

# End of Project External Evaluation Supporting the Protection and Empowerment of **Afghan Children**

(SPEAC – II)



SUBMITTED BY:  
GREAT DEAMS CONSULTING (PRIVATE LTD)  
TO: WAR CHILD CANADA

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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>CBCPM</b>	Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DRL</b>	Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>FGD</b>	Focused Group Discussion
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>IDI</b>	In-Depth Interview
<b>IP</b>	Implementing partner
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PSAE</b>	Preventing Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
<b>SMS</b>	School Management Shura
<b>SPEAC</b>	Supporting the Protection and Empowerment of Afghan Children
<b>SRSR</b>	Special Rapporteur to the Secretary General
<b>TIP</b>	Trafficking in Persons
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>VAC</b>	Violence Against Children

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2019, War Child Canada received funding for the second phase of the project titled “Supporting and Promoting the Empowerment of Afghan Children” (SPEAC) aiming to *Build the capacity of justice and law enforcement actors to proactively address acts of impunity by security forces in Afghanistan, specifically by enforcing laws that criminalize bacha baazi*. The **SPEAC Phase II project was executed from September 2019 to January 2023 (which included a no cost extension)**. It was impacted by two main elements: the COVID-19 pandemic and the major political shift of August 2021. The project’s original three key objectives were:

- (1) Increased enforcement of existing national child protection laws and focus on the implementation of the 2018 Penal Code by justice and law enforcement officials;
- (2) Afghan national and sub-national authorities promote the active prosecution of perpetrators of *bacha baazi* increased support services for survivors;
- (3) Afghan civil society support community engagement and advocacy of Community Based Child protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs), youth activists, CDCs think tanks and academia to be agents of change for policies and practices of trafficking-in-person including *bacha baazi*.

Post August 2021, there was a need to modify objective 3 due to the dramatic changes in the security and political situation across Afghanistan. The project’s key objectives became:

- (1) Increased enforcement of existing national child protection laws and focus on the implementation of the 2018 Penal Code by justice and law enforcement officials;
- (2) Afghan government, civil society activists, and local communities establish protection measures, surveillance, and reporting system to ensure identification and protection of victims of trafficking and *bacha baazi*;
- (3) Civil society actors ensure increased support services to survivors of *bacha baazi*.

This report presents the final evaluation of the SPEAC II project. The final evaluation explores the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, coordination and management of the intervention, and looks at what outcome and impact have been generated against the envisaged Theory of Change.

The main findings demonstrate that SPEAC II has been impactful despite significant challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and a major political shift. The intervention has contributed to :

- a. developing an enabling environment for justice and law enforcement to implement the full existing laws and active prosecution of the perpetrators of trafficking in person including *bacha baazi* and full protection of Afghan children from all forms of abuse and exploitation;

- b. Providing national and sub-national authorities with tools to identify and prosecute *bacha baazi* perpetrators accordingly and gain the knowledge and resources to refer the appropriate services.

But more specifically, SPEAC II impact lies in how it helped:

- c. Empower Afghan civil society with knowledge of child rights through multiple agents of change to proactively promote the elimination of *bacha baazi* and other forms of child trafficking their communities.

To this end, the project has been creative, responsive and resilient and has banked on a locally owned child participatory and catalytic process to promote Justice With Children in a humanitarian and changing political context.

In particular, the project has:

- Created a pool of informed agents of change who continue to promote child rights and child protection in their community, beyond the project implementation period through capacity-building and behavior change communication;
- Effectively upscaled a community-based child protection model largely aligned with international child safeguarding standards, which serves as a locally anchored safety net. Sensitized local members of the community (religious leaders, parents, shopkeepers, influential people, neighbors, teachers, youth and children themselves) have been voluntarily watching out, and organizing themselves to identify risks of child abuse, report concerns to the other CBCPM members in order to prevent and respond to abuse in a child-sensitive manner. The reported cases were referred to and managed by a formal justice system prior to August 2021 and later, it was only managed informally at community level. At the time of this evaluation, those CBPCMs were still active. Those community-based mechanisms include a multi-sectoral referral system that has been used to provide access to medical care, legal aid, and financial support for child victims of *bacha baazi*, sexual abuse or child labor. They have contributed to the community's safety by taking action to protect children: for example, some cases of child sextortion were referred to prosecutors trained under the project by a CBCPM member, and a differently-able child who had behaved inappropriately was saved from an abusive punishment thanks to the CBCPM intervention. Hence, children and parents in those communities know that they have a support network available to protect them or their children, and that they can therefore share and disclose their issues safely and in a relatively confidential manner to seek help and some form of redressal. The fact that those systems comprise local community members who find that the work performed by CBCPMs is aligned with their religious values, ensures social buy-in and feeds sustainability. But since those mechanisms are not overseen by a state-led structure, it also faces limitations that we will discuss later in this section;
- Empowered, consulted and taken into consideration children's voices and views to inform the project design, subsequently execute some needed activities (i.e. sensitization sessions in communities and schools, internships with students in universities, provision of legal aid and psycho-social support) and thereby sustain impact such as a) promoting youth agency beyond the project duration to promote child protection and child rights in universities, families or communities; b) achieving a behavioral change within the youth consisting of a preventive and help seeking behavior when risks are identified or when abuse occurs.

- Achieved a youth-led multiplier effect which feeds the project sustainability and effectiveness by collaborating with universities and offering students internships
- Promoted and even started to institutionalize a child-centric and trauma-informed approach by including training tools on child rights, child protection and TIP developed under the project in the state curriculum in some police academies and universities, which has contributed to effective provision of multi-sectoral support to juveniles, children vulnerable to/victims or survivors of abuse including Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (SEA), and *bacha baazi*.
- Piloted a successful model to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. This model included: switching to online and telephonic coordination meetings with partners, meetings and sessions with smaller groups, applying physical distancing and using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), conducting mass media awareness campaigns instead of community-based awareness sessions, and timely rescheduling of activities prior to/following various waves of COVID-19.
- Showcased an example of adaptability and intersectional approach to promote Justice with Children in humanitarian and complex political contexts that entailed: the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters (floods), conflicts (Taliban versus NATO forces, and terrorist attacks from the Islamic State of Khorasan), economic and food crisis, and the takeover of the country by the Taliban in August 2021 followed by the imposition of a new Afghan regime, international sanctions as well as the suspension and limitation of international aid.

However, the evaluation team found that the project required improvement in the areas described underneath:

- Despite the behavioral changes in favor of child rights and child protection that the project was able to generate among target groups, the evaluation team noted that only four out of sixty-five respondents were able to make the link between the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights (ICCPR) and the project. **In general, respondents were not aware of the international treaties and protocols that serve as guidelines to protect children from abuse and trafficking, and to try their cases.** Respondents mentioned “international laws” for children but could not quote the correct nomenclature, they knew that those international treaties were about child rights to food, shelter, education, and protection but never talked about justice for or with children. Moreover, the right to non-discrimination and participation was quoted by less respondents. **Finally, the respondents were not aware of the provision in the Afghan penal code related to child protection and trafficking.**
- A lesser number of children than initially envisaged accessed justice under this project due to the political shift of August 2021 and the suspension of the formal justice system. However, this is a finding which is more situated at an output level. At an outcome level, the desk review and the discussions with the lawyers and the CBCPMs members seem to confirm that the project has contributed to enforcing local child protection laws and prosecuting cases: they gave examples of cases that they referred, that were prosecuted and in which children received legal aid and psycho-social or financial support. Nevertheless, since the suspension of the formal justice system, no case of child abuse was prosecuted under the project. If the CBCPMs are part of the process of Justice with Children, it cannot be the sole entity upon which to rely on case of Child sexual Abuse. **The access to justice for child victims of child abuse has therefore been**

undermined post August 2021, and there was nothing that the project could do about it.

- **Women's participation in the evaluation but also in the project execution, constitutes another salient area of improvement.** Efforts were initially made to involve women in training and sensitization sessions, and as members in the CBPCMs and School Management Shuras (SMS). However, War Child Canada in Afghanistan and its implementing partners (IPs) are largely managed by men. **Community-based decisions to protect children are also essentially taken by men:** women may have played a role in sensitizing other women and their children about how to identify and mitigate risks, but the decisions on how to respond to abuse when it is disclosed, still largely rely on men. The fact that women were banned from working for (I)NGOs and UN agencies at the time of this assignment, may have exacerbated this perception by the evaluation team, since very few women accepted to answer the questionnaires.
- **The CBCPMs and their referral networks are not integrated into a state-led child protection mechanism that can oversee the quality of their work, hold them accountable or protect them whenever needed.** Examples of the CBCPMs' interventions and case studies suggest that non-violent solutions abiding by the best interests of the child were applied to address reported cases of child abuse, but risks of violent escalation or retaliation against the CBCPMs members, or the child or his family cannot be totally excluded.
- The evaluation team also noted that even if the project scope was limited to the geographical areas mentioned earlier, **War Child Canada and its implementing partners had very little interaction with regional and international platforms that specialize in advocacy, experience and knowledge sharing pertaining to child protection and justice with children.** This is regrettable as War Child Canada team in Canada and Afghanistan, its implementing partners, as well as the children involved in the SPEAC II project, could learn from such interactions and use such knowledge to guarantee cross-fertilization and achieve further impact.
- Lastly, the monitoring and evaluation framework under **the project lacked specific child-centric justice indicators** that would have helped assess more precisely to which extent the justice system (informal and informal) in the target areas was abiding by international child safeguarding standards and making a difference for children in Afghanistan.

Overall, it is important to remember that given the profound multi-dimensional crisis impacting Afghanistan, its children are increasingly vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation such as *bacha baazi*. The current absence of formal child protection mechanism and justice system hinder the response and accountability process for perpetrators of child sexual abuse. This situation may further threaten the social cohesion of Afghan communities. It is therefore crucial to remain engaged with local actors, reflect on a way forward, and identify synergies that could address the current state-led child protection and formal justice vacuums. Yet, more than ever, this project is a valid source of information to study what works for systemic and positive change in highly challenging contexts. This intervention reminds us, that with adequate resources, a competent team, a localized strategy, and relevant information, Afghan people resilience is still admirable and can truly make a difference for children of Afghanistan.




# INFOGRAPHIC

## PROJECT IMPACT and OUTCOMES

**Overall Objective** Build the capacity of justice and law enforcement actors to proactively address acts of impunity by security forces in Afghanistan, specifically by enforcing laws that criminalize Bacha Baazi

**1 Effective Public Awareness Raising and capacity-building** 

- Increased skills and knowledge on child rights and child protection acquired and used by adult target groups to prevent and respond to SAE and other child rights violations
- Positive behavioral change among duty bearers and community members fostering positive citizenry to protect children in their community
- Progressive reconciliation between international child rights laws and Islamic principles
- Multiplier effect: transmission (based on peer-to-peer interactions, community networks, sermons in mosques), replication, upscaling.

**2 Justice with children improved in target areas** 


- 2 models of child protection mechanisms piloted;

PRE August 2021 (formal & informal system)	POST August 2021 (informal system)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multistakeholder, systemic structure: CSOs, and state actors</li> <li>• TORs</li> <li>• Referral mechanism</li> <li>• Case management, SOPs</li> <li>• Cases of Violence Against Children reported and prosecuted</li> <li>• Rehabilitation in collaboration with the state</li> <li>• Follow up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-Based Safety net</li> <li>• TORs</li> <li>• Referral mechanism</li> <li>• Case management, SOPs</li> <li>• Cases of Violence Against Children reported and addressed at community level</li> <li>• Rehabilitation</li> <li>• Community-based accountability and follow-up</li> </ul>

- Child centered and trauma-informed services comprising legal, psycho-social, educational and financial support provided to juveniles and child victims of violence including SAE, trafficking, labour, bacha baazi

**3 Youth-led transformative process to promote child rights and child protection** 

- Student councils enhancing children's agency to promote child rights and child protection (identifying and reporting cases, adopting preventive measures and healthy practices)
- Creation of a pool of informed young professionals through internship for students on child rights and child protection

**4 KEY strengths: adaptability, social and technical sustainability** 

- Online activities, social and physical distancing, small gatherings, and use of the PPE during the COVID19 pandemic
- Shifting from a partnership with government and actors of justice to a collaboration with community-members including religious leaders and schools
- Training tools, SOPs and guidelines printed and disseminated among agents of change
- Responsive financial and risk management (timely transfers and reporting, sensitive semantics, do no harm policy)

# INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan has been marred by decades of war, displacements, poor economy, inadequate development plans, corruption, natural disasters, harmful social norms and practices, and COVID-19. The recent takeover of the country by the Taliban regime has worsened the situation. Currently, as mentioned in the Report of the Special Rapporteur about human rights in Afghanistan, presented in the fifty-first session of the Human Rights Council: “Afghanistan is experiencing a complex economic crisis, with natural disasters exacerbating the humanitarian emergency that began prior to the Taliban takeover. Real gross domestic product per capita declined 34 per cent between the end of 2020 and the end of 2021.<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan received enormous international support over two decades, driving human development gains from among the worst in the world to around the average for a country at its income level. After the Taliban takeover, the Afghan economy almost collapsed as international support halted. This was exacerbated as the now Taliban-controlled Central Bank of Afghanistan has been cut off from the international banking system, including access to the country’s foreign currency reserves.<sup>2</sup>”. The same report highlights how children have been adversely impacted by this tragic state of affairs: “In June 2022, the World Food Programme assessed those 1,078,804 children under the age of 5 had severe acute malnutrition, 2,807,452 children had moderate acute malnutrition and 836,657 pregnant and lactating women had acute malnutrition.<sup>3</sup> The Special Rapporteur asked a group of children aged 7–10 about their main concern when they woke up; one responded: “Food. The whole day I think about how I can find a job or make some money to buy food for my family. I am scared that we will not have food in the future.”<sup>4</sup> “The Special Rapporteur is greatly concerned about the situation of children. In addition to restrictions to the right to education, the effects of the economic hardship and humanitarian crisis are magnified for children, whose basic needs are not being met. According to a recent needs assessment, 45 per cent of girls and 36 per cent of boys reported that their family could not provide for their basic needs.<sup>5</sup> Children are suffering from hunger at alarming rates: 9.6 million children in Afghanistan are going hungry every day and 9.2 million children are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity between June and November 2022.<sup>6</sup> Many families are utilizing harmful coping strategies, including the sale of children, child marriage, child labour and decreased spending on health care and education.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, it is no surprise that harmful traditional practices such as *bacha baazi* persist in Afghanistan.

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<sup>1</sup>World Bank, “Towards economic stabilization and recovery”, Afghanistan Development Update (April 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Background, Chapter III, 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Humanitarian Needs Overview: Afghanistan* (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Chapter 1, 42

<sup>5</sup> Silvia Mila Arlini and Melissa Burgess, *Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment* (Singapore, Save the Children International, June 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Save the Children, “Almost 10 million children going hungry in Afghanistan as food aid alone fails to meet tidal wave of need, Save the Children says”, 9 May 2022.

<sup>7</sup> G-Other Groups of Particular Concern, 1, Children.

*Bacha baazi* or dancing boys (from Persian: *bacheh*- “boy”, and *baazi*- “play, game”) is an expression used in certain parts of the country. It refers to a form of human trafficking practiced in Afghanistan (and a few parts of Pakistan) where boys are bought, sold, rented, or traded for the entertainment and sexual pleasures of the elite class of the society (Network, 2013). The *bacha baazi* practice was outlawed under the Sharia Law of the Taliban but came back in full force after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. Typically, this harmful tradition entails boys to be dressed up like women, with make-up and bells on their feet, and being forced to dance for the entertainment of the “*Bacha Baz*”. The practice also involves forcing Afghan boys to engage in various forms of commercial and sexual exploitation, and sexual abuse (including generating Child Sexual Abuse Material). Sometimes, this sexual exploitation can last until the age of 23-25, depending upon the young man’s physical appearance (Abawi, 2009; Coleman, *Bacha baazi* Documentary Uncovers Horrific Sexual Abuse of Afghan, 2010).<sup>8</sup> This practice has turned into a centuries-long tradition. These preadolescent boys, called *Bacha Bareesh* or “beardless boys” usually come from poor families who have agreed to give their children away with the hope that those will be provided with an education and a promising future. Sometimes, those boys are kidnapped, or simply sold, so that the desperate families may survive. When those children reach adolescence and once their beard (puberty) starts growing, or when they start looking more like adult males, their “service” is no longer desired, and they are “released”. While those child victims suffer a lifetime of trauma, multiple health issues and stigma, they have no access to support services and consequently find it almost impossible reintegrate into society.

Afghanistan is among the 196 state parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The main components of the treaty revolve around the welfare and dignity of children. It also sets out the framework that protects the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. The convention also defines a child as any human being who is under the age of eighteen<sup>9</sup>. In March 2019, a major step was taken, and Afghanistan’s parliament approved and adopted the Children Protection Act. The act consists of 16 chapters and 108 articles and was a response to the imperative need of a legislation that was in line with the UNCRC for ensuring that the fundamental rights of every child in Afghanistan were protected and that the law would come to aid any child whose rights have been breached. It is worth mentioning that War Child Canada has successfully advocated for this law to be enacted in Afghanistan in its previous SPEAC program. Nevertheless, too many boys continue to be trafficked and abused via this *bacha baazi* custom in Afghanistan and to date, despite some encouraging previous models of intervention, a vast majority of children are abused, denied justice, and left with no way to heal and recover from one of the worst forms of child rights violations.

The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) announced in 2016 an open competition for organizations interested in submitting applications for projects that support children’s rights in Afghanistan. DRL’s objectives for the intervention were as follows:-

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ideasforpeace.org/content/the-unraveled-and-disquieting-human-rights-violation-of-afghanistan/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

(1) enhance the knowledge and skills of justice sector actors to effectively advocate for increased enforcement of existing national child protection laws, as well as enforcement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(2) promote active prosecution of perpetrators of *bacha baazi* by national and local Afghan authorities.

Potential approaches included, but were not limited to, the following:

(4) developing and delivering comprehensive, culturally appropriate training modules to law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges, specific to investigating, prosecuting, and adjudicating allegations of *bacha baazi* within the framework of existing Afghan law;

(5) engaging the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) units within the Ministry of Justice and National Directorate of Security, as well as the Attorney General's Office, to promote active prosecution of perpetrators;

(6) convening stakeholders at the local level – such as civil society organizations, local government officials, and security sector institutions – to discuss specific strategies for addressing and preventing *bacha baazi*, with the aim of developing local-level action plans for implementation.

Later, following the major political shift of August 2021, DRL's objective evolved and comprised the support for children's rights in Afghanistan through provision of psychosocial support to victims of *bacha baazi* and their families. Activities included, but were not limited to, the following:

(1) engage respected religious and community leaders to speak against this practice as well as promote child protection in general, particularly in areas where the practice is most prevalent;

(2) provide or refer victims and their families to appropriate services—such as psychological counseling, legal aid, education/literacy services, and other relevant forms of support—through the establishment of an emergency response center that works closely with existing shelters to ensure effective provision of resources to victims;

War Child Canada is a registered Canadian charity based in Toronto that works with war-affected communities to help children reclaim their childhood through access to education, opportunity, and justice. War Child Canada has over 20 years of experience working in communities in conflict and post-conflict zones. All work is implemented in direct partnership with local communities, local NGOs, and other stakeholders using a child-centered approach. War Child Canada is currently operational in Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, and Yemen. War Child Canada decided to answer DRL's call and submitted the "Supporting the Protection and Empowerment of Afghan Children" (SPEAC I) program in 2016, the precursor of SPEAC II.

### Overview of SPEAC II

In September 2019, War Child Canada received funding for the second phase of the SPEAC project aiming to *Build the capacity of justice and law enforcement actors to proactively address acts of impunity by security forces in Afghanistan, specifically by enforcing laws that criminalize bacha baazi*. The **SPEAC Phase II project was executed from September 2019 to January 2023 (which included no cost extension)**. It was impacted by two main elements: the COVID-19 pandemic and the major political shift of August 2021.

The project's original three key objectives were:

- 1) Increased enforcement of existing national child protection laws and focus on the implementation of the 2018 Penal Code by justice and law enforcement officials;
- 2) Afghan national and sub-national authorities promote the active prosecution of perpetrators of *bacha baazi* increased support services for survivors;
- 3) Afghan civil society support community engagement and advocacy of Community Based Child protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs), youth activists, CDCs think tanks and academia to be agents of change for policies and practices of trafficking-in-person including *bacha baazi*.

Post August 2021, there was a need to modify objective 3 due to the dramatic changes in the security and political situation across Afghanistan. The project's three key objectives became:

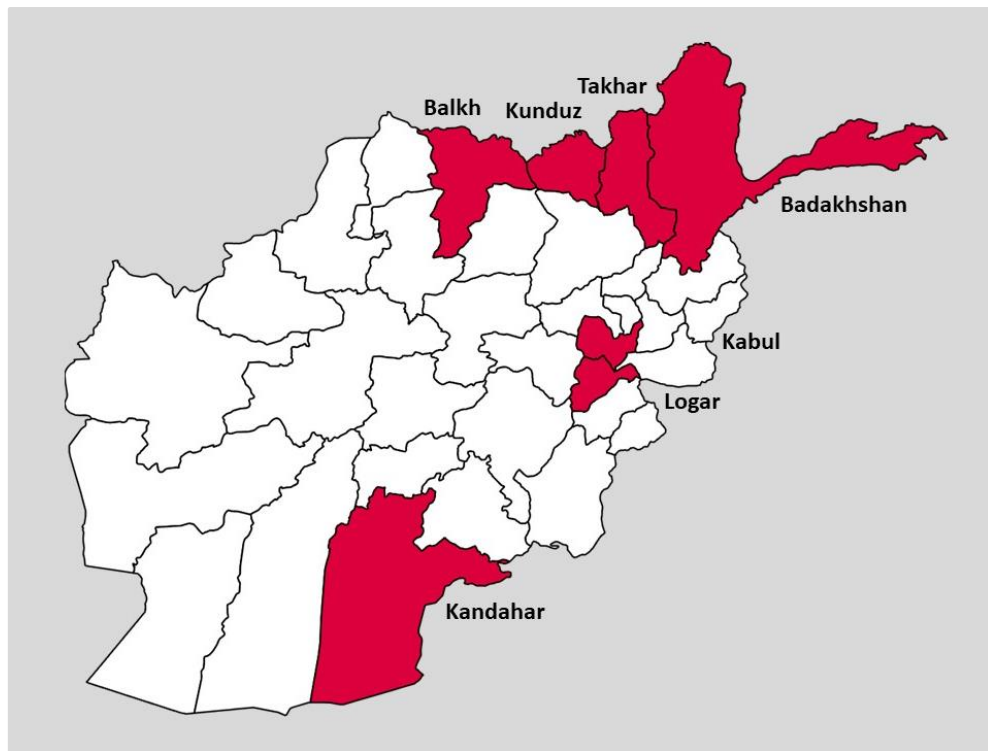
- 1) Increased enforcement of existing national child protection laws and focus on the implementation of the 2018 Penal Code by justice and law enforcement officials;
- 2) Afghan government, civil society activists, and local communities establish protection measures, surveillance, and reporting system to ensure identification and protection of victims of trafficking and *bacha baazi*;
- 3) Civil society actors ensure increased support services to survivors of *bacha baazi*.

### **Brief Background and Rationale for the Evaluation**

As mentioned in the DRL SPEAC II proposal narrative<sup>10</sup> and in the first project progress report submitted to the donor on January 30<sup>th</sup>, the SPEAC II project was designed to build on the success and learning of the SPEAC first phase implemented by War Child Canada and its local implementing partners from September 2016 to October 2018. The second phase of the SPEAC project was implemented by War Child Canada and local NGO partners from September 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023 in seven provinces (Kabul, Logar, Kandahar, Balkh, Kunduz, Badakhshan, and Takhar).

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<sup>10</sup> DRL SPEAC II -Resubmission -Proposal Narrative (July 2019); Progress report submitted to donors on January 30, 2020



*Map of Afghanistan and implementation areas of SPEAC II project*

War Child Canada has sought the services of Great Dreams Consulting (Private Ltd.)<sup>11</sup> to conduct the final evaluation of the **SPEAC II project** and thereby explore to which extent this second phase made a difference for children and their community in Afghanistan.

More precisely, the evaluation aims to enable War Child Canada team, its partners, and associates to plan the way forward based on the identified examples of good practices, challenges, improving areas and lessons learned. Additionally, this report may help further build War Child Canada's team and its partners' capacities to design, manage and execute projects to counter neglect, abuse, Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of children (*bacha baazi* in particular) in humanitarian contexts, in Afghanistan, and possibly elsewhere.

### **Summary of the Terms Of Reference (TORs)**

This evaluation aims to provide an opportunity for all project stakeholders to review accomplishments and be informed by the beneficiaries' voices (children<sup>12</sup>, their families, community leaders and members<sup>13</sup>, civil society representatives and ex-government officials, attorneys, adult survivors of the *bacha baazi* practice) to reflect on the extent to which the project has made a difference in the beneficiaries' life and achieved the planned results.

The evaluation focused on the following criteria: **relevance, efficiency, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, coordination, and management**. Moreover, the evaluation team assessed a) the process inherent to the project and the coherence

<sup>11</sup> For the purpose of this evaluation, the company will be mentioned as GDC; the company's profile is available in the technical proposal submitted to WCC for this evaluation.

<sup>12</sup> Those children constitute the student councils.

<sup>13</sup> Members of the CBCPMs

of the proposed solutions vis-a-vis the external environment, b) how the project has impacted the beneficiaries' life.

The evaluation process has included:

- An inception meeting and several need-based exchanges<sup>14</sup>;
- A desk review;
- The development of an evaluation matrix, a sampling frame, a table of respondents and a Gantt chart;
- The drafting and submission of an inception report;
- The development of data collection tools;
- Data collection;
- Data compilation, triangulation, and analysis;
- The submission of the key findings and a draft evaluation report to War Child Canada;
- The identification and drafting of case studies;

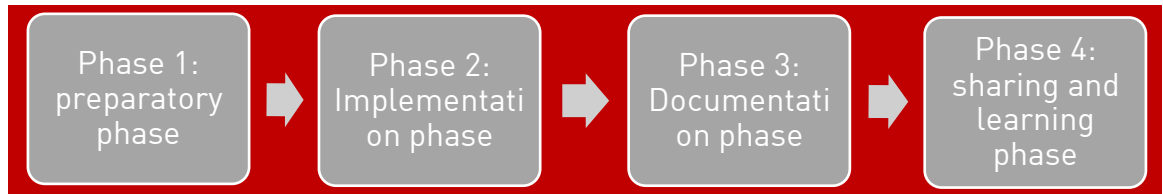
Once the final evaluation report is approved by War Child Canada, the next step will consist in presenting the findings to the donor, and any other relevant stakeholder approved by War Child Canada.

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<sup>14</sup> See 2 attached notes

# BRIEF METHODOLOGY

Overall, the evaluation followed a mixed summative approach articulated around four phases:



- **Phase 1:** The team focused on clarifying the communication lines and obtaining a consensus on the revised timeline and methodology. A Gantt chart was developed/adjusted along with an evaluation matrix, a sampling frame, a table of respondents and questionnaires. A desk review took place, quantitative data reported by War Child Canada to the donor was analyzed and an inception report was subsequently submitted.
- **Phase 2:** The male research assistant and a female data collector were trained on the approved tools, and primary data was collected, collated, and compiled [essentially qualitative data].
- **Phase 3:** The compiled primary data added to the desk review and project data informed the overall analysis. A draft evaluation report was then submitted.
- **Phase 4:** As a next step, once the evaluation report is approved, findings will be shared with the donor and any relevant stakeholder identified by War Child Canada.

From the onset, it was clarified that the evaluation data would be indicative only, but it is important to underline that due to the difficulties described in the section “challenges and constraints”, the analysis is essentially qualitative. In fact, the operational context in Afghanistan remained challenging, hence the data collection methodology had to be adjusted: the number of respondents was reduced, and the primary data collection tools comprised questionnaires for physical In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for males only, and telephonic IDIs for females.

**Primary data:** It was collected through eleven questionnaires developed by GDC to conduct the IDIs and the FGDs. Only five female respondents -out of whom one child- and sixty male respondents -out of whom three children- could be interviewed, which makes a total of sixty-five respondents able to directly inform this evaluation.

**Secondary data:** It was collected through the desk review.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, following the notification banning women from working with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies, it was jointly decided that the foreign female consultant would not travel to Afghanistan to collect data. Hence, taking into consideration legal constraints, prevailing gender norms, and

<sup>15</sup> See desk review matrix annexed to this report (annexure iii)



security sensitivities, a local female data collector had to be identified to interview female respondents through phone. One local female data collector (English, Dari and Pashto speaking) was recruited, and trained by GDC on the IDIs. She also interacted with GDC’s male data collector through her male family member for coordination. Yet, many female respondents refused to answer the questionnaires due to safety concerns or because they felt that they had not taken part in the project long enough to give a valuable opinion. Consequently, the evaluation team applied a “DO NO HARM” policy and could not ensure gender-balance among respondents. As anticipated in the risk framework developed for this evaluation, the analysis will therefore essentially reflect adult male views.

Finally, only a limited number of children could be reached. Whenever those were interviewed, a child safeguarding protocol was applied in coordination with War Child Canada Afghanistan’s team. Children were accompanied by an adult guardian or a chaperone preferably of the same gender. The guardian was asked for his consent and the child was asked for his/her assent. For physical interviews, the space was open, and doors never locked.

Three geographical areas of intervention were selected in consultation with War Child Canada keeping in view criteria such as accessibility, internet connectivity, Value for Money (VfM), ethnic diversity, and availability of respondents: Kabul, Balkh, and Kandahar.

Eventually, the evaluation applied the sampling frame summarized in the table below:

*Sampling Frame- SPEAC II End of Program Evaluation*

Category of respondents	Locations	Quantity & gender	Sub-Total	Methodology
War Child Canada staff	Canada	2 males, 1 female	3	3 Online IDIs
	Afghanistan	2 males	2	2 Online IDIs
Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms	Balkh	10 males (5 +5), 1 female	11	2 FGDs, 1 IDI
	Kandahar	5 males	5	FGD
	Kabul	10 males (Collective)	10	FGD
Student Councils	Balkh	1 male, 1 female	2	IDI
	Kandahar	1 male	1	IDI
	Kabul	1 male	1	IDI
School Management Shuras	Kandahar	2 males (Collective)	2	FGD
	Kabul	1 male	1	IDI
	Balkh	1 female	1	IDI
Parents	Balkh	1 male	1	IDI
	Kandahar	1 male	1	IDI
	Kabul	1 male	1	IDI
Teachers	Balkh	2 males (Collective), 1 female	3	FGD
	Kandahar	1 male	1	IDI

	Kabul	2 males (Collective)	2	FGD
Legal Aid Attorneys	Balkh	1 male	1	IDI
	Kabul	1 male	1	IDI
Ulemas	Balkh	3 males	3	FGD
	Kandahar	3 males	3	FGD
	Kabul	4 males	4	FGD
Implementing Partners	Balkh	1 male	1	Online IDI
	Kandahar	1 male	2	Online IDI
Adult Survivors	Balkh	2 males	2	IDIs

Lastly, the evaluation team followed the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and Development Assistance Committee (DAC)<sup>16</sup> criteria and corresponding questions listed underneath:

Evaluation Criteria	Questions
Relevance and Efficiency	What factors related to local context and variances between provinces facilitated or limited the project response?
	To what extent the project has considered the causes and factors of conflict and fragility and taken them into account as part of project implementation?
	What best practices should be retained for future programming (for War Child Canada and the donor)?
Context Change and Adaptability	To what extent the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the project implementation and activities? What adaptations and strategies were employed to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the project? How useful and appropriate were these changes?
	Which factors facilitated or limited the project's response capacity and flexibility?
Coherence	To what extent was the project aligned to the long-term needs, development goals, and priorities relating to countering human trafficking and child protection in Afghanistan?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project's theory of change accurate and able to produce the

<sup>16</sup> Those are evaluation standards established in 1991 by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

	planned changes in the targeted communities?
	To what extent has the project achieved the expected results /outcomes in the following priority areas: Community-level capacity building to protect and promote children’s rights Application of victim centered approach and Trauma-informed approach Engagement and advocacy with legal actors and decision makers Community-focused behavior change communication and public awareness
<b>Sustainability</b>	What steps have been taken for sustainability of the project? To what extent are local partners and stakeholders empowered and engaged as part of these steps?
<b>Coordination and Management</b>	To what extent has the project team been effective in its coordination with relevant actors, examples of support received, and effective project implementation, monitoring and evaluation and grant management?

### Constraints and challenges

During the assignment there were several constraints and challenges that the evaluation team faced, most of these were effectively managed by both the cooperation of War Child Canada (Head Quarter and Afghanistan) and the evaluation team however, a few obstacles remained.

At the time of submitting the proposal for the assignment it was envisioned that the evaluation team would be able to visit Afghanistan and conduct several interviews in person, especially with female respondents. Unfortunately, after being awarded the assignment and as mentioned earlier in this report, the de facto Government of Afghanistan made some radical changes with its policy regarding female employees. The ban on female employees to go to work (for NGOs and INGOs) caused a significant change in the approach that the Team had to take:

1. Female employees of INGOs stopped coming to work and had to work from home;
2. Female members of the evaluation team were informed that it would be best that she does not travel to Afghanistan due to security reasons;
3. Female respondents that we wanted to interview considering the evaluation would not be able to meet with other females due their movement restriction;

As it was important for both War Child Canada and the evaluation team to ensure that women participated in the evaluation process, this constraint was significant. So, alternatives such as interviews over the phone were then considered even though this was not an ideal option, but with the policy of the Government of Afghanistan it was the only viable one. Hence, limiting the level of detail and access

to these respondents was evident and reflected in the overall evaluation of SPEAC II. Nevertheless, with the support of the Kabul Office the best possible way forward was devised and implemented even though it was not ideal.

A model of using cell phone calls were used to try and interview female respondents and the evaluation team did the best it could under these circumstances. In all honesty, all efforts were made to try and get the viewpoint of some female respondents into the evaluation.

The evaluation team manage to send a male colleague to Afghanistan to conduct interviews with male respondents and Kabul Office team members.

The other significant challenge that the evaluation team faced and was unable to overcome was that the entire evaluation process was conducted without the input of the previous or de facto Government of Afghanistan counterparts. Following the regime change in Kabul, many ex-government officers left the country, and new official representatives got appointed. Since none of the new representatives was familiar with the project, there was no point to get their take on the outcome and output of SPEAC II.

Similarly, some key respondents and active participants of the project, such as Legal Aid lawyers, had left the country after the takeover by the Taliban Government in Afghanistan. This was especially the case in Kandahar. Other key participants had also fled the country and it was therefore difficult to track them down as part of the evaluation. This challenge also was out of the hands of the Team and WCC and hence, felt as an unmet gap in the over all evaluation of SPEAC II. In tandem with this, with the change in regime in Kabul a few key Government officials were also transferred from their roles and designations. Their replacements were unfamiliar with the scope of the project and therefore, unable to provide any view with regards to the efficacy, impact and/or effectiveness of the project. This was most pronounced in Kandahar and Mazar e-Sharif.

The evaluation also coincided with the Holy month of Ramadan. This was a challenge in just that the timings of the meetings had to be scheduled in order to respect the changed work times in Afghanistan. Several meetings and discussion did take place in the evenings for example in order to respect the fasting timings of the respondents and War Child Canada colleagues in Afghanistan.

An online survey was shared with IPs but no answer was received, hence online IDIs took place instead.

Lastly, some focal persons in Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif had changed jobs since the end of the project. Although facilitation was provided by Kabul office to work with them in the mentioned areas, this did make exchanges with them slightly less efficient and slower as they were either taking days off work or taking half days.

A more detailed presentation of the methodology is attached to this report (annexure 1).

### Definitions.

- **Pedophilia;** “pedophilia, also spelled **paedophilia**, also called **pedophilic disorder** or **pedophilia disorder**, in conventional usage, is a psychosexual disorder, generally affecting adults, characterized by sexual interest in prepubescent children or attempts to engage in sexual acts with prepubescent children. The term was used with that meaning in the psychiatric diagnostic literature prior to the publication of the fifth edition of

the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2013; DSM-5), which replaced *pedophilia* with *pedophilic disorder*.<sup>17</sup> All pedophiles do not necessarily “act” on their urges towards children. Since the project does not address preventive action or rehabilitation of pedophiles/ephebophiles/pedo-ephebophiles/individuals who (may) become child sexual offenders, we feel that it is important to use a more appropriate word to describe the focus of this project: PEDO-CRIMINALITY. Hence, for the purpose of this report, **pedo-criminality** will refer to pedophiles, ephebophiles<sup>18</sup>, pedo-ephebophiles<sup>19</sup> or any adult person<sup>20</sup> who engages into any sexual activity with children<sup>21</sup>.

- **Child participation** refers to the concept enshrined in article 19 of the UNCRC and is further defined as the right to be heard. Child participation must be meaningful and ethical; to this end, it must be aligned with nine key principles<sup>22</sup>: be transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable.
- **Good practices**: for the purpose of this report, good practices will be assessed according to the following criteria: innovation, participation, sustainability, efficiency, transversality, reproducibility, serving the best interest of the child.
- **Child Justice**: this concept is understood as per the General Comment (GC) 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which addresses the pre-trial, trial, and post-trial process that children in conflict with the law are supposed to avail so that secondary victimization is avoided. It relies on the following fundamental principles: best interest of the child, dignity of the child, right to be heard and non-discrimination. It focuses on restorative justice processes, diversion, and envisages detention as a very last resort.
- **Justice with Children**: the concept of Justice with Children is relatively new and has emerged as a result of multiple consultations between the civil society, practitioners, the United Nations and other international entities. It has been highlighted during the latest World Congress on Justice with Children, in November 2021. It focuses on children in conflict and in contact with the law. The concept of Justice with Children underlines the obligation of each state signatory to the UNCRC and its relevant protocol to ensure that any child whose right has been violated, may access a safe, adequate and confidential redressal mechanism, which does not necessarily have to be limited to a formal court<sup>23</sup> of justice.
- **Court**: in the context of this evaluation report, the court refers to the formal court of justice operational in Afghanistan, prior to August 2021.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pedophilia>

<sup>18</sup> <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ephebophilia>

<sup>19</sup> Sexual attraction towards pre-pubescent children as well as adolescents

<sup>20</sup> Not necessarily diagnosed with those sexual disorders

<sup>21</sup> For the purpose of this report children means any human being less than 18 years of age.

<sup>22</sup> [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/basic\\_requirements-english-final.pdf/](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/basic_requirements-english-final.pdf/)

<sup>23</sup> <https://justicewithchildren.org/about-the-initiative/>

# FINDINGS

The evaluation shows that the SPEAC II Theory of Change (TOC) stands validated since:

- it enabled the project team to mitigate two significant risks: the COVID 19 pandemic and the major political shift of August 2021. The Logic Model had envisaged that security issues or such external factors could jeopardize the execution of the project, therefore most proposed activities could be adjusted and organized virtually or in smaller groups during the pandemic. Moreover, a significant part of the TOC consisted of community-based activities, hence when War Child Canada revisited the Logic Model after the political shift of August 2021, only minor adjustments were required: reformulating objective 3 and focusing more on community-based interventions and dropping the work with justice actors.
- it geared significant results to promote child rights and protect children (male children in particular) despite those significant challenges. In particular, the activities of the TOC led to **an increased awareness and social disapproval of *bacha baazi*** at community level, despite the fact that the Logic Model mentioned how difficult it was to speak about this sensitive topic with community members. Many respondents mentioned a “before the project” and “after” to underline that the project had changed their views and helped them realize how child abuse and *bacha baazi* was affecting children. The project strategic engagement with religious leaders, parents and schools also resulted in **placing child rights as a priority agenda for change among target community members**: all the respondents were convinced that promoting and enforcing child rights was a civic and religious duty. Respondents also added that the only way for Afghanistan to get out of the current difficulties was to invest time and money in child rights, with a strong focus on education and protection. For instance, several teachers who had been trained under this project explained that activities under SPEAC II had made them understand the adverse effects of corporal punishment and that they had subsequently transformed their pedagogical views and practices. In the same vein, children themselves shared that SPEAC II had contributed to making them aware of their rights and had increased their self-confidence to sensitize their peers and report risks of abuse. A few students mentioned that corporal punishment was no more possible in their school, thanks to SPEAC II, because teachers knew that if they hit children they would be reported to the SMS or the CBPCMs. Lastly the project has **helped several child victims of abuse access rescue and support services**.

Additionally, the analysis of findings suggests that, prior to August 2021, the project contributed to the development of an enabling environment for justice and law enforcement to implement the existing laws and active prosecution of the perpetrators of trafficking in person, including *bacha baazi*, and the protection -to a certain extent- of Afghan children from all forms of abuse and exploitation. The term enabling environment has been used by the evaluation team to describe a context in which child victims and/or their family had identified a group of people they could trust to disclose abuse and seek help and support from:

i.e. “Community Educators/Volunteers and Ulemas, carrying out follow-up sessions with children and families whose cases were either finalized at court or were in the process of finalization”<sup>24</sup>. Additionally, other activity reports and interviews with lawyers show that this enabling environment was characterized by magistrates, prosecutors, and legal aid lawyers who would try to avoid the secondary victimization of the child during the trial, by ensuring that age-appropriate questions only would be asked to the child, without threat, or violence, and that the child’s confidentiality would be maintained by CBCPM or legal actors. Efforts were also made to provide psycho-social support and vocational training to children in Juvenile Rehabilitation Centers to facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration, thereby replacing a retributive approach with a restorative one. A progress narrative report states<sup>25</sup>: “Children and juveniles aged 13-18 at the JRCs received counselling and life skills training from the project team”. Finally, the enabling environment to which the project contributed was also one where the court decisions ended up holding perpetrators of child abuse accountable and where victims felt that they could obtain justice. In several reports, one can read: “...a total of 26 (1 in Kabul, 2 in Kandahar, 1 in Balkh, 4 in Badakhshan & 18 in Takhar) child abuse and exploitation cases were identified and referred to the project lawyers and private attorneys for follow-up with representation in justice and judicial organizations. Of that, 23 cases were represented and settled in favour of the children at court by the private attorneys and project lawyers and perpetrators were sentenced to prison by court.”<sup>26</sup>

Since training manuals, SOPs and guidelines were developed in local languages and disseminated to legal actors who subsequently used those in their practices<sup>27</sup>, it can also be said that -to a certain level-, the project contributed to providing the tools to identify and prosecute *bacha baazi* perpetrators accordingly and have the knowledge and resources to refer victims to appropriate service providers. However, those two initial impacts were adversely affected by the political shift of August 2021, since the formal justice system got suspended.

Hence, pre and post August 2021, the project has essentially contributed to the following impact: empowering the Afghan civil society with knowledge of child rights through multiple agents of change to proactively promote the elimination of *bacha baazi* and other forms of child trafficking (and abuse) their communities.

More precisely, the project remained focused on its overarching goal: “*Build the capacity of justice and law enforcement actors to proactively address acts of impunity by security forces in Afghanistan, specifically by enforcing laws that criminalize bacha baazi*”. To this end, the project generated and sustained a locally owned child participatory and catalytic process to promote Justice With Children in a humanitarian and changing political context.

The diagram below dissects how this process was structured and operationalized:

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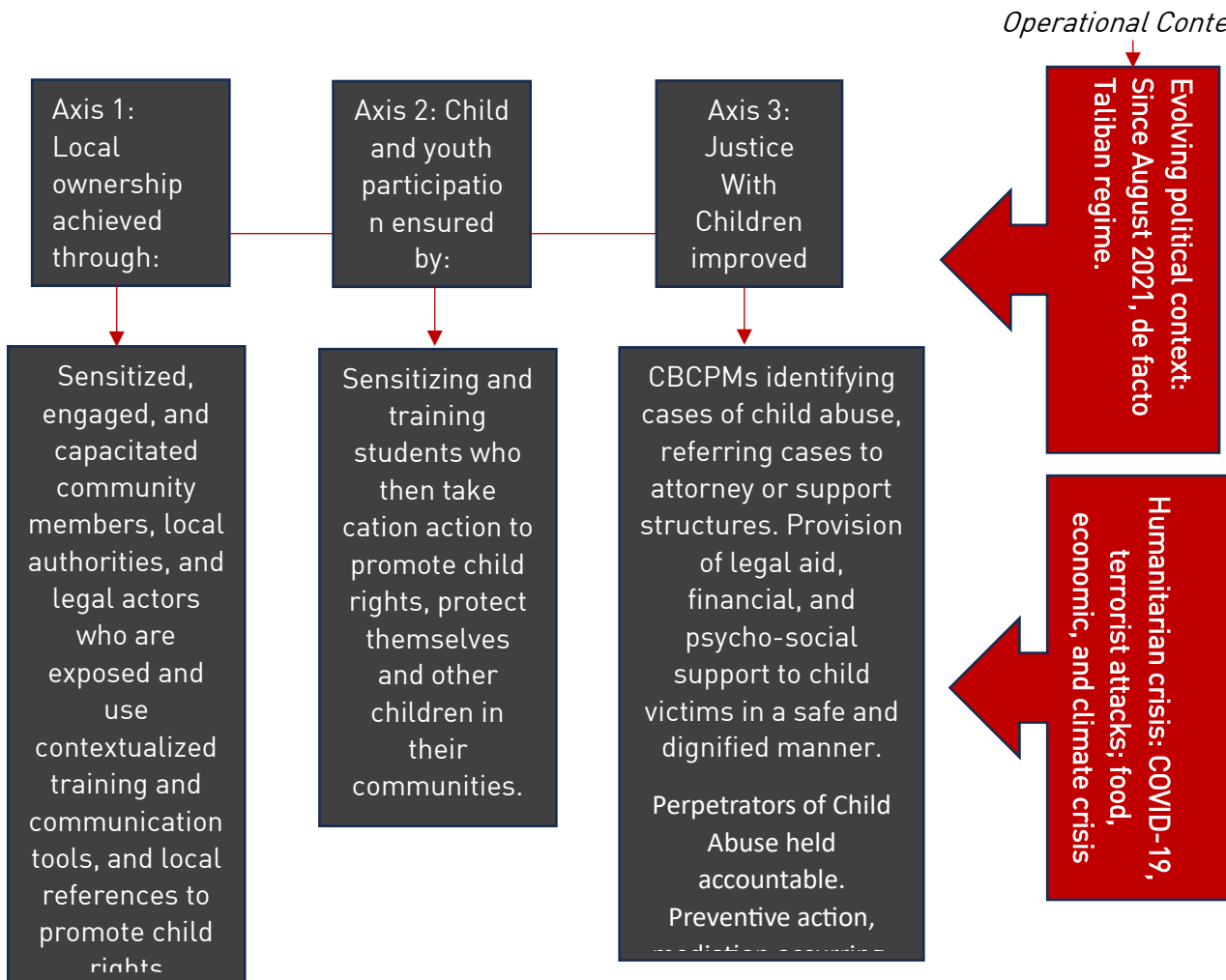
<sup>24</sup> Progress Narrative Report SPEAC II, July-September 2020

<sup>25</sup> Progress Narrative Report SPEAC II, January-March 2021

<sup>26</sup> Progress Narrative Report SPEAC II, July-September 2020

<sup>27</sup> See impact assessment legal actors

***Community-Based Catalytic Process to achieve the overarching goal of the SPEAC II project***



Prior to August 2021, the process described above relied on a multi-stakeholder formal and informal child protection system and referral mechanism. The formal system consisted of a set of Standard Operating Procedures that were to be followed by state actors including legal actors (police, prosecutors, judges) to investigate, try, manage and follow-up cases of juveniles and child victims of abuse. The informal system concerned the sensitization and organization of community members (teachers, volunteers, students, religious leaders) who were in charge of surveilling their community, prevent, report and refer risks of/cases of child abuse to the formal system and sometimes be part of the solution-making processes to prevent or respond to cases of abuse. Post August 2021, the process shifted to an informal child protection system relying on community members only since the justice system got suspended. The informal system finds its strength in the fact that it is inspired by a thousand-year-old local tribal tradition that uses groups of selected, relatively informed and motivated males (usually quite mature or even old) from the community who are given authority to provide guidance to protect and promote peace, justice and social cohesion in case of dispute or crimes. It is often referred to as “jirga” which is a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism. While the CBCPMs are NOT jirgas, they certainly benefit from this ancient custom of bringing together community members to redress crimes and disputes.

In both scenarios, efforts were made to:



- align with international safeguarding standards enshrined in the UNCRC;
- provide child-centric and trauma informed support services for male children;
- Improve local capacities, foster positive behavioral change, and sustain outcomes through the engagement of child rights champions among decision makers and legal actors, teachers, religious leaders, community members, children, and youth.

The section below provides further details about the project achievements.

#### **OVERARCHING FINDINGS:**

- **Public Awareness Raising and capacity-building:** The project has created a pool of informed agents of change who continue to promote child rights and child protection in their community, beyond the project implementation period.

All respondents declared that they had shared the knowledge and skills on child rights and child protection acquired under this project, with some neighbors, friends, family members or peers. Several respondents (students, community members attending the mosque sermon, and teachers) shared that they had joined SPEAC II action on child protection based on sensitization activities that took place under the project. The respondents explained that they used the acquired knowledge in their daily life with their children at home (i.e. not using corporal punishment, taking the time to listen to them when there was a problem), in their professional life (i.e. teachers using positive discipling, prosecutors using legal knowledge on trafficking to prosecute a case and child-sensitive methods to interview the child), with community members (getting together to go and visit parents of some child laborers, convince them to send him to school instead and arranging financial support), to report case of abuse to CBCPMs and sometimes refer those cases to an attorney. Moreover, **sixty respondents stated that they continued their work on child protection** even after the project ended: for example, parents indicated that they continue to sensitize other parents against corporal punishment in their respective community; a volunteer psychologist continues to medically follow up a child survivor of *bacha baazi* even if the project has now ended. This illustrates how the awareness and capacity-building activities under SPEAC II have created a multiplier effect which feeds into the project technical, and social sustainability.

**Out of the 20 interviewed *religious leaders*, all of them confirmed that the project made them realize that child rights in the UNCRC were aligned with Islamic values** and all of them indicated that they were still using the acquired information in their sermons to raise awareness on child rights and child protection in their communities. Additionally, in the three locations, religious leaders gave concrete examples of how they capitalized upon the training. One of them indicated that he used the acquired knowledge to convince parents not to send their children work in the mines (highlighting the risk of child sexual abuse); another one said that he used this knowledge to convince the Taliban Regime to grant him an exceptional authorization to run a madrassah for girls above 12 to attend school, with female teachers only; others indicated that they used this knowledge to sensitize other religious leaders about the need to establish CBCPMs in other communities. The findings above suggest that the awareness sessions and trainings executed under SPEAC II have contributed to behavioral change in favor of child rights as per international standards: the project has helped reconcile concepts of international

child rights laws with Islamic values among target groups. Firstly, the target groups shifted from rejection to acceptance once they realized that international child rights were reflected in Islam as well; secondly, the target groups started implementing what they learned: ending corporal punishment, talking to children about risks, listening to children more, sending them to school, etc. This is essential to create social and political buy-in, especially under the current new Afghan regime which places Islam at the center of its governance. Lastly, according to legal aid lawyers, the dissemination of SOPs and guidelines for legal actors had also contributed to a more child-sensitive process in court where children were reportedly “well treated”, where the trial was shorter than before (three months approximately), and where some convictions were achieved<sup>28</sup>.

- **Community-Based Protection Systems: the project has effectively upscaled a community-based child protection model largely aligned with international child safeguarding standards, which serves as a locally anchored safety net.**

The SPEAC II project has been **successful in establishing effective Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs)** that are led and sustained by volunteers (male and female prior to August 2021, male only, after August 2021). Those CBCPMs contribute to a) identifying potential or verified cases of child abuse, b) preventing abuse from happening, c) reporting and responding to cases of abuse. The CBCPMs’ work for child protection has been illustrated through a case study<sup>29</sup> and via other examples and quotes featured further down in this report. All the twenty-six (twenty-five males, one female) interviewed CBCPMs members were aware of child rights and knew what child protection entailed: “protecting children from abuse and violence”. Two members added that child protection was also about “protecting children from discrimination”. This awareness ensures that the action by CBCPMs is child centric and relatively trauma informed. For example, the War Child Canada team in Afghanistan and its partners agreed that no child survivor of *bacha baazi* or sexual abuse would be interviewed for this evaluation, to avoid secondary trauma and ensure the dignity of the child beneficiaries.

The CBCPMs are part of larger child protection mechanisms that comprises a referral mechanism, (SOPs) and coordination with multi-stakeholders. Those stakeholders included state and legal actors prior to August 2021. Afterwards, the coordination was limited to various community members only. No child protection mechanism was officially notified in by the State in Afghanistan during the implementation period. However, several respondents explained how the CBCPMs helped rescue children from labor, referred cases of SAE of children to attorneys for prosecution, or organized surveillance committees to monitor communities and counter child abuse. Hence, it seems fair to state that the project has articulated two effective models of community-based child protection mechanisms that can be presented as examples of good practices in relevant forums with two specificities: one comprising a formal and informal justice system, another one comprising an informal justice system only.

- **Participatory Processes: children’s voices and views have been taken into consideration to inform the project, execute some activities and thereby sustain impact.**

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<sup>28</sup> Those convictions were mentioned by legal aid lawyers but were not documented in the project documents.

<sup>29</sup> See case study 4.

The project's child participatory approach seems to have yielded positive effects to reduce child labor, foster access to education and enhance safe learning in targeted schools. The approach consisted in collecting and taking into considerations children's views to design SPEAC II and assess its impact and outcomes. It also entailed engaging children in awareness raising activities and sometimes in decision-making processes affecting their own future. In fact, the children used the knowledge and skills acquired under this project to sensitize their peers and protect themselves or help rescue some other children out of abusive situations. They were part of the project multiplier effect to raise awareness on child protection and child rights and prevent or stop some abuse. **For instance, one child member** of the Student Council mentioned how he explained to his friends the dangers of working in the brick kilns<sup>30</sup> and how he referred them to the CBCPM members who talked to the parents, arranged financial support for their family, and facilitated their enrollment in school. Another member of one student council established under SPEAC II explained that in his school, teachers stopped practicing corporal punishment because they knew that the children were now aware of their rights and that they would report it. Students also explained that they were sharing with their peers what to do and whom to go to in case of abuse: for example, a student was able to encourage his friend to talk to a religious leader about the shopkeeper who was "annoying him and not behaving well". Subsequently, the religious leader took action and followed up to stop the shopkeeper from approaching any child. These findings suggest that the project has banked on child participation to empower children so that they may develop a help seeking behavior when they suspect or identify a risk for themselves or other children.

Last, but not the least, based on children's recommendations during the evaluation of SPEAC in 2019, SPEAC II has enhanced the provision of psycho-social support services to child victims of abuse, including *bacha baazi*. This suggests that children's views have informed the project design, in alignment with the famous child participation moto "Nothing about us, without us!".

- **Students and Internship Program: the project has achieved a youth-led multiplier effect which feeds the project sustainability and effectiveness.**

The youth participatory dimension of the action contributes to fostering a more child-conducive society on the mid and long term. Students have availed internship opportunity with the project on child rights, relevant laws, and child protection. Additionally, educational institutions including universities were engaged in public awareness raising on countering *bacha baazi* and promoting the rights of children through debates and awareness sessions. According to the legal aid lawyers, those young students will also advocate for the reactivation of the old laws or the development of a new law to hold perpetrators of child abuse accountable. Finally, they will sensitize their peers and disseminate a pro child rights narrative within their academic circle. Hence the findings suggest that the student internship program strengthens the technical sustainability of the action.

- **Support to victims/survivors: the project has been child-centric and trauma-informed which has allowed effective provision of multi-sectoral support to children vulnerable to/victims-survivors of abuse including SAE, and *bacha baazi***

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<sup>30</sup> Risk of being sexually abused

The SPEAC II project has upscaled a child protection program. The intervention was able to mobilize citizens to break the rule of silence and activate community-based or institutional mechanisms to redress child rights violations through formal and informal systems. Children (or their guardians) from low income or marginalized communities have received legal aid or victim's assistance with USG support under the intervention. The project contributed to investigations and prosecutions of individuals for the sexual abuse of boys and/or attending *bacha baazi* events prior to August 2021. Some child victims of abuse, exploitation, and *bacha baazi* were provided with psycho-social support, and one child victim was referred to a rehabilitation centre. When the formal justice system got suspended after August 2021, cases of child abuse continued to be reported to members of the CBCPMs, the student councils, and the school management shura. The respondents explained that they took action to provide/facilitate access to the support services described earlier, except legal aid. Informal justice systems such as jirgas or small community committees were organized and played a crucial role in filling the vacuum left by the formal justice system in the target areas. Respondents shared that when cases got referred, children were recognized as victims, protected, supported and perpetrators monitored by community members to prevent relapse. Furthermore, some perpetrators of child abuse were boycotted as a form of community-based punishment.

All respondents pointed out that they paid attention to ensuring the confidentiality of the victims and that they did not judge and rather wanted to support and help in the child's rehabilitation process. The legal aid lawyer insisted on the fact that prior to August 2021, the judges tried to limit the duration of the trial (mostly by refusing adjournments) to avoid secondary trauma for the child, and that there was an improvement in the way the child was treated by the judiciary while appearing in court (i.e: speaking politely to the child, asking if the child wanted water, offering him a seat, stopping abusive language from the defense lawyer at the time of cross examination).

- Response to COVID19: the project has been able to mitigate the impact of the pandemic

The project adjusted its operational strategy and included remote management to overcome the adverse effect of the restrictions resulting from the pandemic. This flexibility (such as shifting to online activities and meetings, working from home, working with smaller groups, etc..) has allowed War Child Canada to maintain contact with its partners and organize awareness and capacity-building sessions despite the pandemic. Thanks to this adaptation, War Child Canada could also provide timely and reliable data and conduct relevant situation analysis which was essential to identify potential cases of COVID-19 and apply quarantine rules whenever required.

- Adaptability and intersectionality: the project demonstrated its capacity to remarkably adapt and mitigate the adverse impact of the major political shift of August 2021.

*Following the August 2021 events, War Child Canada took series of adaptive measures:*

- using the UN funds (which were exempted from any ban) to sustain financial support while foreign aid was suspended and the way forward discussed;
- maintaining engagement with implementing partners and community members while activities were suspended;

- ending the capacity-building program with the government and legal actors, dropping activities pertaining to legal aid, and instead, focusing on empowering community members, religious leaders, schools, children, and youth to prevent and respond to reported cases of child abuse including trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation, and *bacha baazi*.

Additionally, War Child Canada and their implementing partners adopted a work from home policy for their female staff when the Taliban de facto regime banned women from working with INGOs/NGOs.

War Child Canada also developed a relocation plan for its expatriate staff due to the various terrorist attacks that took place in the country.

This adaptability has enabled the project to remain relevant, to secure and sustain the social buy-in of the action and maintain a crucial support for children vulnerable to/victims of abuse, trafficking, and *bacha baazi*.

The community-based child protection mechanism that have been reinforced from April 2022 till the end of the project have also generated some intersectional outcomes:

- respondents have underlined how their increased awareness of child rights has made them realize even more the adverse impact of impeding girls from accessing education above class 12. Several of them quoted the adverse economic and psycho-social effect of such a discriminatory policy (child protection and gender equality);
- Respondents increasingly understood how countering child labour and enhancing women or families' livelihood was a way to prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (food-poverty alleviation and child protection nexus);
- Some women respondents, a teacher and a religious leader pointed out that by countering corporal punishment in school, an overall discussion around anger management and peaceful conflict resolution emerged and opened a pathway to denounce and mitigate domestic violence, -including violence against women- and the need to promote peace. It seems that the project has enabled some community members to reflect and realize that keeping children away from abuse and violence - outside or at home - was essential for the future of the country. This suggests that the project has enabled some community members to progressively understand the intergenerational impact of child abuse. (VAC-GBV-Peace).

This intersectionality shows that the project has been able to generate unintended outcomes which highlights its effectiveness, one more time.

Nevertheless, despite the behavioral changes in favor of child rights and child protection that the project was able to generate among target groups, the evaluation team noted that only four out of sixty-five respondents were able to make the link between the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights (ICCPR) and the project. **In general, respondents were not aware of the international treaties and protocols that serve as guidelines to protect children from abuse and trafficking, and to try their cases.** Respondents mentioned "international laws" for children but could not quote the correct nomenclature, they knew that those international treaties were about child rights to food, shelter, education, and protection but never talked about justice for or with children. Moreover, the right to non-discrimination and participation was quoted by less respondents. **Finally, the respondents were not**

aware of the provision in the Afghan penal code related to child protection and trafficking.

A lesser number of children than initially envisaged accessed justice under this project due to the political shift of August 2021 and the suspension of the formal justice system. However, this is a finding which is more situated at an output level. At an outcome level, the desk review and the discussions with the lawyers and the CBCPMs members seem to confirm that the project has contributed to enforcing local child protection laws and prosecuting cases: they gave examples of cases that they referred, that were prosecuted and in which children received legal aid and psycho-social or financial support. Nevertheless, since the suspension of the formal justice system, no case of child abuse was prosecuted under the project. If the CBCPMs are part of the process of Justice with Children, it cannot be the sole entity upon which to rely on case of Child sexual Abuse. **The access to justice for child victims of child abuse has therefore been undermined post August 2021, and there was nothing that the project could do about it.**

**Women's participation in the evaluation but also in the project execution, constitutes another salient area of improvement.** Efforts were initially made to involve women in training and sensitization sessions, and as members in the CBCPMs and School Management Shuras (SMS). However, War Child Canada in Afghanistan and its implementing partners (IPs) are largely managed by men. **Community-based decisions to protect children are also essentially taken by men:** women may have played a role in sensitizing other women and their children about how to identify and mitigate risks, but the decisions on how to respond to abuse when it is disclosed, still largely rely on men. The fact that women were banned from working for (I)NGOs and UN agencies at the time of this assignment, may have exacerbated this perception by the evaluation team, since very few women accepted to answer the questionnaires.

**The CBCPMs and their referral networks are not integrated into a state-led child protection mechanism that can oversee the quality of their work, hold them accountable or protect them whenever needed.** Examples of the CBCPMs' interventions and case studies suggest that non-violent solutions abiding by the best interests of the child were applied to address reported cases of child abuse, but risks of violent escalation or retaliation against the CBCPMs members, or the child or his family cannot be totally excluded.

The evaluation team also noted that even if the project scope was limited to the geographical areas mentioned earlier, **War Child Canada and its implementing partners had very little interaction with regional and international platforms that specialize in advocacy, experience and knowledge sharing pertaining to child protection and justice with children.** This is regrettable as War Child Canada team in Canada and Afghanistan, its implementing partners, as well as the children involved in the SPEAC II project, could learn from such interactions and use such knowledge to guarantee cross-fertilization and achieve further impact.

Lastly, the monitoring and evaluation framework under **the project lacked specific child-centric justice indicators** that would have helped assess more precisely to which extent the justice system (informal and informal) in the target areas was abiding by international child safeguarding standards and making a difference for children in Afghanistan.

Moreover, the evaluation focuses on the outcomes and impact generated by the project. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that since outcomes are essentially fed by outputs stemming from various activities, this project presents a specific feature:

- In the first phase of SPEAC II, out of ten targets, six targets were achieved for activities related to community mobilization and stakeholders' engagement, trainings, advocacy, tool development. Only four were not achieved mostly due to activities being paused because of the pandemic of the August 2021 political shift (capacity-building activities on local child protection laws had to be dropped, and a lesser number of children received legal aid and less cases than planned got prosecuted)
- Post August 2021, out of sixteen targets, 5 were achieved or overachieved; those targets directly concerned the community mobilization related activities and the operationalization of a structured community-based child protection mechanism, whereas eleven targets were not achieved (less students and members of the SMS could be sensitized on child rights and reporting of abuse, less religious leaders than anticipated could be engaged to disseminate information on child rights and child protection, less policy dialogues could be held, less universities or educational institutions got engaged in the program, a smaller number of parents was reached for sensitization sessions, and a lesser number of child victims received psychosocial support of legal aid), essentially due to the suspension of the justice mechanism or security restrictions and COVID-19.

All in all, out of twenty-six targets, twelve were achieved only, which under the circumstances, is still highly encouraging. As we will see later in the evaluation criteria analysis, the fact that some quantitative results have not been achieved, has not stopped the program from creating impact and achieving outcomes, especially at community level. This also suggests a high degree of effectiveness in the project execution.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

**Relevance and efficiency** the project was **relevant and efficient**. It builds on past groundbreaking results (enactment of a new law criminalizing the *bacha baazi* practice) and addresses the child victims' need to access justice and other support services and be free from abuse and discrimination.

To this end, the project raised awareness on child rights through local languages and appropriate vectors (TV, radio, community-based meetings, leaflets), it engaged community members -including religious leaders and children- and state duty bearers to develop and operationalize a child protection and referral mechanism; it also built the capacities of justice actors to deal with cases of child abuse, and provided comprehensive support services (including legal aid, educational, psychological and financial support) to child victims, and their families.

**The findings suggests that the project response was facilitated** by the fact that informed War Child Canada Afghan staff members helped design and adjust interventions that fit the operational context, taking into consideration political, cultural and gender sensitivities. For example, post August 2021, War Child Canada Afghan staff was highly instrumental in maintaining contact (physical or virtual), coordinating, and collecting data from the IPs to identify what activities and objectives ought to be dropped or adjusted, to achieve intended results. Similarly,

the Afghan staff was very reactive in re-registering War Child Canada in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, so that it may continue its operations and serve the beneficiaries.

**The response of SPEAC II was also supported by War Child Canada's strategic choice to partner with local IPs** located in seven provinces in the country and comprising various ethnic groups. **All those IPs had a long-term association** (some of them up to 12 years) **with War Child Canada to work on child protection projects.** Lastly, the community focused approach of the intervention also allowed a tailor-made and timely response of the project.

Hence, the activities fitted the provincial contexts, served the project objectives, and were owned by partners and community members.

This analysis seems to be further substantiated by the community-based respondents: all the respondents felt that the intervention was *needed* as it addressed key issues faced by male children: essentially commercial exploitation and abuse (including sexual abuse). Additionally, War Child Canada staff members mentioned that the current multi-dimensional crisis impacting the Afghan population, continues to put children at risk of being exploited and abused. Families must survive, and male children are often requested to help generate an income.

"There were a lot of things that pushed us to join this action. Children are vulnerable and we saw things such as child labor, bacha baazi".  
*Male member of a CBPCM (Balkh)*

"I saw these cases and helped in the mediation of those. So, I got very interested and joined War Child Canada. We felt we needed this in our community".

*Male Legal Aid Attorney (Kabul)*

"I admired their (War Child Canada) goals. Where I grow up, I saw many difficulties for children. When we got forms, we found out that there was a volunteering program in Afghanistan, so I felt the need to take part in this program."

*Teacher, Balkh*

Moreover, by ensuring that War Child Canada and its IPs would be re-registered post August 2021, paying attention to the semantics, engaging with religious leaders, and - to a certain extent- with men and boys than women and girls, the project demonstrates its capacity to manage conflict sensitivity.



“Rather than using the expression *bacha baazi*, when we interact with community members, we talk about child protection or even protection from Child Sexual Abuse or trafficking. This is easier and addresses local sensitivities”.

*War Child Canada- Afghanistan male staff member and one IP male representative in Kandahar*

**Context Change and Adaptability:** As described earlier in this report, the relevance and efficiency of the project were further supported by its capacity to take into consideration context changes and adapt. For example, **the action was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:** workshops and trainings were suspended and the number of participants for any activity entailing physical interaction was reduced to a maximum of 10 people wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), sitting at a safe distance from each other. To counter the negative impact of suspending workshops, trainings, and community-based sensitization sessions, War Child Canada and its partners resorted to mass media awareness campaign through TV, radio, and loudspeakers in mosques. Whilst the War Child Canada team and its partners consider that those alternative solutions are not as effective as community-based physical activities, they all agree that in the context of a pandemic, this was the best they could do.

**The other element that has impacted the project was the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban regime in August 2021.** Consequently, the formal justice system got suspended. As per newly notified policies, women got barred from working with NGOs/INGOs and UN agencies. Girls above 12 were stopped from studying and both saw their mobility further restricted (obligation to be accompanied by a “legal guardian” to go out). Consequently, international aid got suspended, activities were put on hold, the project objectives and activities revised, and it is only by ensuring that the project would solely focus on beneficiaries and not interact directly or indirectly with Taliban that SPEAC II resumed in April 2022.

This adjustment was quite successful and led to an interesting “paradigm shift<sup>31</sup>” which focused on preventing and responding to child abuse, especially SAE - including *bacha baazi*- through informal community-based child protection mechanisms. Nevertheless, the interviews with female respondents suggest that the bar on women and girls to study and work has psychologically effected parents, volunteers. It may also explain why certain quantitative numbers were not achieved, since suddenly, half of the community-based target groups (females) could not be reached anymore, or with much more difficulties and risks.

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<sup>31</sup> Quote from a War Child Canada male staff member in Afghanistan.

Yes that (the August 2021 political shift) impacted us a lot because nowadays, women and girls cannot go out easily for their work and training anymore”.

*Female member of a SMS*

“I feel sorry for my daughter. We need to educate them (girls) if we want to improve our society”.

*A father, Kabul*

**Overall, the respondents acknowledge the limitations and found that the mitigations adopted by War Child Canada and the IPs, were the best they could do under the circumstances.** Some teachers suggested that those mitigations should include the development and distribution at community level of a booklet on child rights and the UNCR, featuring the corresponding Qur’anic verses to promote child rights in a culturally relevant manner. They also suggested to use social media for the dissemination of such material.

When asked about other potential problems faced while working on this project respondents pointed out the lack of transportation facilities which hindered their participation, threats by terrorist groups and some Taliban (the report and respondents indicate that there is a divide among the Taliban and that some are far more conservative than others).

“They are so close minded. But we are on a mission to deal with them. I have some examples. Some of them are ridiculous and say that children should be segregated from pre-school, that cartoons should be banned. This is a very backward thinking. I am working on convincing people in their areas not to listen to them. These are the kind of people that lead to girls not going to school.”

*A religious leader*

To overcome those additional obstacles, respondents declared that they focused on the younger generation (students, children, newlywed couples, other religious leaders) and communities instead of government representatives.

**Hence the findings show that the project has been adaptive and resilient to manage constraints and challenges.**

### **Coherence:**

As mentioned in the context analysis featured in this report and in the *SPEAC / external evaluation report 2019*, the harmful practice of *bacha baazi* has been occurring for centuries in Afghanistan and is, essentially, a culturally embedded, and largely tolerated institutionalized form of pedo-criminality and human trafficking. The evaluation found that the project had taken into consideration the

long-term needs, development goals, and priorities relating to countering human trafficking and improving child protection systems in Afghanistan. Capacity-building and awareness sessions on child rights, child protection and Trafficking in Persons (TIP) laws were embedded in the project to promote law enforcement. Moreover, the project also worked on equipping state and non-state actors - including communities- with knowledge and skills to identify cases of SAE and trafficking, refer those cases via a community-based mechanism, prevent those, and in general, advocate for a behavioral change and a more child-conducive society. This is aligned with international child safeguarding guidelines enshrined in the UNCRC. However, respondents insisted that the multi-pronged crisis is so severe in Afghanistan that without urgent humanitarian support and action to improve livelihood, millions of children are still at risk of extremely serious child rights violations including SAE and trafficking.

"We, Afghans, are facing hard financial problems at home; that is why we cannot give our children the rights that they deserve."

*Female CBPCM member, Balkh*

The project's coherence has also been ensured through the synergies that it built with like-minded organizations, key institutions and stakeholders including but not limited to mosques, schools, madrassas, houses of village elders, private homes, parents, Empowerment Center for Women, lawyers, teachers, shopkeepers, neighbors, religious leaders, and the children, Afghanistan Justice Organization, Global Rights, Child Protection Action Network (CPAN), universities.. All those were part of the community-based child protection and referral mechanism that were established under SPEAC II. Additionally, the findings suggest that coordination and dialogue through the Child Protection cluster enabled War Child Canada to avoid duplication and facilitate coherence to improve child protection in Afghanistan. For example, Save the Children and War Child Canada worked on identical child protection components but apparently not in the same area. We were informed by War Child Canada team in Afghanistan that, to avoid duplication, the United Nations Child Protection Cluster mapped all child protection interventions in Afghanistan and shared this mapping with INGOs and NGOs. This information seems to be corroborated by the fact that at the time of the evaluation, the respondents did not know of any other INGO or NGO currently working on child protection in their community.

Moreover, SPEAC II project is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children", the General Comment 24 of the UNCRC on Child Justice (for juveniles) and the objectives of the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) announced in 2016 to support child rights in Afghanistan.

### Effectiveness

The respondents' feedback confirms that the project was **effective**: the evolving context of the project was taken into consideration and adequate mitigations were adopted. Post August 2021, objective 3 of SPEAC II was revised, some activities

adjusted or even discontinued, enablers identified in a timely and sustained manner. Overall, the impacts achieved by the project in such a challenging operational context seem rather impressive. More precisely, the project has been able to contribute to the three intended impacts listed in SPEAC II logical model to various degrees:

- **Result 1: the development of an enabling environment for justice and law enforcement to implement the full existing laws and active prosecution of the perpetrators of trafficking in person including *bacha baazi* and full protection of Afghan children from all forms of abuse and exploitation.**

To this end, the **engagement of/advocacy with legal actors and decision-makers** appears to have been successful prior to August 2021. Right from the beginning of the project, War Child Canada could report that “*As a result of the meetings, JRC, AIHRC, Attorney General’s Office, the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior Affairs pledged to support the children surviving bacha baazi, trafficking in person and sexual abuse issues together with national and international organizations engaged in the implementation of the DRL SPEAC II project*”. Moreover, trainings with lawyers were impactful and outcomes institutionalized: “After the training, War Child Canada and HRDA signed contracts with the trained private attorneys, and they started to identify child abuse and *bacha baazi* cases from different sources. The trained attorneys will apply the knowledge gained during training for better case representation and follow-up processes”. The utilization of the acquired knowledge was confirmed by the interviewed lawyers.

Finally, a report quotes: “*Subsequently, the project team has represented cases of child abuse in the court which was decided in favour of the child*”. If we add this information to the alleged positive behavioral change towards children (asking child-sensitive questions in court, looking after the child, treating him well, trying to conduct the trial in a relatively short period) quoted by the interviewed lawyers who were in a different province and who did not know each other, this suggests that courts were shifting towards improved Justice with Child victims of SAE where the violation of their rights could be redressed.

An interview with a legal aid lawyer also shows that the engagement of legal actors went beyond the court space: the lawyer referred the child to a psychologist and to an organization who arranged financial support for the child to pursue this education. This denotes a **child centric and trauma-informed approach supported by a referral mechanism**. Both legal aid lawyers highlighted the difference between what happened prior to the project and as a result of the project: “A lot (of children) had been previously ill-treated by others. They had been tortured or beaten by family or by an abuser. So keeping this in mind, and due to the trainings which was given, extra care was given to these children to make them feel comfortable and safe during the justice process”.

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Moreover, the SPEAC II progress report for quarter 8 states: “*During this quarter, trainings and counselling sessions continued to be offered for children and their parents at the JRC in Kabul province. In total, 93 (all male) children received life-*

*skills education. Topics and skills covered in these sessions were: interpersonal relationships, management of stress, self-awareness, empathy, communication, management of emotions, problem solving, decision making, and creative and critical thinking. Trainings were facilitated through active approaches such as presentation, discussions, group work, role play, and storytelling sessions”.*

The fact that the project helped provide vocational training, and psycho-social to juveniles and their families in Juvenile Rehabilitation Centers (JRCs) demonstrates how the action supported efforts to boost a child conducive and enabling environment. Such support to juveniles and their families is an essential part of a restorative process for children who usually faced adverse childhood experience and who were often manipulated to eventually fall in conflict with the law. Moreover, the pre and post test results suggest that the life skills-based educational sessions have been effective: “*The pre and post-test results of these trainings on average is shown 73% - 77% improvement in the knowledge of the children about life-skills at JRCs”.*

- **Result 2: The national and sub-national authorities will have the tools to identify and prosecute *bacha baazi* perpetrators accordingly and have the knowledge and resources to refer them to appropriate services.**

Training manuals, SOPs, and guidelines for legal actors to prosecute cases of child abuse, trafficking, and *bacha baazi* were developed and disseminated to mentor and sustain this pool of informed legal actors. This suggests that the project has been effective in creating a knowledge platform that feeds the sustainability of the capacity-building and in fostering child-centric actions to refer children to support services. At the time of the evaluation, some psycho-social follow-up was still taking place by a volunteer for at least two children.

“We would refer them (child victims) to schools and psychologists and arrange loans for their education”  
*Legal aid lawyer, Kabul*

Furthermore, the knowledge acquired by legal actors has been improved and retained, however, post August 2021, it could not be used in court since the formal justice process got suspended. However, the skills and knowledge acquired under this project, prior to August 2021, may help legal actors and other relevant stakeholders advocate with the current regime to prevent and respond to child Sexual Abuse, trafficking, and *bacha baazi* through a formal justice system: they will be able to share and defend examples of good practices to protect and rehabilitate children victims of abuse and juveniles, and can link the rights enshrined in the UNCRC with the local values. This potentially catalytic pool of human technical resources underlines the effectiveness of the project, and must be capitalized upon and put to use in the next programming phase for advocacy purposes.

"We don't know if the existing laws are relevant. They (the Taliban regime) are still trying to decide whether they will use older laws or implement shariah entirely".

*Legal aid lawyer, Kabul*

- **Result 3: Afghan civil society is empowered with knowledge of child rights through multiple agents of change to proactively promote the elimination of *bacha bazi* and other forms of child trafficking their communities.**

The most successful components of the project appear to be the community-level capacity building to protect and promote children's rights and the community-focused behaviour change communication & public awareness.

For example, the data shows that the capacity-building of volunteers has yielded positive results to refer cases of child abuse, trafficking, or *bacha baazi* to attorneys or CBCPMs, follow-up those cases, or mobilize and empower law students for internships. Community-focused behavior change communication such as the media campaign and public awareness appear to have had a positive impact on the target population. Parents, community members and religious leaders realized their duty towards children and took action to rescue and support child victims. They referred cases and adopted a more vigilant approach towards child protection in their respective environment.

"We also discouraged children from going to game arcades as they are dangerous for children. Children were exploited and abused there".

*Female respondent, Balkh*

"We know people in our village, the commissioners they are preoccupied with governing the country. This is our role: bringing the change at community level".

*A religious leader in Kabul.*

"Some children were given cigarettes in exchange for a touch. We managed to stop that person: we filed a case. I also remember a case of *bacha bazi*, we managed to take the boy out of it"

*Female member of a CBCPM/Female teacher*

"Ignorance is fine. But now that we have been trained, it is our duty to promote child rights and child protection. We have no excuse to remain silent and inactive anymore".

*Member of the SMS, Balkh*

We had a child who was working in the agriculture fields from morning till evening then we met his father and talked to him: now he sends his son to school daily.

*Female teacher, Balkh*

The contribution of the project towards promoting a behavioral change was further underlined: the respondents felt that the project had developed help-seeking behaviors among children, and that adults were more ready to listen to them and support them. Some women and the *religious leaders* also stated that the project had also contributed to reducing domestic violence: people realized that violence was creating a toxic environment for children and themselves and more peaceful and dialogue-oriented behaviors were noticed among some parents, fathers in particular.

"I will save myself first, then I will report to my parents, the CBCPMs and my teacher",

*A male member of the student council, Balkh*

"Now instead of fighting we talk to each other because if we fight, children will do the same. We have a responsibility towards them".

*Father, Balkh*

"Many boys would work till late at brick kilns. There was also *bacha baazi* happening there. But after attending the training, we started intervening. Many children would get deals like moving 1000 bricks, for 20 afghanis. We gave sermons and went to their parents. We told them to not do this, to instead send their children for education and madrassas. We especially reprimanded the fathers who would send their sons and sit at home themselves".

*Religious leader, Balkh*

"I also intervened in a case of domestic violence, it was running the children and the family, I gave my guarantee to protect the mother".

*Religious leader, Kabul*

Indeed, interviews with the respondents suggest that the project made a difference in children's life: raising their awareness about their rights, reducing child labor in the target areas, promoting access to justice and education, holding perpetrators legally OR socially accountable (boycott), protecting children from being sexually abused or exploited, providing them with psycho-social support and vocational trainings. The respondents also mentioned that positive disciplining for children at home and safe learning in school, had improved thanks to the project training and sensitization sessions.

"If a child makes a mistake, now instead of punishing, we teach them better. At least in my direct surrounding, we have stopped hitting children for discipline."

*Male teacher, Kandahar.*

"My next project is really to set up a center for safe recreational activities for children."

*Teacher, Kandahar*

"All the people who were known to be cruel to children or had history of *bacha baazi* are no longer welcome in the area".

*Religious leader*

Two survivors acknowledged the economic, educational, and psychological support that they received and how it helped them find a job and live a better life. One of them said that he was less anxious now, thanks to the program. None of them mentioned the legal aid. Both were aware of child rights and were still in contact with War Child Canada team and its partner.

When asked about the gender equality component, respondents largely pointed out that the women who were trained under the project, and women-headed families, could influence their families and peers and raise their children in a more conducive manner. Several respondents insisted that trained mothers could ensure that children were protected or did not commit any crime. Whenever possible, the project data was gender disaggregated, women and girls were involved as facilitators and beneficiaries, but the new regime had disturbed those gender-sensitive efforts. What must also not be forgotten in the project's gender framework -especially in the context of *bacha baazi*- is that boys are the main victims of sexual gender-based violence in this scenario. Therefore, it may be worth exploring how countering GBV against boys may help reduce GBV, including violence against women and girls.

**Hence, it seems fair to say that the capacity-building and behavior change communication executed at community level under SPEAC II has been effective and has generated the following impact:**

- Creating a group of community-based agents of change who understand what child rights are and what child protection is, and who are ready to play a catalytic role to positively transform their society. Before the project, at least 50% of the respondents did not try to do something in their surroundings to protect children. Respondents listed right to education, food, care, be protected from abuse and exploitation as fundamental rights. Child protection was defined as all children -regardless of their gender- being able to study safely and be protected from any form of abuse and violence. But more importantly, all respondents were capable



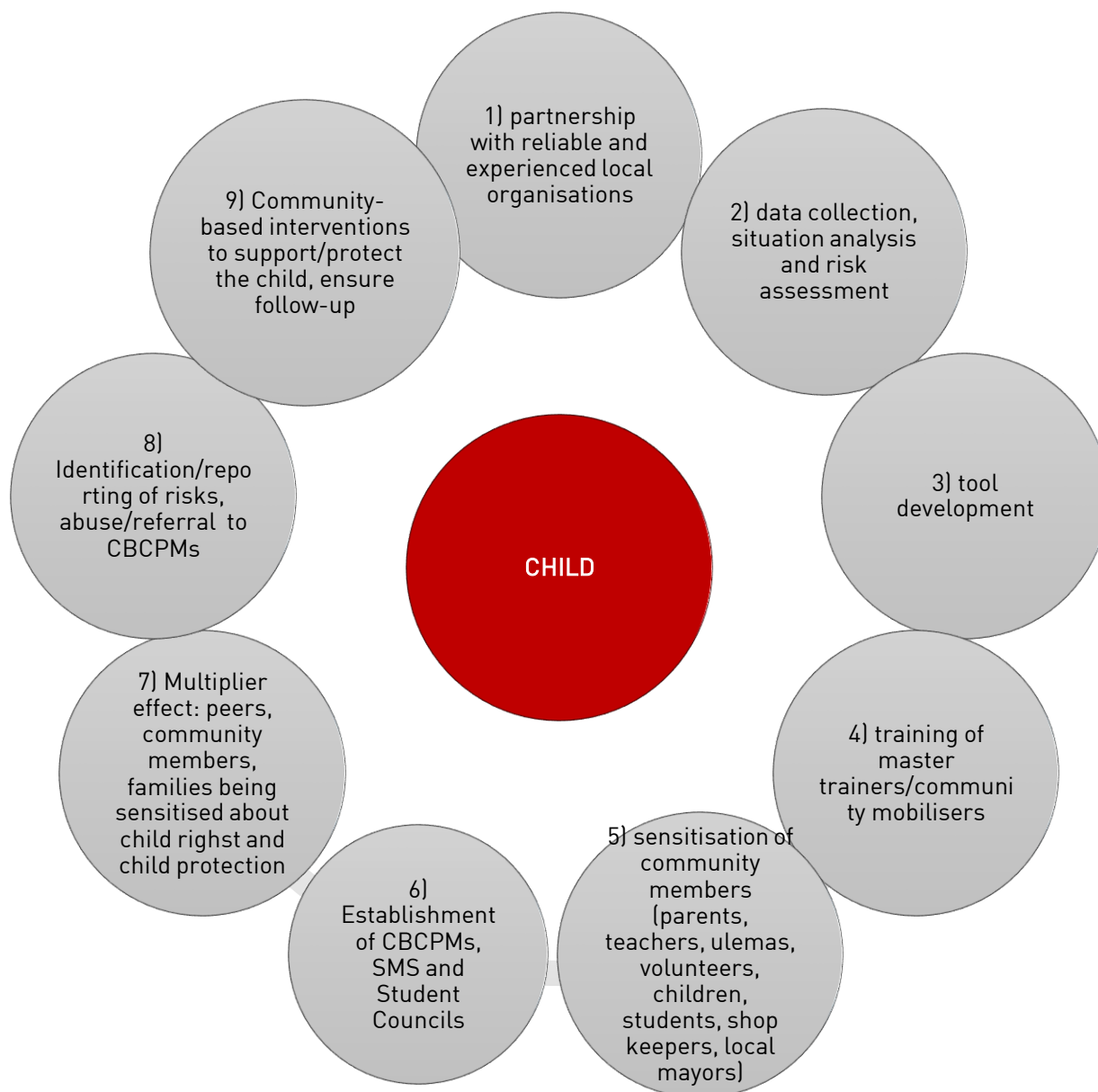
of giving at least an example of how the trainings and sensitization had motivated them to ACT for child rights. Becoming a volunteer under the SPEAC II project, raising awareness at home, reporting a case, surveilling the shops, rescuing children from labor, going to meet the parents of child victims to convince them to send the child to school, arranging financial support for children and families, area few examples of the actions that were quoted and that illustrate the behavioral change stemming from those capacity-building sessions.

The generic term of *care* was often used by respondents to define child rights and child protection. Additionally, most respondents viewed child protection as a religious principle to abide by and an adult's responsibility.

- Creation of a cohort of **legal actors** equipped with relevant knowledge to prosecute cases of cases of child abuse, including cases of child sexual abuse, trafficking, and *bacha baazi*: according to the interviewed lawyers, War Child Canada Staff in Afghanistan, and a woman respondent who had referred a case of child abuse to War Child Canada, the trained prosecutors have used the knowledge and skills acquired during the training while prosecuting cases. For them, it meant “being good to the child”, “treating him well” during the trial process, and not divulging his identity. Additionally, a lawyer mentioned that prior to attending the training under this project, the cases of *bacha baazi* or sexual abuse against children could last several years, whilst after attending the training, the judges tried to adjudicate within a few weeks. Those elements are aligned with the principles of child-friendly justice taught under this project: ensure a conducive environment for the child (accused or victim) and try to limit the duration of the trial to avoid secondary trauma. However, the evidence to support this analysis is limited to a few statements from respondents; since no legal file could be consulted -due to legitimate and ethical considerations-, the evaluation team has recommended a more specific type of assessment to measure more adequately the child-friendliness of the courts, after the trainings.
- **Juveniles and** child victims of child abuse accessed justice and support services (mental health and economic support);
- Operationalization of referral mechanisms to prevent and respond to cases of Violence Against Children;
- Reconciling the perceptions about the rights enshrined in the UNCRC with Islamic Principles and thereby indirectly contributing to social cohesion and peace;
- Mobilising synergies that led to concrete actions to end SAE of children and child labor: shutting down an arcade game center where cases of abuse had been reported, extracting children from labor in brick kilns and mines and enrolling them in schools: a respondent said that he had found a male child being forced to work on the streets. He chose to pay him a monthly stipend as long as he would go to school at the madrassa. The child is now a star student, and his siblings and cousins also go to the same school.
- Multiplier effect: trainees sharing knowledge with peers, neighbors, family members, or other community members in mosques;
- Alleged reduction of corporal punishment in targeted communities and schools;

Last but not the least, the process and engagement described underneath, with target communities, led to an effective model of community-based child protection mechanism, which is child-centric and trauma informed.

## SPEAC II process to establish a model community-based child protection mechanism



Some respondents mentioned that while raising awareness on child rights or referring cases to CBCPMs, they noticed some resistance from families accused of child abuse, from perpetrators, from a few lawyers, the mayor of one target area, a few community members, some Taliban, or from some religious leaders “less educated and closed minded”<sup>32</sup>. The respondents identified this resistance as a risk and a problem that could lead to being accused of promoting a *Western agenda*, and which may get them in trouble with local authorities. Yet -apart from women and a lawyer- they were confident that the project had equipped them with relevant knowledge to argue and convince their opponents that child rights were aligned with Islamic principles and beneficial for their community and the country.

<sup>32</sup> This was mentioned by another Aalim.

## Sustainability:

The project sustainability has been assessed from a technical, political, institutional, financial, and social perspective. The findings suggest the following:

Technical sustainability: War Child Canada has developed and disseminated training manuals, Standard Operating Procedures, guidebooks, that will be available and accessible even after the project ends. On-going linkage, capacity-building workshops and on-job training provided to local service providers, community leaders, and partners have established a pool of trained stakeholders to counter the practice of *bacha baazi*. For example, local staff were trained on delivering psycho-social support to child victims of *bacha baazi* or their families. War Child Canada staff and legal actors were trained on TIP laws, advocacy strategy, effective coordination, communication and community mobilization. Moreover, the technical sustainability is visible through the results documented in the stakeholders' assessments:

- Community leaders: "It was found that 87% to 100% of the respondents learned all the topics covered in the TiP Law training";
- Legal actors assessment report: "It was found that 87% to 100% of the respondents learned all the topics covered in the TIP Law training".

Additionally, during the interviews, as previously mentioned, **all the male respondents ensured that they would continue to share the acquired knowledge on child rights and child protection, and work against child labor. However, among the five female respondents, 2 pointed out that it might be difficult for them to share the technical knowledge and skills they had acquired under this project, due to the restrictive policies put in place for women by the new regime.**

"Given the current situation, I will only share knowledge with my family, at home"

*Female member of the SMS, Balkh*

Political sustainability: as aptly described by one War Child Canada staff member and partners, this is a challenging aspect of the project sustainability and it may be too soon to comment on this section. Prior to the August 2021 shift, the project kept a strong liaison with state authorities and the government. This changed with the arrival of the new Taliban regime. However, since War Child Canada has maintained synergies with local organizations, community members and religious leaders throughout SPEAC II, it is possible that the CSO Alliance, and other agents of change, may continue to advocate for a more child conducive political agenda, on their own. To this end, the civil society and the community members may use the project achievements as evidence to support their contextualized pro-child rights and justice narrative to counter child abuse -including the *bacha baazi* practice- in the target areas. Under the previous Taliban regime, the practice of *bacha baazi* had been outlawed and labelled anti-Islamic, against the Shariah Law. **Hence, whether based on an international human rights logic or an Islamic principled approach, the data suggests that the constant contacts, and interactions with local decision-makers under SPEAC II are likely to have contributed to a form of political buy-in for child rights. However, this buy-in will largely depend on the evolution of the geo-political scenario and the level of agency and safety that CSOs and child rights activists may avail.**

"There are not that many educated children so, child rights are important, primarily right to education, as we need to have more breadwinners in Afghanistan. Most of the skilled people left the country, and it has been felt."

*Male teacher, Kabul*

"Children are our future: training them on those topics (child protection and child rights) amounts to investing in the future of Afghanistan."

*Male Aalim, Kabul*

"If we can nurture children's minds, they can bring the change in the mindset that our country needs and challenge the status quo. It is important, but it is difficult right now due to security reasons. I have received calls and questions asking why I take part in such work for child rights."

*Legal Aid Lawyer.*

Institutional sustainability: initial steps had been taken to work with the justice sector -including police academies- and institutionalise trainings on TIP laws and child protection as per national laws. Moreover, an on-going institutional collaboration to refer cases of *bacha baazi*, provide health and rehabilitation services to victims and prosecute the accused, took place. Collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and other state actors was ensured and formalized through the signature of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and the investment in master trainers, so that the acquired knowledge may be transferred afterwards, beyond the project life. However, the data shows that the activities related to ensuring access to justice for victims of *bacha baazi* had to be discontinued towards the end of the project since the previous justice system stopped functioning after the Taliban de facto regime came to power. Hence the only remaining form of institutionalised sustainability of the project may stem from a) the engagement of some educational institutions whose staff was trained on the referral mechanism and child protection, b) the engagement of the master trainers trained and mentored prior to the August 2021 political shift, to sensitise their peers against SAE of children, even in their respective institutions, in a new legal context, c) the mobilisation of the same master trainers and decision makers to advocate for a legal framework (even a new one, away from the previous penal code) that could hold perpetrators of SAE accountable and ensure rehabilitation services to child victims. **The collaboration with schools and institutional educations has been a constant feature of the project's institutional sustainability, and ought to be upscaled.**

Financial sustainability: War Child Canada has prudently showcased its work and results through Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and its website. This visibility along with coordination with the CSOs, and regular update with the donor, contributes to the financial sustainability of the action as it may inform and motivate a donor to support a good cause: child protection in Afghanistan. Furthermore, several donors check an organization website and its social media when they

receive a proposal, to verify the organization claim and expertise. War Child Canada internally conducted a risk assessment and decided to keep a rather low visibility regarding its action in Afghanistan, especially in a context where the donor was US-based. However, one of the outcomes of this final evaluation may be to re-assess the situation and see to which extent the visibility of the results achieved through SPEAC II could be better showcased in yet a safe, conflict and child-sensitive manner. For example, some short videos, graphics, or animations could be developed to share key updates, document examples of good practices without mentioning the donor and keeping in view the do no harm policy, and best interests of the child. Linking with regional and international advocacy forums could be an interesting approach to this end<sup>33</sup>.

Lastly, the fact that tools and SOPs developed during the first phase of the SPEAC project were re-used during the second phase “Referral system, SoPs, and guidelines were developed in Dari as part of the previous phase of the project (SPEAC I) and continue to be utilized for the current phase of the project”<sup>34</sup>, brings Value for Money (VfM) to the action and is part of the project financial sustainability. Nevertheless, an important aspect of the project financial sustainability depends on the geo-political dynamics between Taliban and the rest of the world, and the resilience of Afghan volunteers to continue their engagement for child rights now that the project has ended. Without any economic support and improvement, it may however become difficult for some of the volunteers to maintain the same level of engagement, despite their genuine commitment.

“I have facilitated them with my home, safety, and hospitality to organize meetings. I will continue to do so, but at some point, when things became really difficult, I would have appreciated some support.”

*A father, community volunteer.*

Social sustainability: the project has invested a lot on this type of sustainability by engaging, sensitising, and training parents, teachers, community members, students, justice actors, children, youth and *religious leaders who continue their activity towards child protection beyond the project implementation period*. The data suggests that the increased knowledge and positive behavioral change witnessed among target groups, the improved conviction rate resulting from the capacity-building of legal actors and activation of referral mechanism, the support expressed by *Ulemas*, parents and other members of the CBCPM, have had a multiplier and lasting effect. All the respondents seemed to have continued their action to promote and protect children despite the fact that the project has ended. This social sustainability is also confirmed through:

- the Community leaders’ assessment report: “It was found that a great majority of the respondents have positive attitudes about child protection. Besides, the assessment found that respondents took steps towards child protection, for instance, most of them started using the pocket guidelines. Ninety-three percent of the respondents confirmed that the training

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<sup>33</sup> See the section useful links

<sup>34</sup> SPEAC II 7<sup>th</sup> quarter progress

delivered to them were ‘very effective’ (*see figure 8*). This positive attitude towards children and the understanding that child protection and enforcing child rights is essential for the future of the country, **has motivated community leaders to take concrete steps for children even after the project ended**. One of the respondents stated that he now would focus on creating a safe leisure space in his community for male children so that they could play in a conducive environment; another one indicated that combatting child labour and protecting children from abuse would be his life mission. All respondents highlighted how the project had helped them “open their eyes” or “understand better” child rights and child protection. This knowledge will continue to be transmitted beyond the project implementation period and will shape some actions by community members that carry positive social change for children of those communities. The exchanges with those community leaders suggest that their positive attitude towards child rights promotes a behavioral model (a child rights-based one) that inspires neighbors, and benefits the youth, the next generation.

**3 female respondents insisted on the fact that raising awareness on child rights and particularly on gender equality was essential at a time when right to education was denied to so many girls.** The concepts of “responsibility” and “duty” to sustain the project results, and the realization that improving child rights and protection was going to generate social, political, and economic dividends for the country was repeatedly mentioned by respondents which suggests a social shift among the target groups. Lastly, male respondents pointed out several times that, as Muslims, they had to continue promoting child rights and protecting children.

**It therefore seems fair to say that the project has managed to create an impressive group of community-based agents of change, by fostering positive citizenry in line with Islamic values. Those agents of change have continued to positively transform their community in favor of children beyond the project life. This is no small feat and probably constitutes one of the strongest elements of the project sustainability.**

“We will continue to pass on the information that we have learned, because it is our responsibility as Muslims and humans for the betterment of our homes and communities, and for our children and country to succeed. If we do not do this, it will be harmful for both: the children and for us too.”

*Religious leader, Kabul*

### **Coordination and Management**

The findings indicate that the coordination of the project has been **solid and efficient**. The project team has ensured regular and timely coordination with relevant actors (donors, state authorities, lawyers, police, registration authorities, religious leaders, schools management shuras, students councils, CBCPMs, parents and other community members), even when the project was paused. Financial and narrative reports were submitted on time. Religious leaders have helped raise awareness on child protection at community level through their sermons. CBCPMs have referred cases of *bacha baazi* or other forms of SAE that were subsequently taken up by attorneys, prosecuted and followed up. Child victims

and their families accessed psycho-social support services and other forms of support after community-based referral. This regular coordination also took place with CSO alliances, Child Protection clusters and INSO, which was essential to ensure timely and relevant security updates and flow of information, including during COVID-19 third wave. Hence, it seems appropriate to state that the effective project coordination has played an important role in upholding the “Do No Harm Policy”. Other examples of how War Child Canada has focused and applied safeguarding standards reside in:

- the relocation plan that was developed for foreign staff
- the confidentiality ensured for survivors of child sexual abuse and *bacha baazi*
- the trainings on child protection delivered to War Child Canada staff, partners, and other target groups
- the use of personal protection equipment (PPE)
- the remote management that was adopted to avoid COVID-19 spread (using skype, e-mails, Team Meetings, etc).

Overall, War Child Canada has been able to adapt quite quickly to the changing operational circumstances. The solid project management is also illustrated by the way War Child Canada and its partners ensured funds disbursement even when the US-funding was paused: War Child Canada and its partners used their UN-funding (which were the only funds exempted from any ban at that time) to support staff and essential work and paused non-essential activities. This contributed to strengthening the trust rapport between partners, which has been critical to navigate the roadblocks during this implementation period and eventually achieve the results assessed through this evaluation.

**All the respondents underlined how War Child Canada and the partners were responsive and praised their communication.** Implementing partners found weekly and bi-monthly meetings with War Child Canada Kabul office useful and they praised along the technical support provided by War Child Canada whenever requested and required. The fact that the intervention leadership rested with locals was also lauded by IPs. For example, “In September 2022, War Child Canada staff attended a monthly coordination meeting hosted by the Afghanistan Legal Aid and Advocates Network (ALAAN) consisting of lawyers, private attorneys, legal aid service providers organizations (NGOs/INGOs, Senior staff) in SAFI Hotel. The participants shared monthly updates, and in addition two documents were shared by The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) 1) the Coordination and Communication Guideline plan and 2) the Litigation Strategy plan to collect feedback from network members for improvement. War Child Canada staff had significant contribution in terms of providing feedback and insights for improvement of these two documents and encouraged the network members to work for children and women rights and recommended to establish joint advocacy and referral system for victim children case”.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Extract from the narrative report 12<sup>th</sup> quarter SPEAC II, page 3

# CASE STUDIES

- **Case study 1:** a religious leader based in Kabul, PD-7

This *religious leader* is very educated and a strong believer in the importance of education. In his madrassa, children are not only taught Islamic studies, but also Mathematics, Sciences, English; they have options to take some vocation skills trainings if they wish to.

After the ban on education for girls past the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the *religious leader* negotiated with the new regime and obtained the following: he would be allowed to use the madrassa to teach young girls, even past the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, under certain conditions. i.e. no interactions with males, and all female teachers. The madrassah that he runs now has 11 female teachers and approximately 500 female students.

When asked about how the project contributed to this, he said that although he already stood by these ideals and would have gone forward with the school regardless of the project, it had helped him a lot to learn Child Protection in a much more structured and cognitive manner. He said it was like going to school to learn it. He also stated that the project had allowed him to be aware of these morals that already exist in Islam, but in an international way.

- **Case study 2:** history of a child respondent (survivor) in Mazar-e-Sharif:

One respondent in Mazar was a differently able child. Maybe due to a slightly weaker grasp on socio-cultural norms, he was sending love letters to his neighbor's daughter. Unfortunately, the neighbor found out and he did not take well to what he perceived as a dishonorable act. He captured the child and tied him to a tree. The surrounding community members (members of the CBCPM) had been trained on child protection and child rights under the project, hence when they found out what had happened, they knew how to intervene. With the help of some teachers, a focal person, and some elders in the village, they spoke to the neighbor and explained not only that the child has a mental disability, but also that he was a child, and that this was subsequently not an appropriate way to react. The community members argued that they just needed them to explain things to the child in a conducive manner.

A psychologist who was also a member of the local CBCPM, followed up with the child after the event and to date, the child is safe and took part in the evaluation.

- **Case study 3:** a father in Kabul

A father showed an excellent knowledge in Gender Equality. He happened to be one of the respondents who provided their home as a training center. He emphasized the importance of educating girls. At a time when the trainings were regularly happening at his home, he faced a lot of trouble dealing with the locals and the Taliban. Locals were reporting him to Taliban workers and confronting him about teaching the women and children of the community "western ideals". His response was to invite them all to attend the trainings and see for themselves. He said that this allowed many of the people to actually understand that nothing Un-Islamic was being taught, and that in fact, it aligned very much with Islamic teachings.



This man also invited shopkeepers and construction workers to these trainings, saying they should be educated even more than others, because they were out and about all day, interacting with everyone and observing people around them which gave them more potential to pass on this message. He said he had volunteered to provide this space, teach people there, and educate the community.

- **Case study 4:** CBCPM in action

In Kandahar, several cases of sexual abuse against children laboring in the mines were reported to trained CBCPMs members, but those cases were not prosecuted due to social and economic pressure on the families. The CBCPM and religious leaders of the area, reached out to the parents and launched a community-based awareness campaign on the dangers that children were exposed to while working in the mines. Several of those children were referred under the project and received a stipend which allowed them to quit labor and enroll in schools. Since then, it is alleged that the number of children laboring in those mines has reduced and parents are more vigilant.

# GOOD PRACTICES

Overall, when asked about what good practices should be retained for future programming<sup>36</sup>, the respondents mentioned the following:

<b>Good practice 1</b>	<b>Training on child rights and child protection for legal actors</b>
<b>Innovation</b>	The targeted legal actors had never been trained on child protection and child rights laws before SPEAC II
<b>Participation</b>	The legal actors found the training session interactive and will remain involved in various capacities in groups advocating for child rights.
<b>Sustainability</b>	The legal actors used acquired knowledge and skills to prosecute some cases (1 example given) and shared it with peers, prior to August 2021
<b>Efficiency</b>	The legal actors realized the importance of child rights and became advocates of child protection and justice with children in other platforms (the interviewed legal actors had joined other organizations); the training tools are translated in local languages which made the training highly cognitive
<b>Transversality</b>	Legal actors link child protection and awareness on child rights to political advocacy for social justice and gender equality and peace: they see child protection as a pathway to uplift the most vulnerable (including girls).
<b>Reproducibility</b>	If the courts are back, or in a formal justice system elsewhere this approach to promote Justice with children can be replicated. Model training tools are available.
<b>Serving the best interest of the child</b>	The training contributed to creating a pool of informed legal actors ready to represent children in court and advocate for their rights outside the court
<b>Good practice 2</b>	<b>Engaging religious leaders to raise awareness on child rights and child protection</b>
<b>Innovation</b>	Most targeted religious leaders had never been trained on child rights and child protection with this international safeguarding perspective aligned with Islamic principles.
<b>Participation</b>	The religious leaders are part of the community structures and processes that prevent and respond to cases of child abuse in target areas: several child victims or members of the child victim's entourage reported cases to them directly.
<b>Sustainability</b>	All interviewed religious leaders confirmed that they continued their awareness activities through sermons in mosques and liaised with CBCPMs even after the project ended.

<sup>36</sup> The future programming is not necessarily related to Afghanistan only.

Efficiency	Those are non-traditional stakeholders in development projects and their role became those of <b>agents of change and child protection advocates who use Islamic religious principles to prevent child abuse, rescue and rehabilitate children. They also mobilize resources to economically support children and extract them from labor and sexual abuse and exploitation</b>
Transversality	Religious leaders in particular made the link between child sexual abuse, poverty and child labor. Another interesting link is faith and civic education which for them is essential to foster healthy behavioral change and create child-sensitive societies. Whilst the project focused on boys, several of them mentioned that child rights applied to girls as well and positioned themselves as advocates for gender equality and right to education for girls as well.
Reproducibility	The model of engagement with religious leaders can be replicated in other areas of Afghanistan. The trained religious leaders can lead this replication process.
Serving the best interest of the child	Once trained on child rights and child protection and ready to act within the framework of child-centric SOPs, those religious leaders play an essential role in the CBCPM to identify abuse or risk of abuse, respond or prevent it and sensitize community members or their peers.
<b>Good practice 3</b>	<b>Empowering community members through localized workshops and community-based meetings to report and prevent child abuse</b>
Innovation	No informed and structured community-based mechanism existed before in those target areas. The sensitization and training sessions motivated community members to ACT for child rights and child protection.
Participation	Once trained, community members operate and lead those community-based child protection processes.
Sustainability	All respondents indicated that they continued to share information with peers, identify children at risk, rescue child victims, and monitor alleged perpetrators even if the project ended.
Efficiency	Several children victims of sexual abuse or <i>bacha baazi</i> accessed justice or were protected from further abuse thanks to the referral and support of those trained community members who consider that they have a civic and sacred duty to “make a difference”. The use of local and sensitive languages to disseminate guidelines and SOPs created a cognitive effect (behavioral change) and generated social buy-in and local ownership.
Transversality	Interviewed community members realized that they had a civic duty to work for <b>safety and peace</b> in their community, that it was essential for child protection. They also understood how <b>child labor</b> was driving child sexual abuse and how <b>education</b> was important to prevent child abuse.
Reproducibility	This process of mobilizing, training, and organizing community members to prevent and respond to child abuse can be replicated in other areas in Afghanistan as suggested by community members.
Serving the best interest of the child	Children are safer when adults are informed, equipped and aware of their responsibility to protect children. Adult survivors interviewed during the evaluation were grateful for the help they received and found that it had helped them “feel better”.

<b>Good practice 4</b>	<b>Using new technologies to conduct online activities in case of pandemics or any other crisis</b>
<b>Innovation</b>	New technologies have expanded and are increasingly required to execute projects especially for remote management.
<b>Participation</b>	The use of new technologies enabled communication and exchanges with IPs and target groups who would have been left behind otherwise.
<b>Sustainability</b>	The practice of using those new technologies has now been embedded as a mitigation in the projects risk analysis and remain part of methodology to overcome physical restrictions: several interviews for this evaluation took place online.
<b>Efficiency</b>	These new technologies enabled the continuation of some of the sensitization and training activities. It also ensured continuous coordination with IPs to obtain timely and relevant information and ensure the relevant and timely design of remediations whenever required (i.e: work from home for female staff or project staff when security risks arose). It is also good Value for Money as it reduces traveling and logistical costs.
<b>Transversality</b>	This use of new technology has opened a door for an intersection between humanitarian and developmental action: those two modus operandi may not be seen as totally separated from each other from now on.
<b>Reproducibility</b>	The use of new technologies to overcome the restriction of physical meetings due to pandemics, natural disasters, limited budget, or security risks, has now become a constant feature of War Child Canada working methodology. It can be used in other interventions in other countries as a mitigation strategy or a cost-effective approach.
<b>Serving the best interest of the child</b>	The use of new technologies has enabled the project to continue its community-based activities to empower civil society, support and empower children in Afghanistan.
<b>Good practice 5</b>	<b>Providing multi-sectoral support to child vulnerable to/victims of sexual abuse including <i>bacha baazi</i></b>
<b>Innovation</b>	This multi-sectoral, child -centric and trauma informed support for juveniles, child victims or children at risk, was not structured, conducive and available before in the target communities.
<b>Participation</b>	The provision of that support was ensured by local actors and inspired by international safeguarding standards.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Since the support was localized, this group of agents of change is still available to some extent (some left the country after August 20210). Moreover, the support provided to juveniles, child victims or children at risk has had short, mid-terms and possibly long-term impact: they are rescued from exploitative of abusive environments and their healthy development is often monitored by community members.
<b>Efficiency</b>	The interviewed survivors stated that they were highly satisfied with the support they received. The support empowers children as it addressed multiple needs: the legal one when courts were functioning, the financial and social one with vocational training or the provision of a stipend, the psychological one. Several respondents stated that they personally knew and followed up children who were safe and healing after the project supported them. The need to

	ensure that the support was done discreetly, and in accordance with the child's particular needs also highlights the concern for a child-centric and trauma-informed approach by service providers and community members.
<b>Transversality</b>	For respondents, child protection was linked to the economic development and overall prosperity of the country.
<b>Reproducibility</b>	The model of multisectoral support to child victims can be replicated in other areas in Afghanistan or in other countries (with or without the legal aid through the formal justice system).
<b>Serving the best interest of the child</b>	According to the respondents and two survivors, the children who have been supported are healing, recovering, maintained family linkages, and are not sexually exploited, in conflict with the law or abused any more.
<b>Good Practice 6</b>	<b>Training school students and teachers on child rights , child protection and safe learning</b>
<b>Innovation</b>	None of those target beneficiaries had been trained on child rights and child protection before
<b>Participation</b>	The sessions were interactive
<b>Sustainability</b>	All respondents indicated that they shared and applied acquired knowledge and skills even after the project ended
<b>Efficiency</b>	The trainings have contributed to reducing corporal punishment in schools and at home as well. Students have gained self-confidence to report abuse, the school environment is becoming more child-conducive and responsive to students' well-being.
<b>Transversality</b>	Child trainees and teachers have started sensitizing peers on child protection beyond the school space. There is an increased realization that practicing positive disciplining will help reduce domestic violence and foster peace at community level in a more general manner. The idea is that positive disciplining helps promote anger management in general and breaks the cycle of violence.
<b>Reproducibility</b>	Those training have been translated in local language and can be replicated in other areas of Afghanistan.
<b>Serving the best interest of the child</b>	Ensuring that positive disciplining prevails in school is crucial for children's safe learning, their retention in school, and their overall healthy development.

# LESSONS LEARNED

- The project's relevance, efficiency, adaptability, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact were essentially ensured thanks to the fact that the action was a) executed through child-sensitive local staff, in partnership with long-term local partners versed in child rights and child protection interventions, b) anchored at community-level;
- The project has generated a space for **intersectional approaches**. For example, the project could further explore how to use **child rights as a pathway towards gender equality and peace**: some respondents explained how learning about child protection and non-violent communication and positive disciplining has contributed to reducing domestic violence in some families;
- **The need to upscale livelihood enhancement for vulnerable children and their families** has emerged as a priority since poverty and the food crisis is quoted by participants as a driver for child abuse and exploitation in Afghanistan;
- **Working with religious leaders is essential to improve child justice and child protection in Afghanistan**: Islamic principles can be a pathway towards enforcing child rights enshrined in the UNCRC and countering harmful traditional practices;
- Legal files are not sufficient to assess the performance of a Justice system: **investigation and court performance assessments** (which includes analyzing legal files, observing court hearing and court physical space as per **child centric parameters**, visiting juvenile rehabilitation centers, interviewing all justice actors) **are required** to monitor to which extent children can exercise their fundamental right to Justice. The same type of assessment could be envisaged for informal dispute/crime resolution systems that deal with cases of child abuse.
- **New Technology-facilitated forms of violence have become an increased safety concern for children who may be approached/groomed online to eventually be abused or exploited**: Afghan children are not immune to this phenomenon and *game arcades* have been identified by several respondents as dangerous places for children in Afghanistan;
- **In absence of a formal justice system to investigate and try a case, the question of holding perpetrators accountable as per due process of law becomes challenging**. This concern was already highlighted in the SPEAC impact study published in November 2020, with regards to CBCPMs. Methods to avoid vigilantism, community-based conflict, and gross human rights violations in case people are accused of abusing children in their communities must be further researched and discussed with target communities and the local authorities. Additionally, it may be difficult to ensure the safety of the community members or victims who report cases. Hence, it is worth pursuing efforts advocating for an institutionalized and fair justice process (which may include a formal and informal system) that addresses cases involving children in an adequate manner.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the evaluation team would like to submit the following recommendations:

- **Organize a capacity-building program for War Child Canada staff members, IPs, and other stakeholders on the concept of *Justice with Children*** (none of the respondents clearly knew what it was, and none understood how it corresponded to what was done under SPEAC II project). This would primarily address some of the knowledge gaps across all stakeholders by linking the national and local legal framework and redressal mechanisms associated with Child Protection and Justice with Children to international conventions and protocols.
- **Sensitize and raise awareness** amongst War Child Canada staff (in Afghanistan and elsewhere) and their IPs **on how Justice with Children/Child Protection may contribute to decreasing Gender Based Violence (GBV) including Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**. This could open a possible safe entry point into action to promote and protect girls' rights – a blatant need in Afghanistan- and could constitute a topic of research in target communities at some stage;
- **Generally, raise awareness of War Child Canada staff members, IPs, and other stakeholders on the international framework pertaining to child rights** to ensure that target stakeholders are fully versed with international norms and how they relate and be contextualized to the situation on the ground in and across Afghanistan. If gaps are identified, then how best to modify the legal framework in Afghanistan in order to align with the international standards and protocols;
- **Intensify community-based sensitization programs on child rights and child protection;**
- In a scenario where courts would be operational again: **conduct mass awareness campaign on the local legal framework** to protect children from abuse and trafficking.
- In a scenario where courts would be operational again: **develop training curricula for various justice actors (pre-trial, trial, and post-trial level) focusing more on child-centric forensic investigation and interview**. In case the courts are not operational but that an alternative justice mechanism is set up, build the capacities of those alternative justice actors to ensure that children are protected from secondary victimization/trauma thanks to a child-sensitive interview/process, and environment;
- In a scenario where courts would be operational again, conduct comparative court performance assessments on the model that has been piloted for children in Pakistan in collaboration with the higher judiciary and the federal Ministry of Law and Justice, for example, with support from FCDO (UK Govt);
- Organize staff exchanges with countries that have faced conflict and crisis and where informal justice systems exist to learn more about Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms for cases pertaining to child abuse;

- To further strengthen the work of War Child Canada team in Afghanistan, make all possible efforts to link with regional and international experts in the field of Justice with Children and child protection. A series of links and references have been provided, as part of this evaluation, to facilitate learning, understanding, and networking opportunities for the War Child Canada team (especially in Afghanistan) along with their community groups, partners, and lawyers working on Child Protection and Justice in Afghanistan. These links will give the team in Afghanistan opportunities to link up with other relevant national, regional, and international actors working on Child Rights and Justice with Children. These links will also provide details of regional and international networks and forums that are existing globally so that War Child Canada teams and partners in Afghanistan (and other countries) may share experience and knowledge related to Child Protection and Justice with Children;
- Explore the possibility to formalize/institutionalize<sup>37</sup> and further upscale the concept of CBCPM, case management, referral mechanism at community level, child protection policies within schools;
- Focus on socio-economic empowerment and livelihood enhancement of children vulnerable to / victims of abuse and exploitation and their families (including the women/mothers) to alleviate poverty, reduce risks of child labor, sexual exploitation of children and facilitate juveniles' healthy reintegration in the society. This focus may include mothers' entrepreneurship, or technical and vocational education for youth, but a more specific need assessment would be required to design those components.
- Continue engaging with religious leaders who adhere to War Child Canada 's agenda and acted as agents of change under SPEAC I and II, to promote child rights, child protection and child justice through intersectional lenses and whereby Islamic principles are *reconciled* with the rights enshrined in the UNCRC and its optional protocols;
- Organize a national conference (in Afghanistan) on child protection with CSOs to share experience and knowledge identified under the SPEAC II program so that the good practices on promoting child rights and child protection in Afghanistan may be replicated or scaled-up;
- Organize a child participatory conference (or maybe two: one for the boys one for the girls) to gather their recommendations on how to improve the enforcement of child rights, child justice and child protection in Afghanistan to better inform future programs and actions;
- Child participatory research on child rights and child protection (including digital safety) in Afghanistan could be piloted at district level to start with and later upscaled; to this end, support from relevant universities and organizations may be sought (see useful links).
- Conduct action research regarding alternative care in Afghanistan (laws and practices, strengths, and gaps) and devise a set of recommendations to be integrated to the overall child protection advocacy agenda of the Government;
- Create a knowledge hub/repository on child protection and Justice with Children that could be accessible by War Child Canada teams working on other similar projects in other countries and possibly other War Child offices around the world

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<sup>37</sup> This would mean linking those to a formal child protection mechanism administered by the state.



# CONCLUSION

SPEAC II has made a change in the lives of some children in Afghanistan. The findings show that there is tremendous potential to grow and roll out a nation-wide program focusing on the rights of Children in the country. SPEAC II may be seen as a model intervention especially at the community level. The approach developed and adopted by War Child Canada in implementing SPEAC II is an example of innovative and unique solution to address the needs of Children in Afghanistan. It is a model that has strong potential to foster behavioural change at the individual level all the way up to the judicial system. With further support and determination, there is every possibility that this change can go well beyond the geographic foot print of the SPEAC II program area to become a national program.

This evaluation focused on five (5) specific thematic areas and applied them each to the program. These five thematic areas were: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Impact. The methods used to access this information were; a desk review of all documents related to this program provided by War Child Canada and other external related documents, field visit, key informant interviews and FGDs. The findings relative to each thematic area have shown to be largely positive. The overall program side and its relevance are in alignment between project goals and stakeholder needs; Its coherence fits with the focus of the donor, War Child Canada and all stakeholders; the effectiveness is largely positive in measuring achieved outcomes an impact against the envisaged Theory of Change; the efficiency of the intervention has demonstrated good use of the funding available; finally, the impact of the mechanism has contributed to making a difference at the community level and on the lives of the children.

For the entire SPEAC Phase II program the unforeseen challenges: global pandemic along with a political collapse, have had an impact on the field operations. Such challenges were in addition to those that already existed in Afghanistan to start with (terrorism, natural disasters, economic and food crisis, drought, and high insecurity along with high unemployment to name a few). The War Child Canada team rose to the occasion and was able to provide significant result at the end, with a change in the operating environment at both the Headquarter level and Field Level. Since the beginning of 2020, there has been progressively more impact on the way management and programming is done. This has included changes in work environments from office/field to home/office, reducing the number and size of meetings, changing the oversight mechanisms, implementing COVID-19 protection protocols, spacing of colleagues and so on. On top of this, the political turmoil after August 2021 caused further disruption in the ways of working in Afghanistan; the institutionalization process which was well on track to include training manuals in state academies and train prosecutors and police on child-friendly justice, got interrupted since the formal justice system got suspended. Cases of child abuse could not be prosecuted any more. But worked still went ahead thanks to the understanding of the donor, quick thinking of the field teams and headquarter team. These dynamics resulted in an impactful program despite the fact that some targets could not be fully achieved.

There are many lessons learnt from this program and tremendous opportunities that need to be addressed moving forward. With all that was good, there are gaps that need to be plugged in to make the work more meaningful. War Child Canada and its partners need to learn a lot and gain a better understanding of the international protocols governing Child rights, Child protection and Justice With Children. A greater degree of engagement of women and girls in the planning, implementation and policy work needs to be worked on. For example, using the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) guidelines in the design of the program would bring greater change in the lives of women and children. Linking up with organizations and research institutes in the region and across Asia who are working on Child Protection, Child rights and Justice With Children would have enriched the work of the War Child Canada team in Afghanistan. Exchange of ideas, sharing of points of view and most of all being able to better adapt to an ever-changing external factor would have brought in more efficient results. Involvement of women in leadership roles at the Country Office level would also bring a healthy and diverse perspective to the work of War Child Canada in Afghanistan. Last, but not the least, conducting court performance or CBCPMs assessments with specific child-centric indicators would have also helped in identifying more specifically the strength and improving areas of the systems addressing cases of child abuse. More needs to be done and more can be done.

The foundation is surely laid out and SPEAC I and II have both shown the work to be relevant, coherent, efficient, effective, and impactful in improving the lives of children in Afghanistan.

Additionally, there is truly a positive change in the citizenry of target groups today towards justice with children, and the acknowledgement by the communities that both civic and religious duties are essential for the future of children of Afghanistan. By ensuring community endorsement and having highly competent partners followed by excellent communication with the stakeholders, positive change is possible in places like Afghanistan.

It is heartwarming to see such positive trends and credit goes to both War Child Canada as well as DRL for partnering together and addressing such a sensitive issue as Child Protection in a country like Afghanistan where there is so much need for basic needs, that the rights of Children may not come up in the top 5 most urgent priorities.

The program showed that a safe learning environment for children in schools is possible. There are brave and highly dedicated individuals willing to break the silence by raising their voices individually and as a collective against violence against children.

Finally, with the right level of motivation and approach the formal and informal justice mechanism can and does work for the survivors. Unacceptable cultural practices such as *bacha baazi* can be countered so long as there is a clear and focused approach, a dedicated and well-versed diverse team of practitioners backed by a team of researchers, leaders and donors.

- **Useful links:**

- a) networks, groups, child rights organizations, child rights advocacy forums**

- ECPAT network: <https://ecpat.org>
    - <https://justicewithchildren.org>
    - <https://www.alliance87.org>
    - <https://justicewithchildren.org>
    - <https://www.end-violence.org/grants/south-asian-initiative-end-violence-against-children-saievac-regional>
    - <https://www.crcasia.org>
    - <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org>
    - <https://gdpakistan.org/justice-with-children/>

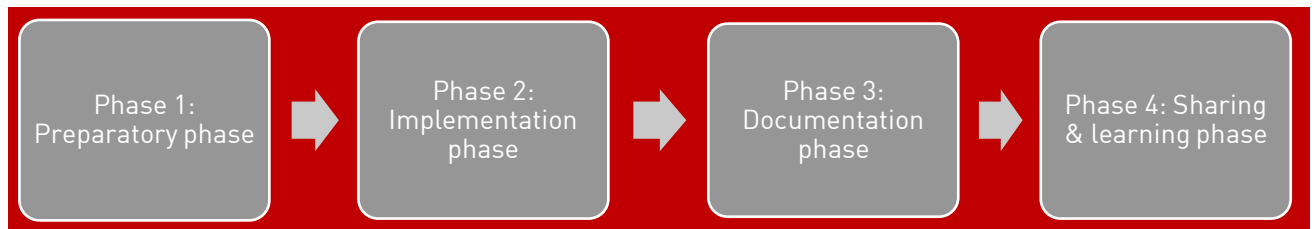
- b) technical resources**

- Terre des Hommes and the COVIDUnder19 initiative: <https://www.tdh.org/en/projects/covidunder19>
    - Queen University Belfast and child participatory research <https://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforChildrensRights/NewsEvents/COVIDUnder19-GlobalChildrensConsultation.html>
    - Guidelines for online child participation: <https://gdpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Child-Participation-Guidelines-on-Online-Discussions-with-Children-CRC-Asia-2021.pdf>
    - UNSRSG on VAC: [https://gdpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/children\\_as\\_agents\\_of\\_positive\\_change.pdf](https://gdpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/children_as_agents_of_positive_change.pdf)
    - [https://gdpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/final\\_hidden\\_scars\\_low\\_violence\\_harms\\_the\\_mental\\_health\\_of\\_children.pdf](https://gdpakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/final_hidden_scars_low_violence_harms_the_mental_health_of_children.pdf)
    - [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new-delhi/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_300826.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new-delhi/documents/genericdocument/wcms_300826.pdf)
    - [https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2018-03/Victims\\_are\\_not\\_virtual.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2018-03/Victims_are_not_virtual.pdf)
    - [https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2018-03/Victims\\_are\\_not\\_virtual.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2018-03/Victims_are_not_virtual.pdf)

# ANNEXES

(i) Annex 1: METHODOLOGY

The SPEAC II evaluation followed a mixed summative approach articulated around four phases:



- **Phase 1:** The team focused on clarifying the communication lines and obtaining a consensus on the revised timeline and methodology. A Gantt chart was developed/adjusted along with an evaluation matrix, a sampling frame, a table of respondents and questionnaires. A desk review took place, quantitative data reported by WCC to the donor was analyzed and an inception report was subsequently submitted.
- **Phase 2:** The male research assistant and a female data collector were trained on the approved tools, and primary data was collected, collated, and compiled (essentially qualitative data).
- **Phase 3:** The compiled primary data added to the desk review and project data informed the overall analysis. A draft evaluation report was then submitted.
- **Phase 4:** As a next step, once the evaluation report is approved, findings will be shared with the donor and any relevant stakeholder identified by WCC.

The following groups of respondents were interviewed:

- WCC staff in the headquarter
- WCC staff in Afghanistan
- Implementing partners
- Members of the CBCPMs
- Members of the SMS
- Members of the Student Council
- Teachers
- Parents
- Adult survivors of *bacha bazi*
- *Ulemas*

From the onset, it was clarified that the evaluation data would be indicative only, but it is important to underline that due to the difficulties described in the section

“challenges and constraints”, the analysis is essentially qualitative. In fact, the operational context in Afghanistan remained challenging, hence the data collection methodology had to be adjusted: the number of respondents was reduced, and the primary data collection tools comprised questionnaires for physical IDIs and FGDs for males only, and telephonic IDIs for females.

Primary data: It was collected through eleven questionnaires developed by GDC to conduct the In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Out of twenty-four finalized female respondents for the sampling, only five -out of whom one child- could be reached. Additionally, sixty male respondents -out of whom three children- could be interviewed, which makes a total of sixty-five respondents able to directly inform this evaluation.

Secondary data: It was collected through the desk review.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, following the notification banning women from working with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies, it was jointly decided that the foreign female consultant would not travel to Afghanistan to collect data. Hence, taking into consideration legal constraints, prevailing gender norms, and security sensitivities, a local female data collector had to be identified to interview female respondents through phone. One local female data collector (English, Dari and Pashto speaking) was recruited, and trained by GDC on the IDIs. She also interacted with GDC’s male data collector through her male family member for coordination. Yet, many female respondents refused to answer the questionnaires due to safety concerns or because they felt that they had not taken part in the project long enough to give a valuable opinion. Consequently, the evaluation team applied a “DO NO HARM” policy and could not ensure gender-balance among respondents. As anticipated in the risk framework developed for this evaluation, the analysis will therefore essentially reflect adult male views.

Finally, only a limited number of children could be reached. Whenever those were interviewed, a child safeguarding protocol was applied in coordination with War Child Canada Afghanistan’s team. Children were accompanied by an adult guardian or a chaperone preferably of the same gender. The guardian was asked for his consent and the child was asked for his/her assent. For physical interviews, the space was open, and doors never locked.

A WhatsApp group was created to ensure effective communication, real time follow-up and efficient coordination.

Three geographical areas of intervention were selected in consultation with War Child Canada keeping in view criteria such as accessibility, internet connectivity, Value for Money (VfM), ethnic diversity, and availability of respondents: Kabul, Balkh, and Kandahar.

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<sup>38</sup> See desk review matrix annexed to this report

Eventually, the evaluation applied the sampling frame summarized in the table below:

Category of respondents	Locations	Quantity & gender	Sub-Total	Methodology
<b>WCC staff</b>	Canada	2 males, 1 female	3	3 Online IDIs
	Afghanistan	2 males	2	2 Online IDIs
<b>CBCPM</b>	Balkh	10 males (5 +5), 1 female	11	2 FGDs, 1 IDI
	Kandahar	5 males	5	FGD
	Kabul	10 males (Collective)	10	FGD
<b>Student Councils</b>	Balkh	1 male, 1 female	2	IDI
	Kandahar	1 male	1	IDI
	Kabul	1 male	1	IDI
<b>SMS</b>	Kandahar	2 males (Collective)	2	FGD
	Kabul	1 male	1	IDI
	Balkh	1 female	1	IDI
<b>Parents</b>	Balkh	1 male	1	IDI
	Kandahar	1 male	1	IDI
	Kabul	1 male	1	IDI
<b>Teachers</b>	Balkh	2 males (Collective), 1 female	3	FGD
	Kandahar	1 male	1	IDI
	Kabul	2 males (Collective)	2	FGD
<b>Legal Attorneys</b>	Balkh	1 male	1	IDI
	Kabul	1 male	1	IDI
<b>Ulemas</b>	Balkh	3 males	3	FGD
	Kandahar	3 males	3	FGD
	Kabul	4 males	4	FGD
<b>IPs</b>	Balkh	1 male	1	Online IDI
	Kandahar	1 male	2	Online IDI
<b>Adult Survivors</b>	Balkh	2 males	2	IDIs

Additionally, the ethical principles described underneath were strictly adhered to by GDC team:

- Social Responsibility** • Strive to promote social good and prevent or mitigate social harms through research, public education, and advocacy.
- Non-Discrimination** • No discrimination against respondents on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, or other factors that are not related to their scientific competence and integrity.
- Human Subjects Protection** • When conducting research on human subjects, minimize harms and risks and maximize benefits; respect human dignity, privacy, and autonomy.
- Honesty** • Honestly report data, results, methods and procedures, and publication status. Do not fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent data.
- Objectivity** • Strive to avoid bias in experimental design, data analysis, data interpretation, peer review, personnel decisions, grant writing, expert testimony, and other aspects of research.
- Confidentiality** • Protect confidential communications, such as papers or grants submitted for publication and personnel records
- Respect for Intellectual Property** • Honor patents, copyrights, and other forms of intellectual property. Do not use unpublished data, methods, or results without permission. Give credit where credit is due.

## Evaluation Matrix

This matrix details the evaluation process with target groups, in alignment with the sampling frame which was submitted along with the inception report. For students who are above 12, the interviewers were trained to work with child victims of abuse. For interviews with survivors, the discussion did not focus on the abuse that survivors faced, but on the solution that was proposed and the envisaged way forward. Translators were arranged whenever required.

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Area of Analysis	Data Source	Data Collection Method <sup>39</sup>	Data Collection Tool	Target groups for primary data collection
Relevance & Efficiency	What factors related to local context and variances between provinces facilitated or limited the project response?	Efficacy of intervention in the local context and local dynamics causing variance in the intervention response.	Project proposal, Logic model, M&E reports, donors reports, existing regulatory framework, and interviews with stakeholders including project staff and partners	Desk Review, In Depth Interviews (IDIs)-offline and online	Project documents, Interview Protocol & IDIs questionnaires	<p>The ET will explore to which extent those target groups are aware of the project and its implementing agencies, what the project seeks to achieve, why they chose to collaborate, if they have faced any difficulties while collaborating with the IPs in their communities, when? Why? And how they have managed those difficulties: have they stopped some activities, changed those, why? (CBCPM members, SMS, Student Council, Ulema, Teachers, Parents, legal aid team, CSOs).</p> <p>The ET will explore to which extent Adult survivors of <i>bacha bazi</i> are aware of the project objectives, expected</p>

<sup>39</sup> IDIs will be done offline and online, as per need.



					<p>results and if they know its implementing partners; what support -if any- they received from WCC and IPs, was this support disturbed? How? Why? When? How was this disturbance managed? Could it have been done better? How?</p> <p>The ET will explore the WCC and its IPs' level of understanding of the project, whether they felt comfortable with working on this project, what challenges or opportunities they faced and how they adapted to/capitalized on those?</p>
To what extent the project has considered the causes and factors of conflict and fragility and taken them into account as part of the project implementation?	Review of the prevailing regulatory framework, LFA, surveys, M&E and donors reports. Documented learnings from the project.	Project proposal, detailed Implementation Plan, M&E Reports, Progress reports and Interviews with Project Staff	Desk Review, IDIs (offline & online)	Project documents, case studies and Interview Protocol & IDIs questionnaires	This aspect will be explored with WCC team and its IPs, and with CBCPM members during the IDIs. Additionally, the level of comfort and safety experienced by SMS, Student Council, Ulema, Teachers, Parents, legal aid team, CSOs and IPs while collaborating for this project, or receiving support from this project will also be assessed during IDIs. Conflict management and safety policies will also be discussed with WCC and IPs.
What best practices should be retained for	Analysis of evidence of adaptability as part of	Periodic progress reports and case	Desk Review & IDIs (offline & online)	Reports and interview protocol	All target groups will be asked if they can quote an example

	future programming (for War Child Canada and the donor)?	project activities and level of integration of best practices in the project implementation	studies, Interviews with project staff and implementing partners		& IDI questionnaires	of good practice, a significant result which they think should be replicated to stop <i>bacha bazi</i> and child trafficking in their country. For children, it can also be something “they really liked” about the project.
Context Change and Adaptability	To what extent the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the project implementation and activities? What adaptations and strategies were employed to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the project? How useful and appropriate were these changes?	Impact of COVID-19 on project activities, adaptability of project to factor in the changes and impact of changes on the intended results.	Review of project documents including amendments, Interview with Project staff, Implementing partners and beneficiaries	Desk Review, IDIs (offline & online) & FGDs	Project documents, interview protocols, IDIs questionnaires and FGDs	CBCPM members, SMS, Student Council, Ulema, Teachers, Parents, legal aid team, CSOs will be asked if their collaboration for the project was impacted by the COVID-19, how and what special measures, arrangements they had to undertake. They will then be asked if those measures were efficient according to them to achieve the objectives that they had, and if they think it should have been done differently. Similarly, the adult survivors of <i>bacha bazi</i> will be asked what they think was the best aspect of the project, what was the most successful, important aspect of the project for them, why?
	Which factors facilitated or limited the project’s response capacity and flexibility?	Identify barriers, boosters, challenges, and opportunities related to the intervention and impact of all these factors on project results.	Project documents, capacity- building reports and strategies, inter-agency	Desk Review, IDIs & FGDs	Project reports, IDI protocols, FGD protocols and questionnaires.	WCC and its IPs will be asked to identify that.

			coordination mechanism, laws Implementation processes, Insights from parents, children, Ulema, implementing partners and project staff			
Coherence	To what extent was the project aligned with the long-term needs, development goals, and priorities relating to countering human trafficking and child protection in Afghanistan?	Review of casual or logical linkage of activities with system strengthening, capacity-building, and public engagement related to countering human trafficking and child protection. Level of understanding/awareness of intersectionality.	Project proposal, log frame, M&E Plan, donors reports, strategies, existing laws and rules of business, and interviews with stakeholders including project staff and implementing partners	Desk Review and IDIs	Project documents, Reports, interviews, protocols, and questionnaires.	The ET will explore to which extent the target groups understand the concepts and intersection between <i>bacha bazi</i> , child trafficking and child protection, and ask if according to them the long term needs and development goals that characterize child victims of trafficking or SAE have been addressed by the project, we will ask for specific examples from the interviewees. For students and survivors we will rather focus on checking if they are able to identify mid- term and long-term needs of children who faced abusive situations, and if they think that the project or the activities they have been part of/have benefited from, addresses those needs.

Effectiveness	To what extent was the project's theory of change accurate and able to produce the planned changes in the targeted communities?	A critical review of the project theory of change, project strategy, plan, and budget.	Project proposal, LFA, budget, operating model, structure, capacity-building initiatives. Regulatory framework. Insight from Parents, Children, CSO Representatives and project staff and Implementing partner	Desk Review, IDIs & FGDs	Project reports, IDI protocols, FGD protocols and questionnaires	Here, The ET will focus on collecting data from target groups (CBCPM members, SMS, Student Council, Ulema, Teachers, Parents, legal aid team, CSOs) to assess the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- how has the project contributed to not only improving but also enforcing the law to counter <i>bacha bazi</i>, child trafficking and protecting children in Afghanistan? (all target groups)</li> <li>- how has the project taken into consideration and, used a narrative that refers to/capitalizes upon the cultural and religious context to end <i>bacha bazi</i>, child trafficking and promote child protection (legal aid actors, <i>Ulemas</i>, CBPCMs)</li> <li>- Has the project contributed to increasing the access to comprehensive support services for child victims of the <i>bacha bazi</i> practice</li> </ul>
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					<p>and their families? (legal actors, WCC, IPS, survivors and families, CBPCMs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Were those services child centric and trauma-informed (WCC, IPs, legal actors, survivors and families, CBPCMs)</li> </ul> <p>At each stage of the interviews and FGDs, tangible examples will be requested from the respondents. For survivors and families this will be more based on their experience of support, how they “rate it”, what they would change, what they really appreciate. The part linked to the examples of good practices is addressed earlier in the matrix.</p>
<p>To what extent has the project achieved the expected results/outcomes in the following priority areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-level capacity building to protect and promote children’s rights</li> <li>• Application of victim centered</li> </ul>	<p>Comparison of outputs and outcome targets versus achievement with timeline and cost</p>	<p>Progress report, implementation plan, budget, and other documents and interviews with stakeholders including project staff and implementing partners</p>	<p>Desk Review &amp; IDIs</p>	<p>Reports, Case Studies, IDIs protocols &amp; questionnaires</p>	<p>Target groups will be interviewed to complement the data which was entered in the result framework. Apart from checking the acquired skills and knowledge, the ET will assess how those have been put to use in the best interest of the child to promote child protection and ensure PSAE, what type of treatment was</p>

	<p>approach and Trauma-informed approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement and advocacy with legal actors and decision makers</li> <li>• Community-focused behavior change communication and public awareness</li> </ul>					<p>faced by the child victim and his family once deciding to enter the justice process (quality of forensic investigation -especially interview with children_ and to which extend secondary-victimisation was avoided, etc), what was the quality and level of access to psycho-social services, socio-economic support opportunities.</p>
Sustainability	<p>What steps have been taken for sustainability of the project? To what extent are local partners and stakeholders empowered and engaged as part of these steps?</p>	<p>A critical review of the existing regulatory framework, capacities of lawyers, police, and other stakeholders. Awareness at community and children's levels and participation of children, communities, and networks.</p>	<p>A critical review of the Project Theory of Change. Stakeholder's input, Beneficiary insights, Legal framework, Costing models, Critical review of proposed exit strategy and approach, Project documents Parents, Children, Lawyers, CSO Representatives and project staff</p>	<p>Desk Review, IDIs and FGDs</p>	<p>Reports, Case studies, FGDs protocol, IDIs protocol and questionnaires</p>	<p>The ET will explore the sustainability of the project with all relevant target groups keeping in view the technical, political, institutional, financial, and social sustainability. Two dimensions will be explored:</p>
	<p>To what extent has the project team been effective in its coordination with</p>	<p>Review of project structure operating model to the project accountability and</p>	<p>Project structure, operating model, reporting mechanism, HR</p>	<p>Desk Review IDIs</p>	<p>Reports, IDIs protocol and questionnaires</p>	<p>Interviews with IPS and WCC and head of the CP cluster in Afghanistan and other CP INGOs to assess what</p>

<p>relevant actors (including head of the CP cluster in Afghanistan and other CP INGOs), examples of support received, and effective project implementation, monitoring and evaluation and grant management?</p>	<p>project objectives. Review of the financial management system, procedures, and protocols and M&amp;E systems</p>	<p>Policies, accountability system. Award management system, reporting system, account management, Scheme of delegation, and other Project documents</p>			<p>coordination mechanism were in place, if and when they were used, whether it was useful: support provided, information shared and used timely etc Dialogue with the MEAL team to see how the MEAL exercise was feeding the project implementation, the VFM approach will also be discussed with the operation team</p>
<p>To what extent did the project apply the Do No Harm approach? What are some examples?</p>	<p>Review of organization policies, project approach, implementation strategies and accountability systems</p>	<p>Project documents, policies, accountability systems, and feedback from stakeholders including Representatives and project staff</p>	<p>Desk Review and IDIs</p>	<p>Reports, IDIs protocol and questionnaires</p>	<p>Interview with WCC and IPs to assess level of awareness and enforcement safeguarding policies, potential changes stemming from safety considerations interviews with other target groups to assess their level of awareness of DOs and DON'T, and also to gauge their level of comfort with, and confidence in, the project, during its execution.  Concrete examples will be sought</p>
<p>How best did WCC engage with the donor, head of CP cluster in Afghanistan, other CP INGOs and kept them updated and informed, and how much did the donor get involved in the</p>	<p>Review of the communication flow and content between the donor and WCC, and assessment of the donor's response - financial and technical-towards challenges as</p>	<p>Project documents, communication exchanges and chart, feedback from WCC staff in Canada and Afghanistan and</p>	<p>Desk Review and IDIs</p>	<p>Reports, IDIs protocol and questionnaires.</p>	<p>Those interviews will be conducted with WCC and IPs and the head of CP cluster in Afghanistan, other CP INGOs, to assess if experience and knowledge sharing took place, when, how and whether it was useful and for whom?</p>

<p>project adjustment process?</p>	<p>well as variations in the political economy of the country: was the donor responsive and flexible to adaptations?</p> <p>For next programming: how and to which extent could INGOs (and in our case WCC in particular) be in the position to collaborate with the de facto Taliban regime given various funding prohibitions and other relevant political positions.</p>	<p>from implementing partners in target areas, CP cluster and INGOs working on CP.</p>			
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(ii) Annex 2: QUESTIONNAIRES

Evaluation questions	Serial #	Questions
<b>General</b>		
<p>Those questions allow us to establish a baseline on the team profile which will also inform our evaluation for other criteria listed underneath; additionally, this will help us formulate potential recommendations for the way forward.</p>	1	Since when have you been involved in the SPEAC II project?
	2	Since when have you been working on child protection?
	3	Since when have you been working on child protection in Afghanistan?
	4	How do you define child rights?
	5	How would you define child protection?
	6	How would you define Child Justice and Justice with Children?
	7	Can you summarize the SPEAC II project in Afghanistan?
<b>Relevance &amp; efficiency</b>		
<p>What factors related to local context and variances between provinces facilitated or limited the project response?</p> <p>To what extent has the project considered the causes and factors of conflict and fragility and taken them into account as part of the project implementation?<sup>40</sup></p>	8	Who was involved in the project design?
	9	Is the project SPEAC II aligned with DRL priorities? Please explain.
	10	Does the project reflect WCC overall strategy and policies, and WCC-Afghanistan country strategy? Please explain.
	11	Where the recommendations and lessons learnt shared in the impact study report and external evaluation report of SPEAC (2019) taken into consideration to design SPEAC II? Give examples
	12	Do you think that this project on child protection has responded to the needs of the target population? How?
	13	Does the project design and implementation reflect gender equality priorities? If yes, how?
	14	To what extent was the project implemented as designed/planned? Were alternatives considered and/or adopted? Give examples

<sup>40</sup> Excluding the COVID-19 pandemic, since we have a specific set of questions for this.

	15	Were there resource limitations? If so, how did this impact the project? Give specific examples
	16	How efficient and timely was the approval process (from GAC, then internally) to make any necessary adjustments to the project?
	17	Was your project implemented in a timely manner? If not, were there particular adaptations required, please explain?
	18	Were funds transferred by WCC to Afghanistan in a timely manner? If not why?
	19	Did you receive reports from WCC Afghanistan team in timely manner, if not why?
	20	Were you able to submit reports to the donor in a timely manner? If not, please describe any difficulty.
What best practices should be retained for future programming (for War Child Canada and the donor)?	21	What worked well in the project to prevent and respond to the practice of <i>bacha bazi</i> ? Please give examples
<b>Context change and adaptability</b>		
To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the project implementation and activities?	22	How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the project implementation and its activities? Share examples
What adaptations and strategies were employed to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the project?	23	What solutions did you apply to overcome the implementation challenges mentioned above? Please give specific examples
How useful and appropriate were these changes?	24	Were those solutions effective? Did they work? Please explain.
To what extent has the August 2021 political shift impacted the project implementation and activities?	25	How did the August 2021 political shift impact the project implementation and its activities? Give specific examples

What adaptations and strategies were employed to mitigate the effects of the political shift on the project?	26	What solutions did you apply to overcome the implementation challenges mentioned above?give specific examples
How useful and appropriate were these changes?	27	Were those solutions effective? Did they work? Please explain.
Which factors facilitated or limited the project's response capacity and flexibility?	28	Were there any other major challenges and/or opportunities? Share concrete examples
	29	What measures did you take to mitigate/overcome those challenges or bank upon those opportunities? Give concrete examples
	30	Did those measures work? explain
<b>Coherence</b>		
To what extent was the project aligned with the long-term needs, development goals, and priorities relating to countering human trafficking and child protection in Afghanistan?	31	Was the project aligned with any international, country specific policy, law, or action plan? <sup>41</sup> Please explain
	32	Is there a clear nexus of policy areas (eg. Humanitarian-development) upon which the project relies? Which one? Is data available to sufficiently assess policy coherence?
	33	Were adequate partnerships established among stakeholders to facilitate the project delivery? Which ones? Please explain.
<b>Effectiveness</b>		
To what extent was the project's theory of change accurate and able to produce the planned changes in the targeted communities?	34	Overall, how would you categorize the quality of project implementation (successful, a failure, average). Disaggregate by reasons for achievement, non-achievement, or underachievement.
To what extent has the project achieved the expected results/outcomes in the following priority areas;	35	Can you give examples of positive results generated by the capacity-building activities of community members on child rights and child protection?
	36	In your opinion, have the project results contributed to gender equality and child protection? If so, how?

<sup>41</sup> We are talking about the international framework here and the State of Afghanistan here, not WCC

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-level capacity building to protect and promote children’s rights</li> <li>• Application of victim centered approach and Trauma-informed approach</li> <li>• Engagement and advocacy with legal actors and decision makers</li> <li>• Community-focused behavior change communication and public awareness</li> </ul>	37	Were adjustments made during the project implementation period to address any child protection and/or gender equality concerns and maximize effectiveness? Please give an example
	38	Has the project contributed to improved legal framework on child protection and improved law enforcement? How? Please give concrete examples.
	39	What tangible examples of behavioral changes do you think have been generated by the project? Please give concrete examples.
	40	Does the HQ based team encourage country office-based team to have a shared understanding of the importance of comparing gender-based information? (GAM)
	41	Is there evidence of support for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning among the Country Office team? Please give an example

### Sustainability

What steps have been taken for sustainability of the project? To what extent are local partners and stakeholders empowered and engaged as part of these steps?	42	In your view, which interventions implemented under SPEAC II is sustainable and would live beyond the life of this project? Particularly, in the area of building local capacity and resilience through partnerships and stakeholders’ engagement? Advocacy, child protection and legislative changes? (Overall, explore technical, financial, institutional social and political sustainability).
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### Coordination and management

<p>To what extent has the project team been effective in its coordination with relevant actors (including head of the CP cluster in Afghanistan and other CP CSOs), examples of support received, and effective project implementation, monitoring and evaluation and grant management?</p> <p>Safeguarding standards.</p>	43	To what extent did the project apply the Do No Harm approach? What are some examples?
	44	According to you, what is the value-add of the WCC HQ team in this project? Give examples
	45	What communication tools and methods were used by WCC HQ staff to engage with the Country Office? How effective was the communication between the HQ team and the Afghanistan team during the project implementation? Please share concrete examples
	46	Were projects delivered through local partners and/or consortia at country level? If so, was the method effective? Explain how

	47	Did the Programme Committee at HQ work well with the team in Afghanistan? Give examples. How would you improve this level of teamwork to ensure effective delivery?
<b>Impact</b>		
Overall, what positive change has been achieved through SPEAC II?	48	Did the project create significant changes in the lives of all intended beneficiaries? Did the project adopt a “leave no one behind” approach? Share examples please.
	49	Identify any unintended effects and unintended results. What is the significance of these? How and why did they occur?
	50	Is there evidence of program ownership among country office team and implementing partners? Give examples
	51	Do the WCC HQ and the Country Office team engage in advocacy practices at the local, national or international levels related to broad issues associated with humanitarian relief and protection issues in particular, especially child protection? If so, provide examples.

(iii) Annex 3: Desk review matrix

A desk review of War Child Canada documents was conducted. The documents that were reviewed are listed below including a series of reference material that was also consulted during the course of this external evaluation.

The following reference documents were reviewed:

- The UNCRC Convention;
- Report from the United Nations Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (UN, 2019);
- <https://newlinesinstitute.org/afghanistan/what-about-the-boys-a-gendered-analysis-of-the-u-s-withdrawal-and-bacha-bazi-in-afghanistan/>
- <https://www.humanium.org/en/bacha-bazi-severe-child-abuse-disguised-as-an-afghani-custom/>;
- *Bacha Bazi* and Human Rights Violations in Afghanistan: Should the U.S. Military Have Done More to Protect Underage Boys?, Annie Barry Bruton, University of Kentucky, Kentucky Law Journal, Volume 108, Issue 1, Article 6, 2019;
- Causes and Consequences of *Bacha baazi* in Afghanistan, (National Inquiry Report 1393), 6 June 2002, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission;
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, **Human Rights Council, Fifty-first session**, 12 September–7 October 2022, Agenda items 2 and 10;
- <https://www.ideasforpeace.org/content/the-unraveled-and-disquieting-human-rights-violation-of-afghanistan/>.

Below is a complete list of the documents reviewed:

Desk Review Documents reviewed	
1	DLR original call for proposal. SPEAC
2	SPEAC Phase 1 External Evaluation Report
3	Phase 2 Proposal submitted to DLR for funding
4	All Progress reports and relevant annexures submitted to donor by WCC
5	WCC SPEAC 1 impact study
6	MEAL Framework
7	DRL SPEAC II Cost Extension and No Cost Extension Revision of the Phase 2 SOW
8	SPEAC II Request for Cost Extension and No Cost Extension;
9	Correspondence between WCC and donor
10	OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria
11	DRL SPEAC baseline
12	SPEAC Logic Model
13	DRL SPEAC II community leaders' assessment;

14	DRL SPEAC II Ulemas assessment;
15	DRL SPEAC II legal actors' assessment
16	The nine basic requirements for meaningful and ethical children's participation, Save the Children, 2021;
17	SPEAC PPR and PMF;