



Newsletter

Spring 2025

“Protecting children is an important part of our work. We feel it as a mission, because we read in the Bible how important children are to Jesus. He protects children, calls them to Himself and blesses them.” -Andries Schuttinga, CEO

A third of the world’s population are children. And all of these children, made in the image of God, deserve to have rights intended to safeguard them, regardless of where they live. In the developed world, we often take these rights for granted. But in the developing communities where we work, children are often vulnerable. Protecting children and explaining these rights to children and parents is a key part of the Help a Child programs. How do we do this in practice?

The Rights of the Child are described in 54 articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They include the right to education, to protection in war and against child labor, to have one’s own language and culture, a name and nationality, one’s own opinion, and a safe and healthy life. At Help a Child, we embrace these rights, and along with our Christian faith, they form the basis of our work.

A Good Start

Help a Child’s programs are aimed at giving very young children a good start in life and a chance for a better future. This is possible if a child is healthy, receives a good education, can develop their talents, and has self-confidence. How we form our programs depends on the area where we work.

The Children’s Club

In **Kenya**, for example, we have children’s groups in which children learn to discover their talents and where they learn about their rights. We motivate them and help them to make plans for the future and going to school.

In **Malawi**, Otis leads the Children’s Rights Club. This includes about twenty children meeting twice a month. “In this club, for example, they discuss situations of violence at school or at home. Many children are shy and not used to speaking out. Here, they learn to stand up for themselves,” says Otis. One of the ways in which the children learn this is through role-playing. The children act out situations that they experience, such as a girl who has been married off and no longer comes to school. A situation that occurs regularly, says Hellenah (18), a participant in the club: “Even if a girl is married and pregnant, we want her to be able to go to school. It is important that she gets an education.”

Looking After Each Other

In **Uganda** and **India**, we use children’s parliaments as a fun and educational method to involve children in decisions that are made. For example, eleven-year-old Imak is the Minister of Health in his village in Purnea, Northern India. The children’s parliament here meets every week and each minister has his or her own responsibilities. The Minister of Education makes sure that all the children in the village go to school. If a child is absent, he or she visits them to see if everything is going well and in case of illness, the Minister of Health contacts the health officer. Together they investigate whether action needs to be taken. In this way, children learn to look out for each other, to solve problems, and to ask adults for help when needed. Imak and the other children take their roles very seriously and are committed to the project. ■



Child protection in Malawi – Committee ensures safety within the village community

In many places where we work, children have long been subject to violence or neglect, and crimes against them often go unpunished. The Child Protection Committee in Upper Zilakoma, Malawi, is responsible for the safety of children within the village community. It is a community-based initiative made up of volunteers, mainly parents, who work closely with a government-appointed Child Protection Officer. The volunteers investigate reports of child labor and child abuse and ensure that the police are involved when necessary.

The committee is tasked with advocating for vulnerable children. In one instance, there was a girl in the village who was taken by her older sister's husband and became pregnant. With the help of the committee, the police were involved, and the man was sentenced to prison. In another situation, parents left their two children, aged ten and two, home alone while they were on a business trip for a month. Sometimes parents do not want their child



Getrude: "When I was young, there was a lot of violence towards children. My hope and wish is that I can protect the children and that they can get a good education. If they are well educated, they can also support this village community." Getrude Phiri coordinates 'Safe Places for Children,' one of the tasks of the committee.

"We are proud of what we do. We want society to become better."



Upper Zilakoma - Malawi

to go to school. Thanks to efforts to provide information to parents about the importance of schooling and to the work of the committee, most children now go to school.

These things can seem unfathomable to us, but unfortunately they happen in communities where Help a Child works. This committee is one way we help communities effect change, and it is having a preventive effect: people increasingly see that crimes against children will not go unpunished. The village community is happy with the committee's work, and one volunteer reflected: "We are proud of what we do. We want society to become better. Our work helps people to change."



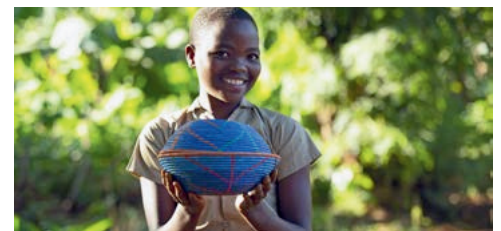
Gilbert (10) from Uganda: "My mother is a member of a self-help group and can buy clothes and food and there is enough school fees. I am a member of the Arise & Shine group. I like that group because I learn things about personal hygiene like bathing, washing clothes, brushing teeth, sweeping the house and cleaning the grounds."

In their words...

"If I were president, I would make sure there was enough food for everyone"

Brenda, 13, Kenya

Aline (13) from Burundi: "Thanks to the program, we know more about hygiene. Like that you have to wash your hands after using the toilet. And we didn't have a vegetable garden, but now we do. My parents learned how to work the land, which has increased the harvest. Now I eat three meals a day, but before I only had one!"



Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me"

Matthew 25:40

Thank you for your support and prayers for the children and families served by Help a Child. This help is still very much needed!

Want to send a card to your sponsored child or family? Send it to us at the address below or email a message and we will write it in a card on your behalf. Thank you!