

Children play a critical role in child protection

November 15, 2017

ChildFund Alliance statement on Universal Children's Day 2017

New York, NY — As we celebrate Universal Children's Day, ChildFund Alliance reaffirms our commitment to do all we can to prevent violence at all levels, protect children from violence and exploitation, and enable children to meaningfully participate in decisions related to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Participants in a Child-friendly Accountability pilot project in Paraguay painted a mural to illustrate children's rights.

For the one billion children – more than half of the world's children – who experience some form of emotional, physical or sexual violence and exploitation every year, implementation of SDG target 16.2 and its related targets is critical. (SDG target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.)

Through our child-friendly accountability initiative, ChildFund Alliance is working with children to hold governments and local authorities accountable to their commitments in SDG target 16.2.

"Child-friendly Accountability improves child protection and reduces violence against children by providing children and their communities with knowledge about their rights and the child protection system," said Meg Gardinier, Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance. "It enables them to engage in an informed dialogue with decision-makers about issues of concern to them."

“ChildFund strongly believes that children have the right to have their opinions taken into account in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Child-friendly Accountability gives them an opportunity to play a role in improving the systems that are supposed to protect them.”

In four pilot projects conducted in India, Mexico, Paraguay and Vietnam between June and August 2017, children aged 13 to 17 learned about their rights, met with people responsible for child protection in their communities and developed child-friendly versions of child protection laws and policies. They held sessions to educate their peers, youth and adults in the community about their findings, and undertook advocacy.



Participants in a Child-friendly Accountability pilot project in Vietnam learned about their rights in a training workshop.

In Paraguay, advocacy by one group of children led to the mayor committing to the installation of a CODENI (Children’s Rights Counseling—a free governmental service) office in order to give faster responses to child protection issues in the community.

In Vietnam, Linh*, left school to help support her family. “I did not have any idea what would I do before coming to Child-friendly Accountability trainings,” she says. “But when I participated I learned many new things like child rights, I know better about policies and laws. I had never heard about child protection before. I used to think children were always safe. I did not know that children had our own rights and there are Articles just for children. Reading and analyzing the child protection system helps me to realize that statements on papers do not go along with things that happened in reality. Now I know children are not always protected. I am much better at communicating and can explain to others about child’s rights.”

When children like Linh and her peers around the world have a say in improving child protection systems, there's hope that in future years we won't be reporting that half the world's children have experienced violence in the past year.

** Name has been changed to protect her identity.*