

Domestic Violence And Neglect

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Background Paper

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INTRODUCTION

Childhood without a fear is being considered to be a right for every child and also a legal obligation, based on the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CRC defines the necessity of care and protection for the entire lifeline of the child:

“The child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.”¹

The terms ‘care’ and ‘protection’ are being seen generally associated with children’s safety, when providing them is being strongly dependent on the caregivers’ abilities², related closely also to other environmental issues.³ Care is concerning the entire well-being and safety of a child through a holistic view with health; hygiene, nutrition, cognitive skills and socio-emotional skills.⁴ World Vision’s Framework also provides a set of outcomes to achieve a holistic approach to children’s well-being, especially for the most vulnerable ones. The most vulnerable children are considered to be those:

“Whose quality of life and ability to fulfil their potential is most affected by extreme deprivation and violations of their rights. These children often live in catastrophic situations and relationships characterized by violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, exclusion and discrimination.”⁵

The descriptions of the most vulnerable children are telling a crucial truth; all children are at risk of violence, but the most vulnerable ones are those at greatest risk. Children with disabilities, those who are under migration or institutions, and those who are being exposed to deprivation, neglect, and even to the dangers of the streets.⁶

Systemic approach of child well-being is also one of the leading assets of World Visions’s approaches, whereas children’s well-being is being seen dependent on their relationships with others and the social, political, spiritual, physical and environmental structures.⁷ The World Vision’s Framework is using this approach, that all the levels of child’s life and activity could being noticed. Systems approach also recognises that all these different levels interact

¹ United Nations 1989, *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

² Nordtveit 2008, p. 415.

³ Unicef 2013, p. 11-12.

⁴ Evans, J. L. 1993, p. 4.

⁵ WV 2009, p. 2

⁶ Unicef 2013, p. 2.

⁷ WV 2015, p. 5.

and influence on each other,⁸ which is a requirement for using a holistic approach concerning child well-being.

Only by knowing about violence it is possible to plan and design interventions and strategies to end violence against children.⁹ This article about domestic violence and neglect is being grounded to the key findings of the work of World Vision International and to the newest research of violence against children. The article defines domestic violence and neglect by handling the fundamental problem of violence through the framework of World Vision, and presents the most productive interventions World Vision has announced the following Article 19 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child:

*“States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of violence, injury or abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”.*¹⁰

2 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When care is concerning the entire well-being and safety of a child through a holistic view (health, hygiene, nutrition, cognitive, socio-emotional skills)¹¹, the maltreatment is also being seen as a multidimensional phenomenon, whereas it can be seen in private and public surroundings. Violence is a problem, that is closely related to social structures and policies, which makes the definition of maltreatment actual to the current context children are living in. Thereby violence against children is, at one hand, an environmental issue. Thus, the basic definition of violence should start from realizing the problem being an intentional harm or a consequence of harmful policies.¹² A number of definitions can be remarked identifying violence or child maltreatment, and majority of surveys being published are even making definitions of their own.¹³ Violence is most commonly being defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), which focuses seeing the issue as an *intentional* use of force or power that *causes* harm in contrast to behavior that is resulting *actual* or *potential* harm:

⁸ WV 2015, p. 5.

⁹ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 12.

¹⁰ United Nations 1989, *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 19.

¹¹ Evans, J. L. 1993, p. 4.

¹² Reading, R. et al. 2009, p. 333.

¹³ Unicef 2014, p. 18.

“...the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”¹⁴

And child abuse or maltreatment:

“...constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”¹⁵

WHO defines different types of child abuse as physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and negligent treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation.¹⁶ This definition has also being World Vision’s ground for defining its four forms of violence:

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation
- Violence
 - Domestic Violence¹⁷

The impacts of violence upon children are crucial, where child’s development and well-being is being extremely compromised and may even put their lives at risk. Violence is causing long-lasting effects, where toxic stress in children can seriously damage children’s brains, increase the risk of developmental delays and stress-related health problems, such as heart disease or depression.¹⁸ The impacts of violence has been captured by the Committee on the Rights of the Child:

- Fatal or non-fatal injury (possibly leading to disability)
- Health problems
- Cognitive impairment
- Psychological and emotional consequences
- Mental health problems

¹⁴ World Health Organization 2002.

¹⁵ World Health Organization 1999.

¹⁶ World Health Organization 1999, p. 13-17.

¹⁷ WV Central, April 2015, <https://www.wvcentral.org/advocacy/Pages/Formsofviolence.aspx>

¹⁸ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 9.

- Risky behaviors
- Developmental and behavioral consequences (for example school drop outs)¹⁹

Children and youth are at risk of violence in all five settings they are spending their lives in: the home and family, school and education settings, care and justice institutions, the working environment and the community. Violence has got an interlinked and cumulative nature; when child is experiencing violence in one context, it will more likely to be experienced in other circumstances as well. This means that children are even at risk to become “polyvictims”.²⁰ Specific dangers for adolescents have also being pointed to face the violence while stepping towards adulthood and feeling insecure. This can appear for example as street violence, bullying and abuse through information technologies. Also there can be seen a gender dimension, where girls are at greater risk of sexual violence and boys of physical punishment and gang-related violence.²¹ Causes of violence against children are diverse; 40% of the wrong-doers have a lack of knowledge, 38% suffer from alcoholism or drug abuse, 37% are past victims of abuse, and 24% are belonging to an organized crime group. Other 40% of violence is caused by cultural attitudes or practices, terrorists or armed forces.²²

Throughout 60 years of service to children and their families World Vision has seen the failure of protecting children from violence.²³ Children’s vulnerability to violence has become even more acute in the past few years, when the global economic context has had a major downturn.²⁴ Also food insecurity during the climate change and natural disasters are this kind of environmental issues, which bring a lot of pressure to the families. Stretching the family economics to the limits is being shown to be one of the biggest resulting risks for the violence of children. It has been shown, that children in their earliest years have the greatest risk of violence.²⁵ This is sadly relating to the fact that children experience violence in the current life setting they are spending their time in – home.²⁶

Home is a place where children were supposed to be enjoying nurture, care and love in a safe environment. Conversely, evidence of several surveys show that children face the

¹⁹ Unicef 2014, p. 2.

²⁰ Unicef 2013, p. 3.

²¹ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014.

²² WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 10.

²³ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 4.

²⁴ Unicef 2013, p. 19.

²⁵ Unicef 2013, p. 20-21.

²⁶ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 19.

biggest risks in the home environment²⁷ even though 62% of people still think that children are most likely to be at risk when they are “out there”, in public places.²⁸ Global survey of violence against children confirmed, that immediate family members are the most common perpetrators (34%) of all forms of abuse, where the perpetrator was known.²⁹

Children are being exposed to domestic violence in home environment, especially when parents and caregivers face difficult social, economic or personal circumstances. A survey made by World Vision International (2014) revealed, that children prefer to talk about their problems to their parents and family members, but it is not often possible because of the bad mental states caused by overloaded problems. Too often the conversations started by children end up to an abuse of violent behavior by an adult.³⁰ It is being said, that where poverty and disadvantage are pervasive, the risk of violence against children becomes acute,³¹ and there is a biggest risk for physical and sexual forms of violence to emerge.³² When families are struggling with the daily basics, children, mostly girls, are being pressed to drop out their school and start to contribute the incomes.³³ Besides economics, one of the environmental concerns is the cultural behavior and attitudes towards discipline. Study shows, that three out of four children 2 and 14 years old experience violent discipline at home.³⁴ Still, vulnerable disabled children are the ones most likely to experience violence or neglect at home, when disability, poverty and violence are too often connected.³⁵

3 NEGLECT

World Vision International is defining neglect as:

Deprivation of a child's basic needs when adult carer has the means to provide for those needs. Basic needs include health, education, emotional and spiritual development, nutrition, clothing medical and dental care, supervision, shelter and safe living conditions.

²⁷ Unicef 2013, p. 31.

²⁸ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 1.

²⁹ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 8.

³⁰ WV International 2014, p. 7.

³¹ Unicef 2013, p. 31 & 11.

³² WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 7.

³³ Unicef 2013, p. 12.

³⁴ Unicef 2010, p.21.

³⁵ Unicef 2013, p. 13.

Families suffering from challenging lives with economic and environmental issues have brought a growing concern, when children are often being “left behind” when parents and caregivers are seeking opportunities elsewhere.³⁶ Too often children without the care of their parents become more vulnerable to violence, where neglect can also be seen as a cause of violence. One of the factors making domestic violence and neglect such a challenging problem is the complexity of the family as a dangerous and safety environment at the same time. Children experience violence mostly at home, but family is also the most effective (69%) institution in the fight against violence towards children.³⁷

4 APPROACHES

4.1 Child Protection

Protecting children is the main purpose for World Vision and the goal is to prevent sustained well-being of children within families and communities, especially the most vulnerable. This focus can be seen in the child well-being Aspirations and Outcomes:

- Enjoy good health
- Are educated for life
- Experience love of God and their neighbours
- Are cared for, protected and participating³⁸

World Vision’s approach to Child Protection seeks to empower children, families, governments, communities and other partners to prevent and respond to exploitation, neglect, abuse and other forms of violence affecting children, which children themselves have told to be the most consistent area of concern.³⁹ This has most affectively been reached via systems approach by creating productive environments for the children together with formal (for example social welfare services) and informal (for example churches) elements working together. The seven elements of a Child Protection System are:

1. Laws, policies, standards and regulations
2. Services and their delivery mechanisms

³⁶ Unicef 2013, p. 23.

³⁷ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 14.

³⁸ WV International 2011, p. 10.

³⁹ WV International Child Protection 2014, p. 4.

3. Capacities
4. Co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms
5. Accountability mechanisms
6. Circle of care, surrounding of a child
7. Resilience, life skills and participation of the children

These elements are implemented and build by five different types of actors:

1. The Child
2. Family
3. Community
4. State
5. International Structures and Actors⁴⁰

World Vision has designed Child Protection ADAPT tool for Analysis, Design and Planning to reach more depth understanding of the child protection at the national and community levels. The structure of the tool is based on children's voice to be heard first and after that listening adults and key informants. This is the best place to identify issues affecting children, and all other processes and work proceeds from children's matter of concern. ADAPT tool is being used whenever WV program staff, local partners and key stakeholders are developing a national strategy or a program team is planning a local level interventions for child protection.⁴¹

World Vision is also using Child Protection and Advocacy project model (CPA) to present a set of interventions to create a protective environment for the children. CPA model was developed to the basis of Vulnerable Child Advocacy (VCA), child rights and Community-based Child Protection (CBCP) by using the World Vision's systems approach understanding to the child protection.⁴² Community-based Child Protection refers specific interventions to empower the whole communities to protect their children directly from abuse, neglect or other forms of violence within families and communities.⁴³ CPA can be implemented in any type of a situation, where child's safety is being under a threat. It can be reached by the following four components:

⁴⁰ WV International Child Protection 2014, p. 33.

⁴¹ WV International Child Protection 2014, p. 5-6.

⁴² WV International 2013, p. 2.

⁴³ WV International 2010, p. 4.

1. Building community awareness and consciousness
2. Establishing and strengthening reporting and referral mechanisms
3. Provision of quality support to vulnerable families
4. Building life skills and resilience in order to empower children to protect themselves⁴⁴

World Vision is following a family orientated approach in which the preferred option for all the forms of child care is the family itself.⁴⁵ It is said, that the family is the main site of prevention, and by focusing on them is the most effective way of preventing children from being exposed to violence.⁴⁶ Another priority for family well-being is seen in psychosocial support, which has proven to have a direct impact on the well-being of children and families.⁴⁷ The importance of psychosocial support and the preventive approach can be seen in the World Vision interventions, where the risk factor is increasing the likelihood of future negative outcome, and protective factor acting as an optimizer for positive outcomes.⁴⁸ This is the reason, why interventions are planned to prevent violent behavior in families, promote positive parenting skills, enlarge community-based support and other positive outcomes for children and families at risk.⁴⁹ World Vision understands the outline of family well-being to be driven from inside the family and especially from the parenting skills. Positive parenting approach is one example of group of interventions where vulnerable parents are guided to take a positive approach to their roles as parents. *Celebrating Families* and *Positive Discipline – Practices* provide the possibility to reconnect the family members, share knowledge about child rights and help the parents to adapt with positive discipline approach.⁵⁰ Also successful social networking and the role of the fathers are being highly noticed. *Engaging Men* is a new project model for activating fathers to reduce gender-based violence and promote child protection, which has proven to show impact against domestic violence and gender based violence in India.⁵¹

The interventions World Vision is implementing to build up community awareness and consciousness about domestic violence and neglect, can be seen for example in Mozambique where, since October 2013, World Vision has built the capacity of community courts to

⁴⁴ WV International 2013, p. 3-4.

⁴⁵ Oswald & Forbes 2009.

⁴⁶ WV International & Ipsos Reid 2014, p. 11.

⁴⁷ WV Central 2015.

⁴⁸ WV 2014, p. 2.

⁴⁹ WV International 2013, p. 4.

⁵⁰ WV 2014, p. 3.

⁵¹ WV India 2014, p.6.

spread the right knowledge about violence against children and the public law, which considers violence against children to be a public crime. Since the project started, judges of the local traditional law started a practice of reporting all the cases with child abuse to the police, and making sure the community members know that children's rights are not supposed to be violated.⁵² Successful work with communities has shown good results also in Uganda Nabukalu community, where World Vision has helped the community to create multi professional teams for strengthening both formal and informal systems and structures for child protection. Since the networking started in 2012, they have carried out 23 dialogues in five schools and reached over 2,800 children with information on child protection. This has made the community members and stakeholders to work as a team against child maltreatment, and have given knowledge to the children to stand out for their own rights by revealing child protection issues to the teachers.⁵³ This is one example not only about building community awareness but also establishing reporting and referral mechanisms within the work against the violence against children. Innovative approach for this topic has also been seen in Mongolia, where in June 2014 World Vision has facilitated the co-operation between the Government of Mongolia and a private mobile service provider. Together both partners have been improving a local *Child Helpline* functional. The helpline is open for children and youth to take instant contact for free by mobile phone, if they experience threat of violence or face current danger. The number of calls made by children in 6 months exceeded the number of calls made before in 2 years. This shows the importance of partnerships on the way moving towards stronger child protection systems.⁵⁴

One of the CPA community-based interventions used at the household level is called the *Home Visitor Project Model (HV)*, which has also been constructed around multi professional networking. This model has been developed to provide quality support for vulnerable families and complementing the third component of CPA –program. This component is aimed at preventing abuse, exploitation and neglect by identifying and supporting at-risk families. In *Home Visitor* project the social network is being built by community volunteers, who visit the families regularly to build relationships with most vulnerable children and families. Besides, they help families to connect with other social resources and relevant services within the community (for example necessary social or health services) and also

⁵² WV CP & A Update 2014, p. 1-2.

⁵³ WV Uganda 2014, p. 1-4.

⁵⁴ WV Mongolia 2014, p. 1-4.

organize tailored activities for the families to strengthen their daily capacities.⁵⁵ The *Home Visiting* –model is quite new but already a popular model; this is expected in the situation where the model has been indicated to make communities work more actively and addressing the issues of the vulnerable families, and most importantly, increasingly making changes in the community attitudes towards child protection and commitment to act on the cases of abuse. For example in Mongolia, Home Visitor was working with the family suffering from alcoholism, mental illness, unemployment, school drop outs, and loneliness. After spending a period of time with the family, the Home Visitor was able to link the family to multi professional team, which helped the household to empower, ease the state of their multiple problems and provide activities for the parents where they can develop their parenting skills. The Home Visitor saw the children starting to enjoy life again in a more safe and caring environment and even getting back to school.⁵⁶

As there can be seen above, all the interventions used by World Vision are representing methodology of social participation. Impact results of psychosocial support and social participation are provably showing their assets on the fieldwork for family well-being and against problems such as domestic violence and neglect. The growing interest to social participation and especially child participation is leading the fourth component of Child Protection and Advocacy –program, where the main point is to focus on strengthening children’s abilities to face adversities. This positive approach as well as the entire structure of World Vision’s Child Participation approach will be strengthened in the future.

4.2 Child Participation

Child participation includes two possibilities to empower the well-being of the children. First, parents can be informed about the capacity they can built for their children to take part their daily decisions and activities. Second, we can focus on enhancing the skills of children, so that they could effectively work for their own lives.⁵⁷ World Vision’s framework for Child Participation is based on the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child, but can also be described as

⁵⁵ WV International 2014, p. 4.

⁵⁶ WV Mongolia 2015, p. 1-4.

⁵⁷ Unicef 2013, p. 115.

*“an ongoing process of children’s expression of opinions and active involvement in decision-making at different levels in matters that concern them. It requires information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect and power sharing.”*⁵⁸

As well as being exposed to violence, most vulnerable children also are less likely to be reached by programs and preventive interventions.⁵⁹ World Vision is taking action to solve this problem by inviting children to participate. This is the basis of World Vision’s work and can be seen in the Child protection ADAPT tool, where the first step is to hear the voice of the children. Also, the fourth component of The Child Protection and Advocacy -program is underlining the importance of life skills and resilience of the children. This is particularly seen in the interventions made for children and youth, where they can practice their life skills in protecting themselves and others. Practicing life skills also build children’s capacity to make good decisions, positively influence their peers and environment, and build resilience.⁶⁰ Children’s participation is supported on different levels: community, national, regional and international levels.

World Vision is working together with international NGOs for developing and improving conceptual framework to monitor and evaluate children’s participation. Even if the work for child participation in international level is important, studies and evaluations indicate, that participatory efforts are generally most effective at the community and national levels, where they can directly relate to children’s lives, growing, learning and developing.⁶¹ This goal has been accomplished for example in Cambodia, where child participation interventions have shown direct effects on decreasing violence in the family.⁶² World Vision’s work for improving reporting and referral mechanisms are also been seen as a part of the work for child participation. One example of this is the Mongolian helpline project, which is giving the children a chance to express themselves and their worries through a mobile connection. This is one way of giving the children a voice!⁶³

Positive outcome has been seen from an intervention called *Peace Road Curriculum (PRC)*, where World Vision has been successfully creating a community-based approach to the fourth component of the CPA model; peace road curriculum model was originally developed

⁵⁸ Lansdown 2004, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Unicef 2013, 14.

⁶⁰ WV International 2013, p. 4.

⁶¹ Unicef 2013, p. 117.

⁶² WV International 2012, p. 10.

⁶³ WV Mongolia 2014.

for Cambodian children and adolescents for peace-building education and later to build up life skills, values and behavior for healthy relationships. The PRC includes youth club meetings with fun games, discussions and other activities concerning important themes like for example self-knowledge, diversity, gender equality, healthy relationships and peace building.⁶⁴ *The Peace Road Curriculum* can be contextualized to different countries and recently has been implemented in South America (Bolivia) and Africa. The effects are seen in the way children learn, not only self-control and emotional skills, but also strengthen resilience through social activities and participation.

As noticed above, community-based approach and the power of social activities are playing a significant role when we are working towards human wellbeing, especially with values and attitudes. Recent research also shows the critical role of church and other faith leaders in development work.⁶⁵ World Vision originally designed *Channels of Hope* (CoH) methodology to tackle down church leader's negative attitudes towards HIV positives, but with the widespread influence of the faith leaders, World Vision made a decision to use their inspiration also as a leading power for child protection. Church leaders are expected to reach World Vision's child development goals widely, especially in the fragile contexts, where the government presence is limited. The *Channels of Hope* is focusing on partnering with local faith leaders to equip them to better understand and apply their faith to social issues protecting the most vulnerable. The aim is to provide faith leaders a culture of child protection and eradicate harmful traditional practices. The *channels of Hope* is said to be a life transformation, which has already shown very promising results on the early state of implementation; participants have experienced a new way of thinking about children being the gift from God, wanted to better parents and sought forgiveness for the abuses they have perpetrated.⁶⁶ The *Channels of Hope* aims to touch deep-seated attitudes, which are on the central focus whilst maintaining sustainable change towards child protection and wellbeing.

Work against domestic violence and neglect is diverse. Only with the collaboration between different governments, congregations and agencies we can tackle down the violence against children. One of the recent acts towards violence prevention is from World Vision Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office, where they state for "A region free of violence against children". In 2015 this campaign interacts with 14 national offices to work together with children and their parents on conflict resolution, promoting peace at community level,

⁶⁴ WV Central 2015.

⁶⁵ UNICEF 2012, <http://ftguonline.org/ftgu-232/index.php/ftgu/article/view/2053/4102>.

⁶⁶ WV International 2013.

helping parents with raising a child and promoting hope among vulnerable youth through education and economic opportunities.⁶⁷ The region free of violence against children needs to be addressed through the whole world.

⁶⁷ WV Costa Rica 2015, <http://www.wvi.org/Ihaveadream>

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