



WORLD VISION'S WORK WITH THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN:

What have we achieved and how do we improve?
- Learning for programme staff

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Acronyms

ADAPT –	Analysis, Design and Planning Tool
ADP –	Area Development Program
CAPE –	Child Accountability Protection Evaluation
CBO –	Community Based Organization
CP -	Child protection
CPA –	Child Protection and Advocacy
CRC -	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CWD	Children with disabilities
DFID –	Department for International Development
DRC –	Democratic Republic of Congo
EARO –	Eastern Africa Regional Office
FBO –	Faith Based Organization
FCBM -	Fragile Context Business Model
FG –	Focus group
FGM –	Female Genital Mutilation
ICT –	Information and communication technology
IICRD –	International Institute for Child Rights and Development
KII –	Key informant interviews
MEER –	Middle East and Eastern Europe Region
MONUSCO -	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MSC -	Most Significant Change
MVC –	Most Vulnerable Children
NGO –	Non-governmental organization
OVC –	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PAR –	Participatory action research
PPA –	Program Partnership Agreement
SW -	Social worker
WV –	World Vision

Table of contents:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 About the study
- 1.2 The basic findings

2. Who are the Most Vulnerable Children (MVC) and how best should we target and reach them?

- 2.1 Defining ‘Most Vulnerable Children’**
- 2.2 Who are MVC in reality?
- 2.3 Reaching and targeting MVC
- 2.4 What more can we do to ensure that all MVC are included?

3. How are we doing on impacting MVC in our work?

- 3.1 Child Protection and Advocacy significantly impacts on vulnerable children and their families
 - 3.1.1 **What more can we do to encourage children’s self-protection?**
- 3.2 World Vision’s work has been effective in developing and promoting youth leadership**
 - 3.2.1 What more can we do to support youth leadership?
- 3.3 World Vision has built the capacity of government and civil society actors in responding to child protection issues
 - 3.3.1 What more can we do to connect formal and informal mechanisms that protect MVC?
- 3.4 Our child protection programmes have positively affected parenting behaviour and begun shifting social norms
 - 3.4.1 What more can we do to promote attitude and behaviour change?

4. How can we do our MVC work better?

- 4.1 Participation is key
 - 4.1.1 What more can we do to ensure meaningful participation in child protection?
- 4.2 The importance of community ownership
 - 4.2.1 What more can we do to promote community ownership?
- 4.3 Engaging with social and cultural norms is critical to protecting children
 - 4.3.1 What more can we do to engage with local social and cultural norms?
- 4.4 Further lessons for including and impacting more MVC

5. Policy recommendations for MVC advocacy

6. Further reading and key tools to support further work with MVC

1. Introduction

World Vision UK commissioned some independent research by Dr Philip Cook and Dr Mike Wessels to establish how we are doing in reaching the poorest and most marginalised children through our child protection programmes and to recommend how we might improve on our work in the future. This report summarises these findings and the lessons learned. It also presents a range of practical recommendations to help World Vision staff and others advance our work in this crucial area of programming.

1.1 About the study

The study reviewed information from a number of countries, focusing in particular on our child protection programmes in Cambodia, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania – **all of which have been supported by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) through its Partnership Programme Agreement funding.** These programmes were selected on the basis of their geographical and cultural diversity and also because they exemplify promising practice in community-based child protection. Eastern DRC was chosen particularly to represent a community-based approach to child protection in a complex emergency context; Cambodia and Tanzania each included rural and urban settings.

The research set out to answer the following questions:

- To what extent is the PPA Child Protection programme *including* the Most Vulnerable Children?
- To what extent is the PPA Child Protection programme *impacting* the Most Vulnerable Children?

In responding to these questions it also looked at the *barriers* that prevent Most Vulnerable **Children's inclusion in child protection programme initiatives; and how** *children and their caregivers* reduce vulnerability to child protection risks.

The research collected qualitative data using the following participatory research tools:

- Relational vulnerability mapping of MVC, self protection and program inclusion social mapping and transect walks exploring MVC inclusion and barriers.
- River of Life and Most Significant Change activities and child case studies.
- Focus group discussions with MVC children not involved in WV programming
- Interviews and focus groups discussions with adults involved in child protection committees, networks and other child protection structures, both formal and informal.

¹ Partnership Programme Agreements (PPAs) are long-term funding agreements set up with the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to help develop communities around the world.

1.2 The basic findings

The research findings provide important insights into WVUK’s child protection work, including what we are doing well and what we could do better. In general, it was found that our child protection programmes have had a positive impact on many vulnerable children – including those affected by violence and abuse, children with disabilities, girls at risk of early marriage, out of school children and some child labourers.

In particular, it was found that World Vision’s systems-based approach to child protection has enabled a range of actors to work individually and together to reduce the vulnerability of children². Activities including youth leadership, life skills and child rights training have been transforming the lives of many MVC who are often dealing with their own healing and social reintegration. Work with their peers, families and communities has been successful in identifying and referring many MVC to formal and informal community child protection mechanisms, **reducing children’s vulnerability more systematically as a result.** Significantly, cultural and social norms and beliefs are also being positively impacted on some traditional practices that are harmful to children, such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), early marriage and child labour.

At the same time, the research has found that many of the most vulnerable children are still excluded from the benefits provided by these programmes, and that there are a number of things we could still do to include them and to improve their situation. The rest of this report explains how.



Girls in rural Cambodia use vulnerability mapping to identify where MVC live, work and play and the hazards that face them.

² A systems approach to child protection focuses on strengthening the protective nature of the environment around children and the children themselves, in order to ensure their well-being and fulfill their rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence. (WVI, 2011)

2. Who are the Most Vulnerable Children and how best should we target and reach them?

2.1 Defining 'Most Vulnerable Children'

World Vision defines 'most vulnerable' children as “children whose quality of life and ability to fulfil their potential are most affected by extreme deprivation and violations of their rights. These children often live in catastrophic situations and relationships characterised by violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, exclusion and discrimination.”

The definition above points to the scale and range of the risks that together can lead children to be 'most vulnerable'. Let's take a moment to unpack this statement, as it contains four key vulnerability factors that are worth reviewing:

1. **“abusive or exploitative relationships”**: these are relationships which are characterised by violence or the use of a child to benefit others sexually or commercially, or which consistently harm the child through deliberate acts or negligence.
2. **“extreme deprivation”**: this is severe, chronic poverty or deprivation of caregivers. Extreme deprivation can lead to a number of risks to children, such as being out of school, engaging in harmful labour, as well as drug and alcohol use.
3. **“serious discrimination”**: this is severe social stigma which prevents children from accessing services or opportunities essential to their protection or development, such as education and healthcare.
4. **“vulnerability to negative impact from a catastrophe or disaster”**: these are natural or manmade events that can seriously threaten the survival or development of a child, and to which some children are more likely to be affected negatively and less likely to be able to recover. This can result in family separation, loss of multiple family members, an inability to meet basic needs and sexual exploitation, amongst other things.



extreme
deprivation



serious
discrimination



abusive
relationships



catastrophes,
disasters

2.2 Who are MVC in reality?

The wide range of most vulnerable children that World Vision's child protection programmes have been reaching across the research locations reflects the many and diverse contexts where they can be found. They include, among others:

- Children affected by violence, abuse and rape;
- Children with disabilities;
- Children not in school and some in exploitative work situations;
- Abandoned children and those without birth registration documents;
- Girls at risk from early marriage and FGM/C;
- Former child soldiers and brothel workers.

The categories of MVC mentioned most frequently in the research were children in families where domestic violence occurs, children who are sexually abused, out of school children, children involved in heavy or dangerous labour, and street children. Less frequently mentioned categories included migrant children, children with disabilities (including mental disabilities), children using drugs and alcohol, children affected by HIV and AIDS, children involved in gangs, child soldiers, and girls involved in commercial sexual exploitation.

2.3 Reaching and targeting MVC

We know that we need to reach more MVC, and to do this we need to be able to identify them. The research suggests, however, that there are limitations in the way that World Vision and the groups that it has established (such as some Community Child Protection Committees and youth clubs) identify the most vulnerable children. Many children are categorised as vulnerable simply because of their more obvious characteristics or circumstances (for example because they have a physical disability, or have been orphaned), rather than digging deeper to take account of the **actual risks they face. This can lead to misidentification of some children as 'most vulnerable'** when they are not. Even more significantly, it can lead to some vulnerable children being missed out, such as some migrant children and children with learning difficulties.

In addition, those factors which might protect children are less regularly considered in assessing their vulnerability level. The research has shown that while community members and World Vision staff can readily identify which children need protection, adults in particular are less able to **recognise aspects of children's individual situations that may actually be protecting them. In other words, we may overlook those factors which may be protecting vulnerable children while over-emphasising the deficits (challenges) facing children and so only focus on reducing risks in our MVC work. In particular, not enough account is taken of children's ability to protect themselves** (self-protection), and of how family love and support and some positive cultural practices can make children less vulnerable.

The research has found that MVC and their parents/caregivers use aspects of their culture to support children standing up for their rights and protecting themselves. For example:

- In Cambodia, the Buddhist belief in collective unity (*samaki*) mobilises communities to support their MVC;
- In Eastern DRC, popular music promotes child protection messages;
- In rural north Tanzania, young people use the Masai concept of bravery to help them face challenges.

Source: MVC research report, World Vision UK, 2014, p50.

The research also indicates that **many MVC face barriers to inclusion in World Vision's** child protection activities, including youth clubs and child rights groups. In lots of communities, MVC are still not in school, where they may be safer. Some MVC remain living on the streets and many are working – tending animals, working in factories, as domestic servants or in child brothels.

“I have been working in a brick factory since I was four. I go to school as well as work. I save the money from my work to take extra tutoring. I was invited to join the World Vision youth club but my education is more important so I don't go.” Boy aged 14, Cambodia ³.

Other MVC and their parents/caregivers that we have come into contact with consider their economic situation to be too desperate to spend time in youth clubs or child rights groups when they could be earning money. Other MVC have told us that the activities at World Vision youth clubs are too young for them. For example, in Eastern DRC former child soldiers and girls working in brothels – children who have been forced too early into the adult world – described **youth clubs' activities as 'childish'**. **Some street children have expressed worries about being stigmatised or rejected by other children at the clubs.**



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Masai boys herding goats in Tanzania:
Out of school and unable to access children's clubs

³ All names of children have been removed to protect their identity.

2.4 What more can we do to ensure that all MVC are included?

The report suggests several things that we can do to improve our work in defining and reaching the most vulnerable children.

Firstly, we need to become as good at identifying children who are vulnerable due to violence (in schools, for example) and exploitation (such as child labour), as we are at spotting vulnerability due to physical or sexual abuse and discrimination (e.g caused by their sex or disability). We also need to pay even closer attention to identifying situations relating to neglect and particularly marginalised children.

Moreover, the research suggests that we need to build the capacity of our staff, and of those leading community child protection committees, to explore deeper root causes of vulnerability. This includes focusing on gender, social exclusion (including geographic exclusion) and harmful cultural practices. **It also requires a better understanding of 'children on the move', as well as especially neglected children (such as children affected by HIV/AIDS) and children impacted by armed conflict (including boy soldiers and girls working in brothels). Children's own knowledge of MVC should be principal to this process.**

The findings also point to our need to recognise what protects children, as well as what makes them more vulnerable. In doing this World Vision staff will need to help build the capacity of all of those involved in child protection to identify local protective mechanisms, which could include: any measures which support the basic needs of children and vulnerable families; caring and nurturing relationships; justice and accountability; and social accountability and agency.

Reducing barriers to MVC participation in our activities

The research has established that youth clubs and child rights groups are proving effective in **reducing children's vulnerability. As a result it is important to make MVC participation in them easier and more attractive.** Thus we need to:

- Reconsider the times that our programmes run – are they convenient? Do they clash with other priorities?
- Think about where projects are located – would more MVC come if we situated them somewhere else or helped to organise transport?
- Make our activities more age-sensitive – for both younger children as well as adolescents;
- Make our environment welcoming enough for highly stigmatised children and help ensure less vulnerable children don't make stigmatised children feel unwelcome.

3. How are we doing on impacting MVC in our work?

The following section summarises the research findings on what *impact* World Vision is having on **vulnerable children, particularly in assisting the most vulnerable. It also presents the reports' conclusions on what more World Vision could be doing to strengthen our work in these areas.**

3.1 Child Protection Advocacy significantly impacts on vulnerable children and their families

“World Vision is successful in bringing child protection to our communities because they listen to our needs, they combine protecting vulnerable children with other assistance like helping with our cattle, providing fresh water and health care, they are the only NGO that has come and is still welcome here” (Village Elder, Tanzania)

The report has shown that vulnerable children and their families have been impacted positively in **a number of ways. Children have experienced personal change through World Vision's activities,** including through increased self esteem, better life skills and self-protection skills.

“Youth explicitly linked their safety and ability to protect themselves to child rights and life skills training, about which they had learned much in the youth groups.” (MVC research report, World Vision UK, June 2014, p40.)

Through the youth activities, MVC have also achieved significant change for their peers, such as a girl with a disability successfully advocating for a non-disabled child to attend school in the DRC; Masai girls in Tanzania intervening to prevent early marriage; and children in Phnom Penh educating others on the dangers of trafficking. MVC have also been made less vulnerable through activities with their families, for example by changing caregiver attitudes to corporal punishment, child labour and the importance of school.

The research has also found that where parents and caregivers encourage and support their children's involvement in youth clubs and child rights groups, MVC were much more likely to get and stay involved in activities that make them less vulnerable and more protected. Where parents and caregivers were not supportive, the opposite was true.

The research has revealed that after taking part in protection projects, MVC and parents/caregivers had learned how to better protect themselves or their children, thus reducing vulnerability. For example:-

MVC now know how to:

- Use risk reduction strategies to protect themselves;
- Avoid dangerous places, people and risky activities and situations;
- Safely clean up dirty and dangerous areas;
- **Confidently say 'no' to unwanted, inappropriate sex or any other form of abuse/ exploitation;**
- Bring MVC together with key adults who can help them;
- Refer MVC who have experienced abuse to child protection committees.

Parents/caregivers now protect their children by:

- Caring for and meeting their basic needs;
- Understanding and respecting their rights;
- Encouraging them to go to school, where they will be safer;
- Teaching them how to avoid dangerous places, people and situations known to be risky.

Crucial change was also evident at the systems level, including the strengthening of the relationship between community and government child protection systems – shown by the **increasing number of referrals, the improved quality of these referrals (ensuring children’s safety and best interests)**, and increasing levels of community responsibility for child protection. Evidence of higher level systems change were also evident, with the development of new district level by-laws on the right to school in Tanzania, provincial agreements between police and community child protection committees in rural Cambodia, and high level cooperation between World Vision, the Ministry of Social Welfare and MONUSCO (the UN Stabilisation Mission) in Eastern DRC on cases of sexual exploitation.

3.1.1 What more can we do to encourage children’s self-protection?

The report recommends that World Vision’s child protection programming should:

- continue self-protection training and awareness raising activities through the youth groups, role plays, parent training, and related activities;
- **sensitise and encourage parents and caregivers to support their children’s** sustained involvement in clubs and child rights groups, as these have been **shown to reduce children’s vulnerability and increased their protection;**
- emphasise child rights and life skills (especially self esteem, communication and self and collective agency enhancing skills) in the context of self protection for MVC;
- **examine whether the positive effects of World Vision’s child protection** work extends to those MVC who have been unable to participate directly in activities;
- **document approaches to developing children’s self**-protection, and to share these widely with governments, NGOs, communities and others with an interest and stake in child protection systems strengthening.



World Vision's Child Protection and Advocacy project model

Child Protection and Advocacy (CPA) is a set of interventions which focus on strengthening the child protection system at the community level. The model aims to strengthen both the protective environment for children as well as the children themselves in order to improve their well-being and fulfil their rights to protection from abuse, exploitation, neglect, discrimination or other forms of violence.

The CPA project model can be applied in any place where child protection prevention efforts or effective local level responses (both formal and informal) are lacking. It provides guidance to enable World Vision staff and local partners to develop contextually appropriate activities – based on in-depth analysis of the root causes of child protection issues within the community.

The CPA model has four parts:

- Building community awareness and conscientisation – to take action through sustained community dialogue;
- Establishing and strengthening reporting and referral mechanisms – to raise incidents and ensure support for the affected children and their families;
- Providing quality support to vulnerable families – through early intervention and positive parenting skills;
- Building life skills and resilience – to enable children to protect themselves and others.

For more information about CPA see *Child Protection Advocacy: Effective interventions for strengthening the child protection system at the local level*, World Vision, 2012. Available from: (insert link)

3.2 World Vision's work has been effective in developing and promoting youth leadership

The research has identified that our community youth leadership work has not only had a significant effect in protecting vulnerable children, but has also had an impact on youth agency regarding environmental quality (via community clean up campaigns, for example) and nutrition too. The knowledge (of life skills and rights) and the mutual peer support gained in youth groups has been found to be the critical first step for many vulnerable children in enabling them to participate more fully in society, have more self-confidence, and to know where to access support if they need it. Children involved in these groups have said that what they had learned made them safer and better able to protect themselves, and to reach out to other MVC to reduce their vulnerability

MVC speaking up for other MVC

Having learned about their own rights, many MVC now help other vulnerable children stand up for their rights as well.

“When I became pregnant at 15 I was made to give up school. With World Vision's help I was able to start studying again. I help other girls in the same situation learn that as young mothers they still have the right to an education and can stay in school” – girl aged 17, Tanzania

“I have been a member of the World Vision children's parliament for two years. This year I helped a young girl. She was pregnant and wanted to keep her baby and carry on with her studies. I put her in touch with World Vision to help her do this” – girl aged 12, Tanzania

At the same time, the research has found that the constant rotation of youth leaders who have reached the age of 18 can sometimes leave gaps in youth club provision. Also, while there are many female youth group leaders and active children with disabilities, a majority of youth club leaders are able bodied and male. Recruiting new members remains a problem in some areas.

The Peace Road

The Peace Road Course is a club-based curriculum to empower children and youth with positive **life skills, and has become an essential and proven tool in building young people's resiliency,** participation, protection and ability to contribute to peace-building efforts in their homes, communities and societies. Through their participation in the clubs, thousands of young people have become empowered as agents of social change for their own development and wellbeing, and that of their entire community. Through its six modules, the Peace Road Course challenges young people to think in new ways and helps them learn new skills to enable them to develop into healthy, responsible and contributing adults.

Findings from several years experience of utilising the Peace Road in Cambodia (where it was first developed) have demonstrated a variety of changes and impacts in the communities where it has been implemented. These include:

- Empowering young people to champion issues of peace, care and protection of children and to be actively engaged in building social unity in their communities;
- Founding functional peace clubs in formal and informal environments that have continued to mobilise young people on issues of peace and care and protection of children in their communities;
- Raising awareness in communities about a range of issues of concern to young people;
- Positive changes in attitudes amongst parents and community leaders on issues of violence and other areas of social problems for young people, and resulting action;
- A greater understanding by adults and community leaders of the capability of young people and the importance of listening to their voices.

Our Peace Road: A Course to Empower Children and Youth with Positive Life Skills is available in a number of versions. The Africa version, finalised in 2014, is available on WV Central (see pg.23)



Drawing by children in Cambodia mapping high risk and safe places in their community

3.2.1 What more can we do to support youth leadership?

The report recommends that World Vision should:

- continue and fully document the youth leadership approaches that the youth clubs develop and nurture;
- prioritize leadership by young women and continue to nurture and support emerging youth leaders;

3.3 World Vision has built the capacity of government and civil society actors in responding to child protection issues

“As a teacher I didn’t use to think that I was responsible for vulnerable children’s needs. Now I and some of the other teachers, approach these children, try and find out about their problems and then mediate on their behalf (Teacher working with WV Community protection Committee in Beni, Eastern DRC)”

The research findings have shown that our work with community based protection mechanisms has interwoven the formal and informal aspects of the local child protection system in ways that are having meaningful impacts on children. It is evident that people are increasingly reporting violations against children – including domestic violence and sexual abuse – and that appropriate action is being taken as a result. The research found, for example, that when physical abuse was reported, selected Child Protection Committee members in all of the study locations visited the family, educated them about the harm to children caused by violence, and offered advice. Where abuse continued, cases were successfully escalated to the police or social welfare officers who negotiated with the perpetrator for an end to the violence. As a result of this multi-layered approach, domestic violence was reported to have reduced.

At the same time Child Protection Committee members also reported that referred cases were often impossible to track, and were sometimes difficult to manage due to a lack of support services in place to provide the necessary assistance. It was also found that many instances of protection violations were still not being reported to the authorities. The complex emergency context in the Eastern DRC also exposed the limitations of community child protection committees in complex conflict settings.



Sister Katungo is a 38 year old nurse and single mother of 6 children and one adopted infant, baby Moses. “My eldest son was sick and a friend had come to bring him some medicine. As she was leaving she ran back to tell me that there was a young child wrapped in rags abandoned in the bush near the river. The baby was just hours old and, with the local chief we took the baby to the hospital where they cut the umbilical cord and cleaned him. There was no-one to take care of the baby except me. The chief alerted the local Child Protection Committee and World Vision staff and they came and helped by giving me some food and seeds to grow more crops. Over time the Committee has given me practical support and the chief has negotiated that Baby Moses (as we named him) will receive free medical care from the local Government run clinic. I am happy to have Moses as my son”. (Mrs Katungo, Eastern DRC)

3.3.1 What more can we do to connect formal and informal mechanisms that protect MVC?

The report recommends that World Vision should:

- continue its strong work with community protection mechanisms and apply learning from successful advocacy strategies that lead the government to accept more responsibility for child protection, link district level structures with those at community level, and integrate community mechanisms into efforts to strengthen the national child protection system;
- **learn from people who are not directly participating in World Vision's** programme activities as to how they respond when harm to children arises. This could help ensure and maintain the appropriateness and effectiveness of various elements of the child protection system to the local context;
- develop a child protection systems strategy for conflict-affected regions that accommodates both the involvement of youth clubs and adult committees, as well as focused advocacy with appropriate provincial and national government and UN agencies.

3.4 Our child protection programmes have positively affected parenting behaviour and begun shifting social norms

“We care for the child from the womb of the mother across the life of the child. We visit the mother when she is pregnant and when the child is born to discuss child protection and educate on good parenting, proper nutrition, and the need for education” (**Community Chief and Chair of Child Protection Network, Koh krolor, Cambodia**)

In Cambodia, young people, members of Child Protection Committees, parents and World Vision staff all reported that training on positive parenting had resulted in more favourable attitudes towards education and child rights, had motivated parents to keep their children in school, encouraged nonviolent conflict resolution within the family, and taught parents how to keep children away from harm. Young people commented on how their parents' encouragement and moral support had helped them to stay in school. At the same time, much work on parenting remains to be done around questionable cultural practices such as disciplining children through beating, and favouring boys for higher education.

More widely, the report indicates that CPA programmes have, in a relatively short period of time, begun changing cultural attitudes, norms and behaviour. This is particularly the case when it comes to child protection threats such as early marriage and FGM/C. In Tanzania, for example, community leaders have reported significant changes to beliefs and behaviour on these issues as a result of:

- **increased local trust in World Vision's capacity to assist in community economic and social wellbeing;**
- **World Vision's compassionate, low key, faith based approach; a focus on social justice** for girls through our rights-based approach and our emphasis on non-discrimination and the best interests of the child.

These factors have led to community leaders and local children’s advocates actively intervening and providing holistic care to prevent early marriage and FGM/C, as well as children attempting to negotiate behaviour change with parents of their more vulnerable peers. There is evidence of similar success in Eastern DRC where community partners reported that child protection campaigns had resulted in changed social norms on child marriage and prevention and treatment of gender-based sexual violence.

3.4.1 What more can we do to promote attitude and behaviour change?

The report recommends that World Vision should:

- extend the work on positive parenting, and strengthen those elements that are relevant to changing cultural norms. This could be done using dialogue oriented approaches such as *Community Change* and *Home Visitor project model*⁴ and processes which have been successfully utilised in changing harmful practices such as FGM/C.
- actively support community social change processes driven by community members that address social injustice.



Young people in Cambodia using the “river of life” tool to explain how and when the project impacted on their lives.

⁴ *C-Change* is a project model that enables community members to create social change by addressing unjust socio-cultural norms and practices. The *Home Visitors* project model empowers vulnerable households to improve the care and protection that children need through the use of community volunteers (serving as home visitors). To

4. How can our work do more to impact MVC?

In this section, a number of insights into critical areas of World Vision's child protection programming practice are presented, along with a range of recommendations which highlight where progress can be made in building on programme strengths and closing protection gaps.

4.1 Participation is key

The research has found that the importance and value of child participation is identified by all of those working in child protection as fundamental to the success of any initiative to include and impact upon MVC⁵. A key finding was how important participation is in making our protection work effective. Not only is it critical in forming a full understanding of the risks faced by MVC, it also plays an important role in boosting protective factors, particularly self-protection. At the same time, it sets us the challenge of how to meaningfully engage MVC in ways that are beneficial, appealing and safe.

“I dropped out of school when I was thirteen because I needed to support my family. When I was fourteen I was taken to Malaysia and worked in a clothing factory where I was mistreated. My brother helped bring me home and I am now working for a farmer who is kind. There is a group of youth in our community who, like me, have experience of migration that we share with other young people who want to migrate.” (Girl, 17, Cambodia)

Despite the general consensus on the importance of participation, there are many examples in which vulnerable children are ignored or their views overlooked by World Vision and other agencies (see, for example, Wessells, 2009). This is particularly the case when it comes to **children's involvement in monitoring and evaluation. However, tools such as World Vision's ADAPT for Child Protection (see box on next page) lead with children's understanding of protection threats and use children's perspectives to engage adults in mapping protection risks** and protective mechanisms are helping strengthen participation in children who are harder to reach, such as child sex workers, victims of trafficking and children living in conflict areas.

The research has identified a number of challenges which have negatively affected the participation of MVC in our programmes. This is because:

- Their marginalisation reduces their chances of engaging with non local NGOs or child protection agencies;
- They may live in locations remote from the sites in which the programme is implemented;
- **Gender roles in the community frequently limit girls' and women's participation in activities that are outside of their accepted roles and assumed competence;**
- **There may be potential risks (whether actual or perceived) to MVC's from participating;**
- The government (or disasters or insecurity) may restrict access to certain locations;
- Local biases and exclusionary practices limit the inclusion of MVCs or make it difficult for them to get involved.

⁵ We also know that there is the potential for harm associated with some aspects of participation, and as these harms are not always foreseen, some agencies – including World Vision – have developed processes that aim to identify and manage or prevent unintended harms.

ADAPT for Child Protection

The Analysis, Design and Planning Tool (ADAPT) for Child Protection has been specifically designed to help with identifying, prioritising and root cause analysis of child protection issues. It also helps with the identification and mapping of the systems that are in place to protect children. Central to the process is the emphasis on listening to and engaging with children, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

The toolkit is broken into two major parts. Part One guides staff through a national level child protection analysis – for use in developing a national strategy for child protection. Part Two guides programme staff, local partners and other key stakeholders through a local level child protection analysis – for designing local level child protection projects.

ADAPT for Child Protection (WVI, 2011) is available to download from: <http://www.wvi.org/child-protection/publication/adapt-child-protection>



Young people in DRC share in a participatory activity as part of the research project.

4.1.1 What more can we do to ensure meaningful participation in child protection?

The report recommends that World Vision should:

- Build on its current success in engaging children in its child protection work by further exploring which MVC are not included. Those MVC who are less likely to have been reached include street children, children involved in migration, neglected children and girls working in abusive domestic labour situations. We also need to engage with younger MVC by developing activities that are suitable to their age and needs;
- Think how MVC can be more involved in designing, monitoring and evaluating our child protection work, and use more innovative and participatory tools to assist with this. In addition to using World Vision Child Protection and Advocacy materials such as ADAPT (see box in this section), there is a need to explore the tools, insights and lessons of others, for example from the International Institute for Child Rights & Development's Child-Centred Accountability and Protection Evaluation CAPE Project ⁶;

⁶ For more details about the CAPE project see <http://www.iicrd.org/projects/child-centred-accountability-and-protection-evaluation-cape>

- Develop local capacity to create specialised approaches supporting a safe, supportive environment for MVC who are not attending existing youth programmes – as many of these youth are struggling with psychosocial issues and may struggle to trust adults (e.g. street children engaged in drug misuse, war affected children, children involved in commercial sexual exploitation);
- Look out for, and be open to, new and inventive approaches to participation from the children themselves, especially those that encourage other MVC to get involved in learning about their rights and developing skills (known as positive deviance) ⁷;
- Incorporate some of the methods used in the MVC research to support meaningful participation and engage young people more actively in child protection monitoring and evaluation. Suggested methods include: unity circle, river of life and risk mapping ⁸;

4.2 The importance of community ownership

“World Vision used to apply the concept that what is good for the community is good for the vulnerable child. Now, by learning from communities and children at risk we are seeing the *opposite, what is good for vulnerable children is good for the community*” (WV CPA team member Tanzania)”

We know that working through and supporting community-based child protection mechanisms – especially those that already exist – is important in ensuring effective and sustainable change in child protection systems. We also know that it can be difficult to encourage community ownership, especially if the methods of facilitating or establishing these community-based systems are alien to the ways in which the community operates.

The report indicates that, broadly-speaking, **World Vision’s CPA approach does promote** community ownership of child protection mechanisms, encouraging social change that is guided from within the community. One particular method which is proving successful in supporting **community driven social change is World Vision’s Channels of Hope** (see box).

Channels of Hope is a World Vision approach that recognises the potential of faith leaders to catalyse attitudinal and behavioural change. Not only do faith leaders have deep and trusted relationships within communities, they also have the authority to lead behavioural change, as well as to resist injustice and protect the most vulnerable children. The approach, which has been adapted for use on a variety of issues and in a range of settings, promotes a dialogue with faith leaders on sensitive and taboo subjects, including on local traditional practices that are harmful to children. These leaders are encouraged to explore and challenge the meaning and consequences of these practices, and who are then able to play a principal role in shifting individual and community mindsets towards more active protection of children.

Channels of Hope: Transforming lives positively (World Vision International, 2014) is available at (insert link)

⁷ *Positive Deviance* is based on the view that in any community, there are people whose uncommon but successful behaviors or strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, despite facing similar challenges. For example, the MVC report cites the case of children with disabilities in Eastern DRC supporting other MVCs to attend school – underscoring the capacity of vulnerable children to assist others.

⁸ See CAPE guidebook (through link in earlier footnote)

The research has also established that our MVC programmes are much more effective in areas where community development has been supported for many years (through Area Development Programmes), and where our child protection work runs alongside existing health, education and income generation projects.

4.2.1 What more can we do to promote community ownership?

The report recommends that World Vision should:

- **Explore how to make the most of World Vision’s long term engagement with communities** (through its Area Development Programmes) to benefit MVC;
- Strengthen community ownership by developing an integrated MVC programme strategy which includes the provision of basic needs, livelihoods, social change (e.g. Community Change – see footnote), child rights, youth engagement and life skills (e.g. *Peace Road* – see box in previous section) and compassion (e.g. *Channels of Hope* – see box in previous section).
- Look into the options for a more conscious sponsorship focus on MVC, as a way of strengthening community ownership.



4.3 Engaging with social and cultural norms is critical to protecting children

Social and cultural norms affect the impact of child protection work in two distinct ways:

Firstly, they can be a significant challenge to promoting children’s rights. This is because these norms often force or condone behaviour, attitudes and practices which can contravene children’s rights and be a source of their vulnerability. This is the case when it comes to child marriage, FGM/C and violent or degrading punishment, for example. At the same time, **understanding social and cultural norms plays a decisive role when it comes to comprehending children’s contexts and supporting them in improving their lives.**

This is one of the reasons why World Vision must continue to work closely and in a participatory way with communities and vulnerable children, in order to understand local beliefs and values which underpin harmful practices and those which may help to protect children. It is worth noting again – as was identified in the previous section – that World Vision has already had some success in tackling harmful social norms and beliefs, as well as in nurturing home grown protective factors.

“However well embedded our work is in the community, as an external agency World Vision staff must always be aware of the potential bias that we bring to protecting children. This can be in the approaches that we favour as an organisation, as well as our own personal beliefs and experiences that we support. Engaging communities on their beliefs and practices is not only a delicate matter that requires considerable sensitivity and time investment; it also requires serious self-reflection amongst us about our personal and organisational assumptions and agendas”.

Source: MVC research report, June 2014: p25.

The research has also noted that local people frequently did not identify as harmful certain practices that cause harm to children, and that are prohibited by international child protection and child rights standards. Indeed, the gap between local views and practices and international child rights standards is often a key starting point for our child protection work.

4.3.1 What more can we do to engage with local social and cultural norms?

The report recommends that World Vision should:

- Continue to use a community dialogue approach to build on its promising efforts in changing harmful traditional practices, such as in reducing child marriage, and supporting girls and other MVC to attend school;
- Support local practices which protect and integrate children, and incorporate these practices into local policies and by-laws (for example in preventing early marriage amongst the Masai, and supporting pregnant teens attending school);
- **Further explore World Vision’s added value in altering harmful cultural practices** through faith based interventions, including by expanding the *Channels of Hope* programme to other contexts and faiths;
- Reinforce WV methods such as *ADAPT for Child Protection* that identify harmful traditional practices and which mobilize local community members to tackle them;
- Apply the lessons we have learned in protecting children through informal community mechanisms to strengthen formal child protection systems at local, district and national levels;
- Develop activities that strengthen joint child and adult engagement in together identifying and changing harmful traditional practices and in enhancing protective traditional social knowledge and practice.

4.4 Further lessons for including and impacting more MVC

At a PPA Learning Event in November 2015, staff from NOs shared how they are managing to include and impact more MVC in their programmes, particularly Children With Disabilities:

- Cambodia - after mapping MVCs in ADPs, WV found that the government policy on MVC was too narrowly defined by poverty data and successfully advocated for a wider definition.
- DRC - the project now works with over 100 children with disabilities (CWD). Sports and celebratory events have proved most effective for integration of CWD with other children.
- India - installing a robust data collection system was found to be key for collecting the right information on MVC. Volunteer and child led groups have been trained to collect data.
- Sierra Leone - the project pro-actively included **CWD in Children's Clubs from the start**, so now all Clubs include CWD. In 2016, the NO plans to map MVC in all ADPs.
- Somaliland - Child Rights Club members identified CWD, their needs and how to meet them. This data led to recognition of the need to train staff to support and work with CWD.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MVC ADVOCACY

Several policy recommendations have also emerged as a result of this review of World Vision's programming work. These more outward-facing recommendations are presented here to help ensure that we reach and support all MVC, and could form the basis of MVC focused advocacy work at local and national, regional and global levels:

- Policies, practice and funding must recognize the importance of the informal sector in providing local child protection services and strengthen the crucial interface with formal government child protection services - investing in a systemic approach increases government and civil society capacity to prevent and respond to harm against children
- Government supported social protection and economic programmes and strategies need to be linked to child protection systems. They should be targeted at MVC and use community-owned, participatory methods to ensure all MVC are included
- Provide further support to programmes that address harmful social norms as these frequently impact MVCs and also reinforce positive practices
- As education generally provides a more protective environment, ensure education services are expanded and adapted to be more accessible to MVC.
- Where MVC cannot access academic education due to age or social barriers (e.g. working children and former child soldiers) vocational training or non formal education is required.
- Training in life skills reduces vulnerability and needs to be provided for all children more widely, not just for less vulnerable, easy to reach children in schools
- Faith leaders and their communities have a crucial role in protecting MVC and need further recognition and support to enable them to be more effective
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launching January 2016, promote an end to violence against children and so provide an opportunity to advocate for MVC at national and global levels. See in particular, targets 16.2, 16.9 (violence against children); 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 (violence and discrimination against women and girls); 8.7 (end child labour).

6. Further reading and key tools to support work with MVC

World Vision UK, 2014: *Most Vulnerable Children: World Vision UK Programme Inclusion and Impact: Summary of Key Points from a Literature Review, Key Informant Interviews and Case Studies in Tanzania, Cambodia and Eastern DRC*. Available from: <http://www.iicrd.org/most-vulnerable-children-0>. An Executive version also available on WV Central: [wvcentral home](#)›[Community Home](#)›[Child Well-being & Rights](#)›[Documents \(/child-protection-programming-IG\)](#)›[Research -](#)

Wessells, M., 2009: *What are we learning about protecting children? An inter-agency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings*. London: Save the Children. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/What_We_Are_Learning_About_Protecting_Children_in_the_Community_Full_Report.pdf

World Vision International, 2011: *A Systems Approach to Child Protection*, World Vision Discussion Paper. Available from: <http://www.wvi.org/child-protection>

Key tools to support work with MVC

Child Protection and Advocacy: Effective interventions for strengthening the child protection system at the local level, WVI, 2012. Available from: [wvcentral home](#)›[Community Home](#)›[Child Well-being & Rights](#)›[Documents \(/child-protection-programming-IG\)](#)›[CPA Project Model](#)

Our Peace Road: A Course to Empower Children and Youth with Positive Life Skills is available in a number of versions. The Africa version, finalised in 2014, is available on WV Central at [wvcentral home](#)›[Community Home](#)›[Child Well-being & Rights](#)›[Documents \(/child-protection-programming-IG\)](#)›[Peace Road Life Skills Curriculum - Africa Version](#)

The Analysis, Design and Planning Tool (ADAPT) for Child Protection (WVI, 2011) is available to download from <http://www.wvi.org/child-protection/publication/adapt-child-protection>

Channels of Hope: Transforming lives positively (WVI, 2014) is available at <http://www.wvi.org/health/publication/channels-hope-transforming-lives-positively>

Community Change (C-Change) – a project model to enable community members to create social change - is available from <http://www.wvi.org/gender/publication/gender-and-development-community-change-project-model>

The *Home Visitors* project model (WVI, 2012) – which empowers vulnerable households through community volunteers – is available from [wvcentral home](#)›[Community Home](#)›[Child Well-being & Rights](#)›[Documents \(/child-protection-programming-IG\)](#)›[Home Visitor Project Model](#)

Other resources, including guides to support MVC through positive parenting skills can be found on WV Central (Child Wellbeing & Rights COP / Child Protection Interest Group)

Most Vulnerable Children: WV UK Programme Inclusion and Impact – Summary literature Review, Key Points and Short Case Studies from Cambodia/Tanzania/Eastern DRC.

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Drawing by children in Cambodia mapping high risk and safe places in their community

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