

LEADING BY EXAMPLE



Business Management Skills Training participant opens her own shop, 2016

Over the past 25 years, War Child has become recognized around the world as a leading organization focused on the wellbeing of children and families caught up in the horrors of war. We work with local people to find avenues of hope through peacebuilding, enforcing the protection of child rights, providing access to education, and giving parents and communities the economic opportunities to support children. Through this holistic approach, we see communities grow towards not only recovery, but a thriving and enriching future. Our programming is designed to comprehensively meet the needs of those impacted by armed conflict.

From the Archives: South Sudan 2016

When Nahla was thirty years old, conflict in Juba, South Sudan threatened to reach her home. With her husband, her own five children, and her sister's two in tow, Nahla's family fled the violence. The family of nine found themselves, penniless, in a displacement camp.

Thanks to War Child, Nahla started her own shop.

"When War Child came to the camp, I chose to be trained on business management skills," she said. After completing training, she received a small loan from War Child, giving her enough to open a small store.

The South Sudan program targeted the livelihoods of young people and mothers, education through the provision of safe learning spaces, and psychosocial support to parents and children.

Nahla said the most important thing she was trained on is calculation of profit and loss. "For any item I buy and sell, I must make profits."



Malakal Income Generating Activity Group receiving start-up kits, 2016

Nahla estimated her business to be worth more than five times her original investment.

"We used to depend on the food rations given by the United Nations," she said, "which sometimes does not come in time, and it was difficult buying food for our home."

"Now I rent the shop for my small business, I pay school fees for four children, I buy food for my family, I pay medical bills, and I support my husband!"



Small-scale farmer participants receiving goats, 2016

War Child has expanded its programming in South Sudan over recent years. Our primary focus is on education and agricultural improvements, both of which are critical in a country that continues to face the threat of significant food shortages. In addition to ongoing instability, farming yields are threatened by poor farming methods that degrade the soil. We address this by offering training in improved agricultural practices and literacy classes. The aim is to increase and stabilize food security and empower farming communities to increase their capacity for economic sustainability.



2023, South Sudan sustainable farming programs

ROOTED IN COLLABORATION



2015 War Child local DRC staff with community children.

From day one, our programming has been designed in close collaboration with the people we serve. Today, 99% of our staff are recruited from within those communities. It is essential that the people directly affected by the repercussions of armed conflict are empowered to take charge of the rehabilitation process. This includes groups that are often marginalized, including women, children with disabilities, and displaced people. It also involves partnerships with small local groups, community leaders, and local government agencies. By taking this approach, we can be confident that our programming is embedded in the local culture, has roots deep enough to ensure it has the resilience to stay the course, and that it gives local communities the means and the confidence to take charge of their own future.

From the archives: The Democratic Republic of Congo, 2015

“It’s important that I know how to read and write,” Esperance explained, “because the school might send me a note to come and meet the teacher about my children, and if I couldn’t read it, I would not go.”

Like many women in the DRC, Esperance never went to school herself. She was married at 16 and, nine years later, she had four children. Our team met Esperance during a meeting with the village chief and community members about War Child’s education program for girls. She had taken part in a literacy and numeracy program a year earlier and had subsequently joined a Community Education Committee established by War Child to help address some of the local issues facing girls’ education. When she was not volunteering with War Child, she spent her days farming and dreaming of a better future for her children.



2015 Women’s training programs in DRC

Esperance’s story was not an unusual one. In 2015, over 50 percent of Congolese women were illiterate. Involving the community in decision making is key to overcoming this. They spread the word about our work and help us ensure that the education we offer is accessible to everyone.

There was no lack of enthusiasm for learning in Esperance’s village. As another girl at that same meeting excitedly told us, “I want to finish my education so I can become president of the country!”

Girls’ education is still central to our work in DRC. Congolese women still face significant barriers to economic opportunities, with less than 20% of women having completed secondary school. For girls in rural areas of eastern DRC, it is often too dangerous to make the long journey to school. Sexual violence by militia groups remains stubbornly pervasive. To reach these girls, we empower local organizations to deliver the school curriculum through specially produced radio dramas. This distance learning approach means girls can safely attend lessons close to home, guided by trained teaching assistants.



2024, DRC Radio-based learning facilitation

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE ACROSS GENERATIONS



2024, Community-led Mother to Mother Group

For the past quarter century, we have been doing far more than meeting urgent needs. We have been laying the foundations for deep and long-term improvements. We understand that making real and impactful change is complex and multi-layered. To achieve it, we concentrate on strengthening people's ability to bounce back from crises, to claim ownership of their lives and decisions, and to take control of their own destiny. Our work has a profound and lasting impact because of this. With a strategy that puts whole communities at the centre of our work, we not only help overcome the immediate impact of war, but also give people the tools to shape a future that lessens the legacy of armed conflict for future generations.

From the archives: Uganda, 2012

In 2012, War Child was working with survivors of gender-based violence in northern Uganda. Sadly, often the victims were children.

Charles was a police constable in northern Uganda. He had recently completed War Child's sexual and gender-based violence training. His community had only one under-funded rural police outpost, so the training was a great opportunity to expand his skill set.

He didn't expect that shortly after the training his little sister would be sexually assaulted. You can imagine his horror, and the pain she must have felt as she told him the details. But at least Charles now knew what to do. He took her to the hospital for HIV testing, a medical examination, and a rape kit. He then ensured that the perpetrator was tracked down and brought to justice.

Charles made a personal commitment to ensuring that parents and community leaders have the information they need to help prevent sexual violence.

"The community has shown an increasing commitment to the prevention of sexual violence. I see it in the number of cases reported to me. Before my interventions, the number of assaults was very worrying but only one or two a month were ever reported."

Charles was deeply worried that his sister's childhood had been stolen from her. But once the perpetrator was behind bars, she had the opportunity to move on and face the future with hope rather than dread. Meanwhile, Charles continues to strive to make sexual violence a thing of the past in his community.



International Women's Day, 2012



2024 UPSHIFT, Youth Skills Training Program

War Child is now recognized as a leading agency working with refugee and vulnerable communities in Uganda. In addition to our work supporting victims of gender-based violence, we also offer catch-up learning programs that allow young people who would like to return to school the opportunity to reintegrate into the local systems. Youth unemployment among refugees in Uganda is disproportionately high, with some estimating it to be at 80%. War Child's response includes business incubation "boot camps," enhanced support for youth business centres, financial aid for training and business start-ups, and mentorship with local business leaders.

BEYOND HANDOUTS

Since our founding, War Child has sought to redefine the way we think about supporting people trying to overcome the aftermath of war and armed conflict. Instead of simply giving handouts, we focus on empowering people, letting local community leaders take charge, ensuring that the benefits of our work are enduring. This means we do more than offer quick fixes, we work with communities to enable them to grow stronger over time. War Child has been challenging the old ways of providing aid for 25 years, promoting a fair and respectful approach to international development that makes a concrete and lasting difference in the lives of children and their communities.



Women's Health Centre, 2024

From the archives: Afghanistan, 2014

When War Child first met Shaima, her life was very difficult. She was illiterate, her husband worked a series of sporadic jobs, and her children were unable to go to school.

Her outlook was grim until our team identified her as one of the excluded women who needed support.

For a year, Shaima took part in a program where she learnt to read and write and was given basic business advice and training. Meanwhile, her children attended a War Child-run kindergarten, so she didn't have to worry about their care during the day. At the end of the training, Shaima received a loan for her new tailoring business. In 2014, her business employed 50 women, all of whom she trained herself.

Shaima had a plan. "I am saving money to build a room in my house where my children can study away from the sound of the sewing machines. I need money, so I work more!"

"Before my husband was president," she told us, "Now, I am!"



2014 Women's Business Training

Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021, the scale of the humanitarian crisis has grown considerably. At the same time, severe restrictions placed on aid organizations forced many to abandon the country. However, a reputation earned over two decades of work within local communities allowed War Child's staff to successfully negotiate the resumption of most of our programs as well as the continued employment of women, who comprise 47% of War Child's staff in the country today. With growing needs, our programming has expanded to include health and nutrition for women and girls. Additionally, our team identifies acutely vulnerable women and girls to provide them with opportunities for income generation through intensive vocational and entrepreneurship training.

Summary

Since our founding in 1999, War Child has been redefining what it means to support communities recovering from war and armed conflict. We do not settle for what has come before if that approach has failed. We look for innovative and comprehensive solutions that put the welfare of children and their families before anything else. We have achieved a lot, but there is much to be done. The world is increasingly unstable, with competing powers playing dangerous games of brinkmanship at the expense of the families we exist to support. We rely on you, our donors, to give us the flexibility to respond effectively in some of the most challenging global arenas. We only ask one thing of you. Stay with us on this journey. Together we can bring hope to the darkest places.