



# Collective Impact: a mechanism to mobilize and coordinate social actors in the field of child protection in the Republic of Moldova

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## Abstract

The research analyses phase one of applying Collective Impact (CI) methodology as a means of organizing and coordinating key stakeholders in child protection sector in the Republic of Moldova. The 2022 study employs a qualitative approach, combining document analysis and key informant interviews. Key findings highlight the importance of a common agenda, the role of a backbone organisation, and the necessity of shared measurement systems in ensuring initial collaboration. The study identifies both opportunities and challenges, including initial scepticism, role ambiguity, and the need for sustainable funding. Comparative analysis with international case studies, such as Family Care First in Cambodia and the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati, demonstrates the potential for adapting Collective Impact principles to Moldova's context. The study underscores the novelty of applying Collective Impact in Moldova, as no prior empirical or theoretical research has explored this approach in the country. Care reform actors may find the results of the study useful for practical application of CI collaboratives in comparable contexts. For implementing agencies or groups, the recommendations for stakeholder mapping and leveraging from undertakings already in place are also beneficial.

**Keywords:** collective impact, common agenda, backbone, childcare system, Moldova

## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Collective Impact (CI) as conceptual framework for collaborative initiatives**

Reforming child protection sector in post-Soviet contexts like Moldova, requires complex systemic approaches that require coordinated solutions across government, civil society, and international partners.<sup>1</sup> Though care reform in Moldova has started in mid 2000s<sup>2</sup>, to finalize the process a joint action of all groups of stakeholders is needed.<sup>3</sup> While collective actions have deep historical roots, and the concept of collaboration is not something new in system strengthening nor in the child protection sector. However collaborative initiatives got a new dimension in 2011 when John Kania and Mark Kramer brought the idea of a structural framework for collaborative initiatives. Basing on several successful examples, the authors define Collective Impact as “commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem”. This research attempts to analyse effectiveness of applying CI to mobilize and coordinate key stakeholders in child protection in Moldova within an initiative that started in 2021.

Kania and Kramer identify five key conditions of a Collective Impact initiative including: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and a backbone support organization. (Kania & Kramer, 2011) In 2012, same authors, together with Fay Hanleybrown, further develop the framework adding clear definitions of each key condition as well as key components of success and associated actions in three consecutive phases. (Kania et al., 2011) As the framework became increasingly popular, Sheri Brady and Jennifer Splansky Juster in 2016 bring to light eight additional principles of practice. (Brady & Splansky Juster, 2016) In 2022, John Kania et al. in their article “Centering Equity in Collective Impact” redefine Collective Impact as “a network of community members, organizations, and institutions that advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems-level change”. The definition underlines the aspects of equity and learning and replaces “solving a problem” with “achieving change”. This shift in thinking enables practitioners to orient their goals towards system strengthening rather than solving the problem they identified.

To research CI collaboratives, we can apply the Social Ecological Model for Change proposed by FHI 360 and its partners. (C- Change, 2012) The model is an adaptation of socio-ecological model developed by McKee N., Manoncourt E., Chin Saik Yoon and Carnegie R. (McKee et al, 2003) The FHI 360 version of socio-ecological model enables deep reflection on additional cross-cutting factors that enable social change. The model allows practitioners to examine and address multiple levels of influence to find effective critical points for change. Considering all levels of change is important for governments or social movements, such as CI initiatives, to unite people and organisations behind a particular goal and implement actions to

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<sup>1</sup> [https://socialserviceworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/moldova\\_insights\\_role\\_of\\_collective\\_impact\\_in\\_workforce\\_strengthening\\_final.pdf](https://socialserviceworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/moldova_insights_role_of_collective_impact_in_workforce_strengthening_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.measureevaluation.org/countries/moldova/care-reform-in-moldova-timeline>

<sup>3</sup> [https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/final\\_moldova\\_financing\\_conference\\_report\\_eng.pdf](https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/final_moldova_financing_conference_report_eng.pdf)

drive change. The Social Ecological model of change helps to identify the reasons for behaviour change at different levels, including individual, interpersonal, community, environmental and cross-cutting factors such as information, motivation, agency and norms. This model has already been used to study behaviour change in CI initiatives. For example, Peggy Geiser writes (Geiser, 2018): "The community needs to have a mechanism to frame this complex theoretical work and one such model would be the Stanford Innovations Collective Impact Model as described by Kania and Kramer in the Stanford Social Innovation Review. Collective Impact is a framework that allows for a cross-sector approach for the operationalization of the Social Ecological Theory of Change in real time." As Collective Impact is being more thoroughly conceptualized, opportunities for its practical application and replication across different contexts and areas grow. The latest works of John Kania focus on conceptualizing the Six Conditions of System Change framework including policies, practice, resource flows, relationships and connections, power dynamics and mental models (Kania et al., 2018) as well as exploring the ways its three levels work together with Collective Impact. (Kania, 2020)

## **1.2 Backbone support as one of Collective Impact key conditions**

The key conditions of Collective Impact, as described by Kania and Kramer, remain constant as collaboratives gain popularity and are applied in different contexts and sectors. A common agenda, shared measurement system with a limited number of critical indicators, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities are always present albeit taking various forms as collaboratives identify according to their needs and priorities. However, the backbone support seems to be the least uniform and the most versatile of all key conditions. The backbone structure or organisation ensures that the initiative moves forward to achieve the common agenda by facilitating the other three conditions of Collective Impact, including continuous communication, shared measurement and mutually reinforcing activities. The backbone structure has six key functions within the initiative:

- Provide overall strategic direction,
- Facilitate dialogue between partners,
- Manage data collection and analysis,
- Manage communications,
- Coordinate community outreach activities,
- Mobilise funding. (Kania et al., 2012)

The backbone structure builds partners' trust in the initiative by remaining neutral and providing ongoing support. (Kania et al., 2012) In addition, a 2018 study found that the most effective backbone organizations focused on building a network rather than leading change. The backbone structure should be comprised of well-trained leaders with a specific focus on equity within the initiative. (Lynn, 2018) Funders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, or a combination of these actors, can fulfil the role of a backbone structure. (Kania et al., 2012) The backbone organisations will be determined by the level of

flexibility of funders, an initiative's way of operating, and which organizations within the existing community of practice are best positioned to fulfil this function. (Lynn et al., 2015)

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

This research examines the challenge of mobilisation and coordination of key actors in the child protection system in Moldova while applying Collective Impact methodology. Despite efforts to reform the childcare system, gaps in stakeholder coordination persist, limiting sustainable progress. The lack of a unified framework has been a barrier to collaboration between government institutions, NGOs and international donors. While CI has been applied at the international level, its implementation in the Republic of Moldova remains largely unexamined, necessitating an in-depth analysis of its feasibility and effectiveness.

### **1.4 Research objectives and questions**

The study evaluates the effectiveness of the Collective Impact methodology in mobilizing and coordinating key child protection stakeholders in Moldova. It aims to analyse the theoretical-methodological background for CI, to identify relevant international practices and to assess its effectiveness in improving coordination efforts in the first phase and beginning of second phase of implementation. The authors seek to reveal the benefits and limitations of the methodology and attempt to provide evidence-based recommendations to refine future strategies. The central question guiding this study is: How does Collective Impact contribute to improving stakeholder coordination within systemic child protection reforms in Moldova? This is particularly relevant considering national-level efforts in planning and implementing the National Program for Child Protection (NPCP) and its action plan.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

As the first systematic study of Collective Impact in Moldova, this research provides valuable insights into how collaborative governance can drive childcare reform. Given the country's historical reliance on institutional care, an understanding of effective stakeholder engagement is of critical importance. The findings contribute to academic discourse and inform policy by providing a structured approach to multi-sectoral collaboration. Moreover, this framework has the potential to serve as a model for addressing other complex social challenges in Moldova and beyond.

### **1.6 Methods**

To investigate the mobilization and coordination of key stakeholders in child protection within the CI initiative in Moldova, we employed a mixed-method approach to produce a descriptive analysis of the initiative's inception stage. This mixed-method approach included documentary research and key informant interviews.

The research team analysed secondary data available within the initiative's monitoring system, including data on activities and participants of events, reports, meeting notes, and participant feedback available for the first year of implementation (2021). Key stakeholder mapping was performed through open sources, such as websites, and included more than 200 local, regional, national, and international organizations, government bodies, and other actors active in child protection. Additionally, a review of 52 legislative and normative documents in

the field of child protection in Moldova and government statistical data on children at risk provided an overview of child care reform process between 1994 and 2020. Comparative analysis of the initiative's results framework and draft NPCP objectives concluded with the recommendation to regard the NPCP action plan as a common agenda for the collaborative.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were selected as a research method due to the limited number of experts with relevant knowledge and experience within the initiative's inception stages. Since CI was applied in Moldova for the first time, there were no individuals from other sectors whose experience would be relevant for comparison. As a result, we reached data saturation by conducting six KIIs with Moldova child protection champions who had experience in participating in national-level coordination mechanisms and leaders of organizations that are members of the collective impact initiative. Interviews were transcribed and coded for further qualitative analysis. Data collected through key informant interviews facilitated the analysis of historical and existing coordination mechanisms in child protection in Moldova. Additionally, we examined the backbone structures, as these represent key elements for mobilizing and coordinating the initiative. This helped us consider potential scenarios for conceptualizing and positioning the backbone structure for the CI initiative, as well as develop recommendations in this respect. Interviews were carried out to capture firsthand experiences and viewpoints, while relevant documents were analysed to provide additional context and corroborate the information obtained from the interviews.

The analytical framework employed in this study is based on the principles of Critical Inquiry. This framework was used to systematically analyse the implementation processes and outcomes of the initiatives. By applying Critical Inquiry principles, the researchers were able to critically examine the power dynamics, underlying assumptions, and broader implications of the initiatives. This analytical approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and impact of the initiatives, highlighting areas of success as well as opportunities for improvement.

## **2 Results**

### **2.1 International Perspectives and Comparisons**

The documentary review revealed that the Collective Impact framework has been applied globally, with varying degrees of success and adaptation to local contexts. One notable example is the Family Care First (FCF) initiative in Cambodia. Launched by USAID in 2014, this initiative aimed to reduce the number of children growing up outside family care. The FCF initiative was led by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation, supported by a network of organisations, including Save the Children, UNICEF, and various NGOs. The approach involved a participatory co-design workshop, leading to collaborative projects. However, the initiative faced challenges such as role confusion between the Global Alliance for Children (GAC) and Save the Children, and the need for clear processes and delegation of authority. Initial funding was provided by USAID, with additional support from the European Union, GHR Foundation, and others. Nevertheless, the initiative fostered

collaboration among various stakeholders, leading to improved support for children and families.<sup>4</sup>

Document analysis brings up interesting examples from the United States, where the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati aimed to address long-standing issues in the local education system through a comprehensive approach involving leaders from the private, public, and non-profit sectors. The initiative established committees to discuss progress and set common indicators for measuring success, focusing on aligning efforts across the educational continuum. The Strive Partnership successfully improved various educational indicators by fostering collaboration and aligning efforts among stakeholders. This example demonstrates the effectiveness of a collaborative approach in addressing complex issues, highlighting the potential benefits of CI when implemented with clear goals and coordinated efforts. (Seldon et al., 2012)

Australia has also seen a proliferation of Collective Impact projects, with over 80 initiatives across the country. Collaboratives in Australia emphasize flexibility and community involvement. To understand the problem, it is essential to involve communities and apply cultural lens to develop, implement and evaluate solutions together. (Gwynne et. al, 2022). The success of CI initiatives in Australia underscores the importance of community involvement and flexibility, suggesting that Moldova could adopt a participatory approach, involving local communities in decision-making processes.

## **2.2 Lessons Learned from International Experiences and Their Relevance to Moldova**

The international experiences with CI provide valuable lessons that can be applied to the context of Moldova. One key lesson is the importance of clear roles and responsibilities. The confusion between GAC and Save the Children in Cambodia highlighted the need for a well-defined structure for coordination. For Moldova, establishing clear roles and responsibilities among stakeholders is crucial to avoid similar challenges and ensure effective collaboration.

Sustainable funding is another critical factor. The lack of sufficient and sustainable funding was a significant challenge for the FCF initiative in Cambodia. Moldova should ensure diverse and sustainable funding sources to support long-term initiatives. This could involve securing government ownership of care reform complemented by support from international donors and development partners to create a strong financial foundation.

Stakeholder involvement and flexibility are also essential. The success of collaboratives in Australia emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in decision-making processes and adapting strategies to fit the local context. Moldova should adopt a participatory approach, engaging stakeholders at national, regional and community levels in planning and implementation of CI initiatives. This will help ensure that the initiatives are relevant and responsive to the specific needs and conditions of the local context.

The collaborative approach demonstrated by the Strive Partnership in the United States shows the effectiveness of aligning efforts among various stakeholders to address complex

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<sup>4</sup> Family Care First React – collaborative website. Available at <https://www.fcf-react.org/>

issues. Moldova can benefit from fostering collaboration among government, NGOs, and other stakeholders, creating a unified effort towards common goals. This approach can help leverage the strengths and resources of different sectors, leading to more comprehensive and sustainable solutions. Finally, the need for adaptation to the local context is crucial. The flexibility in implementing CI initiatives in Australia highlights the importance of tailoring strategies to the unique socio-political and economic environment of Moldova. By learning from these international experiences, Moldova can enhance the effectiveness of its current and future Collective Impact initiatives, ensuring better outcomes for children and families.

## **2.3 Child Protection Landscape in Moldova**

### **2.3.1 Historical Background: Transition from Institutional Care to Modern Child Protection Systems**

The transition from Soviet-era institutional care to modern child protection systems in Moldova has been a complex and gradual process. During the Soviet period, the state heavily relied on institutional care for children, with large numbers of children placed in large residential institutions. This approach was rooted in the Soviet ideology that emphasized state responsibility over family-based care. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moldova inherited this institutional framework, which was characterized by a lack of individualized care and support for children. The early 1990s marked the beginning of significant reforms aimed at deinstitutionalization and the development of community-based services. Key milestones in this transition included the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990<sup>5</sup>, creation of government-led Council for the Child Rights Protection<sup>6</sup>, adoption of national strategies in inclusive education, reforming institutional care, disability inclusion, benefits and social services between 1996 and 2010. Another important factor catalysing child care reforms at global scale is the growing body of literature underscoring the harm of institutional care for children, especially at young age. (National Scientific Council on The Development of The Child, 2012) These reforms were supported by international organizations and aimed at reducing the number of children in institutional care, improving the quality of care, and ensuring that children grow up in a family environment. As a result, the number of children in institutional care reduced from 17,000 in 1995<sup>7</sup> to 600 in 2023.<sup>8</sup>

### **2.3.2 Current Challenges: Resource Disparities, Need for Reform, and Stakeholder Coordination**

Despite the progress made, Moldova continues to face several challenges in its child protection system. Even though the number of children in residential care decreases, the rate of separated children placed in institutional care remains at the level of 15% between 2021 and 2023. [Figure 1] Per government statistical data, babies and young children as well as children with disabilities continue to have higher chances of being placed in residential care institutions.

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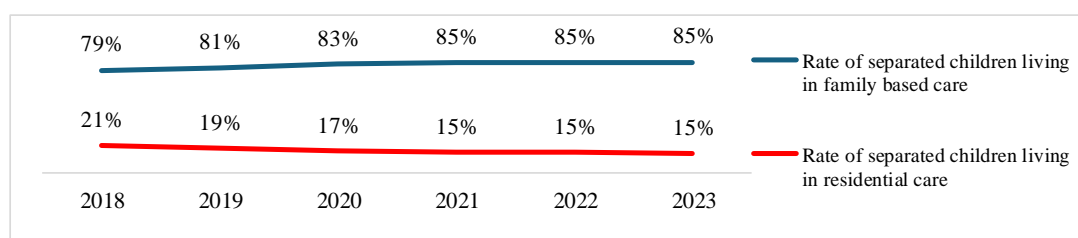
<sup>5</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=115568&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=115568&lang=ro)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=44197&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=44197&lang=ro)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.measureevaluation.org/countries/moldova/care-reform-in-moldova-timeline>

<sup>8</sup> <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Raport-statistic-anual-nr.-103---Copii-aflati-in-situatie-de-risc-si-copii-separati-de-parinti-in-anul-2023.pdf>

Figure 1: Rates of separated children placed in family-based care versus residential care in Moldova 2018-



2023.

Source: Government Statistical data. Available: [social.gov.md](http://social.gov.md)

Resource disparities remain a significant issue, with uneven distribution of community and social support services across different administrative units. This disparity affects the quality and accessibility of child care, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, there is a need to enhance capacities of social service workforce, support services available for caregivers, and ensure sustainable funding for child protection initiatives.<sup>9</sup> Another critical challenge is coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners. Effective stakeholder coordination is essential for the successful implementation of child protection policies and programs. (Situational Analysis, 2021) It requires clear communication, shared goals, and collaborative efforts to address the complex needs of children and families. Addressing these challenges is crucial for building a robust and responsive child protection system in Moldova.

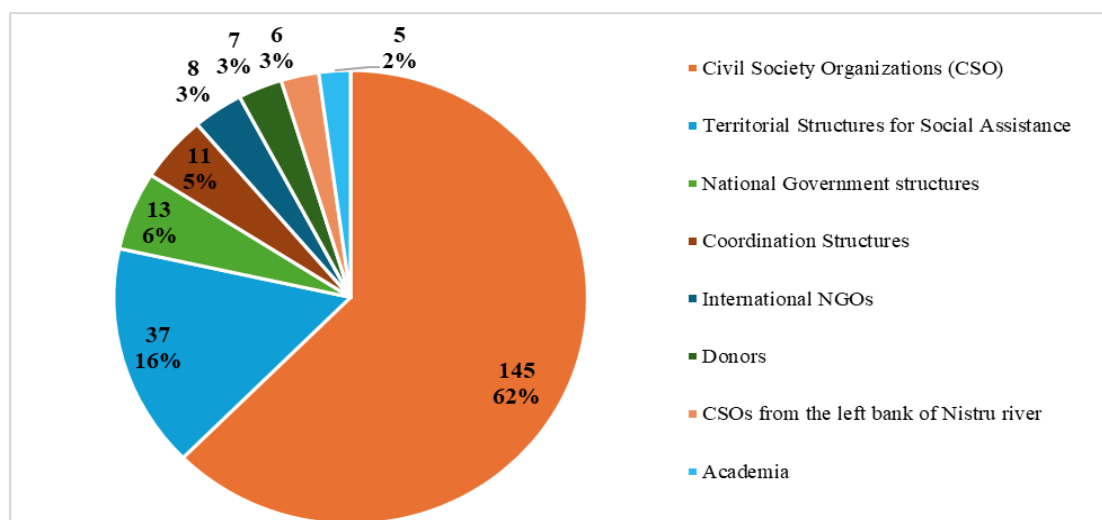
## 2.4 Collective Impact Implementation in Moldova

### 2.4.1 Stakeholder mapping and mobilization

As revealed through key informant interviews, the initial phase of implementing Collective Impact in Moldova focused on mobilising key stakeholders and establishing a shared agenda. This phase entailed extensive consultations with governmental bodies, non-governmental organisations, academia, and civil society actors to ensure a collaborative approach to social welfare reform. An essential aspect of this process was mapping key childcare and protection sector actors. This exercise aimed to identify leading organisations, alliances, and collaborative platforms that could contribute to the CI initiative. Through this mapping, several primary coordination structures were recognised, including the National Council for the Protection of Child Rights, the Alliance of NGOs Active in Child and Family Social Protection, and the Alliance of Organisations for Persons with Disabilities in Moldova.

<sup>9</sup> <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Report%208%20Legal%20and%20Funding%20Report%20300%20Web.pdf>

Figure 2: Key stakeholders in child protection in Moldova in 2020



Source: Key stakeholder mapping exercise, CRS Moldova, 2020.

Furthermore, civil society organisations, international development partners, and faith-based organizations that provide family support services were considered key stakeholders. [Figure 2] Introductory meetings facilitated dialogue between different entities, ensuring the alignment of priorities and the integration of CI principles into existing child protection strategies. A crucial aspect of this phase was overcoming initial scepticism and ensuring broad-based support from stakeholders, who often perceived CI as an externally imposed framework rather than a locally driven initiative. To address these concerns, emphasis was placed on contextualising CI within Moldova’s ongoing child protection reform efforts, particularly the National Programme for Child Protection in the process of development at that time. The alignment of CI objectives with stakeholders’ and national programme priorities provided legitimacy to the approach and helped mitigate resistance from stakeholders.

#### 2.4.2 Development of Collaborative’s Common Agenda

The National Programme for Child Protection (NPCP) 2022–2026 was developed through a collaborative process involving government entities, civil society organisations, and international partners. The process of its development was initiated and supported by UNICEF Moldova. The programme consists of two main components: a narrative section, which includes a situational analysis and strategic objectives, and an action plan detailing specific quantitative output indicators and expected outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

A technical working group composed of key stakeholders was convened to draft and refine the NPCP. This group met regularly to ensure the alignment of the programme’s goals with national child protection priorities. The drafting process was also informed by baseline research and consultations with experts in child welfare. To enhance accountability and

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/comunicate-de-pres%C4%83/unicef-%C3%AE%C8%99i-reafirm%C4%83-angajamentul-pentru-implementarea-programului-na%C8%9Bional>

feasibility, a costing exercise was conducted to estimate the financial resources needed for implementation. The draft NPCP and action plan underwent multiple rounds of review, including formal and informal feedback from government agencies and development partners. The process of NPCP development including assessment and consultation was taking place in 2021-2022 and overlapped with CI collaborative initial stage.

The finalisation process was influenced by several factors, including the broad scope of the programme and funding constraints. While the NPCP outlines a comprehensive reform agenda, securing financial commitments for its implementation remains a challenge. The programme was ultimately submitted for government approval, reinforcing its role as a cornerstone of Moldova's child protection framework. The government of Moldova approved the NPCP and its action plan on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

The NPCP and its action plan were selected as the common agenda for the Collective Impact initiative due to their alignment with key strategic objectives in child protection reform. The programme's goals, particularly strengthening child protection system and ensuring family-based care solutions for separated children, were consistent with the priorities of multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, academia, and civil society organisations. The participatory approach used in the development of the NPCP, involving consultations with key actors, ensured that the programme reflected a broad consensus on priority actions. Furthermore, the structured action plan provided a concrete framework for coordination, monitoring, and accountability, essential for the successful implementation of Collective Impact initiatives. By adopting the NPCP as the common agenda, collaborative leaders ensured that collective efforts were directed towards measurable and sustainable improvements in child protection policies and services.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP), in collaboration with partners including Partnerships for Every Child, Council of Europe, Child Community Family, Data for Impact Project, Keystone Moldova divided roles and responsibilities and stated these commitments in the publicly available Action Plan for the implementation of the National Programme for Child Protection 2022-2026.

A significant challenge during this phase was defining the leadership structure and ensuring effective decision-making processes. The emphasis was placed on sustainability, with efforts to embed CI practices within government structures rather than relying solely on donor-driven initiatives. Unlike other CI collaboratives, in Moldova the first technical working group was set up prior to organizing backbone structure.

### **2.4.3 Formation of the Workforce Strengthening Working Group**

One of the notable achievements of the CI implementation in Moldova has been the formation of the Workforce Strengthening Working Group (WSWG). This body was established to address critical gaps in professional development of social workers and to ensure consistent, high-quality service provision. The WSWG brought together representatives from government agencies, international organisations, NGOs, and academia to develop strategies for enhancing social service workforce capacity.

The WSWG's mandate emerged from a 2021 assessment that identified key challenges in social worker training and supervision. Based on the recommendations from this assessment, workforce strengthening was integrated into Moldova's National Child Protection Programme (2022-2026). The WSWG facilitated the development of four specialised technical groups, focused on: (1) mechanisms for initial and continuous training, (2) strengthening partnerships between MoLSP and academia, (3) improving professional supervision, and (4) developing training courses in child protection. These groups provided a mechanism for aligning stakeholders' efforts and ensuring shared accountability for outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

A key milestone in this collaboration was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between MoLSP and four leading universities: Moldova State University, Ion Creanga University, Alecu Russo University, and the Free International University of Moldova. This MoU formalised cooperation in enhancing social work education, aligning professional training to the labour market requirements, and integrating research into policy development.

This multi-sectoral approach has facilitated knowledge sharing, policy alignment, and joint action planning. While civil society organizations were providing training to social service workforce, formalization and institutionalization of these practices must be realized through engagement with academia and government stakeholders.

#### **2.4.4 Coordination Structures for the Collective Impact Initiative in Moldova**

A successful implementation of a CI initiative in Moldova's child protection reform necessitated an establishment of robust coordination structures. Given the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations, international development partners, and civil society, a structured governance framework was essential to ensuring an integrated approach to reform. Central to this effort was the identification of a dedicated backbone organisation to provide strategic leadership, facilitate communication, and oversee the execution of shared goals. This entity played a pivotal role in fostering cross-sector collaboration, streamlining policy implementation, and mobilising financial resources to support sustainable interventions.

Moldova has a history of collaborative governance in child protection, exemplified by the National Council for the Child Rights Protection. However, the need for enhanced coordination mechanisms remains critical to improving inter-agency cooperation and service delivery. While previously the Council has effectively contributed to reforming childcare system in Moldova, it had become inactive between July 2021 and July 2023, as evidenced by the lack of communication on its official website.<sup>1</sup> In May 2023, the Council Regulation was reapproved as well as the list of organizations-members. It is important to mention though that the Regulation has not been updated for 20 years.<sup>1</sup> Due to advocacy efforts<sup>3</sup> in the frame of CI

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<sup>1</sup> [https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/moldova\\_insights\\_role\\_of\\_collective\\_impact\\_in\\_workforce\\_strengthening\\_final.pdf](https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/moldova_insights_role_of_collective_impact_in_workforce_strengthening_final.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cnfdc.gov.md/ro/comunicate>

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=137580&lang=ro#](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=137580&lang=ro#)

collaborative, the council remains chaired by the Prime Minister. Engagement of high-level authorities raises the profile of the Council and ensures effective coordination.

### **3 Discussion**

The findings suggest that the CI approach provides a workable framework to improve coordination between actors in the Moldovan child protection system. While progress has been made in deinstitutionalisation, challenges remain in coordinating the efforts of government bodies, NGOs and international partners. A more structured approach to cooperation has been facilitated by the adoption of a common agenda centred on the National Programme for Child Protection (NPCP) 2022-2026. A significant development in improving the professional capacity of the sector was the establishment of the first collaborative Workforce Strengthening Working Group (WSWG). However, initial scepticism and the ambiguity surrounding the role of the collaborative and its leaders highlight the need to contextualise Collective Impact within existing national reforms to ensure broad stakeholder engagement and commitment.

The study's findings echo international Collective Impact research, particularly in contexts where child protection reforms require multisectoral collaboration. Similar to the Family Care First (FCF) initiative in Cambodia, the Moldova case highlights the importance of establishing clear governance structures and defining roles to avoid confusion among stakeholders. The Strive Partnership in Cincinnati demonstrated the value of establishing common indicators and fostering sustained cross-sector collaboration, which is echoed in Moldova's attempt to create a unified measurement system for child protection outcomes. Australian experience with CI initiatives also highlights the need for flexibility and community involvement, elements Moldova has begun to incorporate, albeit early.

This study acknowledges several limitations that may have influenced its findings. One significant limitation is the involvement of one of the authors who is employed within the Collective Impact initiative. This dual role may introduce potential biases, as the researcher's close involvement with the collaborative could affect objectivity and the interpretation of data. Another limitation is the study's reliance on so-called WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic) theory, which may not fully capture the unique socio-cultural and economic contexts of Moldova. Collective Impact framework is coming from collaborative initiatives realized in such as the US, Canada, Western Europe, and Australia, which are characterized by higher standards of education, industrialization, affluence, and democratic systems than the global norm. This could lead to an incomplete understanding of the child protection mechanisms within the collaborative. The findings may have limited generalisability due to the specific context of Moldova, meaning the results may not be easily applicable to other regions. Additionally, the study faced limitations related to data availability and quality, with some sources being inaccessible or lacking detail. This may have affected the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Academic research of CI is still in its early stages, with limited impact evaluations to prove its effectiveness. Critics argue that the current methodology provides misleading perspectives on collaboration, both in terms of objectives and social and community change processes. As Collective Impact is adopted at global scale, it is necessary to examine it more critically. The theoretical description and research on its effectiveness are still developing. These limitations highlight the need for cautious interpretation of the results

and suggest areas for further research to validate and expand upon the findings. By acknowledging these constraints, the study aims to provide a balanced and transparent account of its methodology and outcomes.

Future research should focus on the advancement of the Collective Impact collaborative within Moldova's childcare system, particularly in ensuring the effective coordination of key stakeholders in alignment with national policy objectives. A critical area of inquiry is the refinement of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, assessing their role in sustaining long-term improvements and adherence to EU recommendations.

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