

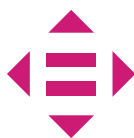
# CHILD PROTECTION LEARNING REPORT

Evaluation of World Vision's  
Child Protection Programmes  
2018 – 2021



Cambodia 

**10** REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS





## Objectives

To ensure that children are protected from abuse, exploitation and other forms of violence through:



**Empowering children and adolescents** with life skills, resilience, psychosocial well-being and meaningful participation in decisions that affect their lives



**Transforming attitudes, norms and behaviours** of parents, faith leaders, faith communities and community members while promoting positive norms and practices



**Strengthening services and support mechanisms** and the capacity, coordination, and collaboration of formal and informal actors to prevent, protect and respond



**Improving laws and accountability** through advocacy at all levels and citizen voice in the quality and provision of services by service providers and local duty bearers

## Impact

**Proportion of adolescents who reported experiencing physical violence over the last 12 months**

Baseline	End Line
49%	38%

**Proportion of parents and caregivers who have used physical punishment and/or psychological aggression in the previous 12 months**

Baseline	End Line
84%	66%

# KEY FACTS ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN CAMBODIA



**More than 3/4 of children** experience at least one form of violence before they turn 18<sup>1</sup>.



**Corporal and humiliating punishments** are the most common forms of violence in Cambodia.

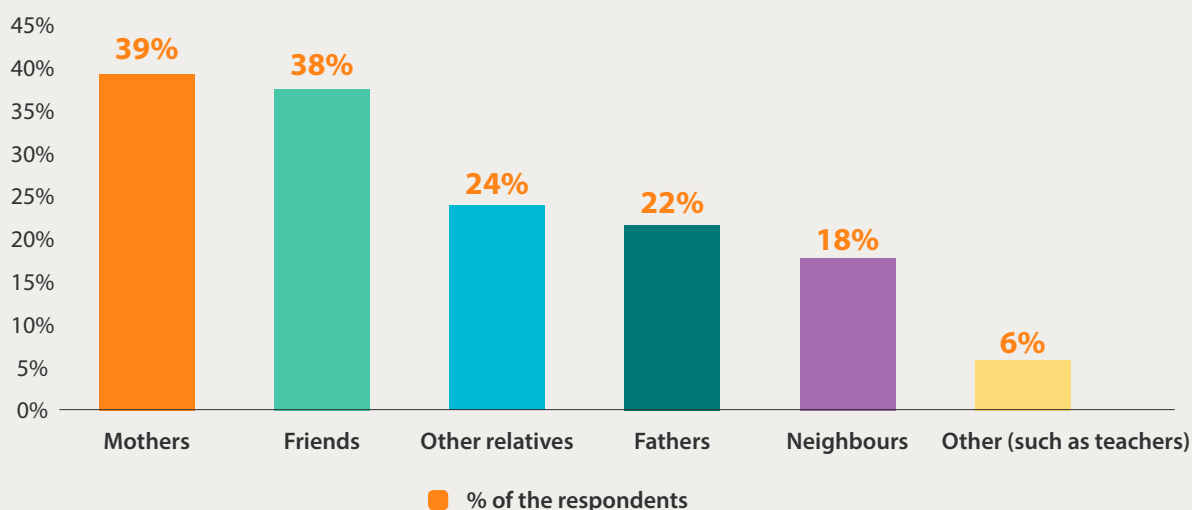


**Almost 1/2 of the adolescents**

experienced physical violence in the last 12 months<sup>2</sup>.

- 67% Emotional violence (such as being shouted at)
- 40% Physical violence (such as being hit or slapped on the face or body)
- Sexual violence such as unwanted intimate touching (3.8%), attempted rape (1.8%) and rape (1.2%).

## Most common perpetrators of violence<sup>3</sup>



Traditional gender roles give mothers and grand-mothers a predominant role in educating and disciplining children and they usually receive limited support from men in this area.

<sup>1</sup> 2013 Survey on Violence against Children (VAC) by the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) and UNICEF

<sup>2</sup> World Vision's Baseline Survey 2018

<sup>3</sup> World Vision's Baseline Survey 2018



## **US \$161 million or 1.06% of the country's GDP**

Estimated minimum economic loss from health consequences related to violence against children in Cambodia<sup>4</sup>.

Abuse and exploitation undermine children's well-being and health and have life-long consequences such as difficulties in learning, poor health, problems in gaining employment and social interaction.

### **Key challenges**



**Social norms condone violence against children, particularly corporal and humiliating punishments**



**Limited functionality of local child protection mechanisms**



**Fragmented child protection system with limited resources for service provision and the judiciary**

<sup>4</sup> Fang, Xiangming, The Economic Burden of the Health Consequences of Violence Against Children in Cambodia, Ministry of Women's Affairs, UNICEF Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2015.

# OUR PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH AND PROGRESS OVER THE LAST 4 YEARS (2018 – 2021)

WVI-C's Child Protection Programme follows a system-approach and social-ecological model focusing on **4 objectives**.

## 1. Empowering children and adolescents

with appropriate life skills to protect themselves and their peers, treat others with respect, be active citizens, collectively act to improve their community and become agents of change in efforts to end violence against children



### 110,000 children and young people trained

on life skills and protection skills using an experiential and interactive learning approach (from around 600 community child, adolescent and youth clubs)



### 650 adolescent-led projects

implemented to support ending violence against children in their communities.

## 2. Transforming attitudes, norms and behaviours

of parents, faith leaders, faith communities and community members while promoting positive norms and practices



### 35,000 parents and caregivers trained

on positive parenting<sup>5</sup> through the evidence-based [Celebrating Families](#) model (directly benefiting 54,000 children)



### Faith leaders from 40 churches trained

on positive parenting across 26 districts. They then organized workshops and trainings in their communities, reaching more than 5,100 caregivers with 11,000 children.



### 1.5 million people reached on social media by the Kumrou Ahoengsa Campaign

World Vision is implementing the Kumrou Ahoengsa (non-violent role model) Campaign to inspire change in the behaviours and attitudes of caregivers and teachers on corporal punishments and positive discipline.

<sup>5</sup> This includes training on parenting skills, how to foster healthy parent-child relationships, how to reduce parental stress, how caregivers could be connected to existing services and how to challenge harmful cultural attitudes, norms, values and practices.

### 3. Strengthening services and support mechanisms

and the capacity, coordination, and collaboration of formal and informal actors to prevent, protect and respond to violence against children.



#### 95 Child Protection groups formed and trained

in 95 communes in 8 provinces (with 3,300 members including members of Commune Committees for Women and Children, local authorities, police, school principals and teachers, representatives from health centres, parents/caregivers, child and youth representatives, faith leaders, etc.).

The members of these groups were trained on various topics<sup>6</sup> to strengthen their capacity to prevent and respond to child protection issues at the commune level.



#### 700 children directly supported in 2021

by members of Commune Committees for Women and Children trained following child protection incidents.

### 4. Improving laws and accountability



#### Social accountability for Child Protection

*implemented in 95 communes and sangkats in 9 provinces and Phnom Penh.*

This model promotes dialogue between local authorities and citizens to jointly identify actions to address issues and gaps in Child Protection service delivery (especially in relation to the performance of Commune Committees for Women and Children). In 2021, more than 1,300 parents and caregivers, village leaders, faith leaders, child representatives, teachers, members of the police, health centre staff, members of Commune Committees for Women and Children and members of local CSOs took parts in these dialogues to develop local action plans. By the end of 2021, 76% of the actions from these plans had been implemented with the financial support of the relevant Commune Councils (more than 34,000\$).



#### *Supporting the efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia to improve the Child Protection legal and policy framework.*

Over the last 4 years, World Vision made a significant contribution to the adoption or improvements of several important laws and policies, including the strengthening of CCWCs (adoption of the Prakas on the functions of Commune Committees for Women and Children and of the Child Protection Guidebook for Commune Committees for Women and Children) and the operationalization of the policy on Child Protection in Schools (adoption of the National Action Plan and of the Implementation Manual).

<sup>6</sup> This includes how to conduct data collection and analysis, identify and prioritize child protection issues, develop action plans, mobilize resources and monitor implementation of the action plans. Some other topics included role and responsibilities of CCWCs, psychosocial first aid training, as well as how to strengthen the reporting and referral mechanism within their communities.

# FINDINGS AND LEARNINGS

The evaluation of World Vision’s Child Protection programming has shown that:

**1** A system approach can significantly reduce violence against children (learning 1), especially the use of corporal punishments (learning 2) and peer violence (learning 8).

**2** Further reduction in violence against children requires targeted investment and additional adaptation focusing on critical contributing factors such as the limited capacities of local child protection systems (learning 13), caregiver stress (learning 4, 5 and 6), excessive alcohol consumption (learning 7) and the lack of safe places for children to play (learning 13).

**3** Additional research on the prevalence of violence against girls (learning 9), and especially sexual violence (learning 10), is needed.



## Significant decrease in violence against children

**1**

The evaluation of World Vision’s programming over the last 4 years shows that our systems approach contributed to significantly reduce violence against children in our target areas. The evaluation shows that this decrease was especially strong for the 2 most prevalent forms of violence: corporal and humiliating punishments (see learnings 2 to 7) and peer violence (see learning 8).

Proportion of adolescents who reported experiencing physical violence over the last 12 months

Baseline	Endline
49%	38%



## Positive parenting trainings have been effective at changing behaviours related to the use of corporal and humiliating punishments...

**2**

In focus group discussions, parents and caregivers mentioned consistently that positive parenting trainings were one of the key reasons why they reduced the use of violence towards their children.

Proportion of parents and caregivers who have used physical punishment and/or psychological aggression in the previous 12 months

Baseline	Endline
84%	66%





## ...However, there is a gap between theory (improved knowledge) and practice (changed behaviours)

# 3

If 2/3 of caregivers surveyed have used physical punishments and/or psychological aggression against their children in the last 12 months, only 19% of them believed that the only way to bring up a child properly is to use this physical violence as punishment. Almost all parents that participated in group discussions commonly expressed that they actually understand that using violence is not a good way to discipline their children. There is therefore a significant gap between the theory (improved knowledge of caregivers) and practice (changed behaviours). During the focus group discussions, caregivers explained this gap by their inability to control their emotions and anger mentioning 2 main causes for these issues: stress (see findings 4 and 6) and alcohol consumption (see finding 7).



## Traditional gender roles and unfair share of parenting responsibilities increase the levels of stress of female caregivers and contribute to violence against children

# 4

Mothers, or the grandmothers when the mothers have migrated for work, are traditionally responsible for all parenting responsibilities. As a result, they are consistently identified as the main perpetrators of violence against children at home. However, the findings from the focus group discussions, as well as recent data from the evaluation of a project model focusing on grandmothers<sup>7</sup>, show that an unfair sharing of parenting responsibilities significantly increases the level of stress of the female caregivers which may lead them to use harsher disciplining approaches. It is therefore critical, for positive parenting programmes to be successful, to include specific activities aimed at promoting a fairer sharing of responsibilities between male and female caregivers.



## Engaging men in positive parenting programmes requires adaptations

# 5

Our evaluation showed that several barriers may prevent male caregivers to truly engage in positive parenting projects and several adaptations are needed to ensure their full participation:

- Gender segregated sessions led by male facilitators may help to challenge the commonly expressed male view that positive parenting sessions are for women (who traditionally are in charge of all caregiving activities).
- Gender segregated sessions may also enable men to share more honestly about their feelings and challenges while several factors (traditional definition of masculinity, shame when the man has been the perpetrator of domestic violence, etc.) may prevent them from sharing in mixed group sessions.
- Evening sessions or sessions during the weekend are more adapted to men who are often busy with income generating activities during the day.

<sup>7</sup> See World Vision, Learning Report – The Grandmother Inclusive Approach For Improved Child Nutrition, April 2022, available [here](#).



## **COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the level of stress of many households, and therefore on their use of harsh discipline**

# 6

Caregivers, child leaders and adolescents in the FGDs and interviews clearly and consistently identified COVID-19 as having increased the levels of stress of caregivers through a reduction of their family's income and an increase of their workload or parental responsibilities (especially due to school closures). In the focus group discussions, they clearly linked this increased stress and workload with an increased use of harsh punishments. This finding is consistent with a WVI survey conducted in April 2021 when more than 20% of parents/caregivers and children reported an increase in the use of violence to discipline children since the beginning of COVID-19. This finding suggests that, considering the impact of COVID-19 on the children and parents' mental health, positive parenting programming should be adapted to include mental health and psychosocial support.



## **Excessive alcohol consumption among caregivers and violence against children**

# 7

During the evaluation, children and adolescents made references to excessive alcohol consumption several times as an important associated cause of violence against children. For example, while 64% of children and adolescents surveyed reported that feel safe in their community, one of the main concerns of the children who do not feel safe in their community was alcohol consumption by the family and community members. Similarly, adolescent boys and girls in focus group discussions often mentioned alcohol consumption by the parents/caregivers as one of the key concerning root causes of violence against children. There is a need to further investigate the association of excessive alcohol consumption and addiction on domestic violence and violence against children to understand how these issues are interconnected and ensure better integrated response in positive parenting projects, especially as part of the efforts to engage male caregivers.



## A system approach can significantly reduce peer violence

The evaluation found a significant decrease in peer violence. Focus group discussions with adolescents showed that the combination of both life skills training and positive parenting training has played a major role in this significant decline.

# 8

Adolescents involved in life skills programmes mentioned that they learned how to more effectively manage their emotions and anger. Through sports, the programme also taught them to collectively solve peacefully conflicts in teams of adolescents that did not know each other before the start of the project.

Adolescents also described the impact of the positive parenting approach in reducing peer violence. With parents trying to resolve peacefully issues at home, and with a reduced use of corporal punishments, adolescents received reinforcing messages about the importance to finding alternatives to violence - messages that echoed the guidance provided through the life skill training.

### Proportion of adolescents who reported having been involved in a physical fight over the last 30 days

Baseline	Endline
89%	9%



## Violence against girls

The endline shows that slightly more girl adolescents than boys reported experiencing emotional and physical violence over the last 12 months.

These findings are surprising because studies conducted prior to COVID-19 (including the

# 9

baseline of our CP programmes) systematically found that, in Cambodia, boys experienced more physical violence than girls. However, a World Vision study conducted in April 2021 among 621 households in Cambodia also found that girls were experiencing more violence than boys. A potential reason to explain the increase in violence against girls is related to COVID-19 and traditional gender roles. Several studies<sup>8</sup> and surveys have shown that school closures led to an increase of the time that children spent helping with household chores. Due to traditional gender roles, girls are likely to have had to take on more responsibilities at home than boys. Combined with the additional stress mentioned by caregivers (see finding 3), these additional responsibilities may have led to an increase in harsh punishments for girls. More investigation would be needed to analyse this potential linkage. It will be important to monitor in future studies if girls continue to be more affected by violence than boys.

### Proportion of adolescents who report having experienced any physical violence and/or psychological aggression in the past 12 months by any perpetrator

Girls		Boys	
Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
46%	39%	55%	36%

<sup>8</sup> See for example UNICEF and the World Food Programme, COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, March 2022.



## Measuring the prevalence of sexual violence

Proportion of adolescents who reported feeling safe in his/her community<sup>9</sup>

Boys	Girls
39%	30%

# 10

The proportion of adolescents who reported they had experienced forms of sexual violence remained very low in the endline (close to 0). However, a review of 200 child protection incidents reported by World Vision staff at community level in 2021 shows that sexual violence (rape and attempted rape) is the form of violence most often reported (52 cases out of 200, 25%), ahead of physical violence. In 92% of these incidents, the victim is a girl. This may explain why significantly more girls than boys reported not feeling safe in their community.

This data suggest that adolescents consulted in the endline (and likely in other studies) may have under-reported experiences of sexual violence and it would be useful for the Government, in partnership with UNICEF and relevant CSOs, to measure more precisely the prevalence of sexual violence in Cambodia. The last major study on VAC in Cambodia was conducted in 2013<sup>10</sup> and, as the Government is currently reviewing the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children<sup>11</sup>, a new nationwide study with a strong methodology on sexual violence would bring important information to better respond to this issue.



## Vulnerable adolescents experience more violence than other groups of adolescents

Proportion of adolescents who reported experiencing physical violence over the last 12 months

All adolescents	Adolescents from very vulnerable households
38%	46%

# 11

WVI-C systematically identifies in its target areas the families that are very vulnerable because they belong to specific groups (IDPoor, families including people with disability, etc.). The evaluation found that these children reported experiencing more violence than the average of their peers. This finding is aligned with several previous studies conducted in Cambodia and demonstrates again the importance of social targeting for child protection programming.

<sup>9</sup> This indicator was not measured at baseline.

<sup>10</sup> See UNICEF, Findings from Cambodia's Violence Against Children Survey 2013, available [here](#).

<sup>11</sup> Available [here](#).



## Lack of safe places for children to play and risks of traffic accidents

Overall, a significant majority of caregivers and adolescents believe that their community is a safe place for children.

Proportion of caregivers who feel their community is a safe place for children

Baseline

36%

Endline

76%

Proportion of adolescents who feel safe all the time or most of the time in their community

Baseline

64%

Endline

70%

# 12

Among the caregivers, adolescents and children who had responded that communities were not safe (all the time or part of the time), two interrelated reasons were most often mentioned: lack of safe places to play and risk of traffic accidents while playing in unsafe public spaces. These concerns were especially strong in urban areas where there is often extremely limited space for children and adolescents to play and gather with friends. Commune leaders in World Vision's urban programmes in Phnom Penh similarly raised these concerns in interviews. Future CP programming should consider addressing these issues, potentially through local level advocacy for the development of safe public spaces that children can use to play and to exercise.



## The performance of local Child Protection systems is still affected by a lack of capacity and resources

The evaluation shows that the Commune Committees for Women and Children have become more systematic in their response to known child protection incidents over the last 4 years (see table). However, in interviews and focus group discussions, the members of local CP system (members of

the CCWCs, Commune leaders, village leaders and commune police) commonly mentioned the lack of capacity and resources as major barriers to effectively fulfil their mandated roles and responsibilities.

A prominent view expressed related to limited capacities and resources available to provide psychological and emotional support and services to children and women, educate parents and community members on positive parenting skills and conducting home visits or outreach to most vulnerable children and families.

# 13

Percentage of known CP incidents followed by the CCWCs

Baseline

66%

Endline

89%

# METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

The baseline survey was conducted over the first half of 2018 in 26 districts in 9 provinces. The endline survey was conducted between June and September 2021 in 36 districts in 9 provinces where the programmes have been implemented for at least 3 years since 2018. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the methodology of the endline had to be changed and the number of interviews had to be reduced.

Tools	Baseline survey	Endline survey
Caregiver survey	1,350	2,286
Adolescent and youth (12-18) survey	5,720	985
Focus Group Discussions	20	31
Key Informant Interviews	30	18





# World Vision



**World Vision** is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God.

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