



**2025
WEST AFRICA
REGIONAL CHILD PARTICIPATION
IN WORLD VISION
DECISION-MAKING REPORT**

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World Vision staff in each of the countries of this region also worked diligently to gather the data and findings for each of the FO reports and strive each day to engage children meaningfully in World Vision programming, advocacy, and decision making.

Introduction

World Vision is committed to supporting and strengthening children's meaningful participation in all decisions that affect their lives, including and especially in World Vision's own decision-making processes that affect children at local, national, regional and global levels. Ensuring that children have a say in projects and programmes that affect their lives and empowering them to take action on issues that they care about is a cornerstone of World Vision's identity and child-focused programming.

This regional report provides high-level insight on the child participation reporting and data from the countries in the West Africa Region who submitted their annual FO report in 2025 (Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger). These FO reports are produced annually as part of the organisation's Operational Requirements for Child Participation in World Vision Decision-Making, summarising an office's local and national level child participation practices, data, and perspectives from boys and girls. It also digs deeper into how child participation is making an impact on children, local communities, and World Vision, giving the Region and FOs more insight into what practices to strengthen and what areas to target for improvement.

Note: Please note that the following sections draw only from data and examples that were reported in the office's annual child participation in decision-making report from FY25. Each office report follows the same general structure, but some offices provide more or less information about their child participation efforts at their discretion. Therefore, this regional report may not capture the breadth of the region's child participation work in full.



Section 1: What do children think is going well in World Vision programming?

Children across Mali, Ghana, and Niger¹ report that World Vision's programming is significantly improving their lives, particularly through themes of water access, education, and meaningful participation. Below is a ranking of the most frequently mentioned successful themes across the three reports:

1. Child Participation, leadership, and advocacy

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Children frequently identify the provision of clean water as a primary success. In **Ghana**, children noted that World Vision provided "clean and safe water for our school and community". In **Mali**, the construction of water points and boreholes has directly improved children's health and lightened their daily chores. Niger's children also highlighted access to drinking water and improved school hygiene through the WaSH UP approach.

- **Ghana:** "There is clean water for everyone, most of our schools, communities and CHPs compounds have boreholes, mechanized systems..." — Group feedback from children.



Children enjoying a water point, Mali

2. Meaningful participation and empowerment

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Children express deep satisfaction with being treated as active participants rather than passive recipients. In **Mali**, children feel respected because they are involved in project design and evaluation (See photo inset). In **Niger**, children reported that being heard strengthened their self-confidence and leadership skills. **Ghanaian** children appreciated having a platform for their voices to be heard both at home and at school.

- **Mali:** "Today we are capable of having a clear vision for ourselves; to sensitize our peers on the culture of peace and its benefits..." — Group feedback from children.
- **Niger:** "When children are supported, they give their best (ideas, suggestions...) Involving children strengthens the relevance of programmes." — Report findings.



3. Education and school infrastructure

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

The improvement of learning environments is a major theme. In **Ghana**, children specifically praised the supply of school furniture to reduce classroom congestion and the distribution of learning materials like exercise books and pens. In **Mali**, the Reading Clubs have been highly successful in helping children develop literacy and writing skills. **Niger's** children highlighted the rehabilitation of schools which allows them to learn in a safe environment.

- **Mali:** "Minata has learned to say hello to us (parents) every morning, she works well at school, and loves reading... thanks to which Minata knows how to read and write well today." — Parents of Minata, 8 years old.

¹Due to unforeseen challenges, World Vision Mauritania's data was not able to be included in Sections 1 and 2 of this report. Their report content is featured in sections 3-6.

4. Child protection and peacebuilding

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Children value the safe spaces created by World Vision. In Mali, the Empowering Children as Peacebuilders (ECaP) model is noted for helping children prevent conflicts. In Ghana and Niger, sensitization efforts regarding child marriage and child abuse were highlighted as significant positive interventions.

- **Mali:** *"I used to think that we children only had duties... Animations allowed me to understand that we have rights such as having a birth certificate, going to school, being treated."* — Kamissa, 12 years old.
- **Niger:** Boys expressed interest in *"programmes on violence prevention, leadership, training on various topics."*

5. Economic development and livelihoods

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Support for families and vocational training for youth are seen as vital successes. Children in **Ghana** and **Mali** highlighted the Savings for Transformation (S4T) model, which helps their parents start small businesses. In **Mali**, older children appreciated vocational training in trades like sewing and livestock farming.

- **Mali:** *"This participation has changed my life, the initiative allowed me to learn to sew clothes and, in the days to come I could meet my needs and help my parents financially."* — Djeneba (see photo).
- **Mali:** *"This training... has changed the way I perceive the world and has greatly influenced my mentality... I'm going to buy pigeons and goats... to transform my life."* — Moussa, a boy living with a disability.



6. Spiritual development and kid's clubs

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Kids Clubs are identified as safe havens for socialization and spiritual growth. In **Ghana**, children mentioned learning about God's creation. In **Niger**, children valued the spiritual nurture provided by trained leaders in these clubs.

- **Ghana:** *"Being a member of World Vision Kid's club, I have learnt about God's creation and Empower World View through the club's activities."* — Vanesa, Kids Club Member
- **Niger:** Girls expressed a preference for *"social and educational games such as swings, board games, but they are also very responsive to teachings on hygiene, respect, and education."*

Section 2. What do children say could be improved about World Vision programming?

Children identified several key areas where World Vision's programming and operations can be improved. These suggestions are ranked below by the frequency and prevalence of the themes across the three countries

1. Education infrastructure and resources

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Children consistently request more classroom blocks, furniture, and learning materials to combat overcrowding and poor learning conditions.

- **Mali:** Children expressed a cry from the heart regarding classroom overcrowding, with some classes exceeding 100 students.
- **Ghana:** Children requested the provision of school blocks and an *"increased supply of learning materials such as textbooks, pens, exercise books, and storybooks"*.
- **Niger:** Girls highlighted an *"increased need for school supplies"* and more interactive teaching methods.

2. Inclusion of children with disabilities and vulnerable groups

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Children identified a need for more intentional and individualized support for the most vulnerable, particularly those with disabilities.

- **Mali:** The report noted a low inclusion rate for children with disabilities (0.38%) and children suggested increasing these numbers in vocational training.
- **Ghana:** Children asked for *"greater inclusion and support for children with disabilities, including access to assistive devices"*.
- **Niger:** There is a request for *"specific and individualized support in clubs"* and better physical accessibility to schools and health centres.

3. Mental health and psychosocial support

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

While water access is a success, children want more reliability and specific infrastructure improvements.

- **Mali:** Children recommended that the control office *"intensify the monitoring of the construction of infrastructure"* to ensure quality.
- **Ghana:** Children requested the *"mechanization of more boreholes to serve larger populations"* rather than just manual pumps.
- **Niger:** Girls identified a need for *"functional toilets separated for girls/boys"* to improve safety and comfort.

4. Logistics and awareness for child participation

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Children suggest operational changes to make their participation more meaningful and less burdensome.

- **Ghana:** Children recommended that those chosen to represent the community in national activities should be changed often to give more children exposure.
- **Niger:** Children want to see their suggestions "translated into concrete actions" and requested better feedback on how their ideas were used.
- **Mali:** Children requested that World Vision sensitise their parents on the benefits of child participation in decision-making.

5. Strengthening child protection and safeguarding visibility

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 3 Reports

Children want protection policies to be more visible and for adults in their lives to be better sensitized.

- **Mali:** Children requested that the safeguarding policy be "*visually distributed through posters in high-traffic areas*".
- **Ghana:** There is a call for "*continuous sensitization on child marriage, child abuse, and teenage pregnancy*".
- **Niger:** Girls specifically highlighted the need for "*fighting against early marriages*".



Section 3: How are children participating in advocacy?

Based on the three country reports, there are a variety of ways that children are participating to influence policy, laws, budgeting, and service quality. The table below lists the most prominent advocacy themes, levels, spaces, and impact of children's advocacy across the three country reports.

Advocacy theme / activity	Type & levels of participation	Spaces used for advocacy	Impact & country illustrations
National & Regional Strategy Development	Type: Consultative participation / Strategic planning. Levels: National, Regional.	National Strategy Refresh workshops; Regional consultation sessions.	Ghana: Influenced the selection of integrated programme frameworks for the next 5 years. Mauritania: Participatory planning and budgeting of programmes Niger: Led to official management signatures on action plans.
Local Budgeting & Multi-Sectoral Planning	Type: Collaborative planning / Priority setting. Levels: Local (Community / District).	Area Programme (AP) annual review meetings; Community action plan workshops.	Niger: Planning and budgeting for FY26 took children's preferences into account. Mali: Children's Deep Dive consultations and AP reviews influenced community intervention priorities.
Environmental Laws & Climate Action	Type: Direct advocacy / Petitions. Levels: Regional (Provincial / State).	Petitions to Governors; Climate risk committees.	Niger: Children presented a petition on plastic pollution to the Governor of Zinder, resulting in an official commitment to enforce environmental laws. Mali: Youth advocated for Environmental Protection committees to manage climate-related disasters.
Service Quality (WASH & Education)	Type: Monitoring / Accountability-based advocacy. Levels: Local (School / Community).	School WASH clubs; Community review meetings; Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) focus groups.	Mali: Advocacy led to the construction of latrines and water points in schools at Zébala and Larka. Mauritania: WASH Kids Clubs conducted awareness raising at both school and community levels, leading to a notable decrease in diseases and adoption of better hygiene practices. Ghana: Successful requests for mechanization of boreholes and school furniture to reduce congestion.

Advocacy theme / activity	Type & levels of participation	Spaces used for advocacy	Impact & country illustrations
Child Protection & Peacebuilding	<p>Type: Social advocacy / Peer sensitization.</p> <p>Levels: Local / Peer-to-peer.</p>	<p>Empowering Children as Peacebuilders (ECaP) clubs; Community radio.</p>	<p>Mali: ECaP clubs became peace ambassadors, advocating roles for religious leaders in conflict prevention.</p> <p>Mauritania: Children promoted CP hotlines in all programmes, enabling greater reporting of violence against children.</p> <p>Niger: Children broadcast radio spots for the ENOUGH campaign, making malnutrition a priority issue.</p>
Global & National Representation	<p>Type: Representational advocacy.</p> <p>Levels: National, International.</p>	<p>Intergenerational dialogues; National memorial days.</p>	<p>Niger: A youth participated in UK-based dialogues with donors to advocate for resource allocation for Field Offices.</p> <p>Ghana: Children advocated for the rotation of participants in national events to ensure broader representation.</p> <p>Mauritania: Young people participated in the “Voices of Children and Youth for Better Nutrition” dialogue.</p>



Section 4: How are children participating in decision-making?

Children in West Africa are participating in decision-making throughout the entire project cycle - design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. They are increasingly involved in shaping high-level organizational strategies and local community action plans.

Common methods of participation

Children use a variety of structured and informal methods to influence decisions:

- **Consultative workshops and strategy sessions:** In Mali and Ghana, children participated in National Strategy Refresh sessions, where they shared opinions on previous impacts and set priorities for the next five years.
- **Annual planning and review meetings:** Children in all four countries attend Area Programme (AP) annual review and planning meetings to voice community issues to leadership and stakeholders.
- **Child-led clubs and leadership groups:** Kids clubs, reading clubs, and peace clubs (such as the ECaP model in Mali) serve as primary spaces for children to develop leadership and advocacy skills.
- **Direct advocacy and petitions:** In Niger, children influenced regional policy by presenting a petition on plastic pollution to the Governor of Zinder. In Mali, they conduct advocacy with religious leaders for conflict prevention.
- **Monitoring and feedback mechanisms:** Children participate in Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) focus groups and use surveys to evaluate protection and service quality. In Mauritania, children were especially active in establishing complaint and feedback mechanisms in local communities.

What is working and why?

The sources highlight several factors that make child participation effective and meaningful:

- **Respect and recognition from adults:** Participation works best when adults move beyond tokenism and take children's opinions seriously. Children in Mali reported that being respected and having their presence recognized by adults was a key factor in feeling their voice mattered.
- **Concrete tangible results:** Seeing their suggestions translated into physical infrastructure reinforces children's engagement. For example, in the Koudiakan cluster (Mali), children's demands led directly to the construction of school WASH facilities (water points and latrines).
- **Safe and inclusive spaces:** Child-managed spaces, such as clubs, allow children to be themselves, play, and learn without adult imposition. This is particularly impactful for children with disabilities, who reported feeling empowered when treated as equals in these settings.
- **Skill development:** Participation is successful when it is paired with capacity building. Children who received training in communication and leadership showed exceptional confidence when presenting community issues to global stakeholders.
- **Intergenerational dialogue:** In Niger, a shift toward mutual respect and collaboration has been noted, where adults have begun consulting children before making decisions, thereby institutionalizing their voices in local governance.
- **Transparency and voluntary participation:** Children expressed higher levels of trust when they were fully informed about activities and given the choice to participate voluntarily under informed consent.

Section 5: What could be done to make children's participation more effective?

To make their participation more effective, children across Mali, Ghana, and Niger have identified specific needs ranging from better adult sensitization and concrete feedback to improved logistics and inclusive infrastructure.

1. Community and parent sensitization

A primary barrier children identify is the need for parents, teachers, and community leaders to be sensitized on the value of child participation.

- **Mali:** Children emphasized the need to "*sensitize parents on the advantages of the participation of children in decision-making*". Cultural norms in some communities often view children as too young or inexperienced to contribute.
- **Mauritania:** Social and cultural norms strongly hinder children's expression (especially girls), whose voices are often deemed illegitimate. Lack of community awareness reinforces this exclusion, with some adults seeing children's participation as a threat to traditional authority.
- **Ghana:** Children requested that World Vision "*keep intensifying community sensitization*" so that parents recognize that children have a voice in decision-making.

2. Concrete feedback and accountability

Children express a strong desire to see that their voices lead to real change and to be kept informed of the outcomes.

- **Niger:** Children explicitly stated they want to see their suggestions translated into concrete actions by management. The report noted that children do not always receive clear feedback on what was done following their recommendations.
- **Mali:** Children requested that they be more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of activities to see the impact themselves.

3. Logistics, timing, and communication

Operational adjustments are needed to ensure participation does not conflict with other parts of children's lives.

- **Timing:** Children in Mali suggested scheduling activities on weekends or non-working days so participation does not interfere with their schooling.
- **Communication:** In Ghana, children underscored the need for World Vision to use simple language that is easy for them to understand.
- **Logistics:** In a practical request, children in Mali asked for promotional materials, like t-shirts and tracksuits, to be ordered in their actual sizes.

4. Inclusion and rotation of representation

Children are concerned about equity and ensuring that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

- **Rotation:** Ghanaian children suggested that those chosen for national exposure and memorial days should be changed often to give more children the same opportunities.
- **Disability inclusion:** There is a universal call for greater support for children with disabilities, including access to assistive devices, specialized education, and individualized support within clubs.
- **Vulnerable groups:** Children in Niger highlighted the need for targeted support (food, clothing, healthcare) for orphans and children from very poor families to enable them to participate.

5. Resources and skill building

To participate as agents of change and partners in development, children ask for the tools and training necessary to be effective leaders.

- **Capacity building:** Children in Mali called for the amplification of peacebuilding training (ECaP) in emergency zones and for their peers.
- **Interactive learning:** In Niger, girls requested more interactive teaching methods and the provision of school supplies and sports equipment to make their club environments more engaging.

6. Safe and appropriate environments

Safety and privacy are essential for children to feel comfortable speaking out.

- **Gender-specific needs:** Girls in Niger identified a need for comfortable and safe meeting places, specifically requesting functional toilets that are separated for girls and boys.
- **Physical safety:** In Mali, children suggested that safeguarding policies should be visually displayed through posters in high-traffic areas so everyone knows their rights and how to report abuse.



Section 6: Impact of child participation on children, communities and World Vision

Child participation is transforming the role of children in decision-making across programme design and implementation, strategy development and advocacy and resulting in significant benefits for the children themselves, their broader communities, and World Vision's organizational effectiveness.



1. Impact on children

For children, participating in decision-making fosters a profound sense of empowerment and self-worth. Children develop leadership and communication abilities, improve literacy and vocational skills, deepen understanding of their rights, and build positive relationships and resilience within safe, supportive environments.

2. Impact on local communities

Children's voices act as a catalyst for social and behavioural change within their communities. Their advocacy mobilizes adults, influences policies, promotes peace, directly improves services and infrastructure for local communities, and fosters intergenerational dialogue. Their participation in decision-making and advocacy strengthens respect for children's voices and encourages collaborative decision making within families and communities.

3. Impact on World Vision

Child participation has reconfigured the programme-participant dynamic, placing children at the heart of local governance and organizational strategy. Their perspectives ensure that World Vision's goals and programming decisions are implemented with quality and align with the real needs of the most vulnerable children. Involving children in decision-making and acting upon their suggestions also strengthens trust and partnership between World Vision and the communities we serve.

Conclusions

Across Mali, Mauritania, Ghana, and Niger, World Vision's programming is successfully transitioning children from passive recipients to active agents of change through structured platforms like Kids Clubs, Reading Clubs, and Peacebuilder groups. This engagement has fostered significant personal growth in children while simultaneously mobilizing adults and local leaders to address community-wide issues like child marriage, malnutrition, and environmental protection.

At the same time, there is always room for growth, and children specifically request that World Vision intensify parental sensitization to overcome cultural barriers, provide concrete feedback on how their suggestions are implemented, and adjust activity schedules to avoid conflicts with school hours. Moving forward, the reports emphasize that institutionalizing child voices through child-led monitoring committees and regular intergenerational dialogues will be essential to ensuring programming remains accountable and relevant to the most vulnerable.

Appendix: Consolidated child participation data

Based on the reports the following table consolidates data regarding child participation in various clubs and spaces, membership and participation numbers, and the key impacts these groups have achieved.

Country	Participating clubs & spaces	Membership / participation numbers	Key impacts
Mali	Kids Clubs, Reading Clubs, Peace Clubs (ECaP), School WASH Clubs, S4T (Savings for Transformation) groups, Local Children's Parliament	30,653 in club activities (15,476 girls, 15,177 boys) 5,291 in training activities 10,374 in evaluations	Peace ambassadorship: Kids trained in ECaP conduct advocacy with religious leaders. Literacy: Reading clubs significantly improved reading and writing skills. Infrastructure: WASH clubs successfully advocated for school latrines and water points.
Ghana	Kids Clubs, Reading Clubs, Peace Clubs, WASH Clubs	179,657 direct participants (108,556 girls, 71,101 boys) 81,539 Registered Children (RC) 96,614 Most Vulnerable Children (MVC)	Strategic influence: 25 children from Kids Clubs presented community issues that shaped the National Strategy. Rights awareness: Children report gaining platforms for their voices to be heard at home and school. Tangible support: Provision of clean water, school furniture, and sanitary pads.
Niger	Kids Clubs, Peace Road Clubs, Hygiene Clubs (WaSH UP), Leadership groups	19,523 active participants 12,028 regular attendees in Kids Clubs 65 in annual review/ planning meetings	Policy & law: A petition to the Governor of Zinder led to a commitment to enforce environmental laws. Budgeting: Priorities for health, malnutrition, and education were integrated into the FY26 budget. Public advocacy: Children broadcast radio spots for the ENOUGH campaign.



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