

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Nearly 30 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and youth around the world, of all ages and backgrounds, continue to experience abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. As well as being a direct violation of their rights, this violence can have a deeply harmful impact on children's long-term well-being and development.

At ChildFund, we are committed to changing this. Guided by our organizational strategy, **Destination 2020**, we are strengthening our child protection work around the world to ensure that the progress we make for children is not undone by abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence. This involves systematically targeting – across all our programs – the risk of violence that may disrupt children's well-being and development, while working with communities and governments to advocate for wider policy and social change. At the same time, we are strengthening our ability to provide high-quality programming that enables children of all ages to grow and thrive.

As an important first step, **we are investing in collecting information about the risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence that children experience**

across the countries where we work. We are already learning valuable lessons. Child protection mappings, new monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data, and innovative research studies are helping us to better understand the factors that render children vulnerable to violence, as well as those that protect children at different stages of childhood. We are using this knowledge to tailor our programs in response and strengthen our overall child development work while also working to transform ourselves internally so that we set the highest standards for the way that we work with children.

Our goal for 2020 is for more children to be living in conditions which enable their optimum development at each stage of their lives, including being protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

What are we learning about violence against children?

The 2018 Impact Report examines how we are progressing on our journey to deepen child protection across our programs and organization. It explores what we are learning about the violence that children face as they grow from infancy to adulthood and how this may hamper the developmental outcomes we seek and highlights ChildFund programs that are helping to protect children around the world.

Data from our research and interventions reveal that:

- **Children and youth are at risk of and subject to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence** at all stages of childhood and early adulthood. While families are the main source of care and protection for the vast majority of children, our data remind us that violence often has a “familiar face.” It is all too frequently inflicted by parents and caregivers, adult relatives, teachers, neighbors, classmates, and friends.

- **Children are vulnerable to changing forms of violence** as they grow up. For example, our data indicate that infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to violent discipline from caregivers, older children and young adolescents are more vulnerable to peer-to-peer bullying and physical punishment by teachers, and older adolescents and youth face an increased risk of physical and sexual violence.
- **Violence affects girls and boys differently.** Although children tend to face many of the same risks in the early years, gender increasingly determines the kind of violence girls and boys – and children expressing a non-binary gender identity – experience as they transition to adolescence and adulthood.
- **The reasons for violence are complex;** however, our exploration of the causes of violence reveals the particular role of cultural and social norms in sanctioning forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. For example, in many societies harsh physical punishment by parents and teachers is still socially accepted (and legal) and is considered a way to instill good behavior, while early marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting are viewed as protective rather than harmful practices.
- **Measures to protect children from violence** are essential at the community level. In many of the countries where we work, formal child welfare and protection systems are weak, under-resourced, and have limited reach within some communities, which means that direct interventions with children, parents, families and communities are essential.

How are we protecting children from violence?

At ChildFund, our **Life Stage Approach** continues to guide our programs, ensuring that all children are able to realize a series of core outcomes in each chapter of childhood. This unique approach provides a framework for addressing the evolving challenges and opportunities that children face as they grow and mature – whether at home, school or in the community – including different forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.

Our continuing efforts to understand children’s experiences of violence inform priority areas for interventions at different stages of their lives in order to both protect them and support healthy development. For example:

- **Infants and Young Children** (Life Stage 1: ages 0-5 years): Ethnographic research with communities in **Kenya** revealed protection risks to infants and young children ranging from poor parental care and sexual violence to neglect and abandonment.ⁱ Evidence like this is changing the way we design and deliver our work with caregivers of very young children.
- **Children and Young Adolescents** (Life Stage 2: ages 6-14 years): Findings from our global M&E data collection indicate a link between children’s exposure to violence at school and their learning outcomes.ⁱⁱ This gives further impetus to the development and wide-scale uptake of our *School-Based Violence Prevention Program*.

- **Adolescents and Youth** (Life Stage 3: ages 15-24 years): Our research has shown significant vulnerability to child labor and sexual violence in the **Philippines** and **Uganda**, respectively, concerns that are echoed across many of the countries in which we work. We have proven ability and experience in developing safe spaces for youth to explore, strategize, and respond to these issues, helping them to develop the agency and voice to engage with governments and other powerful people to make change in their own lives, communities and government policy. These safe spaces will form the cornerstone of our programming with adolescents and youth.

As we strengthen our work on preventing and responding to the violence that children experience in each life stage, we are working with our partners to:

- **Design targeted child protection programs** that are appropriate to the local context and reflect the priorities of children and communities. For example, we support community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) to prevent and respond to violence against children and forge linkages between communities and formal social welfare services.
- **Adapt our existing program interventions** in education, health, nutrition, livelihoods, and emergencies so that they identify and mitigate children’s vulnerability to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.
- **Advocate with and for children and youth**, using the knowledge we generate about the prevalence and impact of violence against children to bring about systemic social change.

What change are we seeing?

We are making progress. From efforts to reduce violence in schools and improve parenting practices to anti-trafficking and youth advocacy programs, we are starting to make a difference in children’s lives:

- In **Uganda**, we were able to reunite 1,743 children with their families while reducing the social and economic vulnerability scores of households at risk of family separation by 34%;ⁱⁱⁱ ChildFund Uganda also led efforts to conduct the first-ever *National Survey on Violence Against Children (VAC)*ⁱ in partnership with the Government of Uganda.^{iv}
- In the **Philippines**, the *ABK3 LEAP* initiative² reached 54,000 children and youth and led to a reduction in the percent of children in exploitative labor: from 94% (2011) to 16% (2016).^v
- In **Honduras**, our violence prevention intervention in 36 schools in high-crime cities led to a reported reduction in physical and emotional violence in classrooms and a greater use of positive discipline by parents.^{vi}
- In **Ethiopia**, good child care practices showed an increase from 31% to 92% of caregivers at the end of our positive parenting program. Child protection issues that were reported and

1. Funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

2. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) through World Vision International

became part of a formal case management response increased from 9% to 100%.^{vii}

- In **Senegal**, we partnered with the Ministry of Education to train teachers in religious schools and enlisted local community groups to feed and care for students so that they were no longer forced to beg for money or food.^{viii}
- In **Indonesia**, our disaster risk reduction (DRR) intervention in preschools in Sumba resulted in significantly increased knowledge among young children regarding where to go and what to do in emergencies.^{ix}
- At the **global level**, we came together with other child-focused organizations in 2017 to successfully advocate for the inclusion of Target 16.2, a specific goal to end violence against children in the new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

We are also seeing changes internally, as we put stronger safeguarding policies in place to protect the children and youth with whom we work and roll out child protection training for all our staff and partners.

Reflections

As we move forward, we are determined to build upon this progress to shape our work. Our programs and data collection efforts are already yielding important conclusions and learning for our future programming.

As ChildFund strives to achieve its goals for children, we will work with our partners to:

- 1 Focus on the intersection between child development and child protection**, integrating our learning about the risk and impact of violence against children into our programs on health, education, nutrition, early childhood development (ECD), and livelihoods.
- 2 Consolidate and expand our learning about child protection**, investing in innovative new ways to capture the stories of children's lives.
- 3 Build the necessary capacity to address violence**, to both prevent and respond to violence against children in the communities where they work.
- 4 Foster nurturing relationships that protect children** at all ages and stages of development to mitigate the risk of violence and to promote well-being to families and communities.
- 5 Strengthen our partnerships with the communities where we work**, empowering children, parents, teachers, government, and local partner organization staff to challenge harmful practices and transform deeply held attitudes.

- 6 **Support community systems of protection**, including community-based child protection mechanisms, to operate more effectively and be linked to formal systems.
- 7 **Amplify the voice of children and youth and facilitate participation**, working with them as partners in research, program design, and evaluation.
- 8 **Advocate for and support the development of formal child protection systems**, progressively bringing children's experiences and opinions to the attention of senior policy-makers.
- 9 **Sharpen a gender lens to our interventions**, in recognition that vulnerability to specific types of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence affects girls and boys – and children expressing a non-binary gender identity – differently, especially as they transition to adolescence and adulthood.
- 10 **Take a long-term, systems approach to child protection programming**, enabling us to address the complex and deep-rooted nature of many child protection issues.

As we make child protection integral to everything that we do, we will begin to see the real impact on children's lives. We believe that the changes we are making are a worthwhile investment so that **children and youth can grow up safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, achieve their potential, and lead fulfilling lives.**

Endnotes:

[i.](#) African Research and Development. (2017). *A Rapid Ethnographic Study of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms for Infant and Young Children (0-5 years) in Two Villages in Ugunja Sub-County, Siaya County.*

[ii.](#) ChildFund International. (2018). *Global M&E Level 2 Data Brief FY17: Exposure to Violence in Schools*

[iii.](#) JSI Research & Training Institute. (2018). *ChildFund Deinstitutionalization of Vulnerable Children in Uganda (DOVCU): Final Report from July 1 2014 through December 31 2017.*

[iv.](#) Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development. (2017). *Uganda Violence Against Children Survey: Findings from a National Survey 2015.*

[v.](#) Del Rosario, B.P, Adaro C.E., Rolle, J.M., Clavero, C.S., & Del Rosario A.P. (2016). *ABK3 LEAP Endline Study December 2015-August 2016: A Report on the ABK3 LEAP (Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection) Project to Reduce Child Labor in Sugarcane Areas.*

[vi.](#) USAID Honduras & ChildFund Honduras. (2017). *Final Evaluation: Project PUENTES.*

[vii.](#) ChildFund Ethiopia. (2017). *CCCP Learning Brief.*

[viii.](#) Cabinet AFRICADIS Consulting. (2015). *Evaluation of the Project Daara Plus: Final Report.*

[ix.](#) ChildFund International. (2016). *Disaster Risk Reduction in Early Childhood Development: Evaluation of ChildFund International Model.*