

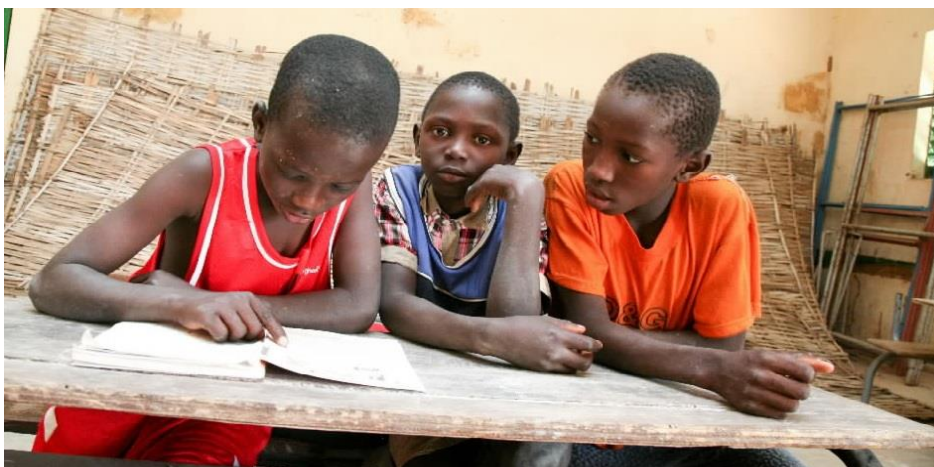
## CASE STUDY: SENEGAL

## Vélingara Child Protection Project

*Child abuse is of major concern in Senegal, affecting both girls and boys, but particularly girls. More than one in four girls are exposed to sexual harassment before the age of 13, forced marriage is culturally accepted, and sexual abuse in the family is considered to be widespread. Sexual violence and physical abuse are also entrenched in schools. Victims of violence struggle to have their attackers recognised or punished, and this has been linked to school dropout as the only way for children to avoid further abuse.*

Resolving a culturally accepted cycle of violence was at the heart of World Vision's Vélingara Child Protection (VCP) project in Kolda, Senegal. By linking together networks of care already inherent in the family and community, the project aimed to create better protection structures across all the spaces where children were at risk: in the home, in the streets and in schools. VCP was initially implemented in 21 communities between 2010 and 2012. It has since been scaled up across Senegal, not only by World Vision but also by local governments, in accordance with the national policy of the Government of Senegal.

VCP has been so effective because it uses resources and networks already in place in any community or village. This makes it not only a logical approach to reducing risks for children, but also an affordable one. The project sets up local and accessible community-based child protection structures called 'CAVEs', an acronym in French that translates as 'Vigilance Committees to Alert, Watch and Listen'. CAVEs call on relevant community decision makers and leaders to play specific roles in child protection, including identifying risk, mediating community conflict and referring cases to appropriate authorities.

**Forms of violence:**

- Physical and sexual abuse.

**Solutions:**

- Changing attitudes and social norms that tolerate violence against children
- Providing a continuum of services for prevention, protection and empowerment
- Developing locally owned solutions and fostering social accountability for child protection.

**Results:**

- Nearly double the amount of CAVEs formed compared to original targets
- Junior high dropout rates reduced from 17.3% to 7.9% in just two years
- Birth registration for newborns is now locally available
- District and national government have adopted elements of VCP.

In Vélingara the CAVEs quickly became referral points for cases of child abuse, where children, parents and concerned community members would bring their abuse-related concerns. In total, 114 CAVEs formed, as did an inter-village network that joined local groups together and connected them to district-level monitoring and action. Complementing this work were school-based committees that trained teachers and children to recognise, report and prevent child abuse.

Recognising that a low rate of birth registration adds to the child protection challenges in Senegal, the CAVEs in 52 villages were trained to manage birth registration in their communities under the authority of the village chief. As a result, 7,213 births were registered in 2013 in Vélingara, while 3,790 children obtained a birth certificate retrospectively to accompany their school graduation.

Children in schools and in the community formed theatre groups and performed regularly to raise awareness of themes of violence and child rights. Many of them had witnessed or experienced the forms of violence that they acted out on stage – such as early marriage, sexual abuse, female genital mutilation or hazardous child labour. Adults in the community commented that hearing the children speak with maturity and authority on the issues they faced had led to increased respect for children as citizens.

Evaluation of the project shows that children, parents and other adults in the community all better understand their own roles and capacities to end violence and abuse against children. Children are more aware of their right to grow up free from abuse and violence, and the number of girls and boys who know how to report violence against them or their friends or families has increased by 43 per cent. There is good evidence to suggest that, for perpetrators, knowing that children can report violations directly has been acting as a deterrent against abuse continuing. School violence has decreased and the junior high dropout rate has halved as a result – a particularly beneficial trend for girls.

In 2013, even before VCP concluded, local governments had adopted the CAVE model to set up village-based Vigilance Committees in five other regions. In December 2013, the Government of Senegal adopted a National Strategy for Child Protection that endorsed the approach promoted by the Vélingara Child Protection project.

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Published by Advocacy & Justice for Children as a resource for World Vision staff.

Managed on behalf of Advocacy & Justice for Children by Tamara Tutnjevic Gorman.

Author: Daja Wenke. Senior Editor: Heather Elliott.

Content editor: Katie Chalk/Chalk It Up.

Production Management: Katie Fike.

Design: Friend Creative. Proofreading: Anna Claire Okeke.

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*Primary school children in Kolda, Senegal.*