

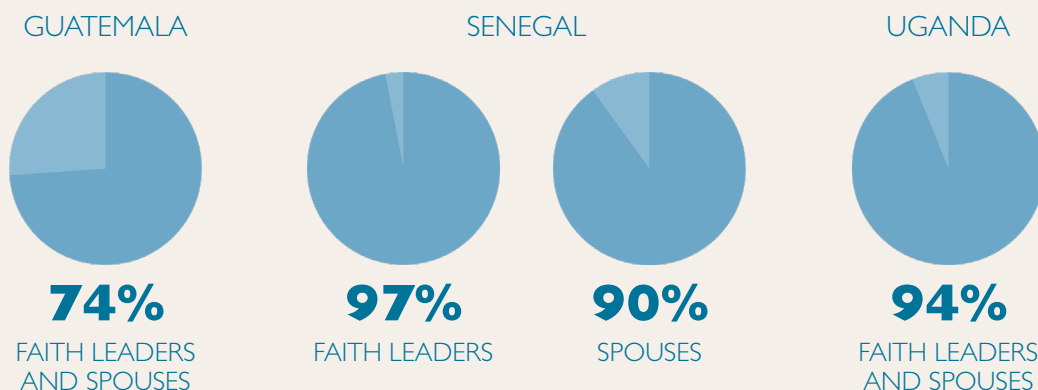
COMMUNITY HOPE ACTION TEAMS DRIVE CHANGE

Research shows how engaged and motivated faith communities make big changes for children in their communities

World Vision’s Channels of Hope for Child Protection (COH CP) project is an intervention that seeks to address violence against children by catalysing religious leaders’ awareness of key child protection issues, mobilising local faith community resources and, as a result, fostering the development of an enabling environment for the protection, support and well-being of children. A multi-country, longitudinal study of the project shows a positive impact on attitudes, behaviours and motivations.

ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD PROTECTION

Percentage of faith leaders and spouses who participated in CoH CP workshops and actively worked on child protection in their communities afterwards:



KEY GLOBAL LEARNINGS

This study shows the promise of the CoH CP model in strengthening an enabling environment for child protection and demonstrates the positive potential of engaging faith leaders and actors in ongoing initiatives to strengthen child protection around the world.

The methodology of CoH CP assumes that the transformation of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices that promote a better, more protective environment for children, especially the most vulnerable, will cascade down from faith leaders and their spouses to CHAT groups to the wider faith communities and then to the broader community. Active and engaged CHAT groups are a key mechanism to make that happen. Many of them took actions that were innovative, situation-specific, creative, dynamic – and sometimes unconventional.

The research documentation is available on WVI.org:
www.wvi.org/faith-and-development/channels-hope

COMMUNITY HOPE ACTION TEAMS (CHATs)

CHATs are the real engine driving CoH CP change. They are small groups of people who design and manage a church or faith community's child protection plan. They attend a workshop with content similar to the workshops attended by their faith leaders. These workshops equip CHAT groups with the knowledge, skills and time to make a plan to address their local child protection issues.

Across the study, they varied in terms of their structure, composition and functionality, but over 90% of CHAT members in the intervention sites in all study countries said that they had been involved in child protection work following the workshop, despite the restrictions of COVID. A majority of them were involved in congregation or community meetings, talks and discussions about child protection and child well-being.

A DIVERSITY OF RESPONSES

One of the most encouraging outcomes seen was how each CHAT group came to understand the unique needs, strengths and skill sets in their communities, and put those to work to address root causes. Initiatives included:

- Raising funds to help vulnerable children with school fees and other needs
- Working with governments, officials and teachers to improve services or facilities
- Awareness raising within their communities on a variety of child protection topics
- Positive parenting skill building for parents and caregivers
- Teaching youth livelihood skills: motorbike repair, hair dressing, tailoring
- Mobilising community members to shut down a pub causing violent behaviour
- Visiting homes to talk about child protection issues
- Using music, dance and drama to talk about children's rights and well-being
- Monitoring attendance and counselling children and parents about the importance of school
- Encouraging churches to be more child-friendly
- Putting up a house for a vulnerable family
- Working to get a community not to baptise children without birth registration
- Establishing a nursery for preschool children.

EFFECTIVE CHATS HAD SEVERAL THINGS IN COMMON:

- They referred to the religious texts when discussing child protection issues
- They developed action plans
- They worked to sensitise the surrounding community by involving key stakeholders from the community (teachers, village leaders, women's groups, other community-based organisations)
- They established funds to support the most vulnerable children
- They focused on and promoted a few key child protection issues that are specific to their context and community.



GUATEMALA

In focus group discussions, CHATs said that CoH CP motivated them to engage in child protection activities. A female CHAT member learned in the workshops that girls and boys, as well as children with a disability, should be treated equally, which motivated her to promote opportunities for all children:

“We learned so much about children. Girls are worth the same as boys. There are children with disabilities, and they are worthy. This got me motivated to do something for the children. For the same reason, my parents denied me my education. Now I want to give our children the opportunity.” (FGD with CHAT members, San Juan Ermita)

CHAT members also spoke of changing their behaviour first to be a role model for others in the community:

“One thing Channels of Hope fostered in us is the desire to be a role model. If I tell the community about giving love to children, well, I have to be the first that does that. You cannot teach these values if you do not practice them.” (FGD with CHAT members, Jocotán)

Some CHAT members talked about taking concrete steps to tackle child protection issues in their community. For example, a CHAT member in San Juan Ermita mobilised community members to shut down a pub because it was causing problems such as violent behaviour:

“Well we, through this project, managed to remove a brewery. There was a brewery that had a lot of people, so much screaming at night, and doing a lot of things. Thank God, we talked to the man that had the brewery, and we made him aware that it was not only for us but also for them. We talked to him because he also had some daughters... there is [now] no beer, it has another foodstuff, but beer not anymore.” (FGD with CHATs, San Juan Ermita)

SENEGAL

Two CHATs (Muslim and Christian) in Gouloumbou shared their experiences of engaging with community members through sensitisation, establishing funds to help the most vulnerable children with school fees and other needs, and involving their dahira (Muslim faith-based organisation) in child protection activities. The latter point is of particular significance since at baseline no dahira was involved in child protection.

Compared to CHAT members, a smaller number of faith congregation members (67%) and wider community members (53%) said that they had been involved in child protection activity in the last year. However, 71% of faith congregation members and 57% of community members pointed out that faith leaders and their spouses inspired them to be involved in child protection work.

“We learned from this training workshop how to take care of our children, to monitor their studies, to register them at birth for a birth certificate. We also learned not to beat children but to be attentive to their opinions. We have been told about our daughter’s early marriages that can bring complications. Finally, we have been told to avoid forced marriages since girls have rights.” (FGD with FL spouses, Hamdallaya Pont)

UGANDA

The congregation and community members in Buikwe confirmed participating in the sensitisation activities of their CHATs. One of the local faith community members said:

“The CHATs and faith leaders have played a great role. In our Pentecostal church, after prayers CHATs teach us on how to protect children and the faith leader also teaches that it is a responsibility of parents towards their children and those that are not theirs.” (FGD with Christian congregation members, Buikwe)

CHAT members appear to be highly motivated to engage in child protection work. They reported experiencing positive changes in their attitudes, beliefs, and practices about child protection which had spurred them on to engage in sensitisation activities in their communities. Some community members have started referring and reporting cases to the CHAT groups. CHAT members have also been involved in successfully addressing individual child protection cases.

One CHAT from Rakai established a music, dance, and drama group as a way of teaching his community about children’s rights. Another CHAT in Rakai trained other churches in child protection so that they could inform their respective communities:

“Me in my team in the CHAT, after the training, we organised a way to reach out to churches and train different churches about child protection issues and taking care of children.” (FGD with CHAT members, Rakai)

Some CHATs focus their sensitisation activities on child protection issues that are prevalent in their communities. For example, one CHAT in Rakai engaged their community on early pregnancy:

“We are looking at early pregnancies to avoid them in our community. We have early pregnancies. So when I had gone for the training, and it landed in my ears, I told my people to look at this as a big issue.” (FGD with CHAT member, Rakai)

BACKGROUND

Channels of Hope for Child Protection (CoH CP) is a World Vision attitude and social norm change intervention. It starts with raising the awareness of faith leaders and their spouses about key child protection issues through analysis and dialogue about religious texts. These faith leaders then mobilise local faith communities around child protection to foster an environment that advances the protection, support and well-being of children. This process is supported by faith leader workshops, Congregational Hope Action Teams (CHATs) workshops, and a biannual follow-up by World Vision (see figure below, which illustrates CoH CP phases and points in time for data collection).

Together with Queen Margaret University (QMU) in Scotland, World Vision's global research team conducted a five-year (2016-2021), multi-country, longitudinal study on Faith Communities' Contribution to Ending Violence Against Children (FCC EVAC). The study explores CoH CP pathways for change and impact at different time points across three sites representing different religious environments: Senegal (predominantly Muslim), Uganda (Christian and Muslim), and Guatemala (Christian). Additionally, this study gathers evidence on faith communities' role in child protection beyond CoH CP.

The study in these countries was conducted among World Vision programmes that implement Child Protection and Advocacy (CPA) projects. The sites had similar key socioeconomic, religious, and cultural factors. The only difference between the intervention and comparison sites was that the intervention included Channels of Hope (CoH) as a part of their CPA programme. In both countries, the endline studies use a mixed method approach. The quantitative component included a survey on knowledge, attitudes, practices, and theological reflections (KAPT) among faith leaders and spouses across intervention and comparison sites, and another survey on community norms among CHAT members, faith congregation members, and community members. The qualitative component generated insights from individuals through key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) with various study population groups, as well as participatory activities with children and case studies.

The main methodological challenge was that the study could not follow all participants of the original cohort identified at baseline, meaning that the researchers had to construct new samples from the participants of catalysing workshops at each time point to most accurately capture changes throughout the project. Nonetheless, they managed to follow a high percentage of the catalysing workshop participants throughout the study.

