

We contribute to:



Child Protection

Children need protection. That's obvious, but is it really that easy? Many parents, including those in the Netherlands, struggle with this because there are so many dangers. Nevertheless, you must allow your child to grow up and become independent, for example by letting them go to school alone or play outside.

The same applies in the countries where Help a Child works. However, the circumstances are often even more challenging. Parents often have to leave their children at home alone while they search for water or food, work on the land or try to sell a few tomatoes at the market to earn money for food.

Children face many other dangers too: they can get sick from drinking dirty water or be bitten by mosquitoes carrying malaria and become very ill. The stress of survival can also lead to parents arguing and sometimes becoming violent.

In countries such as DRC and South Sudan, there are also armed militias that create insecurity. Even in 'safe' countries, groups of armed people fed up with poverty have taken to robbing people and raping girls.

Help a Child and its partner organisations try various ways to protect children. If something does happen, it is crucial that children receive the right care.

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:

10,941

children in Children Groups supported



33,313

parents trained in the Parenting Challenge

920

Parenting Groups



473

Child Protection Committees



370

Child-Friendly Spaces supported

117,156

children supported via Child-Friendly Spaces



UGANDA IMPACT STORY:

A girl with a **voice**

Gladys (14) lives in Abim, a district in the northeast of Uganda. She was a very shy girl and didn't like to speak up in class or in a group. She didn't have many friends and felt lonely. When she started having her menstruation, she had to stay home every month for a few days, since her parents could not afford to buy sanitary pads.

Change started when she became a member of the children's club at Awach Primary School. Together with other children, she talked about everything that concerns them. Slowly, Gladys also started to share her experiences. It turned out that more girls were facing monthly problems. It felt good to realize she was not the only one with this problem.

Together with the other members of the club and the teacher, Gladys decided to do something about this. They learned how to make their own sanitary pads: a piece of cloth that you can stuff with cotton which grows there. You can then wash it and use it again. In the club, they informed the boys about menstruation, so they understood what it was and no longer bullied girls with it. And it worked!

The girls are no longer missing lessons because of this. Gladys finds the group so important that she now even talks about these topics on the radio to advocate for children's rights. She now loves speaking out and encouraging other children to know and stand for their rights. "I love speaking on the radio because it makes me feel like my voice matters," Gladys says with a big smile. "I want all children to know that they have a right to be heard and should never be afraid to speak up."

Gladys dreams of becoming a teacher one day so she can inspire and empower other children. She is grateful to the children's club for giving her confidence, skills, and hope for a brighter future.





KENYA IMPACT STORY:

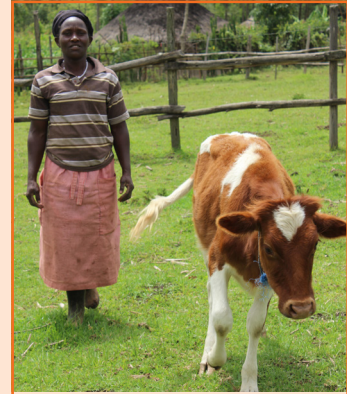
Challenging parenting

Southwestern Kenya is a region of striking natural beauty. Under normal rainfall conditions, the landscape is lush and green. However, livelihoods in the area are highly dependent on rainfall patterns. When rains are delayed, insufficient, or excessive, communities can face significant challenges and increased vulnerability.



Linnet, a single mother, experienced these challenges firsthand. To provide for her children, she brewed traditional beer, which gave her enough income to support the family. However, the work also carried risks. Customers sometimes became drunk and unpredictable, and Linnet's children helped deliver the brew to clients in the community, which was not always safe for them.

When ADS, the partner organisation of Help a Child, started a PIP training for farmers, Linnet joined. She was trained in farm planning, smart agriculture, and diversification. Supported by the other members of the group,



37 Farmer Groups supported in Kenya

she took the difficult decision to leave brewing and started farming the way she learned. With a loan from the group, she started poultry farming. Today, her business is doing very well, and she can take care of the children, providing them with a safe home.



Linnet participating in the farmers' group training session.

DRC IMPACT STORY:

How a community protects their girls and women

In DRC, protection is greatly needed but difficult to achieve. Armed militias are making villages unsafe. There is a lot of violence, including sexual violence.

A few years ago, Help a Child launched a group intervention programme called Empower 2 Protect (E2P). Through this programme, men and women of all ages come together in group sessions to discuss safety issues. They reflect on the risks they face in their daily lives, how these risks affect them and how they can protect themselves and their communities.

These discussions are particularly important because many everyday activities involve significant danger. For instance, young girls and women frequently have to walk long distances to collect water and firewood or to trade goods at

the market. These journeys expose them to serious risks, as armed groups operate in the area, making travel unsafe. The E2P sessions provide a platform for community members to openly discuss these challenges and explore ways to mitigate the risks they encounter.

Several solutions are being discussed in the E2P groups: travelling in a group, having (young) men accompany girls and women, and not going out too late as it gets dark early. Another possibility is wearing an Invi-bracelet, which releases a bad smell when pulled off, scaring people away and giving the girl the opportunity to escape.

The insecurity in the area affects more than just girls and women. Young men are also at risk, as they are often targeted by armed groups and forced to join militias. Refusing is rarely an option, so



many boys and young men have to think carefully about how to stay safe and avoid being recruited.

Within the E2P groups, participants discuss these risks and share their experiences. The groups have proven to be effective. Girls and women feel more confident speaking about their fears and experiences, and realise that they are not alone. Men gain a better understanding of the dangers faced by their daughters and wives, as well as how they can support and protect them. Meanwhile, young men are increasingly opening up about the risks they face and discussing strategies to stay safe.





Learning through play

Children need to play. It may be a common understanding, but the importance of it for children, and adults, is often not realized.

Through play, children develop physical skills such as running, jumping and throwing a ball, which requires hand-eye coordination. Take football, for example: in all our programmes, boys and an increasing number of girls play football. Sometimes, girls play a different game called netball. In South Sudan, they play a game called Boruboru, which has many variations in other African countries.

Children also learn social skills, such as how to cooperate and work together. This is important in a team sport, but consider Gladys's story from **Uganda** (see page 41), where she learned to open up in the children's club.

In the What's Up children's groups in **South Sudan**, children play all kinds of games to learn about emotional skills. Sometimes you can be very sad, sometimes very happy, and sometimes very angry. How do you realize that? And what do you do? Maybe you feel

like beating up somebody, but are there better ways to deal with anger? Instead of talking about this, children learn about this through games.

In **Kenya** teenagers talk about sensitive topics like sexual reproductive health through a board game with questions. And a quiz also stimulates them to think and talk about it.

Adults learn through play, too. In Mwansambo, **Malawi**, a drama

group performed an interesting form of theatre in which the actors role-played common situations, such as a quarrel between a husband and wife. Then the narrator stops the play and the actors freeze. The narrator then asks the audience what they see and what advice they would give. Several audience members share their views until a consensus is reached. Then the play continues, with the actors following the audience's advice.





Help a Child **India** developed dedicated, child-friendly learning spaces to support holistic early learning and improve school readiness in both Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres and primary schools. They promoted playful learning by expanding kinaesthetic and physical development opportunities, including installing play equipment such as swings and slides and creating safe play areas that strengthen children's gross and fine motor skills. They also created stimulating learning environments by setting up libraries in ECD centres with age-appropriate picture books and adding colourful wall paintings to make the spaces welcoming and cognitively engaging. Classroom readiness was further strengthened through essential learning materials, including blackboards, floor mats, child-sized chairs, and audio-visual learning aids, to encourage participation, curiosity, and sustained engagement.

Laughing again

Playing is also very relaxing. It relieves stress, if only temporarily. This is particularly important for children in DRC, South Sudan and Somalia. The ongoing conflicts make the environment very stressful. Children feel this stress in their bodies, and it is evident in their behaviour. But when they have time to play as children should, it eases the stress, relaxes their bodies and minds, enables them to laugh and gives them hope.



SOUTH SUDAN IMPACT STORY:

Become an architect of change with **Boruboru**

In many parts of South Sudan, conflict has replaced playgrounds with fear and silence. Children withdrew. Trust eroded. Communities fractured.

Then, in 2025, Boruboru, a traditional girls' dodgeball game, was revived across Aweil, Wau, Pibor and Tonj North by Help a Child South Sudan. It returned not merely as a sport, but as a movement for healing, leadership and social transformation.

A total of 770 children, aged 10-18, took to the field. They left as leaders. Through structured play and guided reflection, they developed leadership, teamwork, communication, non-violence and advocacy skills. Organised and empowered, they led seven child-driven campaigns lasting between 12 and 21 days, reaching over 30,000 people with messages about education, child protection, peaceful coexistence and an end to child marriage.

Boruboru helped to rebuild trust in fragile communities. Children from divided backgrounds played together. Parents returned to the fields. Chiefs and local leaders gathered. Suspicion was replaced by laughter. Dialogue was reopened.

Boruboru is rooted in culture, is low-cost and is community-owned. It strengthens girls' participation while fostering social cohesion and psychosocial healing. As it spreads organically, Boruboru stands as a powerful testament to the fact that when children are given a safe space and trust, they can become architects of hope and change, rather than remaining victims of conflict.

