

What is CoH for CP?

Channels of Hope for Child Protection (CoH CP) is a programme methodology that motivates and builds capacity in faith communities to address harmful traditional practices toward children, to support and advocate for children's rights, to become better child protectors, and to ultimately strengthen the local child protection system.

CoH CP relies on Scripture-based guiding principles, interactive activities and scientific information. It builds on the desire of faith leaders and communities to be better parents within their own families. More than that, it aims to ensure that children can celebrate who they are and become who they were created to be with the love, respect and help of their parents and faith communities.



A large crowd including children watch a youth drama about child trafficking at a school in Cambodia.

Photo: Jon Warren/World Vision

Why CoH for CP?

Many child protection issues are the product of deeply entrenched, long-lasting beliefs, values and culture. Faith leaders and their communities can play a vital role in child protection, but many are inactive or even contribute to the harm of children. Religious texts teach that God has a special heart for children, whom adults are to love, protect and honour. However, religious teachings are sometimes confused with culture, and there are difficult Scriptural passages and theological interpretations that may fuel damaging attitudes and practices towards children. Examples include: the Bible verse “spare the rod, spoil the child”; the idea that “it is better for a child to work than go to school because work is from God”; and the belief that “pregnant teenage girls should be expelled from church to discourage teenage pregnancy”.

“I need to educate [others] about the validity of [the truth that] children are also made in the image and likeness of God just as adults are. Children should be placed in high esteem, with love, care, discipline, guidance, protection, and participation.”

Pastor CoH CP,
Sierra Leone 2012

Though laws have been passed barring harmful traditional practices, they remain in many areas; laws do not change damaging attitudes or socio-religious beliefs that contribute to such practices. But CoH CP reaches down to the root causes and deepest convictions that maintain these harmful attitudes, norms, values, and practices toward children.

The unmatched moral authority of faith leaders and their power to embrace change and influence communities can be channelled to powerfully support children's rights and benefit child wellbeing. By sensitising faith leaders, there is potential to sensitise and change whole communities to better honour, protect and care for children. For this to happen, faith leaders and communities need a safe space to share and learn the actual child practices that are taking place in their communities. They need to be able to identify who and where the most vulnerable children are and what makes them vulnerable. Most importantly, they need to learn how to protect children.

CoH CP programme content

CoH CP explores and addresses the following issues:

- Harmful traditional practices such as physical abuse, FGM, child marriage, child labour, gender inequality, child begging, child trafficking and domestic violence
- Strengthening the local child protection system informally and formally
- Positive parenting and discipline, including non-violent discipline
- The effects of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence on children.

Outcomes

- Faith communities are sensitised, educated and mobilised to actively address traditional practices and social issues that make children vulnerable, thereby helping ensure children are better protected
- Faith communities become persuasive voices in actively challenging stigma, negative attitudes and harmful practices toward children within their communities (for example, they learn to value children as much as adults)
- Faith leaders are spiritually transformed to protect children and can share positive messages from Scripture as guiding principles for their response to CP issues.

Advocacy

Advocacy for child rights and child protection readily stems from all issues addressed by CoH CP. This methodology provides opportunities to advocate for child protection, child rights (abuse prevention, birth registration, postponing marriage until 18, and the prevention of exploitation of children, including trafficking) and justice issues regarding equality of children (such as gender issues and disabilities).

Use in other groups

CoH materials have been successfully adapted to fit various ecumenical Christian and Muslim contexts. They also have been used effectively with various non-faith groups including teachers, community leaders and youth. In these cases, the curriculum can be used without the faith-specific content.