Collecting data on the incidence of child endangerment in Switzerland: Lessons learned

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There is widespread agreement that in order to make progress in the prevention and reduction of child maltreatment it is important for policy-makers to have information on the scope and characteristics of reported incidents, on gaps and regional disparities in reporting. Globally, studies to nationally collect data on agency responses to child maltreatment are, however, rare (Jud, Fegert, & Finkelhor, 2016; Jud, Fluke, et al., 2013; Krüger & Jud, 2015). The first national survey on agency responses to child maltreatment in Switzerland bridges this gap and was highly successful in mobilizing agencies to participate: 81% of the sampled agencies have provided data on their caseload of newly reported incidents between September 1, 2016 and November 30, 2016. Based on these data we have been able to identify regional disparities in reported incidents, biased decision-making, gaps in service provision, etc. These major findings are made available to child protection professionals and the public in a booklet translated into German, French, Italian and English (free download at http://www.optimusstudy.org/index.php?id=260). Secondary analyses will follow and be published in peer-reviewed academic journals. The present report accompanies the booklet and scrutinizes the survey's procedure to identify beneficial strategies, hurdles and barriers for future researchers. The lessons learned will cover the contacts with agencies, measures, data collection and cleaning, analyses and dissemination. They both address the expertise and knowledge of social scientists and IT-specialists as both groups have contributed to a successful survey.

This first national survey on agency responses to child maltreatment is the third step in the Optimus Study Switzerland. Between 2009 and 2011, the UBS Optimus Foundation has sponsored both a population survey and an agency survey on child sexual victimization (Averdijk, Müller-Johnson, & Eisner, 2012). Two major limitations were associated with the agency survey in cycle 1: First, participation rate was relatively low with 27.6% of agencies participating. It was particularly low for certain sectors of service provision and for the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Moreover, a focus solely on child sexual victimization was criticized as an isolated view as most agencies in child

protection respond to all forms of violence against children. In fact, incidents of child sexual abuse usually represent the smallest part of a child protective service's caseload and many children suffer from multiple victimization (e.g. Trocmé, 2008). The intermediary cycle 2 of the Optimus Study Switzerland was therefore reserved to prepare and build up to a first national survey on reported incidents of all forms of child maltreatment.

1. A framework of mutual research-practice collaboration

Cycle 3 of the Optimus Study Switzerland builds on a framework of knowledge mobilization (e.g. Graham et al., 2006; Trocmé, Esposito, Laurendeau, Thomson, & Milne, 2009). It therefore refrains from viewing agencies as mere data providers, but values their contextual knowledge on processes in Swiss child protection. These research-practice partnerships have already been initiated in cycle 2 of the Optimus Study back in 2014: Stakeholders of child protection practice have been engaged in discussing uniform definitions of violence against children in identifying shared elements of data collection and building up the commitment for national surveillance of reported incidents of child endangerment (cf. Cuttelod, Ben Salah, Mitrovic, & Jud, 2014). Contacting agencies way in advance of data collection and including them in planning the survey was quintessential in building trust. And trust, in return, was essential for the participation of agencies (cf. Lomas, 2000). The agencies and stakeholders in Swiss child protection had a real say in shaping the survey: In fact, the novel approach of uploading agencies' own standardized data onto a secured web-platform and mapping their variables onto the study data set was suggested by the agencies themselves. The study's list of variables is annexed to ease an overview. Another central piece in establishing trust was the multisite research team: With units located in two different cultural and linguistic parts of Switzerland, we have been perceived as more familiar with the respective contexts. Advantages of an extended preparatory phase are summarized in Box 1.

Box 1: **Advantages of preparing the survey in collaboration with child protection practice (Optimus Study's cycle 2)**

- Establishing trust in a mutual research-practice partnerships way in advance of data collection.

- Paving the route for shared definitions of child endangerment across sectors.

- Developing a practice-validated tool for data collection in cycle 3 of the Optimus Study Switzerland.

- Increasing the commitment for national surveillance of incidents of child endangerment.

Knowledge mobilization builds upon constant exchanges on a mutual basis. A helpful tool in keeping it up was a biannual newsletter that had started in Optimus' cycle 2 and has been continued into phase 3. As much as possible we have tried to mirror back the tasks in preparing a survey to the agencies. Putting together the sample of agencies across different sectors was, for example, used to develop a

map of agencies' location across Switzerland (Jud, Cuttelod, Steiner, & Stutz, 2013). This helpful map[1] was highly esteemed as an overview on child protection organizations across Switzerland – a geographical and cantonal overview lacking so far.

1.1 Contacts with stakeholders in Swiss child protection: A multilevel approach

First contacts with agencies in cycle 3 have been eased by using facilitators at different levels: First, we have been supported by well-known experts of different disciplines in the field of child protection to gain access to federal or inter-cantonal administrative units, to national or regional umbrella organizations. These units have then provided us with support letters to address the agencies within their domain and have spread the word informally. The different support letters have worked as door openers. Especially the support letter of the Federal Social Insurances Office, the leading strategic entity for child protection in Switzerland, was core to participation and has sent the message that this survey is also of interest for the national administration and policy-makers.

A framework of knowledge mobilization, however, not only means constant interaction with administrators at different levels, it also means constant exchange with frontline staff (Jud, AlBuhairan, Ntinapogias, & Nikolaidis, 2015). Keeping in touch with the latter allowed the team to develop and maintain awareness of the agencies' limitations regarding different aspects of the research procedure. At the same time, we have been able to constantly improve data collection procedure based on their feedback. These exchanges, however, not only highly facilitated participation of agencies in data collection, but also enabled an effective dissemination of the results. Indeed, there are numerous occasions in which close cooperation with these actors proved to be especially fruitful:

- to identify potentially high rates of missing data for certain variables in advance of data collection (and consequently to refrain from trying to collect these variables);
- to recognize agencies' specific limitations (e.g. outdated software or lack thereof);
- to improve the operationalization of the study's main categories (cf. section 2.3, p. 8f);
- in providing various opportunities to disseminate the findings regionally;

Based on our approach of knowledge mobilization, we have been able to detect difficulties at an early stage. The research team has been able to implement regional adaptations of data collection. In the Latin part, organizations were less well equipped with data software than the organizations in the German part and could have uploaded their individual agencies' data only in a much lower rate than in the German-speaking part. We have therefore developed an Excel user interface to manually complete the data set and upload it to our secured web-based data set (for details, see section 2.2, p. 7). Overall, valuing the agencies contextual knowledge has been the central precondition of successful participation. The following chapter discusses specific topics that have also contributed to participation, but also a few barriers and limitations.

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[1] Access the map at
https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1JkF6qA4ow441fRoeW1bcxaXCFgM&ll=46.783429462958324%2C8.21202500000004&z=8.

2. Specific topics

2.1 Reducing work burden for agencies

In WHO's toolkit on mapping agency responses to child maltreatment[2], Jud et al. (2015) have identified workload as the most significant barrier to data collection on the incidence of reported child maltreatment. While agencies quickly embraced the goal of sharing data across different sectors, they were (and still are) hesitant to put data sharing into practice due to concerns over lacking resources for extracurricular data collection. This is especially relevant as some agencies not just collect data for themselves, but also have to collect data for cantonal or federal administrative units, and/or for umbrella organizations. Frontline workers juggle dozens of cases in a restricted amount of time: For Swiss Children and Youth Services it is not a rarity that frontline workers have to handle a hundred cases for a fulltime employment equivalent (e.g. Stadtrat Stadt Zürich, 2008). This results in having less than 20 minutes per case per week for a 42-hour working week. It is not surprising that under these conditions, frontline workers want to reserve as much time as possible for direct interaction with the client. Data collection for a survey is therefore not a priority, even if they support the goal of uniform data collection on reported incidents across sectors.

However, if the study goal is valued by frontline workers and administrators alike, reducing the work burden should be a successful strategy to increase participation. Extracting case level data from agencies' own standardized data collection does not bother the individual frontline worker with the task of collecting data; instead, only one person per agency had to deal with the research team and upload their agency's data to the secured study web-platform. For many agencies, it was even easier than that: Because the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) or a national umbrella organization had consented to provide information from their national data sets, the individual agency had no other workload in participating except for sending back an e-mail that they agree to participate via a national stakeholder. This strategy has been a major pillar in securing high participation: Around half of the agencies participated via a national data set. The other half of participating agencies still surpasses the rate of participation achieved in Optimus Study 1 were the survey was based on an online questionnaire to be filled out by frontline workers (cf. Maier, Mohler-Kuo, Landolt, Schnyder, & Jud, 2013).

Alas, it was not sufficient to only describe the reduced work burden in invitation to participate. Many agencies had to be contacted personally by phone to a) make them aware of our request to participate and b) explain the study's approach to access data. We also had to regularly send the invitation letter and accompanying documents a second time.

Obviously, reducing the work burden for participating agencies, in turn, increased the workload for the research team (see the following sections for details). Securing adequate financial support when replicating this strategy is crucial. While it might be a challenge to find sponsors who cover the extra workload, a high participation rate is one of the key quality criteria for a research project on child protection – especially if it should have an impact on policy.

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[2] The toolkit is available for free at
http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/155237/9789241549073_eng.pdf;jsessionid=6F3A3932918748B3699819EDFB9421F2?sequence=1.

Overall, the strategy can be highly recommended for reducing the work burden for participating agencies. Yet, we have experienced some surprises: A few child protection agencies did not participate even though the only thing they had to do was writing an e-mail to confirm participation. For what reasons exactly remains unclear. We therefore assume that even an optimal strategy in securing high participation will still encounter subjects or agencies that decline to participate for obscure reasons. Another surprising finding are the 30% of agencies that manually completed the questionnaire instead of extracting the data from their agency's own data set. While some agencies lacked a standardized data collection at the agency level, others viewed manual data collection as less complicated than extracting the data (for more information, see section 2.2, p. 6f).

2.2 Ethical considerations and data protection

Using already existing administrative data for a secondary analysis instead of bothering victims and/or professionals with a data collection shortened the process of ethical review. After submitting a proposal to the responsible ethics committee for Lucerne, the Ethikkommission Nordwest und Zentralschweiz (EKNZ), the EKNZ's decision has deemed the study ethically unobjectionable. Therefore, no formal approval by all nine ethics committees in Switzerland was needed. Nevertheless, there was an extensive workload due to close collaboration with cantonal and municipal data protection officers – probably only possible in terms of time and resources through the shortened ethical review. To ensure legal compliance, first the Data Protection and Information Commissioner of the Canton of Lucerne reviewed a draft of our data security concept before sending it out to data protection officers of the remaining 25 cantons and 5 major cities. This procedure paid off as suggested and implemented adaptions to the security concept (Koehler, Schnürle, & Portmann, 2015) after the first review helped to successfully pass the subsequent reviews in other cantons. Even though the project is the same for all cantons and the data protection law is almost indistinguishable between cantons, the submission process resulted in a variability of responses. Some data protection officers suggested further adaptations or required additional security measures such as data protection revers or lists of contacted and participating organizations in their area of responsibility.

Mostly, the data protection officers answered the request within reasonable time. A reminder by direct telephone contact was useful to clarify questions. Experiencing the positive effect of exchange between data protection officers (some contacted their colleagues on their own to discuss our request), we recommend initiating such exchanges informally if facing obstacles with one data protection office. For discussing an individual officer's response, it was helpful to refer to similar responses by other data protection officers and to present our security concept in more detail. The procedure has been especially difficult in the Latin parts of Switzerland. There, despite multiple attempts to contact even via registered letters, we had (and still have) no response to our proposal. This decision to proceed and to not further delay the study was based on the presumption that the different cantonal laws on data protection are more or less congruent. The lack of data protection officers' responses in Switzerland's Latin parts delayed the phase of contacting agencies by approximately two months. To avoid such shortcomings, we recommend that a face-to-face contact should be sought if necessary. Especially in a federal landscape, sufficient time must be scheduled for ethical and data protection reviews. It took us nine months from the request to the ethical committee to the approval by the data protection officers. Unfortunately, some data protection officers were only vaguely familiar with research needs, others not extensively competent in information technologies – and there are more than 26 offices across Switzerland. We believe that further coordinating data

protection work beyond cantonal borders by providing for example a national contact point for research studies could make data protection more effective across Switzerland.

Duplicate cases. Collecting child protection data raises a number of ethical concerns associated with access to data, privacy and confidentiality. Strict anonymity of data at the time of uploading is, however, a precondition for compliance with data protection guidelines. Optimus Study's previous Swiss cycle on reported incidents of child sexual victimization (cf. Maier et al., 2013) identified duplicates by applying the less-than-perfect-strategy of using the only the second letter of the first name, the third letter of the family name and other variables. For this study, however, frontline workers have complemented an online questionnaire. The child's full name was therefore never known to the research teams. Having an algorithm picking selected letters from names in uploaded files is, however, not compatible with data protection even if the full name is immediately deleted after picking the letters.

Not being able to estimate the amount of reported duplicates is a set-back for analyses and the estimation of national incidence rates. However, based on previous research for Switzerland, we assume that the overlap of duplicate reporting is not extensive within the period of three months used as a reference for data collection but accumulates over a longer period (e.g. Jud, 2008). If a national data base for surveillance of reported child maltreatment is planned, building a child-ID or using the social security number across agencies requires political consent.

2.2 Data security and data storage

Developing a secure IT-infrastructure. The effort of protecting the collection of sensitive person-related data on a national basis in Switzerland was very high to guarantee accordance with the requirements in the aforementioned complex setting of cantonal and municipal data protection officers.

The IT-project therefore started with the creation of a detailed security concept that was crucial to the success of the data collection. The security concept provided a service-oriented and workflow-focused analysis of requirements. It early on identified users of the system, how they will work and interact with the system and what services the system needs to provide in order to best support their desired activities when participating in the study. During the development of the security concept, external security experts and selected data protection officers were included in the process. This reduced the need for changes later on in the project. During the development phase, the IT-expert team met several times with external security experts for security audits concerning the security of the firewall, servers, the web-platform, key management, user management, processes and workflows. A high security infrastructure with separate subnetworks, firewalled and separated from the internet was a prerequisite to run such a system.

Most of the security measures can be put in place with minimal effort (server-hard disk encryption, firewall rules, https-only communication). The identification of the user groups led to a role-based security approach. A challenge was to balance data protection officers' and study team's requirements with the available IT-budget. Several in-depth discussions with the study team were hold to discuss the consequences of data protection officers' requirements on the IT-budget and the security measures that had to be put into place. For example, the IT-team did not develop an algorithm for detecting duplicate cases as this would have required further analysis and correlation of data about individuals,

for which data protection approval would have been nearly impossible to obtain (cf. p. 6). Furthermore, the idea of the study team that agencies complement their data after upload could only be implemented in a limited way where agencies had access to edit the anonymized data for the study, but not the original data that they had uploaded.

Access to the servers was strictly limited to the smallest group possible. For each agency, a designated contact point and user of the data collection platform was identified. Backup and restore were tested repeatedly to guarantee correct functioning, if ever needed. During the data collection phase, an active surveillance of the servers was put into place and security updates to servers and the firewall were applied on a weekly basis.

Overall, the IT team needed in-depth knowledge of security, software architecture, and the technology platforms used to implement and maintain such a platform quickly and securely. In addition, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary communication skills were important to ensure a fruitful cooperation with all partners. Employees at child protection agencies might not be the most technology-savvy personnel and developing a user-friendly IT-system that supports their work activities in a way that they perceive as transparent and natural is key to success. Spending time on understanding and elucidating user needs is therefore key as in any other successful IT-project.

Agencies' data formats. Data from 253 agencies have been processed on the web-platform. The development team implemented 19 different table-based mapping formats and 1 XML-mapper for the format of the national data set of the umbrella organization for Child and Adult Protection Authorities (German acronym KOKES). 104 agencies used the Excel survey format provided by the study team. Several software tools for the recording of cases used by the agencies did not provide an interface to easily export the required case data in a format suitable for the study. For these agencies, we worked with software tool vendors directly who either assisted agencies in exporting the case data or who performed the export from a hosted cloud-based environment under approval of the agency. Work time costs for such exports were paid from the IT-budget of the study to keep the agencies' resources needed for participation at a minimum. Some data could not be exported from certain software tools even by third-party vendors. In this case, the agency could not participate in the study or the study team manually curated the data in the Excel survey format.

Usability. Simple step-by-step instructions for the login and upload of the case data by the agencies were sent together with login credentials to the designated agency users. The IT-team designed a self-explanatory web page for access to the platform that was as simple as possible. Study variables were grouped intuitively and interface concepts were applied that are well-known from common social media or online sources such as pull-down menu and radio buttons.

The registered user of an agency could upload files several times. Each upload would delete earlier versions of the data source and all data that were extracted from this source and mapped to the study data. As soon as users manually edited the cases and corrected or added additional data, they could no longer upload new data versions again to avoid data merging problems. This helped keeping the IT-efforts at a reasonable level. A clear communication of this process to the users was mandatory for them to understand this process. Allowing agencies to upload data several times turned out to be a handy feature as wrong or incomplete data uploads occurred several times.

Very few of the agencies had to contact the help desk for help with the upload. None of the users had problems with the required two-factor authentication using a password and an SMS token sent to the registered user's cell phone. If users called the help desk, it was mostly because they had forgotten their complex password that was required to contain at least 8 characters and special characters and numbers. Many agency users are not familiar with proper password management and what constitutes a safe password. Although it is common practice that users must change passwords when logging into the system for the first time, it can be questioned if such a rule makes sense given the observed problems. It rather seems useful to predefine passwords and make sure that users store the document in a safe place or have to log in just once to the platform. This would also reduce problems that occurred when users got locked out of the system, because they had too many failed login attempts. In this case, users had to contact the help desk to have their account renewed – as required by the implemented security-concept.

Several times, new users had to be registered for agencies, because personnel fluctuation within the agencies made it necessary to change the designated agency representative for the study. The time required to re-determine, re-register, and instruct the newly authorized contact person was significant

The strict separation of the website accessed by the users and the data storage-servers limited how users could edit their uploaded data. The security concept did not allow an access to the uploaded original data and users could only see mapped study values. This made it more difficult to edit cases after mapping, because person-related data was no longer available and recognizing a specific case is difficult or nearly impossible for large agencies with many cases. However, transparency is important for the agencies to see that their data is correctly interpreted and integrated into the study. We implemented an edit-functionality for cases although we expected that users would not undertake the effort to edit and complement their data. Indeed, log analysis showed that only ten agencies controlled their data in-depth and made changes to them. The IT-team expected such a low edit rate right from the beginning of the project, however, allowing users to edit and complement their data was highly desired by social scientists as it would have allowed gathering additional data from notes in the case file. However, given the limited use of the edit functionality that is in line with the little time agencies want and can spend on data collection, it would have been sufficient to allow users only to see, but not edit, their mapped study data. Such a read-only access instead of a write-access would have simplified the IT-security concept in some aspects.

2.3 Mapping variables from agencies into a standardized format

Social scientists' perspective. Mapping agencies' individual data onto the study data base's uniform definition was the study's core stage and also its most time-consuming phase. To map data sets, it was important to clarify and determine the exact nature of category labels and variables' content. Exchanges with the agencies, by e-mails and phone calls, were necessary to get additional information. In the future, it would be useful to inform the contact persons, in each agency, that they will be contacted to clarify and discuss certain categories. First, we pilot-tested the mapping process for around a dozen agencies based on these agencies' data sets from previous years. The mapping was processed ad hoc: Once a file had been uploaded, its variable structure was sent to the social scientists. Then, they wrote rules for mapping the agency's data onto the study data set in an Excel file developed by the IT team. Once these rules were implemented by the IT specialists, the agency was able to check

their data online and complement them if necessary. Numerous difficulties had to be dealt with by social scientists, the list is inconclusive:

- First, it was rather difficult to determine whether documented services were provided by the agency itself (variable 24 "agencies' own services", see Annex) or if they were referred to other entities for a service to be provided (variable 25 "referral to other agencies", see Annex).
- Second, some data sets had to be restructured from one line per offense (e.g., in the Police Crime Statistics) to one victim per line for the study data set. For others, their unit of analysis was the family. These data had to be restructured to contain one child per line.
- Third, some essential variables were not sufficiently documented: For example, the national data set of victim aid agencies includes both child and adult victims of crimes. As no age was documented for some victims, adult victims had to be excluded on the basis of the type of infraction as some legal paragraphs only apply for adult victims. This procedure was not possible for all cases with missing victim's age, as some paragraphs apply to both adult and child victims. Therefore, for this remaining cases with missing victim's age, a quote of cases was chosen randomly based on the percentage of child victims with known age (18%).
- Fourth, for the FSO's victim aid agencies' data set, the date of report was missing. Therefore, we have compared – where available – the caseload of individual victim aid agencies data sets between September 1, 2016, and November 30, 2016, to their annual numbers in the FSO data set. For agencies with both individual data and FSO data, the months of September to November 2016 corresponded to a mean of 40% of their annual caseload. For agency data only available via the FSO data set, we have therefore randomly chosen 40% of their annual caseload.
- Fifth, some agencies applied broader categories than we intended for our study. Some agencies, for example, only applied the broad category "family" to describe the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Our categories, on the other hand, were narrower and included parents, siblings and relatives as separate categories. Therefore, it had to be decided whether to broaden our categories and lose detailed information or – as we preferred for this variable – keeping our categories narrower and transferring broader operationalizations of the variable to the category "other/unknown".
- Finally, some agencies or national stakeholders' definitions could correspond to more than one category of Optimus Study. For example, the penal definition of "coercion" (art. 181 Swiss Criminal Code) can both include acts of psychological or physical maltreatment. While some sort of psychological force by the perpetrator is default, the penal definition of coercion not necessarily includes physical violence. We have therefore mapped coercion only as psychological maltreatment to be on the safe side. This conservative approach however leads to an underestimation of multiple victimization (children both psychologically and physically coerced) – a fact to be considered in interpreting the findings.

From a **technological perspective**, additional "lessons learned" can be underlined that might be useful to other researchers. First, mapping is a long process that is time-consuming. It is therefore important to allow extra time for this phase. We had underestimated its extent. In addition, it was important that the social scientists and IT specialists in the research team work closely together (e.g. to discuss the classification of the different variables) and how to resolve ambiguities in the data. Nevertheless, it seems important to apply a similar mapping process in future research on the

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incidence of reported child maltreatment. This mapping reduces the workload for agencies and allows a centralization of the information in spite of the institutional differences. The most important part of the mappings was consistency across the different agencies. By working closely together with the study team, the IT-team received mapping instructions on a per-institution basis. To ensure consistency across the mappings, continuous retrospective review and testing of already mapped data had to be performed. The goal was to ensure that if there are differences in the mappings of certain terms, they had to be justified.

Luckily, most of the agencies were able to export their data in a tabular format (like Excel or csv). To ensure an efficient mapping, the key was to be able to express different tabular formats quickly. The IT-team therefore specified a small number of rules that defined how tabular formats can be correctly translated into each other. Based on these rules that were also partially reusable across different agency data formats, the IT-team was able to implement the required data mappings with reasonable effort.

Of great value was the Excel survey (see Figure 1) that the study team created. It allowed agencies that had no possibility of data export or had only very few cases to express their cases in the study data format directly. This reduced the workload and the number of required mappings for the automatic data integration drastically.

Figure 1   **Pre-defined survey for manually recorded cases**

Once the defined Excel sheet was released to the agency, changes to the variables and values of the study data format were no longer possible as agencies started to fill in their cases into the Excel table. Changes to the format of the study data after the start of the collection of the data and to the mappings can only be implemented with significant effort and should be avoided in order to not confuse agencies and decrease trust into the data-handling competency of the study team. During the definition of the

study variables, the IT specialists and social scientists in the study team had several discussions on how to distinguish between values unknown to an agency and values not recorded by the agency. The study adopted the solution with a "not specified" value, which is always chosen if the value is not recorded by the agency.

3. Conclusion

The third cycle of the Optimus Study Switzerland has been highly successful in getting agencies across sectors to participate in the first nationally representative survey on reported incidents of child endangerment. Studies on responses to child endangerment, on regional and inter-professional variability in decision-making need extra care in implementing. This is why our team would like to make future research researchers sensitive to several strategies applied in Optimus study 3:

- First, we recommend embracing a framework of knowledge mobilization: Agencies and stakeholders should be involved from the start in developing study goals, outcomes and measures, and data collection.
- Provide enough time for getting the agencies committed and for preparatory work. Involving different sectors of service provision means obtaining agreements from various levels of administrative units of different jurisdictions – especially in federally organized countries –, from ethical committees and/or data protection units.
- Moreover, several facilitators should be involved to ease access to agencies. Collaboration with well-known experts in child protection will help to build up trust from the start and these agencies' commitment to study goals of the study. If different disciplinary sectors and different federal regions are involved, facilitators will ideally represent the different disciplines, different regions, and different administrative units. To have an official supporting document from a national office or ministry is particularly relevant.
- Familiarity with regional contexts is not just an important issue for multi-language countries like Switzerland. Involving different sectors of service provision calls for familiarity with different disciplinary discourses on the topic and specific terminology.
- A high commitment to data security is not only conditional to fulfill requirements by data protection units and ethical boards, but is also highly valued by child protection practice.
- Reducing the work burden for participating agencies is the most important strategy of all. Only agencies will commit to participate that perceive the study as not taking too much time from their primary work – serving the client. This goal may be reached via using the agencies own standardized tools of data collection and mapping them onto a shared definitions of a study data base.
- In our approach to efficiently reduce the work burden, support by an IT-team has been essential. We have much benefited that they both understood and have been able to respond to the needs of social research appropriately. It was core to build up a common language in an interdisciplinary team – a two-sided learning process.

We would also like to highlight a communication strategy that has not yet been addressed in this report: The survey was always introduced not primarily as of "pure research interests", but within the context of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. In its response to Switzerland's second to fourth periodic state report, the Committee on the Rights of the Child criticizes the lack of national

surveillance on reported incidents of child endangerment (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015). Furthermore, we have always presented our study as a first step to sustainable surveillance on the child endangerment in Switzerland. It has never been our goal as academic organizations to take over a state responsibility of regularly surveying if the Swiss child protection system adequately detects and serves one of its most vulnerable groups. Instead, we wanted to demonstrate that it is possible – with reasonable effort – to nationally collect data from different sectors and valuable insights can be gained that may help improving prevention and services to the child.

While the high participation rate and consequently the high representativeness are this survey's major strengths, we have also encountered risks to be learned from. Collecting administrative data by uploading agencies' own standardized data onto a secured web-based platform and mapping it on shared definitions is a novel and time-saving approach for the agency, but it comes with risks for the reliability of data. Some agencies do not collect data on perpetrators, agencies in the penal sector almost exclusively collect this type of information. Identifying missing variables within different sectors has, however, also been a secondary goal of this research project. Only if these missing variables are identified, we can commit the agencies and national stakeholders to more uniformity. But even if the agencies do collect the same variables, terms, definitions and operationalizations differ. The mapping process has been performed by the research team, thereby guaranteeing a more reliable approach. However, how individual professionals viewed their own agency's categories when completing their files – especially as only few agencies use formal and documented definitions – remains unclear. The time-consuming approach is also a potential caveat for an academic career as much of the work cannot easily be transferred into written output (cf. Jud et al., 2018).

The last paragraph of this report is reserved for the survey's sustainability. We always sought at promoting national surveillance by state authorities – a goal shared by the UBS Optimus Foundation. They have additionally sponsored an advocacy company, advocacy AG, Basel/Zurich, for a maximized outreach and to get policy-makers from the national parliament and cantonal governments to support national surveillance of reported incidents of child endangerment. This work will be intensified when the booklet on findings of Optimus Study 3 and this report will be launched on June 13, 2018.

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