

# Learning from the Implementation of Channels of Hope for Child Protection in Malawi



A report for World Vision UK  
September 2015

**Blessings Kachale, Carola Eyber and Alastair Ager**

Institute for Global Health and Development  
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH



## CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. The CoH CP Programme
2. CoH CP Implementation in Malawi
3. Study Approach
4. Programme Implementation
  - a. Participants and training methodology
  - b. Fidelity of programme delivery
5. Findings
  - a. Key child protection concerns identified
  - b. Sensitization of faith leaders and other participants
  - c. Varied circumstances of faith leaders
  - d. Strategies of mobilization
  - e. Establishing an enabling environment
6. Recommendations



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Channels of Hope for Child Protection (CoH CP) is an intervention that seeks to promote child protection by catalysing religious leaders' awareness of key child protection issues, mobilizing local faith community resources and thereby fostering the development of a wider enabling environment for the protection, support and well-being of children. A CoH CP pilot project was initiated in the Chingale and Namachete communities of Zomba, Malawi in January 2014 through the provision of workshops engaging local faith leaders, their spouses and other community members in Zomba, Chingale and Namachete.

This report is based on a field study completed in September 2015 to identify the impacts of this intervention. The study involved interviews with six World Vision staff across national, district and sub-district level, seventeen key informant interviews (KIIs) and six focus group discussions (FGDs) with local stakeholders including religious leaders, their spouses and local officials in both Chingale and Namachete. Five FGDs were conducted with community groups, including four FGDs (involving over 30 boys and 30 girls) with children.

Interviews indicated that while the CoH CP sensitization workshops with religious leaders and their wives had been delivered broadly according to specification, scheduled follow-up activities (including the training of Congregation/Community Hope Action Teams, CHATs) had not been completed. Significant turnover of staff appears to have been a major factor in this. Appraisal of impact is thus principally with respect to the catalyzing workshops rather than the full CoH CP model.

Many participants reported that attending the workshop had been transformational of their perspectives regarding the protection of children and its relationship to their religious

ministry. The key child protection issues identified by participants included non-school attendance, forced labor, child marriage and harsh physical punishment.

Sensitization had been translated into action by many participants, though the form of this action varied widely. There were several examples of more isolated religious leaders adopting innovative strategies<sup>1</sup> to highlight and follow-up on child protection issues in their communities. Those with more established church structures and/or those with more confident understanding of workshop material implemented more concerted activities. Few congregations established a formal CHAT structure. Although this in part reflected the lack of formal support for the formation of CHATs, in many cases it signaled the appropriate accommodation of CHAT functions within existing congregational or community structures.

Given the design of the study and the partial implementation of the CoH CP model it is difficult to conclude impact on the wider enabling environment for child protection in the two communities. However, with the simultaneous roll-out of the Community Voice and Action (CVA) programme in the communities, a number of developments in establishing a more protective environment could be identified. These included stronger links with government structures and village authorities and the broader connection of religious leaders with other parties interested in promoting CP such as teachers.

Several recommendations for subsequent CoH CP programming are suggested. These include: ensuring that workshop materials and approach

---

<sup>1</sup> The cover photograph depicts one of the strategies adopted by pastor. Here youth from different satellite churches, who had attended a five day youth retreat, gathered to run a Sunday service.



match recruitment selection criteria (especially in regard to language and educational skills of participants); ensuring adequate follow-up in support of mobilization within communities; enabling and encouraging adaption of the CHAT model by congregations in acknowledgment of their existing structures and capacity for innovation; and more explicitly coordinating CoH CP work with other initiatives with which there are clear potential synergies such as CVA.

## Acknowledgements

With thanks to all who supported planning and implementation of this study including staff at World Vision UK (Tracy Shields, Child Protection Coordinator; and Andrew Ware), World Vision Malawi (Naire Salima, Richard Chigwenembe, Ndanyo Nkosi, Linda Banda, Janet Mbwadzulu, Wezi Mjathu, Binwell Ntoso, Arthur Mpumulo, Paul Chiwambo and Maxwell Kamiza) and the World Vision International CoH CP team (Bill Forbes, Robyn Cawker and Christo Greyling). We acknowledge the support of staff at QMU, Edinburgh, especially Linda Graham and Janice Burr. Finally, we are grateful for the kindness and hospitality of the communities of Chingale and Namachete that so generously assisted us in our work.

## Suggested Citation

Kachale, B, Eyber, C and Ager, A (2015) Learning from the Implementation of Channels of Hope for Child Protection in Malawi. Report to World Vision UK. Edinburgh: QMU, Edinburgh.

## Acronyms

ADP: Area Development Programme  
CHAT: Congregational Hope Action Team  
CoH: Channels of Hope  
CP: Child Protection  
CPC: Child Protection Committee  
CVA: Community Voice and Action  
DFID: Dept. for International Development  
FGD: Focus Group Discussion  
KII: Key Informant Interview  
PF: Pastors Fraternal  
WV: World Vision  
WVM: World Vision Malawi



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH



## LEARNING FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANNELS OF HOPE FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN MALAWI

### 1. THE COH CP PROGRAMME

CoH CP is a World Vision project model that motivates and builds capacity in faith leaders and faith communities to engage with key child protection issues including addressing harmful practices, supporting and advocating for children's rights, and fostering a wider enabling environment to strengthen the child protection system.

Engaging faith leaders is viewed as crucial because their unmatched moral authority and influence can embrace change and inspire communities to better support, honour, protect and care for children. Many child protection issues are the product of deeply entrenched, long-lasting beliefs, values and culture, which faith leaders can have authority to address.

CoH CP is viewed by WV both a process and a methodology. The methodology is packaged into a three-day workshop that is planned to be facilitative and interactive. The methodology aims to create a safe space for faith leaders and faith communities to learn, share and debate. It seeks to reach down to the root causes and deepest convictions that maintain harmful attitudes, norms, values and practices toward children. The process is grounded in guiding principles from the participants' holy scripture.

The CoH process is structured in four phases of activity: *prepare* (developing materials, mapping potential stakeholders and identifying recruitment criteria); *catalyse* (activity focused around an interactive three-day workshop on child protection issues for faith leaders and their spouses, which draws upon both technical child protection knowledge and relevant religious teachings); *strategise* (supporting faith

leaders to form groups within their congregations, Congregational/Community Hope Action Teams (CHATs), who develop plans to address child protection issues in collaboration with the wider community); and *empower* (activities encouraging reflection upon progress and wider influence on the enabling environment).

### 2. COH CP IMPLEMENTATION IN MALAWI

Three pilot CoH CP workshops were conducted in Zomba town and in the nearby Namachete and Chingale communities, Malawi, in January 2014, which were funded through UK Department for International Development (DfID) Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA2) funds. After preparatory work in contextualizing materials, selection criteria for participants were developed for three separate three-day workshops conducted in English in Chingale and Namachete respectively. The workshops involved a total of 109 participants. This included 47 senior faith leaders<sup>2</sup> and their spouses, 10 government staff and 11 WV staff from Chingale and Namachete ADPs.

### 3. STUDY APPROACH

This report is based on a field evaluation conducted between 28th August and 6th September 2015 to identify the impact of the CoH CP workshop intervention and related programme activity in relation to the care and protection of children. The study involved semi-structured interviews with six World Vision staff across national, district and sub-district level, and sixteen key informant interviews (KIIs) with local stakeholders including faith leaders, their

---

<sup>2</sup> Senior faith leader means the senior-most leader of a Christian congregation, with 20 or more members, that meets regularly



spouses and local government officials. Eight focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with community groups, including 3 FGDs (involving approximately 31 boys and 31 girls) with children. Details of the groups and participants interviewed are attached in Annex A.



FGD with a youth group in Chingale

#### 4. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

##### a. Participants and training methodology

The selection of workshop participants was delegated by WV staff to an organization of Christian faith leaders who were active both at district as well as at a local community level (the Pastors Fraternal). The Pastors Fraternal (PF) represents many but not all of the church leaders in these areas. Previous WV contact with this organization made them an appropriate partner for selecting participants. WV staff requested that all participants should be able to speak English and be literate.

The first workshop was conducted at the Zomba district level with what WV staff described as 'higher level' faith leaders. Some ambiguity surrounds how pastors were then selected for the workshops in Chingale and Namachete with the PF in Chingale stating that they had to adapt their selection of participants at the last minute to reflect the same membership of churches

that were represented at the Zomba workshop. The reason given by WV staff for this was that it would make working together easier for the pastors across the three areas (Zomba town, Chingale and Namachete). However, this meant that the selection of participants for Chingale was changed just before the workshop and some pastors were included who could not speak English and were semi-literate<sup>3</sup>. The participants who could not speak English complained about the training and all hand-outs being in English, which made it difficult for most of them to understand the content.

*"Some of us found it hard to understand English and it took group discussions for us to understand what was being required of us when we come back to our congregations,"* FGD Pastors fraternal, Namachete

*"Even the books that we were given were in English, some of us did not go far with school",* KII Pastor DK, Chingale

WV facilitators who had conducted the workshops confirmed that it had been difficult to conduct the workshop in English and participants needed a lot of help but that the dense format of the workshop did not allow them to translate all of the content into Chichewa. Towards the end of the workshop one of the facilitators started interpreting most of the material for the participants.

Post-workshop many faith leaders expressed the concern that they needed to translate the workbooks for their congregation for it to be useful. More than half of the faith leaders reported that they found it hard to understand and translate the manual into actionable points.

*"The manual [workbook] should be translated into Chichewa, it needs someone who has gone*

---

<sup>3</sup> This seemed not to have occurred in Namachete, however.



*to school, here in our community there are not many who have gone far with their education to interpret the manual,”* Pastor JK, Chingale

The selection of participants raises some interesting issues for CoH processes. On the one hand the presence of pastors who did not meet the selection criteria (i.e., English-speakers and literate) presented a problem for the flow of the workshop. On the other hand the intervention of the Zomba PF actually led to the presence of a number of pastors who would otherwise not have had the opportunity or exposure to such a workshop. Their inclusion can thus also be seen as a positive and appropriate result – one which does however raise questions around the need for workshop materials to be translated into the local language.

The workshop methodology consisted of a combination of instructional/classroom learning and dialogue in various small group exercises. The participants largely felt that the workshop methodology had been appropriate, appreciating the time given to discussions on various topics, which helped them grasp the training content more fully through group interaction.

There were, however, two points of concern raised by workshop participants regarding content and associated methodology of the workshop. One of these was with regard to the suggestion that ‘forcing a child to go to church is a form of child abuse’. Participants generally disagreed with this, but felt that they were being told that they should view it as such:

*“Q: Were there things in the workshop you didn’t agree with?”*

*A: Forcing a child to go to church is a form of abuse. In the group work the conclusion was not that straight forward, there was room for making you draw your own conclusion with help*

*from the facilitators. Almost all of us were saying that it is not abuse; this is attached to our culture. For us in our society you can force a child to go to church. The way it was portrayed in the handbook is that it is child abuse”,* KII, Pastor WK, Chingale.

Ambiguity regarding the notion of ‘force’ and whether it only involved physical measures appears to have contributed to uncertainty on this question.

The second point of disagreement was with regard to the physical punishment of children. In an FGD with a group of pastors’ wives several participants revealed that they felt a need to continue to beat their children – after admonishing them verbally several times first – in order to not appear to be irresponsible mothers to neighbours and others around them:

*“I decided to still use the rod but according to age. My 3 year old will just get one light hit but my 8 year old will get more”,* FGD, Pastors wives.

Other than on these two issues, there was general support for the curriculum of the workshop and its methodology. Strong satisfaction was expressed by the pastors’ wives about their inclusion in the programme:

*“Normally we are just the wives. We are not important - our husbands are important. But this time we could go to the workshop and this was very good”,* FGD, Pastors Wives, Chingale.

### ***b. Fidelity of programme delivery***

As part of the training workshop process a rudimentary plan to address local child protection issues was developed for each of the 47 congregations represented. These plans typically focused on raising awareness both



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH



within and outside their congregations. About half of the participating faith leaders committed in their plans to form CHATs. These CHATs were expected to develop their own congregational strategies and actions plans according to their size, vision and needs. There is some ambiguity at senior level of WV in regard to the commitment to the CHAT workshops; however at the local level there was a clear expectation that these would take place and that further follow-up and support from WV would be put into place.

The operation of CoH CP was affected by World Vision's implementation of the Leap 3 national strategy in Chingale and Namachete ADP. This involved the deployment of new technical staff and existing postholders being shifted to take up new assignments. In Chingale new staff were appointed, including a new ADP Manager. On the other hand Namachete ADP began to be phased out, which led to staff being reassigned to new locations.

In the context of these changes, one staff member who had volunteered to be the 'link person' between WV and the catalyzed faith leaders in Chingale and Namachete ADPs left WV employment some months after the workshops had taken place. As a result, no proper monitoring of the CoH CP was implemented, which eroded commitment and enthusiasm on part of faith leaders:

*World Vision I know them, I have been with them, they start so many activities but lack follow-up,"* Pastor DK, Chingale.

*"There is need to monitor CP work in the area, we feel laid back at present as we do not know where to forward our reports to as the Namachete ADP staff have been moved. We need someone to monitor the work that we are doing, this will give us the sense of encouragement we need,"* CPC FGD, Namachete.

Faith leaders in both Namachete and Chingale raised the concern of lack of follow-up after the training which made it difficult for them to know whether they were on track or not. They expressed the need for contact with WV staff to discuss what they had done in relation to addressing CP concerns. Most of the conventional (larger) churches displayed innovativeness to utilize the existing structures in their churches to also address CP issues both within and outside their congregations.

*"After training we were just left, no one came to visit us to see what we are doing, twice we were asked to submit the same report but we did not get feedback,"* Pastor JK, Chingale.

*"In my case I did not form a CHAT, in our congregation we agreed to use the women's group to address CP issues in church and in the community,"* Rev EM, Chingale.

Although some pastors and congregations had moved forward under their own initiative (as detailed subsequently), many reported that they were waiting for training because they lacked the capacity to promote the CP work in their communities. Because they felt they had been 'told' to form CHAT committees but were unable to do so they looked for guidance on how to continue their work:

*"We were strongly encouraged to establish these CHAT committees in the workshop. It was not optional".* Pastors Fraternal FGD, Chingale.

## 5. FINDINGS

### **a. Key child protection concerns identified**

Across discussions in Chingale and Namachete ADPs a fairly consistent portrayal of child protection concerns emerged. Non-school



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH





attendance, forced labor, early marriage<sup>4</sup> and harsh physical punishment were consistent themes articulated, although there was some variation in emphasis.

In two discussions with youths in Chingale, the most prominent protection issues raised were girls being forced into marriage, rape, children being given adult tasks, being sent to sell goods on school days, being denied food, corporal punishment and being made to sleep outside for not completing tasks or misbehaving. Girls were generally considered at greater risk of such issues than boys. Being sent to market to sell things on school days or at evening markets was seen to expose them to abuse in the form of rape and sexual assault.

*"I have three friends who were forced into marriage, it is mostly with a man not of their age, most of these marriages do not last here, when a girl has three children, the husband will go to town, and then will never come back,"* Girl member, Youth FGD , Chingale

Youth were able to identify contextual factors contributing to such risks:

*"A key factor is poverty; parents believe that marrying a girl means their financial burden and that of the girl will be put onto the new family"* Youth FGD, Chingale.

Youth FGDs in Namachete saw child marriage, initiation being given precedence over school, parents refusing to provide school fees, child rape and sexual harassment by step-parents, rich people, and sometimes boys, physical disciplining, verbal abuse and viewing age-inappropriate movies noted as key concerns.

---

<sup>4</sup> The term 'early marriage' was used by community members and we have decided to use this term instead of child marriage for reasons of authenticity.



*Girls reported multiple protection concerns*

In discussion with Namachete CPC, the major concerns identified were child trafficking, school drop-out, child marriage and child labour (especially fishing work). For Chingale CPC, child rape (mainly involving incest by fathers or step-fathers), child marriages, child labour (especially amongst boys) and school drop-out were major concerns.

Faith leaders in Namachete and Chingale identified major protection concerns to be age-inappropriate messaging to children in the course of initiation (leading to early marriages), the practice of "fisi" (virgin cleansing, where after initiation girls are made to sleep with an adult male), rape and sexual assault of girls by prominent people and uncles (which were not reported because of the social position of perpetrators), the showing of age-inappropriate movies and engaging in adult-oriented tasks.

*"Child school drop-out due to mostly early child marriage is common here in Chingale. Young boys and girls change when they come back from initiation ceremonies, I think it is to do with the advice they are given there,"* Pastor, Chingale.

Early marriage and child labour were widely seen as risks closely linked to food shortages and economic conditions. In Namachete the influence of Lake Chirwa (a major fishing area) and the proximity of Mozambique, where



children are regularly trafficked to work on tobacco farms, were seen as significant factors exacerbating risks:

*“Early marriage, school dropout rates are quite high for both boys and girls. For most boys, child labour is really a big issue while for girls, early marriages and consequently maternal deaths are very high in Namachete which has left behind infants, at present there are infants whose mothers died in delivery and soon after delivery. Boy children are trafficked to Mozambique to work on farms there, most parents get payment in advance from middlemen. Fishing families send their boy-children to go and work assisting fishermen mending nets, usually uncles and in-laws, in this work boys are exposed to smoking marijuana so they can cope with the work there, CPC FGD Namachete.*

*“The major challenge we have here is poverty and food shortage which has immensely been contributed by floods. Most households have no food and it is difficult for them to provide food to their children, so they see marrying the child or sending them to work as a solution to the entire family,” Government worker, Namachete ADP*

It appeared that in both Chingale and Namachete economic conditions had been worsened – and thus child protection risks exacerbated - by the floods that hit the area in early 2015. There was no direct evidence that the CoH programme had an impact on how faith leaders responded to the floods; however the pastors seemed to be aware of the worsening of CP challenges following the disaster. These impacts had been most intense in Namachete because of the greater flood impact there.

*“The floods hit hard in Namachete and it affected our efforts to pursue child protection issues this year. It has been difficult for us*

*to rescue child marriage victims as well as child labour victims due to poverty that has been aggravated by floods. Families see this as the only way to overcome household poverty,” FGD Pastors Fraternal, Namachete ADP*

Finally, a major protection concern expressed by many participants was the lack of awareness of issues by other key members of the community:

*“We are addressing child school drop-out with parents and yet most of the times you find that teacher have sent home pupils for reporting late to school,” Faith leader, Namachete.*

*“Some community leaders do not act when we report issues of child marriage in their villages so they should support us to stop them. We should remember that some of these girls are their nieces, and children, is they too can be trained it means children will have an all-round support”, Pastors Fraternal FGD, Chingale.*

#### **b. Sensitization of faith leaders and other participants**

There was strong evidence of the power of the CoH methodology to sensitize participants to child protection issues on several different levels: on an occupational level as people with responsibility within their communities (as pastors, wives of pastors, teachers etc.), on a personal level and on a practical level.

There were two key themes in relation to sensitization as faith leaders that were reiterated by participants. The first of these pertains to the recognition of the extent of CP challenges in their own communities:

*“I knew that some people hit their children but I didn’t realise that this is child abuse”, KII, Pastor H, Chingale.*



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH



*“Abuse like psychological, name calling, they are normal those things. We used to call children ‘you are a dog’ and it was something very light. Now we have opened up to learning. So name calling was not new but the way it was presented it was”,* Pastor FM, Chingale.

The second key theme was in relation to the pastors’ own responsibility to act on these realisations within their remit as faith leaders. Many had not considered child protection issues to be part of their remit and area of engagement prior to the workshop:

*“Yes, the training [workshop] opened my eyes, at first I thought these child protection issues were the responsibility of community leaders and parents, the CoH CP training opened my eyes to a greater calling which I was neglecting, I realise the missed opportunities I lost and planned that I will be a real part of change my community. I learnt that I was to take part in the welfare of all children in the community and not only those members of my congregation which is what I was doing.”* Pastor of small church

There was also evidence of personal transformation that occurred for some of the participants:

*“I can never be the same again. There was me before the workshop and me after the workshop. I am changed and I can never go back to how I was before”,* Pastor K, Chingale.

The powerful way in which child protection issues had been addressed during the workshop seemed to have had a life changing impact for some of the participants. Particular mention was made of two exercises during the workshop: the ‘balloon game’ and the collecting and placing of stones under the cross.



*Meeting with Pastors Fraternal in Chingale*

*“I remembered this other facilitator asked us to collect stones and lay them down. This brought me that passion and through this process we were moved to do something. These stones represent children who are being abused. We connect one stone to the story of a child we know that has been abused and after that there were so many stones!”,* Pastor F, Chingale.

Other participants also commented on their own parenting styles and how these were transformed through participation of the workshop:

*“The training made me reflect on my personal parenting style, I realized how much I had abused my own children and used most of the time force to enforce good behavior, I am now able to sit down with my children to discuss behavioral issues,”* Pastor DK, Chingale.

One wife of a pastor disclosed her own personal story of childhood abuse and her restoration after attending the CoH CP training:

*“I grew up an orphan and experienced all manner of abuse as a child, since then when I got married I had nothing to do with children going through abuse by both parents and guardians, I wanted them to experience what I went through as a child. During training I realized I was wrong and that I was not the only one in the training who had gone through*



*abuse, I made a decision I was going to support any child, adult going through abuse. The training motivated me to start getting involved in protecting children in my community. When I came back from training I was able to take rescue one girl-child who was going through abuse and neglect,”* Pastor’s wife, Namachete.

On a practical level participants reported the usefulness of meeting members of government structures and agencies in the workshop and being informed about what actions they can take:

*“I know so much about child protection and who I can network with such as the Social Welfare and Police in matters... and the balance between child rights and responsibilities”* Pastor FM, Chingale.

Most of the pastors reported that before the training they only viewed the police as people who were tasked to catch offenders, not as their partners. CoH workshop led them to view the police in a positive light as a people they could network with in matters such as child rape and neglect and this applied also to the social welfare officers and the CP committees. It seemed that pastors became more aware of and linked into existing CP structures within their communities.

Not only did the pastors realize their own responsibility but they also gained self-confidence in relation to CP issues:

*“The CoH training has opened my eyes, other people used to look down on me, but now I have gained confidence and know where to report [child protection] issues”,* Pastor TM, Chingale.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these powerful and profound changes in attitude that participants spoke of on

---

<sup>5</sup> This pastor had little influence or respect in the community, possibly due to reasons of limited education or wealth (see sub-section c below).

personal, occupational and practical levels, there was clear evidence that they continued to engage with conceptualisations of child rights and child abuse in relation to their own realities and contexts.

Both faith leaders in Namachete and Chingale highlighted that culture and context plays a part in how CP issues are understood and dealt with in their communities. A FGD with a CHAT committee in Chingale reflected on this:

*“There are a lot of NGOs who go around and preach about children’s rights. This makes the children rude and the community [parents, elders] doesn’t like it. Even in the church people have a negative attitude towards this. So we need to find the right approach to this,”* FGD, CHAT Committee Chingale

A further example was given by a pastor in Namachete:

*“Allowing children to exercise their rights, some children will decide not to go to the farm. Forcing them to go to the farm is a form of abuse and beating such children to comply is a form of abuse. I did not agree to this concept. If I allow my son to decide whether he wants to go to school or not, he will end up becoming my burden forever,”* Rev CA, Chingale.

The critical reflection on how to approach children’s rights issues within their own communities as well as to discuss what is in the best interest of the child can be viewed as a positive and thoughtful engagement with the content of the CoH programme.

### **c. Varied circumstances of faith leaders**

The home visits to the pastors as well as various KII with WV staff brought to light the varying circumstances that the pastors worked and lived in. These circumstances were reflected in the size of their congregations, in their status as faith leaders within their own congregations as

well as in the communities, and in relation to resources and capacities to initiate action.

Broadly speaking three distinct groups of pastors could be identified:

#### *Pastors of established churches*

This group comprised pastors of established churches, with relatively large congregations, who were respected within their congregations and commanded significant resources and influence. These pastors lived closer to the centres and villages and earned their living mainly through their pastor's salary. One of these was the pastor from a Conventional church who expressed his confidence in his ability to influence his community:

*"I am not lazy. I do things and I organise things. I tell them [church groups] what to do and they are impressed and then they agree",* KII, Chingale.

This group spoke good English, were educated to a high level and connected to church bodies outside of their immediate communities. This group had confidence and influence in their congregations and displayed innovation by utilising the existing structures in their congregations - women's guild, youth, men's ministry etc. - to take up child protection issues rather than forming a CHAT:

*"I did not form a CHAT, we agreed to use existing structures in our congregation and it is working for us,"* Pastor CA, Member Pastors Fraternal, Chingale.

#### *Pastors of large but poor churches*

This group comprised pastors of relatively large but poor churches who were respected within these congregations but had limited access to resources beyond their own personal ones.

These pastors were mostly not salaried and conducted other income-generation on the side. Their influence in the communities varied and some had good relationships with the village authorities. This group of pastors had some confidence in their own abilities but felt they needed support for activities, especially in regard to the workshop material which was in English.

*"My congregation asked me how this committee will be supported and reminded me how other committees that were set up previously failed due to lack of support, so we did not form a CHAT in my congregation,"* Pastor FM, Chingale.

#### *Pastors of small independent churches*

This group comprised pastors of smaller independent churches who had small and poor congregations and limited influence over both congregations and communities. As one pastor said:

*'No one listens to me. I try to tell them something but they say: 'Who are you to tell us something?' I can't change their minds',* KII, Pastor HN, Namachete.

This group of pastors tended to live more remotely in rural areas and earned their living through farming like everyone else in their neighbourhood. Their status as faith leaders seemed contested within the communities and their resources very limited. The pastors in this group did not speak English and some were semi-literate.

The participation of these three fairly distinct groups of faith leaders is a product of the way in which the selection for the workshops occurred (see 4a above). If the original selection criteria as outlined by the CoH facilitators had been applied (i.e. must be able to speak English and



be literate) most of the pastors in the first group and none in the final group would have attended the workshop. Their presence and their circumstances raise critical and important questions, however, for defining the target group of CoH, the congregations they serve and the type of support they are offered. Some of these pastors, despite their limited influence and relatively low status, were dedicated in their fight for increased child protection (see below) and worked in congregations and communities that are not reached by the pastors of well-established churches. However, as one of the pastors explained:

*“Another reason why some pastors manage to succeed on child protection and others not is low self-esteem. You must have noticed on Sunday that some of us are reluctant [shy] to speak and that element also makes a pastor not be able to fulfil the work”*

*Q: What are the reasons for the low self-esteem?*

*“It’s an issue of personality and also education.... I want to highlight, and you may be surprised, that some of us as pastors we can’t write our own names”, KII, Chingale.*

For CoH the questions raised by these findings include:

- By specifying the selection criteria for the pilot (literate and English-speaking) are certain types of faith leaders and thereby their congregations (i.e. poorer ones) being excluded?<sup>6</sup>
- To what extent can it be assumed that all pastors have influence over their congregations and are listened to?

---

<sup>6</sup> As this was a pilot workshop the materials were only available in English. For regular implementation they would be translated into local languages.

- How can the type of support that is extended to the pastors’ post-catalysing workshop be flexible enough to take into account the variations in resources, capacities, influence and status?

#### **d. Strategies of mobilization**

The varied circumstances of the pastors had an impact on the types of actions taken after the sensitisation workshop. Given that no further support was extended to them by WV it was particularly valuable to examine the different strategies and creative ways in which the groups of pastors approached child protection issues in their congregations and communities. A number of key issues emerged:

##### *Remit*

Some of the pastors identified their remit for CP to pertain only to their congregations and restricted themselves to these. This meant that they focused all activities only on those who are part of their church and worked with structures and individuals in these. Interestingly, some of these pastors belonged to group (i) above who potentially could have had influence beyond their congregations. Other pastors interpreted their task as pertaining to all of their community regardless of whether families belonged to their congregations or not.



*Pastors deployed many mobilization strategies*

### *Types of strategies employed*

Sensitisation: the majority of the first group of pastors used sermons and various existing structures and groups within their churches to conduct sensitization sessions with them. The group included women's groups (Women's Guild), youth groups, church elders and others. The content of the sensitization/information sessions varied but focused on topics such as the need to stop corporal punishment, the need to ensure that girls who have babies can go back to school amongst others.

Pastors of large but poor or small independent churches attempted sensitization through various means, sometimes trying to call community meetings to talking to their congregations during sermons. However, the last two groups reported mixed responses to these attempts, pointing out that at times these initiatives were not well received by their congregations or community members.

One particular success story of sensitization came from a pastor in Namachete who formed a CHAT group in his church despite not having attended the CoH training himself. He attended a briefing by one of the pastors who had participated:

*"I could relate to child abuse issues in my community as the briefing went on and I decided to share this information to my congregation who agreed to form a CHAT, we did not want to be left behind in addressing CP issues in our zone,"* Pastor, Pentecostal church Namachete

Establishing CHAT committees: Pastors of established churches generally had had no intention of ever establishing CHAT committees and worked only through their existing church structures. They expressed satisfaction with this approach. Pastors of large poorer churches generally attempted to establish CHAT

committees, some of which were successful and others not. Criteria for success seemed to lie in the pastors' ability to motivate the group as well as in his ability to convey the workshop material to them. The latter was mostly done verbally but some pastors attempted to translate the written English resources into Chichewa for their groups which seemed not to be a successful endeavor. Other pastors did not manage to establish CHATs despite trying:

*Q: Did you form a CHAT after CoH workshop?*

*"No, I tried to sell the idea to form a CHAT in my congregation but my congregation was not keen to belong to another committee so I just raised awareness on protecting children charging each one with that responsibility",* KII, Masaula.

Individual CP cases: all pastors reported that they had involved themselves in preventing individual children from being abused or had managed to extricate children from situations that represented a violation of their rights. Great satisfaction was expressed in relation to such instances as preventing a child marriage from taking place, getting children back into school after they had dropped out, preventing harsh physical punishment etc. Examples of such success stories are attached to the report.

Working alone versus networking: the extent to which pastors worked alone or together with others varied. Pastors in the third grouping seemed to work very much on their own without support from anyone around them. They tended to focus on individual cases and despite their limited strategies seemed motivated to continue to assist children wherever they could. An example of the 'lone wolf' pastor explained:

*"I did not get anyone who listens to me. But I continued to talk about children's right to stay*



*in school. This morning 8 young boys and girls<sup>7</sup> came to me and said: 'we hear that you are saying we should stay in school'. So I counselled them and they accepted my advice. Then I said to them: 'Can you be my CHAT committee?' And they accepted and I am very happy", [Pastor B, Chingale.*

Most pastors worked as a team together with their wives. As one wife explained:

*"We are most successful when we go together. We always approach families together as husband and wife. Then people don't feel like we are just coming to talk bad things to them", KII Pastor S. and Wife H., Chingale.*

Other pastors teamed up with one another or worked through the Pastors Fraternal to try and address issues. One example was given where two pastors sensitised and mobilised their village leaders to support them to approach businessmen who were showing videos during the day from 9.00am onwards, thus making most children miss school to go and watch video shows. The pastors and the village leaders persuaded the men to open the video shows from 4.0pm to 10.00pm after children have come back from school.

In addition, some pastors engaged actively with government agents and village authorities to try and enact child protection. One pastor asked the police to help him drive the children from the market place to school during school hours and although this attempt failed, according to the pastor, it does demonstrate the range of actions the pastors considered in their endeavors to assist in protecting children.

## Challenges

The pastors encountered many challenges in pursuing their strategies, some of which are mentioned above. One frequently mentioned one was the context of poverty which drives some of the CP concerns:

*"We lack resources to support those families who do not send their children to school because of poverty to provide them with school fees, clothes, food, pens and books", FGD Faith Leaders, Namachete.*

A further challenge was identified by the wives of the pastors who spoke about their own limited ability to influence others around them without their husband's endorsement. One of the wives spoke of the need for them to become stronger and more confident in order to overcome this hurdle:

*"The problem is with us – we look down on ourselves that we can't deliver the material. We should stand up and stop thinking of ourselves as failures. We must believe that we can do the work!", FGD, Pastors wives, Chingale.*

In summary, the various strategies employed by the pastors and their wives attest to the creativity and flexibility, their engagement and continued motivation to work on these issues that clearly are very close to their hearts. Despite having had little in the way of external support for this, many of these pastors had not only been significantly impacted by the initial workshop but had followed up on this to mobilize innovative and energetic child protection strategies.

---

<sup>7</sup> The children seemed to be adolescents since they were in secondary school.



### e. Establishing an enabling environment

Although the lack of follow-through with CHAT training and monitoring and support muted programme impacts, there was some indication of the creation of a more enabling environment for child protection in both communities.

With the simultaneous roll-out of the Citizen's Voice and Action (CVA) programme, the attribution of these changes is challenging. However, the broader lesson appears to be the benefits of coordinating and integrating such initiatives. For example, there was evidence of CVA mobilization in one community regarding the establishment of a local bye-law proscribing child marriage where advocacy by faith leaders had played a key role. In another instance, a participant of the CoH CP workshop reported seeing health and education personnel identified through CVA work as the appropriate drivers of change for the initiatives they planned, rather than a CHAT group. This participant was a senior women's leader in the Catholic church and sought to identify collaborators with whom she could work in order to address CP more effectively. She formed an effective 'working group of three': one of the CVA health promoters, a teacher and herself.



*Discussion with CVA Chairperson*

There were also, however, examples of less effective collaboration. Several examples were

cited where a child protection incident had been reported separately to the CPC and the CVA committees. Separately the two committees' representatives went to respond to the issue. The CVA committee was reported to have sent back the CPC representatives as they were viewed as interfering with CVA business:

*"We were informed of a child who was raped by her uncle and we went there to respond to the issue, where we met with CVA members. They asked us what we wanted, when we explained to them our purpose for coming, they sent us back saying it was none of our business,"* CPC member, Namachete

A similar confrontation was reported by the CPC in Chingale. CoH CP is not designed to act as a stand-alone (as perhaps occurred here due to the lack of support and follow-up in these specific instances) but is intended to be integrated into what is going on already in the communities. In Chingale and Namachete there is need for staff in both ADPs to work with the CVAs to highlight the need for working together. The CPCs are a government structure which will continue to run even after phase out of WV programme operations in both ADPs. The CVA committees in both contexts appeared to have more influence which may have resulted from the training and follow-ups they received. The World Vision T-shirts they wore were also seen to bring some authority.

There is a clear need to ensure that all programmatic initiatives serve to reinforce an enabling environment, rather than create competing structures and approaches. However, there is also some indication that with more linking and support the CoH participants could collaborate effectively with other CP initiatives to assist in creating a more enabling environment.



## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations follow for development of CoH CP programming and related initiatives:

### ***a. Continue to support engagement with local faith leaders***

There is a strong positive recommendation to continue to support programmes of this nature which engage faith leaders and their congregations actively in CP promotion and which work towards creating a more robust enabling environment for CP at community level. The fact that the programme produced the results documented despite the challenges encountered attests to the potential power and influence of local faith communities.

### ***b. Provide more consistent follow-up***

There is need for a follow-up workshop for faith leaders and CHATS. Although some congregations have formed CHATS, they are at present mostly not functional, awaiting further follow-up and capacity building. WVM should ensure adequate follow-up in support of mobilization within communities.

### ***c. Give special attention to the role of pastors' wives***

Special attention should be given to what types of support pastors' wives need in order to strengthen their engagement with CP work.

### ***d. Encourage adaptation to local structures and context***

WV CoH facilitators must enable and encourage adaptation of the CHAT model by congregations in acknowledgment of their existing structures and capacity for innovation.

### ***e. Build on synergies to strengthen the enabling environment***

WV Staff in the ADP must work explicitly to create an enabling environment by coordinating CoH CP work with other initiatives with which there are clear potential synergies such as CVA and CPC committees.

### ***f. Consider issues of language and literacy to enable full participation***

Attention must be given to issues of language and literacy for both workshop delivery and materials to ensure that full participation is possible for a range of pastors and their wives from varied circumstances. Pastors should not be excluded on the basis of their language and literacy skills.



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH

