CHILD PROTECTION
THEORY OF CHANGE

1. WHY DO WE NEED A CP THEORY OF CHANGE?[1]

The goal of Child Protection is "To strengthen the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence." Child Protection is critical for all child well-being (CWB) Aspirations and Outcomes. Violence or exploitation can undermine any other child well-being outcome, just as a safe environment provides children with the opportunity to develop across all the outcomes. Also, adverse childhood experiences (such as abuse, exploitation and neglect) are shown to have long-term consequences on well-being and behaviour. The consequences often include difficulties in school/learning, poor health and problems in gaining employment and interacting socially, frequently for their whole lives. Sustained improvement in all of WV's Child Well-Being Targets requires protection of children from violence and discrimination.

The theory of change that is described in this document reflects the changes at various levels that need to occur to lead to the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence. This is much broader than WV's ministry; WV will only contribute to some elements that are required for change. No change can be directly attributed to WV. Rather, our level of contribution will vary from significant to minor depending on the context.

It is also important to note that this theory of change reflects our current understanding of how change takes place. As we mature in our experience in child protection across many contexts, with an increasing focus on evidence building, our confidence in this theory of change should improve. As we learn from our monitoring and evaluation data, targeted research, and other information, we will most likely change elements of this theory, and increase our confidence in other elements. The theory of change is a tentative statement that is subject to ongoing refinement and adjustment as we learn our way forward.

How will it help us?

The theory of change provides the basis for a number of aspects of our work. It can help to unite or link the contributions of different sectors and lines of ministry to child protection outcomes. The theory of change can also be a valuable guide in developing strategy; it can help offices think through the numerous possible entry points to strengthening protective environments, and link efforts at different levels into a more coherent strategy.

Just like a business that works out its business model by determining where it will add value to the value chain, so too WV offices and programmes can utilize the theory of change to consider the many types of interventions that contribute to child protection outcomes, determine how and where it is likely to make an impact, and scope its work on child protection with reference to the overarching change process that has been mapped in the theory of change. Each entity, sector or program will be able to determine what particular capabilities it has that allow it to add value to aspects of the change process. In other words, the theory of change can help WV to decide where it will focus, where it will partner, and what it will and will not contribute to - at the organisational level, national, sector and program levels. This of course will also be very important in the development of Technical Approaches which are seeking to impact violence or exploitation of children.

The theory of change can also provide a framework to guide evidence building and learning on child protection. We will be developing a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure change at the various levels of the theory of change. Also, all research and action learning in child protection should contribute to refining this theory of change, with special priority given to the 3 X 3 Essentials below.

The theory of change can also be used in capacity building, so that staff are able to envision and dive deeper into the many joined-up elements contributing to child protection. It should be used as a framework to guide all programming and advocacy guidance. And it can provide compelling evidence to potential donors that WV is technically robust in the field of child protection.

---

[1] This section is adapted from World Vision's Theory of Change (2011).

2 WORLD VISION'S APPROACH TO CHILD PROTECTION

As mentioned above, this theory of change is broader than World Vision's ministry, and reflects the efforts of many actors in complex systems. World Vision and partners utilize strong analytical tools to identify specific and appropriate entry points to leverage systemic change in each context.

However, across all contexts, our approach to child protection seeks to empower children, families, communities, governments and other partners to prevent and respond to exploitation, neglect, abuse and other forms of violence affecting children, especially the most vulnerable. We take a systems approach to child protection, helping to strengthen the protective environment around children, as well as the children themselves. This includes a focus on the formal elements (for example, national legislation and policy frameworks, legal services and social welfare services) and informal elements (for example, churches, community based organizations, indigenous leaders and children/youth networks) that work together to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence against children. Our programmatic work and expertise at the local level gives us the credibility and evidence to advocate for stronger child protection systems on national, regional and global level. A systems approach seeks to do the following: [2]

- Address child protection issues in a comprehensive and sustainable manner, including cultural, political, social, spiritual and financial factors.
- Affirm the role of parents (both mothers and fathers) and caregivers as those first responsible for care and protection of children.
- Affirm the responsibility of States to guarantee the care and protection of children, through respecting, protecting and fulfilling their protection rights outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments.
- Affirm the critical contribution of non-formal actors to protective norms and behaviours, including especially the influence of faith communities.
- Affirm the role of children as the final measures of the effectiveness of child protection, and as critical actors in protecting themselves and their peers.
- Strengthen the protective environment for all children, including a strong focus on prevention of abuse, exploitation, neglect and other forms of violence against children.
- Leverage local level work to strengthen child protection systems on national, regional and global levels.

A systems approach to complex change must always operationalize the following principles:
- See the whole/big picture
- See that different parts of the system affect each other
- See various different ways/entry points to change a situation
- Understand that worldview and beliefs affect how people act and choices they make
- Take a long-term view
- Practice continual learning and make regular adjustments.

---

[2] For a more detailed explanation of child protection systems and the implications of a systems-approach to child protection, see World Vision International (WVI) (2011): *World Vision's Understanding of a Systems Approach to Child Protection: A Discussion Paper* (http://www.wvi.org/child-protection/publication/systems-approach-child-protection); and the WVI Child protection strategy (https://www.wvcentral.org/community/cwbr/Documents_03/Child%20Protection%20Key%20Documents/Final%20WVI%20Child%20Protection%20Strategy.pdf).

In addition to strengthening child protection systems, World Vision addresses the root causes of child protection issues (as assessed in each particular area), through targeted interventions by other sectors. This includes addressing family stress, lack of hope, financial drivers of harmful behaviours, discrimination and inequitable access to services or resources, and other factors which contribute to abusive, exploitative or neglectful behaviours.

Evidence and our experience tell us that child protection issues are critical for children (especially the most vulnerable) everywhere that we work. We therefore aim to apply this approach to strengthening the protection of children not only through projects focused on especially vulnerable groups or specific issues (e.g. children who are trafficked), but also as a core part of all community-based programming, humanitarian efforts, and advocacy work for child well-being.

World Vision's Essentials of Child Protection

Within the broad range of entry points and interventions for child protection systems strengthening, we have identified 3X3 Essentials of Child Protection for World Vision. These Essentials have been developed based on participatory analyses of child protection issues and systems in every region where WV works, as well as thoughtful reflection on World Vision's Ministry Framework. World Vision focuses on 3 Actors and 3 Enablers as the Essentials that define the particular value and contribution that World Vision can bring both to a child protection systems strengthening approach. These 3X3 Essentials are the framework for evidence-building, and the focus of our global investment in capacity-building and project model development. They are the areas in which we want to be known for, and the targets for influencing wider practice in the child protection, humanitarian and development community.

The 3 X 3 Essentials are:

3 Actors	3 Enablers
1. *Strengthening families* as the first line of protection and care for children	**1.** Establishing and increasing *local level collaboration between formal and informal actors* to strengthen child protection
2. *Empowering children* as actors in the child protection system	**2.** Integrating focused child protection efforts with other sectoral interventions (e.g. water, livelihoods, education)
3. Catalysing the unique and essential *contribution of churches and other faith communities* to strengthening child protection	**3.** Leveraging our long-term presence in communities for *national, regional and global influence* to establish the importance of child protection for development and humanitarian outcomes
Foundation: Organisations and institutions that work with children take adequate measures to be safe for children.	

Changes in OUTCOMES

Children, especially MVC: are influential protection actors amongst their peers, in their family, and in their community

Families, especially MVC: have strong and healthy relationships that equitably protect, respect and nurture all children and youth

Faith communities: are safe for children and are positively influencing families and communities to be safe

Communities: are safe and just environments that nurture, value, and protect children (especially the MV)

Legitimate, functional and accessible community supports and services help children across the continuum of care, protection and restoration

District/regional government: Justice, protective & social support mechanisms and CP survivor support services are effective and accessible to all

Local by-laws, protocols and policies align with customary laws and national laws and frameworks

Protective services are resourced with strong capacity

Changes in BEHAVIOURS

Children, especially MVC:
- avoid risky behaviours
- treat others with compassion, dignity and respect
- influence their environment to be safer and more protective

Families, especially MV:
- provide love and support to all children
- engage in positive parenting
- access to social protection, supports and services
- respond to child protection issues

Children, especially MVC, parents and community members:
- practice protective socio-cultural traditions and behaviors
- access social support and community networks
- access protective services and supports

Faith communities:
- are actively promoting child protection

Child protection actors:
- Nonformal and formal CP actors collaborate together in sustainable and appropriate CP committees/mechanisms

District/regional government:
- provides quality social protection and statutory services
- brokers dialogue and partnership between all CP actors
- implements national laws

Establishing norms

- Family functioning strengthened
- Social pressures shifted towards positive behaviours
- Increased trust of justice and other CP services
- Early intervention in situations where children are at risk
- Schools and other community resources are safe for children
- Preventive and responsive services and supports available and accessible

Essential steps

- Children, families, community members and formal/nonformal leaders unlearn harmful values, deal with resistance, adopt new values and attitudes; and increase trust
- Nonformal and formal actors work together to address new threats and capture new opportunities
- Collective action to reduce child protection risks, build assets and increase thriving
- Capacity built of key local actors in the child protection system
- Government policy and legal frameworks ensure access to quality services across the continuum of care, with clear standards, feasible plans and adequate funding

Increased political will and resourcing for child protection on global, regional and national levels

Breaking ground

- Changes in knowledge about violence against children *(laws, rights, responsibilities and how to respond)*
- Sustained community dialogue about child protection issues
- New options and alternatives to harmful practices are made known/ available
- Local and district government have mandate and interest to prevent and respond to child protection issues
- Public pressure to eliminate harmful practices, increase demand for services and social accountability

4 Conduct national, regional and global level evidence-based advocacy with partners

2 With a special focus on these core approaches at the local level:

- Mobilise and raise awareness *(such as Community Change, Channels of Hope)*
- Strengthen reporting and referral mechanisms
- Support vulnerable households *(such as Home Visitors, Celebrating Families/ Positive Discipline)*
- Strengthen children's life skills and resilience *(such as Peace Road)*
- Address other root causes to protection issues *(from CP Analysis*)*

L O C A L   L E V E L   A D V O C A C Y

3 Influence national academia, media and faith leaders to promote and support child protection

1 Work at the local level in collaborative efforts between formal and nonformal actors (CP committees) to strengthen the protection of children, especially the most vulnerable *(Child Protection and Advocacy project model)*

* For example, access to clean water near home, inclusive education, livelihoods, social protections to address extreme poverty and food insecurity, or safe spaces to play.

3 HOW TO READ THE THEORY OF CHANGE

This section provides the narrative that supports the Child Protection Theory of Change diagram. The attached theory of change diagram outlines the steps towards achieving the long term goal of strengthening the protection of children, especially the most vulnerable. It is important to note here that the diagram is a simplified, linear depiction of change – in reality change is complex, and often cyclical and non-linear. However, the diagram allows us to conceptualize the major elements which are necessary for strengthening child protection.

The Child Protection Theory of Change is divided into two parts, with nine sections. Part 1 (the first four sections) describes some of the necessary actions or initiators of change. These are interventions which catalyze systemic change in the protective environment or in behaviours of those who are supposed to protect children. Part 2 describes the pathways of change which need to occur for real change to take place.

PART 1 (Sections 1-4)

Section 1: The first section is the foundation of our work in child protection across all contexts—local level collaboration between formal and nonformal actors to strengthen child protection. WV strongly affirms the foundational importance of collaboration between nonformal actors (for example churches, community based organizations, indigenous leaders and families) and formal actors (such as social, statutory, justice, education, health service workers) in order for child protection efforts to be viewed as legitimate by the local population, and feasible in regards to capacity. This collaboration is built upon a shared analysis of the child protection system strengths and weaknesses, as well as the prevalence of child protection issues and their root causes. Based on this shared assessment and analysis, the partnership between formal and nonformal actors develops a shared vision, plans shared projects, and decides how they will work and learn together.

Section 2: The second section focuses on the types of interventions which have proven to be effective across many contexts. Note that not all of these approaches will be necessary or appropriate in every context. Based on the analysis by the local actors, as well as analysis of the national child protection system and child protection issues, the local partnership of formal and nonformal actors should choose which interventions are appropriate in their context. Regardless of what interventions are chosen, local level advocacy regarding relevant government services is normally needed in order to strengthen demand for change, strengthen government accountability and ensure the sustainability of interventions. The Theory of Change Diagram also identifies some of the recommended resources for these interventions in italics.

The third and fourth sections focus on national level work, which complements the local (and subnational) work that needs to happen for positive change in child protection.

Section 3: Section 3 of the diagram focuses on the important role that national academia, media and faith leaders have in shaping public attitudes, beliefs and awareness of child protection issues.

Section 4: Section 4 articulates the critical importance of national, regional and global advocacy on child protection services, entitlements, resources and political will.

PART 2 (Sections 5-9)

Part 2 describes the process of change which occurs when the first interventions are underway. Note that while there is some level of progression from section to section, this change is often non-linear and cyclical. These changes are helpful in measuring the impact of interventions described in Part 1.

Section 5: Section 5 is called "Breaking Ground" because it describes the initial changes in knowledge, interest, dialogue and reflection which signals that a change process is possible and has begun. These initial factors of change include local level changes in knowledge and awareness, as well as broader shifts in public pressure and discourse as well as political will.

Section 6: Section 6 is called "Essential Steps" because it describes the key steps that children, families, community members, nonformal and formal child protection actors need to take in order to move beyond the initial ground breaking done in Section 5, and start to strengthen the protective environment around children.

Section 7: Section 7 is called "Establishing Norms" because it describes new socially sanctioned patterns of behavior which are protective of children. After the Essential Steps in Section 6 are put into practice, over time the social pressures and norms will shift toward strengthening protection and care of children. At the same time, government services will be held to and supported toward a higher quality norm of preventive and responsive service for children.

Section 8: Section 8 is called "Changes in Behaviours" and describes the behavior level changes that can be measured in children (especially the most vulnerable), families (especially the most vulnerable), parents, community members, faith communities, local child protection actors, and district/regional governments. These changes in behaviours are individual level expressions of the changes in norms from Section 7, and can be measured to indicate real change in child protection.

Section 9: Section 9 is called "Changes in Outcomes" and describes the measurable outcomes which any change initiative would hope to see, among children (especially the most vulnerable), families (especially the most vulnerable), other community members, faith communities, and district/regional governments.

4 ASSUMPTIONS

Assumption #1 - We are dependent on God and God's work, the role of prayer and our witness to God's love in Christ to strengthen the protection of children, especially the most vulnerable.
We acknowledge that all we accomplish is possible only through God's direction and grace. In developing this theory of change, we freely affirm our dependence on God and God's work, the role of prayer and our witness to God's love in Christ. Abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence against children are detestable to God, and also are very challenging patterns to stop on individual, corporate and societal levels. We strongly affirm God's intent for every child to have the opportunity of life in all its fullness (John 10:10), and the necessary work of God in people's hearts in order to change abusive or violent behaviours and norms that are harming children.

Assumption #2 – All organizations or institutions that have direct contact with children implement adequate child safeguarding protocols.
All institutions with direct contact with children must make every effort to keep children safe while they are participating in the services or activities of the organization. This requires, at a minimum, that the staff/volunteers in these organizations understand basic child protection principles, evaluate the risks they could potentially pose to children and take steps to minimise and mitigate those risks.

For World Vision, all WV entities must fulfill all child protection standards and protocols to be a child safe organization, and influence our partners to also be safe for children. This is the foundation to establish credibility and legitimacy for engaging on other child protection issues. This includes due diligence in staff and volunteer selection, awareness raising, behavior protocols, visitors to WV projects, communications, social media/digital technology, incident reporting and response, child protection mainstreaming in programming/advocacy/sponsorship, and safe child participation. This also includes developing Child Protection Incident Preparedness Plans, which should logically and operationally link to the work being done by WV and others to strengthen the protective environment at the local level.

Assumption #3 – A focus on equity is required to ensure the most vulnerable children benefit from efforts to strengthen child protection.
The most vulnerable children often do not benefit from positive changes in their community, and are therefore sometimes even further marginalized as the child protection system is strengthened. Abuse, exploitation, neglect and other forms of violence increase children's overall vulnerability to harm; which often then results in further marginalization and increased vulnerability to violence - setting up a harmful cycle of violence and marginalization.

Our WVI Ministry Goal mentions one special priority: "The sustained well-being of children within families and communities, especially the most vulnerable." The critical importance of child protection is noted in World Vision's definition of most vulnerable children, where abusive and exploitative relationships are called out as one of the four vulnerability factors. When defining who are the most vulnerable children, it is critical to include those who are more vulnerable to future exploitation, abuse and neglect (such as migrant children, stateless children, children without caregivers, street children, children with disabilities, children in fragile states etc.); as well as those who are more vulnerable because they have already experienced abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Efforts to strengthen the child protection system must be inclusive and accountable to impact on the most vulnerable children, in order to ensure they benefit from the changes. Strengthening the protective environment around children, and helping children protect themselves, is one of the most strategic and important ways that WV and partners can prevent and respond to issues which make children most vulnerable.

Assumption #4 – Empowering women and girls as agents of change and promoting gender equality is critical to achieving sustained child protection outcomes.
Every child protection issue has serious gender dynamics or drivers, and gender inequality must be overcome in order to strengthen the protection of all children. Therefore child protection change processes must be gender sensitive, and interventions must be built on adequate gender analysis. In World Vision, Child Protection and Gender teams must work together to address gender based violence and exploitation. To work effectively in child protection, World Vision offices and programmes must implement the Gender Equality Policy, and apply a critical gender lens to the development and implementation of all child protection interventions.

Assumption #5 – Child Protection is important across all the life cycle stages of the child.
Child Protection begins in the womb with strong prenatal supports, and continues through adolescence. Different life cycle stages bring different areas and types of child protection risks and assets, so specific interventions, services and supports are necessary for the various life cycle stages.

Assumption #6 (Internal) - The Child Protection Theory of Change applies to efforts across all three Lines of Ministry: Transformational Development, Advocacy and Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs (HEA).
A protective environment is foundational to all CWB Aspirations and Outcomes. Helping children to be safe is a critical part of all WV ministry, and child protection must have a strong programming presence across all three lines of ministry. The CP Theory of Change is meant to guide work in all contexts and across all Lines of Ministry.

Assumption #7 (Internal) – World Vision National Offices are utilizing the Development Programme Approach for local level programming.
The foundational actions outlined in the theory of change (especially Sections 1 and 2), as well as the 3X3 Essentials of Child Protection, will be best implemented within the principles outlined by the Development Programme Approach. This includes a primary focus on strengthening local partners and partnerships for child well-being, with a special focus on the most vulnerable children. Child Protection programming vision and priorities are developed with and owned by the community (including children) and local partners.

Assumption #8 (Internal) – Child Sponsorship is being utilized to strengthen community care and protection.
Strengthening Community Care and Protection is one of the Essentials of Sponsorship for World Vision. This Sponsorship Essential is implemented in a way which brings greater visibility to the situations of the most vulnerable children, which contributes to this Child Protection Theory of Change, and which acts as an entry point for more comprehensive action described in the CP Theory of Change.