Child Selection

Objective: **A tool for selection of children in World Vision child sponsorship**

We've learned some things about selecting children.

It is not a separate sponsorship process anymore.

And if we get it right, we deepen community involvement in the lives of their children.

time span
- Define child selection during Steps 3 to 6 of the Critical Path.
- Select children at the end of Step 6 and throughout the life of the programme.

product
Child selection criteria

who facilitates
Development facilitator and sponsorship specialist

who participates
Working groups, community members and children

Overview

Selecting children for child sponsorship is a programming task - part of the programme design process. It is informed by the analysis of vulnerability for children in the area and all of the project interventions.

Selecting children is development - creating community dialogue about the inclusion of the most vulnerable children in programming and in sponsorship.

Programme staff need to ensure that every child selected will participate in and benefit from shared project activities.

Process steps

1 **Appoint a local child selection committee.**

2 **Start with WVI Minimum Child Selection Criteria.**

3 **Adapt selection criteria for local considerations.**

4 **Identify groups of children who will benefit from the shared projects.**

5 **Share child selection criteria with community groups.**

6 **Select children.**

Note: These steps may not necessarily occur in this exact order.

Principles of child selection

▶ Child selection is part of programme design

It is vital that the children selected for child sponsorship are part of the target group of children who will participate in – and benefit from – the shared project activities. To achieve this, the programme team, alongside the working groups, first needs to identify which groups of children will be reached by shared project activities. This is why child selection needs to be part of the programme design process. Use the programme design process to:

- **Identify the primary groups of children targeted for programming, including the most vulnerable children:** Registration for child sponsorship then aligns with the programming priorities and target groups. This will help to assure that children are participating and benefitting from the project activities.

- **Define the geographic area:** Children must **only** be selected for sponsorship in areas where there are project activities that they can point to and say, 'this has helped me.' Where are the primary focus areas for the programme activities? Consider high saturation of children in these areas.

- **Consider timing:** It is also important to consider the timing of project activities. For instance, if a certain group of children will not benefit from any of the activities in the first eighteen months, then they should not be selected.

Only select children from areas where activities are going to take place in the immediate future. When the programme expands to begin activity in other areas, then children may be selected from other areas.*

▶ Child selection is a community process

Research has shown that high levels of community ownership of child sponsorship lead to better integration of sponsorship and long-term development, and therefore better development outcomes.

1. Strengthen community ownership:
- When community members own the child selection process, it is their programme.
- It empowers the community in their relationship with World Vision.
- It helps protect children and families from feelings of unfairness or jealousy.
- Community members know the children and their families.
- It builds the foundation for future community involvement in sponsorship activities.

2. Use it as a community tool to focus on children:
- Discussions about child selection create opportunities to **reflect on vulnerability** and inclusion in their society (especially including the most vulnerable).
- Selection and monitoring should be used as a community tool to bring focus on the most vulnerable children, to **continually learn about gaps** in reaching all the children in the community.
- Partners and community groups select children to monitor so they can **track their own progress** in improving the lives of children.

* Note: In areas of low population, this may create challenges to meet the registered children (RC) numbers. This emphasises the need for integration between design and child selection. Use the RC Projection and Allocation tool to help match programming and RC numbers.

1 Appoint a child selection committee

Overview

The most effective child selection committee is one that represents all of the different social groups in the community. Individuals on the committee might be former starter group members, working group members, or representatives from the parents, children, youth, or other groups.

The child selection committee also represents minority groups (other religious or ethnic groups) and demonstrates care for the most vulnerable. The committee will work with WV staff.

The committee is responsible for selecting children for the life of the programme, and may choose to develop some local child selection criteria.

> **TIP**
>
> If some children experience exclusion, consider creating a simple interview process to make sure that each committee member demonstrates care for all children.

The child selection committee needs to understand the rationale for child selection, the meaning of each child selection criteria and be able to explain the criteria to members of the community.

The committee also needs to understand the basic sponsorship messages (refer to the *Sponsorship Community Engagement* tool).

SUGGESTIONS:

One of the best approaches to child selection is for each working group member to select and monitor children from the children and families they serve. For example:

- School management committees select children from their schools.
- A local organisation or church selects children from the families they work with.

This occurs when child-focused partners elect to adopt child sponsorship monitoring to enhance their own understanding of children through the monitoring processes. WV may still need to work with child selection committee if this does not cover all the children required.

2 Start with WVI Minimum Child Selection Criteria

Overview

Begin with the WVI Minimum Child Selection Criteria below. These can be used as they are or local child selection criteria can be added. This will be discussed in the following steps. Refer to Appendix A for detailed explanations of this criteria.

The WVI Minimum Child Selection Criteria

1. Represent community diversity

Children will be selected to reflect the diversity of the community, giving priority to the poorest and most vulnerable children.

Economic groups: Children may be selected from any group classified as poor or vulnerable.

Gender: Approximately equal numbers of boys and girls will be selected.

Ethnicity and religious background: Children of all ethnicities and religious backgrounds within the community will be included.

Disabilities: Children with disabilities will be included in proportion to the number of children with disabilities within the community.

Families: One child per family will be selected, unless the population size of the target community is small, or there is a particular focus such as child-headed households.

2. Age

A child may be newly registered in child sponsorship at any age before their 13th birthday. Exceptions to newly registered older children may be agreed by the national office and support office; for example, if there is a special project focused on adolescents.

3. Participation in programme

Target community: Children selected for sponsorship must be part of the target community of children identified by the programme design for project interventions.

Geographic area: Children selected for sponsorship must live in a geographic area where project activities will occur within the next 18 months or where they will continue to benefit from earlier interventions.

Orientation and participation: Parents or caregivers demonstrate understanding of WV ministry, child sponsorship and the programme. Parents or caregivers agree to participate in the programme and child sponsorship requirements indicated by a consent letter signed by a parent or guardian.

4. Multiple sponsorship

A child may be selected only if they are not currently registered in any child sponsorship programme run by WV or another organisation.

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3 Adapt selection criteria for local considerations

1ST Consider national office priorities

There may be strategic national office priorities (such as orphans and vulnerable children) that need to be reflected in the selection criteria to give focus to key issues. If so, these issues are also addressed in the shared project designs.

2ND Discuss how risks can be managed

In some cases, child selection criteria can be adapted to manage some sponsorship problems. Check the *Sponsorship Risk Management Matrix* used during *LEAP Programme Assessment.* This matrix documents any critical issues that might affect the management of child sponsorship.

How do you use child selection criteria to manage local risks?

As suggested in the *Sponsorship Feasibility and Risk Management* tool, reflect on the identified risk and identify whether a special child selection criteria can help to manage challenges to sponsorship. Here are some examples of risks that can be managed by developing some local child selection criteria.

EXAMPLES	COMMENTS	CRITERIA
Children who move location: Some groups of children may frequently move location, or be high risk of leaving the area, such as children living and working on the street or seasonal migrators.	Often these are the most vulnerable children. It may be appropriate to continue to reach these children through specific projects, but not select them for sponsorship. Include them in sponsorship unless the risk of movement is too high.	**Sample:** Children may be registered if they are permanent residents of the community and have lived in their current location for at least one year.
Children living in difficult to access locations: Some groups of children may live where there are no solutions to establish regular monitoring and contact.	Programme staff need to be able to see children as often as project activities require. Reports and communications need to be maintained regularly through the year. However, seek local community solutions before excluding children from sponsorship.	**Sample:** Children may be selected as long as contact and communications can be maintained on a regular basis throughout the year.

3RD Look at community considerations

In some cases, local selection criteria may also be added by the local committee.

Share with the committee the definition of vulnerability and the results of mapping the most vulnerable children (created by the starter group in Step 3 of the Critical Path). The team can use some of the exercises in *Exploring Our Context Part 2* to help the committee identify the most vulnerable in their context. One of the former starter group members can co-facilitate this discussion. The committee can use this information for creating local child selection criteria. Review and discuss this criteria as the working groups are developing their shared project designs.

E X A M P L E :

Local child selection criteria:

At least one in 20 children will be from Boonwurrung tribe

At least one child from every child-headed household will be selected

INCLUSION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE:

Sometimes, some of the most vulnerable children cannot be selected for sponsorship due to their high mobility but they can participate in shared project activities. It is important to include the most vulnerable wherever possible, as this is a powerful symbol of their importance, and gives witness to the whole community of the heart of God.

> **TIP**
>
> Children can participate in project activities without being selected for sponsorship. For example, children living and working on the street are highly vulnerable, but without a fixed address may not be suited to the sponsor's needs for a long-term relationship. Sometimes the community may select some children for monitoring who will not be registered for sponsorship – but they choose to monitor them anyway.

4 Identify children who will benefit from shared projects

Overview

Programme staff must be able to demonstrate that all the children selected will benefit from shared project activities. To do this, programme staff consider child sponsorship as they engage with the working groups in the programme design process.

1ST Consider geographic focus

Only select children for sponsorship from active primary focus areas.
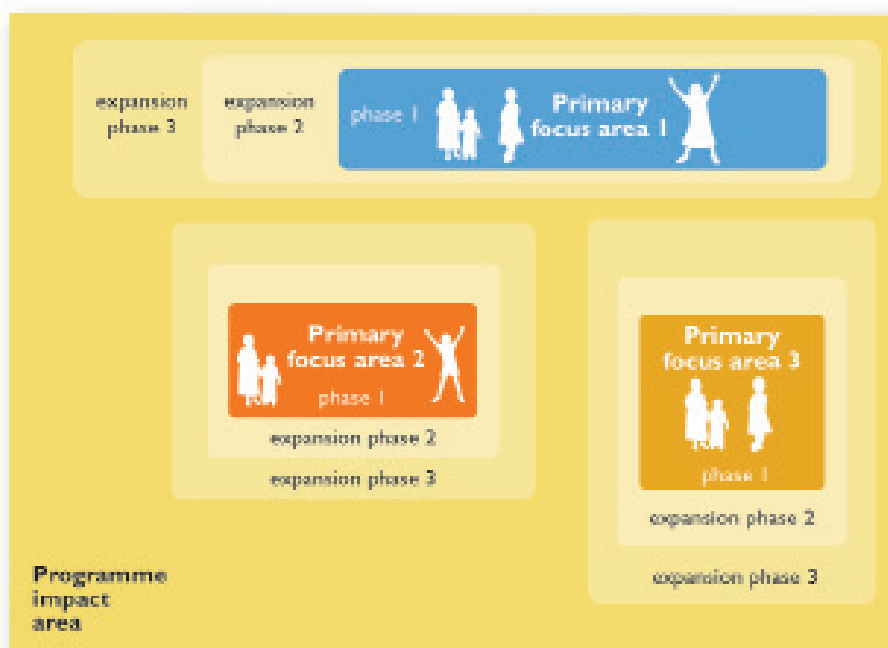
> **TIP**
> Consider settlement patterns that may have an impact on sponsorship.
> Sometimes staff need to identify more settled communities (living in an area for more than two years) for sponsorship rather than new settlements where migration is more likely.

2ND Review shared project plans

Review shared project plans to identify ages and groups of children who have been identified as target groups for project interventions.

As the working groups design shared project plans, programme staff can identify which children are being targeted for the proposed interventions. Programme staff ensure that the ages of children selected for sponsorship match the ages of children to be reached by the shared projects.
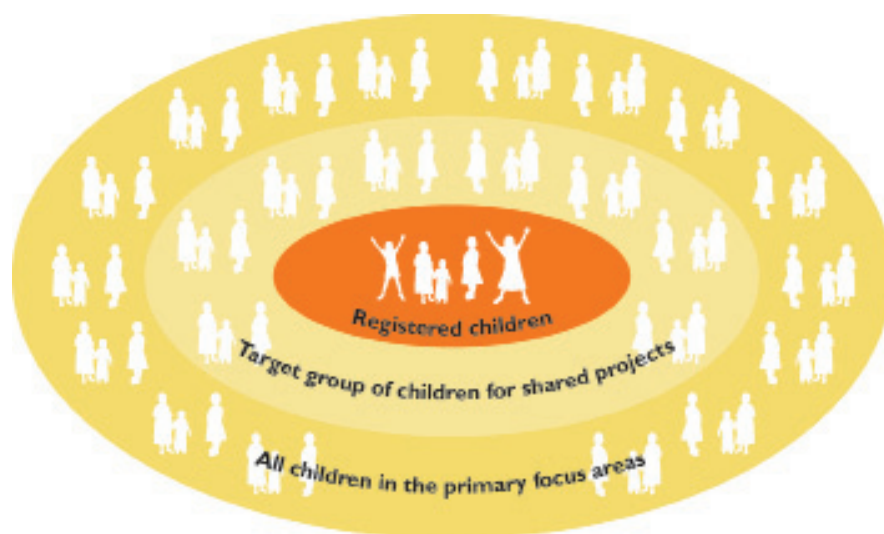
EXAMPLE

If there is an emphasis on under-five nutrition, it would be ideal to select children targeted by the nutrition project. In this way, registered children are clearly 'amongst the primary beneficiaries' and the monitoring will help to inform this project.

3RD Consider timing of project activities

Only select children from areas where activities are going to take place in the immediate future. When the programme expands to begin activities in other areas, then children may be selected for child sponsorship from those areas.

Note: In areas of low population, this may create challenges to meet registered children (RC) numbers. Use the *RC Projection and Allocation* tool to help match programming and RC numbers.

5 Share child selection criteria with community groups

Overview

Once the child selection committee has drafted the local child selection criteria, share the criteria with the working groups and broader community.

- Make sure they understand child selection criteria and how it will be used.
- Allow opportunity for local dialogue and input.

Refer to Appendix B for information to help explain child selection criteria.

> **SUGGESTIONS:**
>
> It is important to communicate to groups not directly involved in child sponsorship and provide opportunities to discuss and address feelings of unfairness or jealousy.
>
> Take care that certain groups are not neglected because they are outside the awareness or concern of the child selection committee. It may be worthwhile to discuss this with the committee.
>
> This also becomes an opportunity to identify if the committee has their own prejudices. For example, committee members may want to select children from local cliques, or from among their relatives, their church or their tribe. Or, they may have excluded certain groups due to local tensions or prejudice. If so, it may be worth having an open discussion about this.

6 Select children

Process principles

- **Work with a child-focused partner:** This will depend on your local context.
- **Consider involvement of children:** Children usually know which children are excluded.
- **Start small and expand:** It is recommended to start with smaller groups of children and their families who are already participating in the programme. This will help avoid wrong expectations about child sponsorship. Later, it is easier to expand into other areas of the community when there are already children who have experienced child sponsorship.
- **Interview families:** To ensure that children meet selection criteria and understand the meaning and obligations of involvement in child sponsorship. It is inadequate for people to simply attend a meeting and register without the committee assessing each family's understanding of sponsorship. In some cases, it may be appropriate to interview families to determine if they really meet the selection criteria.

APPENDIX A

Detailed explanation of selection criteria

I. REPRESENT COMMUNITY DIVERSITY

Children will be selected to reflect the diversity of the community, giving priority to the poorest and most vulnerable children.	"Reflect the diversity of the community as much as is reasonable."[1] Children with special needs, such as those that are disabled, lowest socio-economic groups and different ethnicities, should be included. This sends a positive message to the community and can also be a point of advocacy with the community regarding marginalised people. *Most vulnerable children* are girls and boys whose quality of life and ability to fulfil their potential is most affected by extreme deprivation and violations of their rights. These children often live in catastrophic situations and relationships characterised by violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, exclusion, and discrimination.
A. Economic groups	
Children may be selected from any group classified as poor or vulnerable.	Programmes will prioritise the "poorest and most vulnerable families *as much as possible*, given the need to meet the communication and monitoring requirements of child sponsorship at an affordable cost."[1] *Wealth ranking:* It is useful to understand the diversity of the community and ensure the participation of community members from different segments of the community. *Verify circumstances:* Children that are recommended for child sponsorship are eligible once their personal circumstances are verified (as given by the child selection committee).
B. Gender	
Approximately equal numbers of boys and girls will be selected.	The overall ratio of registered girls to boys within each programme and nationally will be within the 40:60 or 60:40 ranges.
C. Ethnicity and religious background	
Children of all ethnicities and religious backgrounds within the community will be included.	Children of different ethnicities and religious backgrounds should be proportionately included. For example, if an ethnic minority comprises five percent of the target population, then approximately five percent of all children registered for child sponsorship should be from this minority.
D. Disabilities	
Children with disabilities will be included in proportion to the number of children with disabilities within the community.	Children with disabilities will be included in the approximately equivalent proportion of children with disabilities within the community. It is important to manage expectations among the community and sponsors in regards to the plans for inclusion of disabled children in the development processes, along with other children in the programme. (See Disability guidelines for further support.)
E. Families	
One child per family will be selected, unless the population size of the target community is small, or there is a particular focus such as child-headed households.	Begin with one child per family in order to increase participation of many families through the programming and sponsorship activities. More children from the same family may then be registered for sponsorship, if the children can participate in shared project activities and their inclusion is managed in an equitable way.

F. Other issues	
	Children who are HIV-positive may be registered. However, their status will remain confidential.

2. A G E	
A child may be newly registered in the sponsorship programme at any age before his or her 13th birthday.	Age of children selected *should match the age* of children who will benefit from the programme (project interventions).
	Exceptions to this standard are child-headed households and participants with disabilities who may be registered over the age of 13 with agreement from the support office. Other children older than 13 may be registered if the support office agrees; this would be, for example, if the strategic programming focus includes adolescent life skills development and participation.
	Babies can be selected for sponsorship. It is advisable to discuss with the support office.

3. P A R T I C I P A T I O N I N P R O G R A M M E	
Target community: Children selected for sponsorship should be part of the target community of children identified by the programme design for project interventions.	Children registered must be part of the target groups prioritised by the shared programme design to directly benefit from projects. This means child selection cannot be determined until it is clear from the design which groups are being targeted.
Geographic area: Children selected for sponsorship must live in a geographic area where interventions will occur within the next 18 months or where they will continue to benefit from earlier interventions.	Children must live in the geographic areas where World Vision is working. This will be the primary focus areas. *Note:* It is not necessary to register children from all the communities served by a programme.
Orientation and participation: The parents or caregivers demonstrate understanding of World Vision ministry, sponsorship and the programme. Parents or caregivers agree to participate in the programme and child sponsorship requirements indicated by consent letter signed by parent or guardian.	The parents or caregivers will sign a commitment with the programme, to agree to the different requirements of sponsorship (such as annual reports, Christmas cards, correspondence, photos, meetings and sponsor visits). The family will be informed and will authorise the use of the child's personal information, as well as their photo for the search of sponsorship through internet, for which the support offices will carry out the minimum standards of sponsorship through the supervision of World Vision.

4. M U L T I P L E S P O N S O R S H I P S	
A child may not be selected if they are already involved in a child sponsorship programme.	Children cannot be selected if families are currently participating in any child sponsorship programme run by World Vision or another sponsorship organisation. National offices should have Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with other sponsorship organisations to avoid multiple sponsorship and conflict of approaches with the same community. It is also important for the community to understand the problem with multiple sponsorship and this should form part of their agreement with the programme.

[1] WVI Board policy on child sponsorship

APPENDIX B

Explaining selection criteria to the community

Before the child selection criteria is complete, the child selection committee needs to build understanding and ownership of community members. The committee provides clear explanations about the child selection criteria and allows members of the community to discuss these and contribute their own ideas before a formal agreement about the beginning of sponsorship is finalised in each primary focus area. Also, provide community members with the opportunity to:

- contribute their own child selection criteria
- be involved in the child selection process.

Here is some guidance to help explain to community members about the WVI Minimum Child Selection Criteria.

CRITERIA	EXPLANATION TO THE COMMUNITY
1. Represent community diversity	• Together we will select sample of the community children to help us all learn more about, and respond, to the risks to vulnerable children. We need to make sure all children are represented. • We want to put special focus on the most vulnerable children in the community so that no child is left behind. • It is important that all groups of children are represented in sponsorship, because every child is important, regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, health, or abilities. It is also an important symbol to the community that everyone is included. • Selected children are representatives of the community to help sponsors to understand how their support is helping children.
2. Age	• Sponsors want to see the changes in children's lives, but this takes time. Selecting children under 13 means there is more of a chance of a longer relationship. However, a child who turns 13 or older can remain in sponsorship if they still have a sponsor. Of course, all children, regardless of age, can participate in the development programme, even if they are not registered.
3. Participation in programme	• It is important that the children that are selected are from families who are participating in the programme, otherwise the families and sponsors won't see the changes in their lives. Registered children and their families benefit through their participation in the programme (shared project activities), which also enables others in the community to benefit. • The sponsors who support the programme will learn about the improved lives of the children as they write and receive reports from the children. Therefore, it's important that children experience the changes in their lives, and we encourage them to tell their stories of change to the sponsors.
4. Avoid multiple sponsorship	• Sponsorship begins a relationship between one child and one sponsor. If a child has more than one sponsor with WV or other organisations, this breaks the promise WV makes to the sponsor. We would lose their trust. • It is important for each child and their parents or caregivers to understand that if they are registered in World Vision child sponsorship, they are making an agreement that they will not join any other sponsorship programme.