

CASE STUDY: SOUTH SUDAN

Social Accountability and Child Protection Programme

The Government of South Sudan is a new institution and has inherited a culture of weak child protection and high community tolerance of violence, including corporal punishment and child abuse, at home, in schools and in daily life. Although the government is gradually ratifying international conventions and treaties on children's rights, systems for implementing new policies are overstretched and law enforcement weak. For many children, physical and sexual abuse continue to be a common experience.

World Vision's Social Accountability and Child Protection Programme (SA&CP) in South Sudan was designed specifically for this context, since it was clear that government resources could not stretch far enough to reach every child, and that locally driven solutions to address ongoing violence against children needed to be found. The implementation of SA&CP in Renzi and Tambura counties in Western Equatoria state, from October 2011 to March 2014, applied three core approaches simultaneously:

1. Strengthening community-based child protection structures to prevent violence against children and protect children whose rights had been violated
2. Raising awareness of violence against children and mobilising communities (using World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action model) to advocate and lobby for access to quality services for children
3. Teaching life skills and rights awareness for children through school-based Child Rights Clubs.



Forms of violence:

- Physical and sexual abuse.

Solutions include:

- Providing a continuum of services for prevention, protection and empowerment
- Developing locally-owned solutions and fostering social accountability for child protection
- Investing in safe schools.

Results:

- Violence against children in targeted communities decreased by 80 per cent
- 95 per cent of children now feel safe at school
- Codes of conduct for school administration and protection have influenced nationwide school reform.

The value and impact of each approach was strengthened by the others, in a positive cycle of awareness, participation and empowerment. An essential starting point was to map existing formal and informal child protection mechanisms that could play appropriate roles of monitoring, intervention and reporting which were not yet systematised. Community-based Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) formed and began preparations to connect with the structures of the national child protection system. At the same time, concerned citizens prepared to write action plans for health and education shortfalls as part of the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) process. The Child Rights Clubs were popular with children, who shared their experiences with friends and parents, while the CCPCs quickly developed as a central function in child protection and reporting structures. Parents and community facilitators engaged in the CVA process with school administrations, which led to jointly agreed codes of conduct and action plans. This work improved the quality of teaching and child safety from violence in schools. These positive changes formed the basis for government to promote standardised codes of conduct that have since triggered various systemic reforms within primary schools.

The end-of-project evaluation found that 63 per cent of children now knew where to turn for help and support in case of abuse – a 26 per cent increase over two years. Around three quarters of children who had taken part in Child Rights Clubs had raised issues of child protection with peers, family or other community members; around half of these were girls, a noteworthy achievement in a culture with low gender inclusion among adults. CCPCs had reported and referred 74 cases of children who might otherwise have gone without support, protecting them from violence and abuse, child marriage and neglect.¹ Community surveys indicate that early and forced marriages, child labour and discrimination against girls was reduced by 80 per cent in participating communities, and that the percentage of children with birth certificates had increased from 49 to 56.²

Three out of four children expressed trust in their community to look after them by addressing and

resolving child protection concerns, identifying family members, teachers and CCPC members as main sources of support.

Perhaps the most remarkable change brought about by the SA&CP was in bringing children back to school. In Renzi and Tambura, the enrolment rates in primary schools rose by 47 per cent between 2011 and 2013, and the completion rate rose from 52 to 98 per cent. The evaluation also noted a reduction of pregnancies and related dropouts of girls from 28 to 4 cases between 2012 and 2013.³ In addition, 95 per cent of the children who participated in the end-of-project evaluation (with similar response rates for boys and girls) stated that they now felt safe at school.⁴

References

1. World Vision International (2014), *End of Project Evaluation Report, Programme Partnership Agreement: Social Accountability and Child Protection Project*, October 2011 to March 2014.
2. *Ibid.*
3. World Vision South Sudan (2014), *LEAP Semi-Annual Programme Management Report, Tambura Rehabilitation Programme, Social Accountability and Child Protection Project*, October 2013 to March 2014.
4. World Vision International (2014).

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

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Children performing in celebrations to mark the Day of the African Child in Tambura, Western Equatoria, South Sudan.