect, and the use and impact of monitoring activities;
- Raised issues of harmonization with concepts that are already defined and validated nationally, with indicators used by other partners, and with the expected variables in such formalized tools as MICS, DHS or in existing databases.

The support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and other agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) or the International Labour Organization (ILO) is decisive in this respect. In Burkina Faso, the World Bank supported the Ministry of Social Affairs in the development of 16 indicators, relating in particular to infancy, vulnerable children (extent, supervision and reintegration), persons living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, marginalized persons and persons living with a disability (extent, supervision). These indicators were defined in connection with existing national planning frameworks in the different sectors concerned.

Currently, none of the countries possess a list of protection indicators that is recognized at the national level, by those involved in protection and their partners.

The experience of using the regional list of indicators has revealed the need for a revision of the list of indicators on the basis of: more recently developed directives and manuals, at the global level, regarding thematic protection indicators, for example related to juvenile justice; difficulties experienced by country offices in the acquisition, calculation and utilization of the indicators; and a harmonization of concepts and variables. This revision would result in improved inter-agency collaboration and results analysis.

The availability of **protection data** is currently more a reflection of programme priorities or actions rather than a tool for monitoring or information, or as an aid in strategic planning for child protection. In every country, there is a large difference in the amount of documentation available for each of the protection themes, and the data available that reflect the current political focus on certain protection situations and the programme priorities supported by partners. Data come from a wide variety of sources, in an uncoordinated manner and on the basis of variable concepts, which

makes consolidation difficult. Monitoring of protection indicators at the regional level produced the following conclusions:

- *Patchy updating of data:* country offices made a serious attempt to update data between 2006 and 2007. The result is that certain countries have higher quality indicators, although this improvement may not be noticeable at the regional level. As such, data held may date back as far as 2000, depending on the country.
- *Continued limited data coverage:* In 2007, as in 2006, many of the indicators still relied on data that had limited coverage and which were not representative of the national situation. Certain data were simply the reflection of their institutional sources,⁴ for example the number of children in institutions originates from the staff working in such institutions in the capital city.
- *Varying definitions of concepts and fields covered:* definition of the concepts of protection still vary from one country to the next, or even between one institutional source to the next within a single country. The most notable example is that of orphans and other vulnerable children.⁵ At the same time, the field covered by regional indicators does not always match existing collection formats, as the table below illustrates. The data collected does not therefore correspond in the strict sense to the field determined by the indicators.

Table: Examples of problems matching regional indicators with MICS-DHS

UNICEF regional indicator list	National indicators according to information sources
Children aged 5-14 in work	MICS: Children under 15 working other than in domestic service
Disabled children below the age of 18	MICS: Children aged 2-9 affected by a disability
Girls below the age of 18 who have undergone FGM/C	DHS: 15-19 years old MICS: Women 15-49 excised / with at least one daughter who has undergone FGM/C
Girls married before legal age	MICS: Women 15-49 married before 15 / before 18 years old
Average age at first marriage	DHS-MICS: Median age

An indicator has, in principle, different functions: i) to evaluate a situation or trend at moment “t”; ii) to enable comparisons over time and place; iii) evaluate the match with objectives and targets; iv) trigger warning signals; v) measure the impact of policies and programmes; vi) identify priority questions and issues; and vii) facilitate decision-making.

Regarding the situation in West and Central Africa, the usefulness and quality of indicators is seriously compromised by a “reactive” and empirical collecting of the data used to calculate the indicators . A comparative study of updated data for certain indicators has revealed the level of

⁴ These data were collected in 2006 and 2007, for the reasons mentioned previously, and should no longer be used for indicators in the next regional exercise, during which the setting up of national systems for collecting and managing information should be capable of generating national definitions.

⁵ See annex for examples of national definitions.

discrepancies that occurred when the source of information, the reference period or the definitions were changed.⁶

The availability of **protection indicators** in the region, independently of the quality of the data used to calculate them, is concentrated in three themes: in 2007, a majority of country offices provided data for more than 50% of the indicators related to the protective environment (that is, 18 countries), to OVC (16 countries), and the development of adolescents (14 countries). In contrast, despite progress in certain countries, there is a low availability at the regional level for indicators on children in institutions (only four countries provided data for more than 50% of the indicators) and economic exploitation (three countries). This observation can be explained by:

- ✓ A higher number of qualitative indicators, of processes and means, in the three themes mentioned, for which information/data are easier to generate;
- ✓ The continuing difficulty in providing quantitative estimates for the national level in general, and for certain vulnerable situations in particular (trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation, violence at school), despite improvements in quantitative indicators globally (41% of indicators provided by 12 countries minimum in 2007, compared with 34% in 2006);
- ✓ The mismatch of certain indicators with existing indicators and collection systems, which calls for a redefinition (e.g. economic exploitation);
- ✓ Limited attention paid up to now to monitoring certain protection themes (children in institutions).

Despite the limits observed at the national levels, regional monitoring of indicators, such as those defined in 2005, has provided clear and synthesized information on certain regional trends in terms of progress and gaps in the responses and services, based on environment and coverage indicators.⁷

In conclusion, the majority of countries in the region experience difficulties in producing reliable quantitative information in this area. Only a limited number of situation indicators were therefore available in 2007.

The systems of social information and the national population surveys (e.g. DHS, MICS, general population and housing census) provide reference points but these surveys are not suitable for certain child protection issues (e.g. sexual abuse). In addition, they are carried out too infrequently. Production of updated and periodic protection data can therefore only be based on the establishment of national systems of monitoring and information specifically on protection, accompanied by specialized research.

⁶ Examples: In Niger, the data collection system set up by joint missions recorded a figure of 683 street children in 2005, whereas a study carried out in 2005 put the figure at 25,949. In Mali, the number of street children who received assistance referred to a different time period than that used to cover the total number of street children (that is, 1,924 street children, and 42,026 street children who received assistance), thus rendering the calculation of the rate of cover as impossible.

⁷ See annexes

4. Country experiences of child protection information and monitoring

A large number of initiatives have been undertaken by governments in West and Central Africa, with the support of UNICEF and other child protection partners, in order to improve information and monitoring related to child protection. Different countries have focused on different protection themes or particular geographical areas, which has led to the development of a child protection databases that are sectoral or compartmentalized.⁸

Monitoring child protection situations and services consists largely of two complementary approaches for generating and centralizing regular strategic information:

- i) **Monitoring:** involving a mechanism for collecting, analyzing and disseminating information about risk situations and situations of rights violations. This monitoring can be *passive*, that is, linked to the routine recording and reporting of administrative data by child protection services; or *active*, that is, based on a population survey involving potential information sources;
- ii) Information and documentation, based on population surveys, as well as research and studies.

4.1. Description of information and monitoring mechanisms in peace time⁹

4.1.1. Internal information systems

In principle, in countries in the region, decentralized **social services** record cases of individuals or families in difficult situations or those who are being assisted. The information on individual cases of children in vulnerable situations is collected and copied into registers or files, according to a predefined framework, as part of an activity report, to be forwarded up the hierarchy to regional and central levels.

At the same time, **the judicial services and the police** have procedures for registering and archiving files concerning rights abuses of children and children in conflict with the law. However, the haphazard recording of cases, the non-systematic alerting of social services, data collection with little regard for the child and his or her rights, and irregular circulation of information all limit the effectiveness of these systems in terms of producing reliable statistics.

The Domestic Violence and Victim Support Units (DOVVSU) in **Ghana**, for example, consists of a network of police units that respond to domestic violence and provide victim support. The current DOVVSU network consists of eleven regional units and 75 local units spread across the entire country. A recent study was carried out to evaluate how cases of domestic violence were recorded and archived, and how data on domestic violence were consolidated and disaggregated by sex, age, region and type of violence. The study revealed a haphazard recording of cases; a patchwork of concepts, collecting formats and archiving methods; and the non-systematic character of the

⁸ A table showing activities by country is in the annex.

⁹ The analysis and lessons learned in existing experience follows in sub-section 4.5.

variables collected. Only the DOVVSU in Accra produced information disaggregated according to the sex and age of the victim.

In **Liberia**, a system for the management and investigation of cases of violence, sexual abuse and exploitation has been set up within police services, based in the Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberia National Police (WACP-LNP). Forty-eight units spread over 15 counties register cases of violence and sexual abuse and exploitation that are reported, and transmitted each month to the central headquarters of the National Police. The data are then added to a specific database. The information produced is analysed and shared with the Ministry of Gender and Development, the Gender-based Violence Unit, and the Liberian Statistics Institute.

Similarly, in **Togo**, the prison administration produces monthly reports for the central level, on the number of prisoners according to the type of detention, sex and the type of offence, without highlighting cases committed by minors. In **Benin**, the Youth Protection Brigade, based in Cotonou, houses a system of recording and managing information related to offences against children, using a software programme called, “Children of Benin”, with the aim of producing statistics. The Brigade manages the corresponding database and transmits the consolidated and aggregated data to the Ministry in charge of Protection, while keeping information about the offenders and children confidential.

In **Sierra Leone**, in the absence of a national system of data collection, the ministry in charge of child protection (Ministry of Social Affairs, Gender and Children) uses different sources according to the protection theme: the Police Family Units for domestic violence and sexual violence, and the judiciary for children in conflict with the law.

Ultimately, services and institutions register information about children in accordance with their mandates and activities, using a variety of frameworks, formats and regularity.

In the absence of regular consultations between different child protection services and the lack of a predefined framework of collecting, processing and managing information on vulnerable children, information about individual cases remains localized in the original notebooks or registers at the level of the service or institution in charge. The information collected in this scattered and unsystematic way is of low value and flows upwards in a vertical and compartmentalized fashion in the form of monthly, bi-annual or annual reports within the sector hierarchy. When the information is shared, it circulates sporadically and the availability of data is irregular. In most cases, the data that go to the central level are insufficiently disaggregated. In this context, and in the absence of a national register of children’s rights abuses, the production of national child protection statistics will be limited.

In conclusion, two types of national information systems can be developed that are based on the routine registration of cases by child protection services:

- a *National Registry of Rights Violations*, which is developed within the social services and which systematically refers individual cases to other child protection actors. This is in line with a more systematic approach to protection that includes coordination of services, and the development of alert, referral and orientation procedures for children.
- a *National Monitoring System*: in order for a recording system to contribute to the production of national statistics, it is necessary to access a higher level of organization. Such a system rests on the recording of the original information according to predefined objectives, on clearly established procedures and classifications, and standard tools that allow the collection of information that are sufficiently disaggregated by source of information, so that it can be consolidated at the central level.

As part of the framework of setting up national mechanisms for monitoring and collecting child protection data, eight countries in the region have carried out initiatives, based on different approaches, that have supported the creation of a national child protection information and monitoring system: Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Niger and Nigeria. These experiences are being presented in the following sections.

4.1.2. Targeted monitoring systems (geographical/thematic)

The integrated monitoring system in convergence zones

In a country, such as the Gambia or Togo, UNICEF efforts have been focused on setting up an integrated monitoring system in convergence zones. In Togo, a child monitoring observatory has been set up within the Central Statistics Office, with regional divisions that rely on a bi-annual collection of data by Social Advancement officials and representatives from village development committees. The observatory is attached to project zones and activities, and the data are consolidated locally according to a predefined form for data collection.

The monitoring and thematic information management system in Togo and Senegal

In other countries, the collection and management of child protection information have concentrated on one or two protection themes. In Senegal, for example, a national system for the collection and management of information has been set up that targets the worst forms of child labour.

In Togo, a national monitoring system on the trafficking of children has enabled the creation of a database on child victims of trafficking. A National Commission of Reception and Social Rehabilitation of the Children Victims of Trafficking (CNARSEVT) was established by ministerial decree in 2002. It is responsible for coordinating the reception, supervision, and family and social rehabilitation of child victims of trafficking identified at borders and in other countries, and for centralizing correlated information and statistics. It has six regional and 30 prefectural divisions, however not all are operational.

Data collection depends on monitoring activities of the local monitoring committees at the community level, as well as on other services (border police, social services, etc.), which may be called upon to detect cases, and which are responsible for collecting and copying individual data in preformatted registers. These registers are forwarded to the central level for processing and for entering of individual data into national databases. An initial consolidated analysis was produced in 2008, with a total of 251 child victims of cross-border trafficking, recorded between 2002 and 2007. Statistical trends were extracted according to basic variables, such as sex, age, educational level, region or country of origin and destination.

4.1.3. National routine monitoring system

Decentralized collection of routine data in Benin, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea

Four countries in the region have launched a process to develop a permanent national system for routine monitoring and data management related to child protection. **Benin** and **Guinea** have made the most progress in this domain, while the other two countries are completing the stage of devising the institutional organization and tools for a national system that is not yet operational.

These monitoring and information systems all depend on the logging, by public child protection services¹⁰ and the community services that support them, of certain information on individual cases that these services are called on to identify and manage as part of their regular activities and according to a pre-established format. Relying on those services most often called upon to be aware of and identify cases of special protection, this approach aims to organize current systems of recording and internal archiving of individual files in such a way as to extract information and statistical data, based on the activities of the service, to national range.

In these four countries, the objectives of these mechanisms are i) to produce reliable information that is sufficiently disaggregated at the local level according to common frameworks adapted to the different sources of information that are supported; ii) to ensure that this information periodically rises to higher levels based on an pyramid-shaped flow of data; and iii) to consolidate this information at the central level and to make it accessible and usable for surveillance, evaluation, planning, programming and monitoring.

Process. Setting up a national system for collecting and managing child protection information is based on a number of steps that are relatively similar from one country to the next. The starting point for initiating the process at the national level has often been the sharing and discussion of the UNICEF regional list of indicators with the ministry in charge of child protection. In **Benin**, a national workshop was held in June 2006 to decide with the Government on the collection system and database to be set up.

In three out of four countries, a diagnosis of the existing child protection information systems was considered a preliminary step before designing a new system. In **Benin**, a workshop was organized with the Government to review the existing systems and to choose the system to set up. In **Côte d'Ivoire** and **Guinea**, consultants prepared an inventory and assessment of the existing information systems based in public and community services responsible for child protection. Only **Guinea** has undertaken a mapping of protection interventions and the creation of a database of NGOs involved in this field.

In all the countries, it is unsure whether sufficient time and resources were given to a preliminary consideration of the priority needs, the objectives of the data collecting, the utilization of the information, and the choice and design of the national protection indicators.

Once the mechanism and tools were designed and approved by a national workshop, UNICEF supported the technical design and installation of the database at the central level, and, if necessary, at the regional level (**Benin**).

Capacity building, supported by UNICEF, consisted of:

- At the central level: providing the department responsible for coordinating the system and the database with IT equipment, and, if necessary, the decentralized services housing an intermediate database (local authorities of social affairs, **Benin**);
- At the decentralized level: providing training for actors and institutions responsible for recording (on paper) individual data at the local level regarding indicators and data collecting tools. In **Benin**, for example, 350 actors and structures were trained in the administration of

¹⁰ Public services *responsible* for child protection refer to those services and institutions whose mandate or mission is to intervene in cases where children are in danger, for example, social services, child protection, the police and the courts. They are distinguished from services or institutions *concerned* with protection, who within the framework of their activities, when children are involved, are called on to deal with risk situations, for example, education, health, sociocultural coordination services, etc.

the individual data collection form. Database managers at the central level and, if necessary, at the local, *departmental*, level (**Benin**) also received training.

Institutional hosting and coordination. Depending on the country, the overall coordination of the activities linked to the monitoring and information management system has been entrusted to:

- the Central Office or Institute of Statistics, under the authority of the ministry in charge of planning and development (INSEED in Chad);
- the Child Protection Department, within the ministry responsible for this issue (the Social Protection Department in **Côte d'Ivoire**; the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Preschool Education and Child Protection in **Guinea**);
- the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation in the Ministry in charge of child protection (Department of the Family, Women and Child Observatory in **Benin**).

Coverage. All the systems that have been set up have a mission to cover the entire country. However, although they may cover several protection themes, not all have been systematically taken into account:

- **Benin:** 16 modules – Trafficking, work, mistreatment, disability, female genital mutilation, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, OVC, children in conflict with the law, street children, children in the street, infanticide, kidnapping, early/forced marriage, malnutrition and child witches. Many of the indicators are the same as those in the UNICEF regional list;
- **Guinea:** 9 modules – Sexual abuse, children in conflict with the law, children in institutions, child labourers and child victims of trafficking, children affected by armed conflict, OVC, participation of adolescents, harmful practices and the protective environment (that is, 26 indicators taken from the UNICEF regional list);
- **Côte d'Ivoire:** 5 modules initially – trafficking, sexual violence, harmful practices, and children in institutions (integrating the corresponding indicators from the regional list).

Information sources and tools

In the framework of a national system of statistics on protection, the judicial and social services (both public and private) sectors are the main producers and managers of data collection relating to children in need of special measures of protection. This is due to their obvious role as primary access point to services when a child's rights are abused.

The permanent mechanisms for collecting protection data that have been set up in the region all reflect this institutional dominance. At the same time, the involvement in these systems of national and international NGOs working on child protection is essential, given their number and their strategic importance in the network of operational child protection services in most of the countries of the region.

Benin provides an example of a national system of monitoring cases of rights abuses based on completing a unique child identification form. This form allows for the collection of information that goes beyond the basic (sex, age, nationality and region). It is divided into three parts – profile of the structure, profile of the child and modules specific to the rights abuses recorded – and allows for the collection of disaggregated information on characteristics of the child, his/her educational and family status, the characteristics of the parents/guardians, the services involved and the measures undertaken, and the conditions and characteristics of the rights abuse and the offender. The variables noted can therefore capture the multiple dimensions of the child's situation, and make it

possible to analyse the factors of vulnerability, as well as an evaluation of protection services and measures.

As in **Guinea**, the system established in **Côte d'Ivoire** is more a system of statistics: the recording forms developed¹¹ target the production of basic statistics on the general profile of the children concerned (sex, age, nationality, residence and civil status), the characteristics/circumstances of the rights abuse or the protection situations, and the kind of assistance provided.

The tools devised in **Benin** and **Côte d'Ivoire** also have the objective of collecting data on birth registration, through each individual case.

Regularity and information channels

The impact of the system in place depends on the quality of the flow of information. Guidelines are, in principle, made available to the professionals concerned, with regard to the identification and registration of children needing special protection, as well as operational protocols organizing the transfer of information from different services and structures to intermediate structures in charge of centralizing and checking the data before forwarding them to a higher level and their consolidation at the national level.

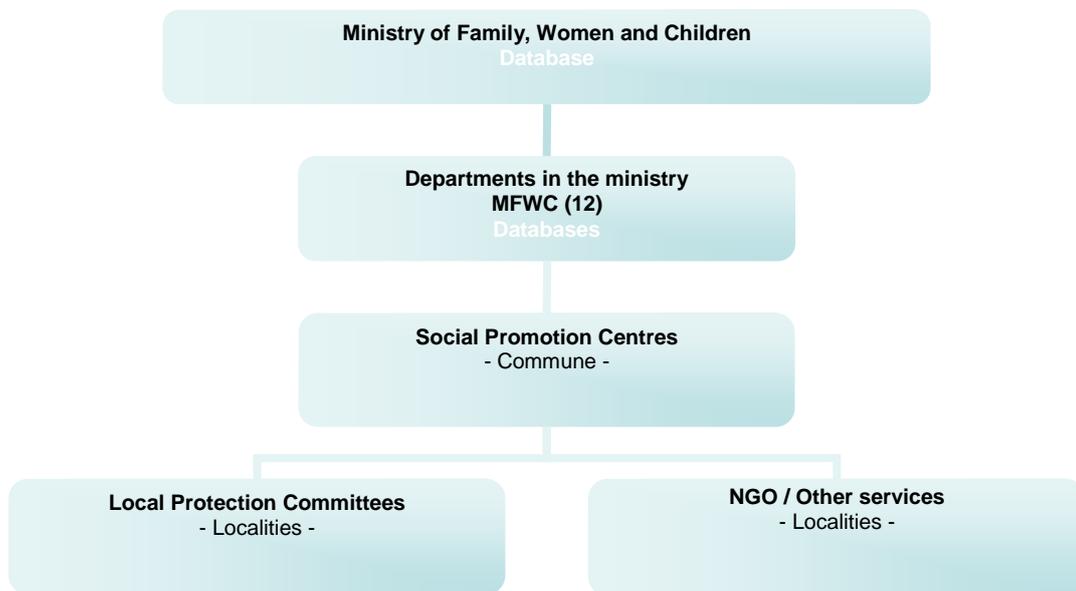
The decentralization model for each country, as well as the organization of decentralized services, can influence the opportunities for the generation of consolidated national data. A federal-type state structure, as in Nigeria, makes it more difficult to harmonize concepts, collection methods and tools from one state to the next, with the aim of producing consolidated information at the national level. Therefore, the development of a national monitoring system will be far more complex than an approach founded on a basic national survey. In contrast, the current decentralization processes in the countries of the region still seem to have limited impact on the organization of social services, and subsequently the possibility of developing national protection monitoring systems.

In **Benin**, the collection system is organized in a pyramid shape, as shown in the diagram below:

- At the local level, 350 operational social services (Social Advancement Centres, NGOs and local authority social services) are responsible for registering data using individual forms (paper-based);
- At the beginning of each month, they send the forms to an initial centralized level: Social Advancement Centres, at the district level;
- The Social Advancement Centre managers then forward the forms (paper-based) to regional departments of the Ministry of the Family, Women and Children, where they are analysed, entered and centralized in a database that is compatible with DEVINFO (ChildPro);
- Each quarter, the data are transmitted electronically to the central level and entered in the database attached to the Department of the Family, Women and Child Observatory of the Ministry of the Family, Women and Children.

¹¹ These tools had not yet been approved at the time of this report.

Diagram: Collection and centralization system for protection data in Benin



The child protection monitoring and information system in **Benin** has been operational since the end of 2007 and, as of September 2008, has generated approximately 10,000 individual forms of cases of rights abuses.

In **Guinea**, the institutional organization of data collection is similar, relying on district and regional departments of social affairs to centralize data that are collected by operational social affairs and NGOs. The only difference compared with **Benin** is that there are no intermediate databases. Within the central department responsible for child protection, a monitoring and evaluation unit has been created, responsible for hosting and managing the corresponding national database.

Analysis, dissemination and utilization

The main expected outcome from these different systems is to produce an annual progress report on child protection (**Benin**) and an annual statistical yearbook on child protection (**Guinea**). Because the systems have only recently been set up, there are no results that can be analysed and utilized.

Cost of setting up and running national monitoring systems

Setting up a collection and information management system in **Guinea** (including diagnostic studies, NGO mapping and equipment and excluding training and the running of the system) required initial financing from UNICEF of 54,100 USD (2005/2006).

In **Benin**, installing a system required UNICEF support of 50,000 USD, to which was added in 2007, the provision of IT kits for the 12 district departments of the Ministry of Family, Women and Children. The annual operating budget for 2009 is 75,000 USD, which is being used to run the system and to ensure that the data collection and data management run smoothly.

4.1.4. National survey of basic child protection

Collecting protection data can also be based on periodically recording information from key sources. In this sense, it can be considered active monitoring. It has particular relevance in collecting data on all cases of abuse, violence or exploitation that cannot be reported legally; when data are not

available; or in the absence of a routine monitoring system. Two countries have initiated this approach: Nigeria and Cameroon.

Process, institutional hosting and coordination

Nigeria and Cameroon have developed a system of protection data collection based on a national statistical survey that is in turn used to form a national database that will serve as a reference for child protection.

Objectives of the national survey of basic child protection	
Nigeria	Cameroon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collect basic data on the incidence, kind, trends and characteristics of child protection situations - Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes related to child protection and participation - Provide basic data for research /studies of key or emerging issues in child protection and participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supply regional protection indicators, and produce a Social Progress Report - Monitor annual results of protection programme - Contribute to establishment of the system of social information in the Ministry of Social Affairs - Determine the profile of staff and types of interventions on behalf of children needing special measures of protection

In both countries, the collection and management of data is based in the institute responsible for national statistics (National Baseline Survey [NBS] in Nigeria; INS in Cameroon). The national survey of basic protection constitutes the basis for a national monitoring and information system on child protection.

- *Close academic coordination (Nigeria)*

Since 2003, a cooperation agreement has linked the University of Lagos, the NBS and UNICEF, leading to the creation of a university Chair on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the Department of Public Law, University of Lagos. Several committees ensure the coordination, monitoring and implementation of information activities and research related to child protection. The creation of a database on the issues affecting the rights of children and youth through the implementation of a basic national survey of child protection was identified by the inter-agency/university committee (UNDS Team, composed of UNICEF, ILO, UNODC and the University of Lagos) as one of the first priorities for implementing this agreement.

In Nigeria, the CRC Chair Committee was given the task of preparing the project, and an interdisciplinary university group has been set up between the Sociology Department and the Law Faculty. The research team comprises researchers from the University of Lagos, but also from Benin and Jos. A national coordinator ensures coordination and monitoring of research activities, supported by research coordinators for each state.

- *Close coordination with the Ministry in charge of Child Protection (Cameroon)*

Although the INS is responsible for coordinating the survey and the corresponding database management, the collecting activity must contribute to the gradual establishment of a system of social information and child protection.

In Cameroon, data collection tools for the basic national survey have been devised through a combined effort with the Ministry of Social Affairs, responsible for child protection, and adopted at the national level. The tools are intended to be:

- distributed and administered to professionals working with children, in particular placement institutions, detention centres, police services, the judicial service, social workers and civil society organizations;
- utilized in later national statistics surveys, such as the Social Progress Report, MICS or DHS;
- recopied in the form of registers and made available to actors and institutions in charge of or concerned with child protection (detention centres, police judiciary, social services, etc.) to collect complete routine data more systematically.

In both countries, a pilot study was first carried out in a limited geographical zone: Four states and Lagos in Nigeria, and three sites from the OVC project in Cameroon.

Coverage

Both systems are intended to cover the entire national territory. However, while they cover several protection themes, not all the themes are systematically taken into account:

Areas covered	
Nigeria	Cameroon
Area 1: Child trafficking, sexual exploitation, prostitution	Children living or working in the street
Area 2: Domestic work, children working in construction and agriculture	Exploited children
Area 3: Children and violence, juvenile criminality and drugs, juvenile gangs and militia	Children in conflict with the law Orphans and other vulnerable children

In Nigeria, the three research areas correspond to the areas of interest of the three major partners in protection (UNICEF, ILO and UNODC). Initially, the project was supposed to benefit from co-financing from these three partners, but in the end, only UNICEF contributed effectively towards financing the system.

Information sources and tools

The collection tools devised by INS/NBS have been examined, reformulated and approved during national workshops by the main protection partners (governmental agencies and NGOs), as well as by university advisors (**Nigeria**).

- Nigeria: eleven questionnaire modules:
 - ✓ Basic household questionnaire: three modules – household, gender and child victims of trafficking
 - ✓ Basic questionnaire on institutions: eleven modules – police, immigration, customs, national drug agency, judicial service, refugees, NGOs, establishment, ethnic group, religion and militia
 - ✓ Questionnaires on specific modules: street children, child sex workers (sic!) and school

The population survey in Nigeria is based on a sample of 9,600 households (400 households x 24 states).¹²

¹² Selection of Local Government Areas – three strata (population density, crime rate, and other activities affecting the rights and protection of children and women) / census areas stratified as ZU and ZR / household units.

- Cameroon: four questionnaire modules – children living or working in the street, children victims of exploitation, children in conflict with the law and OVC.

Periodicity

The time period for the surveys has not been specified.

Analysis, dissemination and utilization

In Nigeria, a national database on child protection exists, which can now function as a baseline reference for monitoring and evaluation and in the development of research programmes. The data are analysed by the research team that prepares the final survey report, statisticians and programme managers, coordinated by the director of the CRC Chair at the University of Lagos.

In Cameroon, the survey has not yet been implemented. However, besides their analysis and utilization for monitoring and evaluation of protection situations such as services and programmes, the data collected should in principle be utilized and disseminated within the framework of the Social Progress Report.

4.1.5. Empirical approaches

Certain countries have adopted a more progressive approach to setting up a national system for monitoring and information on protection, by improving existing information systems in such a way as to generate and centralize protection data more systematically and regularly. Thus the approaches chosen by Liberia and Niger, although very different in their organization and mechanisms, nevertheless share an emphasis on flexibility, with the short-term objective to organize an information flow based on existing information systems, in anticipation of being able to set up more elaborate monitoring systems.

4.1.5.1. The convergence of existing information systems towards a central database – Liberia

In Liberia, as in many countries in the region, several initiatives have been carried out in recent years concerning information about protection, leading towards the development of systems for collecting and managing information, separated according to geographical and/or thematic criteria, and independent of each other:

- Child protection monitoring system at the borders of six counties (Mano River Union [MRU]-UNICEF regional project, Save the Children and IRC)
- Management and investigation system on violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, attached to the National Police services (WACP-LNP)
- System for monitoring violations of children's rights, attached to the National Observation Group on Children's Rights (NACROG). Headed by a director of the technical committee, NACROG comprises civil society organizations, key ministries (gender and development, health, social services, justice, defence, economic affairs and planning) and other political decision-makers. The director is responsible for monitoring violations of children's rights and collects data from field reports and visits.

Since the end of the conflict, central coordination mechanisms for child protection monitoring and information have not been re-established. This has weakened the initiatives undertaken, as well as the impact of each of the systems that have been set up. In 2007, a process of converging systems was finally initiated with the support of partners already active in this field (Save the Children, IRC

and UNICEF). A pilot project was launched to set up an inter-agency database, under the authority of the Ministry of Gender and Development, in charge of protection.

A road map was prepared that anticipates a gradual implementation, based on:

- The adoption of common indicators;
- The development of standard formats to centralize the data collected by the different systems (rehabilitation, violations of children's rights, separated children) and to collect other thematic data gradually;
- Monthly collection of qualitative and quantitative data.

The approach chosen here combines the systems of passive monitoring (routine activities data) and active monitoring (survey reports and visits). The data collected have been used on a sector basis: i) to evaluate the progress of the rehabilitation programme; and ii) to measure the scale of interventions of prevention and response to cases of sexual abuse, violence and exploitation. The NACROG database had contributed to the situation analysis.

4.1.5.2. Joint missions – Niger

Process and coordination

Since 2004, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Protection of Children, with the support of UNICEF, has organized and coordinated each year a joint child protection monitoring and information mission with the regional offices of key ministries related to child protection. The objectives of this system are:

- To assess the implementation status of activities of regional technical units and NGOs;
- To create a synergy in order to make protection interventions at the regional level more effective and more visible;
- To identify potentially ambiguous indicators;
- To identify the difficulties experienced by decentralized technical services in the implementation of activities;
- To collect qualitative and quantitative data on women and children;
- To present activity proposals for the annual work plan.

Coverage

The data collected refer to the cases that have been recorded by different sectoral services as part of their activities. The questionnaire plans to cover nine protection modules, which supply 53 quantitative indicators of situation and coverage: birth registration (6), orphans and other vulnerable children (11), sexual abuse and violence (6), child labour (6), disabled children (5), children in conflict with the law (9), assistance to people in need (6), harmful practices (4) and youth participation (5).

Information sources and tools

A single questionnaire is sent by bus to all the regions, to the regional offices of seven ministries (Advancement of Women and Protection of Children, Social Action, Defence, Interior, Youth, Employment and Justice) that are responsible for collecting the data. This collection is based on information contained in the annual reports of the different technical services concerned, which is consolidated and transferred to the integrated questionnaire, in preparation for the joint missions.

The data that reach the central level are only slightly disaggregated. They are separated by region, but sex-disaggregated data are not systematically available for all indicators.

Regularity and information channels

The data are collected as part of the routine activity of the sectoral operational services and recorded in their periodic internal reports, then consolidated once a year on the occasion of the joint missions of the central offices, which are organized each year along two geographical axes across the country. The missions last about ten days. The data are made available to the Department of Studies and Programming of the Ministry of the Advancement of Women and the Protection of Children, where they are entered electronically. A database is in the process of being developed.

Analysis, dissemination and utilization

During the joint missions, the consolidated data are analysed, combining the central and regional offices of key sectoral ministries and the main regional partners. Since 2004, Niger has also produced a report on the status of protection indicators. The data have been used as advocacy tools for the poverty reduction strategy paper and the allocation of budgetary resources from the state, for example for the benefit of street children.

Implementation and running costs

The annual cost of the joint missions is about 10,000 USD. The cost will rise if other existing sectoral information systems (health and education) are gradually integrated into the exercise (copying/reprinting and staff training).

4.2. Description of information and monitoring systems in emergency situations

In a country affected by armed conflict, the documentation, collection and management of child protection data are confronted with:

- Weakening / malfunctioning / destruction of decentralized services
- Maintaining access to children and other populations
- Maintaining national coordination
- Targeting more sensitive / volatile situations of special protection

Four main types of protection information mechanisms in emergency situations have been developed in the region:

- The monitoring and reporting mechanism of serious violations of child rights: MRM 1612
- Monitoring systems of violations of child rights at borders (Mano River)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commissions
- Monitoring and information management systems for unaccompanied children

4.2.1. Monitoring and reporting mechanism 1612

In the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone, a national mechanism for monitoring and reporting serious violations of child rights has been established, in line with Resolution 1612 of the Security Council. Resolution 1612 is specific to situations of armed conflict and calls for the implementation in designated countries of a national mechanism responsible for collecting, analyzing and transmitting timely information on serious violations and abuses committed against children. The mechanism reports to a Security Council working group on matters relating to children affected by armed conflict.

Although this system is limited to a given context and to certain situations (the six serious abuses of child rights), the experience deserves to be cited because it can be added to the other approaches that aim to produce information concerning child protection. Targeting other themes, this method can constitute an intermediate stage in a process of developing national capacities on monitoring and information about child protection, in particular in the context of a post-conflict and reconstruction situation of national monitoring systems.

The experience in Côte d'Ivoire indicates the complexity of building a national child protection monitoring and information mechanism on the 1612 MRM

Information sources and tools

In Côte d'Ivoire, the 1612 MRM, set up in 2006, is coordinated by a taskforce composed of all United Nations agencies present in the country. In addition to the officers of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), 24 NGOs were chosen and trained (by UNICEF) to collect information on serious child rights abuses. In this way, the investigative work of UNOCI is being complemented by reporting of cases recorded by community partners. The information is recorded on standardized recording forms. In practice, only a limited number of NGOs contributed to the regular production of information, either through a lack of motivation or because of the concern of maintaining access to populations and protecting the confidentiality of victims within a delicate political context. Poor communications and the absence of close monitoring with the central level also contributed to the low level of support and insufficient networking of actors in the field.

Regularity and information channels

The data collected by the personnel on the ground is forwarded to the central level. However, the inflexibility of the 1612 system resulted in two parallel information flows and two separate databases: cases noted by UNOCI officers are processed and recorded in the UNOCI database, while those of the NGO partners are entered into the database attached to UNICEF. Access to these databases is restricted.

Analysis, dissemination and utilization

The consolidated reports on rights abuses are prepared on a monthly and quarterly basis by UNOCI. Every two months, a detailed report of cases of child rights abuses is prepared, with descriptions of the victims and the facts. The information produced in 2007 highlighted the scale and seriousness of sexual violence against women and children, and to some extent guided the planning and programming of child protection activities.

4.2.2. Regional integrated system for information on rights abuses in border areas (Mano River)

UNICEF supported the establishment of an integrated monitoring system of child rights abuses in the border areas of four Mano River countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire).

The system aims to produce reports on:

- The trends in terms of rights abuses in the sub-region, in order to improve and support programming, responses and advocacy ;
- The kind and quality of protection interventions developed in the sub-region, in order to facilitate the identification of gaps in programming.

The particularity of this approach is in:

- The coordinated involvement of multiple child protection agencies: UNICEF, ICRC, CCF, IRC, UNHCR, Save the Children Alliance (UK and Sweden) and NGO national partners on the ground;
- The geographic coverage of monitoring and the exchange of information: national and cross-border;
- Monitoring of protection situations integrated with the monitoring of protection and supervision activities;
- Monitoring vulnerable zones by means of an “epidemiological” monitoring of rights abuses;
- Simultaneous recording, processing and sharing of information, closely linking the collection, access and analysis of the data by actors at all levels (local, national and regional).

The development of this integrated information system is thus based on four stages:

- An audit of the use of child protection data, and existing systems of information management;
- Discussion of results and identification of pilot tools / modules that can be set up between partners;
- Process of consultation and approval of pilot tools / modules with managers and teams on the ground who are responsible for child protection;
- Training actors in the use of simplified data collection and management formats on Excel.

The tools have been developed to facilitate the generation and use of updated statistics. They are based on the following principles:

- Categorizing the situations and the limited number of variables collected, rather than precise details of each individual case, in order to give an overview;
- Automatic and maximized statistical analysis based on available variables. The objective is to generate, systematically and synthetically, consolidated inter-agency information to local, national and regional levels;
- Flexibility in the automatic electronic processing of the data, according to the information and analysis needs of the agencies and actors involved;
- The system set-up complements other existing information systems and efforts are made to avoid duplication;
- Provisional format of pilot modules developed to gradually improve information management in the region.

Three modules have thus been set up: i) monitoring borders; ii) child protection at the community level; and iii) risk mapping, for which simplified forms for manual data collection have been developed for field personnel and community monitoring agents.

	Module 1: Monitoring borders	Module 2: Community child protection	Module 3: Risk mapping
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a general statistical and inter-agency insight into border zones in order to facilitate advocacy, programme planning and allocation of resources • Facilitate monitoring and management of individual cases referred from one agency to another 	Monitor agency interventions in order to implement and support community organizations for child protection	Monitoring rights abuses in communities
Types of info. collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details related to child rights abuses • Response measures taken, including case referrals • Final result or return of information from the institution to which the case had been referred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of staff attached to community-based activities • Partnerships with other agencies. If necessary, how many, what kind of agency • Types of community-based interventions • Hourly volume and beneficiaries (number of hours spent, and number of adults and children participating) 	11 categories of rights abuses: recruitment, separation, exploitation, conflict with the law, trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation, kidnapping, no access to school/health, harmful practices, physical abuse and deprivation of care

The first module, concerning monitoring rights abuses at borders, could be used in both emergency situations and peace time, by one or more agencies. It covers the general level of response, chosen from five generic actions: i) monitoring vulnerable children; ii) community-based intervention; iii) intervention by the institution itself; iv) case referred to at least one other service in the country (police, decentralized ministerial service, other NGO, etc.); and v) cross-border referred cases. In terms of the result, there are four types of options: i) the case is admitted into the institution to where the child had been sent; ii) measures in progress; iii) resolved cases; and iv) contact lost with child.

The second module, community-based child protection activities, targets activities developed by institutions within the framework of community-based child protection programmes, but not their impact. The types of community-based interventions defined are: community awareness raising; capacity building of community structures (constitution and organization; technical support for organizations (on DE and child protection); professional training; psycho-social support (targeting groups of children and communities); recreational and sports activities; and support for monitoring and response to rights abuses.

The third module, risk mapping rights abuses, aims to monitor zones vulnerable to child rights abuses, and their ranking based on reported frequency, according to a “high”, “medium” and “low” risk. This information should allow constant measurement of the level of risk encountered in a community, for each type of offence, and to plan and develop preventative and/or premature, or to review the protection interventions.

Once the database on rights abuses had been created, it allowed for the automatic production of monthly and annual reports consolidated according to predetermined frameworks (referring to the types of abuses, activities and results; age and sex of children concerned; monthly trends over a year; and rights abuses reported by community actors, etc.)

Database: Categories of rights abuses

Categories	Sub-categories	Variables
Recruitment	(re)recruitment	Sex Age 0-5 years 6-12 years 13-18 years + 18 years unknown
Separation		
Exploitation		
Conflict with the law	Illegal imprisonment/arbitrary detention/no access to legal assistance	
Trafficking	Intermediate/internal/cross-border/parental complicity	
Sexual abuse and exploitation	Prostitution/rape/early pregnancies/harassment	
Kidnapping	Absence of consent/forced to join armed groups	
No access to school/health	Non-access/Inability to pay school fees/ infrastructure destroyed/absence of educational/health personnel	
Harmful practices	Early marriage/FGM/C	
Physical abuse	Torture/injury linked to violence/murder/ritual murder/mistreatment	
Deprivation of care	Negligence/abandonment	

Such an approach requires consensus of all actors on the predefined definitions and categories for the collection formats, and a commitment and systematic use of the tools/modules by the actors involved, independently of other information sources.

Limits and challenges

- Limited coverage capacity of tools/modules developed, which do not take into account the complexity of situations and responses, nor their impact
- Commitment of local partners; weak in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia; non-existent in Sierra Leone
- Strong centralization of project at the regional level, which threatens the durability and autonomy of the system. The role and responsibility of the national focal points for protection should be consolidated
- Limited circulation and exchange of national and regional reports with national partners and other agencies in the countries concerned
- High turnover of staff at the local level, specific to emergency situations
- Analyses of the risk mapping, and of actions/results in border areas

4.2.3. Inter-agency system of monitoring and information management regarding children affected by armed conflict

Within the framework of the inter-agency work group on separated children, Save the Children, IRC and UNICEF have developed a common system of standardized information management on separated children, children associated with armed groups and other vulnerable children, in order to facilitate:

- Collecting information, communications and exchanging data, in particular as part of activities related to family searches and reunification
- Individual monitoring of children

Separated children Information categories: recording forms	Children associated with armed groups Exc. Other data collected	Protection queries cross-referenced
Personal data: Surname/first name/nickname after separation Sex, age, nationality Ethnic group Place of family residence Language Religion Physical particularities Family characteristics Description of separation Supervision Child's wishes Miscellaneous	Causes of recruitment Role of the child in the armed group Child's reasons for leaving How the child was freed and the date of departure	Absence of civil status Health problems Child head of household Child victim of trafficking Child victim of worst forms of labour Child living in an institution Child living in the street Child affected by a disability Drug abuse Early pregnancy/motherhood Child in conflict with the law Child out of school Other forms of abuse or violence Physical violence Sexual exploitation

The inter-agency database is an instrument that is flexible and can be adapted to a variety of contexts and protection situations; it also facilitates inter-agency coordination, activity planning and programme evaluation. A permanent committee, comprising Save the Children UK, IRC and UNICEF, supervises the use of the system and decides on any changes necessary to strengthen it. At the beginning of 2006, the inter-agency project was launched in West Africa, in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia, countries in which IRC and Save the Children UK were already using the system or were about to introduce it.

Until now, global support has consisted of:

- Development of standardized training tools
- Training actors responsible for collecting and managing the database in each of the three countries
- Evaluation of the utilization of the system in the first phase
- Extension of the number of organizations and countries using the system
- Adaptation of training tools to ensure their utilization and durability

Currently, in the third phase of the project, emphasis is placed, at the global level, on improving the system to make it more flexible and to facilitate its rapid use at the start of an emergency situation.

4.2.4. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

As in other post-conflict countries during the last thirty years, Liberia and Sierra Leone set up, in 2000 and 2003 respectively, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), responsible for hearing and recording, in an impartial manner, testimony from victims, witnesses and offenders regarding human rights violations during the period of conflict. TRCs are considered to be an essential process for national reconciliation. The particular nature of the TRC in Sierra Leone, which was established to document rights abuses between 1991 and 1999, was in the special attention it accorded to the participation of children in the process. This was the first time children had participated in this type of forum. The Commission adapted procedures in order to allow personal testimony by children affected by the conflict, in particular sexual violence. These procedures included:

- Closed sessions
- Reassuring setting for interviews
- Protected identity for child witnesses
- Training of personnel involved, concerning psycho-social assistance for children

With the support of UNICEF, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the Child Protection Network (representing the main organizations involved in this issue in Sierra Leone), and local child protection organizations played a major role in the identification, orientation, preparation and assistance of children participating in the TRC. The organizations drew on i) databases on demobilized and/or separated children, created as part of their activities; and ii) the relationship of trust already established with the children benefiting from these programmes. Once the children were willing and prepared to testify, the local organizations contacted one of the fifty TRC agents trained and responsible for recording testimony. The children's hearing at the TRC was then held behind closed doors. The public thematic hearings transmitted the children's recorded testimony, while protecting their identity. The participation and testimony of children at the Commission remained non-binding and voluntary and from start to finish, children were able to withdraw at any moment.

In Sierra Leone, the TRC heard testimony from a total of 300 children. Based on TRC research, it is estimated that around 7,000 children were associated with armed groups and armies during the conflict, and that several thousand children were victims of kidnapping, sexual abuse and violence, and mutilations. In addition to the official report of the TRC, children also participated in the preparation of a specially adapted version for children (2004).

In Liberia, the TRC, established in 2003, was based on the same approach and was responsible for documenting human rights abuses committed between 1979 and 2003. By September 2008, it had heard testimony from 18,000 people, including 1,200 confidential accounts from children throughout the country.

Experience has shown that collaboration and cooperation between the TRC and child protection organizations should be in place at the beginning of the process. It should be accompanied, at the right moment, by awareness and information campaigns at the community level, to ensure clear understanding of the role of the TRC and to encourage children to participate.

4.3. Periodic population surveys

In national contexts characterized by dispersed internal information systems, protection databases with limited coverage, the almost total lack of national systems for recording or monitoring rights abuses or vulnerable situations for children, population surveys, carried out periodically by national statistics institutes, with donor support, constitute a valuable information source on child protection. Based on household data, the surveys provide:

- National estimates of the scale of certain vulnerable situations for children ;
- The possibility of checking trends, based on a certain number of variables (age, sex, region, nationality, level of education, urban/rural area, etc.)

Two periodic population surveys currently integrate protection issues:

- i) Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), supported by UNICEF; and
- ii) Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), supported by USAID.

UNICEF emphasizes coordination in collecting child protection data, with respect to the tools and modules developed, and the implementation schedule in the country, thus ensuring maximum coverage and comparisons.

4.3.1. MICS

MICS are carried out every five years with the support of UNICEF (in future every three years). Through the use of three questionnaires – on household, women aged 15-49 and children under five – these surveys enable the government to collect quantitative data on the well-being of populations, in particular that of women and children, and to target eight child protection issues.

MICS3 (2006-09) includes the following child protection modules:

- Birth registrations (UF5 questionnaire)
- Early marriage (women’s questionnaire)
- Child labour (household questionnaire)
- FGM/C (extra tool)
- Child disability (optional)
- Child discipline (optional)
- Attitudes towards domestic violence (optional)
- Orphans and other vulnerable children in the context of HIV/AIDS

In the third cycle of surveys, only half (12) of the countries in the region of West Africa and Central Africa carried out an MICS. At the same time, during the same period, six countries carried out a DHS. Seven countries in the region have not carried out an MICS or DHS in the last three years.

MICS3 (2006-09)	DHS (2006/2007)	No recent / DHS
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Burkina Faso	Guinea-Bissau	Benin	Cape Verde
Cameroon	Niger	Guinea	Chad
Central African Republic	Sao Tome and Principe	Liberia	Congo
Côte d'Ivoire	Senegal	Mali	Gabon
Gambia	Sierra Leone	Niger	Equatorial Guinea
Ghana	Togo	DRC	Mauritania
		+ Senegal, Congo (2005)	Nigeria

As part of the MICS, most countries integrated the optional modules, with the exception of

- Child labour: Burkina Faso and Senegal
- Child disability: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal and Togo
- Child discipline: Niger, Sao Tome and Principe and Senegal
- Domestic violence: Niger and Senegal

Efforts have been made, with UNICEF support, to integrate all protection modules in MICS, but this has not always proved productive. In addition to concerns about overloading data collection and efforts to minimize costs, not all protection issues are considered to be priorities, and certain issues are considered to be too complex or sensitive by the government. The child disability module was thus excluded by half of the countries that carried out MICS3. In Côte d'Ivoire, this exclusion appears to have been motivated by i) a perception that this type of survey was inadequate for this issue; ii) the particular technical difficulty in administering this module, involving training and a specific methodology lacking among national analysts; and iii) the non-priority nature of this theme.

Each country publishes the results of the MICS in a consolidated report and in a summary brochure. That said, there is little follow-up to this research carried out in countries in the region with regard to protection. When the results are released, they are not systematically the subject of in-depth or targeted debates or discussions at the national level (political representatives, academics, development partners, government), which limits the impact of the exercise as well as optimal data use in terms of planning, monitoring and prospective research.

Apart from the five-year programming exercises, the data most often remain in the form of percentages (percentages of orphans, etc.), and are not systematically and regularly expressed in the number of individuals, following estimates of demographic growth, which limits situation monitoring, as well as planning and the evaluation of the impact of protection interventions, in particular at the decentralized level.

In principle, access to the MICS database is on demand and free of charge; in practice it is limited. The organization responsible for hosting the database, such as the national institute for statistics, sometimes has the special status as a public office with industrial or commercial characteristics, operating as a department of research, thus reducing access particularly for individual researchers or university research departments. Utilization of the data is therefore sometimes only possible through payment for services provided by the hosting institute.

At the same time, at the end of the MICS and the publication/dissemination of the basic report, no measures are taken to develop a consultative strategy to exploit the data systematically in order to carry out more in-depth analyses on particular protection themes. In the same way, the national studies on particular protection issues do not take much advantage of the existence of the MICS database to estimate certain populations of vulnerable children or children vulnerable to rights

abuses, or simply to orient complementary research activities,¹³ or to consolidate the analysis of qualitative data.

4.3.2. Demographic and Health Surveys

The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are supported by USAID and carried out every five years with a large sample of households (between 5,000 and 30,000). They constitute, together with the MICS, the main source of data on health and well-being indicators related to households.

The DHS is based on two questionnaires:

- A household questionnaire (collection of basic data on the place of residence, and the household composition and amenities;
- An individual questionnaire for women aged 15-49 (data on education, reproduction, contraception, child nutrition, marriage, FGM/C, work, etc.).

The data collected by the DHS with a link to protection touch on the same aspects of protection as the data collected by the MICS: fostering practices, orphan children, school dropouts, early marriage, FGM/C, but excluding child labour and birth registration. However, most national statistics institutes have not systematically incorporated the variables related to the registration of births in the DHS at population census. Only a few countries, such as Mauritania, do this systematically.

Table: Available DHS indicators linked to protection

Indicators	Variables
Adopted children / Orphan household members - Residence status of children under 15 - Parental status (alive / deceased)	Age (0-2 / 3-5 / 6-9 / 10-14) Sex Region Urban / Rural (Exc. Educational status / current occupation)
School attendance of household members	Age (6-10 / 11-15 / 6-15 / 16-20 / 21-24) Sex Urban / Rural Region Level reached (Primary /secondary) and passed (Y/N) (Exc. Sex)
Reasons for dropping out: pregnancy, marriage, childcare, needed to help family, inability to pay school costs, need to earn money, sufficiently qualified, exam failure, didn't like school, school inaccessible, other reason	Urban / Rural Region Level reached (Primary/secondary) and passed (Y/N) (Exc. Age, sex)
Occupation of women aged 15-49	Age 15-19 / 20-24 / etc. (Exc. Child activities under 15 years old / boys)
Childminding during work (women ages 15-49): - Children concerned - Person who deals with it: the respondent, husband/father, other child, other relative, neighbour/friend, domestic help, school/other structure, other girl child, other boy child, not worked since birth	Level of education Occupation: agriculture sector (Y/N), Status (independent, employed, family aid), duration (full-/part-time, annual/seasonal/occasional) Urban/Rural Region
Age at first marriage (women aged 15-49) - Exact age	Exact age: 15/18/20/22/25/never married (age under 15)

¹³ For example, although the scale of the occurrence of trafficking is obviously not apparent in this type of survey, it is nevertheless possible to make a preliminary estimate (and locating) of children in a vulnerable situation by means of a cluster of indicators, by referring to a crossing of basic variables such as the relation to the head of household, presence of father or mother in the household, place of birth, educational status and occupational status.

Indicators	Variables
- Median age	Median age: 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49
Female genital mutilations (Women aged 15-49) - Knowledge of the practice - Prevalence: % women with at least one living daughter excised - Prevalence of women excised - Type of FGM/C - Performer of FGM/C - Median age of women excised - Attitudes towards FGM/C	

Six countries carried out DHS between 2006 and 2007. Among these countries, Niger also carried out a MICS during the same period. In other words, 17 out of 24 countries in the region carried out a basic national household survey, which has enabled the recent collection of converging data regarding protection issues. In certain countries, increasing numbers of MICS and DHS teams are working together to attempt to harmonize certain issues. Concerning the objectives of monitoring and protection information, conducting DHS reflects the same concerns as for MICS. Specific use of existing databases can produce particular protection indicators. In this way, Benin derived from the DHS 2006 the following protection indicators: birth registrations of under fives, orphans aged under 15 with or without access to school, orphans aged 10-14 attending school, children aged 10-14 married, children working at least 4hrs/4-8hrs/+8 hrs per day, and FGM/C indicators.

Although it is carried out half as frequently as the surveys mentioned above (each decade), the General Population Census – GPC – offers a double interest for protection: i) the data serve to calculate the indicators, especially for the denominator; and ii) the tool is an additional opportunity to integrate protection indicators or to highlight trends with respect to certain protection situations, such as those covered by MICS or DHS. The most easily integrated issues concern birth registration (but not systematically), child labour (via school status and the occupational status of the members of the household), orphans and foster children, relation with the head of the household, and parent(s) present / alive.

The experience of GPC in certain countries indicates that it contains a collection of data that is relevant for these issues, but two fundamental limits restrict the impact in terms of monitoring protection situations at both national and regional level:

- The operational definition of the concepts covered can vary from one country to the next, and also from one tool to the next (e.g. between MICS/DHS and GPC). The most striking example is that related to child labour. In the long term, the question concerns the evolution of concepts over time, given that targeting protection questions expresses and reflects the sensitivity and understanding of a particular society at a particular time regarding child rights. Changes or the introduction of new concepts in the statistical tool should be planned carefully in order to avoid biasing subsequent comparative analyses;
- The synthesized analysis of data in the general report, and the excessive oversimplification of protection issues, which risks excluding or losing data for analyzing and targeting children requiring special measures of protection.

In any case, the GPC constitutes an additional database for the analysis of the situation of vulnerable groups and for advocacy/awareness-raising. In Guinea-Bissau, for example, advocacy by UNICEF enabled the publication by INSAE of a special report on vulnerable populations – children and women, based on GPC3. Among the published indicators were those on schooling of children aged 6-11 according to quintiles of poverty, and child workers.

4.4. Child protection research and studies

The sensitive and taboo character of certain protection issues, the multidimensional nature of situations, and the complexity of vulnerability factors, require targeted research and studies. Conducting qualitative and quantitative studies that concentrate on specific child protection issues has to date constituted the principal approach to documenting and reporting protection situations, in terms of the factors, the kind and the scale of the observed phenomena. The launch and implementation of these studies result in government programme priorities, with each financial and technical partner. Whatever the case, these studies complement efforts to develop national information and monitoring mechanisms on protection. In recent years, UNICEF has concentrated its support on producing studies on particular protection themes, as shown in the table below:

Themes	Countries
Trafficking	Benin, Mali, Niger, Congo
Violence	Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Togo
Violence in schools	Guinea
Gender-based violence	Côte d'Ivoire, Congo
OVC	Togo, Cameroon
Child labour	Senegal, Guinea
Street children	Guinea
Children in institutions	Mali, Liberia
Juvenile justice	Liberia, Congo, Guinea
Harmful practices	Gambia, Guinea
Birth registration	Region

The generally combined approach of qualitative and quantitative methods has enabled a better understanding of the factors and dimensions of targeted protection situations, without being able to establish reliable estimations of observed phenomena, or to extract the main determining factors/levers that merit priority attention in protection interventions.

Rapid assessment, analysis and action planning (RAAAP) have shown themselves to be suitable, producing results that are useful in orienting policy and planning protection interventions (e.g. Niger). **National situation analyses** also serve as a reference base for preparing policy, norms and services. In Benin, for example, the results of the situation analysis of OVCs 2005 (UNICEF, World Bank, CRS and the Global Fund) contributed to developing the policy document, the action plan 2006/2010, standards in care, training modules, a practical guide to care provision, and the minimum package of services directed to OVCs.

The cost of the studies depends on the research methodology and the size of the survey samples. In one of the countries in the region, the global cost of the national study of trafficking and children, which combined a quantitative survey of a large sample of households (almost 8,000) and qualitative surveys, was close to 250,000 USD. Such a study is exceptional in its budget and impact, resulting in a reliable estimate of the number of child victims of trafficking each year for the past five years, and identification of national and regional trends and factors.

Conducting studies centred on particular protection themes raises the question of their quality and of their use in the development of effective policies and services, and for the prevention and protection of children from rights abuses. The quality of the studies depends as much on the definition of the research objectives and the methodology developed as it does on the

implementation and monitoring of activities on the ground, checking and consolidating the information collected, and finally the analysis and editing capacities of the researchers.

The hosting of protection studies by national statistics institutes is given priority in certain countries, as in Côte d'Ivoire or Niger, where the INS is entrusted with conducting major studies (poverty, situation analyses), while at the same time benefiting from assistance to strengthen its capacities in this area of research. The partnership with university departments/research institutes to conduct and develop research programmes on child protection remains a marginal experience in the region. Only Nigeria can offer a notable exception – the creation of the university CRC Chair had an impact on inter-institutional, inter-governmental and interdisciplinary cooperation in the field of research into child protection. The capacities of actors with regard to programme management and research were thereby strengthened.

Frameworks for informal consultations and information exchange regarding protection exist, such as the monthly meetings of the National Forums/Networks for Protection. They offer the opportunity for protection partners to share information about study projects and to discuss impact and possible co-financing. From the perspective of United Nations agencies, the common country assessment/UNDAF process constitutes a special framework to develop in a consultative manner national research plans on priority themes, including child protection.

4.5. Challenges, constraints and lessons learned from systems and methods of data collection

4.5.1. Institutional hosting and coordination

The issue of institutional hosting of the information system at the central level is fundamental. Its location determines the impact of the monitoring and information systems that have been set up, in particular the mobilization and coordination of the actors involved in data collection, but also the subsequent access to the database and the analysis, dissemination and utilization of the data. Throughout the countries in the region, the establishment of the database and the management of the system have been considered jointly.

In principle, each ministry has a department that is responsible for research, monitoring and evaluation in its sector of activity. This does not exclude the existence of other units responsible for monitoring and evaluation in different departments of the same ministry. All these ministerial departments are supposed to work closely with the national institute in charge of centralizing statistics. However, these departments are often under funded from the internal ministerial budget and do not systematically collaborate with the central agencies responsible for national statistics. At the same time, external support for collecting and managing child protection data appears to be more oriented towards other technical departments, in particular, those in charge of child protection or protection themes (e.g. Department of child labour studies).

The decision of where to host the database – whether at the national statistics institute, or the central departments in charge of child protection or research – can be the source of institutional tension. If this tension is not settled at the outset by the highest authorities inside or outside the ministry concerned, there is a strong risk that the process will be paralysed and that the system set up will be restricted, as is the case in Côte d'Ivoire. In this country, between 2005 and 2007, support for the creation of a child protection database was channelled in parallel, calling on the leadership of two different departments in the same ministry (Department of Research Planning and Documentation / Department of Social Protection and its sub-department of studies; both in the Ministry of Social Affairs). Similarly in Guinea-Bissau, the Institute of Women and Children (IWC),

under the authority of the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Family and Poverty Reduction experiences difficulty in coordinating the collection of basic data. After receiving approval of the national list of indicators, based on the regional list, attempts to create partnerships between IWC and the INS/Planning Ministry and other key ministries, in order to facilitate data collection, have remained unsuccessful.

The difficulty in hosting resides in the uneven capacities of these different agencies to i) conduct a discussion on the objectives and scope of child protection monitoring; ii) devise tools and organize the system technically; iii) mobilize the actors responsible for collecting the data; iv) transmit the data up the chain of hierarchy; v) process and analyse the information; and vi) manage the database. The central departments in charge of child protection are not always equipped, in terms of both adequate material and human resources, to ensure the production, management, processing and analysis of data. Conversely, the central departments in charge of statistics do not fully appreciate the multi-dimensional character of protection issues, and are not capable of mobilizing local actors responsible for collecting information.

Experience in the region shows that institutional hosting of the coordination depends on the objectives and on the method chosen for data collection, as well as on support from technical and financing partners. When it concerns setting up a routine monitoring system (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea) or integrated data collecting (Niger), it is the ministry in charge of child protection that ensures the coordination of actors and activities. The national statistics institutes are called on when it concerns setting up a system of periodic statistics based on a survey (Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria). But other ministries may feel drawn to intervene, depending on the themes, as is the case for the collecting of data on children and trafficking, which the Ministry of Employment most frequently hosts the information system and the management of the information related to this theme, established with the support of ILO.

In any case, the challenge is to ensure the commitment of the government, by overcoming institutional tensions, whether between or within ministries. A national coordination mechanism is indispensable in order to avoid scattering support, resources and interventions, and to ensure the production of consolidated data at the national level. Setting up a system of monitoring and information on protection themes in a compartmentalized manner, with support from different partners and spread over different ministerial departments or institutes undermines the collection activities at the base – the different lines of approach converge most often on the same social or community actors, who are overworked and demotivated by seeing the results of their work so dispersed. Coordination in the collection and analysis of the data in turn encourage the utilization of the data.

One of the major challenges is to strengthen the involvement and coordination with the state statistical services, both at the central and decentralized level. Hosting opportunities within the decentralized agencies responsible for national statistics are developing. The creation of branches of the national statistics institute at the regional level, or the presence of regional departments of planning, should improve monitoring of the collection and the production of statistical data at the decentralized level.

4.5.2. Capacities of child protection systems

A country's capacity to produce accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date information on protection situations and services is closely related to the capacities of the services in charge of or concerned with child protection and their local partners, and to the operational coordination of their interventions.

Limited institutional capacities of child protection services to collect and manage information: The objective of collecting child protection data has to face structural constraints linked to

- limited operational capacities of decentralized public services working on social and child protection, through inadequate financial, material and human resources to provide even basic services, let alone data collection
- limited expertise and capacities in terms of the production, management and dissemination of information related to child protection, both in centralized and decentralized services. The weak capacity among the personnel of certain local partners to carry out data collection activities proved to be a major constraint in Liberia.

This being the case, the constraints imposed by the lack of technology in a context characterized by limited resources can be overcome by the combined choice of

- a paper-based system for collecting routine data at the local and decentralized levels;
- a computerized system at higher levels (intermediate and central).

At the same time, capacity in terms of collecting, processing and managing the information can be strengthened by appropriate, targeted training. The experience of different countries in the region indicates that the measures needed for national capacity-building in terms of monitoring and protection information are

- training of key personnel (central and decentralized levels) in the ministry responsible for coordination in this field;
- providing IT equipment to key departments and structures responsible for centralizing, processing and analyzing data;
- equipping with means of transport the various actors at the central and decentralized levels who are responsible for centralizing the data and monitoring-evaluation;
- recruiting additional personnel at the level of the decentralized departments responsible for intermediate centralizing and processing of data collected, before forwarding them to the central level.

Weak systemic organization of services responsible for or concerned with child protection: In most countries, the operational coordination of the services in charge of, concerned with or involved in child protection is ineffective or inadequate. The absence of networking among actors and the absence of or failure to comply with reporting and referral procedures for cases of child abuse, violence or exploitation between social services, the police, the judicial system, health and education are serious obstacles to setting up integrated protection information systems, to the synergy of existing information systems, and to the coordinated involvement of actors from different sectors, of different kinds and of different levels of intervention in collecting data on child protection. The development of child protection information and monitoring mechanisms can only be achieved through close links with a systemic approach to protection.

4.5.3. Quality of collected data

Data is considered to be of good quality if they are reliable, accurate and up to date. The quality of data depends on i) the degree of match between the objectives / collection method; ii) the support of the actors involved in collecting; iii) institutional capacities; iv) the organization of information channels; v) quality control; and vi) monitoring and evaluation. Different collection methods raise specific risks regarding the quality of the data. The experiences carried out in the region have to face a certain number of difficulties that can affect the quality of the data produced.

4.5.3.1. Reliability of data

To measure the scale of a situation or of rights abuses, two approaches are possible: i) counting the number of cases declared in a given period (in this case, the routine monitoring system is adapted); or ii) estimating the number of reported and unreported cases by a population survey or poll. In both cases the reliability of the data raises several difficulties in the region:

Reporting, acknowledging and recording cases

- *Reporting situations by the victims, their relatives or a third party to the relevant authorities:* In a context of limited awareness of child protection rights, of the risk of stigmatization and “double punishment” of victims reporting rights abuses, and of mistrust and/or discouragement when confronted with malfunctioning socio-judicial procedures in protecting victims and prosecuting offenders, the probability of reporting is extremely low in most countries in the region.
- *Acknowledgement and confirmation of cases by the relevant authorities; a sometimes limited understanding of child protection rights and an underestimation of child trauma* among certain local actors can result in limited detection and an informal solution procedure that escapes registration and the double check by social services and the police.
- Recording/reporting cases in compliance with pre-established procedures and tools.

Support, motivation and mobilization of actors responsible for collecting data

Whether part of an existing information system or in the framework of setting up a monitoring system, collecting child protection data cannot be strengthened if the professionals responsible for collecting and gathering the information have not understood the rationality of collecting, if they do not see a direct benefit in their daily work and/or if they do not know how to use the information to address their needs.

As part of a routine monitoring system, the recording and reporting of a case of rights abuse may be influenced by the support, motivation and involvement of the professionals concerned. Beyond a basic duty of the job, it is a task that may increase the already heavy workload of the services, depending on the type of individual information to collect and the complexity of the collecting tools. From the moment that the data collection is based on this precise step, the reliability of the data may be affected by an unpredictable recording of each case.

The motivation and involvement of the data collection actors also depends on the recognized utility of the activity. In Liberia as in Côte d’Ivoire, the absence of communication concerning the data collected and their use resulted in discouraging the partners involved in the collecting. In Benin, due to a lack of means and time, the consultation meetings with the managers of the Centres for Social Advancement did not always take place in the locality and constituted a factor in the declining interest of the actors.

This motivation and involvement of local actors is thus more difficult to stimulate and maintain in the framework of a routine monitoring system than a one-off, targeted survey of limited duration and for which collecting agents are specifically recruited. In a situation where the social services suffer from a chronic shortage of logistical, financial and human resources, which affects the delivery of core services, dedicating time and resources to collecting data may appear to be of secondary importance, especially if the precise reasons for commitment and mobilization are not explained. These reasons stem from

- sharing and understanding the relevance of producing protection data;
- close communications between producers and users;

- immediate and long-term benefits derived from the whole exercise of monitoring and information by the actors responsible for collecting data: capacity building, and evaluation of and improvements in services and interventions;
- sharing results and analyses;
- official recognition for collecting activities when the results are disseminated.

When the relevance of the exercise is shared, the mobilization of key actors is also gained. One of the most remarkable examples is that of the Basic National Survey on Protection in Nigeria, where one of the reasons for success lay in the high motivation of key researchers and actors as a result of a partnership and established relations between UNICEF, the university Chair in CRC and the research team.

Regarding the various data collection initiatives set up with UNICEF support in countries in the region, the measures undertaken to ensure the reliability of the data were based on

- training social services actors in the objectives of the system and the collecting tools;
- training actors responsible for protection in the need to record cases and complaints (e.g. Niger);
- making actors at the most local level aware of their responsibilities. Such is the case in Benin, where the managers of the Centres for Social Advancement, who know the children in danger or at risk, were made responsible for data collecting by the actors in their locality;
- networking local actors responsible for protection. Such is the case, for example, in Guinea, where social services staff are in permanent contact with police and judiciary services.

The issue of the reliability of data in the region therefore lies particularly in i) capacity building in detecting and recording by the services concerned directly or indirectly by protection, by means of training and the development of appropriate tools; and ii) the support and sustainable mobilization of local actors within the chosen collecting system.

Risks of counting twice

Data collection based on reporting and recording cases raises serious risks of underestimating the actual cases, as discussed above. Equally important, but more easily avoidable technically speaking, is the risk of counting twice, when, for example, the child is registered with several services, in a context where the civil status of the child is not always reliably recorded in official documents, or when there are multiple rights abuses.

The risk should be analysed in relation to the objectives targeted by the data collection. For example, when the scale and seriousness of a protection situation, especially concerning rights abuses, is to be measured, there are two possible approaches: count the number of children or count the number of rights violations, which can be multiple for a single child, through repetition, committed by different offenders or of a different type of rights abuse. In this respect, the multi-dimensional character of many protection situations in the region should be taken into account. A child victim of exploitation can also be a victim of sexual abuse. A child victim of physical violence can also be a child victim of trafficking, or a child living in the street. The question is how are these different situations going to be accounted for in the current collecting systems in place, and to define beforehand what is to be measured: the child, the act, or the proven offence?

In this perspective, the approach based on a survey may be problematic if different collecting tools are used in an isolated manner for each targeted protection module, or if the sources of information differ. Routine monitoring systems appear to be better adapted, but it is not certain that the systems in place in the region can ensure this degree of precision. In Benin, the risk of double counting a child registered by several successive services is reduced by individual data collecting forms and filtering questions. In Guinea, the database is not based on the individual form and is consequently prone to

duplication. In general, the collection forms available do not clarify how the information related to the child / a rights abuse / an offender is treated in cases of multiple rights abuses, in the production of consolidated data.

4.5.3.2. Accuracy and homogeneity of data

The accuracy of the data depends on the number of variables collected at the local level and the degree of disaggregation of the processed data. The greater the degree of disaggregation, the better the quality control and consolidation of the data at the central level.

In this perspective, the accuracy of the collecting tools and the way they are administrated are decisive. In addition, the effectiveness of the collecting system relies on the need to collect all information necessary, and nothing but the information necessary for the objectives.

The routine recording and monitoring system enables, according to the research objectives, the collection of the maximum number of variables linked to individual characteristics of the child, the family, economic and social environment, the conditions of the vulnerable situation, the characteristics of offenders, if necessary, etc. The individual form of the system in place in Benin is, in this respect, accurate and enables coverage of a wide spectrum of situations and information; but its duration may constitute a handicap for collecting. The data available in Guinea or Niger, broken down by region, do not systematically show basic variables such as sex or gender.

This being so, whether as part of a recording system or a survey, the data collecting tools should be simple to administer. Tools that are too cumbersome to administrate – because they are too complicated or ambitious in capturing information – discourage the actors responsible for collecting, with the result that the data are more unpredictable (the tools are not systematically applied) or incomplete (not all the variables are collected), thus penalizing the consolidation of data because of a lack of reliable and homogenous information.

Centralization and the periodic processing of data. Even if the data are collected systematically by the sources of information, the difficulty in producing up-to-date information also depends on the centralizing capacity and the regular processing of the collected local information. In Benin and Guinea, the monitoring system had to confront logistical constraints in transmitting the collection forms to the intermediate levels, where they then faced processing constraints. In the case of Benin, the capacities of the intermediate level turned out to be inadequate: after one year only a half of the forms centralized each month at the regional level had been entered into the corresponding database. In Guinea, it was the networking of the database at the central level that caused difficulties.

4.5.4. Monitoring and evaluation

The isolation of certain geographical areas, and the difficulty for central services to organize regular monitoring and evaluation missions to those involved in collecting and processing the data, also impede the production and consolidation of the information.

The lack of communication and networking between the producers and users of the data has constituted a major constraint in the production of data and the effectiveness of the implemented process. For example, in Benin, one year after launching the monitoring system, the collecting and centralization process was not secured. A government/UNICEF monitoring and evaluation mission was able to remobilize those responsible for the decentralized level, and a workshop was subsequently organized, bringing together the managers of the central and decentralized departments to exchange ideas and discuss the general functioning of the system. Missions to monitor the functioning of the system in each of the intermediate department were organized afterwards, based on more frequent occurrence.

Close monitoring of data collecting and centralizing activities constitutes an essential factor in the success of the system, particularly in the first few years of operation.

4.5.5. Sources of information

Public and community-based social services constitute the principal source of information used.

Organization of monitoring systems in the region is based on social services, supported by community-based organizations working on child protection. Community involvement in statistics systems, through local protection committees, for use notably in Guinea, has been shown to be of limited value, because of the poor quality of the data provided by these community groups.

The decentralized offices of the Ministries of Justice and Security constitute the two other sources of information, currently used mainly for surveys or for basic statistics extracted from their own information system. But the statistical data from these sources does not give enough information about the characteristics and factors that underlie rights abuses or vulnerable situations. The involvement of these services in specific documentation activities related to protection does, however, signal the focus placed on human rights abuses.

The absence of the education and health sectors as information sources is a permanent feature in all the initiatives conducted in setting up the systems of monitoring and information about protection, regardless of the method. This absence is part of an approach that is voluntarily progressive, but is also the result of the difficulty in promoting an integrated and systemic approach to child protection in the region, and in convincing ministries to allocate resources to monitoring activities not directly related to their core objectives. In Benin, the smooth running of the system should in future be able to count on the three social services in the commune (social services of the Centre for Social Promotion, and of the community health centre, and the centre for school attendance) who would come together as one line in order to improve the cover of the database.

Integration of the decentralized offices of these two sectors is essential in statistics and in monitoring violence against children, as well as children affected by a handicap – detected directly or indirectly as part of routine activities – and corresponding quantitative indicators.

One of the challenges to overcome is therefore to mobilize and integrate other sources of information such as Health and Education, but also Employment, in the monitoring and information mechanisms regarding protection. Utilization of these sources of information would consist of

- Integrating these services in the national monitoring system on rights abuses and vulnerable situations, coordinated by social services;
- Take advantage of the statistical information of this sector by integrating modules or variables on child protection;
- Link up certain databases. Certain health systems, as in Liberia, have a system for birth registration that could be linked to the protection database. The data could then be used by decentralized services and authorities.

4.5.6. Analysis and utilization of data

Initiatives undertaken in the region concerning information and monitoring of child protection have come up against limited understanding among stakeholders of the usefulness of data collection, and the limited capacities for analysis among those in charge, both at central and regional levels. This hampers general commitment and governmental involvement throughout the process of developing a national system of monitoring and evaluation related to protection

No prior in-depth reflection on the strategic data to be collected, with a view to contributing to the planning and programming of child protection issues. The emphasis and resources are placed on technical devices and tools in function of the information that can be mobilized and not in function of information recognized as being necessary. As of this point, the results obtained are below expectations and the resources invested. It is therefore good to consider the use of the data before thinking of collecting and information management systems.

Limited capacity of the ministry responsible for child protection to exploit and use the data collected. The low capacity levels of those responsible for analyzing and using the information produced for advocacy, planning and programme management limits the utilization of the data collected, and subsequently impedes the production process of information and data.

Limited capitalization of the information and data collection activities due to problems of access and using the database. Besides the production of a basic national report, the conditions of access and sharing of the database (except MICS and DHS) are not systematically predefined. This indicates a limited concern with the subsequent use of the data, besides the dissemination of the national indicators once they have been calculated and the basic national report.

Among the challenges to take up, it is necessary to emphasize

- Training agents in data analysis and interpretation;
- Centralizing data by a national agency charged with government statistics, with clearly defined conditions of access and open to university research;
- Development of a plan to make use of the databases created;
- Development through consultation, derived from basic periodic results of monitoring and information systems on protection, of a research plan concerning child protection, based on existing mechanisms of exchange and coordination, protection forums and university research institutes.

4.5.7. Financing and durability of systems

Setting up routine monitoring systems requires high start-up costs: equipment (IT and transport) at the central and decentralized levels in order to centralize, process and manage the data, and monitoring and evaluation; and training for those responsible for processing and managing the data, and the actors charged with the data collecting. When the system is designed to cover, from the outset, the whole country and/or involves an extensive number of information sources and actors, the start-up costs will be high not only for the setting up but also to ensure monitoring and evaluation throughout the country.

Once these investments are in place, the concern is to guarantee the permanent operation of the system by sufficient funds for daily running costs, maintenance of equipment, recurrent and sizable printing/copying costs for collection tools and reports in the situation where recording and disseminating from the peripheral levels to the centre are not electronic; monitoring and evaluation missions, dissemination, etc.

In the region, the durability of the systems is threatened from the point of view of human and financial resources:

- ✓ Throughout the countries of the region, initial efforts and investments, as well as operating the systems set up, depend largely of external technical and financial support.
- ✓ Efforts to build the capacity of actors involved in collecting, managing and analyzing the data have limited impact because of frequent job transfers of staff, unless measures have been taken to limit their effect. For example, in Liberia a team of four people was trained in

managing the database at the Ministry of Gender in order to get around the effects of transfers.

- ✓ The investments made for IT equipment and transport, necessary for operating the system, are not necessarily protected by sufficient budgetary funds for subsequent maintenance and operating costs. In certain countries, like Togo, it is possible that the majority of vehicles, including motorbikes and scooters, are immobilized much of the time due to a lack of resources to repair them or simply to buy petrol.
- ✓ UNICEF is sometimes the sole financial partner during the setting up and launch of information systems. It is necessary to find other financial partners, operating in relay or in complement, in order to cover the needs of the system adequately, and/or to enlarge the coverage of the system.

The method of collecting based on periodic surveys is the most expensive, even though the initial investments are not the same, the activity is limited in time and is the least durable. They periodically raise the problem of fundraising, threatening the periodic nature of the exercise and subsequently the updating of data or the impact of the exercise, and therefore the representative and comparable potential of the data from one exercise to the next. In Nigeria, the limitation of funds, due to a lack of anticipated financing from ILO and UNODC, constituted a major constraint; consequences included the reduction of the survey sample, with only 23 states represented plus the federal capital instead of the planned 36 states, as well as missed deadlines. That said, whichever approach is chosen, data collection is an activity that comes at a cost. A good collection and information management system requires financial investments for infrastructure (IT equipment, software, database, etc.), training, maintenance, monitoring, analysis and periodic reports.

4.5.8. Scope and quality of specialized research and studies

Generally speaking, research in the field of protection in the region is affected by

- Inadequate political will to finance and strengthen research in general, and to improve knowledge in this field ;
- A weak critical mass;
- The difficulty for universities to conduct research in this field autonomously;
- Research capacities and expertise on protection issues not only limited but also scattered. Child protection is not a discipline as such, and does not have a clear place in institutional organization of teaching institutes and university research. High-level national experts do exist but they are few in number and isolated;
- A problem of motivating researchers to get involved in research on these issues.

The objective of quality faces constraints, often multiple in many countries in the region:

- ✓ Low capacities for qualitative research: linked to the absence of critical mass on this issue in the region ;
- ✓ Amount of resources available: this influences the choice of research methodology and its coverage, sometimes to the detriment of the research objectives. In addition, the available budget does not always allow for turning to research institutes or departments in the situation where an individual consultant may not have the extended capacities and vision to meet the research objectives.
- ✓ Institutional tensions encountered in national research institutes, underestimated by donors, which push them to accumulate research projects in response to the internal operating costs, to the detriment of the quality of the final product.

- ✓ Little attention paid to the analysis of the information and data collected, and to the publication of reports. The emphasis, in terms of resources and time, on the development of methodology and carrying out collecting activities in the field does not find a similar response during the analysis and writing phase. This refers as much back to previously mentioned constraints as to limited analytical capacity concerning child protection. In other words, a mass on relevant information may have been collected in a reliable manner, but their utilization and analysis will remain inconsistent, with a final result below expectations.

In conclusion, the type of technical support is a determining factor in the quality of studies, as is resorting to institutional contracts. The absence of a formal and permanent mechanism for consultation, coordination and sharing of resources, studies and research on protection, and of a Reference Resort Centre, impedes the production of strategic knowledge twice over. First, the information extracted from targeted studies or internal reports, sources and various institutional supports remain scattered and do not encourage capitalizing on knowledge and good practices identified, and to have an efficient utilization of the resources allocated to the research/studies. The production of information remains empirical, limited in its field by priorities and programme resources compartmentalized by actors and their partners, while access to this information is unpredictable. The scattering of information and knowledge in turn impedes their exploitation and utilization in strategic planning.

4.6. Main benefits of each approach

4.6.1. Joint missions

The main advantages of joint missions are

- The low start-up and running costs to conduct the exercise;
- The ease of setting them up, given that the emphasis is on the development of a standard framework of reporting and training local actors responsible for collecting data in preparation for annual joint missions;
- The mobilization of regional departments and decentralized offices of other key ministries in data collecting;
- The close ties between production and analysis of the data at the decentralized levels. Joint missions thus offer a major advantage by closely linking the data collection exercise with the monitoring-evaluation of activities and planning. It is the opportunity for central departments to exchange experiences, coordinate and plan with the regional representatives of technical services (e.g. Advancement of women and child protection, civil status, Work Inspection and the Police Department), as well as two NGOs. The synchronicity of these actions not only facilitates communication between the producers and users of the data, but also improves awareness of the usefulness of the information, discussion regarding their strategic utility, as well as analysis of the quality of the data, identification of information gaps, difficulties related to collecting or the indicators, and the response options.

However, the major constraint of this approach lies in the limited coverage and variable quality of the data collected from one region to the next, and from one department to the next. It therefore cannot guarantee

- A systematic and regular collecting of information;
- Collecting individualized local data and their transmission to higher levels;

- The production of data that is precise and sufficiently disaggregated to be consolidated at the national level;
- Extraction of reliable data at the national level to calculate quantitative indicators and evaluate the scale of rights abuses, in particular of children victims of exploitation;
- Extraction of trends in the evolution of situations to enable comparative analysis.

The choice of such an approach, which locates collecting data within the framework of monitoring and evaluating programme services and activities, can therefore be very useful in a context where

- the internal information systems are marginal or produce low quality information;
- managers and decision-makers in the ministry responsible for protection, either at the central or decentralized level, are not convinced by the usefulness of data production, or where the development of monitoring and information systems related to protection does not constitute a priority;
- the coordination capacity of the ministry responsible for protection is fragile, as a result of excessive structural constraints either at the central or decentralized levels, and/or institutional competition on this issue;
- it is difficult to mobilize the other institutional actors concerned by protection;
- financial and budgetary resources are too limited to cover the initial investments, and too uncertain for the running costs of a more elaborate system;
- the results studied emphasize decentralized information production on protection services and situations, in order to support local planning and monitoring-evaluation of protection interventions;
- it is considered an intermediate step that enables the consolidation of coordination functions in the ministry responsible for protection, as well as the interests and involvement of other sectoral ministries in collecting protection data, while waiting for the input of more significant technical and financial resources in setting up a permanent monitoring and information system.

4.6.2. Recording and monitoring systems

A data collection that is part of routine activities for departments and institutions in charge of or concerned by protection has the main advantages of being able to

- Maximize decentralization of collecting data, by linking it with recording individual cases by the services concerned ;
- Produce information that is sufficiently disaggregated to calculate quantitative indicators;
- Enable extraction of statistical data that is sufficiently accurate to analyse risk factors (linked notably to the child's characteristics and the family and social environment, as well as the characteristics of the rights abuser, where necessary);
- Provide a systematic collecting of information, and subsequently permanent monitoring;
- Enable a national inventory of reported cases at the same time as the coverage and response by services: collecting data not only aims to record selective information about all the cases known, but also enables collecting information about how each case is treated by the services. In this way, it can provide an insight into the operations of the services.

The major drawbacks of this approach are:

- High start-up costs to harmonize collecting data by the chosen information sources, in particular if they are different types and if the system covers the whole territory ; and to organize the transmission of the information from the decentralized to the central level, followed by processing, analysis and dissemination;
- The need for strong organizational integration of the services in charge and/or concerned by child protection, which does not exist in most of the countries in the region. Before homogenizing the methods, tools and procedures for recording, it is often necessary to support
 - ✓ The very organization of the internal information systems in order to ensure the production of information of sufficient quality to be expressed as statistical data;
 - ✓ The operational coordination of the services and structures involved in child protection;
- Under-estimating the scale of situations because they are based only on cases reported to and recorded by the services. The capacities in detecting and recording should therefore be maximized;
- Additional need to make professionals involved in child protection aware of their responsibilities, when they are already subject to strong institutional tensions and who therefore need to be motivated and monitored closely.

The choice of such an approach, which locates collecting data within the framework of the routine activities of services, can therefore be particularly relevant in a context that is characterized by

- Decentralizing processes that are underway or still limited, thus facilitating the implementation of common tools and integrated information systems;
- Existing information systems that produce information of intermediate-superior quality, but in a disorganized manner;
- Good opportunities for operational coordination of protection services and their community-based partners;
- Solid coordination capacities of the ministry responsible for protection;
- Prospects of integrating with information systems from other sectoral ministries (Health or Education, for example);

And regarding information and monitoring, for the following objectives and areas:

- Monitoring mistreatment of children (scale; characteristics of situation, victims and offenders; and factors), taken in the wide sense of all forms of neglect, as well as violence or abuse, whether physical, psychological or sexual;
- Detection/monitoring of the situation of children affected by a disability;
- Children in conflict with the law (scale; characteristics of situation, victims and offenders; and factors);
- Children in institutions.

4.6.3. Periodic population surveys

Periodic population surveys (such as those on households – MICS and DHS – or of a sample of a target population) offer the advantage of being able to provide conclusive reference data for policy-making, programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy at the national level.

In this way, they are able to

- Provide estimates of the scale of the risk situations for children, and specify the proportion of a target population affected, by covering both reported and unreported cases, experienced at a given moment;
- Provide basic national statistics on values, attitudes and behaviour regarding certain rights abuses;
- Check trends;
- Analyse disparities and factors based on a certain number of characteristic variables (age, sex, region, nationality, level of education, urban/rural zone, etc.);
- Link indicators for well-being and poverty with situation monitoring.

Their major constraints are

- Measuring risk situations experienced without reference to a given period (experienced at a given moment of existence);
- Frequency too widespread;
- Only targeting certain protection issues (see previous discussion).

The data collected as part of these population surveys only provide estimates, as regards basic factors. The information therefore does not take into account the complexity of protection situations, and only considers certain protection situations. A more in-depth analysis of the factors and situations, as well as targeting certain protection themes (mistreatment, sexual exploitation, the worst forms of child labour, etc.), should be picked up by other information mechanisms and specific quantitative and qualitative research/studies.

4.6.4. Specialized research and studies

Better targeted research that is exclusively qualitative or combined, depending on the objectives, is invaluable in

- determining the scale and nature of sensitive or informal protection systems. This information cannot be captured by recording or monitoring systems, nor by population surveys. It is unlikely that these cases will be reported to the relevant authorities, and while it is true that police and judicial statistics constitute an essential source of information, they only reflect the activity of these services from the point of view of the act and not of the victim. Not everything can be recorded by the operational services, and the collecting format/technique of population surveys is not necessarily suitable.
- in better understanding individual and group dynamics, and the factors that underlie certain situations;
- in determining the needs of vulnerable children regarding prevention, protection and reintegration;

- in evaluating the quality and range of measures taken with regard to prevention, protection and reintegration services.

In the aforementioned conditions, this approach is particularly suitable, depending on the objectives, for collecting and analyzing data on

- children living in the street;
- birth registrations;
- children victims of exploitation (scale; characteristics of situation, offer and demand; factors, etc.);
- children victims of sexual exploitation (ditto);
- children victims of trafficking;
- harmful practices to health and development.

Table: Characteristics of different approaches to collecting protection data

	Routine recording systems	National monitoring system	Population survey MICS/DHS ...	Targeted survey	Qualitative study / community base	Joint missions
Type of information	Qualitative / Quantitative – statistical	Qualitative / Quantitative - statistical	Quantitative / statistical	Qualitative / Quantitative - statistical	Qualitative	Qualitative / Quantitative - non statistical
Types of data	Archiving / Inventory of individual cases reported and recorded in a given period	Inventory of individual cases reported and recorded in a given period	Estimate of reported and unreported cases	Estimate	Individual and collective information	Inventory of individual cases reported and recorded in a given period
Reliability	Depend on levels of reporting & recording Motivation of actors Risks of under-estimating and counting twice	Depends on levels of reporting & recording Motivation of actors Risks of under-estimating and counting twice	Depends on quality control of questionnaires	Depends on sampling, research methodology, quality control of questionnaire	Depends on methodology	Limited Depends on motivation of actors High risks of under-estimating
Coverage	Linked to service activity / protection situation Precise themes	Linked to service activity / protection situation Precise themes	Protection situations Limited number of themes	Themes according to objectives Sampling	Themes according to objectives Locality / Sample	Linked to service activity
Accuracy	Extended number of variables likely to be collected Problem of consolidation at national level	Extended number of variables likely to be collected Highly disaggregated data before being consolidated	Limited number of variables collected	Extended number of variables collected		Limited Restricted number of variables available Aggregation of data as of local level
Updating	Daily archiving but irregular consolidation of data	Daily recording Monthly / quarterly / annual consolidation (depending on institutional capacities)	Low frequency (3-5 years) Unpredictable	Irregular / Unpredictable	Non guaranteed	Annual
Scale	Local / National	Local / National	National	Sample	Sample	Local / National
Start-up cost / cost of collecting	High initial investments	High initial investments. High collecting cost that increases with the number of information sources and coverage	Average investment High collecting costs	Variable depending on sample size and methodology	Variable depending on methodology	Low
Running cost	Average	High	-	-	-	Low but increase with number of information sources
Utilization of data	Knowledge Implementation	Knowledge Planning	Knowledge Planning	Knowledge Planning	Knowledge Awareness raising	Implementation Monitoring

	Routine recording systems	National monitoring system	Population survey MICS/DHS ...	Targeted survey	Qualitative study / community base	Joint missions
	Reporting	Implementation Reporting	Monitoring Advocacy Awareness raising	Monitoring Advocacy Awareness raising		Planning
Lead agency	Sectoral ministries	Ministry responsible for protection / Interministerial committee	INS	Ministry responsible for protection	Ministry responsible for protection	Ministry responsible for protection
Human resources needs for operation	Permanently integrated Strengthening intermediate and central levels of processing and input	Permanently integrated Strengthening intermediate and central levels of processing and input	Occasional	Occasional Executive contract + individual international consultant	Occasional Executive contract + individual international consultant	Permanently integrated
Key support	Tools Equipment, Training Monitoring Analysis	Organizational Tools Equipment Training Monitoring Analysis	Training Monitoring	Methodology Training Monitoring Analysis	Methodology Monitoring Analysis	Monitoring
Main advantage	Collecting integrated into supervision Evaluates service activity Statistics	Collecting integrated into supervision Evaluates service activity Disaggregated data Statistics	Scale Trends analysis Link with poverty indicators	Scale Analyses factors and consequences Sensitive / specific questions	More in-depth analysis of social norms Sensitive questions	Ease of setup Integrated collecting and analysis of data by decision- makers Local planning
Particular thematic relevance	Violence/Mistreatment of children (scale, forms, factors, services) Disability Juvenile justice Children in institutions EN	Violence/Mistreatment of children (scale, forms, factors, services) Disability EN	Violence, Exploitation, EN, Disability, FGM/C, OVC	Depending on objectives + Exploitation of children Children in institutions Juvenile justice, street children ++ Sensitive questions: exploitation/sexual violence, harmful practices, trafficking, etc.	Depending on objectives ++ Sensitive questions: Sexual violence, harmful practices, street children, etc.	-

5. Main recommendations to strengthen national capacities in child protection information and monitoring systems in West and Central Africa

Any national child protection information and monitoring system in the region will have to be developed progressively. Based on a number of general principles, UNICEF focuses on three complementary zones of intervention: i) improving and consolidating systems for recording routine data and information on a national level; ii) strengthening the scope of periodic surveys; and iii) promoting research into child protection. The use of each of these approaches depends on the objectives and the indicators covered, the state of existing services and sources of information, as well as on institutional capacities and available resources. These options complement each other in order to provide fuller coverage of information and/or monitoring needs, by addressing different kinds of actors at different levels.

General principles:

- Consider data use before collecting
- Clarify institutional leadership and support a single point of coordination
- No single source can cover all the information needs
- Strengthen information mechanisms in the framework of detection and supervision
- Do not minimize support for the utilization and dissemination of the data

More specifically, UNICEF's approach includes the following points:

1. Elicit and guide the definition of needs and objectives related to child protection information and monitoring

- Lobby decision-makers and managers concerned by the usefulness of the data for planning, financing and monitoring and evaluation
- Support a process of extended consultation between government (central and regional), institutional partners and technical and financial support agencies on the conceptual framework of protection monitoring and activities related to protection, the objectives and priority information needs (build a consensus), and identify key stakeholders
- Provide technical support to define and harmonize concepts; definition and calculation of national indicators
- Support the organization of consensus workshops to discuss, redefine and approve the indicators and the operational definitions, with experts from various disciplines
- Support evaluation of current national capacities in collecting data, and existing databases, identification of gaps in available information, and methods of developing and collecting additional information
- Undertake mapping services and institutions intervening in the field of child protection

2. Strengthen coordination of information and monitoring activities and systems

- Lobby the government for the involvement of other key ministries and for establishing a national child protection system

- Support the establishment of a steering committee gathering the main ministries concerned, the department responsible for national statistics, technical and financial support partners (bi/multilateral agencies), and national experts and researchers
- Support the development of common / complementary collecting and monitoring mechanisms and tools
- Support the development and adoption of protocols for dissemination and information sharing, and of access to the database
- Strengthen the institutional capacities in coordination, processing and analysis of the ministry responsible for protection

3. Support the establishment of protection monitoring as a strategic part of existing or consolidated routine sectoral recording and/or monitoring systems

This concerns locating protection in information systems or structures that are more solid and/or benefit from significant financial and technical support in terms of information management:

- Involve the health information system: the health services can constitute an important source of routine data on children affected by a disability, registration of births, and especially violence against children. With minimal support, this monitoring can be integrated into the information mechanisms – health intelligence, health statistics – in place in this sector: advocacy, capacities to recognize risk situations, integration tools and reporting protocols;
- Advocacy and technical support for the system of birth registrations, and the networking and access to health services / production services.

4. Consolidate targeting of periodic surveys

Selectively strengthen the protection section in the periodic household surveys (MICS, DHS, etc.):

- Develop more detailed tools on protection issues already targeted in order to refine analyses (situations and/or factors). E.g. child labour;
- Develop plans to use the databases to refine analyses on targeted protection situations or risk situations, and highlight vulnerability indicators. E.g. Risk of exploitation: adopted children not attending school in a household that includes at least one or all children attending school;
- Integrate other information in existing tools. E.g. Estimating prevalence of abuse and violence: persons who as children were victims of sexual abuse / violence, serious or repeated physical violence, etc. E.g. Children in the household having already been detained by the police – duration / motive.

5. Provide technical and financial support for specialized research

- Encourage the development of a unique plan of research or studies specific for protection, government / protection partners;
- Give priority to using local institutional contracts combined with an international consultancy/supervision.

6. Develop an integrated approach to protection monitoring and surveillance: link data collection to detection and intervention

The support of UNICEF and its partners in this field follow the systemic approach to protection. It targets the institutional integration of the flow of information, the homogenization of collecting methods and tools, and the recording procedures of the services, within the framework of strengthening institutional capacities in child protection, and the organization and operational coordination of the services involved.

Initially it concerns improving internal information capacities (recording, producing and archiving routine information), and subsequently to link them up by an institutional organization of the information flow

- To strengthen institutional capacities in detecting, reporting and recording cases (legal framework, procedures, tools, equipment, training) by social services, police services, health services and voluntary and community organizations;
- Organize information collection:
 - o Short term: periodic and occasional report on the data recorded based on a representative sample of sources/services, via formatted tools;
 - o Medium/long term: organize the regular transfer of information from the peripheral levels to the central level.

7. Ensure processing and utilization of information and data

The production of protection data should not be dissociated from communication, advocacy and strategic planning activities. In order to ensure that the information collected is utilized both at local and national level to improve the services, devise policies and increase child protection, UNICEF should generally develop an approach that aims to

- Prompt the government and its partners to commit themselves to and adopt the systems set up, at all stages of the process;
- Strengthen national capacities in analyzing protection data, according to the level (central, regional, peripheral);
- Provide technical support to utilizing the databases constituted;
- Fix from the start the frequency and the formats of disseminating the data, granting priority to the sharing/discussion of research results; and the annual production of key documents for awareness raising and advocacy;
- Insert the objective of collecting protection data in planning documents: sector plans of action for protection, MDG, poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP), etc.;
- Ensure that the conditions of access to the databases are clearly defined and open to researchers and operational protection partners, while respecting confidential personal information.

8. Develop partnerships and research planning

- Support the establishment of a resource centre for child protection at the national level ;
- Establish strategic partnerships in terms of monitoring and research, with a view to promoting and supporting complementary activities of documentation and information collection on child protection at the national level, in partnership with universities, regional and international research networks, and financial and technical support agencies concerned by particular child protection themes (WHO, ILO, UNODC, World Bank? UNDP, etc.);

- Support research at the regional level on child protection, in partnership with agencies or bilateral organizations (Ford Foundation, IDRC, etc.) involved in financing research projects, research competitions, training grants, etc.

9. At the organizational level

In order to strengthen planning, monitoring and evaluation of the protection programmes in the region, the collecting of data and monitoring are essential. The programming and management based on the results involves in this respect i) defining measurable objectives; ii) identifying the results chain; and iii) evaluating the impact, which can only be done with data that is reliable, accurate and periodically updated. This implies

- Developing technical directives for protection monitoring and evaluation, with training to match;
- Developing and disseminating standard methodologies and tools for qualitative collecting/research on particularly sensitive protection issues;
- Strengthening capacities in terms of monitoring and quality control for specialized surveys/studies (qualitative/quantitative);
- Developing a monitoring-evaluation / protection network at the national level.

Annex 1. Regional child protection indicators (126)

Protective environment

- PE-1 Number/proportion of children less than 15 years old living with no biological parent.
- PE-2 Number of children living in the street
- PE-3 Number of street children who received assistance last year
- PE-4 Number of reception and listening centres for vulnerable children in urban settings
- PE-5 Existence of a SOS toll free line for children
- PE-6 Number of children victims of abuse, violence and exploitation identified by a SOS toll free line.
- PE-7 Number et % of children having permanent mental or physical deficiency
- PE-8 Number / % of handicapped children receiving specific assistance of services
- PE-9 Number of social workers in activity per 100,000 individuals
- PE-10 Existence / Staffing brigade for protection of minors
- PE-11 Existence of a Code of Protection of Children
- PE-12 Existence of a database on children victims of abuse, violence and exploitation

Sexual abuse and violence

- SAV-1 Specific adoption at national level of codes of conduct for adults in contact with children (detail)
- SAV-2 Number of children victims of sexual abuse(cases recorded)
- SAV-3 Number and % of adolescent pregnancies (15-18 years old)
- SAV-4 Number of legal proceedings for sexual abuse, violence and exploitation leading to a judicial decision
- SAV-5 Number of shelters and transit centres for children victims of abuse, violence and exploitation
- SAV-6 Number of child victims of sexual abuse, violence and exploitation who benefited from at least one service (listening, medical care, family reintegration, reinsertion)
- SAV-7 Number of personnel trained on assistance to children victims of abuse and violence
- SAV-8 Number of children victims of violence (physical, sexual) at school (registered cases)
- SAV-9 Number of children victims of violence (physical, sexual) at home (registered cases)
- SAV-10 Existence and enforcement of a legislation repressing corporal punishment
- SAV-11 Number / % of children knowing what to do / who to address in case of victimization (surveys, polls)

Economic exploitation

- EX-1 Minimum age to access employment (General / Hazardous)
- EX-2 Number / % of children age of 5 - 14 at work
- EX-3 Number / % of children age of 5-14 working 4-8 hours / day
- EX-4 Number / % of children age of 5-14 working more than 8 hours/day
- EX-5 Number / % of children who work at night
- EX-6 Number / % of children workers engaged in hazardous work
- EX-7 Number / % of child workers who are not directly paid their wages
- EX-8 Number of child workers having access to basic, non-formal or professional education
- EX-9 Number of judicial condemnations for economic exploitation of children
- EX-10 Number of children victims of trafficking identified last year
- EX-11 Number of children victims of trafficking placed in transit centres last year
- EX-12 Number of local committees of surveillance and protection of children from all forms of abuse and exploitation
- EX-13 Number of children identified and assisted by local committees of surveillance and protection

Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)

- OV-1 Number and % of orphaned children
- OV-2 National definition of Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (OVC).
- OV-3 National estimates of number of OVC
- OV-4 Existence of politics and mechanisms facilitating access to health and education for OVC.
- OV-5 % of OVC benefited from specific programmes of assistance (OVC/HIV-AIDS)

- OV-6 % of orphans 6-14 years enrolled in schools (to be compared with non orphans)
- OV-7 % of orphans with birth certificate (to be compared with non orphans)

Children in institutions

- IN-1 Number / % of children living in institutions
- IN-2 Number of children placed in institutions last year
- IN-3 Number / % of orphans among children placed in institutions
- IN-4 Rate of mortality of children placed in institutions (to be compared with national data of the same age group)
- IN-5 Average length of stay in institutions
- IN-6 Number / % of children having left an institution for a placement in family last year
- IN-7 Number / % of children adopted at national and international level last year
- IN-8 Definition and enforcement of standards on the care and protection of children in institutions (yes / no)
- IN-9 Policy and/or legislative measures establishing the institutionalisation of children as a measure of last resort (yes / no)
- IN-10 % of children in institution having received a visit of family members during the last 6 months
- IN-11 % children in institutions whose placement has been assessed during the last 6 months
- IN-12 Number of visit of surveillance of the situation of children in institutions paid by social workers during last year.

Children in conflict with the law

- CL-1 Minimum age of child criminal responsibility
- CL-2 Minimum age for confinement of minors
- CL-3 Maximum sentence for a crime committed by a minor
- CL-4 Number of children sentenced for penal infraction last year
- CL-5 Number of children in detention / % of girls
- CL-6 Number and % of children placed in remand detention among imprisoned children
- CL-7 Average duration of remand detention of minors
- CL-8 Average duration of confinement sentences for minors
- CL-9 Number of children imprisoned with their mother
- CL-10 Number / % of detained children kept with adults
- CL-11 % detained children having access to education/training
- CL-12 Existence of a specialized justice for minors
- CL-13 Existence of a system guaranteeing visits to detained children by independent organizations
- CL-14 Number of social workers attached to police services/ judicial administration/ penitentiary administration
- CL-15 Number of children in conflicts with the law benefiting from alternative measures to detention
- CL-16 Number / % of children detained who received at least a visit of social worker since the beginning of her/his detention
- CL-17 Percentage of released children who benefited from follow-up services during at least two months after being released.

Harmful practices

- HP-1 % of women aged 15-49 victims of FGM/C
- HP-2 % of girls under 18 years old victims of FGM/C
- HP-3 Adoption of legislation / National policy prohibiting FGM/C
- HP-4 Number of judicial proceedings for FGM/C during last year
- HP-5 Number / proportion of traditional and religious leaders who publicly opposed to FGM/C.
- HP-6 % public opinion in favour of ending FGM/C
- HP-7 Number / % of health personnel who have been trained to treat harmful consequences of FGM/C
- HP-8 Girls average age at first marriage
- HP-9 Legal age of marriage for girls/boys
- HP-10 Number and % of girls victims of early marriage (before legal age)
- HP-11 % of girls 15-19 years old already married
- HP-12 % of girls 15-19 years old who were married before the age of 15
- HP-13 Mother average age at first born child
- HP-14 Married girls authorised (or not) to stay at school
- HP-15 Pregnant girls authorised (or not) to stay at school

- HP-16 Number of judicial proceedings for early marriage last year
- HP-17 Existence of assistance services to young girls who escaped forced marriage or other harmful practice /
Number of beneficiaries last year
- HP-18 Number of infanticides (recorded)
- HP-19 Number of ritual infanticides (recorded)

Children affected by armed conflict

- AC-1 Official legal enlistment age in national army
- AC-2 Number of children killed during armed conflicts
- AC-3 Number of children harmed during armed conflicts
- AC-4 Number of children refugees in another country
- AC-5 Number of displaced children
- AC-6 Number of children victims of abduction
- AC-7 Number of unaccompanied and separated children
- AC-8 Number of attacks on schools and health centres
- AC-9 Number of children reunified with their family
- AC-10 Number of children reunified with their family who received at least 2 monitoring visits during the 3 months following the reunification
- AC-11 Number of children victims of anti-personnel mines and UXOs last year
- AC-12 Number of children sensitized on anti personnel mines and UXOs last year
- AC-13 Number of victims of sexual violence in the armed conflict
- AC-14 Number of victims of violence who accessed to at least one service
- AC-15 Number of children associated with armed groups
- AC-16 Number / % of children associated with armed groups benefiting from a demobilisation programme (to be compared with total number estimated)
- AC-17 Number of children associated with armed groups benefiting from formal /non formal education and or skills training.

Adolescent development and participation

- PA-1 Existence of a national policy in favour of youth
- PA-2 Existence of the parliament of children
- PA-3 Number of sessions of that parliament of children per year
- PA-4 Number of associations or organisations of children
- PA-5 Percentage of school councils integrating at least two students (girls and boys)
- PA-6 Percentage of schools integrating a club for youth
- PA-7 Programmes TV / radio animated and run by youth
- PA-8 Existence of child to child projects. Number of beneficiaries.
- PA-9 Number of children trained on life skills last year
- PA-10 Number of clubs for youth in out-of-school settings.

Annex 2. Selection of results from regional matrix of indicators (2007)

Annex 2.1 Remarks by groups of indicators

Protective environment

PE1 – Documented by 11 countries. Sources: DHS-MICS (2000 to 2006)

PE2 / PE3 – Number of children living on street / assistance: data updated but problems of coherence between these two indicators caused by different sources and periods of reference. E.g. Mali: 1,924 street children / 42,026 received assistance

PE4 – Number of centres of counselling and assistance in urban settings: Better visibility

PE7 – Number of children under 18 with a disability: Under-documented. Data from 2000-04. Problem of age categories to be reviewed. E.g. Cameroon: aged 2-9 / DRC: under 15 / Chad: aged 5-14

PE9 – Ratio social workers per 100,000 habitants: Country data unclear (totals?). Which indicator used in Social Progress Reports?

PE12 – Database children victims of abuse, violence and exploitation: In four countries, it is in the process of being developed (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia and Niger). Five countries indicated existence of such a database (Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria and Sierra Leone), but little known about characteristics

Economic exploitation

EX2 – Number of children aged 5-14 at work: basic indicator better documented. Sources: MICS (data 2005-06) and ILO (older data). Variable reference periods and concepts depending on the country

EX3 to EX8: Conditions / type of exploitation: Under-documented. Raises issue of appropriateness of indicators with regard to tools and national data?

EX9 – Number of convictions for economic exploitation: No data. Problem of monitoring the application of laws and a culture of impunity

EX10 – Number of children victims of trafficking last year: Documented but variety of sources and coverage between countries. Sources: national surveys, studies and police services. Question of estimates vs. recorded cases, and assistance (see EX 11) vs. qualitative analyses? E.g. Benin: 40,317 children (national survey); Guinea: 63 children (NGO)

EX11 – Number of children victims of trafficking taken into care: Under-documented. Should not be confused with EX10. This is an indicator of cover that should be compared with the previous indicator. E.g. Benin – 1,000 children assisted (although the target population is estimated to be 40,317); Niger – 64 children assisted (692 identified)

EX12 – Number of local committees: Documented, but problem of selected reference by countries: level of interventions by committees, committees supported by UNICEF or include other donors. Note that some countries have quite dense network as in Mali (2,903 local committees), Benin (1,094) or Ghana (1,000), whereas in Côte d'Ivoire less (50)

EX13 – Number of children assisted by local committees: Under-documented. Raises problem of monitoring local committees and managing the information they generate. Also appears to be misunderstanding over the children targeted (all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation or trafficking only). E.g. Nigeria: more than 18,000 children identified; Niger: 692 (refers to number of children victims of trafficking)

Harmful practices

HP2 -- % girls under age 18 excised: Documented. Problem of reference. MICS = % mothers aged 15-49 with at least one daughter excised. Excision rate varies between 0.4% in Cameroon and 1% in Togo to 89.3% in Guinea

HP4 – Number of legal proceedings: Under-documented. Out of the six countries detailing the number of legal proceedings, four stated that there was not a single case (DRC, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone) and two countries stated two cases (Benin and Niger)

HP6: – % public opinion in favour of abandoning FGM/C: Documented in ten countries. Opinion dissociated by sex. In general, favourable to abandoning, except in Chad, Guinea and Mali

HP8 – Average age of girls at first marriage: Documented, but sometimes reference to median age

HP10 – % girls married under legal age: Under-documented. Problem of reference: under 15 / under 18 years old?

HP11 – % girls aged 15-19 already married: Documented. Proportion varies between 12% in Guinea to 59% in Niger

HP12 – % girls aged 15-19 married under 15 years old: Under-documented. Problem of relevance compared with HP10

Sexual abuse and violence

SAV2 – Number of children victims of sexual abuse – recorded cases: All countries, except two, provided data. These data are quite recent (2005-06), except in seven countries where they date back to 2001. Figures are rising compared with previous years, which indicates improved recording of cases (E.g. Côte d'Ivoire: 103 cases in 2003; 456 in 2006). Sources used remain: police services, surveys, joint evaluation missions. Figures refer, in a variable manner, to cases recorded by the police services, complaints registered for child rape, children victims assisted by UNICEF, children victims assisted by social services. Most often confused with SAV6 (children victims referred to adapted service)

SAV3 – % adolescent pregnancies: Under-documented. Only those countries where DHS/MICS available provided data. Reference age = 15-19 years old. Note: proportion varies between 20-25% in countries such as Cameroon, Central African Republic and Nigeria. Reaches 53% in Niger

SAV4 – Number of legal proceedings: Under-documented. Eight countries provided data. On comparing this indicator with that of number of cases of sexual abuse recorded, the absence of legal action is evident. E.g. Guinea: 115 cases; 7 legal proceedings – Ghana: 788 cases; 163 legal proceedings – Nigeria: 758 cases; 64 legal proceedings

SAV5 – Number of shelters temporary accommodation centres for victims of sexual abuse, violence and exploitation: This indicator of resources reveals limited coverage in general in the countries that provided data: number of centres is fewer than 10 per country. Nigeria cites 13 centres. Raises problem of evaluating institutional capacities

SAV7 – Number of personnel trained to deal with sexual abuse and violence (SAV): Figures provided by certain countries are based on several years, whereas in principle it should only be the last 12 months

SAV8 / SAV9 – Number of children victims of SAV at school or home: Under-documented. Still a new issue in protection. No recent data provided

SAV11 – Capacity of children to react to an SAV situation: Not documented. Raises question of evaluating impact of IEV and of strengthening life skills competences

Children in conflict with the law

CL1 / CL2 – Ages of legal responsibility / adulthood: Problem of distinguishing these concepts in certain countries. Age of legal responsibility (= age as of when can be judged legally responsible for one's acts) should not be confused with age of legal adulthood (= age as of when one is judged as an adult), which is different from the age as of when a custodial sentence is possible. Can highlight that age of legal responsibility in Congo and Nigeria is seven years old, ten in Cameroon and Sierra Leone and 11 in Côte d'Ivoire

CL4 to CL13 – How justice operates for minors and monitoring of children in detention: Largely under-documented. Yet 20 countries indicate specialized legal system for minors (CL12) and a system guaranteeing independent visits (CL13). These two indicators should be redefined.

CL14 – Number of social workers attached to police services, legal services and prison administration: Little documentation. Figures extremely variable from one country to the next, which raises question of coverage and coherence of data. E.g. 350 in Guinea / 3 in Mauritania

Children in institutions

IN1 – Number of children living in institutions: partial data, limited to certain institutions, or spread over several years, depending on the country, which gives too scattered regional overview. E.g. Mali: 2,411 children (1999 to 2004); Chad: 211 (N'Djamena); Mauritania: 80 (2005); Ghana: 1,635 (2005); Senegal: 7,091 (2004)

IN2 onwards – Profile and monitoring of children in institutions: Under-documented

Orphans and other vulnerable children

OV1 – Number and % of orphaned children: Most countries gave an estimate for the orphan population. Sources: MICS, DHS, UNAIDS. But the stated figures are not always coherent from one year to the next, or with regard to the number of OVC (OV3), as a result of differing information sources, reference periods and concepts used.

E.g. Côte d'Ivoire: 920,000 orphans (2006) and 310,000 OVC (UNAIDS, 2003)

E.g. Mali: 632,000 orphans (DHS, 2001) and 900,000 OVC (2005)

E.g. Guinea: 370,000 orphans and 28,000 OVC (country file, 2007) / 420,000 orphans and 35,000 OVC (file, 2006)

OV2 – National definition: Fifteen countries stated existence of national definition of OVC. In certain countries, the very wide reference covered by the definition poses the problems of quantitative estimates and targeting children, and of the coherence of the data with the orphan population (OV1)

OV4 – Policies and access mechanisms of OVC to social services: Thirteen countries stated this had been set up. But problem of definition of the indicator to be reviewed

OV5 onwards – Monitoring OVC: Under-documented. Problem of ratios

Annex 2.2 Variety of concepts

Burkina Faso: "Orphan: Any child having lost one or both parents. Vulnerable child: a person under 18 years old who is victim of or who is exposed to risk in terms of food, health, education, morality, psychological, material, legal, accommodation, etc., requiring temporary or permanent social protection."

Gambia: Any child under 18 years old who i) has lost one or both parents; or ii) who is seriously disabled; or iii) who lives in a household where at least one adult has died in the last 12 months; or iv) lives in a household where one adult has been seriously ill for 3 months out of the last 12 months; or v) lives in a household headed by a child; or vi) lives in a household composed of adults older than 59 years old; or vii) lives outside any family assistance (institution, street, etc.).

Ghana: Definition includes any person under 18 years old who has lost one or both parents due to HIV/AIDS or any other cause; who is in a vulnerable situation because of HIV/AIDS or not; who needs special protection and assistance such as those defined in the Children's Code of 1998.

Mali: Definition of OVC includes: children affected, infected by HIV/AIDS; orphan children (all causes); street children/children living in the street; mentally or physically disabled children; children victims of sexual abuse; children in conflict with the law; migrant children; children victims of trafficking and labour exploitation; child refugees; child soldiers.

Senegal: Person under 18 years old who is infected by HIV/AIDS or not, at least one of whose parents is infected by HIV/AIDS or at risk, for whom health, education and socialization are compromised or insufficiently protected.

Annex 2.3 Regional trends, based on environmental and coverage indicators (2006-07)

Progress	Gaps / Challenges
<p>Existence of Code of Child Protection</p> <p>Existence of juvenile justice</p> <p>Law banning excision</p> <p>Legislation against corporal punishment</p> <p>Existence of mechanisms guaranteeing access to social services for OVC</p>	<p>Access by children to information and counselling services</p> <p>Legal discrimination regarding gender and marriage</p> <p>Application of laws and culture of impunity: number of legal proceedings / sentencing for all types of abuse or violence against children – information not available or non-existent</p> <p>Child protection service (nine countries are equipped but staffing is unknown in seven of them)</p> <p>Codes of conduct (five countries)</p> <p>Monitoring children in institutions</p> <p>Monitoring children in conflict with the law</p> <p>Definitions and application of standardized care and protection in institutions</p> <p>Legislative measure to limit institutionalization as last resort (only nine countries)</p> <p>Social workers</p> <p>Restricted treatment of pregnant girls by schools: although 17 countries allow married girls to stay in school, only 10 allow pregnant girls to stay</p> <p>Support services for child victims</p> <p>Emergency help lines: seven countries have a helpline but their effectiveness remains unknown</p> <p>Child living with a disability: no visibility on their number or level of assistance</p>

Annex 3: Table of national experiences of protection information and monitoring

	Main activities
Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National system for collecting and information management operational. Protection database (ChildPro) exists. Lead agency: Ministry of Social Affairs. Planned production of annual Social Progress Report - System for recording and information management regarding offences against children, "Children of Benin". Database managed by Child Protection Service, Cotonou - DHS, 2007
Burkina Faso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16 indicators developed with support of World Bank. Lead agency: Led by Ministry of Social Affairs - MICS3, 2006
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National survey of basic protection. Lead agency: INS - MICS3
Central African Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Security Council resolution 1612 on monitoring and reporting violations of children' rights (M&R 1612) - Community-based monitoring mechanisms for abuses of child rights - Inter-agency database on rights abuses - Database on orphans and other vulnerable children - MICS3
Chad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community-based monitoring mechanism in five towns - Lead support from Ministry of Planning for collecting protection data in the capital and from public services (2006) - Support for INSEED to strengthen capacities in collecting protection data throughout the country (2007)
Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Observatory on violence
Côte d'Ivoire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M&R 1612 - Inter-agency database on rights abuses in situations of armed conflict - System for collecting and managing information on rights abuses in border zones (Mano River Union [MRU] regional project) - Protection database devised. Collecting mechanisms and tools under development. Lead agency: Ministry of Social Affairs - MICS3
DRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Database on OVC in final stage. Lead agency: Ministry of Social Affairs - Database on sexual violence (care of UNFPA) - M&R 1612 - National observatory on poverty and inequality - National social database (RDCongo Info). Lead agency: INS / Observatory - DevInfo database - DHS
Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopted list of protection indicators - Protection database exists. Annual report on protection (2008) - Integrated monitoring system in convergence zones - Community-based monitoring mechanism, through support of seven local protection committees - MICS3
Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MICS3
Guinea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National system for collecting and information management operational. Protection database exists. Lead agency: Ministry of Social Affairs. Produces statistical yearbook (2007) - DHS
Guinea-Bissau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of protection indicators developed, awaiting approval - MICS3
Liberia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - System for collecting and information management in border zones (MRU regional project) - System of management and investigation into sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. Lead agency: Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberia National Police (WACP-LNP) - National Observatory of Child Rights (NACROG): monitoring system and database - Truth and Reconciliation Commissions - DHS
Mali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Database DevInfo Malikunnafo

Main activities	
	- DHS
Mauritania	-
Niger	- Annual collecting of protection data as part of integrated monitoring-evaluation missions of UNICEF activities and programmes - MICS3 - DHS
Nigeria	- National survey of basic protection. Lead agency: INS. Database exists - Database on children in conflict with the law
Gabon	- In process of setting up system of collecting and information management on protection. Lead agency: Ministry of Planning
Equatorial Guinea	- Ditto
Sao Tome and Principe	- Ditto - MICS3
Senegal	- Database on the worst forms of child labour - MICS3
Sierra Leone	- Joint database on HIV/AIDS and OVC (2008) - Truth and Reconciliation Commissions - Mapping / database on children in institutions (2007) - MICS3
Togo	- Database on children victims of trafficking. Lead agency: CNARSEVT - Integrated monitoring system in convergence zones - Community-based monitoring mechanism - MICS3

Annex 4: Framework for the development of national protection information and monitoring systems in West and Central Africa

1. Consider data use before collecting

Define the objectives and the information needs

To ensure the commitment of the government, as well as the effectiveness and impact of protection monitoring and information measures at the most decentralized levels, UNICEF should first concentrate its support on the definition of the objectives and the information needs. This means generating and assisting the request for data, before supporting the implementation of collecting mechanisms.

What to monitor and why?

- the scale and nature of the situations of risk and rights abuses
- the key factors related to occurrences of rights abuses: the information collected for each individual case should be sufficiently disaggregated to allow an analysis of the factors (characteristics of the child victim and offender, family profile of the child, environmental factors at community, society and cultural levels)
- the scope and impact of the policies and programmes

The information collected should enable measurement of prevention issues and development of suitable policy and prevention and counselling services, in addition to an appropriate response.

The data should address the needs expressed by national and decentralized authorities, and by local organizations.

Examples of objectives

- ✓ Support information collection on the number of cases reported of child abuse at the national level
- ✓ Develop basic information and monitor trends in reporting
- ✓ Strengthen knowledge of indicators and determining factors
- ✓ Promote data collection on risk situations based on an extensive number of sources
- ✓ Enable better understanding of the kinds and seriousness of risk situations
- ✓ Share information on risk situations with other stakeholders
- ✓ Identify fields of research
- ✓ Use information to determine intervention priorities

Define priority indicators

Prior to the choice and formulation of child protection information strategies, the government and its partners should clearly determine what they want to measure and monitor, based on the results they want to produce.

It is therefore the responsibility of each country to develop a **conceptual framework** based on a causal analysis of the main factors of risks and child rights abuses and mistreatment (abuse, violence and exploitation). The causal framework concerning child protection should take into account all children in risk situations.

Next is the development of **indicators for results sought and determining factors**. As suggested in the regional list of protection indicators, three types of indicators should be anticipated. *Situation indicators* enable the

quantification of the level of abuse or of rights abuse in terms of the number of children affected by a situation. They indicate the scale and nature of the protection situations encountered.

The risk factors are examined according to an analysis of the protective environment. The *environment indicators* highlight the gaps in the protective environment, such as the existence of appropriate legislation, court sentencing, services offered and their accessibility. The utilization of these services is then measured by *coverage indicators*, which indicates the number of children in need of special protection that are receiving assistance from services.

Only once the priorities have been established regarding the information to collect, the objectives of the data collection have been defined and the kind of information to collect has been determined can the existing and future sources of information, and the most appropriate method, be identified.

The frequency of updating the indicators is necessarily variable; some evolve more quickly than others. The updating period also determines the choice of the information source and the method.

2. Clarify institutional leadership and support a single point of coordination

The ministry responsible for child protection should ensure the coordination and monitoring of all activities related to collecting and data management with respect to child protection. But this coordination and monitoring function does not exclude technical leadership by other central services/institutions in terms of collecting and managing the information.

The objective is to overcome institutional tensions and ownership conflicts between and within ministries and agencies; and to ensure cooperation from operational services and institutions at the most decentralized levels, including services and institutions responsible for statistics and research.

Setting up a national system for protection monitoring and information that engages different kinds of services and institutions at different levels should therefore be led by a central committee that draws together the principal ministries concerned, the department responsible for national statistics, technical and financial support partners (bi-lateral agencies and international NGOs), and national experts and researchers.

3. Identify suitable information sources and methods

Once the objectives and information needs have been defined, it is then necessary to know where and when to source the information. It is therefore essential to establish priorities.

The first step is to prepare a **mapping** of public, private and charity services responsible for protection, as well as those concerned by child protection. The objective is to have a precise view of the child protection system as it exists in the country, and of the possible path followed by a child in a risk or rights abuse situation (from detection to assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration). The child protection system relies on services and institutions likely to intervene at moment "t" with regard to a child in need of special protection: judicial system, social services, health services, educational establishments, police services, and public or private child protection institutions. Each of these actors intervenes at different levels, in a more or less coordinated manner.

Mapping therefore identifies the sources of information and the existing sources of information, and to evaluate the information flows between and within these systems. Subsequently, it is necessary to evaluate:

- the quality of existing information systems with respect to protection
- the quality of the channels of information regarding special protection cases, which depends on the degree of systemic organization of child protection. The less operational services intervene in a coordinated and integrated manner, the less the information produced can be consolidated and circulated.

Basic premise: No single source can cover all the information needs for an indicator

The judicial and social sectors, public social services assisted by NGO partners, are the main producers and users of data on situations of child rights abuses. This is explained mainly by the fact that they are generally the two kinds of services that are immediately concerned / called on in cases of rights abuses.

Information provided by the judicial sector (courts, police), adapted to measure and monitor the situation of children in conflict with the law, is in principle equally valid for the analysis of trends in terms of rights abuses, that is, all forms of mistreatment, abuse, violence and exploitation of children. But in the context of West and Central Africa, where situations are often not “legalized”, this source cannot cover the evaluation needs regarding rights abuses on a national scale, nor is the information comprehensive enough to provide an analysis of the context and factors for violence, or the kind of prevention and protection interventions.

Social services (public and private) constitute the most important source of both qualitative and quantitative data regarding children in risk situations, insofar as they are the best placed to recognize a variety of situations / cases requiring special protection, independently of legal implications.

Health and education information systems do not yet integrate information about child protection because it is too far removed from their core activity. Yet health services in particular could be an important source of routine data on children affected by a disability, birth registrations, and especially violence against children. Health services therefore have the potential to detect cases of mistreatment and physical violence against children, based on injuries observed / treated.

Analyses carried out at the national level, in the region, have shown that current internal mechanisms for collecting and the quality of the data (reliability, disaggregation, periodic updates, etc.) from existing information sources were not good enough to calculate national quantitative indicators.

Two approaches should therefore be consolidated in order to produce quality protection data: collecting routine data by the operational services and population surveys. Using each of these approaches depends on the objectives and indicators covered, existing services and sources of information, and resources available. These options can be combined so as to cover information needs and/or monitoring.

Choice of methods according to the types of indicators and protection themes

Quantitative data related to the **scale** of protection situations, that is, for **situation** indicators, cannot be completely covered by routine information systems, and requires carrying out household surveys, or other population surveys. The survey is especially necessary for cases that cannot be reported legally, or when the data are not available, or if there is no recording system (passive monitoring) in place.

The question is how to evaluate the number of cases / children that do not access services. The level of identification reflects the complexity of measuring prevalence and occurrence, and refers back to the choice of method. The scale of a situation of rights abuses can thus be understood in two ways:

- either reference is to cases registered by services (occurrence), and there again, several levels of measurable identification are possible (cases reported, proved and punished) according to the objectives sought. In this case, reference is to internal statistics from services, if they are reliable;
- or reference is to cases experienced, whether they have been reported or not (*estimate*), and in this case, the number of cases (reported or not) encountered / experienced (including retroactively) is taken from a representative sample of the population. E.g. Young adults questioned about abuse that occurred during their childhood.

Data related to **environment** indicators are, in principle, available from administrative sources at the central level, regarding policies and services, and from population and community-based surveys, regarding attitudes and beliefs.

Data related to **quality** or **service coverage** indicators are collected from internal information systems of services, and then, if it is a question of rates, related to the reference population, which is available from other sources (polling).

Table: Sources and methods of data according to themes and types of indicators

Theme	Type of indicator Kind of information to collect	Method and source
Abuse and violence against children	Situation (reported cases)	Information systems, police, social and health services
	Situation (estimates)	Population survey
	Types and degree of abuse	Information systems, police, social and health services
	Determining factors	Information systems, social services
Birth registrations	Situation (scale)	Population survey (MICS, etc.)
	Cover / quality of services	Information systems, social services
Children affected by a disability	Situation	Population survey (MICS, etc.)
		Information system, health services
Children in conflict with the law	Situation	Information services, police services, judicial administration
	Cover / quality of services	Information services, police services, judicial administration
	Determining factors	Information services, social services
		Survey
Sexual exploitation	Situation (reported cases)	Information systems, police, social and health services
	Determining factors	Community-based surveys
Child exploitation	Situation (estimates)	Population survey
	Determining factors	Population survey
OVC	Situation	Population survey
	Cover / quality of services	Population survey / social services information systems
Early marriage	Situation (estimates)	Population survey
	Determining factors	Community-based surveys
FGM/C	Situation (estimates)	Population survey
	Determining factors	Community-based surveys
Children in institutions	Situation (number and characteristics)	Survey
	Cover / quality of services	Survey

Choice of methods according to the organization of services and information systems

The more operational services responsible for or concerned by protection intervene in an integrated manner, the more the creation of a national data collecting system integrated into the services is facilitated. The issue then is to support the development and harmonization of concepts, methods and collecting tools, and to organize the channels of information.

Conversely, the low level of integration of protection interventions, the absence of referral procedures and reporting cases of special protection between services, or internal recording and information systems that are inefficient, all make the integrated production of national protection data more difficult, and support for setting up national systems for protection monitoring and information becomes more complex.

Choice of method according to resources available

Whichever method is chosen according to the objectives attached to it, collecting data is not a cost-free exercise. A good information system requires financial investment for material, training, interviews, monitoring, analysis and dissemination.

Setting up a national system of routine information integrated into services (recording) requires high initial investment to provide logistical and technical support for institutional integration, homogenization of collecting methods, tools and recording procedures, and the organization itself of the services and operational coordination.

Using a quantitative survey (with sampling) is one of the most expensive methods in the long term, and the least sustainable in documenting a special protection situation; it produces a piece of information at a given instant “t”, without any guarantee of utilization or comparative analysis over time.

UNICEF’s approach is to support the development of a strategy for collecting data that integrate objectives in the short, medium and long term. As part of strengthening national capacities in collecting and managing protection data, and setting up a national system of protection information and monitoring, it means

- in the short term:
 - ✓ developing a plan for collecting and calculating indicators for which the data are available and easily generated;
 - ✓ developing monitoring sites – refers to selecting sites in communities for passive reporting (recording) or active (survey). Sampling the sites can be done randomly or according to a logical choice, in function of the objectives under research (measuring trends or evaluating programme impact, establish estimates, etc.);
 - ✓ improving existing information systems (recording routine data)
 - ✓ making a representative sampling of sources and collecting information (survey);
- in the medium / long term, initiate a process of developing integrated information systems on protection, as a component of the national child protection system.

At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the protection sections in the population surveys such as MICS and DHS; to develop more systematic plans for analyzing / exploiting the databases; and to strengthen analysis and research capacities with regard to protection issues.

4. Support utilization and dissemination of data

One of the main assurances for the utilization of the data lies in the prior definition, in consultation, of precise objectives associated with collecting the data. As such, UNICEF’s approach in this situation is to strengthen, at this stage of the process, national capacities and mechanisms for analyzing and disseminating data. Collecting data is only meaningful if it adds to knowledge and understanding of situations, in addition to guiding policies, programmes and services.

Adequate partnerships and resources for dissemination, discussion and utilization of the research results and data collected

Experience in the region shows that efforts are concentrated on the production of information and data, but that planning and budgeting resources minimize the significance of strategic dissemination and discussion of the results produced. Databases are created and study reports produced, but not enough attention is paid to using the results and following them up.

The production of protection data should not be dissociated from communication activities, advocacy and strategic planning.

The research and studies produced should be disseminated and debated to serve as a base for information and awareness-raising in general; for public debate in the context of advocacy; and for discussions with key actors (parliamentary representatives, senior civil servants, senior representatives from the judicial and social sectors, local authorities, universities and community organizations).

Aim for the annual production of key documents, including a key report for sensitization and advocacy of child rights, and periodic evaluations at country and regional levels.

Associate the objective of collecting data on protection with planning documents: sectoral action plans for protection, MDGs, PRSP, etc.

The choice and planning of research and situation analyses should be done by establishing a clear link with the planning frameworks established at national level to protect child rights.

5. Build a system of routine information in stages

a. Link data collection with detection and assistance

Collecting data should be considered as

- a step in the detection and identification process of children in risk situations;
- a dynamic process to monitor and evaluate assistance given to children (protection, evaluation and rehabilitation).

This type of approach not only guarantees the commitment of local actors to collecting data, but also capitalizes on the available resources and support.

Interventions that encourage reporting, such as training professionals or the public, have an impact on the number of cases reported. It is therefore necessary first to develop institutional capacities in detection, reporting and recording children in risk situations:

- detection mechanisms – e.g. setting up help lines;
- reporting procedures and systematic referral by sectoral services to social services responsible for protection;
- legal obligation by certain professionals to report to social services, and from social services to judicial protection services;
- training sectoral actors in contact with children in the identification and reporting of risk situations / rights abuses.

Recording and reporting to the appropriate service also depends on the motivation and capacities of the person who passes on the information, even in a situation where there is a legal obligation to make a declaration. It is therefore necessary to encourage cooperation from professionals and actors responsible for reporting (collecting), who are often overloaded with work or demotivated by work conditions:

- the mechanism set up should be easy to use;
- only the information that corresponds to the objectives of the monitoring system should be collected, in order to ensure its utilization. Failing which, the relevance of the system can be put in doubt by the same elements that constitute its foundations;
- offer compensation / assistance;
- inform them about the compilation and utilization of the data collected;
- recognize their role officially.

Collecting national data should be attached at the local level to an individual file for the child that indicates the individual and family profile, review of the facts, type of assistance, and monitoring of the child according to a pre-established framework.

b. Strengthen routine information systems of services responsible for child protection social, court and police services)

When the information collected by the information sources is of good quality, but in mixed formats or localized in registers, in order to be used effectively, one of the intermediate solutions is to

- Devise a formatted collecting tool to retranscribe the information periodically and transmit it towards the central level;
- Train the information sources in organizing and maintaining registers, or reorganizing information. In the long term, the redevelopment of these information systems should be planned.

Given this situation, the ideal scenario would be to encourage the information sources identified to develop and use routine information systems. This means linking the collection of data disaggregated at recording, creating and archiving individual files by the services concerned, then to organize the subsequent flow of information with the aim of centralizing and consolidating the data, determining the schedule for completing each of the steps.

Improving the routine information systems by the services responsible for or concerned by child protection has two major advantages with regard to the gradual development of collecting and monitoring protection mechanisms in the region:

- In the short term, certain indicators can be measured using a “snapshot” of a representative sample of reliable information sources;

- It prepares the way for setting up a national monitoring system of vulnerable children or children victims of rights abuses, as part of strengthening the national systems of protection.

Information recorded locally is useful for monitoring and programming when it is capable of being transformed into statistical data, which means predefined, standardized collecting methodologies, variables and formats; an organized circuit of information; checking, processing and managing data.

The basic information in a routine recording system should include enough variables to cover all aspects of the situation of the child: sex and age, nationality, place of residence, characteristics of the social and family environment, educational and civil status of the child, type of situation reported / according to macro-typologies, type and duration of child / family assistance, and a typology of the services and institutions involved.

Finally, computerization of the information systems is not systematically relevant; nor is it a guarantee of efficiency. A system based on hand-written files may be preferable in a context where resources are rare or inadequate to set up, maintain and update computerized systems. A combination of collecting on paper at the decentralized levels and computer processing at the level of the central database would appear appropriate.

Support for strengthening institutional capacities of recording and managing routine data aims to:

- Harmonize the format and content of individual files, with agreement on the variables;
- Organize file archiving;
- Organize the flow of information from decentralized services to the central level;
- Process the data at the central level.

The quality of the data recorded depends on the following priority measures:

- Operational concepts and definitions should be clearly defined;
- Precise protocols for collecting, and for investigation and interview techniques, should be devised and made available to the actors;
- An ethical code for collecting information about children should be developed and widely disseminated;
- Regular communication should be maintained between the producers and the users of the data;
- Field visits should be frequently organized to check and support the collecting and recording system.

c. Strengthen information systems of other sectors in a targeted approach, before integrating them

Opportunities exist to integrate and share data on children in risk situations with other sectoral systems of monitoring and information management.

In the health sector, besides a system of emergency epidemiological information, certain countries have developed a routine information service updated on a monthly basis. The age groups and pathological categories could be used to highlight cases of physical violence against children (deliberate scars or traumatism, sexual violence) and causes of child death (other than those due to illness). Information systems that monitor the infant development could also be used for the early detection of disability.

It is therefore necessary for UNICEF to:

- Advocate the mobilization of the health sector to detect and monitor violence against children and other child at risk;
- Develop the capacities of health actors to identify and detect risk situations or rights abuses;
- Support the integration of protection data in the epidemiological and infant development information and monitoring systems;
- Support the development of protocols for reporting cases of rights abuses or of children at risk to the social services;
- Train health actors in detection and monitoring of child protection.

The primary education system, and the services for school statistics, could constitute a reference point to evaluate and localize children whose birth has not been registered, without waiting until a small number of them reach secondary school and demand auxiliary evaluations. Mechanisms to detect, record and report cases of violence at school to the social services should also be developed.

d. Support the establishment of a national system of monitoring cases of abuse and violence against children

Only a monitoring system that is located and converges at the level of social services will enable the collection of data that is sufficiently disaggregated to produce strategic information on rights abuses (who, how, where, when and why).

Once the routine recording systems of the different sectors responsible for or in charge of child protection have been strengthened, the objective is then to set up an epidemiological type of information system at the level of social services, targeting all forms of violence against children. Its utility is in improving knowledge and/or to influencing policies and programmes, and also, according to the objectives selected and the means available, enabling an emergency response, holistic to the protection and rehabilitation needs of children in risk situations or situations of rights abuse.

The success of a monitoring system depends on respecting a number of steps and principles when it is first conceived and implemented:

Establish effective communication between the partners in the system. Monitoring relies on multi-sector collaboration. Its success depends largely on the degree of cooperation and exchange between the many actors involved so as to enable a precise and accurate collecting and processing of data, as well as fixing the frequency of reports and the utility of the results. It means getting all the actors involved at the outset of the project, in order to ensure their contribution and cooperation. All the central services of the services concerned directly or indirectly by child protection (public health and court services, social work, etc.), as well as NGOs, the decentralized social, police and hospital services, schools and database experts (statisticians, epidemiologists, experts in information systems, etc.) should be involved in the operational planning (objectives and priorities, identify potential sources of information, develop methods of collecting, processing, analyzing and disseminating the data).

Set more precise objectives and be selective when collecting information. Monitoring differs from research, reporting and population surveys. It requires more precise objectives such as determining trends in terms of the types of abuse and violence; or establishing a profile of mistreated children and their family in order to plan interventions, etc.

Define the cases to monitor operationally. The definitions should be sensitive enough (thus including a range of children in risk situations) and accurate (minimize errors), simple and unambiguous.

Prepare clear and precise directives for referral, recording and reporting for field staff and professionals working in the monitoring system to follow. In addition, operational protocols organize the information flows from the different services to an intermediate agency responsible for centralizing and checking the data before they are compiled at the national level.

Make a limited choice of indicators and variables with regard to the situation, of what is necessary to measure and the context.

Build a monitoring system in stages. Begin with pilot sites before national coverage. At start-up, a small number of collecting sites and information sources are involved, and gradually, the geographical coverage and the number of participating services/institutions increase.

Determine the frequency of collecting and disseminating.

Monitor and evaluate each level of the monitoring system regularly (from input to analysis).

Storing, analyzing and disseminating the data. The individual child files remain at the local level and are archived separately from the database so as to ensure access to the data while respecting private information. If data are collected on paper, data input should be organized periodically.

UNICEF's approach to setting up a monitoring system relies on:

- ✓ Advocacy with the government to involve other key ministries and set up a national child protection system;

- ✓ Strengthening the role and coordination capacities of the ministry in charge of protection;
- ✓ Strengthening the institutional capacities of the central and decentralized services of the ministry in charge of protection to produce, centralize, process, manage, analyse, disseminate and utilize the data.
- ✓ Supporting the development of tools and procedures, organizing the collecting, distribution and management of the data;
- ✓ Training and technical and logistical support for actors / decentralized services involved in monitoring activities;
- ✓ Strengthening and organizing the services concerned to address protection needs such as taking into care and rehabilitation, if the monitoring objective is also to be a warning system for a coordinated response to rights abuses.

e. Extend and deepen the scope of periodic household surveys

The survey method that consists of collecting information based on a sample of a target population, constituted so as to be representative for this population and to enable extrapolation of the results to national level, is necessary when the information is not recorded, or cannot be produced from existing information systems, or when existing systems are not able to generate reliable, complete and/or accurate information.

The periodic surveys on household well-being, such as MICS or DHS, offer a complementary opportunity to collect national statistics on a precise number of protection situations, with basic variables.

Once the information and monitoring objectives have been identified, it is necessary to review the existing *active* data collecting systems (population survey, household surveys, etc.) in order to see to what degree they address information needs, and develop these systems so as to highlight the necessary information. This relies on the following options:

- Go into more detail on protection issues already targeted in order to refine analysis. On situations themselves or factors. E.g. child labour. The criterion of time / type of activity (economic, domestic) is insufficient for strategic information. Reason for starting work, etc.;
- Develop plans to use the databases to refine analyses on targeted protection systems or risk situations, and highlight indicators of vulnerability. E.g. Risk of exploitation: adopted children not attending school, living in a household that includes at least one or all children attending school;
- Integrate other information. E.g. Estimate of the prevalence of abuse and violence: persons aged 15-19 (or older?) having been victims in the past or during their childhood of sexual abuse / violence, of serious or repeated physical violence, etc. E.g. Children in the household having already been detained / held by the police – length, reason, etc.

The information based on population surveys that is not taken into account could be used as material by research institutes. Whatever the case, for certain issues, such as sexual abuse, violence and exploitation, or harmful practices, information that is not purely statistical is necessary for the development of prevention and protection policies.

f. Develop partnerships and research plans

Support setting up a child protection resource centre

This concerns promoting and assisting, at the national level, the appointment / establishment of a reference centre responsible for centralizing, archiving and access existing documentary resources and databases related to child protection, to facilitate secondary analysis of existing qualitative and quantitative data by researchers on the basis of research proposals.

The centre should also capitalize on all the research/studies carried out in this area, by guaranteeing access to protection actors and their partners.

Establish strategic partnerships for monitoring and research

This means going beyond the short-term objective of collecting information for programming and to develop a consultative approach between the government and technical and financial partners with a view to promote

and support complementary activities in documentation and collecting information on child protection at the national level, in partnership with:

- Universities
 - ✓ Support the implementation of partnership conventions with universities and national statistics institutes, especially to utilize existing databases and the develop better targeted research/studies;
 - ✓ Establish a partnership with university law and social sciences departments.
- Research networks
 - ✓ Regional: the CODESRIA, which has hosted a study programme on childhood and youth since 2002, organized in the form of an annual forum. It supports essentially academic research, and not research-action. Its programme of strengthening capacities, through the annual attribution of small grants, is well respected and could serve as an attachment point;
 - ✓ International:
WorldSAFE (World Studies of Abuse in Family Environments), developed by a group of doctors and sociologists working within INCLEN (International Clinical Epidemiology Network). WorldSAFE has developed a protocol of parallel studies on domestic violence and abuse against children.
ChildWatch International, which supports a programme on child indicators, "International Society for Child Indicators".
ISPCAN (International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect), has set up a working group on child maltreatment data (ISPCAN-WGCMD) to support the establishment of permanent national systems of data collection on child maltreatment, and to promote the utilization of the data in this field.
- Technical and financial support organizations on particular child protection themes
 - ✓ WHO for mistreatment and violence against children. Its approach aims to i) develop reliable, accurate and economic measures to collect information on violence, its costs and consequences; ii) develop a typology and definitions of the different forms of violence, in relation with behavioural risks and consequences; iii) facilitate the development and adaptation of research methodologies to improve description and measurement of violence in its different forms, its determining factors and its physical, psychological and social consequences; iv) promote and provide technical support to compile local and national analyses of different forms of violence, and their comparability at international level; v) carry out community-based studies on violence in order to determine the nature and extent of interpersonal violence; and vi) ensure that the information collected is disseminated and utilized in an appropriate manner.
 - ✓ UNODC for juvenile justice. Development of indicators and manual. Possible joint projects.
 - ✓ ILO for exploitation and worst forms of child labour. Development of indicators.

Develop the available critical mass by supporting regional research

Strengthening institutional research capacities depends on research projects and surveys, and should be organized at the regional level, thereby maximizing resources, experiences and the national capacities of the different countries in the region, in order to develop an expertise and a critical mass in the field of protection, available in the region.

Consequently, UNICEF should commit itself to promoting research into child protection, in partnership with bi-lateral organizations that target this type of support, such as the Ford Foundation and the IDRC. Financing research projects, research competitions, training grants, are all necessary means to developing a critical mass on protection in the region.

The approach in this area would lie in the implementation of a peer review mechanism. To do this, UNICEF's Regional Protection Network could define child protection research themes for two to three years, recruiting a resource person to develop and carry out the project, while a Consultative Council comprising international academic experts from the region and three or four other experts from other regions would be responsible for examining the quality of research proposals before financing.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CCF	Catholic Committee against Hunger
CNARSEVT	National Commission of Reception and Social Rehabilitation of children Victims of Trafficking (Togo)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DHS	Demographic Health Surveys
FGM/C	female genital mutilation and cutting
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organization
INS	National Institute of Statistics
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISPCAN	International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
M&R 1612	Resolution 1612 on Monitoring and Reporting on serious violations of children's rights
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MRU	Mano River Union
MTSP	Medium-term strategic plan
NACROG	National Observation Group on Children's Rights
NBS	National Baseline Survey
OVC	orphans and other vulnerable children
PRSP	poverty reduction strategy paper
SAV	sexual abuse and violence
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WACP-LNP	Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberia National Police
WHO	World Health Organization

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