

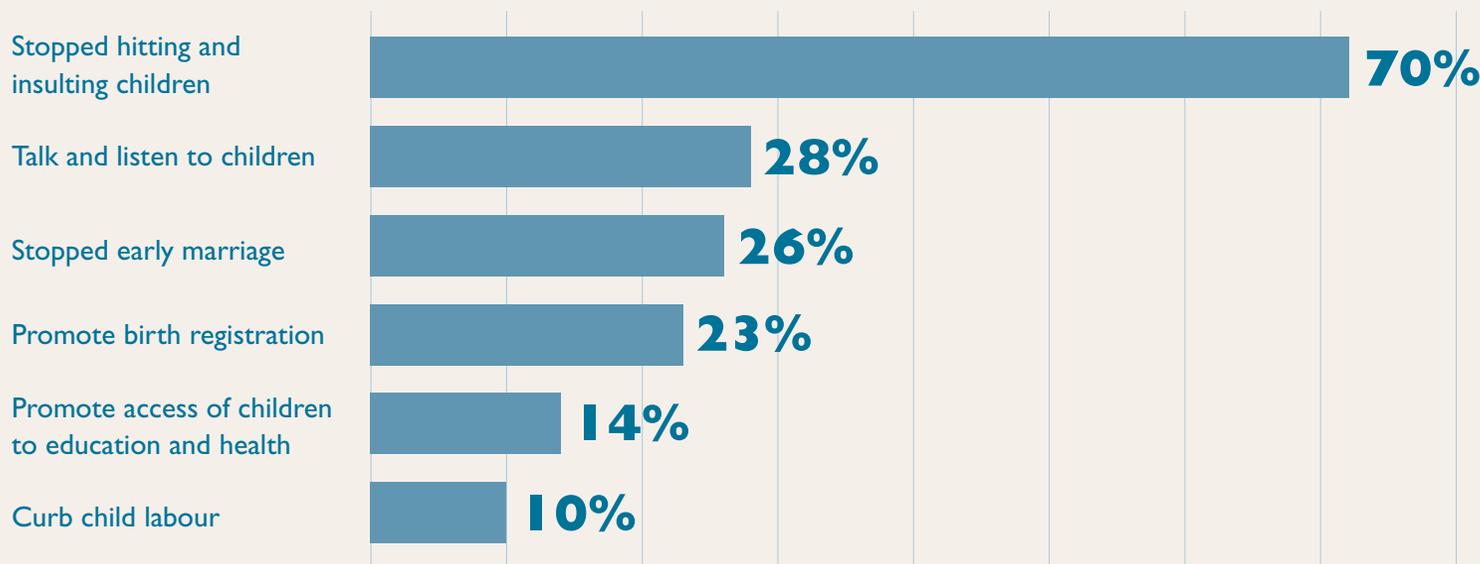
CHALLENGING HARMFUL BEHAVIOURS USING RELIGIOUS TEXTS

## Research finds that engagement with religious texts was key in mobilising faith leaders to improve the lives of children

World Vision’s Channels of Hope for Child Protection (CoH CP) project is an intervention that seeks to address violence against children by catalysing religious leaders’ awareness of key child protection issues, mobilising local faith community resources and, as a result, fostering the development of an enabling environment for the protection, support and well-being of children. A multi-country, longitudinal study of the project shows a positive impact on attitudes, behaviours and motivations.

### RESULTS

Can you give an example of how you changed your behaviour towards children?\*



\*In Senegal, percentage change in behaviour at midline for faith leaders and spouses



### KEY GLOBAL LEARNINGS

The methodology of Channels of Hope, refined over almost three decades and now five different curricula, takes members of faith communities through a transformational trajectory of exploration, learning, grappling, debate and decision in the company of their religious texts and their broader communities. New understanding and norms emerge slowly and sustainably as a result of this careful, well-documented process. For CoH CP, this process in three very different communities is leading to the same result: more protective environments in which children can grow and thrive.

The research documentation is available on WVI.org:  
[www.wvi.org/faitH-and-development/channels-hope](http://www.wvi.org/faitH-and-development/channels-hope)

## WHAT IS CHANNELS OF HOPE?

Since the early 1990s, Channels of Hope has been implemented in over 60 countries and engaged more than half a million people using five different curricula (HIV, Gender, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Ebola and this one on Child Protection). CoH is both a workshop methodology and a multi-year engagement process, designed for faith groups to engage with various child well-being issues. It engages a community's religious texts to challenge existing harmful behaviour, creating a vibrant, constructive space for transforming long-held social norms.

## CoH WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

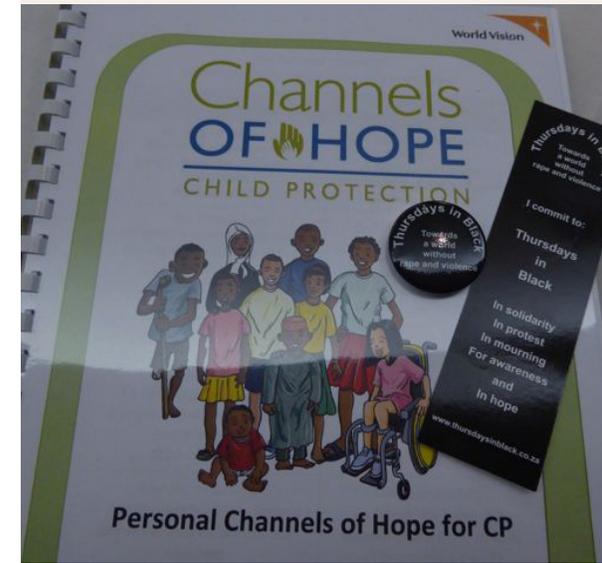
A CoH workshop includes discussion, practical debate and learning on a particular child well-being subject, where participants gain a deeper vision for how they can respond to the challenges their communities face. The workshop methodology allows participants to share personal knowledge and experiences, debate, learn what other faith groups are doing, and explore technical information from local experts. It engages issues of faith, religious texts and ethics. It takes participants on a journey to discern how God might be calling each of one of them to engage, individually and together.

There are two types of CoH workshops, which both follow the same methodology but different target audiences: one is for senior faith leaders and their spouses; and the other is for lay and ministry leaders who will take the vision and plan their faith leader initiated during their workshop and implement it.

The objectives of the workshop for CoH CP are to encourage participants to:

1. Consider the complexities and challenging attitudes associated with child protection
2. Explore associated technical information about child protection through statistics, personal reflection and group activities
3. Come to a deeper understanding of the child protection realities in their communities and begin to discern how they and the wider faith community can respond
4. Explore how to prevent child protection violations with a special focus on positive discipline and the role of the faith community
5. Based on guiding principles, provide a faith-ethical response for the care and protection of children
6. Create space to dialogue and debate the tough issues and questions raised regarding child protection through a lens of faith and religious texts.

CoH CP does not tell participants what do believe or do but encourages them to dig into their own experience and knowledge to address deeply rooted problems. Participants debate tough issues through the lens of their own religious texts, faith and beliefs. They build their own vision for the future and make plans to improve the protective environment for children. They gain knowledge, insight and tangible tools to nurture children and address injustices.



## HOW PARTICIPANTS RESPONDED TO THE CoH CP WORKSHOPS

In Guatemala, faith leaders experienced positive changes in their attitudes on norms around child discipline after participating in CoH CP workshops. The percentage of faith leaders and their spouses who believed spanking to discipline their children was prohibited by their scriptures increased by 40% (from 54% at the baseline to 95% at the endline). For example, faith leaders and their spouses shared that they stopped using corporal punishment to discipline children and listened to them instead.

A few faith leaders and spouses also noted that CoH CP provided clarifications on the scriptures that they had previously been unsure about.

**“What also motivated me is that, in each training, they read us a biblical text. Through that, we felt motivated and courageous to do good things and that it is through the power of God and how they explained. For example, in the Church, there were things that I could not and did not know how to do even though I read the scriptures, but it was hard for me to understand. I came here [COH CP] to learn and dispel the doubts that I had.”** (KII with a faith leader spouse, San Juan Ermita)

**“They [faith leaders] initiated activities with parents, which encourage them to care for their children as reflected in God’s love. They gave them some reflections so that they would feel that call God makes to them. The reflections were given to them by means of a megaphone and a message. This message was: “When I see my children, I see God Himself.” They engage so that parents stop punishing their sons and daughters and value them and encourage people who sell alcoholic beverages to no longer do so.”** (Essays of girls aged 14-17 years old, Jocotán)

Other positive comments included that the workshop was in the form of a dialogue, provided new important information, and its methodology was engaging through such activities as games. Some faith leaders and their spouses noted that bringing together with different denominations was another strength of the workshop.

**“The most important thing is Channels of Hope, it is based on the Bible they are not inventions.”** (Faith leader, male, Jocotán)

**“Because the topics we have learned help us a lot, I have never heard them, and they have helped me grow as a person.”** (Faith leader, female, Jocotán)

**“It was not a sermon, but a dialogue in which opinions are exchanged, one develops and helps us to understand better. Participation among members is what has helped me the most.”** (Faith leader, male, San Juan Ermita)

Almost all (98%) of the participants in Jocotán, Guatemala said that the CoH workshop had influenced their view of children from a Christian perspective. They came to realise that children were important because they were creations of God:

**“Children are so important... as Jesus says that you have to be like children because they do not hold a grudge like adults.”** (Faith leader, male, Jocotán)

**“In understanding that Jesus was a child too and was raised with love, that’s why he was growing in wisdom.”** (Faith leader spouse, female, Jocotán)

After the workshops, faith leaders and their spouses in Gouloumbou, Senegal reported changes in their theological reflections.

**“I attended two training sessions that allowed me to gain much knowledge about child protection and I learned in the Scriptures this verse that talks about child protection.”** (FGD with Muslim faith leaders, Gouloumbou)

**“There is a concordance in the writings of the Bible and the Qur’an on certain aspects related to child protection.”** (FGD with faith leaders, Hamdallaye Pont)

This led to changes in behaviour at a midline survey of faith leaders and spouses.

# BACKGROUND

Channels of Hope for Child Protection (CoH CP) is a World Vision attitude and social norm change intervention. It starts with raising the awareness of faith leaders and their spouses about key child protection issues through analysis and dialogue about religious texts. These faith leaders then mobilise local faith communities around child protection to foster an environment that advances the protection, support and well-being of children. This process is supported by faith leader workshops, Congregational Hope Action Teams (CHATs) workshops, and a biannual follow-up by World Vision (see figure below, which illustrates CoH CP phases and points in time for data collection).

Together with Queen Margaret University (QMU) in Scotland, World Vision's global research team conducted a five-year (2016-2021), multi-country, longitudinal study on Faith Communities' Contribution to Ending Violence Against Children (FCC EVAC). The study explores CoH CP pathways for change and impact at different time points across three sites representing different religious environments: Senegal (predominantly Muslim), Uganda (Christian and Muslim), and Guatemala (Christian). Additionally, this study gathers evidence on faith communities' role in child protection beyond CoH CP.

The study in these countries was conducted among World Vision programmes that implement Child Protection and Advocacy (CPA) projects. The sites had similar key socioeconomic, religious, and cultural factors. The only difference between the intervention and comparison sites was that the intervention included Channels of Hope (CoH) as a part of their CPA programme. In both countries, the endline studies use a mixed method approach. The quantitative component included a survey on knowledge, attitudes, practices, and theological reflections (KAPT) among faith leaders and spouses across intervention and comparison sites, and another survey on community norms among CHAT members, faith congregation members, and community members. The qualitative component generated insights from individuals through key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) with various study population groups, as well as participatory activities with children and case studies.

The main methodological challenge was that the study could not follow all participants of the original cohort identified at baseline, meaning that the researchers had to construct new samples from the participants of catalysing workshops at each time point to most accurately capture changes throughout the project. Nonetheless, they managed to follow a high percentage of the catalysing workshop participants throughout the study.

