



Technical Brief

ROLLING OUT "CHOSEN" IN CHILD SPONSORSHIP AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING THE CHILD'S VOICE

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Background

World Vision Zambia has traditionally used Child Sponsorship as a 'vehicle' for development. Child sponsorship is a fundraising programme used by charitable organizations to connect children beneficiaries with particular sponsors or donors¹. Since World Vision Zambia began its programming, child sponsorship implied enlisting the support of donors and well-wishers to support children get good health care, education and the self-confidence they need to create positive and permanent change in their lives and that of their communities. Sponsors received information about vulnerable children, such as age, photos and family background, to know more about the children they would be sponsoring and create a feeling of personal relationships with children. Further, registered children² in the World Vision programme were connected to sponsors who committed to giving resources to World Vision. When funds are received

from the sponsors, the money is not used to support only the sponsored/registered children but pooled with other contributions to fund projects such as health, education, water and sanitation and protection that benefit vulnerable children, communities etc., to improve their wellbeing.

In 2019, World Vision Zambia launched an initiative called 'Chosen'. As opposed to having donor sponsors choosing children to be sponsored, under 'Chosen', children that are registered in the World Vision Programme participate in choosing who would be their sponsors. This implies that 'Chosen' puts the power to select sponsors in children's hands.

This Technical Brief highlights how 'Chosen' has enhanced children's voices in securing sponsorship for community development.

Technical Approaches

World Vision Zambia began 'Chosen', which grants power to children to choose their sponsors through "Choosing Events" held in areas where children live³.

Before a Chosen Event is undertaken, World Vision International Support Office⁴ will initiate a request to a World Vision Field Office (Implementing Offices which are in the developing countries) like Zambia stating the proposed date and the number of children to participate in the event. The request will be subjected to an internal approval process. This is done to ensure that due consideration is made to factors that may hamper the smooth undertaking of the 'choosing events'. Such considerations may include

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_sponsorship

²Registered children implies; children that are selected from amongst the most vulnerable children based on local transparent local criteria as representatives of other children and enrolled to participate in the World Vision Sponsorship programme. They are connected to sponsors who commit to contribute towards the wellbeing of the children.

³<https://www.wvi.org/child-sponsorship#:~:text=or%20they%20get%20to%20choose%20their%20own%20sponsor%20at%20a%20choosing%20event.>

⁴World Vision Support Offices are fundraising offices that raise resources to support World Vision Programmes all over the world. Currently, Support Offices supporting Zambia include; USA, Singapore, UK, Taiwan, Korea and Australia.

but are not limited to other significant activities lined up for the participating area programme to avoid clashes, security situations, availability of logistics and children. If no extenuating circumstances warrant declining, the request is approved. Support Office then generates a list of registered children available for sponsorship according to the required number for the event and sends it to the Area Programme for validation. Once approval is done, the Area Programme commences sensitization of the community through community meetings and door-to-door engagements about the chosen event. It concurrently starts the validation process for the children to participate in the event. After validating the children, Support Office sends the list of participating children in the horizon system. The Area Programme then prints the Identification Cards for the participating children to avoid mixing with other children, not on the list. Support Office further sends the Sponsor photos printed at least a day before the event and are part of the materials used to set up the venue in readiness for the chosen event.

On the day of the event, World Vision staff takes stock of the children who are supposed to participate in the choosing event and takes advantage to sensitize the community on various programming aspects. Verified children from the choice list are guided to a room one at a time where they are directed to the place where they select a photo for the sponsor of their choice.

Immediately after that, the child and the sponsor are linked by scanning the barcode on the sponsor photo. After that, they move to another room where they write an introductory letter. The first letter a child writes to their sponsor is to introduce oneself. Information in an initial letter includes the child's age, gender, grade (if in school), siblings and friends, amongst other things. After that, an introductory child photo is taken while the child holds a picture of the chosen sponsor. At that point, a child participating in a chosen event will have finished their part and is free to leave the event venue.

After the event, World Vision staff from the Area Programme will match the Introductory Letters to the Child Introductory Photos. The matched products are then uploaded in World Vision Horizon system, which is a repository for all World Vision Information.

This approach is still a pilot; therefore, not all districts or fundraising offices have started this exercise. However, in Zambia, the USA, Singapore, Taiwan and Australia, Support Offices have collectively implemented 75 Chosen events in nine (09) districts. These include; Pemba, Namwala, Kasama, Mungwi, Kapiri Mposhi, Rufunsa, Isoka and Lumezi, covering six (06) provinces of Zambia, namely, Southern, Northern, Central, Lusaka Muchinga and Eastern. So far, the highest number of children sponsored in a single event has been 500 recorded in Rufunsa district.

Key Learnings

Using Chosen events, World Vision sponsorship has created an opportunity for sponsors to connect with sponsored children, families, and communities in need. Sponsorship empowers sponsors and the community to work on lasting solutions that help communities break free from poverty. Since 2019 when 'Chosen' was introduced, more than 50,000 sponsors in the World Vision partnership have built relationships with their sponsored children and their families. Specifically, 6,211 children were allowed to select their sponsors in Zambia. As a result, the children and their parents now feel they are participating in the child sponsorship program as equals.

Sponsors have an opportunity to observe the growth of their sponsored child, see their progress, and be a part of their life transformation processes. Further, there has been observed fulfilment among sponsored children who know that they have a sponsor that is interested in their wellbeing and cares about them and their future⁵.

The methodology used by 'Chosen', where the power to choose a sponsor is placed in the hands of children, eliminated concerns of unfairness that were perceived when children did not participate in choosing their sponsors. For example, meetings were previously organized by Support Offices (SOs), during which those committed to supporting World Vision work selected the children they would want to sponsor. However, this raised suspicion from the children's families as they tended to think that pictures and information collected about their children were used for self-gain among the Sponsors. Even those that did not suspect foul play still felt their children did not have a say in the choice of their sponsors. All these concerns have been put to rest now that children receive the photographs of their would-be Sponsors and participate in selecting the Sponsors. This also removes suspicion on the families and communities that children's photos and letters are taken into a vacuum or used for unintended purposes.

Every chosen event is an exciting encounter for the children and their families. This makes sponsorship a reality in that several children are sponsored simultaneously. This increases the sponsorship funding in a particular district. Since this is a new initiative, it comes with new ways of doing or handling business processes.

⁵<https://www.wvi.org/child-sponsorship#:~:text=World%20Vision%20sponsorship%20is,to%20your%20sponsored%20child>



Limitations and Challenges

Several challenges and gaps were identified despite the positive gains in using 'Chosen' for child sponsorship. The notable ones are detailed below:

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the holding of choosing events. In line with the guidance provided by the government not to allow large gatherings during funerals, weddings, worship and other social events to prevent the spreading of the virus, Chosen events were halted entirely at the pandemic's peak. When the government relaxed the guidelines to allow for at least fewer numbers for gatherings that ordinarily would allow for a lot of people, chosen events would be spread over two to three weeks to allow for door-to-door engagements or meetings of smaller groups of people instead of a single event. Consequently, this took two to three weeks to accomplish, negatively affecting the implementation of other programme activities.

Rainy Season

During the rainy season, some areas become inaccessible due to poor road networks and the absence of bridges. Where the latter are available, some streams become too full and overflow on crossing points, making it impossible to pass and access some areas. The afore-cited lead to children not making it for the choosing event which in itself, would have far-reaching consequences.

Opportunities

All World Vision International Support Offices to adopt "Chosen" methodology in Sponsorships

In order for all children participating in child sponsorship to feel empowered, all Fund Raising Offices should embrace the 'Chosen' methodology so that as many children as possible may exercise their right to choose their own sponsors. Furthermore, negative connotations will quickly be cleared about why pictures are taken and for what purpose.

Scale-Up Opportunity for Chosen Methodology

With Zambia as a country only having implemented "Chosen" in nine of the 23 districts in which World Vision is currently using child sponsorship, there is an opportunity to scale up this approach to all districts covered by World Vision.

In addition, World Vision Zambia currently has about 96,000 Registered Children in its programming, of which about 75,000 are sponsored. The difference of about 21,000 are all potential candidates to participate in "Chosen" events.

Our Call to Action

- All Fundraising Offices to roll out the "Chosen" methodology.
- The Government to ensure all partners using Child Sponsorship as a mechanism for fundraising adopt the "Chosen" methodology as it has shown that it allows children to decide on who should contribute to their development agenda.
- Implementing staff should ensure they fully understand why the "Chosen" methodology is essential and be able to create awareness amongst community members and partners in the operational districts.

References

<https://www.wvi.org/child-sponsorship#:~:text=World%20Vision%20sponsorship%20is,to%20your%20sponsored%20child>

<https://www.wvi.org/child-sponsorship#:~:text=or%20they%20get%20to%20choose%20their%20own%20sponsor%20at%20a%20choosing%20event>



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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