



# **CVA IN AN URBAN SETTING**

**WORLD VISION MALI**



## Objective

The objective of this case study is to document the successful application of guidance materials in urban Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) initiatives within two distinct urban contexts: a mega-city like Dhaka, Bangladesh, and an African city like Bamako, Mali. Rather than presenting novel approaches, this study seeks to demonstrate how established theoretical frameworks are effectively implemented in these unique settings, offering practical insights for future urban CVA initiatives.

Citizen Voice and Action is a local-level advocacy approach developed by World Vision to enhance [social accountability](#) and improve the relationship between communities and their local authorities. Urban environments present unique challenges for social accountability due to high population density, diverse demographics, complex governance structures, and dynamic socioeconomic conditions. The [Citizen Voice and Action approach](#) together with World Vision's [Urban Programme Approach](#) are used as a structured method to engage citizens in holding their local and city governments accountable for service delivery in an urban context. By fostering a participatory approach, CVA ensures that services are more responsive to the needs of urban communities, contributing to more equitable and sustainable development outcomes.

## Introduction

In urban settings like Bamako, Mali, the CVA approach has played a critical role in engaging citizens, fostering participatory governance, and enhancing service delivery across sectors such as health, education, water, sanitation, environmental sustainability and climate action, and child protection. In Mali, CVA operates in approximately 70 communes, encompassing 30 programmes. This case study provides an in-depth look at the implementation of CVA in the Bamako area, highlighting the unique adaptations made to address the urban context, the challenges encountered, and the outcomes achieved.

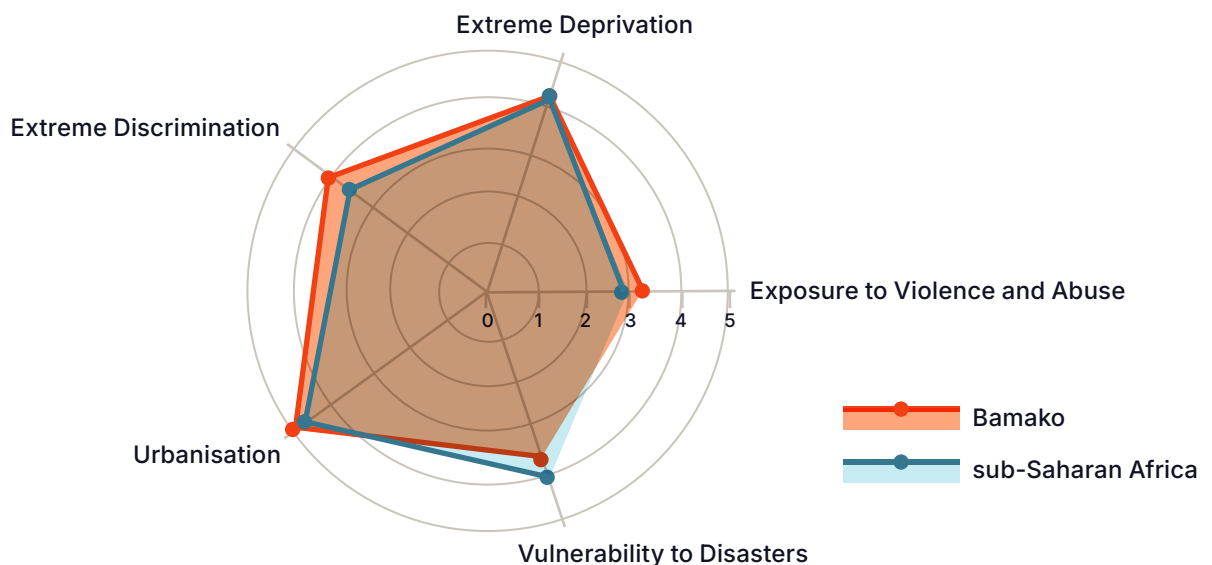




## Brief introduction of the urban context

Bamako, the capital of Mali, is the country's largest city and a major administrative and economic hub, with an estimated population of over 5 million in 2024. As one of Africa's fastest-growing cities, Bamako faces rapid urbanisation challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to essential services, and complex power dynamics among local, district, and national authorities. Figure 1 shows the [multidimensional child vulnerability mapping](#) for Bamako, which, in comparison to the Sub-Saharan Africa region, ranks either equal to or worse on four out of the five indicators.

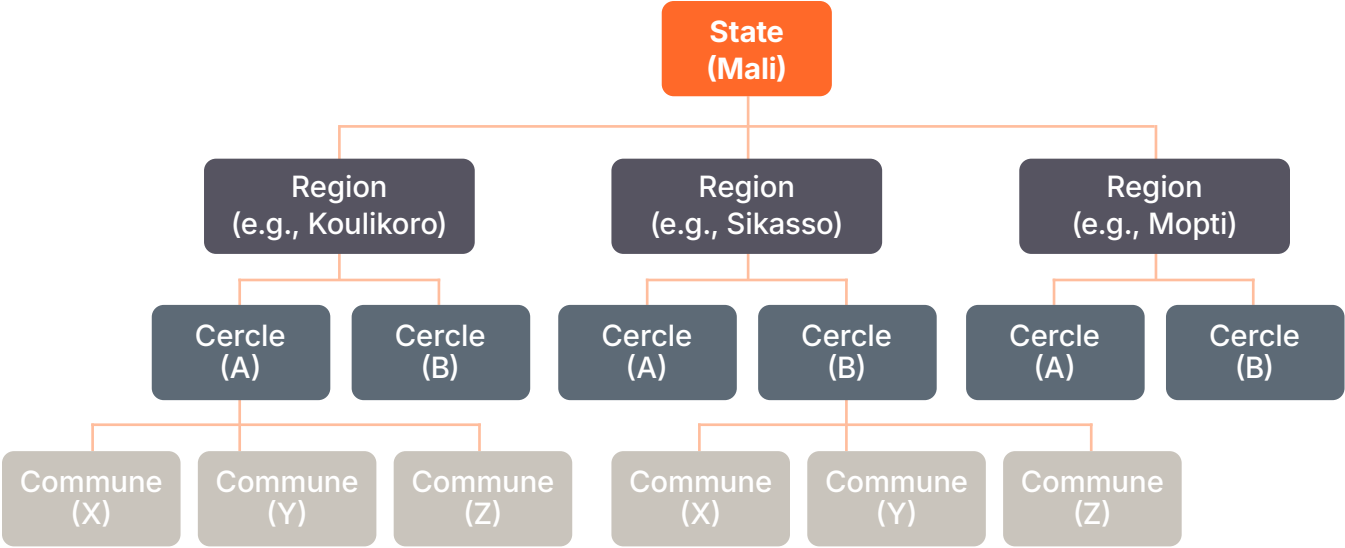
### Multidimensional Child Vulnerability Score Sub-indicators - Bamako (Mali)



Source: <https://worldvision.economicsandpeace.org/>

Figure 1. Multidimensional child vulnerability score sub-indicators – Bamako (Mali)

Since 1994, Mali has pursued a process of administrative decentralisation, granting local authorities –communes, circles, and regions – a degree of management autonomy, as shown in Figure 2. Bamako holds a special status in this structure, as the district of Bamako serves as both a region and a circle administratively.



**Figure 2. Bamako government administrative structure**

Bamako is divided into six communes, each governed by an elected mayor responsible for managing and delivering essential services – such as education, healthcare, water, sanitation, and child protection – within the constraints of limited resources.

The neighbourhoods of Yirimadio and Senou, located in Commune 6 on Bamako’s outskirts, are densely populated areas facing significant socioeconomic challenges. These neighbourhoods are marked by limited access to clean water, inadequate sanitation (with 22.9% of households using basic drinking water facilities and 21% practicing open defecation, according to WV program baseline report), poor healthcare facilities (the prevalence of acute malnutrition was 61.6%), and high poverty levels, with a combined population of 176,605 people.

Due to their locations, these neighbourhoods also expose residents to high vehicle traffic, security issues, and crime. Each neighbourhood is headed by a deputy mayor responsible for local administrative management, who reports to the mayor of Commune 6, who in turn reports to the district mayor.

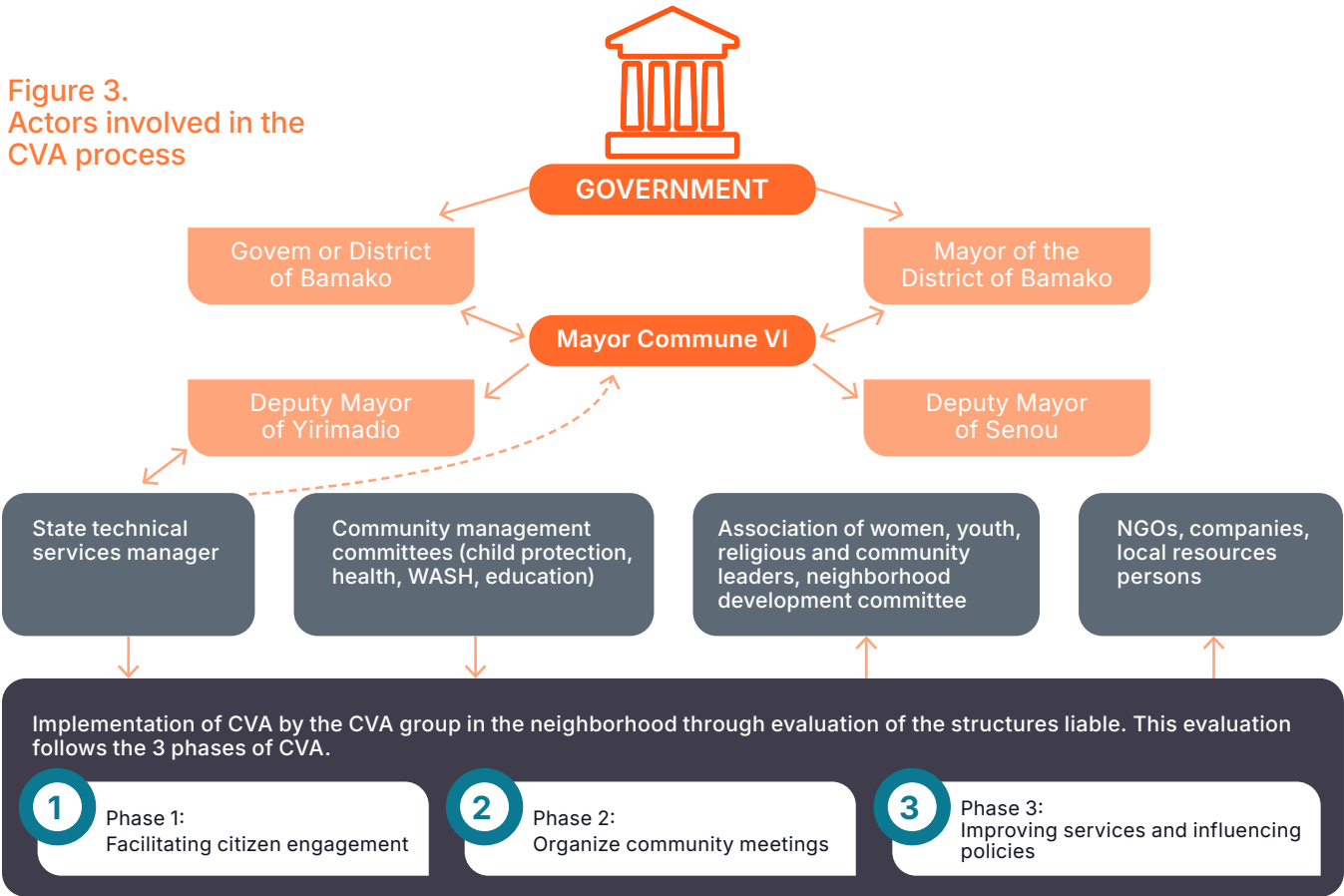
The governance system in Bamako is marked by significant complexity due to power dynamics among different layers of government – local, district, and national – which complicates service delivery and citizen engagement. Political fragmentation at the local level further exacerbates this complexity, as competition for political power often overshadows development goals. Local governance structures also face considerable technical and financial constraints, leaving elected

bodies poorly equipped to fulfil their development mandates. Additionally, weak community engagement and limited awareness of development plans hinder effective governance. Local institutions heavily rely on external resources, such as international donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to implement development projects and climate adaptation strategies, highlighting the challenges Bamako’s governance system faces in addressing urbanisation and sustainability needs.

# CVA as an approach in Bamako Urban Programme

In urban settings, public services are managed by both the State and local authorities. World Vision Mali has adapted by setting up a CVA group in each neighbourhood, where communities can access and acquire public services. Each CVA group has 10 members representing various community sectors, including community organisations, neighbourhood development committees, school management committees, community health associations, the council of neighbourhood youth, the coordination of women’s associations, the association of persons with disabilities, a child representative, and neighbourhood chiefs. Additionally, religious and community leaders participate in these monitoring committees due to their respected positions within the community. Figure 3 highlights all the players involved in implementing CVA in the urban context, with each CVA group composed of active community members.

Figure 3.  
Actors involved in the  
CVA process



CVA is implemented in three phases:

## 1. Facilitating citizen engagement

In this phase, community members – including leaders, youth, women, and other groups – and stakeholders, such as technical managers and authorities, actively participate in the CVA approach. They engage voluntarily in orientation sessions that explain CVA's objectives, principles, and relevant policies.

## 2. Organising community meetings around key issues

- o **Monitoring standards:** The primary activity involved evaluating public services in the two intervention neighbourhoods, Senou and Yirimadio. This evaluation compared the existing standards of these services with the expected norms, identified gaps, and proposed solutions. The image below shows a focus group discussion evaluating performance at one of the schools in Senou.



- o **Community scorecards sessions:** The scorecards offer both users and service providers a straightforward method for assessing service performance and recommending improvements. For example, according to the programme's final evaluation in 2023, 85% of parents or guardians reported satisfaction with health services over the past 12 months.
- o **Interface meeting/dialogues:** CVA group members are actively involved in evaluation activities, mobilising citizens to share their impressions and propose solutions related to the services provided. Although mayors issue the invitations, CVA group members lead orientation, initial, and feedback meetings.



### 3. Improving service quality and influencing policy through community action plans

The main decision makers targeted in the implementation of CVA in the Bamako Urban Programme operate at both national and local levels. At the national level, key figures include ministers, members of parliament/national transition council, the mayor of the District of Bamako, the mayor of Commune 6, deputy mayors, neighbourhood chiefs, and the neighbourhood development committees of Senou and Yirimadio. Additionally, the heads of technical services and basic community organisations manage public structures within the framework of decentralisation.

Advocacy efforts targeted different levels of government starting with the mayor of Commune 6, then to the district governor, and ultimately to the national minister. For example, as part of its efforts to protect children from frequent accidents at the market, the Senou CVA group lobbied for permission to construct a speed bump on Route Nationale No. 7 (RN7). This advocacy led the CVA group to consult with the Direction Nationale des Routes (Director General of Roads) for an expert assessment of the proposed speed bump. Following the appraisal, the Direction Nationale des Routes authorised the construction of the speed bump to enhance children's safety.

Table 1 outlines the unique contextual aspects in Bamako that have informed World Vision Mali's implementation of the CVA model for an urban programme.

**Table 1. Bamako contextual factors**

Aspect	Details	Urban adaptation in Bamako
Governance	Complex power structures with overlapping roles among local, district, and national authorities.	The existing community structures (neighbourhood development committees, school management committees) were integrated into CVA groups to enhance local governance.
Population	High population density with transient communities, including migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons.	The team adopted targeted out-reach strategies, both physical and digital, to ensure inclusive participation from diverse community segments. World Vision Mali's established presence through development programmes strengthened these efforts by fostering strong community connections
Service priorities	Urban communities prioritise access to land, housing, employment, and essential services like water and sanitation.	CVA adapted to advocate for urban-specific needs, including land rights, infrastructure development, and improved access to services.

# Adaptations of CVA for the urban setting

Implementing CVA in Bamako required significant adaptations to fit the unique urban context, characterised by high density, diverse populations, and complex governance. Several key adaptations were made to ensure the approach's effectiveness:

## 1. Modified community engagement tools

Traditional CVA tools, such as the community scorecard and social audits, were tailored to the urban setting. Digital platforms and mobile applications, including WhatsApp and TikTok, were used to facilitate participation among diverse groups, reducing barriers to engagement.

For example, in Senou, four interconnected WhatsApp groups enable discussions on topics of interest to neighbourhood life, including child protection, access to drinking water, hygiene, sanitation, health, and education. Over 200 people use these groups to meet, exchange ideas, and participate in community issues. On TikTok, live sessions are organised on selected themes to engage connected users. These platforms enable CVA group members to raise community awareness about accountability, allowing community concerns to be identified and addressed by authorities.

## 2. Integration with existing structures

Decentralisation provides an opportunity for all citizens, especially communities and civil society organisations, to express themselves and participate actively in public policy governance. The CVA approach leveraged neighbourhood structures to strengthen local governance and improve service delivery.

## 3. Engagement of diverse stakeholders

Regular dialogues were conducted with a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, technical services, community organisations, and residents, to build trust and foster collaborative decision-making.

## 4. Focus on urban-specific issues

The CVA approach was adapted to address urban-specific challenges, such as land rights, infrastructure development, and access to essential services. Advocacy efforts were tailored to the urban context, where issues like housing and employment are often more critical than in rural areas.

The State has transferred responsibilities for education; health; nutrition; and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) to local authorities, with mayors overseeing public services at the commune level. However, specific sectors are coordinated by public technical services under both the mayor and national authorities, such as the district mayor and governor. For example, when the Senou CVA group lobbied to construct the speed bump on RN7 to protect children from frequent



[illegible]

Consultations with communities on the implementation of the Bamako Urban Programme, from diagnostics to activity planning, took place before the programme began. These consultations included interviews, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews with men, women, girls, boys, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. This process helped identify local priorities and challenges.



## Challenges and mitigations

During the implementation of CVA in Bamako, several challenges were encountered:

- ✓ **Governance prioritisation:** Weak governance, combined with local power holders prioritising short-term fixes and resource acquisition over long-term accountability and sustainable development, posed a challenge. To address this, continuous engagement and sensitisation efforts encouraged local leaders to focus on development outcomes. Advocacy efforts also promoted more transparent and inclusive decision-making processes. These initiatives were supported by regular meetings, advocacy sessions with local decision makers, and active involvement from CVA groups.
- ✓ **Political sensitivity:** Engaging multiple layers of government required careful navigation of complex power dynamics. This challenge was mitigated by building strong relationships with key decision makers, maintaining open communication, and understanding their levels of influence (e.g., deputy mayors who have limited powers). World Vision operational staff needed the skills to understand the urban power dynamics, mobilise communities, and facilitate dialogues with both formal and informal power holders. Additionally, meeting schedules were adjusted to accommodate the availability of decision makers, allowing flexibility to suit the demands of an urban environment.
- ✓ **Resource limitations:** Limited resources at the local level posed a significant obstacle. In response, CVA groups established partnerships with NGOs, private sector entities, and international donors to supplement resources, leveraging opportunities in urban settings.
- ✓ **Community mobilisation:** Urban areas displayed a higher degree of individualism and weaker social cohesion compared to rural settings. To address this, CVA groups employed innovative engagement strategies such as building capacities and recognising high-performing members. For instance, CVA group members participated in training sessions for community-based organisations to strengthen local leadership. The CVA Champion initiative was also introduced to highlight and reward members who showed exceptional commitment, encouraging broader engagement, especially from traditionally harder-to-mobilise groups.

- ✓ **Diverse needs of urban populations:** The varying needs of different population groups, such as migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons, required tailored approaches to ensure inclusivity and address mobility dynamics. Targeted outreach, diverse communication channels, and various orientation methods helped manage these complexities. Feedback from community scorecards allowed for prioritised actions, leading to an agreed-upon action plan with clear responsibilities, deadlines, and monitoring milestones.

## Results and achievement (both qualitative and quantitative)

The implementation of CVA in Bamako led to several significant achievements across multiple sectors and at different city levels (municipal and national). Below are some of the key impacts on municipal policies:

- **Health sector:** Patient care at community health centres has improved significantly through the recruitment of additional qualified staff, including four medical professionals, five midwives, four nurses, and six sanitation and hygiene personnel. The health centre's capacity for patient transport was also enhanced with the acquisition of an ambulance and a motorcycle, ensuring more timely and effective transportation for those in need of medical services.
  - The attendance rate at the Yirimadio Community Health Centre rose from 13% in 2007 to 85% in 2022.
  - In health and nutrition, the prevalence of acute malnutrition decreased from 61.6% at the start of the programme (WV program baseline report, 2003) to 12% in 2022 (FY22 LQAS report).
  - The proportion of households where all children under 5 slept under a long-lasting insecticide-treated net increased from 2% at the programme's start to 57% in 2022.
  - Essential vaccine coverage for children aged 0 to 5 increased from 49.25% (TDI Bamako Urban May 2007 report) to 67% in 2022 (LQAS FY22 report). Yellow fever vaccination coverage rose from 48% (baseline report, 2003) to 67% in 2022 (LQAS FY22 report).
  - Access to credit improved, with 13% of households having access at the start (baseline report, 2003), compared to 13.6% in 2020 and 20% in both 2021 and 2022 (FY20, FY21, and FY22 LQAS reports).
  - The proportion of households relying on coping strategies for food consumption dropped from 49.8% in 2007 (TDI Bamako Urban 2007) to 4% in 2020 and 2% in 2022 (FY20 and FY22 LQAS reports).
- **Education sector:** In Yirimadio, six new classrooms were constructed and six teachers were recruited to accommodate the growing student population. Additionally, 85 student benches were repaired to improve learning conditions. To further support vulnerable children, 376 birth certificates were issued, ensuring their legal recognition and access to essential services. For



Senou Aviation and Base schools, 60 new tables and benches were provided, and 180 existing ones were repaired. Nine additional classrooms were built, and four teachers were recruited due to CVA group advocacy. Their evaluation of the schools, as part of CVA implementation, revealed significant shortcomings in educational standards, leading to improvements in student resources that benefitted 207 girls and 169 boys and fostering greater involvement of parents and communities in school management. Furthermore, 300 new benches were added to enhance the learning environment.

- **WASH sector:** Through community advocacy, CVA groups contributed to the installation of water supply systems, improved sanitation facilities, and enhanced hygiene practices. For example, the CVA group's advocacy efforts led to the construction of eight basic water supply systems and a borehole. Additionally, partners constructed three blocks of four latrines in schools.
- The proportion of households practicing open defecation decreased to 6% in 2022 (FY22 LQAS report), compared with 21% at the start of the area programme (2004 baseline report).
- To promote sanitation and hygiene in schools, 26 WASH clubs were established, involving 1,015 students, compared with zero at the start of the programme.
- In the neighbourhoods covered by the programme, 89% of households now have easy access to drinking water.



- **Child protection sector:** The efforts of the CVA group successfully facilitated birth registrations for 207 girls and 169 boys who had not been registered at birth due to factors such as parental poverty, ignorance, abandonment, or the death of one or both parents. Additionally, through advocacy with local and national authorities – including the deputy mayor, mayor of Commune 6, and the Director General of Roads – the group achieved the installation of speed bumps on National Road No. 7 to enhance safety for children crossing the busy road.
- **Food security:** CVA groups successfully advocated for food assistance from G5 Sahel, World Food Programme, and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) for 354 vulnerable households identified by the CVA groups. This aid reached a population of 839 individuals: 403 adults, 201 boys, and 235 girls.

These outcomes reflect a combination of strategic advocacy, effective community engagement, and collaborative partnerships among citizens, government, and other stakeholders.



Installation of a basic water supply system in the Senou neighborhood following advocacy by the CVA group.



## Key takeaways

Based on the experience in Bamako, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance CVA implementation in urban contexts:

- ✓ Strengthen the citizen engagement phase: Allocate more time and resources to citizen engagement to build trust and buy-in from diverse urban communities. This should include orientation on social accountability, government policies and the urban governance targeting both decision makers and community members.
- ✓ Analyse power dynamics: Conduct an analysis to understand the power dynamics in the context and identify who should be influenced and involved in the process.
- ✓ Engage diverse stakeholders: Involve religious actors and other influential stakeholders (e.g., media) in the process based on their interest, power, and scope of influence across different city levels.
- ✓ Enhance local-national linkages: Strengthen connections between local CVA groups and national-level advocacy efforts to amplify impact, validate standards, and drive policy change.
- ✓ Leverage technology: Use digital tools and platforms to increase accessibility, reduce costs, and expand the reach of CVA activities, drawing on evidence (such as evaluation sessions for data collection).
- ✓ Focus on sustainability: Develop sustainable funding models, including income-generating activities for CVA groups, to ensure continuity beyond project timelines.
- ✓ Celebrate successes and quick wins: Recognise and celebrate small achievements to maintain motivation and momentum.





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.

© World Vision International, 2025