

**CHINA**  
**Child Protection**  
**Country Specific Thematic Report**  
**January – December 2018**



Children's activity in a UNICEF-supported child-friendly space, Qianfo CFS, Sichuan Province ©  
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## Strategic Context of 2018

Violence against children cuts across age, sex, race, religion and class, and many children experience violence routinely in everyday settings – within their families, in communities, in institutions, in schools, and increasingly online. Studies have established that violence not only has an immediate and negative impact on children's physical health and education, but more importantly, it has long-lasting effects on their social and emotional development. As well as preventing children who experience violence from reaching their full potential, violence has far-reaching consequences and costs for society. For example, research commissioned by UNICEF found that violence against children is costing countries in East Asia and the Pacific around US\$209 billion/year, equivalent to 2 per cent of the region's GDP, with the percentage of GDP lost due to violence against children being highest in upper-middle income countries, at 3.45 per cent.

A meta-analysis of 68 studies on child maltreatment in China undertaken in 2015 found that an estimated 26.6 per cent of children aged 0–17 suffered from physical abuse, 19.6 per cent experienced emotional abuse, 8.7 per cent were subjected to sexual abuse, and 26 per cent suffered from neglect.

Yet, a lack of nationally representative data makes it difficult to determine the scale of the problem and is one of the key barriers to making significant investments in developing a comprehensive and integrated child protection system. UNICEF is, therefore, working with the Government to strengthen data collection and analysis through a Violence against Children Survey. The survey will start in one province as a first step towards a national survey that could generate authoritative national data on internationally comparable household-based estimates that demonstrate the prevalence of violence against children in China. This type of national survey will also contribute to measuring progress against target 16.2 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from a lack of data, the main challenges identified in protecting children from all forms of violence in China include:

- Traditional norms dictate that what happens in the home is a family matter, and harsh disciplining of children is largely tolerated by the public. These social norms and traditional views towards violence prevent people from recognizing abusive practices, and make even professionals reluctant to report abuse. This hinders interventions by government authorities to prevent and respond to violence and to punish perpetrators.
- Although child maltreatment is prohibited under the law, laws and policies lack practical enforcement and implementation measures, leading to varying interpretations and practices, so that most children who experience violence do not receive the appropriate response they require and are entitled to.
- Current public spending on preventing and responding to violence against children remains very low. There are limited systematic, regular and sustainable social services and protective measures to address child protection risks and issues. In addition, the number of qualified professionals to deliver such services is also limited.
- There is a lack of coordination and clear mandates between central and local authority departments engaged in child protection to prevent and respond to violence against children, with no organization holding primary authority for child protection.

In the last few years, the Government has adopted a number of important laws and policies and introduced reforms in service provision to address gaps in its nascent child protection system. In particular, the Family Violence Law, adopted at the end of 2015 and coming into force in March 2016, recognizes that violence is no longer a family matter but a public issue that requires government action. It emphasizes the importance of prevention and provides special protection for children, including explicitly highlighting that parents or caregivers should educate their children through non-violent means. Moreover, it requires mandatory reporting on violence against children for all staff and officials in schools, kindergartens, medical institutions, residents' committees, village committees, social work

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<sup>1</sup> Target 16.2 states "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children".

service agencies, assistance and management institutions and welfare institutions. Additionally, in its definition of vulnerable children, the State Council's Opinions on Strengthening Protection for Vulnerable Children, issued in June 2016, includes children who are abused or harmed by perpetrators due to inadequate or improper family guardianship. The Opinions spell out the actions needed to prevent violence and respond to children who are vulnerable, and the need to establish a three-level network covering county/district, township/street office and village/neighbourhood committee, as well as a multi-sectoral collaboration mechanism.

Significant progress has been made in the development and implementation of policies on the care and protection of children left-behind by parents who have migrated.<sup>2</sup> Through the establishment of an administrative database on children left-behind in rural areas, children living on their own have been identified, and subsequent actions are being taken to place these children in the care of adults. The Government has also increased its role in providing protective services for children, particularly in relation to child guardianship. To this effect, the Government has been working on transforming street children protection centres across 31 provinces into child protection centres that provide both prevention and response services to vulnerable children, down to the village and community levels. Some investments have also been made in community-based child protection and welfare services through the recruitment of village-level para-social workers and setting up of children's places. The services provided range from identifying children in need of services and supporting them in seeking services, to raising community awareness on child protection and welfare, including through training on parenting skills.

Although these initiatives have been instrumental in laying a foundation for building a child protection system in China, much room and demand for improvement remain. This includes focusing on and allocating resources to preventing violence against children in the first place, for example through raising awareness among parents and community members to protect children from violence, encouraging positive parenting skills and enhancing the demand for protection services when needed. Another area is ensuring early identification of children at risk as well as children who have already experienced violence, by establishing clear protocols for handling violence against children that clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of health, education, social work and other professionals who are in contact with children; and effective detection, reporting, assessment and response to abuse and neglect of children, while guaranteeing the inclusion of the most vulnerable children.

Other measures include further substantiating laws and policies; boosting dedicated public funding to child protection and welfare services to ensure their availability and quality across the country; improving coordination and collaboration among central and local authority sectors and designating one entity with primary authority for child protection; and strengthening professional standards and capacity building for a wide range of professionals, such as in health, education, social work, the police and the judiciary. Meanwhile, there remains a need to further the collection of specific and precise data, in particular, nationally representative data, and conduct in-depth primary research on the different forms of violence against children, to better understand the scale, the root causes that sustain and perpetuate violence against children, and the effectiveness of intervention measures. This in turn will support advocacy to influence government decisions on critical investment in child protection.

Finally, child protection also extends to the online world. The Internet is a tool that can be used for good or for evil. It is undeniable that it has a dark side, especially for children. The UNICEF study, *Perils and Possibilities: Growing up online*<sup>3</sup> shows that globally, 8 out of 10 18-year-olds believe young people are in danger of being sexually abused or taken advantage of online, and more than 5 out of 10 think friends participate in risky behaviours while using the Internet. In China, in a 2016 online survey conducted by Tencent, 57.4 per cent of children admitted to have had contact with pornographic or improper information online; 23 per cent had been bullied online; and 61 per cent had been victims of cyber fraud. Despite these surveys, information about online behaviour remains limited, so there is a need to generate a strong evidence base that could inform the development of a regulatory framework for child online protection in China and raise awareness of the issue.

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<sup>2</sup> Over 103 million children – approximately 4 out of every 10 – are affected by migration in China. Of these, close to 69 million children are left behind by their migrating parents, 41 million of whom live in rural areas.

<sup>3</sup> This study is based on an international opinion poll of more than 10,000 18-year-olds from 25 countries, revealing young people's perspectives on the risks they face growing up in an increasingly connected world.

In recent years, issues of online child sexual abuse (including child pornography), cyberbullying, disclosure of privacy, as well as the proliferation of undesirable content, have frequently made headlines in China, and made children's online safety a major concern. In addition, the extent to which children's reliance on digital technology affects their well-being, and how digital technology may affect their brains and cognitive development, have become hot topics for policymakers, parents and the industry, as well as society at large. Despite a recent increase in public awareness on child online protection, the relevant policy and legal frameworks in China still lag behind when compared with international standards. In addition, empirical research in this field in China remains limited, with most of the existing research focused on 'online addiction', which is itself a controversial term.

## Results Achieved in the Sector

This section outlines how UNICEF has been contributing to the Strategic Plan's goal on 'Every child is protected from violence and exploitation' in China.

In 2018, UNICEF worked with the Government to create a safe and responsive environment that protects children from violence and exploitation. With 4 out of every 10 children in China directly affected by migration, and 69 million children left-behind, there is a need to improve laws, services and systems to protect these children from the multiple vulnerabilities they face.

To improve the enabling environment, UNICEF is involved in the drafting and early consultation stage of the revision of the Law on Protection of Minors. This will continue, with UNICEF being requested to provide technical support as the drafting process proceeds. UNICEF also provided comments to the drafting of the Regulation on Online Protection of Minors, including via think tanks. As further deliberations ensue, and at the request of the regulatory body, UNICEF continues to provide technical support to this important legislation, with a focus on online child sexual abuse.

UNICEF supported the Government to implement national policies that promote children's rights. As part of its assistance in implementing national policies for children left-behind and vulnerable children, UNICEF helped the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) establish and expand a national database of children left-behind by migrating parents, and vulnerable children. As of December 2018, all rural villages across the country registered children left-behind, and all rural and urban communities registered vulnerable children. Based on this database, MCA launched a national plan of action, Joint Efforts to Ensure Guardianship and Company for Sound Development, which required all village committees nationwide to register children left-behind and closely monitor guardianship arrangements, so that children are living under adult guardianship. In 2018, this resulted in: 76,000 registered children left-behind benefiting from improved parenting in cases where one parent remained, and placement with a family in cases where both parents had migrated; the return to school of 160,000 children who had dropped out; and 180,000 children having their *hukou* (household registration) registered.

MCA further expanded the database to add child directors (responsible for the initial assessment of vulnerable children, referring them/their caregivers to social welfare benefits, and reporting cases of children in need) at the community level; and child supervisors (responsible for consolidating data on vulnerable children and ensuring that children who are entitled have access to social welfare benefits and services) at the township level. This has enabled Civil Affairs bureaus at national, provincial and county levels to have an overview of the recruitment of these para-social workers.

To improve the quality and delivery of professional services at the community level, UNICEF supported an MCA pilot on social work for children. Social workers were trained and technical guidance provided in five provinces to explore more approaches to social work support for marginalized children in rural areas, where social work professionals and resources are scarce. This includes government purchasing services from local social work agencies, and pairing these agencies with established social work organizations or social work departments at universities for mentoring and supervision. The pilot aims to incorporate a child safeguarding policy into the management of all organizations that work with and for children.

UNICEF's support to the Barefoot Social Worker (BFSW) model continued to assist vulnerable children and their families to access child welfare services. BFSWs bridge the gap between children and their families, county Civil Affairs bureaus and the various agencies providing services to children, including

through assisting with *hukou* registration, access to social assistance (*dibao*, medical and educational subsidies) and vocational training opportunities. The model has been scaled up in 750 villages by other international/national organizations, and informed a national roll-out of 'BFSW-like' child directors in over 500,000 villages and 30,000 townships with UNICEF's technical and advocacy support. These child directors serve as the frontline of the Chinese child welfare and protection service supervision system, and scale-up stands to benefit around 250 million children.

UNICEF worked with the All-China Women's Federation to model an integrated multi-sectoral approach to child protection in 65 communities in three provinces with a high percentage of children left-behind by migrant parents. The approach consists of three levels of intervention (village, township and county), covering three levels of services: primary, comprising prevention services for all children and public awareness campaigning; secondary, including identification and early detection of vulnerable children and families; and tertiary, including intensive family support services and referral to intervention services. This enabled women's cadres at the village level to pilot community-based mechanisms to deliver child protection services, which aim to prevent harm from occurring, including tackling factors such as poverty, being left-behind by migrating parents, parental substance abuse, lack of support for young, single-parent families, a history of mental health problems and family violence.

Key results in 2018 included TV and social media campaigns on family safety, violence within the family and violence against children in the 65 project communities, with a potential coverage of 2.7 million people. In addition: life-skills safety education was provided to 6,550 children; 1,513 officials from various sectors were trained on child protection issues, including teachers, health workers, civil affairs officers, community leaders, police officers, women's cadres, hotline case workers, and parents and children; and, 8,484 children (4,530 boys, 3,954 girls) in 65 villages were assessed and registered as vulnerable by village committees.

To improve systems and capacities to deliver quality services, UNICEF and the National Working Committee on Children and Women supported the operationalization of four provincial technical support hubs (TSHs) in Chongqing, Guangxi, Hunan and Shaanxi, each supporting 30 child-friendly spaces (CFSs). The hubs comprise multidisciplinary experts who ensure quality service delivery in 120 CFSs through monitoring and capacity development. Each CFS provides a space for children to play, learn, develop and be protected. The National Plan of Action for Children has a goal to establish 'children's places' – which mimic CFSs – in 90 per cent of all urban and rural communities by 2020. The TSHs, as part of UNICEF's strategic support to assist CFSs in improving the quality and coverage of services during scale-up, started to demonstrate positive effects and have the potential for replication. There is increasing government ownership at local levels. Authorities in at least four non-pilot sites have started to adopt the model locally and the local government in one pilot site has made children's places a key public service, with matching government funding.

The multilevel technical support structure (national – provincial – county/district) is crucial for the nationwide scale-up of children's places. All four TSHs are in western and central provinces with high numbers of children left-behind, children from ethnic minorities, and children living in poverty and facing income inequality. The interventions of the CFSs supported by them focus on the most disadvantaged children and their families, including through outreach activities and home visits to identify those at high risk and build a community-based child protection mechanism to serve them. The CFSs are open to all boys and girls aged 0–18 living in the community, regardless of the location of their *hukou*.

A fifth hub in Sichuan, supporting four CFSs with a specific focus on child-centred disaster risk reduction (DRR), contributed to improved resilience of children, parents and community members in four sites. UNICEF also contributed to a more child-centred, multi-sectoral DRR approach in local policy development that puts the rights of vulnerable children and families first. Recognized by the National Working Committee on Children and Women, the model will be introduced to other disaster-prone areas.

Using evidence and field experience from CFS work, the updated version of the Working Manual for Children's Places was finalized in 2018 with UNICEF's support. It includes improved guidance and tools on how to operate and manage children's places, and DRR-related content that will help build children's resilience. The Manual is a key document to ensure the quality of service provision in all children's places.

## Financial Analysis

### 1. Expenditure by result area

EXPENDITURE BY RESULT AREA	AMOUNT
Other Resources - Emergency	109,830
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	109,830
Other Resources - Regular	4,910,595
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	4,821,737
23-03 Access to justice	88,858
Regular Resources	1,916,885
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	1,737,487
23-03 Access to justice	179,398
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,937,310</b>

### 2. Expenditure by thematic area

THEMATIC EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT
<b><i>Other Resources – Emergency</i></b>	<b><i>109,830</i></b>
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	109,830
<b><i>Other Resources – Regular</i></b>	<b><i>32,795</i></b>
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	32,795
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>142,625</b>

*Note: This report is for funds received in 2017. No thematic funds were received in 2018.*

### 3. Expenditure by SIC

EXPENDITURE BY SIC	AMOUNT
23-01-01 Legal and policy framework related to violence, exploitation and abuse	51,249
23-01-04 Psycho-social support in emergencies	216,690
23-01-05 Social welfare workforce systems strengthening (accreditation, staffing and supervision)	1,658,350
23-01-06 Public finance management for child protection	1,556,338
23-01-07 Administrative data and Information Management System (IMS) including CPIMS+, GBVIMS+, MRMIMS+	40,832
23-01-13 Child Protection - Emergency Preparedness	302,182
23-01-14 Parent/caregiver education and programmes on violence, exploitation and abuse - across the life cycle	4,462



<b>EXPENDITURE BY SIC</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
23-01-17 Social and behaviour change communication on violence, exploitation and abuse	85,044
23-01-18 Child protection focused on care and support for children with disabilities	1,320
23-01-19 Violence, exploitation, and abuse - surveys (e.g. KAP, VACS), data analysis/research/evaluation evidence generation, synthesis, and use	69,273
23-01-21 Child road traffic injuries prevention	429,175
23-01-22 Inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration on violence, exploitation and abuse	44,534
23-01-24 Violence, exploitation, and abuse - planning, co-ordination and programme monitoring	24,316
23-01-99 Technical assistance - Prevention and response services for violence against children	1,087,316
23-03-01 Promoting diversion and alternatives to deprivation of liberty	103,711
23-03-02 Justice sector workforce strengthening and capacity building (including police)	76,189
23-03-05 Alternative care reform and service provision	15,647
23-03-99 Technical assistance - Access to justice	5,849
26-01-01 Country programme process (including UNDAF planning and CCA)	444,957
26-02-01 Situation Analysis or Update on women and children	2,167
26-02-04 Stimulating demand for and capacity to use data	26
26-02-05 Administrative data, registers and non-MICS household surveys and censuses	2,590
26-03-01 Advocacy and partnership-building for social behaviour change	6,773
26-03-99 Technical assistance - Cross - sectoral communication for development	121,615
26-04-01 CO/RO Supply - technical assistance and collaboration in supply chain, procurement of goods and services, and logistics	67,133
26-05-10 Research innovation learning, uptake and partnerships for research	6,619
26-06-02 Innovation activities	348
26-06-04 Leading advocate	13,043
26-06-05 Leading voice	62,354
26-06-06 Supporter engagement	140,468
26-06-07 Leading brand	8,225
26-06-08 Emergency preparedness (cross-sectoral)	419
26-07-01 Operations support to programme delivery	143,300



<b>EXPENDITURE BY SIC</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
27-01-06 HQ and RO technical support to multiple Goal Areas	710
28-07-04 Management and Operations support at CO	5,256
30-01-02 Pledge campaign houselist	-
30-01-04 Cash campaign acquisition	201
30-01-13 CO/RSC other non-staff indirect	2
30-02-08 Pledge - Staff	
Unknown	138,485
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,937,170</b>

## Expression of Thanks

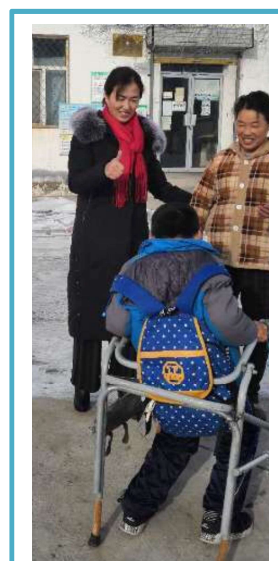
UNICEF China would like to express its sincere gratitude to the United States Fund for UNICEF for its generous support to ensure that children in China are protected from violence and exploitation. The flexibility of thematic funds has allowed UNICEF to be more agile in harnessing momentum for action and responding to challenges faced by children, by designing and implementing pilots that eventually lead to results at scale; generating evidence to influence change in policies and improve their implementation down to the village level; improving national capacity for sustainable change; and building coalitions of supporters and advocating for change at all levels.

## Annex 1. Human Interest Stories

Born in 2008, Daer was six months old when he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Although his parents were able to raise funds for his first round of surgery, they could not afford to pay for follow-up treatment. Daer needed health care but his parents did not know how they could get the help he needed.

In 2010, the Barefoot Social Worker programme was launched and Daer's village was selected as one of the programme's pilot sites, and a children's place was soon set up. Qi, a former elementary school teacher, was selected to be one of the barefoot social workers.

While visiting families in the village, Qi came across Daer and his family. She tried to help them by reporting Daer's problems to the County Civil Affairs Bureau, and asked them to issue a *dibao* (minimum living allowance) for Daer. She also helped Daer's parents to look for funding to pay for his operations, and regularly visited the family, offering emotional support and encouraging Daer to adhere to his treatment regimens. Qi even personally assisted with Daer's rehabilitation exercises. As Daer's condition improved, Qi worked on including Daer in group activities at the children's place as often as she could. Today, after years of support, Daer is able to walk independently and is now going to school. Daer's mother often shares their experience with others and helps Qi run some of the activities in the children's place.



Daer's mother meets him  
after his day at school  
with Qi

Daer is only one of the children Qi has helped during her career as a barefoot social worker. There are 416 children in Qi's village and she has visited every single one of them. She has helped six children with their household registration and to obtain their *dibao*, successfully encouraged two children to enrol in school, and persuaded six more to go back to school. She regularly visits five children whose parents have migrated for work, and helps poor households apply for a housing grant. She also runs the children's place and organizes games for children and families during weekends and holidays. Through Qi's efforts, fewer children have dropped out of school and underage teenagers no longer leave the village for work. As a result, the village community has been brought closer together.

"I was hoping to help families in need in my village, but I didn't know how", says Qi. "Becoming a barefoot social worker was like opening a brand-new window for me. I was formally trained and now I know a lot about child welfare policies and I can contact children experts for help anytime."

## Annex 2. Donor Report Feedback Form

UNICEF is working to improve the quality of our reports and would highly appreciate your feedback via this online form ([link](#)). Thank you!