

CHILD PROTECTION & PARTICIPATION | EAST ASIA

CAPACITY STATEMENT

At World Vision, we believe every child has the right to live free from harm. Yet, across East Asia, nearly 60% of children experience violence before they reach adulthood, and millions face the threat of trafficking, exploitation, and neglect. These realities demand urgent action.

In 2023 World Vision reached over 1 million people including over 600,000 children through our child protection and participation action in East Asia. We address the immediate threats and the root causes, ensuring that children are protected today and in the future. We believe that when children and young people learn to communicate opinions, take responsibility and make decisions, they develop a sense of belonging, justice, accountability, and solidarity.

During 2023 World Vision's child protection & participation work reached:



CHILD PROTECTION

Rapid economic growth has contributed to significant poverty reduction; however, its uneven and inequitable distribution has heightened children's exposure to protection risks, including child trafficking, forced labor, and sexual exploitation. Migrant children face disproportionate vulnerabilities due to their precarious legal, social, and economic status, while children experiencing intersectional disadvantages—such as poverty, social exclusion, and disability—are at elevated risk. Additionally, entrenched gender inequalities exacerbate specific forms of violence against girls, including trafficking, early and forced marriage, and other gender-based harms.



World Vision tackles the root causes of harm

Effective child protection extends beyond reactive interventions; it necessitates addressing the systemic drivers of violence and exploitation, including poverty, migration, and weak protection frameworks. Central to our approach is the **evidence-based understanding that violence against children is preventable**. World Vision employs a [systems approach](#) to tackle the root causes of violence against girls and boys, fostering collaboration among key actors to establish an integrated protective environment that ensures the care and well-being of all children, with particular attention to those facing heightened risks.



Working to support communities to lead change

World Vision collaborates with local leaders and families to enhance **community-based child protection** systems, equipping communities with the knowledge and tools needed to safeguard children and implement early interventions when risks emerge. We support the establishment and strengthening of local **Child Protection and Advocacy Groups**, comprising formal and informal stakeholders from across the child's ecological system. These groups aim to shift harmful cultural norms and provide timely interventions to protect children at risk. Such systems address critical issues like violence, child trafficking, and child labor, which affect an **estimated 10.5 million children across East Asia and the Pacific**.

In 2023, World Vision supported children and youth in 106 communities across Cambodia to actively engage with local authorities to strengthen the performance of local child protection systems. This collaboration led to improved case management processes, the development and implementation of joint action plans between citizens and local authorities, and the mobilization of over \$248,000 in local resources to support these initiatives. As a result of this work, the proportion of parents and caregivers who perceive their community as a safe place for children increased significantly, from 34.8% to 66%.

Enabling safe migration

Addressing migration risks, particularly for children, is a critical focus area, as migration exposes many children to increased risks of exploitation, trafficking, and labor abuse. In 2019, Southeast Asia was home to an estimated 10.1 million international migrants (UN DESA, 2019), and in 2020, approximately 1.27 million international children were on the move within the region (UNICEF, 2023). **Migrant children** often face barriers to accessing legal protections, education, and healthcare, which exacerbates their vulnerability.

World Vision addresses **economic inequalities and migration drivers** in East Asia by working with local leaders and authorities to create safer migration pathways, strengthen legal protections, and engage families to understand risks and prevent child separation. We also advocate for policy changes to ensure migrant children have access to essential services and are less exposed to exploitation.



In partnership with the Stockholm Environment Institute, World Vision launched the 2024 report, "[Climate Change, Vulnerability, and Migration: Impacts on Children and Youth in East Asia](#)". This report delves into the intersection of climate change, poverty, and migration, examining how climate-induced events are driving families to migrate and the profound impacts on children in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. It highlights the critical risks of distress migration, such as exploitation, educational disruption, and health dangers, and underscores the long-term consequences for children's development. Through strategic partnerships and advocacy, World Vision is working to mitigate these risks, ensuring safer, **more dignified migration and the protection of children's rights in the face of climate change**.

For more insights into World Vision's work on child protection, including migration and climate change: <https://www.wvi.org/eastasia/children-and-migration>



In Vietnam, the 5-year U.S. Department of Labor Against Child Exploitation (ACE) project made significant strides in addressing the worst forms of child labor, including online sexual exploitation. The project strengthened reporting mechanisms and legal responses by training labor inspectors and community stakeholders and engaged private sector institutions to implement proactive measures against child labor.

Through partnerships with local authorities and communities, the project identified and reintegrated over 500 trafficking and forced labor victims into safe environments and education programs, disrupting exploitative practices and enabling survivors to rebuild their lives.

In Mongolia, the Child Protection Compact (CPC) Project has achieved notable success in recent years. The project has engaged over 1,500 children through child and youth clubs to raise awareness and prevent child trafficking, while 54 trafficking victims were referred to local NGOs for support services. Looking ahead, the project will contribute to advancing amendments to strengthen Mongolia's Child Protection Law.



Supporting parents to foster nurturing environments

Violence within families continues to pose a significant risk to children in East Asia, with a substantial proportion subjected to corporal punishment. World Vision's [Celebrating Families Model](#) directly addresses this by equipping parents with the knowledge and tools to foster positive, nurturing home environments for their children.

In collaboration with **faith leaders** and local influencers, we work to challenge and reshape harmful cultural norms surrounding child discipline and family violence. By promoting non-violent, nurturing parenting practices, we aim to **break intergenerational cycles of violence** and strengthen family dynamics.

In Vietnam, over 12,257 parents have participated in training since 2021, which has led to reductions in physical punishment and improved parent-child relationships for 9,125 children.

Equipping adolescents with life skills to break the cycle of violence

Youth, particularly in urban and low-income settings, face a high risk of being drawn into cycles of violence, exploitation, and peer conflict. Using the Peace Road Life Skills Model and IMPACT+, World Vision is teaching adolescents critical skills such as conflict resolution, peer support, and leadership. By equipping young people with life skills, we not only prevent their involvement in violence but also support them to become advocates for peace within their communities.

In Thailand, World Vision trained 56,800 youth in life skills, resulting in a 45.25% increase in their engagement with local governance and decision-making processes between 2020 and 2023. These initiatives, combined with support for children's and youth clubs, helped build young people's life skills and confidence. As a result, there was a 45-percentage point increase in the proportion of adolescents (aged 12 to 18) willing to engage with local leaders and service providers. Additionally, more adolescents reported that their perspectives were actively sought and incorporated into local government decision-making.



Strengthening enabling environments and systems of accountability

World Vision East Asia is committed to ensuring that governments across the region fulfil their duty to protect children. Violence against children often goes unreported due to weak legal systems and social norms that trivialize the issue. Our advocacy efforts aim to strengthen these systems and build national accountability for child protection.

We advocate for policy reform, and accountability and build the capacity of governments to ensure that child protection systems are not only reactive but proactive. By using data from our community programs, we highlight the gaps in existing frameworks and advocate for long-term policy solutions that prioritize children's safety.

In Thailand, World Vision's child protection advocacy efforts have reached over 1.5 million children, contributing to the amendment, updating, and implementation of 20 child safeguarding and empowerment policies. Over the past year, 50% of adolescents (aged 12 to 18), both boys and girls, reported improved quality in child protection services as a result of this work.



CHILD PARTICIPATION

World Vision East Asia believes that children and young people can play a significant role as **agents of change** with the capability to engage in decision-making processes, in accordance with their evolving capacities and gradually increasing autonomy. When children and young people learn to communicate opinions, take responsibility and make decisions, they develop a sense of belonging, justice, accountability, and solidarity.

We intentionally strengthen child participation within three key domains: **Child Participation in Programming, Child Participation in Advocacy, and Child Participation in World Vision decision-making.**

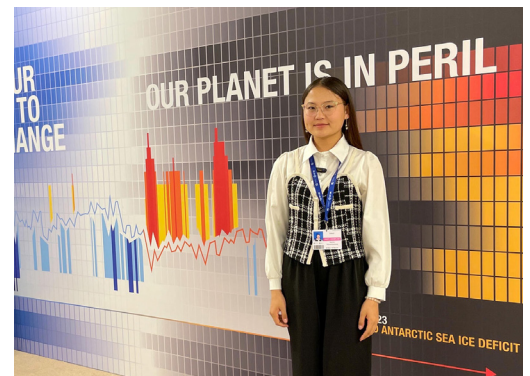
Building Confidence and Leadership in Children

World Vision partners with community leaders to establish **Children's Clubs**, creating safe spaces where young people can develop essential life skills, engage in peer learning, and take on leadership roles. These spaces foster a sense of confidence, enabling children to express their opinions, advocate for their rights, and lead initiatives within their communities. By **shifting perceptions of children's abilities**, we help cultivate an environment where their **voices are heard and valued.**

Child-Led Advocacy: Amplifying Children's Voices

In many communities, decision-making often emphasizes the perspectives of adults, with limited opportunities for children to actively share their views. World Vision child-led advocacy programmes in East Asia, create spaces for young people to engage directly with community leaders and policymakers, enabling them to voice their concerns on important issues such as child labour and violence. This approach helps address long-standing challenges while fostering a more inclusive dialogue for change.

As a result, children gain the skills to express their views, while communities come to recognize the **value of including young voices for the benefit of all.**



Children's voices on a global stage

In December 2023, World Vision supported children from East Asia to participate in COP28 UAE, joining a global community of young climate activists. Our sponsored child from Mongolia, Nomin, had the opportunity to share her insights on climate action with Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar.

"I have gained valuable insights that have broadened my vision for a green future in Mongolia. Connecting with diverse perspectives and innovative ideas, I was inspired to bring sustainable initiatives to my home country."



Youth Councils: Influencing Policy through Participation

Youth councils offer a platform for young people to participate in local governance and influence policy decisions. These councils are vital in breaking down the barriers that prevent young people from engaging in civic life. We address the lack of youth representation in governance by creating pathways for children to influence policy. These councils give young people the experience they need to participate meaningfully in local decision-making processes, fostering a new generation of leaders.

The Children and Youth Council (CYC), launched by World Vision Cambodia in October 2023, empowers young leaders to shape decisions affecting their communities. The council comprises 18 members trained in leadership and advocacy. The CYC's mission is to amplify youth voices in decision-making, advocate for child-focused policy changes, and ensure children's perspectives are integrated into programming and advocacy efforts, fostering a more inclusive and impactful future.

Child-led research: A Path to Sustainable and Inclusive Policies

Children's experiences and perspectives are often overlooked in the research that shapes policy decisions. World Vision's child-led research initiatives actively engage young people in gathering data on critical issues such as climate change, bullying, education, disaster mitigation and nutrition, ensuring that policies reflect the lived realities of children. By supporting children in research projects, we ensure that policies are informed by the insights of those most directly impacted, making them more relevant, sustainable, and equitable. This approach also fosters greater ownership, accountability, and ultimately leads to more effective outcomes for affected communities.

Through these initiatives, World Vision is creating an environment where children are recognized as agents of change, contributing to decisions that directly affect their lives and the well-being of their communities.

Young Minds CAMP (Child-led Actions, Mobilization, and Partnerships)

In 2024, World Vision East Asia launched the [Young Minds CAMP](#), a flagship programme designed to support children and young people as active agents of change. The programme focuses on enhancing child participation in three key areas: programming, advocacy, and decision-making. It aims to amplify children's voices, provide young leaders with the tools to engage in decision-making, and create platforms for child-led advocacy on critical issues like climate change, migration, and child protection. Through this initiative, children—particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds—will develop leadership skills and contribute to shaping policies that directly impact their lives, promoting an inclusive and sustainable future. The programme also incorporates social innovation, ensuring broad participation, including children with disabilities and those from marginalized communities, while upholding child protection standards.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:




The power of child-led research in development programming





Displacement due to conflict and violence is taking its toll on Asia's children




Child-Led Study: Young Minds Shaping Climate Action & Disaster Mitigation for a Sustainable Future

Nomin's journey to COP28: Advocating for children's voices in climate action




Young Minds Camp




Children and Migration in East Asia



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