
21 August 2014

Dear Friends,

Over the past few years, some of our partners have been involved in an exciting child protection initiative that has just concluded. In order to share some of the key learnings that came out of the initiative, Firelight staff wrote a publication called “Protecting our Children: How African Community Organizations Strengthen Child Protection Systems”. In this edition of the Newsflash, as well as next week’s version, will share excerpts of the publication with you, and give you a link to access the full publication.

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

(Resource) Introduction and parts 1-3 of “Protecting our Children”

(Accepting Applications) WeTech Seed Fund for CSOs & Individuals working for Women + Girls in Africa

(Accepting Applications) The Elton John AIDS Foundation Pioneer Grants

(Resource) Introduction and parts 1-3 of “Protecting our Children”

INTRODUCTION:

The UN Secretary General’s study on violence against children (Pinheiro, 2006) documented the widespread abuse of children, cutting across geography, class, and cultural boundaries. The study provided a global picture of what was happening to children in their homes, in schools, in workplaces, and in the wider community. It drew attention to the types of abuse against children and the underlying causes, as well as the impact of violence on children’s development.

The key message of the study was that “violence against children is never justifiable. Nor is it inevitable. If its underlying causes are identified and addressed, violence against children is entirely preventable.”¹

In 2009, Firelight Foundation brought together a group of community-based organizations (CBOs) working across local, national, and regional levels to strengthen their linkages, create learning opportunities, and build partnerships to facilitate their role in the development and implementation of interventions, policies, and systems aimed at

preventing and responding to violence against children. That initial gathering informed the development of a three-year child protection initiative funded by the Oak Foundation. The initiative focused on building the capacity of community-based organizations in child protection and documenting how CBOs act to prevent and mitigate the abuse of children.

Through this initiative, as we documented and analyzed the work of CBOs, we learned that preventing child abuse is at its core about community development. It is about the ongoing and challenging work of building

- Strong families, with empowered and educated children
- Healthy social-emotional ties, tapping into the strengths of the family's natural support networks
- Systems that support vulnerable families at community, district, and national government levels
- Mechanisms to deal with cases of abuse, both to deter abuse and to support children's wellbeing

We also gained insights about how grassroots organizations think about child protection and where they need support. This publication summarizes some of our insights.

PART 1: What kind of child abuse issues are African CBOs addressing?

The environments where our partners operate have a high prevalence of child marriage, child labor, sexual abuse, and corporal punishment. Our partners note varying degrees of prevalence of child trafficking, child prostitution, witchcraft, and initiation. Generally, our partners note that communities openly recognize child labor, child marriage, and sexual abuse as problems.

Our partners see that the underlying causes of abuse are inter-related. Key among them are poverty, orphanhood, harmful cultural practices, household structure (i.e., who is head of household), and poor family support systems. In addition, partners note lack of policies, or in some cases lack of enforcement, as a key issue to deter perpetrators. In many cases, insufficient resources at the local government level also prevent enforcement of policies. A lack of understanding of the formal justice system and a lack of knowledge of children's rights exacerbate this problem. The issue of power is also an area of concern. Lack of power of children, mothers, or poor families can make them targets for abuse.

These are complex issues that vary by family and community. Our partners work to understand the factors that cause abuse and change the reality for children in their community.

PART 2: Systems that protect children or make children vulnerable

Local CBOs serve a unique role in a community. Initiated and led by the community, they

have a depth of understanding of the needs and assets of their community that is not available to external actors. CBOs are adept at working with the key actors in a child's life: family, community members, local institutions, and government agencies.

Family, community, national, and international systems are embedded within each other. This is represented by the Ecological Model of Child Development, which shows the layers of actors who make up the ecology of a child's life. Originally developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, ² it is a highly intuitive model. Drawing upon insights from our partners, we expanded upon this model to more closely describe the layers of care that surround children in an African context.

PART 3: Analyzing systems to design strategies for change

When CBOs face large child protection issues in their communities, on the surface the issues can seem insurmountable. By dismantling and analyzing their component parts, organizations are able to develop insights and design strategies for change.

Three components appear repeatedly in cases that partners share. The components serve as enabling factors, stumbling blocks, or catalysts for change. These include the following:

Content: The written laws, policies, and resource allocation relevant to the issue that is being addressed in child protection. Laws are typically set at the national level, but can also be framed within an international framework. They play a key role in providing standards of protection for children and delineating responsibility for protection, as well as creating the mechanisms for enforcement of the laws and policies.

Structure: The state and non-state mechanisms that exist to facilitate implementation or enforcement of the laws and policies. State mechanisms include social workers, law enforcement, and the judicial system, but also health, education, and other services provided by government. Non-state mechanisms can be formal or informal. They include community groups and the traditional system, as well as other social institutions in the community, for example, child protection committees or village development committees.

Culture: Values, attitudes, and behaviors that shape how people understand, deal with, and act on an issue. These are often held by groups and actualized within both formal and informal systems. For example, if a police officer believes that corporal punishment is acceptable, he or she might be less responsive to a case of physical beating of a child.

Each of these three components plays a critical role in creating change. If one of the components is unaddressed, it can weaken an effort or strategy to create change. For example, without national laws to protect children, it becomes difficult to convince law enforcement to act in a particular case to protect a child from abuse. In another case, a law can be in place, but because no formal structures exist to enforce the laws, the

culture and social norms dictate what happens in terms of both protecting children and responding to their abuse. Similarly, a law can be in place, but a community does not apply that law because their social or cultural norms are the rules that govern the behavior of families and communities. In many places, the traditional system operates outside the legal system. Without a process to integrate the two, the traditional system can reinforce violation of children's rights.

To be effective, an organization must understand all three components as they pertain to child protection issues. Once they analyze these components, organizations decide where they have the ability to take action, whether alone or with others. They can also make an honest assessment of what it will take to effect that change and what strategies they can use in the meantime to try to protect children even if all three components are not aligned.

Organizations need to carefully sequence their action. They may start with content, but the existence of the law or policy does not guarantee protection. The next step would focus on strengthening the structures, then a final step on addressing social norms. Shifting of social norms can happen within the same process of addressing content and building capacity of structures. Overall, we see that the process of protecting children is a long-term process. It requires multiple actors working collaboratively on multiple fronts to create change.

To download the full publication as an ebook, visit: <http://bit.ly/1sHll1k>

(Accepting Applications) WeTech Seed Fund for CSOs & Individuals working for Women + Girls in Africa

Grant Range:

- \$2,000-\$5,000 for individuals and volunteer-led or smaller organizations
- \$5,000-\$20,000 for organizations with an annual operating budget of at least \$25,000

Priority is given to projects demonstrating:

- a collaborative approach
- plans for sustained engagement with women and girls involved in initial project activities
- an innovative use of technology
- realistic plans for expansion and growth

Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicant can be from any country in the African continent.
- Applicant must be an individual working independently (minimum 18 years old), or a representative of a non-governmental organization (NGO), social enterprise or educational institution based in Africa.

- Applicant must be able to demonstrate previous experience conducting high-impact activities supporting women and girls in computer science or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields.
- Applicant must be able to demonstrate leadership potential.
- Application must be made in English language.
- Applicant must be committed to developing and contributing to a virtual community for WeTech Seed Fund grantees
- Applicant must be committed to report quarterly on their progress and also participate in and contribute to a virtual community of fellow grantees.

For more information or to apply, visit: <http://bit.ly/1qavnls>

(Accepting Applications) The Elton John AIDS Foundation Pioneer Grants

The Elton John AIDS Foundation is accepting applications from registered not-for-profit and charitable organizations in Africa, Asia, Europe, America and the Caribbean for its Pioneer Grants. The foundation aims to create an AIDS free future for everybody in this world. The foundation provides funding to programs that help to

- Alleviate the physical, emotional or financial pain of people living with, affected by or at risk of HIV/AIDS
- Continue the fight against HIV/AIDS so that no one is left behind

The Pioneer Grant supports a specific initiative focusing on an individual key population at higher risk – such as men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers and injecting drug users – within an individual country. Applications can be made for more than one year and there is no maximum/minimum figure for grant request.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicants must be a registered not-for-profit or charitable organization in one of the following countries –Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Myanmar (Burma), Nigeria, Russian Federation, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- Applicants must have focus on service delivery.
- Applicants must be catalytic in nature, scalable in design, and innovative.
- Applicants must be able to track changes such as access to condoms, HIV testing and treatment of program beneficiaries.

Note: Eligible applicants must complete and submit the online Concept Note Form within the deadline. Selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposal.

For more information or to apply, visit: <http://bit.ly/Vq4eSY>

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website:

<http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash>

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org

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