

July 2007

Children in Crisis

Protection and Care for Hurting and Vulnerable Girls and Boys

A Report

**Selected Project Activities From
October 2006 Through March 2007**



PROTECTION AND CARE FOR CHILDREN IN CRISIS



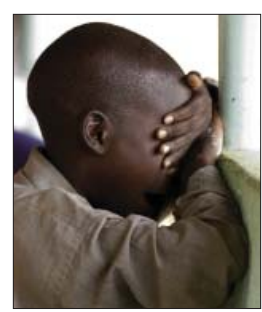
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World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*



From Asia to Latin America to Africa, precious girls and boys struggle to survive in desperate situations. They are in need of basic care and help in healing from the hardships they have endured.

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Introduction

Children in Crisis: An Overview

Worldwide, an estimated 1 billion children live in poverty. While each of these precious children is vulnerable to risks such as malnutrition and disease, millions among them face extraordinary hardship resulting from difficult, often desperate living situations or exclusion. “Children in crisis” are boys and girls affected by sexual exploitation, hazardous labor, war, street life, violence, disability, or lack of a primary caregiver.

Today in our world:

- 250 million children are laborers.
- Tens of millions of children live on the streets.
- 2 million children are exploited in the commercial sex trade.
- As many as 300,000 children serve as child soldiers.



In Mexico City, above, and other large urban centers, the streets are home and workplace for many children. They also are places of danger and lost dreams.

The lives of children in crisis are marked by enormous stress and hardship. Exploitative social situations, conflicts, fragile economies, extreme poverty at the household and community level, and individual vulnerabilities put boys and girls at risk—threatening their development, health, and even their lives.

Children are more vulnerable than adults to the impact of crisis situations. They have less capacity for self-protection and survival because of their evolving physical, psychological, cognitive, and emotional development. Children in crisis are in need of immediate help and ongoing nurturing so that they can heal from their past experiences and grow to fulfill their God-given potential.

A Caring Response, Made Possible by Donors

World Vision is committed to providing a compassionate and meaningful response to the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of children in crisis and those at risk of being placed in crisis situations. Our interventions reflect a holistic approach, which encompasses prevention activities; care, protection, and rehabilitation; and reintegration assistance.

Prevention This includes:

- Advocating at local, regional, and national government levels for establishment of policies and protocols that help protect children from abuse
- Pursuing avenues ranging from use of mass media to training of classroom teachers to raise awareness of the dangers children face and the importance of protecting them

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- Equipping families to help children through involvement in community-based groups that focus on preventing abuse
- Empowering children to embark on promising paths through education and job- and life-skills training



World Vision is working to improve the quality of life for exploited and at-risk children so they can grow to reach their God-given potential and experience lives of fullness and hope.

Care, Protection, and Rehabilitation Our work involves:

- Operating transitional shelters for children who live or work on the streets or those who have escaped from sexual or labor exploitation
- Providing psychosocial services, making referrals if additional counseling is needed, and offering access to spiritual support
- Partnering with other organizations to operate rehabilitation centers that offer shelter, food, and health care to children recovering from exploitative situations, and helping children access other networks of services

Reintegration Our ultimate goal is for children to be successfully reintegrated into their communities and, when appropriate, their families. Therefore we:

- Utilize formal and nonformal education, life-skills training, and vocational instruction to help children develop the tools they need to build a better future
- Help reunite exploited and abandoned children with their families and communities
- Equip families to properly care for their children, offer them job-skills training and business assistance to help generate income, and support them through community development projects that provide the essentials of living

Current Efforts to Help Children in Crisis

World Vision is blessed immensely by generous donors like you who support these activities. We are engaged in different types of Children in Crisis projects in fiscal year 2007 (October 2006 through September 2007), from helping children who have been affected by war to providing shelter, food, and vocational training to street children.

We also are engaged in a multi-country initiative to improve programming for children in crisis worldwide. Through this global effort—called Laboratories of Learning—World Vision and our partner universities are identifying best practices for working with children in crisis and will share these throughout World Vision project areas and with other organizations.

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To provide a window into our Children in Crisis work, we have summarized highlights from the first half of FY07, drawn from projects in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Mexico City; and Gulu, Uganda.

Children in Crisis: Specific Projects

Cambodia Street Children Transformation Project

An estimated 20,000 children are living or working on the streets of Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital. World Vision has been assisting vulnerable street children here since 1993, operating a drop-in center that offers shelter, medical care, food, clothing, recreation, education, vocational training, and spiritual nurture. We also have helped children reunite with their families or find alternative homes such as foster families.

This year, World Vision has refocused its efforts in Phnom Penh to place special emphasis on younger boys and girls, ages 4 to 12, whose needs have not been addressed as effectively as needed. This age group is especially lacking in physical strength, information, and survival skills—which places their well-being at risk and deprives them of opportunities to live their lives to the fullest.

We have responded by reaching out to these children with protection, shelter, education, and help reuniting with their families. From October 2006 through March 2007, the following took place through our Cambodia Street Children Transformation Project.

- Through daytime and nighttime outreach activities, the project team made contact with 2,440 street children, including 809 girls. Staff provided information to children about keeping themselves healthy and how to seek out health center and hospital services, when needed.
- 42 street children, including 18 girls, left the streets and decided to accept safer accommodations at World Vision's center, where they have access to health care, educational opportunities, life-skills training, and vocational instruction.

A Story of Hope

A family illness that drained resources and persistent poverty have forced Soey, 7, and his family to live on the streets of Phnom Penh. Soey, his mother, and younger sibling often have gone to the market to beg.*

The family's shelter offers poor protection from the elements. Soey's mother says, "We are exposed to everything, including rain and mosquitoes. We frequently catch illnesses ..."

Soey's mother explained that her children have taken part in World Vision outreach activities, and Soey asked her if he could stay at the World Vision center. She said, "With a good relationship and trust with World Vision's services, I decided to let my son go."

Soey is enjoying the other children at the center and the care he receives. He said, "Living here gives me hope and makes me feel safe."

* Not his real name



Children gather for a meal at the World Vision center in Phnom Penh.

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Nonformal education provides children at our Phnom Penh center with skills to apply in the future.

- An average of 34 children per month stayed at the World Vision children's center. The environment helps children build positive relationships, provides an atmosphere for healthy living, and promotes the development of good character.
- All children registered at the center took part in nonformal education, with classes ranging from kindergarten to grade 3. Teachers reported that children in grade 1 could write and read the entire Khmer alphabet as well as their names. Children in grades 2 and 3 could read children's magazines and are performing above their grade level in mathematics. The older children sometimes help the younger ones with their studies. Children also are given chores, such as cleaning and cooking, as appropriate for their age.
- A total of 22 children (11 of them girls) were reunited with their birth families. Project staff provided follow-up and counseling for the families. Another 13 children (five of them girls) were transferred to other organizations working with vulnerable children where they will receive ongoing assistance.

A Family Reunited

World Vision helped Pablo reunite with his family earlier this year, following years of effort to rebuild that relationship.*

Pablo was 8 and had been living on the streets for six months when our Mexico City outreach team brought him into our program. Pablo finished grade school and began technical school. He stayed at our residential facility, Hovde House.

World Vision parenting classes—part of our Mexico Children in Crisis Project—helped the youth, his mother, and brothers form strong bonds.

* Not his real name

Mexico Children in Crisis

Mexico City is the most populous city in Mexico, and, with its surrounding areas, constitutes one of the largest urban centers in the world. Here, more than 11,000 children work or live on the streets (UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children*, 2006). These children typically lack proper nutrition, sanitation facilities, health care, schooling, and supportive, loving relationships. Many are exposed to and take part in drug use, violence, and sexual activity. Their experiences often leave them isolated, depressed, aggressive, and self-destructive.

Since 1990, World Vision has been helping street children in Mexico City, offering them a safe environment away from the streets, personal attention, and opportunities to change the direction of their lives. Our work recently took on new importance as World Vision selected Mexico to be a regional center for pioneering research—conducted in collaboration with leading U.S. universities—on how to better serve the needs of Children in Crisis. Mexico is the focal point for Latin America and one of three locations globally where World Vision is engaged in its groundbreaking Laboratories of Learning initiative.

World Vision's Mexico Children in Crisis Project provides specialized services that further the individual, family, social, and

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spiritual development of the children we seek to assist. Following is a summary of activities carried out between October 2006 and March 2007.

Recovery-Outreach We served 604 children and youth through our recovery and outreach interventions.



Activities carried out through the Mexico Children in Crisis Project offer children benefits such as nutritious meals and opportunities for recreation.

- 350 children were helped on the street, benefiting from services such as emergency medical care, and taking part in nonformal education activities.
- An additional 235 children received assistance on the street and through The Patio, which is a drop-in center providing children with a respite from street life. Here, they can bathe, attend to their personal hygiene, have a meal, receive medical care, play, learn vocational skills, and receive spiritual enrichment to help guide them away from violence and drugs.
- 19 youth entered our drug addiction center for rehabilitation.

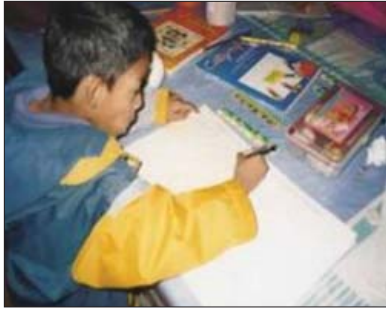
Prevention Activities This work is conducted through the Matlapa Center, which assists families in keeping at-risk children home by promoting education and skills training; enlisting support from local schools and the community; and holding workshops. During the first six months of FY07, World Vision worked in four urban communities and collaborated with 20 local schools to improve school attendance and performance.

The “community promoters” program helped to mobilize the community to support the efforts of the prevention center. Workshops were held for mothers of children at risk, with emphasis on providing girls and boys with an environment that is free of violence, sexual abuse, and drug dependency.

A total of 795 children and youth were served—700 of them directly by the center. Ninety-five indigenous working children also benefited. Eighty-four families were assisted through the prevention center. With this project component, we are helping to build family bonds, promote positive physical and mental health, and provide skills enhancement including technological training.

Strengthening In a residential setting at Casa Hovde (Hovde House) boys, girls, adolescents, and young women receive food, medical and psychological care, guidance on values, information about healthy living, and help in creating and pursuing their personal life goals. We also help children reintegrate with their families. During the first half of FY07:

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Education is important in providing children with options for the future and therefore is a key component of our work with vulnerable children in the Mexico City area.

- 20 boys and girls received holistic, personalized care, including nutritious meals, and attended school.
- 32 adolescents received personalized care and were monitored to ensure they were in good health. All 32 continued with their education.
- Four young women continued with their studies, strengthened their ties to the community, and participated in workshops to further their spiritual growth.
- 56 children and youth at the residential center had contact with their families. Of these, seven were reunited with their families.

Uganda Children of War Center

The War's Impact on Children For the past two decades, Uganda has been embroiled in a brutal civil war between the government, headed by President Yoweri Museveni, and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), an insurgent group run by military leader Joseph Kony. The LRA has perpetrated extreme violence—massacring, maiming, and mutilating civilians and mounting a campaign of abduction.

An estimated 36,000 children from districts in northern and eastern Uganda have been captured. It is estimated that more than 80 percent of LRA soldiers are children who are forced to conduct a reign of terror against their own people, which includes mass murders, cutting of limbs and ears, and burning down entire communities. Girls as young as 8 are taken as porters and soldiers, and when deemed old enough, are given to older men as their “wives” and treated as sex slaves. Many of them, while still children themselves, bear children from this repeated sexual abuse.

Currently, a significant number of children of war are being rescued by the Ugandan army or escaping. These children are quite traumatized by their experience, lack the social, educational and livelihood skills needed to reintegrate themselves into their families and communities, and are frequently mistrusted or hated by their communities for what they have done or are perceived to have done while with the LRA. In addition, many of them have worms because they drink bad water, septic wounds from the distances they had to walk, and scabies from not bathing. They are accustomed to eating roots and berries for food, and their bodies usually are hurt from beatings and gunshot wounds.

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Helping the Hurting Children In 1995, World Vision created the Gulu Rehabilitation Center for Children of War. Since its beginning, the center has served more than 13,580 children, helping them cope with the trauma they experienced as children of war. It is the largest, most well-established rehabilitation center in this conflict. The center has an excellent reputation for its work giving victims support on a number of different fronts—providing children who have escaped the LRA with temporary shelter, AIDS education, food, medical treatment, psychosocial counseling, and spiritual nurture to help them work through the trauma and grief resulting from their captivity.

The program has expanded into the districts of Pader and Kitgum, and now offers both center-based and community outreach projects aimed at improving the psychosocial, physical, and economic well-being of formerly abducted children and their communities. World Vision works within the affected communities, helping families and community members understand what has happened to these children and encouraging forgiveness and acceptance for the atrocities the children may have committed against them.

FY07 Accomplishments From October 2006 through March 2007, World Vision's Children of War Project received, rehabilitated, and reintegrated 67 formerly abducted children with their communities. This included the provision of food, nonfood items, trauma counseling, medical treatment, child rights education, and family tracing and reunion. In addition, the project:

- Provided school fees for 25 formerly abducted children to access post-primary and technical education
- Provided medical care for seven children with serious health issues
- Trained 50 child mothers in business management to improve their income-generation skills
- Engaged communities in conflict resolution, and provided peacebuilding training for more than 800 people
- Trained 36 community volunteers in psychosocial support and trauma counseling

New Program Design In the fall of 2006, World Vision conducted a Children of War program evaluation, which led to a refocusing of activities. The program was redesigned in December 2006, and now places greater emphasis on outreach, increased counseling, individual attention to households of reintegrated children, and improved teacher training. The following specific interventions were put in place:

"A Reason to Live"

Elizabeth was 8 when the LRA kidnapped her. While in the hands of her captors, she was subjected to sexual slavery and forced to act as a "wife" to a rebel commander. After 10 years in captivity, she was rescued and brought to the World Vision Gulu Rehabilitation Center, where she and her toddler daughter are receiving assistance.*

A few days after her arrival at the center, Elizabeth learned that her parents had been killed. For a time, she wished she had stayed in captivity until she died there, but now says more hopefully, "I feel I have a reason to live."

Elizabeth is learning to be a tailor, and says, "I will make the best clothes when I finish my course." She and other child mothers are developing skills that will help them care for themselves and their families, and build their self-esteem.

* Not her real name

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- 1,500 children are receiving one-on-one life coaching through a mentor as well as intensive, long-term psychosocial counseling.
- 700 counselors are working with households that are caring for formerly abducted children, to help strengthen marriages and relationships. These counselors also are coordinating with local churches to provide care for these families.
- Primary and secondary schoolteachers are being trained to identify children in crisis and refer them for further help.
- World Vision is working with UNICEF, other nongovernmental organizations, and the Ministry of Education to help all the children in affected families gain access to education, not only those who have been abducted.
- World Vision is collaborating with other nongovernmental organizations to offer a wider variety of vocational skills training opportunities to child mothers and other formerly abducted children.

Conclusion



"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

—Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Children are hurting and at risk in communities around the globe. World Vision is committed to making a difference in their lives. We are truly blessed that caring, generous donors like you share this commitment. Our work is helping to keep children from harm and providing loving support when they have been hurt or exploited. World Vision is humbled to join with you in demonstrating God's love for precious girls and boys by assisting them, nurturing them, and guiding them toward a brighter future.