

What Are We Learning About Community- Based Child Protection Mechanisms?

Washington Network on
Children and Armed Conflict
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Spirit of the Study

- Urgent, systemic issues require systemic, large scale response using proven approaches
- Paradigm shift—era of child protection systems
- Important moment to reflect & take stock of what we are learning as a global child protection community
- Emphasis on unanswered questions, key challenges and gaps, mutual learning
- Beginning of a longer-term process of field learning and improving practice
- Phase 2 research & field learning



Inter-Agency Team

- Reference Group oversight
 - Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), USAID
 - Oak Foundation
 - PULIH
 - International Save the Children Alliance;
 - UNICEF ESARO, WCARO, HQ
 - World Vision
- Save the Children UK management
- Consultant team



Rationale for Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms

- Widespread child protection issues in emergency, transition, and development contexts
- Inability or unwillingness of governments to protect children
- Low cost means of supporting large numbers of children
- Engaging community resources, values, and supports
- Key element in national child protection systems
- Developing contextually appropriate, sustainable supports



Why This Review?

- Child Protection Committees as a ‘reflex’
- Lack of a strong evidence base—which approaches are most effective, how can we achieve sustainable results, what are the unintended consequences of CPCs?
- Strong evidence is needed to:
 - improve the quality of practice
 - raise appropriate levels of funding
 - influence policy leaders



Objectives

- Provide a broad mapping of scale and coverage of community-based child protection groups...
- Document common models and approaches..
- Document common roles, responsibilities and key activities of community groups; Assess the strength and quality of the evidence base...
- Synthesize the available global evidence on the impact and effectiveness of community based child protection groups...
- Provide a broad review of lessons on community mobilization which can be drawn from other sectors, in particular health and HIV and AIDS
- Inform the second phase field-based research...

Methodology

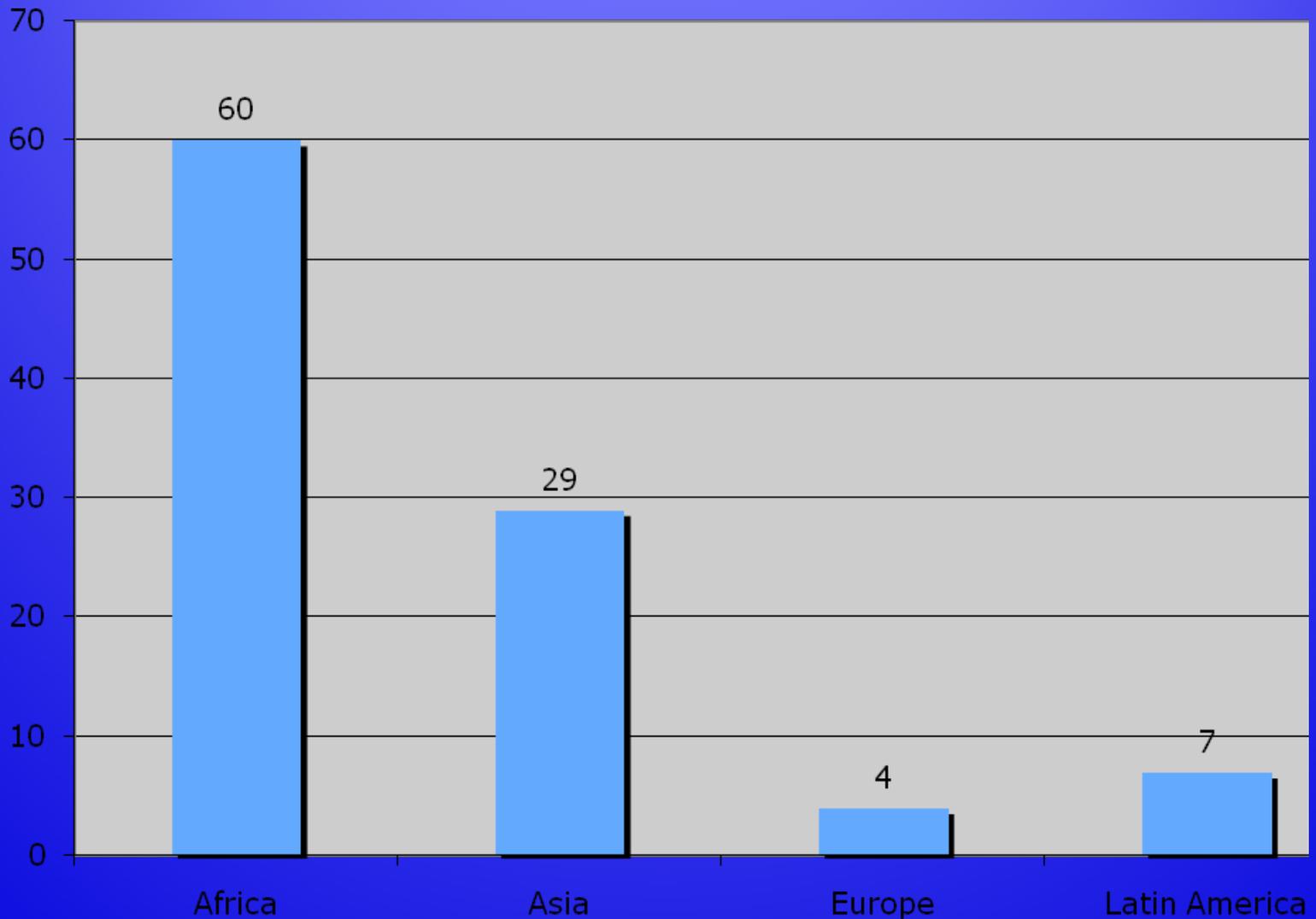
- Document collection—Reference Group and outreach to diverse agencies, regions
- Selection of documents—inclusion criteria & broad approach
 - groups at community & district level--not national level
 - groups focused on children's protection issues
 - groups whose role consists of caring for and protecting children, and supporting broader well-being outcomes for children—including multi-purpose groups
 - community-based child protection approaches that involve 1 or 2 community volunteers (e.g., GBV focal points)..
- Search of social science literature via EBSCO data base

The Document Set

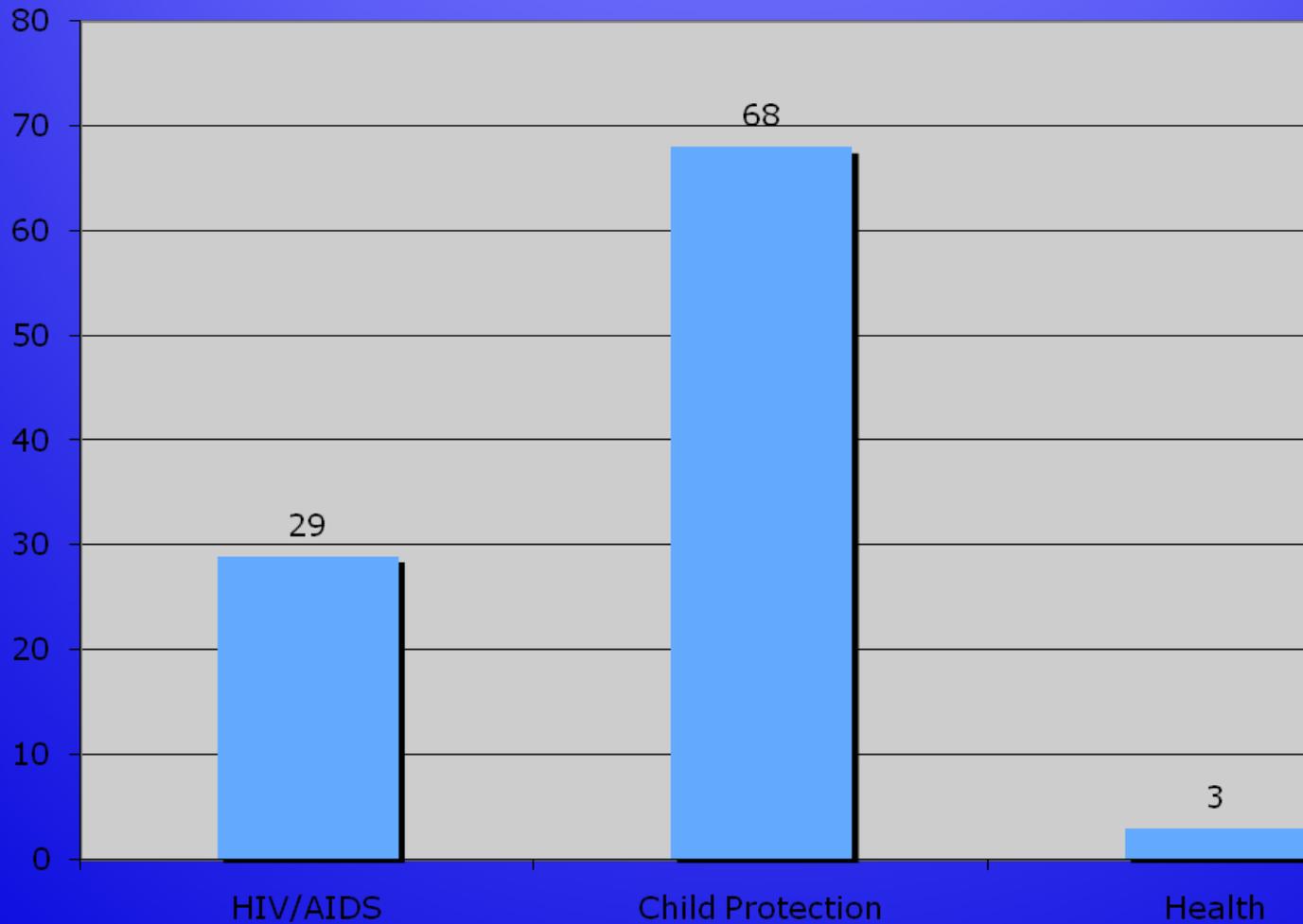
- 265 candidate documents were received—95% in English
- 105 did not meet inclusion criteria
- 160 documents were reviewed
- Desk review of 160 documents worldwide
 - primary review set: 130 grey literature evaluations—emergency, transition, development (English (117), Spanish (8), French (5))
 - 26 published social science papers
 - 4 reviews from the health sector



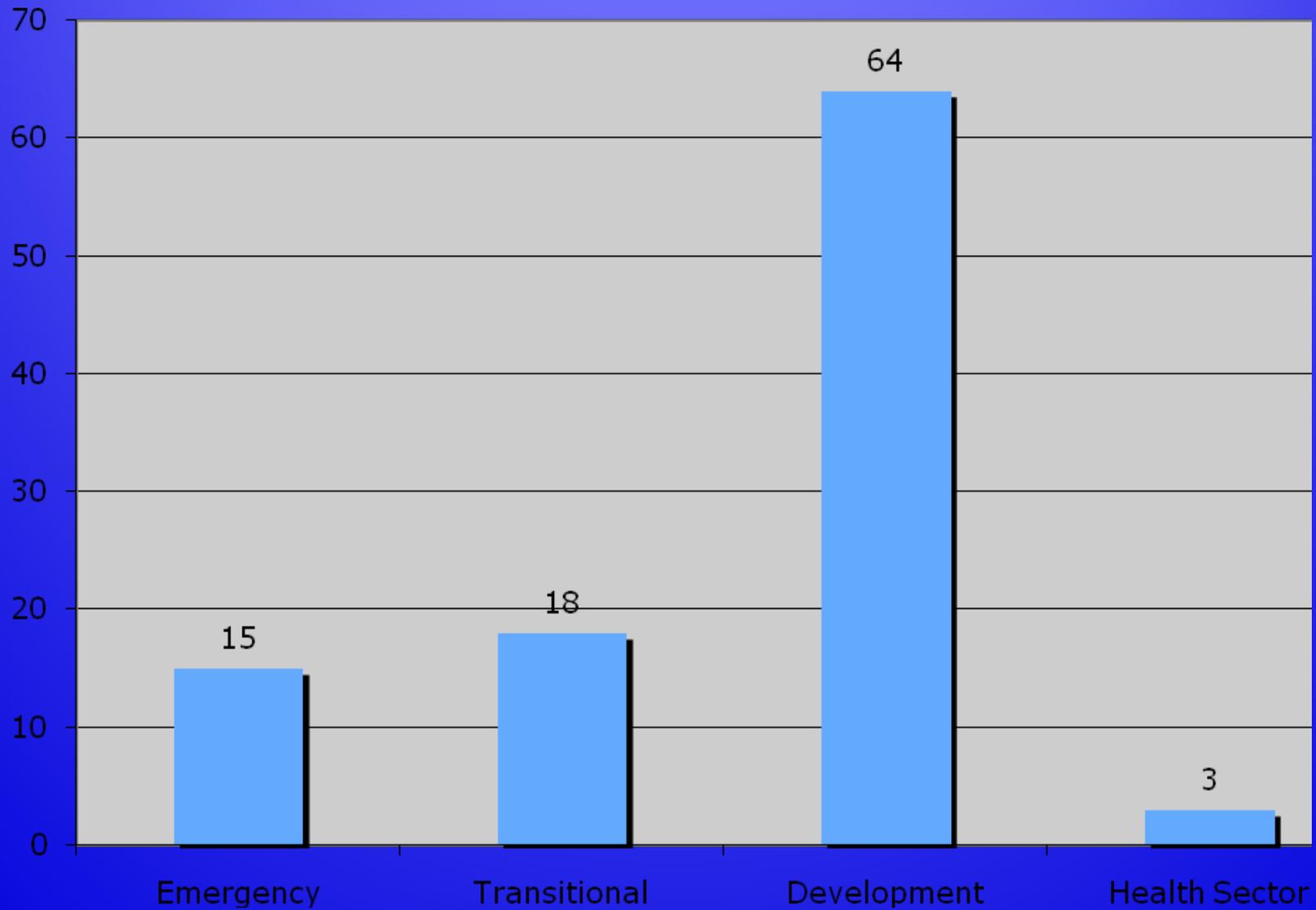
Percent of Documents by Region



Percent of Documents by Technical Focus



Percentage of Documents by Context



Document Review

- Matrix summary & analysis
 - document description
 - description & analysis of community-based child protection group (formation process, selection, functions/roles, resourcing, linkages)
 - evaluation methodology
 - key findings/lessons
 - comments
- Cross-checking, reflection, dialogue, and revision if needed



Typology of Community Engagement Approaches

- **Category 1:** Direct implementation by agency: The agency is a service provider; community members are beneficiaries.
- **Category 2:** Community involvement in agency initiative: The agency is a promoter of its own initiative, a planner and a trainer, and community members are volunteers and beneficiaries.
- **Category 3:** Community owned and managed activities mobilized by external agency: The agency is a catalyst, capacity builder, a facilitator of linkages, and a funder after community ownership has developed. The community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and also beneficiaries.
- **Category 4:** Community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community: The agency is a capacity builder and funder, and community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and also beneficiaries.

Analysis and Synthesis

- Plans for meta-analysis were infeasible
- Inductive approach—identification of recurrent themes, areas of convergence and divergence
- Development and ‘mining’ of working hypotheses (e.g., ‘Community owned action to support vulnerable children is more likely to be sustainable than actions directed and conducted by outside agencies.’)
- Attention to possible biases—reflection, dialogue and cross-checking

Development of Suggestions for Phase 2

- Identification of key issues, gaps, questions
- Scanning for programs and contexts that are ‘ripe’ for further learning/research
- Telephone follow-up discussions with selection programs
- Not comprehensive—additional inputs from Reference Group and Nairobi meeting

Limitations

- Difficult to draw firm conclusions about causation in fluid contexts with many political and economic changes
- Emphasis on externally initiated or supported groups
- Difficult to isolate the specific effects of a community-based child protection group
- Geography and language gap—limited input from Latin America
- Limited time frame
- Challenges of definition—what is ‘community’, ‘child protection’, ‘formal protection system’?
- Yet a group of useful findings emerged consistently across agencies, regions, evaluators
- Key lessons are provisional yet include:

Key Findings—Summary

- The base of evidence in this field is very weak.
- Child focused groups are a highly diverse, adaptable, scalable, and replicable approach to child protection in different contexts.
- When implemented well, child focused groups are effective means of protecting children.
- Sustainability is a significant challenge and depends primarily on the level of community ownership of and responsibility for child focused groups.

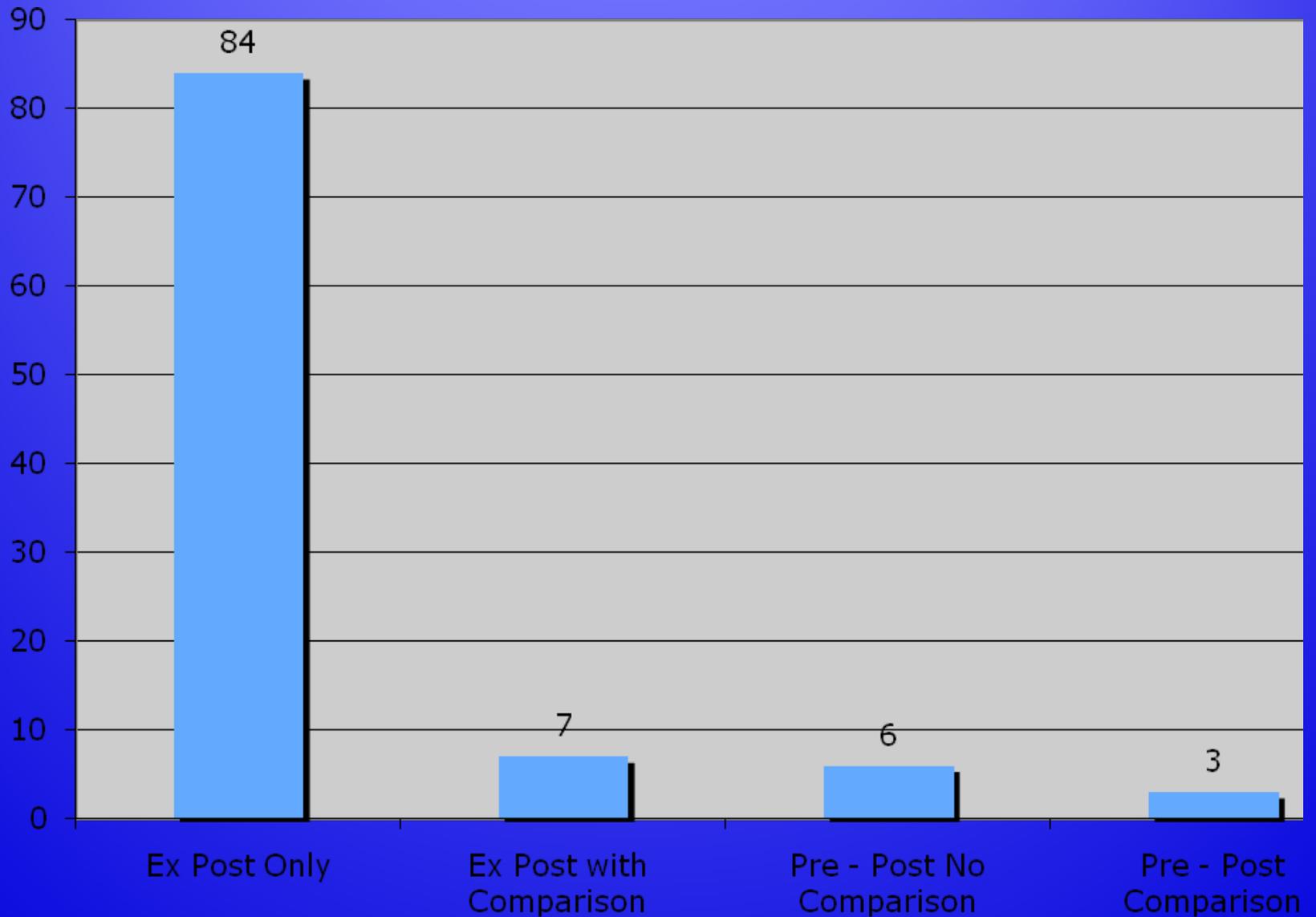


Key Finding 1:

A Very Weak Evidence Base

- Most evaluations included no baseline measurements.
- Measures of actual outcomes for children were rare.
- Few measures of household and family well-being were used.
- Quantitative data were typically for output or process indicators.
- Qualitative data were typically collected on convenience samples.
- Methods of analyzing data were seldom described.
- Many of the interviews and focus group discussions that comprised the bulk of the evidence were subject to numerous biases which evaluators seldom mentioned.

Percentage of Papers by Evaluation Method



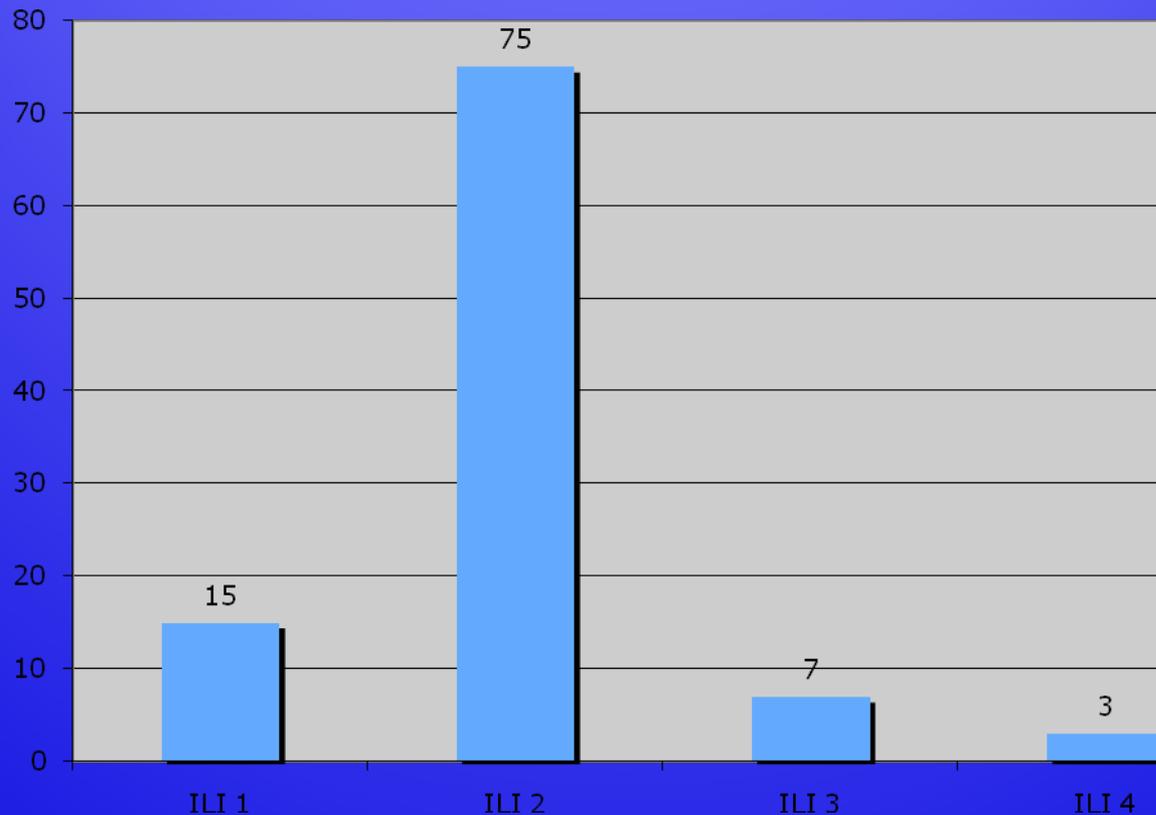
2. Forms and Functions

- Composition
 - 10-20 participants, usually community selected men and women
 - some included children, particularly teenagers
 - diversity & representation of different sub-groups
- Child Rights Committees vs. Child Protection Committees
 - broader rights vs. protection rights
 - different emphases on monitoring, reporting, & advocacy vs. direct response (mediation, problem-solving, support for survivors, development of local solutions)
- Broad spectrum groups: addressed a wide array of child protection and well-being issues
- Focused groups: organized around particular issue or set of issues such as trafficking, labor, HIV and AIDS

3. Seven Factors Contributed to the Effectiveness and Sustainability of Community-Based Child Focused Groups

- Community ownership and responsibility
- Incorporating and building on existing resources
- Leaders' support
- Genuine child participation
- Ongoing management of issues of power, diversity, inclusivity
- Resourcing—ongoing training/capacity building, material support
- Linkages—engagement with formal and nonformal, traditional systems

4. Determinants of Ownership— Approach to Community Engagement



Factors That Promote or Limit Community Ownership

- Promote

- A sense of collective responsibility
- Patient cultivation
- Skill in facilitation
- Identity
- Mobilization of community resources

- Limit

- Early introduction of large sums of money
- Agency oriented engagement with community
- Didactic, top-down approaches
- Failure to build on local ideas and resources

5. Tradeoff Between Level of Ownership and Scope of Child Protection Work

- Community owned approaches did not address the most difficult, sensitive issues such as GBV and family violence
- Virtually all of the broad spectrum groups had a Category 2 approach to community engagement.
- Some evidence suggested that groups that had begun with a focused approach could expand their scope of work over time.



Additional Key Findings

- Levels of child participation were low to moderate, yet child perspectives and creativity contributed to effectiveness
- Too little is done typically to manage issues of power, diversity, and inclusivity
- Child rights are often introduced to communities using a top-down, didactic approach that is ineffective and elicits backlash
- Ongoing capacity building is an issue—too little follow-up and mentoring after initial training(s)
- The evidence regarding the use of stipends is mixed and highly contextual
- Effective linkage of community-based groups with formal systems of child protection boosts the effectiveness and scale of response yet may reduce the sense of community ownership
- In many contexts, child focused groups begun during emergencies do not continue into the early recovery and development phases, nor do the outcomes achieved continue beyond the end of the funded period

Gaps

- Gender-based violence
- Family violence
- Protection of very young children
- Psychosocial support
- Working to change attitudes and practices on sensitive issues through a slow process of dialogue, problem-solving, and internally guided change



Do No Harm Issues

- Confidentiality
- Raised expectations
- Restricting children's freedom of movement
- Excessive targeting—jealousies
- Perverse incentives
- Patronage and reinforcement of local power structures
- Imposition of outsider approaches
- Creation of parallel systems
- Duplication, marginalization, and undermining of existing supports
- Failure to feed information back to communities



Challenges

- Make it a social norm to conduct regular, systematic evaluations and use the results to strengthen practice
- Enable child-focused groups to fulfill appropriate roles and responsibilities
- Produce sustainable, positive outcomes on a broad spectrum of child protection issues
- Take a dialogue oriented, respectful approach to child protection at community level
- Facilitate community ownership of child-focused groups even in emergencies
- Change donor practices in regard to the duration, amount, structure, and orientation of funding for child focused groups

Implications for Phase 2

- How can we begin building community ownership and sustainability even during emergencies?
- How can we build synergies between community-based groups and national child protection systems?
- What measures of child, family, and community outcomes are most appropriate—how can we raise the standard of evidence?
- What practices, mechanisms, resources, etc. do communities have that support children's protection and well-being and how can programs build more effectively on these?
- How can we address effectively the most sensitive child protection issues, even during emergencies?
- How can we collaborate to strengthen child protection at all levels?