

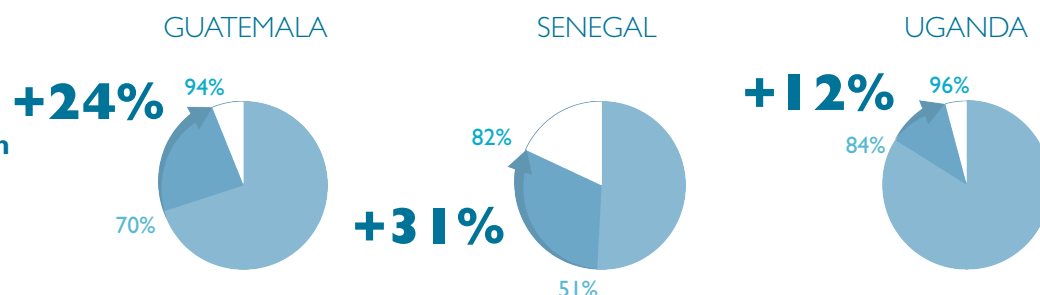
FAITH LEADERS AND SPOUSES CONTRIBUTION TO ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Research shows strengthening of the protective environment for children in the intervention communities

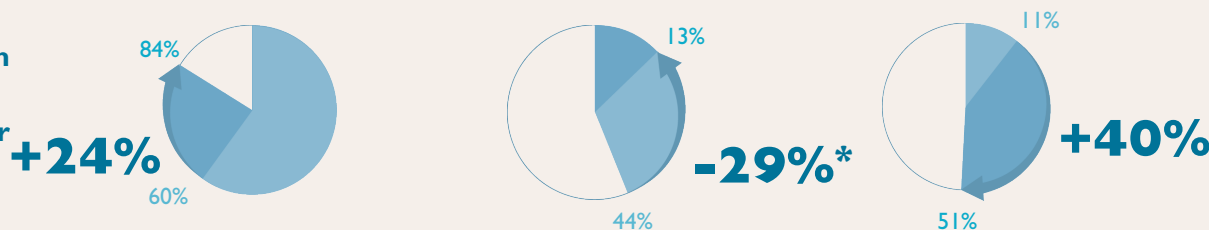
World Vision’s Channels of Hope for Child Protection (COH CP) project is an intervention that seeks to address violence against children by catalysing religious leaders’ awareness of key child protection issues, mobilising local faith community resources and, as a result, fostering the development of an enabling environment for the protection, support and well-being of children. A multi-country, longitudinal study of the project shows a positive impact on attitudes, behaviours and motivations.

RESULTS

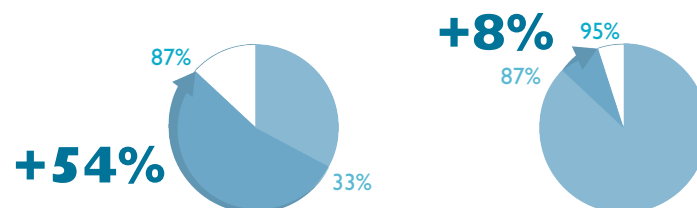
Increased Opposition of Faith Leaders and Spouses to Child Marriage¹



Increased Opposition of Faith Leaders and Spouses to Hitting or Beating Children²



Increased Willingness of Faith Leaders and Spouses to Report Child Abuse³



*In Senegal, percentage decrease in faith leader spouses who believed that their religious beliefs permitted spanking



KEY GLOBAL LEARNINGS

Over the course of this research project, the communities involved saw positive contributions to local and government initiatives to protect children from abuse and end child marriage. Significant personal transformation took place in participants’ knowledge about the issues involved in child protection in their communities and their attitudes towards children that lays the groundwork for long-lasting change. We see the positive potential of involving faith leaders as catalysts for this change, and engaging faith community members to continue the work of creating enabling environments in which their children can grow and thrive.

1. Increase in faith leaders and spouses who opposed marrying off their daughters young rather than see them fall pregnant before marriage between 2017 and 2019
 2. Increase in the percentage of faith leaders and spouses who agreed that a misbehaving child should NOT be hit or beaten (baseline to endline)
 3. Increase in faith leaders and spouses willingness to report child abuse at the risk of jeopardising social relationships (baseline to endline)

GUATEMALA

CONTEXT

Fear of violent reprisal is a limiting factor in the approach to child protection in Guatemala. Most study participants stated that they were afraid to report or to get involved in child protection in their communities because perpetrators of child abuse could retaliate. Physical, psychological and sexual abuse of children are the prevailing concerns.

KEY CHANGE

Faith leaders and spouses stated that, because of the CoH CP training, their previous beliefs that children need physical punishment changed since they came to understand that hitting can contribute to children both experiencing and perpetuating future violence.

They also came to understand that children are the future of their communities and, thus, need support and non-violent care from an early age. Analysis indicates that most faith leaders and spouses are now against corporal punishment and violence. For example, significantly more participants at endline (84%) than at baseline (60%) agreed that one should not strike a child who is misbehaving.

Faith leaders and their spouses also repeatedly stated that they learned that they should listen and talk to children instead of hitting them.

“I used to hit my children. Thanks to World Vision and Channels of Hope, I listened to those topics where they mentioned that we should not hit our kids ... I asked for their forgiveness. I used to hit my kids, not anymore. I love my kids, and they love me. My children forgave me.” (Open-ended response from a faith leader, Jocotán)

The findings of the endline assessment also indicate that faith leaders and spouses now feel more empowered and less fearful of reporting child abuse cases and carrying out child protection activities.

SENEGAL

CONTEXT

The attitudes that made it difficult to address child protection issues in the communities studied in Senegal were described as a lack of parental knowledge about laws and rights especially around early marriage and child labour, and a lack of participation and involvement when there are initiatives addressing children’s issues. There was also an acceptance of corporal punishment as a form of discipline.

“The reason why we have these early marriages is because parents are in a hurry. They are afraid of non-marital pregnancies which bring shame onto the whole family.” (Open-ended response from a girl, Diamagadio)

“We need to watch the child in their daily behaviour. Always keep an eye on the child. A child who is not on the right way should be punished.” (Open-ended response from an Imam’s wife, Ndiapaldé)

KEY CHANGE

However, after CoH CP workshops, faith leaders and their spouses reported changes in their theological reflections and practices.

“I attended two training sessions that allowed me to gain much knowledge about child protection and I learned in the Scriptures this verse that talks about child protection.” (Open-ended response from a Muslim faith leader, Gouloumbou)

“There is a concordance in the writings of the Bible and the Qur’an on certain aspects related to child protection.” (Open-ended response from a faith leader, Hamdallaye Pont)

This led 72% of faith leaders and their spouses in the intervention sites to stop hitting or insulting their children. And, at endline, many faith leaders and spouses, as well as community and congregation members talked about a decrease in child marriage.

“We discuss a lot of topics with children, for example, early marriage, forced marriage. Well, the results, for example, if we had ten child marriages [in Nguene] last year, this year we had only one.” (Open-ended response from a faith leader spouse, Gouloumbou)

“We pay attention to child marriage. Today we heard the imams and the village chief talk about it at the wedding ceremony. We follow their words with our young girls. Among us, who wants to give him daughter in marriage before the age of 18, we advise him to avoid because she [the girl] has not reached the age.” (Open-ended response from a female community member, Gouloumbou)

UGANDA

CONTEXT

The baseline study showed that poverty is an underlying factor leading to child protection issues such as child labour and child marriage.

Traditional beliefs especially towards girls by some parents who ask themselves, **“why pay for a child who is going to get married and not help me?” has led them not to pay fees for their daughters and end up marrying them off early.**” (Open-ended response from a Christian faith community member, Nakasongola district)

The fear of shaming family members or causing bad relations with others was identified as another common factor in preventing justice in sexual abuse cases. Corporal punishment is a widespread form of discipline in communities.

KEY CHANGE

At the endline of the study, one-third of faith leaders and their spouses were satisfied with their child protection work because they could observe a reduction in issues such as child abuse, child marriage, corporal punishment, and school dropouts. They attributed this to their improved capacity and motivation. They said that they now had knowledge, skills, networks with other actors and faith groups, and recognition by the community members to do child protection work.

“People used to see us as people who cannot do anything but after the training we got, it empowered us, and when we speak, they listen.” (Open-ended response from a faith leader, Rakai)

“In the past, women/mothers would beat children but now religious leaders have taught us on how to discipline children by not beating them and offering very harsh punishments.” (Open-ended response from a female community member, Rakai)

Girls in the intervention sites also talked about the active role that their faith leaders, both in Muslim and Christian congregations, had played in addressing child marriage:

“Imam talked to people on the dangers of marrying off children. It used to be allowed in our Muslim faith, and nowadays it is prohibited. Recently, they brought back a child who they rescued from marriage.” (Open-ended response from a girl, case study, Rakai)

The proportion of caregivers, who would report a case of child abuse at the right place or institution, increased in all intervention sites.

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The research documentation is available on WVI.org:
www.wvi.org/faith-and-development/channels-hope

BACKGROUND

Channels of Hope for Child Protection (CoH CP) is a World Vision attitude and social norm change intervention. It starts with raising the awareness of faith leaders and their spouses about key child protection issues through analysis and dialogue about religious texts. These faith leaders then mobilise local faith communities around child protection to foster an environment that advances the protection, support and well-being of children. This process is supported by faith leader workshops, Congregational Hope Action Teams (CHATs) workshops, and a biannual follow-up by World Vision (see figure below, which illustrates CoH CP phases and points in time for data collection).

Together with Queen Margaret University (QMU) in Scotland, World Vision's global research team conducted a five-year (2016-2021), multi-country, longitudinal study on Faith Communities' Contribution to Ending Violence Against Children (FCC EVAC). The study explores CoH CP pathways for change and impact at different time points across three sites representing different religious environments: Senegal (predominantly Muslim), Uganda (Christian and Muslim), and Guatemala (Christian). Additionally, this study gathers evidence on faith communities' role in child protection beyond CoH CP.

The study in these countries was conducted among World Vision programmes that implement Child Protection and Advocacy (CPA) projects. The sites had similar key socioeconomic, religious, and cultural factors. The only difference between the intervention and comparison sites was that the intervention included Channels of Hope (CoH) as a part of their CPA programme. In both countries, the endline studies use a mixed method approach. The quantitative component included a survey on knowledge, attitudes, practices, and theological reflections (KAPT) among faith leaders and spouses across intervention and comparison sites, and another survey on community norms among CHAT members, faith congregation members, and community members. The qualitative component generated insights from individuals through key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) with various study population groups, as well as participatory activities with children and case studies.

The main methodological challenge was that the study could not follow all participants of the original cohort identified at baseline, meaning that the researchers had to construct new samples from the participants of catalysing workshops at each time point to most accurately capture changes throughout the project. Nonetheless, they managed to follow a high percentage of the catalysing workshop participants throughout the study.

