

We contribute to:

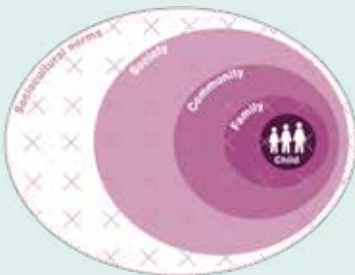


CHILD PROTECTION

Children all over the world are precious, a gift, and it is beautiful to see them growing up. But children are also vulnerable. They need care, love, and support from adults. And they need to be protected from all kinds of harm. Not so much by locking them up in the house, of course, but by preparing them, guiding them, and thus reducing the risk of something bad happening to them.

In our Western world, this is important but quite doable. But what if the children have to grow up under harsh circumstances? In poverty or conflict, in an unsafe home because of conflicts between the parents? Or in a climate which can cause severe droughts or floods? Help a Child is working in those kinds of areas and trying to improve the wellbeing of children. An important element is preventing any abuse of children and, if something does happen, organizing an adequate response. Therefore, we developed guidelines together with our offices and our partner offices. When focusing on child protection, it is important to work on different levels; we call it the rings of responsibility.

Four levels of the child protection socio-ecological model



The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019

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:



745
children groups supported

6,594

children supported through child protection activities



> 10,000
people reached through 'End child marriage' campaigns



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Safe at home

Home should be a safe haven. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Therefore, Help a Child started a programme for parents: The Parenting Challenge. The results are very positive.

In Terego West, in north-west Uganda, the situation changed so much that even the leaders of the district noticed the difference! Parents themselves shared that there had been a big change in their homes. Some quotes:

Stress and bad communication between parents lead to unsafe homes. By reducing the stress and improving communication and cooperation, there is harmony in the homes.



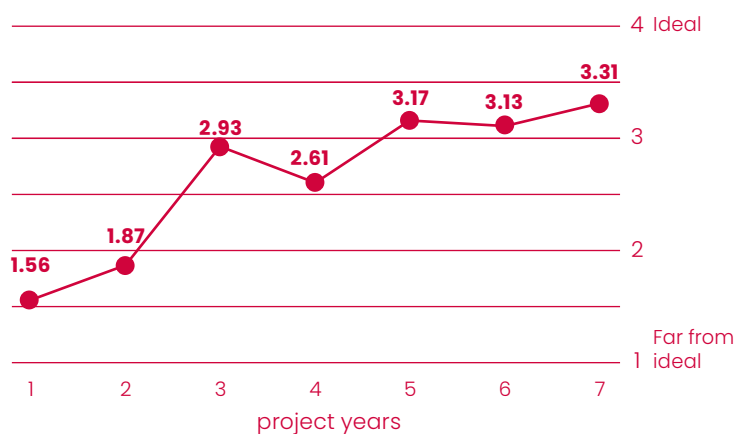
Father: 'I learnt that as a father I also have a responsibility in my family. I used to work in my farm and when I had money from the crops, I went drinking with my friends instead of thinking about my family. Now I support my children and buy things they need for food and for school.'

Father: 'Before, there was a lot of violence in the homes. Now, it is all at peace, no more beatings.'

Mother: 'Another reason for less violence: we all worked for ourselves. I worked here and had a plan with the produce of the farm, but my husband had another idea. That led to a lot of violence. We did not know what to expect from each other, we didn't talk. But now we work together, we plan together, and there is no violence anymore.'

Abim (Empowerment Score Card)

Average score for 'Enabling Safe environment' given by project participants in Abim, Uganda per project year.



1,877

parents participated
in the Parenting
Challenge in Uganda

961
women

916
men



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The community response

To create a sustainable protection system, the whole community should be involved. In most projects, Child Protection Committees are established and trained and linked to the local government.

In Abim, in north-east Uganda, they even went a step further. Perpetrators of child abuse were known, but nothing would happen with them, because there was no clear system and the court was 100 km away. So another solution was created: a mobile court! The partner organization SAO works closely with the community, the Family and Child Unit of the police, the

Community Development and Probation Department of the district, and with the magistrate of the court in the region. Once a month, the magistrate will come to Abim and hold her

court in the open air under a tree in the community. In this way, justice is done to the victims and perpetrators realize they cannot just do anything to children and get away with it.



The magistrate during a court session.



DRC

A sense of **belonging**

When a child is born it will get a name. If it is born in a hospital, the names will be written in the hospital book. And if it is born at home? Registering a newborn baby sounds like a normal thing to do, but sometimes there are challenges: the registration office is far away, it will cost money (to go there and sometimes also to pay a 'facilitation' fee).

Yet birth registration is very important; it is a human right for a child to know where it comes from and to have its name registered in an official institution. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the registration did happen, but on paper, and papers can get lost, since people are often on the run because of conflict. That was the case for Sophie. Her children were not officially registered. Fortunately, she heard from her neighbour that there was an announcement on local radio that registration was now possible in her community. With the support from of Help a Child and its Kids@Risk programme, computers were now in place,

so connection to the national database was easy. Sophie managed to register both her children, the one aged two and the newborn.



1,548
birth certificates
have been rendered





The voice of the children

To be heard, to be listened to... It sounds so simple, and yet it is very important. Adults all over the world often think they know what is best for children. But children do have their own voice too. That does not mean that we only listen to children and not to adults. You have to listen to everyone and preferably bring people together to listen to each other.

That is what Help a Child in South Sudan has been trying to do, respecting the culture and values of the communities. An example is the risk and safe places exercise 'What's Up People': children, teenagers, adults, and leaders discuss in small groups what the safe places are in their community and what the risky places are. They discuss the causes and come up with solutions. During the final meeting, they all come together to discuss and make a plan of action. In one of the camps, the road was a risky place, because cars used to speed on it. By making humps on the road, cars have to slow down.



Children as changemakers

To hear the voice of children in a more systematic way, South Sudan introduced Child-led Research: children finding out from fellow

children what they think, where things go wrong, and what can be done better. In all communities where Help a Child and its partners work, this system has been set up to give children a means of providing feedback and even making complaints about the activities or staff. Some of the complaints included: why is the child-friendly space only open when it is time for BoruBoru (a national sport for girls)? We want to play other games too. Another complaint was heard about the lack of enough sport materials in one of the communities. And children with a disability complained that they were only asked for comments, instead of being involved in all activities.



BoruBoru

BoruBoru is a game played by girls in South Sudan. It is played by two teams. Two players from one team stand about ten metres away from each other. One member of the other team stands in the middle. The two players have to try to throw a ball to hit the girl in the middle. That girl has to try to dodge the ball. When she is hit, the first team gets a point and the teams have to switch. Besides being a very active and fun game, it is also used to create self-confidence in the girls and an awareness that they are more than 'wedding-material'. During the competitions, girls talk openly to the audience about topics concerning them, like early marriages and the importance of education. One of the girls, Sylvia*, was supposed to get married at a young age. But because of what she heard during the Boruboru trainings, she decided to talk to her parents, explaining she was too young for marriage. Her parents listened to her and agreed to postpone the marriage and support their daughter in school.

Read more about BoruBoru on page 37.



**fictitious name*

