

We contribute to:



Child Protection

Children are the future. That is true. But how do we make sure they have a future? When growing up, children learn more and more, including about what is good and what is bad. But in the meantime they are vulnerable: a lot of things can happen to them and they are too young to fully protect themselves. And if something does happen to them, the impact can be high and their future can be at stake.

Child protection is about prevention and response: how can harm be avoided and what needs to be done by whom in case harm does occur? Protecting children is important in areas of conflict, of course, but also in other areas, where, for instance, poverty is causing a lot of problems. But even in the Netherlands, children need to be protected against harm. That is why, in all the projects of Help a Child and its partners, child protection plays an important role.

There are different ways it needs to be done, different layers, different groups of people responsible for protection:

- **Children** themselves: what can they do to protect themselves?
- **Parents/family**: as primary caretakers they are primarily responsible;
- **Community**: think about the school, the neighbourhood, the church, what can they do?
- **Society & norms**: what kind of policies, procedures, and laws are there? Think about the police, community services, health, but also the legal system.

Help a Child focuses mainly on the first three mentioned. Where possible, we do try to influence national government systems.

Child abuse happens everywhere. The main place for protection is at home, but home may be precisely where the abuse happens, often out of frustration on the part of the parents.

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:



632

children groups supported

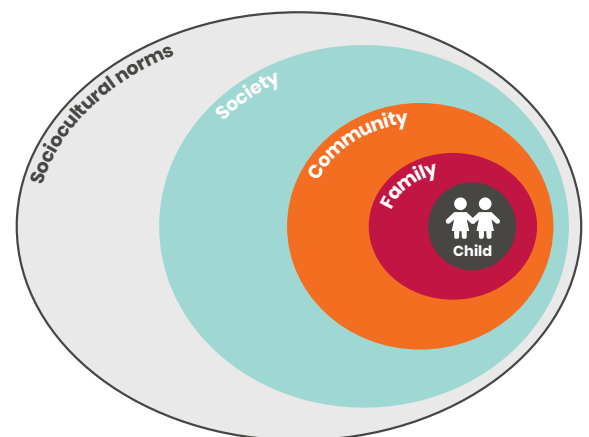
11,064

children supported through child protection activities in disaster response programmes



21,007

people reached through 'End child marriage' campaigns



Four levels of the child protection socio-ecological model, The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019



In Uganda, 85% of children experience violent punishment by parents or caregivers. Beating or caning is what parents do when children do not listen, and this beating can be disproportionate.

AEE Uganda started an intervention, the Parenting Challenge, designed by Help a Child. To include fathers, they started a training course for couples: four half-days for both mothers and fathers and for single parents. The changes in the homes are tremendous: both parents and

children report far less violence in the house (towards children but also between parents themselves), better listening, and more working together. Children are supported to go to school. As parents themselves mentioned, there was no Harmony in the House.

Utrecht University is conducting research on this subject. Four students, under the supervision of Professor Maria de Haan and Assistant Professor Tjitske de Groot, have conducted phase 1 and phase

2 of the research. In 2025, the final phase will take place. The results will be published in 2025.

At the end of 2024, preparations were started to make a documentary about this Parenting Challenge, which will be completed in the first quarter of 2025.



**documentary
Parenting
Challenge**



493

290 women
203 men

**parents trained in the
Parenting Challenge**



**parenting
groups
trained**





BURUNDI IMPACT STORY:

Like father, like family

In Burundi, the Parenting Challenge is also an important intervention for reducing violence and increasing the proper care of children. Here it is combined with PIP, an innovative approach for farmers, where the whole household is involved in improving their farm and thus in improving their own nutrition and income.

One of the fathers in Ruyigi, Burundi, shared that he was always drunk, not able to take care of all the needs of his wife and children and, therefore, dodged going home and went drinking with his friends instead. This resulted in him coming

home late, shouting at his wife and children, and even beating them up. His farm was doing badly, since all the money was spent on alcohol. When he joined the Parenting Challenge group, he realized he had to change. He stopped drinking and stopped beating his wife and children. Instead, he is now supporting them in school. He also followed the PIP training, and together with his wife and children they made a plan for their farm. His farm looks very good, with several crops, fruits and animals. He even managed to buy more land, and his children are attending school. And, most importantly, no more beating and neglect!



780 parents

314 men | 466 women

**trained in the
Parenting Challenge**

113

**PIP farmers
trained / supported**

67 men | 46 women





DRC IMPACT STORY: Birth registration

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is facing many problems. Because of the mineral-rich soil, there are many countries interested in this part of Africa. And that causes ongoing conflicts, with many armed groups fighting each other, resulting in many problems for the population.



One of those problems is the registration of newborn children. Normally, children are registered when they are born in the hospital or at home. This registration, although a simple act in itself, is vital during the rest of a child's life. It provides an identity, but also a document that is necessary to be able to register for school, obtain identity papers, and register for a job. According to data collected by UNICEF, only 40% of children have their birth registered.

Because of the decades-long conflict, this birth registration is not always possible, for various reasons: people have to flee, papers get lost, or the hospital



lacks the supplies or personnel needed for registration.

The Help a Child team in DRC decided, together with the local authorities, to help children to register, even when they are already somewhat older. This includes an investigation to check facts provided by the children and their caregivers, but after that they get this important document: the birth registration!



310 birth certificates
have been rendered



Safe places for children

Children also have a role to play in their own protection. By knowing where to go and where not to go, they learn about safe and risky places. And by knowing what to do if something happens, they know where to go.

Home and school may be safe places for children, although there too things can happen to them at the hands of adults or peers. In some countries a safe space is created where children can play with others, where interventions such as What's Up Children and My Friend can take place within psychosocial support groups, or where children can talk to trained facilitators.

In Rania, **India**, five Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) have been created.

The community was involved right from the beginning. In fact, it was the community that requested such a place, so that parents, when they are at work, know their children are in a safe place. Buildings were selected and transformed into places where children like to be: with bright colours, play materials, and trained facilitators. Children participate in recreational activities, but also in life skills lessons, and in discussions about their rights and responsibilities. They can share

with each other and if they want to talk about their own issues, there are trained counsellors to listen and guide them. The centre is also used for community activities and sessions for the parents to help them support themselves and their children.

Also in India, we have created child-friendly spaces in all villages, providing a safe environment for children to study, play, and learn. In 2024, we are working on establishing small, environmentally

Children forget their problems through creative and recreational activities at Rusayo Camp, Nyiragongo in Goma DRC.

friendly **gardens**. Additionally, we are introducing value education to address issues of gender and caste discrimination. The children are very happy with our centres and eagerly participate in the activities.

In **DRC**, Child-Friendly Spaces are very important. Because of the ongoing conflicts, children do not feel safe anywhere. In the CFS they can feel safe, play with other children, and, if needed, talk to one of the counsellors. Play in times of conflict is very important. Children can forget about their problems for a while, release tension, and be with their friends. Just be a child again. These moments of normalcy are very valuable.

However, because of the insecurity, people are constantly on the move. The Help a Child team in DRC decided to follow the people. They therefore started with **Mobile Child-Friendly Spaces**. If people have moved and settled for a short time in a place, the team organizes activities in the open fields, slightly outside the new camp. In that way children can still enjoy playing with friends. A new danger, however, is that these activities will attract not only children but also armed groups who want to 'recruit' children as new soldiers. For the team, this means constant checking of what is possible and what is too dangerous.

In **Somalia**, the Child-Friendly Spaces are near the health clinics.



When mothers have to go for medical services, the children can stay in the space next to the hospital, where they are safe and where they can play. There are trained CFS facilitators organizing activities. It is nice for the children to play while waiting for their mothers, and for the mothers it is nice to know their children are safe. However, this set-up made it difficult for the facilitators to organize ongoing group activities and to put agetmates together. They decided to have group activities in the afternoon, after school (when the clinics are no longer that busy). There are also group activities for parents, mainly mothers, where they share and learn about skills they need as a parent.



Thanks to What's Up sessions, Maria is now better equipped to nurture her children's well-being and foster a loving and supportive home environment.

One of the mothers, Maria*, shared her story. Her teenage son skipped school. Normally she would have beaten him, but due to the parent sessions she decided to sit with him and talk, finding out the reason for skipping school. It turned out he had difficulties with science and maths and nobody helped him, so he dodged the lessons. Maria talked with the school about this and organized extra lessons for her son to catch up. He is now a happier boy.

**fictitious name*

