

# solutions

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What Works To End Violence Against Children?  
Seven Things We Have Learned

# What Works To End Violence Against Children?

## Seven Things We Have Learned

Violence against children affects more than 1.7 billion children every year, in every community and every country. Children are being subjected to violence in their communities, schools and homes – the very places they should feel the most secure and safe. Violence is devastating for children, affecting their health, obstructing their education and diminishing their chances for a life free from poverty and discrimination. The impact of violence goes beyond the individual children, affecting families and communities, slowing economic development and eroding human and social capital.

But it does not have to be this way. Ending violence against children is possible, but it will take the world to make it happen. Living a life free from violence is the right of all girls and boys and the aspiration of parents, communities and governments across the world. Ensuring children can grow up in a safe, peaceful, nurturing and enabling environment provides a strong foundation for stable societies and is a critical element for inclusive economic growth.

Over the last 60 years, World Vision has been developing and adapting a unique community engagement model. The model enables us to address the

complex root causes of problems that steal childhoods. We engage and work with all those who have a responsibility to protect children, starting with families and faith communities and extending to teachers, schools, local and traditional leaders, hospitals, police, government agencies, and courts. Informed by the INSPIRE strategies, World Vision ensures that solutions to violence are developed in partnership with and owned by all stakeholders. Interventions focus on improving laws and accountability, increasing social services and support, catalysing behaviour and attitude change, and strengthening child resilience. Through our experience, we have learned some big lessons. We hope those in power will hear these lessons and together we can work to end violence against children once and for all.

- 1 It can be done
- 2 It takes a world
- 3 There is no magic wand
- 4 Context is key
- 5 Big picture, little picture
- 6 It takes children
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### INSPIRE PACKAGE

INSPIRE is a set of seven strategies that have shown success in reducing violence against children. Developed by experts<sup>1</sup>, INSPIRE places a strong emphasis on prevention through a multi-sectoral response, with strategies that include health, social welfare, education, finance and justice sectors. The INSPIRE package is a useful and relevant resource to inform action to end violence against children.

INSPIRE stands for:

- Implementation and enforcement of laws;
- Norms and values;
- Safe environments;
- Parent and caregiver support;
- Income and economic strengthening;
- Response and support services; and
- Education and life skills

The successful implementation of the INSPIRE package requires the scaling up of strategies to end violence against children to reach every child in every community and every country.

<sup>1</sup> The INSPIRE framework identifies a select group of strategies that have shown success in reducing violence against children. These have been identified following extensive research conducted with partners on a number of programmes, projects and interventions across different contexts as having the biggest impact on reducing violence against children. INSPIRE is a collaboration between 10 organisations initiated by the World Health Organization. [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/inspire/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/)

## It can be done: Ending violence against children is possible

Preventing and addressing violence against children is an urgent and complex task but it is possible. Over the past five years, a strong evidence base has emerged around a number of interventions and a set of strategies that can effectively reduce and eradicate this problem.

- In the Philippines, a World Vision-led project to reduce the use of children in the sugarcane industry resulted in child labour rates decreasing from 74% to 14% in three years.<sup>2</sup>
- In one community in South Sudan, where nearly everyone knew

someone who had been raped, or been born of rape, a World Vision campaign to counter prejudices resulted in accepting attitudes increased by 8% in the first year alone.<sup>3</sup>

- In Armenia, nearly all children involved in a project to increase online safety (92%) and the vast majority of teachers (85%) and parents (69%) reported increased knowledge and empowerment towards keeping children safe online.<sup>4</sup>

The situation around the world at times appears to be getting worse; more than 1.7 billion children are affected

by violence every year, and more than three quarters of people know a child affected by violence. But in reality, we have a real opportunity to dramatically improve the lives of children facing violence, by ending it for good.

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Tesha, 14, and Agatha from World Vision, in Zambia.

<sup>2</sup> 'Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection to Reduce Child Labour in Sugarcane Areas' project, is funded by the United States Department of Labor.

<sup>3</sup> UK Foreign & Commonwealth funded Magna Carta project "Combating Stigma against Rape Survivors and Children Born of Rape in Armed Conflict" in South Sudan, DRC and Uganda.

<sup>4</sup> World Vision Armenia (2013), Final Evaluation Report of Keeping Children Safe Online Project. World Vision.

## 2 **It takes a world:** Key actors must be engaged and participating

No one organisation, government, or group can end violence against children. Service providers such as health workers, teachers, local government officials, faith leaders, even celebrities and high-profile influencers, all have something to contribute when it comes to designing and delivering services that prevent and respond to violence against children. Faith and traditional leaders, in particular, play a critical role in upholding community values and practices, and they can be a powerful enabler for positive changes. World Vision knows from first-hand experience that engagement of these key, non-traditional powerholders from the start brings an end to child marriage, stigma due to sexual abuse, and child labour.

In many countries, the influence that traditional and religious leaders have over communities can literally save lives. In South Sudan, as part of a World Vision project, the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child marriage and even teenage pregnancy dramatically decreased as result of the initiative taken by traditional village chiefs. They mobilised local authorities, town chiefs, women and youth leaders and constituency councillors who worked together to pass by-laws prohibiting these practices.

In Malawi, Zimbabwe and Kenya, where some conservative church communities ignored and even promoted child marriage, World Vision's Channels of Hope behavioural change approach worked with more than 1,700 faith leaders to transform them into champions who speak and act for the rights of girls in their communities. Thanks to their actions, the number of child marriages is decreasing.

## 3 **There is no magic wand:** Ending violence requires a combination of different approaches

Violence against children is complex and so is the solution. Holistic approaches, which look at every aspect of a child's life and every sector that has an influence on their life, can address the diverse causes of violence and are key to ending it. We must respond to the variety of causes when planning and scaling up what works.

To tackle child labour in Cambodia, World Vision and our partners used a number of approaches that included livelihood support to reduce the economic burdens that forced parents to make tough decisions, support for schools and national agencies to improve education around ending child labour, and, assisting in the creation of community-based savings groups. In five years, child labour rates dropped from 53% to 23% in targeted regions.<sup>5</sup>

In a new report<sup>6</sup> on adapting programmes for fragile and conflict-affected contexts, World Vision again illustrates how important it is to use a combination of approaches. A programme to empower children as

peacebuilders in the Central African Republic was adapted to respond to the lack of livelihood opportunities for children and adolescents, after this was identified as a risk factor for them being recruited into armed groups. In addition to attending Peace Clubs and/or Child Friendly Spaces, children and youth previously engaged in armed groups (as well as those who were not) were engaged in productive activities, including re-enrolment in school, receiving vocational training or participating in other income-generation activities. Since the implementation of the programme, none of the children or adolescents within the targeted communities have been reported to have been forced to join or expressed the desire to rejoin armed groups.<sup>7</sup>

**We must respond to the variety of causes when planning and scaling up what works**

<sup>5</sup> Eliminating Exploitative Child Labor through Education and Livelihoods, or EXCEL is a project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking (OCFT) to combat child labor in Cambodia.

<sup>6</sup> World Vision International *Learning Report: Adaptation and innovation: meeting humanitarian needs in fragile and conflict contexts* [https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/DM%20Learning%20Report%20-%20Electronic.FINAL\\_.pdf](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/DM%20Learning%20Report%20-%20Electronic.FINAL_.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

# 4 Context is key: When our approaches consider the local culture, norms and infrastructure, they work

World Vision's experience proves that efforts to end violence against children are more sustainable, cost-efficient and effective when they draw upon the strengths of a community and factor in the people, knowledge, leaders, practices and laws, as well as assets and capacities. These include informal protective practices, such as churches organising groups of congregants to visit vulnerable families, and values, such as countering community-sanctioned sexual violence against girls. Importantly, they include the priorities of local and national governments. In Uganda, World Vision's community amber alert against

child sacrifice project was an adapted version of the conventional amber alert system for search and recovery of kidnapped children. Traditional drumming – commonly known as Junju Mujje – was combined with modern technology such as megaphones and mobile phones to raise the alert, while community committees would report cases to police. As a result, the number of reported cases increased by 50% in one year.

In cases where community resources and energy are weakened, such as humanitarian crises or prolonged fragility, solutions that are sensitive to

contexts still manage to have an impact. In South Sudan, World Vision adopted a culturally appropriate behavioural change model to address stigma and ensure better community support for survivors of violence and for children born of rape. This model engaged local faith leaders and influential community members as champions.

In Yambio County, the project achieved an 8% increase in accepting attitudes towards survivors of sexual violence and towards children born of rape among participating church congregations and community members within the first year.



Ending violence campaign planning – with children – in Cambodia.

## 5 **Big picture, little picture:** Solutions require direct intervention and longer-term system strengthening

All over the world, steps are currently being taken to intervene in the places where violence occurs. For these to be lasting, they must sit alongside efforts to shift attitudes, strengthen laws and change the norms which allow violence against children to perpetuate. World Vision's work with communities includes strengthening the capability of institutions, such as churches and schools, to prevent and respond to violence, as well as strengthening the

work of community child protection groups. World Vision is also working with local governments to strengthen the legally mandated services and improve the ways those services can reach and have an impact on children. Working in this way – with one eye on ensuring a system that works both now and in the future – ensures the sustainability and outreach of prevention and protection measures.

**All World Vision programmes result in stronger reporting and referral community based mechanisms.**

## 6 **It takes children:** Girls and boys play a significant role as active agents of change

All of World Vision's successful experiences tell us that empowered children – who are involved, heard and equipped – are instrumental in triggering changes in attitudes and norms that ensure lasting solutions to violence against children. Experience shows that when children have respect and behave with responsibility towards other children and adults in the community, this in turn commands respect from parents, community members and leaders. The ripple-effect spreads throughout the whole community, inspiring people with a

sense of respect that discourages the use of violence towards children.

In the town of Beni in the Democratic Republic of Congo, boys and girls engaged in World Vision-supported children's clubs. Together, they designed and led a project which established a complaint mechanism for victims of sexual abuse in four schools. The mechanisms were linked with police and the judicial system and so far 26 cases of child abuse have been brought before the courts, three of which have already been resolved.

# 7 **Scaling Up:** Do more of what works, in more places – and for all children

The solutions to end violence against children clearly exist; we know this because we see it in action. But if we are to see an end to violence against children, these solutions need to be scaled up to reach the most vulnerable boys and girls in the places where they live.

Constantly seeking innovations or implementing single interventions once but then moving on to a different approach or simply targeting small numbers of children and families at a time will not break the cycle of violence.

Solutions need to be scaled up so we can reach all children and show results. Based on World Vision's experience in addressing violence against girls and boys, four key principles need to be considered when planning to scale up:

## **Integrate solutions into national policies and strategies**

Solutions-based approaches need to be integrated into government strategies and plans which address violence against children. Governments need to provide clear policy guidance for scaling up interventions, including the selection of priorities and implementation modalities.

## **Strengthen child protection systems**

Provisions for the implementation of solutions need to continue strengthening the systems through which they will be delivered. This includes government-mandated

systems for prevention and protection of children from violence, as well as the informal, community-based mechanisms. Child protection systems are a fundamental part of ensuring that interventions and services reach all boys and girls that need them.

## **Increase investments at national and international level**

Policy choices for measures to end violence against children need to be followed by improved national budget allocations and increased international development aid to leverage national efforts.

## **Engage and empower key actors in designing and implementing solutions, especially children**

Children, parents, caregivers, service providers and practitioners from different disciplines, community members, local leaders, decision-makers and policymakers are all critical team members. Their participation ensures strategies are contextually relevant, applicable in the local context and implemented in a coherent and co-ordinated way.

## **The time to act is now**

At the core of any solution to end violence against children is the need to transform and repair broken relationships that led to violence in the first place.

When parents and teachers decide to use non-violent discipline; when girls are valued, respected and safe from the risk of sexual abuse; when boys and girls are seen as children – not soldiers, labourers and merchandise – the violence will cease to exist.

Repairing relationships goes beyond technical excellence, systems and procedures; it requires a strong vision of a violence-free society and determination from all actors to see it through. From traditional and faith leaders, parents and children, professionals and teachers, to governments and civil society.

It is now time to act; time to transform our societies and ensure girls and boys have a future free from violence, where they can grow up in safe nurturing environments, free of fear and free to fulfill their potential.

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

We believe a world without violence against children is possible, and World Vision's global campaign It takes a world to end violence against children is igniting movements of people committed to making this happen. No one person, group or organisation can solve this problem alone, it will take the world to end violence against children.



**It takes a world**  
to end violence against children