



Technical Brief

FAITH LEADERS: CATALYSTS OF CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMES FOR WORLD VISION ZAMBIA

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Introduction

UNICEF reported that "among young people aged 18-24 years in Zambia, 20% of women and 10% of men reported experiencing sexual violence before they were 18 years of age, while 34% of women and 40% of men reported experiencing physical violence. In addition, an estimated 1.3 million children aged 5-14 years are engaged in child labour, reinforcing the inter-generational poverty cycle, which undermines the national economy and impedes progress".¹ Reducing these figures require consented efforts from all stakeholders, including faith-based organizations. Therefore, the involvement of faith leaders in awareness-raising on child

protection and support for children to prevent and report violence against children, including corporal punishment, early marriages etc., is very critical to curbing high levels of violence against children.

For this reason, World Vision Zambia has a systems approach to address children's protection which includes engagement of formal and informal actors such as faith leaders. The entry point for faith leaders and other community leaders into World Vision Zambia's programming is through the Church and Community Engagement Sponsorship Programming (CCESP).

Technical Approaches

Faith leaders' influence in the community is an excellent asset for World Vision Zambia to work with and leverage to influence the community to act and address violence against children. Therefore, World Vision Zambia has been working with faith leaders to ensure that children are protected and that child protection interventions are upheld. This is achieved by building the faith leaders' capacity in child protection, using models such as Channels of Hope for Child Protection (CoH CP)², Celebrating Families³, Dare to Discover⁴, and Children's Ministry (for Sunday and Sabbath School and Good News Clubs).

Channels of Hope for Child Protection

Channels of Hope for Child Protection is one of the models that World Vision Zambia uses to ensure that faith leaders are on board and utilize their skills, knowledge and influence to address child protection issues with their congregants. Once faith leaders are engaged, they are required to undergo training which takes approximately ten days. Upon being trained, they can form

¹<https://www.unicef.org/zambia/child-protection>

²Channels of Hope is an interactive process to create a safe space for faith leaders, their spouses and faith communities to become active participants in the well-being of children through science-based information and insights from religious texts.

³Celebrating Families model, is a World Vision model that supports and equips families to create a safe and loving family for children through the Pastors.

⁴Dare to Discover is a model used by World Vision to empower participants discover themselves through exercises such as identifying and breaking the cycle of issues in their lives that makes them feel burdened and trapped, and helping them learn how to surrender problematic issues to God.

committees that are called Congregational Hope Action Teams (CHATs). CHATs are initiated to ensure a systematic way of addressing child protection issues in the community. In this case, the CHATs create an action plan that they follow in collaboration with other sectors and other leaders in the community, such as traditional leaders. After igniting faith leaders' interests and passion in addressing child protection issues, the training evolves into analyzing what protection issues are prevalent in the communities where faith leaders reside. Once those issues are examined, faith leaders can strategize how to best address the root causes with the other members of the committees.

Celebrating Families

Celebrating Families is another model that World Vision Zambia uses to ensure that parents learn to care for and protect children within households and communities. This model is very effective in many of World Vision Zambia's communities. Faith leaders have adopted this to ensure that their congregants understand positive parenting to protect the children in their homes. This means that the children's environment should be very conducive to allow them to thrive. The Celebrating Families model is used within the family set-up to ensure that parents understand how to parent their children positively and protect them. The programme also engages faith leaders to ensure that they are well aware and have knowledge about the Celebrating Families model. Celebrating Families works because when faith leaders are engaged and acquire knowledge about the model, they can roll out the initiative and influence their male and female congregants to care for their children.

Interlinkage between Channels of Hope for Child Protection and Celebrating Families Model

The Channels of Hope for Child Protection model ties in very well with the Celebrating Families model. For example, in Kapululwe of Chongwe district, over 45 couples (faith leaders) have been trained. In turn, they have rolled out the action plans to the community to enhance positive parenting, "sow a seed of goodness and speaking blessings", all of which have a bearing on child protection.

Celebrating Families targets parents within the church to enhance their understanding of their role as a parent in a child's life. Many African parents raise their children with a heavy hand, and the male folk hardly interact with their children. However, Celebrating Families model counters these notions and encourages parents to engage in meaningful, age-appropriate conversations with their children. This helps to build children with a strong character and also allows sharing of family values. This also creates a strong family bond, and children raised in such households are less likely to become delinquents when they grow up. In addition, raising children in a positive environment gives children the courage to speak up when experiencing abuse of any sort.

Adolescent Engagement in Faith

World Vision Zambia also understands that a holistic approach to child protection would include responding to the vices and equipping the youths to influence their paths to success, hence adopting the Dare to Discover (D2D) Model. D2D helps young people keep away from destructive activities and become responsible members of the community. As a result, others have pursued tertiary education with a renewed mindset.

Outcomes of the Programme

Working with faith leaders through the faith and development programme has ensured that World Vision Zambia's programmes in the community are accepted, and there is ownership by the communities. Faith leaders often interact with the community members, and they are most trusted and respected by the community members. Hence, faith leaders have prevented and responded to violence against children with support from World Vision Zambia. With their extraordinary moral authority, religious leaders have influenced thinking, fostered dialogue and set priorities for community members. Therefore, in this programme, they have been able to advocate for social and legal change.

Furthermore, because of their position, faith leaders have been the first to respond to problems, as they have the trust and confidence of individuals, families and communities they serve⁵. As a result, communities also have the confidence to report child abuse and violence cases to faith leaders. This situation has brought about increased reporting of child abuse in World Vision Zambia's programme areas.

For example, CHATs have effectively achieved positive outcomes, including children being withdrawn from marriages, children being returned to school, children of school-going age not in school being enrolled into schools. In addition, criminal cases such as defilement have been

⁵UNICEF (2010): From Commitment to Action; What Religious Communities can do to Eliminate Violence Against Children.

reported and perpetrators apprehended and imprisoned. Through radio programmes, CHATs have also increased awareness among communities on vices such as drug abuse, counselling services and child protection issues.

Over 120 youths from various churches have been trained in Dare to Discover by local Pastors. Interaction with these Youths has led to some children returning to school, while others are starting up small businesses, and others re-organizing themselves to form a group that has drawn the interest of the Local government and Municipal Council Mayor for support (Youth Empowerment). However, this is still in its infancy stages.

Text Box: Programme Outcomes

The key outcomes of the programmes include:

- The programme has increased community ownership of the child protection activities.
- There is increased advocacy of child protection issues by faith leaders.
- Increased engagement and partners with other players in Child protection issues.
- Increased children being withdrawn from child marriages.
- Increased reporting of child abuse and violence cases.
- School aged children going back to school.
- Increased community awareness of child protection issues.

Challenges and Gaps

Despite the positive outcomes of the programme, some challenges and gaps still exist. Here we describe two main challenges or gaps of this programme.

- The CHATS are not legally registered under the Zambian regulations making it difficult to access different services such as loans and other business opportunities.
- Not all faith leaders have the financial capacity to implement child protection interventions in the communities. This provides a challenge in implementing child protection programming or tasks in their designated communities.

Opportunities

Faith leaders in Zambia are well respected. Therefore, involving them in child protection programming is necessary

for effective and sustainable child protection programmes. The good news is that involving faith leaders is a cost-effective undertaking that other development partners can leverage to scale up their child protection programmes. Further, faith leaders reach a lot of people in the communities using the different podiums that they use to preach, enabling child protection messages to reach many people. Therefore, faith leaders can be leveraged as community-based advocates for child protection.

Our Call for Action

Policy Makers

- There is need for faith leaders to be involved in the development and implementation of child protection polices as they work and live with the communities.

Partners

- There is a need for more faith leaders to be on board and support child protection interventions in the communities as they have access to many people in the communities through their congregants.
- There is a need for partners to continue building the capacity of faith leaders in different child protection interventions for them to be well equipped with child protection skills as they interact with the communities.
- Awareness raising is vital to the faith leaders so that they recognize the role they need to play in child protection and how they can support the communities.

Program Implementers

- Faith leaders need to be involved in multifaceted developmental programmes such as fundraising and financial initiatives that will stabilize personal and ministry funding to support poverty reduction which will allow them to be ambassadors for child protection more positively.
- Faith leaders need to be involved from the beginning of every project and programme that promotes child protection.

References

<https://www.cgdev.org/blog/faith-and-development-zambia>

<https://www.unicef.org/zambia/child-protection>

Zambia Statistics Agency



World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities to reach their full potential by tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

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