

Evaluation of Child Friendly Spaces

Summary of findings



Background

Child friendly spaces (CFS) have become a widely used approach to protect and provide psychosocial support to children in emergencies. However, little evidence documents their outcomes and impacts. Recognizing this, the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) of the Global Protection Cluster and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings have identified research in this area as a high priority.

In response to a commitment to strengthen the evidence base for humanitarian practice and the prioritisation of CFS as a key area for research, World Vision and Columbia University, working with Save the Children, UNICEF and others, engaged in a three-year collaborative project to document the outcomes and impacts of CFS and develop capacity for rigorous evaluation.

Need to strengthen the existing evidence

A systematic review of existing evidence was carried out for the project. It revealed that relatively few studies of CFS had been completed and that these were generally not designed in a robust enough manner to infer impact. Weaknesses of past studies identified by the review were addressed in the project's evaluations, particularly by:

- adopting more standardised and rigorous measurement approaches
- establishing a strong basis for inference using baseline assessments before the beginning of programmes and comparison groups to track the experience of children not accessing CFS
- ensuring participatory engagement of children in the evaluation process.

The project completed six multi-agency impact-evaluations* in five different emergency contexts: Ethiopia (with Somali refugees), Uganda (with Congolese refugees), two settings in Iraq (with Syrian refugees), Jordan (with Syrian refugees) and DRC (with internally displaced communities).

* Individual field reports are available for each evaluation as well as a summary report that brings together lessons from these inter-agency series of evaluations.

Multi-agency impact-evaluations



Quality assurance and standards help ensure greater impact

- ★ CFS that adhered to quality standards had greater impact
- ★ CFS that invested in quality assurance and monitoring were more effective

Implication: Continuing to promote quality standards and good M&E are essential to improving impact.



Challenges of operating in urban contexts

- ★ Urban environments provide more choices for children than other settings, which challenges CFS's ability to keep them engaged

- ★ Urban environments pose more complex protection risks than other settings

Implication: Innovation required to adapt and design new CFS approaches for urban settings



Greater impact with girls than boys



- ★ Stronger impacts were observed for younger girls vs. younger boys

Implication: Innovation required to develop activities that better engage boys

The impact of child friendly spaces in humanitarian emergencies

Greater impact with younger children



- ★ Greater impact was observed for younger children vs. older children

- ★ Attendance rates were higher with younger children

Implication: Innovation required to develop more engaging interventions for older children

Limited impact on community capacities



- ★ CFS did not appear to have much impact on strengthening community protection systems.

Implication: Innovation required for more effective outreach and engagement to support community protections systems

Substantial variation in impacts across settings

- ★ CFS was seen to secure substantive gains for children
- ★ This varied across settings (some big, some small)
- ★ Quality and adaptation to local circumstances were key



Implication: Adapting designs to local circumstances and quality assurance are critical factors in ensuring greater impact; more research into other factors is required.

Positive impacts overall

CFS has the potential for positive, albeit modest, impact on the lives of children and their families, particularly with regard to psychosocial well-being and protection.

Tools and guidance for monitoring and evaluating CFS

In-depth lessons learned, practical guidance, and tools, from the evaluations are available in a companion document to this report entitled *Tools and guidance for monitoring and evaluating CFS*.

Project publications

Ager, A., J., Metzler, M. Vojta and K. Savage, (2013). *Child Friendly Spaces: A Systematic Review of the Current Evidence-Base on Outcomes and Impact*. Intervention 11(2): 133–47.

Eyber, C., K. Bermudez, M. Vojta, K. Savage. and G. Bengheya, (2014). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Child Friendly Spaces in IDP Camps in Eastern DRC: Goma Field Study Summary Report. World Vision and Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh.

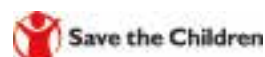
Lilley, S., A. Atrooshi, J. Metzler and A. Ager, (2014). *Evaluation of Child Friendly Spaces: Iraq Field Study Report – A Save the Children Implemented CFS in Domiz Refugee Camp*. World Vision International, Save the Children and Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

Metzler, J., A. Atrooshi, E. Khudeda, D. Ali and A. Ager., (2014). *Evaluation of Child Friendly Spaces: Iraq Field Study Report – A MoLSA-Implemented CFS in Domiz Refugee Camp*. World Vision International and Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

Metzler, J., M. Ishaq, S. Hermosilla, E. Mumba and A. Ager., (2015). *Jordan Field Study Report: A CFS Implemented by World Vision and Partners in Zarqa, Jordan*. World Vision and Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

Metzler, J., R. Kaijuka, M. Vojta, K. Savage, M. Yamano, A. Schafer, G. Yu, G. Ebulu and A. Ager., (2013). *Evaluation of Child Friendly Spaces: Uganda Field Study Summary Report*. World Vision International & Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

Metzler, J., K. Savage, M. Vojta, M. Yamano, A. Schafer and A. Ager, (2013). *Evaluation of Child Friendly Spaces: Ethiopia Field Study Summary Report*. World Vision International & Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.



Contacts

Professor Alastair Ager

Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University, New York
aa2468@columbia.edu

Kevin Savage

Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs
World Vision International, Geneva
kevin_savage@wvi.org

For more information please visit: www.wvi.org/global-engagement/article/child-friendly-spaces-research-collaboration