



# EPAC EXTERNAL EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT

WAR CHILD CANADA



EUROPEAN  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
ORGANISATION



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ORGANISATION

EPAC Afghanistan  
External Evaluation

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## Acronyms

AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
APC	Afghanistan Protection Cluster
BBB	Big Bad Boo
CBCPM	Community Based Child Protection Mechanism
CFS	Child Friendly Space
CPAN	Child Protection Action Network
CEC	Community Education Committee
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CtC	Child to Child
CYEEO	Children and Youth Empowerment Education Organization
DFA	De Facto Authority
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
DMoYA	Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs
DoE	Department of Education
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EPAC	Enhancing Protection for Afghan Children
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HRDA	Human Resource Development Agency
IBCR	International Bureau of Child Rights
IDI	In-depth Interview
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
INGO	International Non-government Organization
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoWA	Ministry of Women’s Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHW	Organization of Human Welfare
PHP	Physical and Humiliating Punishment
PIP	Project Implementation Plan
PMF	Performance Management Framework
PQAL	Program Quality, Accountability and Learning
SC	Student Council
SMS	School Management Shura
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software
TED	Teachers Education Department
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WCC	War Child Canada





## Objectives



1. Strengthen the capacity of local communities, parents, local partners, and legal actors to protect children and fulfil commitments to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, at both the local and national level.



2. The development and establishment of a community-based child-protection model in more than 95 child-friendly community centers.



3. Provide training for educators on child-friendly learning techniques, child rights and child-protection strategies to promote safe learning environments.



## Evaluation activities in Kabul, Kandahar and Nangarhar



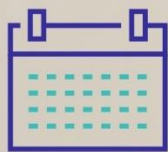
Key Informant (KII) Interviews with 10 partner staff



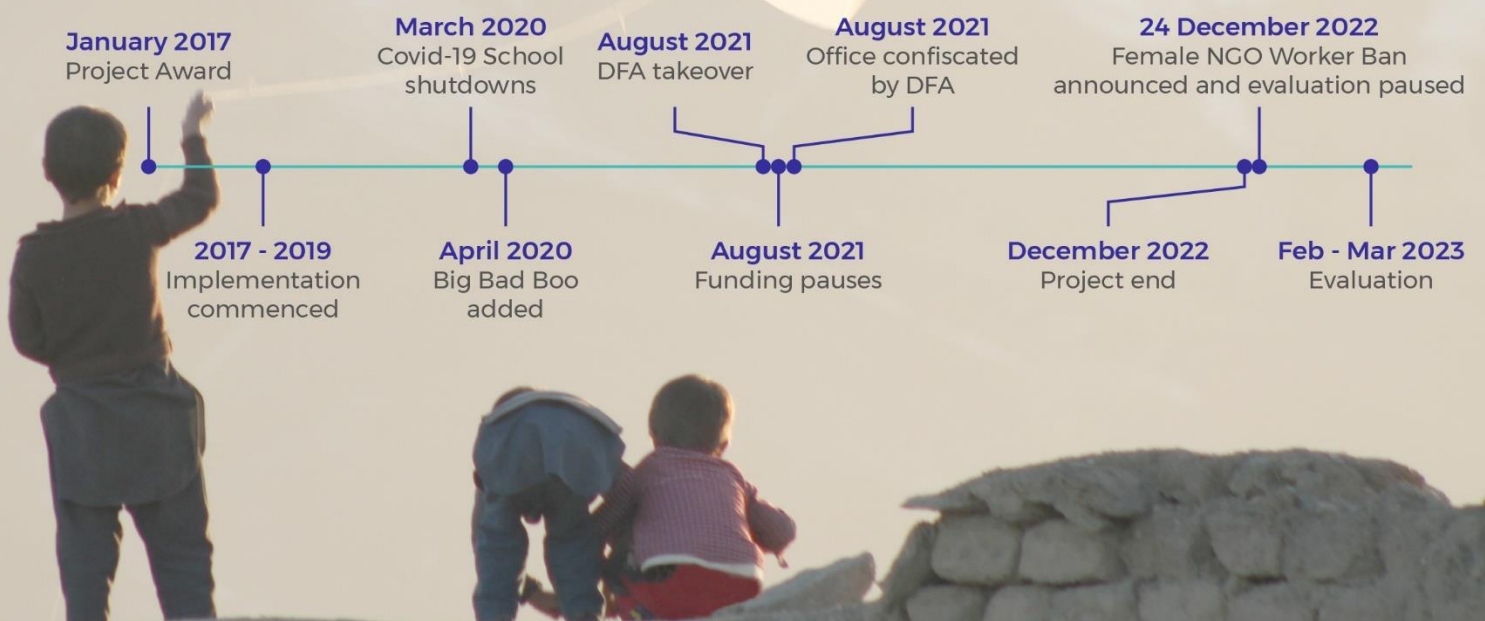
KIIs with 12 stakeholders



In depth interviews (IDIs) with 30 project participants



## Timeline of challenges





# Executive Summary

## Impact

The implementation of EPAC prior to 2020 was smooth and well executed for such a complex project. The aims were consistent and well structured, as was the structure of the intervention activities. Real progress was made. Throughout the evaluation it became more and more clear just how much impact the program had on the lives of project participants.

Of particular note was the recurring reporting from parents that they had learnt from EPAC about parenting, laws and how to protect their children in different settings.

The core modalities of the intervention were also extremely effective at building community and stakeholder buy-in and sustainability for the EPAC child protection model in the program areas. EPAC focused on strengthening the capacities of individuals, organizations, and systems to protect children, which was fully aligned with the growing concerns of development and humanitarian agencies that basic support to children was being undermined.

Focusing through the wider lens of child rights enabled War Child Canada (WCC) and its partners to coordinate with actions of other counterpart agencies working on wider related issues such as unsafe and insecure schools, domestic violence and the sexual exploitation and abuse of both girls and boys. In addition, project participants reported widespread appreciation of the focus on contributing to the mental and intellectual development of children.

## External Shocks and Adaptations

However, as with most projects implemented in Afghanistan during the same period, EPAC suffered multiple chronic external impacts. First the level of conflict in the implementation provinces increased severely, then the COVID-19 pandemic struck and forced the closure and

temporary postponement of some activities and then finally there was a dramatic change of government. The new de facto authorities (DFA) implemented bans on girls' education and adopted a regressive policy towards many of EPAC's goals.

In addition, donor laws and policies imposed further restrictions on the project including being unable to work with 'government' employed teachers and a long pause in program activities. A less impactful but distressing and distracting impact was the confiscation of WCC's Kabul office and equipment by the DFA.

"I am an illiterate mother, at first, I did not understand the right way to treat and raise children...But after the seminars, we understood our children's rights and there were many positive changes in our understanding and practice as well as in our attitudes. Now I think a lot about the best future of my children particularly girls as women is always marginalized in Afghanistan."

EPAC Project Participant

This is a very rare combination of external shocks and the EPAC project teams and donor had to implement a number of serious and unexpected adaptations. As a result, this evaluation is focused on learning lessons from the program.

## Big Bad Boo

Big Bad Boo (BBB) was a key adaptation that was added to EPAC during the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic. Adapted during the height of the pandemic, and not being pre-planned meant that it was not implemented as efficiently and effectively as might have been possible at any other time. However overall, it was reported by most stakeholders and project participants as a welcome adaptation that provided alternative learning opportunities on key EPAC issues.





# Introduction

## Background Context

Decades of conflict, endemic poverty, poor governance and environment/natural disasters have created in Afghanistan, a persistently fragile, insecure and near-crisis environment for its citizens. In justifying its initiation of the Enhancing Protection for Afghan Children (EPAC) project, War Child Canada referenced the 2017 UN strategic review that reclassified Afghanistan “from post-conflict... to active conflict”, describing some one million people as living in a “new and prolonged displacement”, “a third of IDP/returnee children...experiencing psychological distress”; and “multiple forms of violence, including GBV” at home, in communities and schools<sup>1</sup>.

EPAC was presented from the outset, then, with a complex and high-risk operational context in which to introduce its interventions. The level of complexity and threats to the physical safety and psychosocial well-being of its personnel, project participant and stakeholder communities only increased over the five years of its implementation through a series of crises. The scope and significance of EPAC’s implementation and results should be understood through this lens of an especially uncertain and unstable timeline characterized as *relatively normal* implementation (2017-19), followed by *traumatic change* from 2020 onward.

COVID-19 closed access to most social services, including education, for most of 2020 (beginning in March) with irregular impacts on quality and reach of social support systems thereafter. Over the period, armed attacks and broadly-felt insecurity continued to intensify, leading in August 2021 to the fall of the government and replacement by a De facto Authority (DFA) with effectively no capacities for governance. This and the sanctions that followed, led to a catastrophic collapse of the Afghan economy, withdrawal

of international financing, chronic unemployment, poverty and food insecurity. The exclusion of women from the public sphere and the closure of schools and higher education for girls followed soon after. This has made the period of EPAC implementation increasingly important and at the same time increasingly challenging. Realizing its purpose of facilitating integrated community-based actions to expand and strengthen the level and quality of protection for all children, required continuous adaptive responses.

## EPAC purposes and approach

Supported by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), EPAC is a multi-year initiative (2017-2022) implemented in Kabul, Nangarhar, and Kandahar provinces, from the outset by War Child Canada and two local partners: the Organization of Human Welfare (OHW) and the Human Resource Development Agency (HRDA). Latterly, in response to the COVID-19 school closures, the Big Bad Boo (BBB) media firm and its local Afghan subcontractor Children and Youth Empowerment Education Organization (CYEEO) were included to support the roll-out of the alternative learning *1001 Nights* program.

Implementing EPAC has required tireless and near-constant adaptations due to the external issues encountered from 2020 onwards.

While the specific threats and challenges have shifted over the course of the project including those from COVID-19 and the DFA takeover, the originating rationale for EPAC has remained essentially valid: conditions of psychosocial, physical and political stress in the environment continued to undermine, “the ability of individuals, families, communities and governments to protect themselves and respond to and cope with the myriad of challenges they encounter in daily

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from various UN and other sources in WCC-EPAC. Midyear Report April 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018. p5





life”<sup>2</sup>. In the face of this, the right of all children to survive, thrive, and participate in secure and child-friendly spaces, “to be protected at all times,”<sup>3</sup> were the continuing focus of EPAC concern.

Despite the challenges with COVID-19 and the DFA takeover, the originating rationale for EPAC has remained essentially valid.

Children have continued to be the most at-risk within all targeted communities. In all provinces of implementation, children struggled with high degrees of vulnerability characterized by physical and psychological stress, intolerance of and from others, poor coping skills and pressures of early marriage and labour<sup>4</sup>.

As the immediate and longer-term implications of COVID-19 and the DFA government became clearer, and the fragile status of children became more pronounced, so too did the need for EPAC to adapt. Boys and especially girls in the three implementing provinces were directly affected by the

negative health, exclusion and isolation effects of COVID-19. They continued to be affected by threats of sexual and gender-based violence; exploitation, forced early marriage and abusive working conditions. The fallout from the DFA’s actions against women and girls and exclusion from international and development cooperation led to increasing situations of family and individual stress including poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and deteriorating access to health and social support services.

Pursuant to its Ultimate Outcome that “Afghanistan has the necessary local and national level capacity to protect children and fulfill commitments to the rights of the child”, EPAC aimed to strengthen the capacities of local and national stakeholders, as well as children themselves, to ensure the protection of all children, whether in their families, the community or school. Within the GAC/RBM framework, WCC has worked with community leaders and members, parents, teachers and children – and, until mid-2021, government officers – to design and implement project activities through two interactive results chains:



Intermediate Outcome

1100 Model of community-based protection is developed and strengthened, able to be replicated in additional communities

1200 Key stakeholders within the education system, including children, have the necessary tools and strategies to ensure child-friendly learning environments



Immediate Outcomes

1110 Strengthened ability of families and communities to resolve and mitigate child protection concerns

1210 School-based stakeholders have the capacity to actively eliminate physical and humiliating punishment, gender-based discrimination and bullying in schools

1120 Community-level capacity is strengthened to ensure sustainable, community-based child protection mechanisms

1220 Institutional capacity is strengthened to ensure child-friendly schools

1130 Children (m/f) have access to safe spaces and self-learning materials that protect and encourage their learning and social development

<sup>2</sup> WCC/EPAC PIP: 6

<sup>3</sup> WCC/EPAC PIP: 8

<sup>4</sup> Based on pre-test results of the BBB program reported in Big Bad Boo Studios, 2023, “Enhancing Protection for Afghan Children (EPAC): 1001 Nights Life skills and Civic Education Program, Afghanistan”. Final report







Aligned with GAC governance criteria, EPAC reflected an underlying theory of change built around awareness raising and learning, with an emphasis on inclusion, responsiveness, equity and participation, and operationalized through collaboration. Specifically, it pursued its Outcomes through Outputs that:

- *Applied an integrated approach* to establish and strengthen the child protection mechanisms at the family and community levels.
- *Engaged closely with families* to train parents/adult caregivers to understand concepts of child rights and protection, to use positive disciplinary methods, to mitigate risks by supporting children's development of life skills and ensure they are safe and free from abuse.
- *Worked with community members* to create community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) with trained male and female members, and establish child-friendly spaces (CFSs) through which child-to-child methods and age-specific activities support the physical, psychosocial and cognitive development of children.
- *Sought to establish and strengthen referral systems* linking CBCPMs with other child-oriented health, social and protection services.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, three core components have been central to EPAC, defined both explicitly and implicitly as constituting its core concerns and expected to be sustained. Two are defined as models happening non-formally in all target communities: the *Community-Based Child-Protection Mechanism (CBCPM)* and *Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs)*. The third is geared to systemic change through the development of *School Child Friendly and Protective Environment (SCFPE)*, introducing protection concepts and actions into the formal school through teachers, principals, and student councils<sup>6</sup>.

In addition, a fourth component was added as an adaptive measure in year four of the project as a partial response to the Covid 19 pandemic school lockdowns. It was designed to use storytelling through radio and television broadcasting and facilitators reading stories in CFSs to encourage interest in reading and improve reading skills. It was delivered through the materials of the *1001 Nights*.

Understanding how these four elements have functioned as distinct parts of the integrated whole and reviewing their relevance, effectiveness and impact has served as key to framing the evaluation. Brief descriptors of each follow below.

### CBCPM Model

Constituted of male and female volunteers who are selected by the community as people committed to facilitating child protection activities;

- are trained and supervised by EPAC on the CRC, positive discipline, psychosocial development, outreach and mentoring, prevention and response strategies;
- identify children at risk, guide families on safe parenting and work with the community on protection surveillance measures;
- delivering community education and public awareness raising of EPAC messages; and
- where necessary, make referrals of cases to CPAN/ DCPAN and other service providers

### Child Friendly Spaces Model

Based on UNICEF CFS guidelines and Humanitarian Action minimum standards for child protection as an environment that is inclusive and non-discriminatory, safe and secure, stimulating, participatory and supportive; through learning-based activities facilitated by trained community volunteers. WCC have adapted this UNICEF's emergency context approach and included psycho-social support (PSS), child recreation, life skills development and school enrolment.

<sup>5</sup> WCC/EPAC PIP: 11

<sup>6</sup> The MoE was a prime focus initially; with the DFA, intervention at this level became more limited





### School Child Friendly & Protective Environment

- Address physical, psychological punishment by teachers, bullying and fighting, sexual abuse and discrimination.
- Establish and train Student Councils (SC) on child protection prevention and response.
- Train teachers in child-friendly learning techniques.
- Form and train school-based SMS to work with student councils to monitor and address child protection concerns.
- Promote school heads (principals/head teachers) as active participants in raising and monitoring for protection.
- Engage with Community Education Committees through SC and SMSSMS to raise awareness on child rights and their alignment with Islamic principles.
- Engage with the Ministry of Education in each targeted area and nationally, training officers on child rights, protection and child-friendly school environments, identify barriers and potential solutions (restricted to a local basis only post August 2021).

### 1001 Nights

Introducing distance and self-learning concepts in response first to COVID-19 closures and then after for the Taliban take-over was a significant innovation for EPAC in terms of content format, messaging, and interactions among teacher, learner and material. While most in-person activities were paused, self-learning materials, active surveillance of child protection and community sensitization/public awareness continued.

1001 Nights was a major part of this: cartoon-based stories in book and TV formats for children and their families at home, with CBCPM support. It was considered an integral part of EPAC, "...all CBCPM members attended orientation sessions on the new concept of the 1001 Nights/Big Bad Boo program" and parents were expected "to know about children's activities to read and understand 1001 Nights story books and share the messages with other children..."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021. p12





## Evaluation Design and Methodology

The design and methods of the evaluation were necessarily adapted to the constraints of the Afghan context at the time of implementation with respect to restrictions by the DFA on engaging with girls and women. Due to these circumstances and the numerous adaptations EPAC underwent for reasons outside the control of WCC, this evaluation has focused strongly on learning. The key assessment criteria were relevance and efficiency; context changes and adaptability; coherence and effectiveness; sustainability and management coordination; and identifying lessons going forward. Measurement of indicators against

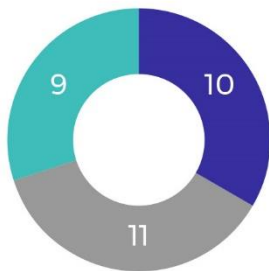
planned targets has been addressed by WCC internally through an endline assessment.

Qualitative data was collected through In-depth interviews (IDI) and Key Informant (KI) Interviews with partners (n= 10), stakeholders (n= 12) and project participants (total: 30) in target districts of Kabul, Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces over a three-week period in February and March 2023. These were semi-structured interviews built around the primary evaluation questions of the TOR, tailored with a focus on the effectiveness of the models and approaches described above.

### Interviewed Beneficiaries

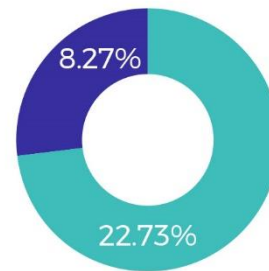
Locations

■ Kandahar ■ Kabul ■ Nangarhar



Gender Distribution

■ Female ■ Male



## Limitations

The evaluation adapted a number of methodological elements (See *Annex A*) to take account of the changed operating context in Afghanistan since the ban on female NGO workers in December 2022. While the adaptations were necessary to limit the risk exposure of participant communities, partners and data collection personnel, they still created limitations that affect the interpretation of the evaluation results.

The central limitation was the evaluation methodology being designed as a qualitative analysis since quantitative data collection was assessed as not appropriate at the time of the

fieldwork. This qualitative-led design was well aligned with the core aim of the evaluation being lessons identification, and not a comparative quantitative analysis of effectiveness (WCC conducted a separate internal endline evaluation). This was appropriate given the adaptations and interruptions the program experienced.

One byproduct of this change was that the sample sizes were small – however more in-depth with findings from the qualitative interviews triangulated with program monitoring data wherever possible.





## Findings

The findings analysis has been structured according to Assessment Criteria provided by WCC (which are in alignment with the GAC RBM model), with multiple evaluation questions (EQs) answered under each Assessment Criteria as follows:



### Assessment Criteria 1

- EQ 1
- EQ 2
- EQ 3



### Assessment Criteria 2

- EQ 4
- EQ 5
- EQ 6



### Assessment Criteria 3

- EQ 7
- EQ 8
- EQ 9

The EQs were provided in the terms of reference and then refined during the inception phase.

## Assessment Criteria 1: Relevance

**EQ: To what extent did the project respond to the evolution of the needs and priorities of Afghanistan?**

**Finding:** The design and approach of the project responded to the needs and priorities of Afghanistan both as articulated before August 2021, and are considered still relevant now.

Afghanistan ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1994, but as of 2011, “did not consider the Convention as a legally binding instrument in the internal order and has therefore not incorporated it systematically into the domestic legal system in order to make it applicable.”<sup>8</sup>

Children were still vulnerable in 2017 and thus the rationale for EPAC was well-grounded. Conflict had severely impacted children in Afghanistan in the preceding year, with a 24% increase in child casualties according to UNAMA<sup>9</sup>. Approximately 40% of children were out of school and the country faced a national crisis in rates of severe acute childhood malnutrition. In addition, children across Afghanistan continued experiencing multiple forms of violence with few options for protection.<sup>10</sup>

EPAC focused on strengthening the capacities of individuals, organizations, and systems to protect children. This was in synchrony with the growing concerns of development and humanitarian agencies that basic support to children was being undermined by weaknesses in the ability or readiness of families and communities to act.

Focusing through the wider lens of child rights enabled WCC and its partners to coordinate with actions of other counterpart agencies working on wider related issues such as unsafe and insecure schools, domestic violence and the sexual exploitation and abuse of girls and boys.

The three targeted provinces for EPAC (Nangarhar, Kabul and Kandahar), were especially affected by all of these as the center points of military conflict and insecurity, child exploitation<sup>11</sup> and unstable families. At the time of the

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.refworld.org/publisher,CRC,CONCOBSERVATIONS,AFG,4dc7bd492,0.html>

<sup>9</sup> UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan

<sup>10</sup> WCC/EPAC. Project Implementation Plan (PIP) Jan 6, 2017 - Mar 31, 2020 (resubmitted July 2017): 6-7

<sup>11</sup> According to a 2015 WCC Nangarhar survey, 67% agreed that child marriage “negatively affects health and psychosocial wellbeing, and 60% that the





project’s development, “over 68% of returnees from Pakistan [were] in Nangarhar and Kabul provinces and 4,500 returnees repatriated to Kandahar between 2015 and 2016.”<sup>12</sup> The Child-Friendly Spaces design and Community-Based Child Protection mechanism used by EPAC was adapted by WCC from the original UNICEF and others design. WCC’s own experience working within Afghanistan’s growing Education in Emergencies (EiE) environment, were harnessed to make additional adaptations to address threats

to children expressly by providing learning and play venues that were “inclusive and non-discriminatory... stimulating, participatory and supportive,” for those not yet able to access protective formal school environments.<sup>13</sup> Until August 2021, in collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Health, they functioned as part of a referral system to identify and, as needed, create support linkages in the community for children at risk.

### EQ: To what extent was the project aligned to the Afghanistan national priority programs, and national peace and development framework?

**Finding:** EPAC was aligned to the Afghanistan national priority programs and national peace and development framework.

According to EPAC’s planning document, the project was taking advantage of an important policy window. The Afghan government was becoming “very open to discussing child protection issues”<sup>14</sup> and through the *National Strategy for Children at Risk* was committed to strengthening the rights of vulnerable children (those with disabilities, orphans, street and working children, those in conflict with law). EPAC too was planned to pursue a broadly inclusive approach to its CBCPM and CFSs outreach. In this, it was strategic in its alignments.

Though no longer actively involved with EPAC, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled was a key counterpart at the project’s start as a focal responsible authority for child protection through enforcing the Labour Code, managing its still-nascent national social work system and orphanages across the country and serving as the link to protection-oriented NGOs. Especially significant were the project’s on-going association with the Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) in its target provinces. As the “primary statutory child protection case management system

operating at provincial and national levels” it has been, at least in theory, a way into the protection systems for CBCPM.

In its emphasis on facilitating local ownership and capacities in support of children’s protection – including by children themselves – EPAC was less well aligned with the theory of change underlying the *Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework 2017-21* (ANPDF). We assess this as a positive. The ANPDF was a five-year strategic plan “for achieving self-reliance”, but without an action plan for developing the human resources necessary for enabling it. In this, it was supply rather than demand driven, aimed at “building the people’s trust that their government can provide a better future for them and their families...” and their, “confidence in a state that is well-governed (and) provides (them) a voice”. Under the Framework, government would “set priorities, make choices, devise appropriate programs and deliver concrete outcomes; (and) detail standards on inclusion, gender equity, regional balance, and other development goals.”<sup>15</sup> In this government framework, there was little space for people themselves to develop and apply the knowledge, competencies and skills to demand, design and monitor these aspects of their

girls...frequently face domestic violence”, while 62% believed such marriages “protect the family’s honor” and were “part of their traditions and customs”. They are findings pertinent to the emphasis EPAC has put on the issue through its protection messaging and evaluation respondents have consistently noted.

<sup>12</sup> WCC PIP p6

<sup>13</sup> EPAC. PIP: 13

<sup>14</sup> EPAC. PIP: 7

<sup>15</sup> GfR. 2017. “Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) 2017-2021”: 2





governance. When the government failed to “supply”, it left a hole that in many cases NGOs like WCC were attempting

to fill with initiatives aimed at mobilizing citizen's participation in learning and protection.

### EQ: Which factors facilitated or limited the project’s response capacity and flexibility? Were partnerships effective?

**Finding:** A range of factors influenced the project's response capacity and flexibility.

A range of factors influenced the nature of EPAC’s responses; key factors are discussed in detail in the other sections of the evaluation as appropriate. From an overarching perspective, however, three are important in having enabled the others.

#### a) Closely aligned partner agencies, each with localized roots in the context and culture of Afghanistan

WCC and its partners HRDA and OHW were all either in or of the country in a comprehensive, interactive way, the latter as national NGOs and WCC in bringing a “twenty-year track record of success in Afghanistan, along with 100% regional staff and strong community ties”<sup>16</sup>.

Critically, the partners worked together through a two-day workshop to “develop a detailed work-plan for individual activities, responsibilities, and a timeframe for completing them... assess the design of the EPAC project and its components, decide upon key strategies and sub-activities, including approaches and tools required to achieve them, and a monitoring and evaluation framework with key important milestones.”<sup>17</sup>

In addition to designing a stronger, more coherent project, the process appears to have served as the key first step in creating a shared “backstage” understanding of what EPAC was about and building a basis of trust, clarity and agreement around goals and methods that made the later pivoting more straightforward. It also allowed WCC to justify time and resources for continuing to strengthen the technical and operational capacities of partners and communities along the way, enabling (it appears) not only a stronger project

implementation, but also leaving capacity for sustaining the models and approaches post-GAC funding.

#### b) Commitment to operationalizing participation as more than “turning up”

It is clear from the scope, regularity and continuity of training workshops, concept building seminars and mentoring approaches, and especially of stakeholder and project participant responses to them, that EPAC did not function solely based on box-ticking attendance. According to its Risk Register, it “integrates an intentional capacity building, learning and knowledge sharing strategy with key project partners, including communities and government officials”<sup>18</sup> as a means of fostering “community acceptance” of the child rights and protection concepts and a readiness to apply them.

Use of what appear to be learning-by-doing and active learning approaches with key EPAC agents such as CBCPM and CFS facilitators similarly reflect a definition of participation that implies “working through” the new ideas to understand, challenge and (as appropriate) adapt them, rather than simply “becoming aware” of them. Again, engaging at these levels would presumably serve to develop the kind of trust WCC needed from partners and stakeholders to realize its complex outcomes and make its several adjustments.

#### c) Setting all core concepts within a holistic and inclusive framework

EPAC documents and stakeholder and project participant comments present a picture of its several “target” reference groups – schools, families, communities – in holistic and

<sup>16</sup> <https://warchildannualreport.ca/>

<sup>17</sup> EPAC. PIP: 5

<sup>18</sup> EPAC. PIP: 22





inclusive terms. The terms of reference and functions of the CBCPM and CFSs are similarly holistic and inclusive. In this, they reflect the complex and interactive reality of children at risk. Any person or institution expecting to act on behalf of their safety and well-being, needs to recognize and take these many forces working against them into account.

The design of EPAC appears to have done so. Thus, for example:

→ The full complement of school actors and structures – leadership/principal, teachers, students and student councils, School Shura and school management committees – are visible in EPAC awareness building, outreach and capacity development. They are expected to take the initiative collaboratively to identify, assess, plan, and take and monitor action to protect students.

→ Families, not the child in isolation, are expected to be included in CBCPM outreach, involved in CFS activities, and linked with the school and social services as fully as possible.

→ The CBCPM model is conceived inherently as an integrated whole, members responsible for children’s protection from prevention through identification, rescue, mitigation to referral. And in this conception, the focus is, logically, on the whole child with multiple rights, responsibilities and roles: as family member, school student, community citizen, son, or daughter of Islam. Because all of these can be sources of threat or harm, as well as providers of safety and well-being, it is an approach to understanding and managing the dynamics of protection that appears to give the CBCPM value.

**EQ: What factors related to local context and variances between provinces facilitated or limited the project response?**

**Finding:** Socio-cultural economic and security factors related to local context and variances between provinces facilitated and/or limited the project response.

There was little detail in the data differentiating the provinces according to implementation or results factors. Overall, the target districts were confronting the same challenges of poverty, insecurity and significant influxes of refugees and IDP. In Kandahar, however, more traditional local norms limited access to families and slowed down the process of

community sensitization to the EPAC concepts and “it took a lot more time there for communities that had been deprived during the war to see results of the project... Nangahar was a bit better, and Kabul much easier” (EPAC partner).

**EQ: To what extent the Canadian assistance and 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?**

**Finding:** Canadian assistance and the project considered the causes and factors of conflict and fragility and took them into account as part of project implementation, the latter more fully than the first. Implications for future programming suggest maintaining core EPAC principles.

The EPAC project as a whole took into account the fact of Afghanistan as a country in conflict, its socio-economic and governance systems fragile and its citizens – especially women and children – increasingly insecure. The fact of its

successful implementation in the face of persistent and significant disturbances from this environment was a function in large part of its being designed and operated as a “loosely coupled” arrangement of flexible parts built from the





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EPAC Afghanistan  
External Evaluation

perspective of communities and based on integrated capacity development – not as a supply-driven intervention based on a fixed agenda of immutable inputs.

The fact that Canadian official assistance supported the EPAC design and management structure was a sign, too, of recognizing the Afghan reality.

A combination of the Afghan context and various restrictions in Canada meant that it sometimes took Global Affairs Canada significant time to decide on next and remedial steps in EPAC – almost two years to approve the PIP, for example.







## Assessment Criteria 2: Context Changes & Adaptability

**EQ:** To what extent the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the project implementation and activities? What adaptations and strategies were employed to mitigate effects of the pandemic on the project?

**Finding:** COVID-19 impacted project implementation and activities significantly. The adaptations and strategies employed to mitigate these effects were appropriate, reasonably fluid and effective.

Understandably, the risk events anticipated in EPAC’s initial design did not include a global pandemic and the significant impact school closures had on the whole of its target communities.

In 2020, EPAC activities were paused as lockdown “prevented implementation of face-to-face project activities... including participation of children in the CFSs, regular face-to-face meetings with CBCPM, SMS, student councils, provision of trainings” (EPAC partner). Partners were nevertheless able to pivot reasonably quickly in developing at least a modest level of alternative arrangements, a function of their respective knowledge of and ties to their own and the wider development communities (e.g., EiE) and their ability to boost capacity reserves of facilitators and CBCPM through a learning-on-the-job approach.

WCC Kabul “continued to provide awareness about COVID-19 prevention measure for parents, community members”, including CBCPM, volunteer community educators, religious leaders, and child friendly spaces.<sup>19</sup>

Flexibility in managing EPAC inputs was also key in enabling accommodation to the dramatic shifts in demand

around COVID-19, while maintaining sufficient capacity to provide effective support. Through CBCPMs, SMS and volunteers, EPAC was able to continue community education outreach (seminars, posters) on prevention and awareness<sup>20</sup>.

EPAC has effectively taken into account the various ways in which its interventions and, especially, its project participant communities and implementors might be vulnerable. And doing so with a focus on strengthening capacities for response.

With less demand, the complement of CBCPM members was reduced; those remaining members tasked specifically with activities aimed at preventing and mitigating the effects of the pandemic through a greater focus on increasing their capacities for awareness raising and active surveillance.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> WCC-EPAC Midyear Report April 1st – September 30th, 2020. p5  
<sup>20</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p5  
<sup>21</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p6. Although the review did not find evidence of this, it was perhaps less disruptive to down-

size this cadre of staff because they were local and volunteers than had they been salaried staff from elsewhere.





**EQ: To what extent the power shift of August 15, 2021, and change of the regime, impacted the project implementation and activities? What adaptations and strategies were used for the project's continued implementation?**

**Finding:** The takeover of Afghanistan by the DFA on August 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 had a significant and direct impact on EPAC implementation and activities. Government systems became unstable, women were eventually excluded, programming closed and WCC's office in Kabul was confiscated. The project was also indirectly affected because of the devastating effect it had on poverty, participation and the security of its referent communities. Adaptations taken were as effective as they could have been in the circumstances in which WCC found itself.

Two risk events that were initially identified by the EPAC PIP: deterioration of political stability and unwillingness of government to participate, did serve to foreshadow to a degree the drama of the regime change. Risk mitigation measures, as well as the project design per se, therefore proved relevant to some extent, including:

*"We want more programs focused on women and girls... We want to provide more girls a safe and fearless environment for education."*

Parent of project participant

- Consistent monitoring, including through CBCPM gathering information directly from project participants and community stakeholders to feed back into project implementation.
- An emphasis on community acceptance, a low profile and a neutral strategy of pro-active protective measures; integration of capacity building, learning and knowledge sharing with key project partners.
- Selection of partners based on their protection programming experience and strong community relations.

It is notable that the cutting-off of relations with the DFA has not been absolute; mutual awareness, efforts to create some understanding and draw on other experience have enabled negotiated arrangements, albeit limited. For example, BBB's subcontractor CYEEO had an association with the DFA that allowed many children to watch the 1001 Nights through Facebook.

Monitoring by EPAC and Child Protection Officers allowed them to "...keep linkage with project participants and follow up on the (BBB) self-learning program", and in the process take corrective action. In one case, the DFA was sufficiently convinced of the neutrality of the project to give its formal approval for activities in CFSs where children and facilitators felt particularly insecure.<sup>22</sup>

*"I just want that you do more attention to our daughters because now they can't go to school for getting knowledge under this government."*

Parent of project participant

These steps have not, of course, resolved the impact of the new governance arrangement and policies, especially as concerns girls and women. Both male and female respondents saw addressing gender exclusion as a core concern for communities.

While project activities were initially suspended after the takeover, EPAC partners were able to remain connected, "remotely providing support to the CBCPM members" who continued to "engage in active surveillance of child protection issues including community sensitization and public awareness."<sup>23</sup> Again, the fact of their being from the communities, and the attention EPAC had given to building the CBCPM as active agents in the project through a mentored, learn-by-doing approach to their work (e.g., active learning), members were assessed as being "an effective link between to project participants."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p12  
<sup>23</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report: April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022: p5, 7

<sup>24</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p7





### EQ: How useful and appropriate were the changes adopted by the project?

**Finding:** The changes adopted by EPAC in the form of the BBB education model were useful and welcomed by children and stakeholders in pedagogical terms but required stronger safeguards against mismatches in organizational cultures and poor communication.

During the 2021 period, BBB’s 1001 Nights<sup>25</sup> social and behavioural learning model for children was introduced, focusing on encouraging children to read and improve their reading skills through the use of radio, television and storybook content, including content focused on Covid 19 hygiene and to a limited extent, protection. It was a reduced format<sup>26</sup> combining story books and TV/Facebook programming allowed the project to reach an overall 25,000 children, in their homes and in schools, supported by 368 self-learning facilitators and 400 MoE teachers.

While a few project participants reported being unfamiliar with the program, most had used it and were satisfied overall with the messages particularly on COVID-19 prevention.<sup>27</sup> Only a couple, however, mentioned the program as being concerned with protection.<sup>28</sup>

*“BBB gave help to the students of schools and courses and told them a lot of information about their protection. It was fun and kids liked them.”*

*“BBB was an effective learning substitute during the lockdowns. When the children and students couldn't attend to school classes and seminars, BBB helped them for studying from far way. They received some books and toys for studying and playing; some educational videos and books. They taught children... how they could protect themselves from COVID 19.”*

*“One of BBB's great contributions to students was stationery, baking, booklets, and free clothes. This motivated children and their mothers to send them to study and education and forced them to attend safety seminars.”*

*“BBB provided a lot of help to school students... encouraged students and their parents to participate more in their education. The students understood what rights they have and how to protect themselves and be able to get their rights. The students learned how to fight against the inequalities of forced marriages”.*

*“It was a good program for children because they were shown through cartoons. They had good learning messages and some messages regarding Covid-19.”*

*“BBB was an excellent educational program for our children in the era of the Coronavirus, through which both the level of awareness of our children grew and its content was informative, so that now our children are implementing those instructions. The program has been very effective for us.”*

However, there were some challenges and some mixed perspectives on BBB. These all seem to stem from the rapid adaptation for Covid-19 – BBB was not a planned part of EPAC. For example, the [pre-DFA] MoE assessed several episodes of BBB not to be in alignment with the Afghan curriculum and some episodes were dropped or edited.

*“We thought about the BBB materials as an alternative, but this was not part of the Ministry of Education policy, so it took a long time to get it approved and started. In making sure it was reaching children, I would say it was effective but we went through a number of challenges to get them to agree. ... BBB subcontracted to CYEEO because BBB did not have their own presence in Afghanistan and CYEEO was engaged with the Ministry; they weren't able to get an MoU,*

<sup>25</sup> <https://bigbadboo.com/education/>

<sup>26</sup> The full BBB program involves extensive interactive in-class component of teacher guidance and storytelling and student exchange and small dramas. The in-person component was limited to facilitators reading stories in CFSs.

<sup>27</sup> It was not always clear from interviews that satisfaction with hygiene messages were a result of BBB specifically or new COVID programs in general.

<sup>28</sup> Topics like problem-solving, conflict resolution and discrimination are major themes of the un-adapted BBB program, but the evaluation could not confirm if they were included in the EPAC story books.





but managed to get some kind of approval. Comic Books etc. were effective - it reached the children, but did not achieve the results because of the bureaucratic challenges.” (WCC/Kabul)

“I’m not quite sure why we have (a) different perception of support for the materials. When our team discussed these materials with the MoE (before the DFA) they questioned the suitability of the materials, that they were not closely aligned with the cultural context. . . Whereas BBB were saying that interaction with the Ministry was nothing but positive; that cultural appropriateness was okay.” (WCC/Kabul).

Some stakeholders at the school-level suggested some stakeholders had a less enthusiastic view of the BBB content:

“There is no space for BBB to be included in the learning system of school. Neither the teachers nor the students showed interest in the BBB....it was not fit with the Afghan culture context. Therefore, BBB did not contribute to EPAC objectives at all” (EPAC partner)

In general, however the hands-on actions taken by WCC, OHW and HRDA project officers and community mobilizers served to make the approach work reasonably well. They made regular field visits to keep the 384 facilitators updated on the basic concepts of the project, guide them on the self-learning methods that they should

follow and, critically, ensure they maintained lists of the children’s status with respect to participation.<sup>29</sup>

Training guidelines for 1001 Nights were later reviewed and adapted for use at community level. Further self-learning facilitators and MOE teachers were trained and “confirmed their full support to implement the program to children in their communities.”<sup>30 31</sup>

Flexibility, a readiness to adapt and relations already established in the community also mattered according to an implementing partner:

“There were no big challenges; sometimes MoE said whenever you need to conduct a training, besides the MoU you need to apply to us. They said we cannot do it in the school time, because of the security situation it was difficult to meet after the school time. Our team fixed their times with the teachers to meet within the school time (they coordinated with the headmaster); they used the break times to discuss the 1001 Nights story books. Since our project team and partners build the capacity of the community, the community members were very interested to persist”.

“I did feel like there was a strong sense of ownership that was driven by communities. We were not on the ground full time, but they maintained the activities which was a testament to their ownership...”

**EQ: To what extent was Global Affairs Canada flexible to approve/agree changes in the project related to context changes? e.g., re-programming, resource realignment, no cost extension etc.**

**Finding:** GAC was supportive and responsive to adaptations prior to the DFA. This was less so post-DFA.

GAC was supportive of the changes made in response to COVID-19, including introduction of the BBB program.

GAC also supported the WCC proposal that, to ensure children who were part of the CFSs continued to be supported, “a self-learning component providing children with self-learning comic books and materials at communities

and MOE schools” would be added and “campaigns/awareness raising” would be conducted in the community and with families “on the importance of education, particularly for girls.”<sup>32</sup>

Given the interruptions to activities caused by COVID-19, GAC agreed to a two-year extension of the program, but

<sup>29</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021. p24

<sup>30</sup> According to one respondent, some teachers burned the BBB materials when the Taliban came into power. This was after EPAC had dropped the program and it was not clear if it was its teachers who were involved.

<sup>31</sup> Annual Report: April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022: 13

<sup>32</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report: April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022: p12





the approval process was slow: “It was a lengthy negotiation with GAC to resolve the issue and get the project going.”<sup>33</sup>.

GAC support following the DFA take-over was less helpful, though perhaps more frustrating than overtly negative. As noted elsewhere, this appeared to be in part a matter of bureaucratic procedure, in this case coupled with an uncertain policy environment globally and a disinclination for risk.

Also, changes suggested by GAC appeared to reduce the ability of EPAC to apply the criteria of collaborative partnership planning and project participant consultation as fully as possible. Linked to this is the Canadian criminal code which created real restrictions to the implementation of EPAC post-DFA, as the Taliban are a listed Terrorist entity. A strict reading of the law prevents technical assistance and other activities being provided to the ministries of the Taliban government, including government teachers.

“EPAC was essentially on hold for over 6 months after the DFA takeover and we did not have approval to continue the project. So, we lost some staff. It was a fundamental problem for us in terms of moving forward because it was tied to the donor policy and their inability to work. Their instructions that we would provide no direct and indirect support was a fundamental barrier. It wasn't a planned pause, it kind of went on and on. When we did get started again the no cost extension was 6-7 months instead of 9-10, so then it was a quick process with partners to get things started again - we were operating under different circumstances and had less time to plan it.”

Implementing Partner

<sup>33</sup> It is noted that no interviews were done with GAC officers in Ottawa or Kabul to confirm, clarify or elaborate its response to either COVID-19 or DFA-related adjustments made to EPAC.





## Assessment Criteria 3: Coherence

**EQ: To what extent the project has achieved the desired goals in relation to the theory of change? Were the outcomes realistic and sufficient to achieve the ultimate outcome? How did Big Bad Boo contribute to this?**

### Findings:

1. Assessing EPAC's achievement of goals (Outcomes) in relation to its theory of change is constrained with only the Logic Model as reference.
2. The possibility that lower-level Outcomes are realistic and sufficient to achieve the Ultimate Outcome is not certain.
3. BBB's contribution to the theory of change is difficult to quantify with the data available, but likely marginal compared to the core EPAC models.

EPAC's internal links to its Logic Model were taken as the Theory of Change for the purposes of this EQ. The Logic Model did not elaborate the conditions under which the relationships would hold i.e., the *assumptions* made as to why and how the results chain are expected to apply. As such, assessing the likelihood that the planned progress from inputs, through outputs to Immediate and then Intermediate Outcomes is tenuous, based only on the structure of the Logic Model making conceptual sense.

That said, in the case of the EPAC Logic Model, it generally does. Whether this Logic Model, and the assumptions which may or may not have been included in its formation made sense in the real world of Afghanistan over the project period cannot be confirmed. For example, have persistent failures in children's protection been the result of weaknesses in the internal logic of EPAC or an invalid set of assumptions?

Assessing likelihood of Outcomes at the Immediate and Intermediate levels leading eventually to the Ultimate Outcome is also tenuous in the highly uncertain and dynamic situation of Afghanistan – where all actors, their policies, programs and resources are in flux.

A theory of change in this case would seem to have needed as a basic assumption that the project could be reconceived,

redesigned and delivered through the lens of a conservative patriarchal culture and historically strict interpretation of Islam which are inherently distrustful of western motives and practice. It was not clear that WCC or GAC explicitly challenged the Logic Model in this way.

Complex projects like EPAC that aim to promote social change are inherently reactive and to a significant degree unpredictable. They must be flexible, able to respond creatively, but also systematic in taking advantage of opportunities and managing threats from external and internal forces affecting their policy and planning, resources and implementation. They are helped in this respect where their intended Outcomes are clear, agreed and seen to be feasible by staff, stakeholders and project participants; and to be linked together in ways that make sense in the real world.

In defining coherence in this way, assessing EPAC in terms of its theory of change at the lower level of progression from Outputs to Immediate Outcomes is a much more realistic and positive undertaking. Modest changes can be observed. For example, training of CBCPM on how to facilitate parents to act in ways that create a safe and nurturing home environment for children can be linked to those parents later reporting they hit their children less and care for their well-being more.





## Assessment Criteria 4: Effectiveness

The evaluation was not tasked with measuring EPAC outcomes against indicators (as this was already done internally by WCC), which is normally the principal means of determining effectiveness. Nevertheless, a clear assessment has been made based on opinions of stakeholders and project participants as to the quality of their participation, types of experience and level of satisfaction with its activities.

### Findings:

1. The kinds of changes EPAC has enabled are consistently and mainly positive across all core dimensions of child protection, despite the magnitude of the threats against its structural integrity and implementation agenda.
2. The project has pivoted well. However, the level these changes have been embedded is more difficult to assess in the current context and are undoubtedly influenced by the DFA takeover and their regressive policies.
3. However, the regularity of the positive observations and of recommendations that the project be extended in duration and to other districts suggests it is fair to consider the project effective.

### EQ: To what extent has the project achieved the expected results/outcomes in the following priority areas: a) Development of community-based model for child protection

Across the whole period of the project, EPAC has “continued mobilization and sensitization of the communities in all targeted provinces” through the auspices of the CBCPM members who have provided awareness sessions on the principles of child protection, guidance of the use of non-physical discipline, identified. They have referred children at risk. They have served as the “bridge between the communities/ project participants and project team”, especially during the disruptions of COVID-19 and the regime change.<sup>34</sup>

The conception of community-based facilitators was not created by EPAC – other agencies in Afghanistan work through them as a means of reaching communities in ways not available to, or appropriate for, their own staff. WCC and its partners worked to bolster these and feel ownership of them, however.

*“We established more than 192 CBCPM groups with more than 2800<sup>35</sup> members and 50% were women. So, we did a*

*lot of work with them, a lot of community-based awareness sessions and capacity building and talking to them about their responsibility for creating a protection environment for children” (WCC/Kabul).*

The approach for some project participant respondents was both understood and appreciated:

*“The CBCPM consisted of individuals at community level who would work in a coordinated way toward child protection goals. They often develop workshops for parents and children to get acquainted with their rights and their role in the community. And these networks and processes were very useful in child protection.”*

Critically, much of the operationalizing of the model happened during implementation based on feedback, a formative adaptation approach typically associated with effective innovation.

<sup>34</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p5, 7

<sup>35</sup> The actual number is 2,880





**EQ: To what extent has the project achieved the expected results/outcomes in the following priority areas: b) Strengthened ability of families to provide safe environment for children**

Reasonably enough, observers of the model base their assessment of its effectiveness on the changes they have seen produced in the community:

*"...after the implementation of this program, almost everything got changed and now people enthusiastically send their children to school without any pressure.... parents have been encouraged to pay serious attention to their children health and safety.... Mullahs who did not want to implement the program [considering] it harmful and destructive to the villagers, particularly to the children [now] strongly support the project and even encourage the people to participate"*  
(Principal)

*"The organizations like WCC are in fact the only source of help for our children to protect their rights and moralities. The project implemented by WCC in our area was indeed cooperative as it provided a lot of services for children, and we have benefited a lot. The main thing about the project I can point out is that it helped a lot in mental and intellectual development of our children. Moreover, some seminars were organized for us through which we got encouraged to let our children learn and obviously were able to recognize the rights of children."*  
(Female project participant)

*"They have offered many trainings and seminars where they taught us some good things that it is very important for us and our children. We have benefited from the support they have provided in both financial and spiritual terms, as our children well-being has now been improved. As a result, they have developed from emotional, mental, social, physical, environmental and spiritual point of view. The organization has also helped us provide a healthy and balanced lifestyle for our children which in turn can boost their personal wellbeing and maintaining growth. As far as my children are concerned, they have truly changed as now they are more obedient and respectful to us. And we clearly see how they became educated and how brilliantly they read and write. Generally, our children have been taken out of those dark ages of illiteracy and we are thrilled about the opportunity we had".*  
(Female project participant)

The inherent strength of the CBCPM model is evident in its mix of enabling characteristics and the fact that these are flexible. It brings together three key factors:

- a. members are from the community they serve and so are able to build on local ties, an existing sense of trust enabling the on-going "dialogues and discussions" critical for communities, knowledge of community structures, an awareness of the risks facing children and links with those who can influence change;
- b. they receive continuous opportunities to learn, to strengthen their capacities through both organized training and, more importantly, less formal mentored practice; and
- c. their responsibilities are holistic, covering the full cycle of child protection issues, often involving children themselves, in planning and conducting surveillance, managing cases, arranging for referrals e.g., to health, police, psychosocial and education service providers and CPAN, and working with families to create "safe and nurturing home environments".

Focused, tailored attention and sufficiently iterative time are key to bringing local and well-positioned EPAC "champions" on side: in the government, in the community, in the school and even in the family. CBCPM are successful in large part because they know who such people are and know the language to use in introducing the concepts through a positive, respectful lens. For example:

*"Working with the local partners was a major contributing factor on this project. They know the power brokers, understand the power structures, can negotiate access etc."*  
(WCC/Kabul).

More specifically as champions to be pursued, "community elders were particularly great collaborators, and they wanted the organization to implement similar projects and programs in their villages." (Kandahar principal)

Importantly for sustainability and application in other districts, the mechanism is less a fixed package of pre-set requirements than it is an arrangement of qualities and







functions. These can be adapted in response to the unpredictability of the changing community and national environments, and threats to children within these. This was shown in the ability of members to pivot responsibilities in the face of COVID-19 and upheavals in governance. It is a capacity for flexibility that is critical to CBCPM success insofar as it allows it to work in a genuine partnership with the community; “shoulder by shoulder (and) community participation is very important to make the program successful” (Kandahar: principal).

Finally, some caution was also raised. The voluntary basis of CBCPM engagement is seen by some as a potential threat to sustained motivation:

*“...in future there should be some incentives, so they are not financially worse off or if there are other income generating activities they are engaged in, these do not suffer. [Incentives might] ensure they are actively engaged” (WCC/Kabul).*

CBCPM themselves appeared to agree, they were ready to continue, but with resources:

*“We know about the structure and design and format of the project. We can run the project very well. There are some materials needed, once we are provided with that, we will continue with the support of community members and elders”.*

**EQ: To what extent has the project achieved the expected results/outcomes in the following priority areas: c) Increased availability of safe spaces for children**

As noted throughout this evaluation, a critical theme in EPAC has been its holistic approach to understanding and acting on protection. Most notable in this has been the focus on children within the context of their families and the dual position of parents – especially mothers – as both rights holders and duty bearers.

While the full-scale plans to conduct project participant training had to be suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions and the deteriorating security situation, CBCPM and self-learning Facilitators nevertheless conducted “weekly parenting education sessions in smaller groups” during the 2021-2022 reporting period to a total of 13,183 parents across all three provinces<sup>36</sup> aimed at increasing their knowledge of child rights and protection, referral mechanisms and positive parenting skills.

Because of this synergy, it is reasonable to assume that most if not all references to improvements in children’s safety and well-being are in some way reflections of families as stronger protective places. Other stakeholder and project participant comments referenced changes in families more directly.

*“The project helped us very much in understanding our rights (and) taught our parents how to treat a small child, how to*

*talk to children in a soft tone. And that the husband and wife should not argue in front of children so as not to have a bad effect on them... because of the project that our parent’s behavior changed which helped us work on things like self-control and lying.”*

*“Now if we enter every house in this area, we will see that all children know about environmental protection issues and their rights. ... Children and girls have learned social interactions.”*

*“I am an illiterate mother, at first, I did not understand the right way to treat and raise children...But after the seminars, we understood our children’s rights and there were many positive changes in our understanding and practice as well as in our attitudes. Now I think a lot about the best future of my children particularly girls as women is always marginalized in Afghanistan.”*

*“...this project was able to change the opinions of parents and relatives of children in the whole society. They became more aware of their behavior in front of their children. People thought of creating a suitable place for children’s education. Children and parents were informed about their rights.”*

*“Most of our family benefited from this project. WCC attracted our attention. Before, our men did not allow our*

<sup>36</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p7





daughters or us to go for learning to school in our village. Now, if there is an educational program in the village, they allow us to learn something.”

“... Gender-based violence has been reduced to some extent. As people are now aware of that the children who grow up in families where there is violence may suffer a range of behavioral and emotional disturbances. Therefore, parents or other family members do not threaten or beat their children but rather encourage them to study and learn something.”

“...the first advantage of this project was to inform parents about children's rights, which was not considered before...none of the residents knew about children's rights, especially girls. After, there were positive changes in the behavior of parents and elders towards their children. Children accesses to their rights has been increased and the children become more secure and stable mentally.”

“Girls who were not allowed to participate in schools, after one of their family members participated in these seminars, they themselves have allowed their girls to attend schools. The mothers who didn't know how to treat young children learned how to treat them properly “

The EPAC emphasis on creating child-friendly spaces (CFSs) as places in which children can participate in play and learning as a means of promoting their protection has proven a sound one. Like CBCPM, it was not unique to EPAC. Based on proven good practice, the modality is assessed increasingly as an effective approach by both development and humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan to reach those children, especially girls, who are marginalized, vulnerable or excluded from school due to poverty, isolation or poor quality of social services. A CFS offers children, and often their parents, the opportunity to acquire social and life skills, be introduced to basics of reading, and develop a sense of self-worth and confidence.

As EPAC initially implemented them, CFSs were selected through joint assessments based on criteria of owner willingness to provide free space for 2+ years; to sign and implement the provisions of the child protection policy on security and safety; and to be inclusive of all children and gender equal.

They functioned effectively at the expected level of 96 sites,

providing a range of learning, play and life-skills opportunities facilitated by female and male volunteer CFSs Facilitators. There were examples of innovative active learning modalities giving children the chance to problem-solve, negotiate, communicate and manage issues of safety in their wider environments:

“Some small missions were being implemented by children, i.e., we would tell them to gather a few problems faced by the villagers, accordingly the children would gather some problems and share with the Shura. The Shura would then come up with solutions to these problems gathered by children”.

“The WCC created groups of some smart children to find some risk and problems at the community level and then find solutions for it ... my own child was in this group of children to find a problem.... The problem was many dogs in our areas which were a big problem for people. The children reported that to the local government department and asked them to collect the dogs from the area and teach people to control their dogs. The government collected all dogs and the problem has been solved.”

The intensity and range of these activities ended with the CFSs closures in 2020 due to COVID-19. At that point, WCC worked with targeted communities, CFSs Facilitators and CBCPMs to “phase out” the initial CFS format and develop plans for children to enroll in formal schools “with the CFSs to be community-run spaces”<sup>37</sup>. As of 2022, 96 CFSs were again “established, functioning and accessible” in large measure due to this strategic reorientation.

Reconfirming, perhaps, the continued value of EPAC collaborations, when the Kandahar team was unable to reach 13 of its targeted schools during the COVID19 distance learning adaptation, it was able to reach eight substitutes with the “support and coordination” of the PED.<sup>38</sup>

Based on their feedback, parents were generally “happy with the CFSs activities” and considered that their “children have improved”. The use of an “accountability system” of forms distributed to the community and posted on the CFS wall, in addition to a phone number they could call, were seen to be contributing to the acceptance of the CFSs arrangement because it made clear there was a feedback cycle available.

<sup>37</sup> Annual Report: April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022: 12

<sup>38</sup> Annual Report: April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022: 12





There were indications that the children in CFSs were learning not just more, but differently:

*“You could see what the children were reflecting in their paintings and posters. A lot of new things that you cannot see in the government schools. They were made by children in child friendly spaces (and showed) more empowerment and knowledge and skills. They know about their rights and protection issues They were also taking the lead on campaigns and advocacy in their own communities”.*

As an indication of the potential sustainability of the CFS and of its perceived value, the “children that were older than CFS age (and had to shift to schools) would introduce new children to the CFS”. (WCC/Kabul).

Change takes time, of course, and some families and community members remained unconvinced as to the relevance, particularly the potential for benefit, of the CFSs or the project with the current context of poverty and social need:

*“People said to us...that this type of seminar and projects are useless instead of these you must make a work area to girls like some dressmaking center. Some of the people told us that instead of these five centers it would be better that you make a school for children because we have not any school*

*in our area. Also, people want financial support for the families; ... If there is not work or support how can the children of that family attend the centers as they need to work to bring food to home”*

(Kabul: volunteer)

While in the majority of cases, CFSs are in private homes or community centers, the concept has also been successfully introduced in the school “to ensure there was a friendly environment for the children and that sexual exploitation and punishment from older students are prevented”. It is also a way to create an experiential, enabling bridge for children to move from the informality and friendliness of the CFSs to the constrained formal world of the school.

The lack of continuity between the two types of learning environment can often be the cause of children dropping out of primary soon after arriving when the culture shock is too great. Making a case for the bridge (like the CBE hub-school mechanism) might also have alleviated the MOE reluctance to embrace the concept of the CFSs as an informal offering when so many Afghan children were in need of access to the formal curriculum.

**EQ: To what extent has the project achieved the expected results/outcomes in the following priority areas: d) Ministry of Education/ School stakeholders’ ability to provide safe environment for children**

In addition to CFSs, EPAC has focused on the “development and implementation of school-based child protection systems” capable of addressing physical and humiliating punishment by teachers, bullying and fighting, sexual abuse and gender discrimination. Working with and through the established school structures has served to strengthen them as areas of safety for children: “engaging with the school management structures and the shuras and the student councils... involving them in hygiene and safety, for example, preventing beatings.

The model was “pretty effective” (WCC/Kabul). Similar conclusions were expressed by project participants,

important especially where they report better interactions between the school and the family on protection issues.

*“...the project has provided a lot of safety for our children. For example, our children now go to school in a good and peaceful environment. Previously they were beaten by teachers, which is not happening now. They were previously despised and insulted, but now they are safe”.*

*“One of the big changes can be considered the changes in the attitudes of schools and teachers towards kids as a result of implementation of the project by the WCC and its Partners. Their attitudes were positive and optimistic. For example, Teachers are nicer with children compared to*





before. Teacher and school pay attention to safety of children. Teachers talk to parents sometimes about children’s issues.”

“The WCC’s project has really changed the manners of teachers a lot as they are now treating our children professionally and with respect. Teaching them like their own children, and not threatening them; they are truly kind to them now.”

“... teachers were pleased with the arrival of this project; after seeing the behavior of our children after the seminars they were surprised; children attended school with a higher level of awareness. And school teachers provided better support to them, admired them. One of the live examples that I can give is that my child’s teacher asked me to come to him and told me to give my children the opportunity and permission to participate in the next projects of the WCC.”

“For example, today, when I went to school there was student who would do his homework and the teacher brought him to my office and we asked him why. He explained that he is a poor boy and cannot afford to buy even a single notebook. The principal gave him few notebooks and told him with a great compassion to do his homework. The student was happy.

I had not seen such generous move in our school before.”

Regular coordination meetings with, and training for, teachers, student councils and SMS have carried forward an integrated change through learning approach with the result that school-based stakeholder-participants have been able to take action:

“SC members continued conducting active surveillance of child protection issues at schools and discussed ways to resolve these problems with SMS and administrators. Moreover, the student councils raised several child protections issues with the school child protection committee, school management staff and SMS members and actively engaged in addressing these”.<sup>39</sup>

Teachers are central to protecting the safety and security of children in school and action to strengthen their capacity as change agents in this respect were reported to be effective, albeit still overly narrow in focus. Developing teachers more

fully as competent professionals able to integrate protection messages and behaviours into a stronger child-centered pedagogical practice will be key.

“... a lot of incentives were there for the teachers, there was a lot of new learning and capacity for them. Yes it was a bit of a burden for them, but it was an interesting area for them. Most teachers didn’t know about child protection, teaching methodologies etc. So it was a kind of incentive to increase their knowledge and understanding of these issues”.

(WCC Kabul).

Unfortunately, engagement with teachers stopped following arrival of the DFA and GAC’s directive not to include the government; “so we then trained the NGO staff trainers”. A not unreasonable pivot, but a significant loss to the momentum of the school-based component of the project.

Unfortunately, engagement with teachers ceased following the arrival of the DFA due to the Canadian Government directive not to include the government.

One caveat to assessing results here is the likelihood that important changes have probably been missed, especially those more micro changes in teacher-child interactions related not to major incidents of abuse or kindnesses, but more micro-ones that can be significant in creating a safe and secure class culture. Data at this level were not collected in part because of a lack of fieldwork access.

It was also a function of the range of actors and actions involved under this Outcome area: wide and varied reporting by activity rather than change. However, it is almost certainly the case that many changes have happened, and capturing these will be important both going forward with EPAC itself and explaining its value to others.

A further issue here was that while all the “parts” were clearly in place to make a real change to school safety, there

<sup>39</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p16





did not appear to be a clear overarching picture of what a school-based child protection system would look like. This makes it difficult to draw a definitive conclusion as to the progress EPAC has made in producing one. Reflecting to some degree UNICEF's CFS language, Output 1222 aiming to establish 40 child-friendly schools is important in providing a greater sense of internal coherence in terms of bringing all aspects of its safe schools' interventions together in each school, working with, training and mentoring teachers, headmasters, student councils and the DED staff on child-friendly learning methods and tools.<sup>40</sup> Again, based on UNICEF's two decades of work in this area, the task is an ambitious one. Not surprisingly, there were apparently as yet no results from this intervention – monitoring progress expressly through a holistic, integrated CFS lens would help provide this.

Some actions already merit note such as the efforts of EPAC managers to establish links between the school and CFS as formal and informal "safe spaces".

*"The main agenda of EPAC is to target children out of school. But even school students need child protection support. If their school was in the morning, then we take them to the CFS in the afternoon. We were not disturbing their formal learning. It also helped a lot to improve the reading skills of children. For most children in general this was not a formal education learning space".*

(WCC: Kabul)

While the effort to convince the pre-DFA MoE to include child rights into the teacher training curriculum was unsuccessful, a step perhaps too far in mobilizing systems

change, introducing it through the shorter-term trainings under the aegis of the EiE cluster apparently worked better.

Also, it is important to differentiate MoE at national and local levels, especially now under the DFA where policies are so opaque and fluid. While buy-in in Kabul may be limited, instances of PED and DED collaboration and support were notable:

*"WCC and partners have established a useful and effective coordination and working relationship with MOE officials at provincial and district levels and maintained that relationship and network. The PED and DED officials haven't stopped implementation of the project activities."<sup>41</sup>*

Whether this aspect of EPAC programming will be able to move forward if GAC policy on dealing with government systems remains as is, is unclear. However, the fact of WCC evolving the status of a nexus NGO (blending humanitarian and development focus) casts the issue into particular relief.

*"After August 2021 GAC added restrictions on the project such as according to the Canadian law, no assistance could be provided to DFA. But that's unrealistic for an education project working in government schools for vulnerable children. We want to present the achievements of this project to GAC but because of the DFA, Afghanistan is not on 'AC's radar. But as a major donor there is something good for GAC to replicate this model into other areas and countries of a similar nature. That will be one of our key suggestions. They have invested a lot in the project and there are great results.*

(WCC Kabul)

## **EQ: To what extent has the project achieved the expected results/outcomes in the following priority areas: d) Community-level capacity building to protect and promote children's rights**

Based on pre/post training tests of 180 community educators at the start of Year five, their level of knowledge of the participants on child rights and protection, COVID-

19 prevention and positive discipline had increased by 55%.<sup>42</sup> While this was a relatively small sample, these results did provide an indication that the capacity development

<sup>40</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p20

<sup>41</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p24

<sup>42</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p8





approaches of the project were working to produce a stronger cadre of child protection agents. Their subsequent ability to apply this knowledge was not formally assessed, but they were reported as being instrumental in 24 later public awareness and education campaigns at the community level reaching several thousands.

It suggests project participants were generally satisfied that what was being done was meeting their needs to some degree.

From a wider perspective, while there was no quantitative data collected showing changed community capacity, it is not unreasonable to assume progress is being made based on the methods used. Crucial among these were its efforts to promote consultation.

Based on data collected for this evaluation, the majority of those participating in EPAC activities as provider/stakeholders or project participants feel they are being heard at some level. Almost all of the 30 project participants considered themselves consulted on project activities (essentially the topics EPAC should include), while 17 felt the same with respect to project design (this was probably high, given that their understanding of “design” was not clear in their responses). This is an important finding insofar as it suggests project participants were generally satisfied that what was being done was meeting their needs to some degree.

Comments showed something of a mixed picture, but most were comfortable with the “for what, when and how well” their perspectives were being reflected. Others were more skeptical.

*“They were trying to adjust the topics of seminars and projects more according to people’s wishes.... people always participated in sharing their opinions, because they were satisfied with the implementation of their opinion.”*

*“Prior to work commencement, they first received our opinions on how to design and implement the program. As all of us know that community and parents’ participation and involvement in the program can ensure its success, therefore, it was important for the organization to get our opinions and fortunately by doing so the program was successful.”*

*“WCC always asked our opinions and implemented some of our ideas and viewpoints during their project...we have a leader or elder person/ representative in our own village. We share our suggestions with him, and he delivers our messages.”*

*“They asked our opinions about the organization and topics of the seminars. They had a good system for collecting people ideas and suggestions for example they had a form and ask people to fill the form as well as everyone can share their suggestions verbally with them as well.”*

*“[WCC] has always asked our opinions regarding coming programs in the future. Since our country is backward, we hope that this project considers our ideas in the future programs.”*

On the other hand:

*“[WCC...] did not consider our viewpoints in designing programs... we asked those responsible to implement this project weekly in our region... but WCC did not implement what we suggested; it implemented its own plan. Although it was beneficial, if it is implemented in different provinces, it will have better result.”*

*“WCC did not consider our opinions much in their plans because the time of the project was not enough.... they just invited those women they selected by themselves<sup>43</sup>. But the interest was more.... they said, “we do not have that many possibilities that all you join”. So, we hope next program will be joined by different people. All will benefit...”*

*“Our opinions have not been considered in designing the project and planning their activities. They have carried out everything on their own and everything that were consider for our children, are based on their own ideas...it would have been better if they had considered our views also.”*

<sup>43</sup> Note this appears to be a reference to the composition of CPCPMs. Membership of these was chosen/voted on by the communities.





All of this has implications for WCC and its partners in terms of how fully “participatory” EPAC has been and could realistically be given its status as a donor-funded project bound within a prescribed time, budget and deliverables framework.

As evident in the following comments, the generally consultative approach of EPAC and its overall success has served to raise expectations in the target communities about their right to comment on what should be included, how far it should reach and for how long.

*“Community feedback is a recovering tool for better implementation of a program. It can be tremendously useful in helping the organization make the program more effective. EPAC used to seek our feedback on the work they were doing and wherever they would face challenges, they referred to the community views on how to tackle the issues. Even they told us that our feedback is vital to their works in terms of the actual work of the program, and it can alert them to the need to refine their techniques and methods, beef up what’s working, and restructure what’s not.”*

*“One of my favorite points while participating in the project was the written and oral opinion of the organization’s employees. EPAC and its employees were constantly trying to collect our and the community’s opinions about their work.... they even provided us with white papers. We could freely express our opinions during the program or after it ended. After collecting our opinions, they shared them with other people.... the subjects included the condition of all sections of the society, especially women and children. They allowed the participation of women, girls and even men so that there were general changes in every class of society and their level of consciousness. However, their topics mostly included children. But it would have been better to emphasize women’s issues and girls’ education rights.”*

From these perspectives, a next version of EPAC is likely to face a more challenging audience. While a fully community-owned initiative would involve its members in a PIP process, for example, and this might be essentially untenable in the current situation, design-related inputs such as incorporating DFA Islamic curriculum, building schools or generating income for women may need to be considered.

**EQ: What were some of the good practices promoting child protection and safety of children in public and private spaces within the project?**

Across the project, building a sense of common purpose and shared responsibility and enabling sufficient shared understanding of EPAC goals and how to realize them has been central to success. This is despite the disruptive environment.

According to one project participants, a core good practice in support of children’s protection was the EPAC attention to “providing good learning environments for children’s education”, ones that promoted basic child-centered pedagogy to enable children to exercise their rights to participate, develop and be protected by:

*“giving them the right to speak and share their problems with teachers easily; making it easy for a child who cannot make themselves heard to express*

*their emotions and not to stay silent; and listening to them, and hearing their ideas, suggestions and any recommendation they might have on some issues”.*

From the perspective of parents, the “goodness” of EPAC has been in supporting activities that they consider to be relevant, useful and clear. Importantly, these are activities that have involved them directly in examining and acting on problems they recognize as their own and doing so through modalities (seminars, trainings, information sharing)

- that have been accessible to them in their homes and community spaces;





- that provided the benefits of both new ideas and more tangible items such as books, supplies and allowances;
- that included all family members – children, fathers and mothers; and
- that were balanced in their messages, including both admonitions as to how not to harm children as well as more positive guidance on how to improve their life chances.

“all the key stakeholders demonstrated key roles in creating such an important environment for the children. For example, OHW conducted trainings, seminars, workshops and awareness programs. Community members and elders, teachers and parents participated the program. Later they conveyed the idea to other places and villages. They encouraged the teachers and volunteers to participate the program and train their children. Even some elders financed some of the programs especially the provision of stationary for the children and wood for the stove in the winter”.

As an illustration of this,

*“...in our community. ... they provided a friendly learning environment for our children (and) taught them about*

*good hygiene habits. They established some illiteracy courses for women and children, which really helped both women and children learn new things. Finally, they distributed to children some stationery i.e., pens, notebooks and even some food stuffs like biscuits, crackers and other useful things .... ”*

*“They have offered many trainings and seminars (that) helped us provide a healthy and balanced lifestyle for our children which in turn can boost their personal wellbeing, and maintaining growth....I received cash and food in exchange for participating...”*

*“... meetings which were held with parents to get their consent on what else they should do for their children’s protection and what would be the best ways to improve this trend....by presenting this program, it has encouraged our children to do sports and go for his education.”*

*“...they helped us understand about children's rights and provided a safe ground for their education.... they distributed some play and stationary kits for children to learn play and at the same time learn something. And the organization held some good workshops for the people and gave trainings to both men and women, and in the meantime, people also get paid in these three-day trainings.”*

*“By organizing these programs and projects to eliminate violence against children and women, WCC taught us how to live together in a peaceful environment and how to save our children from inappropriate cultures....”*







## Assessment Criteria 5: Sustainability

Children, families and communities, schools, religious leaders and (where possible) government officials have been provided opportunities to be exposed to and come to terms with new concepts (human and, especially, child rights, gender equality, non-violence, mutual respect) and test their application in their interactions with others.

**Findings:** Sustaining the kinds of change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors central to EPAC are essentially functions of active learning and this has been a central theory-of-change of the project.

### EQ: To what extent do stakeholders (both primary and secondary) have a clear understanding of the project, its output, immediate outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and ultimate outcome?

Based on respondent comments, most are very clear as to the value of its goals at the level of expressed commitment to the ideal that all children, boys and girls, should enjoy fully their human rights, respect the rights of others and be protected from harm.

Not stated in terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as such, or of duty bearers and rights holders, these concepts were evident in their examples e.g., that “men should be given some trainings regarding child protection because they are kind of superior to women in our society and can have a great influence” (female project participant). For the near future at least, expressions of CRC ideals are unlikely to shift.

At the same time, there was little to indicate that they understood the full implications of these ideals in practice beyond the importance of parents not beating or psychologically abusing their children, or of children not fighting and of girls not being forced into marriage or boys into labour. What would need to change, for example, in terms of sector policies, law, socio-cultural or economic practice for children to be in situations of sustained safety and protection, were not considered. Although, this expectation is likely unrealistic in the context.

The following quotes illustrate an expected level of tension between the longer-term outcomes EPAC was designed to achieve, and the immediate needs of the population in crisis (at the time of the evaluation data collection). *Project participants articulated the core goals of the project in the context of an expanded*

mandate to include curriculum that is more typical of nonformal education e.g., income generation. These suggestions included:

*“...provide more working opportunities for women in the future. This project should make some financial programs for women;”* (female project participant)

*“we want more vocational training projects such as sewing, carpet weaving workshops* (female project participant)”

*“...more support should be provided to the students...they should be helped with stationery, food, clothing and health care”* (male project participant)

*“...people said to us and employees that this type of seminars and projects are useless; instead of these you must make a work area for girls like a dressmaking center; (they) told us that instead of these 5 centers it would be better that you make a school for children”* (female volunteer)

*“EPAC has not done any other significant things like building schools and health centers for us.”* (male project participant)

Such suggestions should not be surprising: “Somehow there is always gap between understanding of the community and WCC about the project” (volunteer). Nor were they unreasonable given the current crises people were facing:

*“My suggestion is to continue support for us in each area*





such as finding works, solar, clean water and everything. We need for everything” (female project participant)

And in many cases, suggestions made sense with respect to sustainability: “people want to stretch the project from two years to ten years so that it will have a constructive impact

on the community” (female project participant). Collaborative planning through negotiation to clarify and agree what will happen and why has been an underlying theme of EPAC; trying to adjust for the inevitable differences has been a persistent challenge in terms of keeping the emphasis on what is even feasible, let alone sustainable.

**EQ: What steps have been taken for sustainability of the project? To what extent are these steps supported by local partners and stakeholders?**

**Finding:** Actions to enhance sustainability of the project have been built into it, including by stakeholders and the two national partners.

EPAC is essentially designed for sustainability insofar as it centers on an integrated approach to capacity strengthening through active learning, mentored practice, problem formulation and resolution in a holistic way and building on existing structures where possible. All of these are intended to promote consolidation and institutionalization of change; to attitudes and behaviors that can be sustained. As core managers of the project, local partners have been part of the planning and implementation from the outset, have mentored and been mentored. It is reasonable to assume they will continue to support these processes in theory, and in practice to the extent they have been given opportunities to consolidate them through practical application.

Sustainable approaches are invariably more labor and time intensive than most supply driven models, however. They typically involve a somewhat smaller reach, reducing at least the sense of significant impact. Data did not indicate if, given

the increasing fragility of human and financial resources in the country, the EPAC design was considered cost-effective by stakeholders. As a note of caution, however, comments suggesting people were waiting to see tangible indications of next steps are important to note: “No assistance has been provided to our children for the near future; almost a year has passed since the last assistance was done”.

Many were looking for more and higher incentives (fees and material) for participants, training for children and women in income generating skills, and faster outreach to other communities. While EPAC does pay some expenses<sup>44</sup> and is considering the matter of CBCPM stipends (not salaries) to ensure their participation is not actually at a cost to them, going too far in this direction may challenge the sustainability of its core message: that protection of a community’s children is something everyone voluntarily does, not a special “job”.

<sup>44</sup> Monthly incentives for facilitators (1000 afghanis) and materials to the house owners of the CFS “to keep them going” (KII)





**EQ: To what extent the intervention implemented by the project will be maintained after the closure of the Canadian assistance? Are there examples to demonstrate sustainability?**

**Finding:** There is a good likelihood that messages as to the importance of child rights and protection of EPAC’s interventions will be sustained after the closure of the project for at least some time. However, the absence of these messages in the community may allow space for alternative paradigms to drown out these messages.

Consistent comments from stakeholders and project participants showed the impact the EPAC program has made on embedding different types of learning and sustaining new ideas and innovations. For example, EPAC identified the initial gap in awareness on the part of communities as to the scope of the protection “problem”:

*“... they were not thinking that their children were at risk. e.g., if they were beating their children, they didn't realize that would affect their learning or that utilizing them for labor that had disadvantages for the child.”*

It has been closing this gap. Respondents indicated a reasonably clear sense of EPAC’s effect in their communities: in the ways parents and teachers treat children, with less physical abuse, greater tolerance, and more attention to their well-being; in the way children treat one another and adults, with less fighting, more respect for differences; and in the efforts being made by families and community leaders to move away from early marriages and child labour.

As described in more detail across the analysis, the factors that have enabled this outcome were evident in the various ways EPAC has supported learning with flexibility and adaptation across several dimensions:

- behavioral through regular community engagement in decision-making and actions to protect children facilitated by the CBCPM – also regularly trained and mentored;
- institutional through engagement with the MOE at national and local levels, training of school leaders and teachers, joint monitoring and documenting lessons learned; and
- financial<sup>45</sup> through strengthening capacities of OHW and HRDA in seeking external grants, managing finances and proposal development.

One EPAC partner raised a cautionary note, however, reinforcing the idea that sustaining complex change cannot be taken for granted as automatic.

*“Voluntarily, all the communities promised to continue the project. But WCC should be in touch with them through different means of communication, monitoring and evaluation from CFSs about their activities. They have strong intentions to continue the project but have limited resources... Since the program is effective but new in the country, it has to be prolonged to another four years and should be funded by the donors”.*

<sup>45</sup> EPAC recognized that the program would not be sustained by local resources in the near-term, a determination reinforced by the crises of COVID-19 and change of regime.





## Assessment Criteria 6: Coordination & Management

EPAC has faced a daunting downward cycle of COVID-19, deteriorating security and finally the DFA takeover. The capacity of partner managers to adjust the specifics of the project to these, while maintaining its core direction and coordination within and among its various moving parts, has been a crucial factor in its implementation progress.

### EQ: To what extent has the development assistance contributed to the enhanced capacity of the project executing agency (War Child Canada) and its local partners?

**Finding:** Canadian development assistance made a necessary contribution to the enhanced capacity of the project executing agency (WCC) and its local partners.

GAC was central to the WCC/EPAC initiative in providing the funding and, based on Annual Reports and KIIs, not over-directing partners in their application of the professional competencies and experience they brought to its implementation.

Less positively, GAC's bureaucratic systems have been slow to react at critical times. Resolving challenges with "lack of salary for the teachers, lack of budget for CFS places and classrooms", for example, were delayed as "the donor did not issue the budget on time".

### EQ: 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?

**Finding:** The project team appears to have been especially effective in its coordination with relevant actors at local levels across the three target provinces, in monitoring and grant management

Coordination among the central management actors has been an important factor in EPAC success; for some the central one:

*"To be honest, the only thing which led the program towards success and people's satisfaction was a great partnership between WCC and other organizations which resulted in EPAC triumph. Apparently, all this would not have been possible if there were no partnership between organizations as well as the community"* (Kandahar: principal).

Reaching this quality was not automatic. Annual Reports indicate continuous efforts by WCC to assess and provide technical training to HRDA and OHW on child protection, CFSs and gender sensitive approaches.

*"Continuous coaching and mentoring were ensured during monitoring visits to support partners to implement quality interventions... Through its technical staff and provincial based program coordinators, WCC (continued) to manage project risks"<sup>46</sup>.*

While the intensity and modalities of delivery had to change with COVID-19 e.g., fewer CBCPM going into households and stories experienced from books rather than through facilitated interactions with teachers and peer-peer learning, it seems that children's and families' sense of belonging to an important and engaging experience was maintained. In the same vein, "CBCPM members continue(d) to monitor the

<sup>46</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Workplan. April 1,

2020 to March, 2021: p4





process”, thus keeping an open access to the messages of the project.<sup>47</sup>

Following the disruptions of August 2021, EPAC was able to build on the strong foundations of the three partners (including WCC) to remain intact, in-country and working with local partners on food and essential supplies distribution. Where it was somewhat weaker was in not having a stronger evaluation base on which perhaps to reframe its underlying Theory of Change. As one WCC staff noted:

*“We have an understanding of what we have done but we don't understand what has come of it. That information sits in people's heads, but people don't get they need to share it.*

*We need to know whether the overall goal has been achieved, but have not had the opportunity to reflect back on that until now. Not to say it hasn't been happening, but it is embedded in people's minds.”*

The EPAC emphasis on coordination meetings continued between Community Facilitators and CBCPM members, able “to ensure children (were) engaged and provided with psychosocial counselling and that child protection concerns (were) identified and addressed at community level”.<sup>48</sup> With schools closed and then female teachers blocked from teaching, the BBB self- learning program provided continuity in children’s exposure to reading, life skills, and opportunities to affirm their right to express ideas, ask questions and explore new behaviors.<sup>49</sup>

### EQ: To what extent did the project apply the Do No Harm approach? What are some examples?

**Finding:** EPAC applied the ‘do no harm’ approach in holistic terms throughout implementation with a design promoting transparency and engagement of all project participants – children and adults – who might be harmed or benefited by actions.

EPAC explicitly aligned its design with GAC's governance criteria: on capacity strengthening and responsiveness, non-discrimination and inclusion. These were, in turn, consistent with WCC’s own governing criterion to ‘Do No Harm’: to ensure that no action exacerbated existing conflict or tension or created new ones.<sup>50</sup>

As detailed elsewhere, this commitment has been facilitated through measures privileging community consultation and feedback on activities through information exchange seminars, written form/phone contacts and joint

monitoring; regular interaction between CBCPM and families as trusted local change agents; and “continuous investment in good relations” with local government, legal and religious power structures.

Important in respect of enhanced transparency and accountability as a means of building trust, EPAC launched a comprehensive Complaint Response Mechanism in 2020 aimed at ensuring “a safe, accessible, and effective channel for War Child Canada’s project participants to raise complaints and concerns” and to have them addressed when they are raised.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p7  
<sup>48</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p7  
<sup>49</sup> WCC-EPAC. Annual Report April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. p12

<sup>50</sup> WCC/EPAC. Project Implementation Plan/PIP: p20  
<sup>51</sup> WCC/EPAC. Annual Report. April 2020-March 2021: 35





## Conclusions and Lessons

### Collaboration Approach

**Transparent, flexible and responsive collaboration has been core to the WCC/ EPAC strategy from the outset, and is the strongest lesson of the evaluation.**

EPAC was designed within the conceptual protection and child-friendly education frameworks of the wider community at national level. It has added value to both of these and been “highlighted as a good practice” by this peer community and reflected in the child protection policy developed by MoE, Ministry of Labor/Social Affairs and UNICEF; “it was a big achievement” (WCC Kabul).

Implementation on the basis of continuous facilitated exchange with its core communities has been essential in allowing EPAC to remain relevant and largely effective as it adapted to a diverse and changing environment and pivoted in two major emergencies.

The critical issue currently confronting WCC and its partners, however, is how to apply this lesson of

collaboration where the main interlocutor occupies a diametrically opposite and threatening world view. Based on relatively few respondent comments about the question of whether and how to engage with the DFA, there appeared nevertheless to be a consensus that collaboration was still essential, that a greater degree of flexibility was needed.

Noted earlier, WCC IS perhaps the most explicit in terms of his concerns for institutionalizing the school component of EPAC through some kind of association with the DFA. Others also urged action, however, even if more modest, implying that broadening the project while maintaining its open, gender-inclusive focus might facilitate creation of a more child-friendly, protective culture overall, at least at local level.

### Cultural Change to Protection

**EPAC expected change in the complex child rights and protection “culture” and was effective in that by recognizing that one-time awareness and information sessions were inadequate for doing so.**

Introducing innovation of this kind requires facilitated opportunities and a reasonably long time to allow targeted communities to work things through, to understand the implications, potential risks as well as value of what is proposed. The CBCPM model recognized that families will typically act in their own best interest, for their own and their children’s good, within the frame of reference they have: knowledge, experiences and resources.

CBCPM was effective by helping diverse families sort through the ideas, to problem-solve, think critically and negotiate, not just accept the answers provided. As different families and communities did this “working through” with

different outcomes and needs for support, the model appeared flexible enough to accommodate them, enabling local ownership while maintaining consistency with EPAC core messages. As one project participant commented:

*“First, there was a training for the parents, then there was a training for the children. The difficulties were from the people of the village at first. People’s thoughts were different. We think that this program is real colonialism. People thought that the project was turning children against them; they also thought that it would turn the children’s mind-sets against our religion, values, and culture. When the parents came to the training, they realized that the program was not against us and then sent the children to CFSs.”*





## Trust & Participation

### EPAC built trust through allowing opportunities for open-ended inclusion in activities; participation meant more than just “turning up”.

Related to the above point, based on respondent descriptions of how they were involved in EPAC, participation was clearly not simply on a “we will call you when we need you” basis. Instead, for project participants and stakeholders this meant engaging with communities and families to explore the questions, not to supply preformulated answers.

*“Sometimes communities raised some concerns and they would use to call me on phone. We would hold meeting a come up with a solution.”*

*“Based on my observation from the program, it was very successful because they implement the program together with community shoulder by shoulder. Community participation is very important to make the program*

*successful. The organization have tried to give the ownership of the program to community and people which was a really good model and strategy.”*

*“[The managers] performed all their responsibilities completely and always tried to use the best and useful instructions with us [volunteers]. Sometimes they sent us educational videos (or) free materials; they permitted us to participate in the councils.”*

*“Our community representatives met with community members and prepared an action plan of different issues child protection. We have lots of IDPs, in terms of housing, rent, these significantly affect children’s protection. The team discussed the issues for each community and created an action plan.”*

## Inclusive Approach

### An inclusive whole-of-school, whole-of-community and whole-of-family approach has been core to the EPAC model.

Issues of abuse and protection are rarely single “events”; nor are they confined to one component of a child’s life. They reflect individuals and groups with their complex patterns of behaviour and interactions of attitudes, values and knowledge that constitute the broad socio-cultural environment in which protection happens – or fails to. Change at this level can only happen in a sustained way through an approach that is similarly holistic; that puts the child at the center as a whole person, in a web of relationships that protect or harm her. The EPAC design of making linkages effectively recognized this.

*“Especially teachers have significantly improved their understanding. One of our most significant stakeholder is parents. Parents improved their understanding, as well as the community people. Community members observed the teacher’s new methods and they saw positive changes in the environment and they shared their feedback.*

*“Also, reducing the family violence to some extent in the targeted population as men and women understand their rights and how to have a happy and productive life.... For example one of the program participants told me that I changed a lot my behavior with my wife and children after attending this project seminars. We have much happy life compared to past, I make plan together with my wife and children for our future which I never done that before.”*

*“Fortunately, after the seminars and projects of WCC, the changes started with the heads of the families and spread to the whole community. The changes was to encourage people to be nice to kids and pay attention to their safety, education and learning. These changes happen gradually after the awareness and seminars provided by WCC to the people.”*





## Teachers as Key Agents of Change

**EPAC recognized that teachers are key agents in creating classrooms as protective environments for children.**

Teachers manage the direct and more subtle interactions with children on a daily basis, at the micro level, in what they do to/with a child and what they do not do. They are also often on their own in the classroom, without peers who might share knowledge and experience with respect to appropriately child-centered pedagogy. For these reasons, it is critical that EPAC as a school-change-initiative acted to strengthen teacher competencies in a comprehensive way, and it did so through methods that reinforced mutual teacher-teacher and whole school support.

*“When we are training a teacher it should not just be methodological skills. They should also learn pedagogical skills and basic psychosocial skills. Teachers should learn that if a child is going through psychological trauma and can't pay attention, it will affect the learning process of the child. This is important to train all the teachers not just on the teaching methods, but also basic techniques on counselling”*

*“I think child friendly learning environments will stay in place because teachers have been trained and they have*

*incorporated it into their lives. Plus the school management shura is representing the community, not just whether teachers are on time, but also looking after the child protection issues”*

*“There are several things that have helped the individual teachers to understand the purposes and methods of child friendly learning environments effectively. Role of community elders in this regard is outstanding as they were always gathering children's parents and had meeting with them on how to improve the learning environment for their children”.*

A cautionary note in the data, however, was the suggestion by a senior staff that introducing teachers to new pedagogies would be “no extra work for them” because it was “helping to enhance their knowledge”. In fact, any such change can well be a burden. As research on implementation of innovation suggests, it is risky to question and revise one's usual ways of thinking and working especially if the gap to something better is a wide one.

## Big Bad Boo

**WCC/EPAC could have gained greater value from BBB by ensuring more clarity on goals and stronger congruence of organizational cultures.**

Partnership collaborations are crucial in principle as means of anchoring, disseminating and expanding complex social change initiatives such as those around child protection. They are especially key in enabling adaptation, bringing new skills and knowledge to fill in gaps of a new arrangement – in this

case, modalities and materials for distance and self-learning. They require care, however, and BBB faced some criticism on its management practice and contents, and though popular with project participants, some misunderstanding as to what it was doing or was intended to do.

## Partnerships

**There was good interaction between the providers and project participants of EPAC, but differentiating opinions, feedback and consultation would serve to better define its value as “community-based”.**

Differentiating what these terms effectively mean and when and how they are useful is important both to assessing the value of the insights provided through them and fairly

measuring if and how they confirm EPAC has been participatory.

→ Opinions are, in a sense, free advice not necessarily grounded in the reality of the problem or the project.







- Feedback is of a higher order, based on having experienced a project's activity and been affected positively or negatively by it. Feedback matters and managers need to "*listen actively*".
- Consultation means discussion through several exchanges, with time and attention to working things through. It matters because it is necessary to establishing ownership.

EPAC has been strong in reflecting all of these ways of gaining access to community knowledge and priorities in the design, management and assessment of its work. Notably, consultation through seminars and monitoring visits were the most referenced and important in creating a more inclusive, evolving design stage.





## Recommendations & Management Comments

The evaluation team have identified the following recommendations:

### **Recommendation 1: Evolve a stronger school change focus.**

It was clear from the data that families and communities prioritized formal education; rightly so. They also recognized, for the most part, that for many children and communities this is not a readily attained goal given poverty, distances, and most seriously the restrictions on girls and women. CFSs remain, then, a necessary part of the overall education environment. WCC/EPAC was in a key position to act on strengthening the coherence and cumulative value of the two systems by taking more explicit action to create linkages between CFSs and schools as a means of engendering shared protective, child-centered cultures, advocating for schools and promoting children's transition from informal to formal.

### **Recommendation 2: Explore options to link CFSs structurally into the CBE system.**

Reiterating a suggestion made by a stakeholder, this would not be appropriate in all cases. CFSs continue to have a significant and unique role to play as semi-permanent, but well thought-through safe and secure places in which at risk and marginalized children can learn informally and be protected. However, their integration into the CBE structure in some communities makes sense given: the limited formal curriculum resources available for children; the tremendous need for learning in all knowledge and skills areas and using all formats interactively to allow tailoring to specific children's needs; and the presence of CBE across the country. It is a form of formal education established in policy and practice while promoting the same child-centered principles as the CFSs.

### **Recommendation 3: Take steps to provide selected stipends to CBCPM on a throughout the project.**

Specifically stipends could be considered in situations where volunteers incur expenses such as communication and travel costs to deliver the project. This would more closely balance the need for longer term sustainability after the project ends (by not having widespread financial support that would be suddenly withdrawn) and the need to achieve the project aims equitably. It also recognizes the fundamental role of these outreach facilitators both in making EPAC effective and in allowing the potential sustainability of its impacts. It recognizes that the situation in Afghanistan is not "normal" and so normal (and appropriate) strictures against such payments in a development project should not necessarily apply. And it recognizes the logic of the concern of the project leadership that CBCPM should not be put at a disadvantage by participating. It implies a more proactive and creative role for WCC and partners in seeking funding partners and for GAC in loosening bureaucratic rigidities.

### **Recommendation 4: Continue to work through a holistic lens.**

The child-friendly and child protection concepts are inherently holistic, understanding child rights as indivisible and support to them necessarily cross-sectoral. Working with families as a whole has allowed identifying and dealing with the need to negotiate roles in support of children.





**Recommendation 5: Develop a more fulsome Theory of Change.**

Relying on the Logic Model as the conceptual basis of EPAC is not ideal and is not a strong reflection of what is being done or, more importantly, why. It offers no intellectual cover for either failures or successes, which is a gap in a project as complex as EPAC.

The assumptions underlying the EPAC results chain, and the assessment of the risks involved should be made explicit, to provide the detail enabling WCC to explain its progress and for others to judge if and how to take EPAC up. A more rigorous Theory of Change would provide a more robust picture as to where EPAC might be succeeding or failing due to its execution or to the underlying logic of its principles of practice.

**Recommendation 6: Articulate an overarching picture of a school-based child protection system.**

While all the “parts” were clearly in place to make a real change to school safety, there did not appear to be a clear overarching picture of what a school-based child protection system would look like. This makes it difficult to conclusively assess the progress EPAC has made in producing one.





## Annex A – Evaluation Terms of Reference



### Where childhood thrives, war does not.

<b>Consultancy Title</b>	<b>Short Term Consultancy</b> External Evaluation - Enhancing Protection for Afghan Children (EPAC) project
<b>Reports to</b>	Senior Manager, Monitoring & Evaluation, Canada
<b>Supported by</b>	PQAL Manager, Afghanistan; Deputy Country Director, Afghanistan; Country Director, Afghanistan
<b>Background</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>Enhancing Protection for Afghan Children (EPAC) is a multi-year development project funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) being implemented by War Child Canada and its local implementing partners in Kabul, Nangarhar, and Kandahar provinces. The project started in January 2017 and will end December 2022.</p> <p>The project used the Canadian Government’s Result Based Management (RBM) approach to assess project progress and achievements. The ultimate outcome of the project is: <i>“Afghanistan has the necessary local and national level capacity to protect children and fulfill commitments to the rights of the child”</i>. The intermediate outcomes and immediate outcomes of the project are outlined below.</p> <p><b>Intermediate outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1100: Model of community-based protection is developed and strengthened, able to be replicated in additional communities</li> <li>• 1200: Key stakeholders within the education system, including children, have the necessary tools and strategies to ensure child-friendly learning environments</li> </ul> <p><b>Immediate outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1110: Strengthened ability of families and communities to resolve and mitigate child protection concerns</li> <li>• 1120: Community-level capacity is strengthened to ensure sustainable, community-based child protection mechanisms</li> <li>• 1130: Children (m/f) have access to safe spaces and self-learning materials that protect and encourage their learning and social development</li> <li>• 1210: School-based stakeholders have the capacity to actively eliminate physical and humiliating punishment, gender-based discrimination and bullying in schools</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1220: Institutional capacity is strengthened to ensure child-friendly schools</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consultancy summary</b></p>	<p><b>The consultant/consultancy team will lead a mixed-method summative evaluation of the project listed below.</b></p> <p>This evaluation will provide an opportunity for all project stakeholders to review accomplishments and to be informed by the voices of the beneficiaries e.g., children, their families, teachers and school officials, community leaders and protection actors, civil society actors and government officials to reflect on the extent to which the project has made a difference in the lives of the beneficiaries and achieved the planned results. The consultant/consulting firm will conduct a systematic and objective assessment of the project's intermediate and immediate outcomes using Global Affairs Canada's results-based M&amp;E standards. The evaluation will document accomplishments of the project, challenges, successes, and lessons learned using the following framework.</p> <p><b>Relevance and efficiency:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent did the project respond to the evolution of the need and priorities of Afghanistan?</li> <li>• To what extent was the project aligned to the Afghanistan national priority programs, and national peace and development framework?</li> <li>• Which factors facilitated or limited the project's response capacity and flexibility?</li> <li>• What factors related to local context and variances between provinces facilitated or limited the project response?</li> <li>• To what extent the Canadian assistance and 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?</li> </ul> <p><b>Context changes and adaptability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the project implementation and activities? What adaptations and strategies were employed to mitigate effects of the pandemic on the project?</li> <li>• To what extent the power shift of August 15, 2021, and change of the regime, impacted the project implementation and activities? What adaptations and strategies were used for the project's continued implementation?</li> <li>• How useful and appropriate were the changes adopted by the project (e.g. distance/self-learning education model)?</li> <li>• To what extent was Global Affairs Canada flexible to approve/agree changes in the project related to context changes? e.g. re-programming, resource realignment, no cost extension etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Coherence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent the project has achieved the desired goals in relation to the theory of change? Were the outcomes realistic and sufficient to achieve the ultimate outcome?</li> </ul>





	<p><b>Effectiveness:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the project achieved the expected results/outcomes in the following priority areas:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development of community-based model for child protection</li> <li>○ Strengthened ability of families to provide safe environment for children</li> <li>○ Increased availability of safe spaces for children</li> <li>○ Ministry of Education/ School stakeholders' ability to provide safe environment for children</li> <li>○ Community-level capacity building to protect and promote children's rights</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What were some of the good practices promoting child protection and safety of children in public and private spaces within the project?</li> </ul> <p><b>Sustainability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent do stakeholders (both primary and secondary) have a clear understanding of the project, its output, immediate outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and ultimate outcome?</li> <li>• What steps have been taken for sustainability of the project? To what extent are these steps supported by local partners and stakeholders?</li> <li>• To what extent the intervention implemented by the project will be maintained after the closure of the Canadian assistance? Are there examples to demonstrate sustainability?</li> </ul> <p><b>Coordination and Management:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the development assistance contributed to the enhanced capacity of the project executing agency (War Child Canada) and its local partners?</li> <li>• To what extent project team been effective in its coordination with relevant actors, examples of support received, and effective project implementation, monitoring and evaluation and grant management?</li> <li>• To what extent did the project apply the Do No Harm approach? What are some examples?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approach and Deliverables:</b></p>	<p>The consultant/team will review all project documents and existing data in advance to carrying out the evaluation. While War Child Canada has developed this scope of work for the evaluation team and has tailored the approach to its needs with evaluation themes that are specific to the project, the consultant will finalize the methods and tools to measure results in collaboration with M&amp;E staff (Canada and Afghanistan). Evaluation questions have been proposed above and will be finalized jointly by the consultant/team and WCC. The evaluation will focus on relevance, efficiency, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, coordination, and management.</p> <p>The consultant will be responsible for <b>design</b> of the evaluation and tools, coordination and implementation of <b>data collection</b> activities, <b>analysis</b> of data, and <b>reporting</b>. The consultant/ team will provide the following deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inception report</li> <li>• Data collection tools</li> <li>• Summary of key findings</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> <li>• Final report</li> <li>• 3-4 case studies of project participants</li> <li>• Presentation of evaluation findings (one for Kabul stakeholders including cluster/ sub-cluster or working group and one for Global Affairs Canada in Ottawa)</li> </ul> <p>The consultant/team will identify, and document lessons learned on successes, innovative approaches, challenges, and learnings, as well as a review of the project’s implementation approach, and a discussion of value for money through a final report that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. A one-to-two-page executive summary</li> <li>II. One-page infographic summarizing key evaluation findings</li> <li>III. Summary of accomplishment of project outcomes</li> <li>IV. Review of community-based protection model</li> <li>V. Review of Child Friendly Space (CFS) model</li> <li>VI. Review of distance-learning approach</li> <li>VII. Lessons learned, constraints, challenges especially reflection on the COVID-19 pandemic and political power shift of August 2021, and other areas that need further attention</li> <li>VIII. The capacity-building impact of the program both with project beneficiaries and local stakeholders</li> <li>IX. Prospects for sustainability of program outcomes</li> <li>X. Proposed recommendations on how War Child Canada can build on successes and incorporate learnings as part of future programming</li> <li>XI. Case studies from representatives of key beneficiary groups</li> <li>XII. Personal reflections from stakeholders where possible</li> <li>XIII. Annex of methodology and tools applied during evaluation</li> </ol> <p>The final report should use high quality photos from the project and will have graphic design and will be formatted by the consultant/ team, with feedback from War Child Canada.</p>
	<p>The evaluation is planned to occur in January and February 2023, with final deliverables provided no later than the first week of March 2023.</p>
<p><b>Experience, skills</b></p>	<p><b>Consultants/consultancy team must demonstrate the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous experience performing high quality mixed-method evaluations and strong understanding of global best practice program evaluation procedures</li> <li>• Consultant/team must have strong research, data analysis, and excellent report writing skills</li> <li>• At least one team member with master’s degree or equivalent in relevant subject area</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience working on projects related to children’s rights and protection issues, education programs, and community-based protection in Afghanistan or in a fragile Muslim context</li> <li>• Strong understanding of the Global Affairs Canada program design, result-based model, and evaluation system and standards</li> <li>• Experience working in Afghanistan or similar Muslim context is desired</li> <li>• Strong English language skills required; Dari and Pashto an asset</li> </ul>
<b>Travel</b>	Travel to the field locations in Kabul and provinces Nangarhar and Kandahar is required but subject to security clearance and COVID-19 safety considerations.
<b>Application process</b>	<p>Interested applicants/firms are invited to submit the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Technical proposal including methodology, timeline, and demonstration of experience (10 pages maximum)</li> <li>▪ Financial proposal (basic budget)</li> <li>▪ Curriculum vitae of consultant or key consultant team members</li> <li>▪ Confirmation of availability (January to March 2023 timeline for evaluation)</li> </ul> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:jobs@warchild.ca">jobs@warchild.ca</a></p> <p>Please ensure your submission email has the subject heading: <i>"Afghanistan EPAC External Evaluation"</i></p> <p>Final candidates will be vetted in accordance with War Child Canada’s Child Safeguarding Policy, including appropriate reference and security checks.</p> <p><b><u>Only those applicants selected for an interview will be notified.</u></b> For more information about War Child Canada, please visit <a href="http://www.warchild.ca">www.warchild.ca</a>.</p>
<b>Deadline</b>	<p>November 30, 2022</p> <p>*Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.</p>







## Annex B – Evaluation Team

The evaluation team for this project was:

- Nathaniel Logan
- Dr Sayed Amin
- Anne Bernard
- Nil Turksen





## Annex C – Evaluation methodology

### Adaptations to Approach

We have adapted a number of methodological elements to take account of the changed operating context in Afghanistan since the ban on female NGO workers in December 2022.

These changes are unfortunate but necessary to limit the risk exposure of project participant communities, partners and data collection personnel. These adaptations are:

- a. A refocus towards lessons capture and lessons learning, de-emphasizing evaluation against achieving planned targets.
- b. A refocus on a smaller sample of project participants, but more in-depth with those beneficiaries.
- c. A move to remote data collection from project participants and partners
- d. A reduction in the number of case studies collected. This is due to reduced access to the project participant community to collect sufficient examples to present.
- e. Refocus on qualitative methods and removing the quantitative survey – the quantitative survey is simply not appropriate to conduct at the moment.
- f. An increased emphasis on using program monitoring and reporting documents and data as a substitute for primary fieldwork.

### Mixed Methods

ESDO proposes a participatory MEAL mixed methods approach to the External Evaluation that provides agency to the participant community and the partners involved. The GAC RBM approach requires both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and our approach complies with this.

The Inquiry Phase of the project will include fully remote data collection using the following methods:

- a. Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews (KIs) with key WCC and partners (n=10)
- b. Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews (KIs) with Stakeholders (n=12)
- c. Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with project participants (n=30)

### Two-Part Desk Review

The first part of this two-part desk review is now complete. It involves a review of the program documentation already provided to familiarize the evaluation team with the program and to inform the development of evaluation tools and evaluation questions (EQs).

The second part of the desk review is a more comprehensive review of all available program documents including but not limited to the endline survey, program monitoring data and donor reporting. WCC will need to provide this information and data to the evaluation team.

### Inquiry Phase

#### Semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIs)

KIs were used to collect qualitative data from key stakeholders (including community leaders, teachers and community protection workers – where WCC assesses this is safe and appropriate to do so) and WCC and partner personnel relevant





to each of the Evaluation Questions. Specifically, we expect the KIIs will help us answer questions on the relevance, adaptability, coherence, effectiveness and coordination of WCC performance and progress towards achieving EPAC goals.

We conducted **n=12 KIIs with selected stakeholders, teachers and community protection workers**, and a further **n=10 KIIs with key WCC and partner program personnel**. Interviewing project staff, including WCC Afghanistan and HQ management, and project partners will provide valuable insights into the project design, intended achievements as well as on the appropriateness of the projects' GAC RBM indicators. Interviewing a wide range of staff involved in different areas of the program and on different levels of implementation will allow us to capture multi-layered feedback on achievement of outcomes.

### Semi-structured In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

IDIs will be used to elicit the experiences of the EPAC program from participants n=30. This is designed to give a voice in the evaluation to project rights holders. These will be fully remote by phone with contact details provided by partners and interviews conducted by female researchers from outside Afghanistan.

A key purpose of the IDIs is to gather qualitative insights from the communities that EPAC serves. The IDIs will provide a qualitative understanding and interpretation of achievement against the outcomes. The IDIs will also provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their needs and views on EPAC, its benefits and direction, focusing particularly on the Evaluation Questions relating to project relevance and efficiency, context changes, effectiveness and enhanced capability (sustainability).

IDIs will be conducted in the preferred language of participants, transcribed and then translated into English for analysis. Once analysed, the English transcripts will be validated with the IDI interviewer to ensure losses in translation are minimised.

Note that some questions in the discussion guide may not be relevant for all project participants and researchers will move on to the next question where this is the case.

### Case Studies

Through the fieldwork (IDIs) ESDO will attempt to identify candidates to participate in case studies of the project. Candidates will be selected based on willingness to be profiled (anonymously), the nature of their engagement and benefit with/from EPAC and the diversity of the candidate pool.

We hope we can produce 1-2 case studies showing the diverse benefits of the project through the voices of the project participants. However, we suggest this may not be possible given the operating constraints and safety concerns. If it is not possible, we will instead produce one composite case study based on experiences elicited from multiple participants.

We will aim that these case studies include the strengths of the community-based protection and the Child Friendly Space (CFS) models.

### Data Analysis Plan

The External Evaluation analysis needs to be presented in GAC RBM format. As the outcome indicators are qualitative, results will be justified using a combination of data sources for each indicator and outcome level. Our technical research team then quality assure, clean, process and code this data before using SPSS to produce data tables of each indicator with the disaggregation's stated in the Theoretical Framework above.





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External Evaluation

Qualitative data is coded in NVIVO and the combined raw results are inserted into sections for our team to analyse and assign the evaluation results. This is presented alongside an analysis of the results in a Final Report in the format outlined below.





## Annex D – References

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## Annex E – Case Studies

**Armineh<sup>52</sup> is a 25-35yr old female parent living in Kandahar City**

### What was your involvement to the project?

*My two children attended the Child Friendly Space (CFS) for one year and we received training from War Child Canada and its partners. We received parenting education where we learned a lot about child rights, parent rights, responsibilities, health awareness and how to communicate about child education.*

### How did the project impact you and your community?

*This project has helped a lot of our children and teenagers. For example, before this project, our children used to fight with each other in the street, which most of the times caused them to be injured. Our neighbor's child for example was fighting on the street with another neighbor's child and one day he broke his hand during the fight. When he joined this program, he was encouraged to do sports and continue his education. And the parent (my neighbor) was also told how to motivate his children to study.*

*Before this project, there were many children in the streets and alleys. Even in our village, children used to fight with each other once or twice a week, further causing their families and parents fighting with each other. With the implementation of this project, this issue has been reduced to some extent.*

*My children were going to the Child Friendly Space, which was open all day. I think different children were going different times in the day. The center had a teacher to help children there. I think around 100 children were going to that center. My kids were provided with materials to read, write and to play with. Sometimes a group of people were coming to the Child Friendly Space (CFS) to monitor the activities as well as they ask about our suggestions and problems.*

*This project has been able to protect our children to some extent from gender discrimination. For example, in our society, parents give more value to their sons and love them more, but unfortunately, they do not pay attention to their daughters as much as they should. They were always of the opinion that a girl does not always stay at home and one day they will go to their husband's house, and they loved their boys more. After this project, they love their sons and daughters equally, and the gender discrimination between them has significantly decreased in our village.*

### What do you think will happen after the project?

*Now the students of the school are not as safe as they were in the previous government. Although there was a war in the previous government, they had a special interest in their work and activities and had hope for their future, but now the government does not pay much attention to those who have higher education. Rather, the government pays more attention to religious matters and most of the positions are held by those who know more about religious issues.*

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<sup>52</sup> Not her real name.





## Larmina<sup>53</sup> is a 15-18yr old female student living in Kabul

### What was your involvement in the project?

*I was one of the children who participated in this project. I did not know about this project at the beginning, but after hearing about free courses and projects from street children, I asked my parents to let me attend these seminars. When I started going to seminars, I found out that War Child Canada is a foreign organization which implements educational projects for children. The organization distributed boxes, books, booklets, pens, toothbrushes, toothpaste and other medical items. I was provided with educational materials.*

### How did the project impact you and your community?

*The awareness sessions about children, women, girls' rights, children's right to education and parents' prevention of forced marriages were very effective for my community. After peoples' level of awareness changed, their behavior and views also changed. In the past, mothers sent their children to the streets for fun and to play there to reduce their responsibility. After going to the streets, they were fighting and making noise. Due to these seminars, children were able to take somehow the responsibilities from their parents. The seminars helped gathering children from the streets and informing them about their rights and education. Not only did the children gather from wandering, but they also learned about their education and rights.*

*The project helped us to learn how to fight (protect) against COVID-19, how to take care of personal hygiene, and take care of environmental health. Students also learned about their rights in society and the government. During the COVID period, War Child Canada taught health tips to children.*

*I can mention myself as an example. (Because of this project) I learned a lot about my rights and my parents' rights after attending the seminars. This knowledge changed my behavior with my family and friends. I understood that education is our right and how can I defend my rights. This performance always pleased my family.*

### What do you think will happen after the project?

*The situation of children was not very good both in the previous government and in the current government. Previously, little support was given to children with the projects of various organizations. But after completion of these projects, attention to children has been reduced again.*

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<sup>53</sup> Not her real name





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