

We contribute to:



## CHILD PROTECTION

**One of the main goals of Help a Child is to provide a safe environment for children and protect them from harm. Help a Child does this by activating and strengthening the so-called rings of responsibility surrounding children.**

Governments at national and local level have an important role to play through laws and social services. Community members can protect children by being aware, supporting each other, and responding when action is needed. The most impactful ring of responsibility, however, consists of parents or others – grandparents, foster parents, aunts and uncles, older siblings – who take care of children on a daily basis. A fulfilling but also demanding task, especially when income and prospects are low, and stress is high. Help a Child has been focusing a lot on this group of parents and caregivers by means of different interventions. In 2022, many parents came together in groups to discuss and exchange experiences, using our practical, fun, and easy-to-use Parenting Challenge modules. In other areas, where women and children are basically at constant risk of violence and exploitation, we used 'What's Up, Ladies?!'. This group-based method helps women to map out the main risks in their community and develop action plans for better protection.

In Ukraine and DRC, child protection trainings were facilitated for social workers to help them detect possible harm and respond adequately. And in most of our projects, child protection committees have been trained to prevent and respond to child abuse and exploitation.

1 NO POVERTY



End poverty in all its forms everywhere

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

### Key statistics:



**453**

children groups supported

**4,946**

children supported through child protection activities



**16,000**

people reached through 'End child marriage' campaigns



## SOUTH SUDAN AND DRC

# Training and exchange to **protect more children**



**'Child protection is a serious matter here', explains Galla, Senior Protection Officer for Help a Child in South Sudan. 'Especially in Pibor, children are facing challenges such as child neglect and early child marriage. In some cases, girls are already booked for marriage by the age of five. They join their husband when they are only twelve or thirteen.'**

By various means, Help a Child tries to improve the situation of girls and boys in Pibor and Wau. Galla: 'We have established eight child-friendly spaces in Wau and Tonj North County. The spaces play a central role in all kinds of protection activities. Mothers and children can come here to play

and talk. Each centre has a child help desk where children can share any problems or challenges. And we facilitate *What's Up?! sessions* from here. *What's Up?! is a unique tool developed by Help a Child to engage children, youth, parents, teachers, and community members in addressing social and psychosocial issues.'*

Last year Galla travelled to Goma to train staff and partners of Help a Child DRC on *What's Up* roll-out and facilitation. Galla: 'In Wau and Pibor, we can clearly see how *What's Up?! combined with other protection activities, is making a change for children. Some parents who already gave their daughter away for marriage are now reconsider-*

*ring. And mothers and fathers are becoming more involved in positive parenting. After the training in DRC, it was noted that community needs in DRC are similar to the needs in South Sudan. Therefore, we expect *What's Up?! to have a positive impact on children in DRC.'**



## UKRAINE

# Mental health support in times of war

**Because of the high need for mental health and psychosocial support in Ukraine, Help a Child, in collaboration with Dorcas, developed a psychosocial group programme for both children and adults. Through group sharing, movement, psycho education, and games, children and their parents were supported to deal with the psychosocial consequences of the war.**

Social workers, psychologists, and volunteers of different organizations in Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania were trained by Help a Child and Dorcas to implement the programme. Implementation of the programme took place from September and had good results. It is not always easy to share sensitive topics like emotions and stress-coping with other people. Participants mentioned that the programme helped them to share and recognize experiences and to feel mentally supported.



## SOMALIA

# What's Up, Ladies?!

**In Somalia, Help a Child started to provide psychosocial support for vulnerable women and children through Medair and local partners.**

The first four groups, comprising eighty women in total, followed ten sessions of our 'What's Up, Ladies?!' method. They talked about the value of trust and

confidentiality and mapped safe and risky areas in their communities. During the group sessions, the women shared hidden stories from their past. In addition, they made a protection action plan. They mentioned things such as fetching water together as a group and using a light when visiting the toilet. Some parts of the training need slight adjustments to fit the culture and context. But overall the support groups were received well. As one of the women testified afterwards: 'I will use the mapping and teach my children about it.'



## KENYA

# 'Helping children in every way we can'

**Juliet and Purity are child facilitators and part of the Child Protection Committee in Mavindini, Kenya. They create a safe place for the children of their community and offer help when it is needed.**

Juliet: 'It is important that children have people they can trust and who they can talk to about everything that bothers them. We are part of the community but not of their families, and this helps to provide a safe space. The children

here face many difficulties, such as malnutrition, lack of education, or (sexual) abuse. We want them to know they are not alone, and we are here to help them in any way we can. Through Help a Child, we received the necessary training to do this. The programme in Mavindini is being phased-out this year, but we now have the necessary skills to continue child protection.'

The child facilitators continue to meet in their committee and share the different stories they hear from



the children. Also, different policies are in place, such as a procedure to protect the children from abuse and make sure the perpetrator is held accountable. Last year, the first person was convicted of child abuse through the Child Protection system.





## Providing support on the frontline

**In 2022, Help a Child launched a new Emergency Fund to support children who need our attention the most. The first pointer on the map: Masisi, North Kivu. 'Being here is like standing on the frontline. When you are working here, you definitely learn to pray,' commented one of the colleagues from the Help a Child DRC team.**



**'A situation created by bad people can only be changed by good people.'**

**Country Director Patrick**

DRC is the largest country in Africa. Considering its natural resources, wide rivers full of fish, and fertile soil, it is a land of opportunity. Unfortunately, recurrent violence, conflict, and civil wars have brought tremendous suffering to the people. The projects of Help a Child, as well as a field office, are situated in North and South Kivu, close to the border with Rwanda and Burundi. 'Last year, the situation here was tense and critical, especially due to rising rebel groups such as M23. At a certain point last year we prepared to evacuate the field office. In the end, the danger was averted just in time. But in Masisi we need to be alert at all times,' explains security officer Dirk-Jan.

#### **Jean**

It is very challenging to start and maintain project interventions in an area like Masisi, where we constantly have to choose between helping children and securing staff. Moreover, during the rainy season, the area is extremely difficult to access. This does not make things any easier. Still, we have a strong desire to be here. We see how war, poverty, and hunger leave deep marks on children and families.

Like Jean\*, who one day walked to the field and was kidnapped and made to work for a militia group. For months, he was forced to carry heavy arms and use drugs and alcohol. He managed to escape but has a hard time adapting to normal life.

And 'normal life' is still very hard. Children eat one meal a day at the most. Girls have cause to feel unsafe in many places. And hardly any health care is available. It is heartbreaking to see children suffer this much.

#### **Keep going**

On behalf of our constituency, through the Emergency Fund, we want to reach out to these children and families in a project called 'Kids@Risk'. Together with our partners in DRC, the aim of this project is to provide food, protection, education, and psychosocial support. Because 'sometimes hope is all that is left, we need it to keep going', says Patrick Mugula, Country Director for Help a Child DRC.

'We have worked in volatile areas like Masisi before,' says Simone Schoemaker, Manager Fundraising & Awareness, 'but with the

Emergency Fund, we are taking a new step to use private funds structurally in an area with so many uncertainties. An adventurous step, because it involves possible interruptions and deviations from plans. We trust our private donors will understand this, precisely because their support is so desperately needed here.'

'A situation created by bad people can only be changed by good people,' adds Country Director Patrick. That is why Help a Child aims to bring about changes for children and families in DRC. In 2023, we hope to expand the Emergency Fund and start a new project in South Sudan to reach more children in the places where there is most need.

*\*Fictitious name*

