



Save the Children

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2023

SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND



INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2023

SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND

This report serves as the 2023 annual programme report to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland for programme-based support. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the ministry.

The names of children and caregivers have been changed to protect their identities.

Save the Children Finland © 2024

Cover photo: Katja Selkimäki-Gray/Save the Children

OUR 2030 AMBITION FOR CHILDREN

Save the Children is working to deliver a shared vision for 2030, focused on three breakthrough goals:

SURVIVE:



By 2030, no child will die from preventable causes before their fifth birthday

LEARN:



By 2030, all children learn from a good-quality basic education

BE PROTECTED:



By 2030, violence against children will no longer be tolerated

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	4
FOREWORD	5
1. SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND INTERNATIONAL WORK IN NUMBERS 2023	6
2. SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND PROGRAMME COUNTRIES: THE OPERATIONAL CONTEXT AND THE PROJECTS	8
2.1. East and Southern Africa	8
2.2. West Africa	12
2.3. Asia	14
2.4. Support to Ukraine	15
3. STRATEGIC FOCUS AND PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	17
3.1. Children and Adolescents Receive the Services They Need in a Timely Manner: Humanitarian Projects in Sudan and Ukraine	19
3.2. Children’s Right to Participate Has Been Reinforced	22
3.3. Life Without Violence: Child Protection	24
3.4. Safety Nets and Resilient Families: Child-Sensitive Social Protection	28
4. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES	38
4.1. Gender Equality	38
4.2. Disability Inclusion	39
4.3. Climate Change Adaptation	39
4.4. Civil Society Strengthening and Collaborating with Local Actors	40
5. LEARNING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY	42
6. SUPPORT FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN FUND	43
7. CHILD RIGHTS AND BUSINESS, CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS, COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY	44
8. RISK MANAGEMENT	46
9. INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN 2023	48

ABBREVIATIONS

CAAC	Children and armed conflicts
CP	Child protection
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSSP	Child-sensitive social protection
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development (the Philippines)
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EiE	Education in emergencies
EU	European Union
GIZ	Development Cooperation (in translation, original form: Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
HF	Humanitarian fund
IDP	Internally displaced person
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (Zambia)
MESAF	Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family (Somaliland)
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Finland)
MFA PBS	Ministry for Foreign Affairs Programme-Based Support
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCD	Organizational capacity development
SCF	Save the Children Finland
SCF IP	Save the Children Finland International Programme
SCI	Save the Children International
SCT	Social Cash Transfer (Zambia)
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

FOREWORD

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development puts the commitment to leaving no one behind in focus. Focusing on the rights of children is imperative, and this has the power to break harmful cycles of poverty and continued human rights violations. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals can create a pathway to systemic, structural and long-term change for every child.

According to the UNICEF ‘Progress on children’s well-being’ report from 2023, progress on child rights has been made, especially on issues such as child marriage or child labour. However, child poverty remains a persistent challenge and the world is not becoming a safer place for children. Today, children are among those most affected by numerous ongoing and compounding crises – including poverty, the effects of climate change and heightened levels of war and conflict – which often interlink.

In 2023, Save the Children Finland (SCF) continued to tackle child poverty in particular (through support to access and improving quality of social protection systems) and violence against children (through safer and skilled parenting). As part of capacity sharing with national strategic partners, SCF continued working closely with local and national governments across the programme countries in Asia and Africa in order to support people in accessing social protection programmes by institutionalising inclusive, transparent and accountable approaches.

We know that children are experts on their own lives, and they are best placed to identify their own solutions; inclusive approaches to action support their resilience and protection. Schools are child-focused community structures that often serve as highly localised hubs for organising community-led disaster risk reduction and response efforts. Working with and through schools on anticipatory action is therefore an opportunity to further support children through our education programming and partnerships with local civil society and education authorities.

It is important to combine long-term development and humanitarian responses in order to build the shock responsiveness of social protection and child protection systems. In 2023, global inflation and local economic shocks deepened the cost-of-living crisis that is affecting millions – all against a backdrop of COVID-19 recovery, supply chain strains and longer-term economic trends (such as widening wealth inequality). Food insecurity was rising

worldwide as a result of unstable global markets, climate change, supply-chain disruptions and emerging conflicts. Armed conflict is affecting more children every year as more actors address conflict through violence. Following a period where armed non-state actors drove more conflicts, we are now witnessing an increase in inter-state war.

The continued shrinking of civil space is evident throughout continents and countries. The past two decades have seen a broad rise in authoritarianism around the globe, paired with a retreat of personal rights of speech, assembly and privacy. Our era is marked by the convergence of many trends, creating crises that are more complex and intractable.

The results of the development and humanitarian efforts supported by SCF in 2023 are summarised in this report. We have managed to support children and their families in many sustainable ways in more than 10 countries and, in addition to that, helped to respond to several crises around the globe. This has been possible with the support of our institutional and private donors, our dedicated professional staff and partners, and with the active and committed participation of our most important stakeholders – the children.

Anne Haaranen
Director, International Programme
Save the Children Finland

1. SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND INTERNATIONAL WORK IN NUMBERS 2023

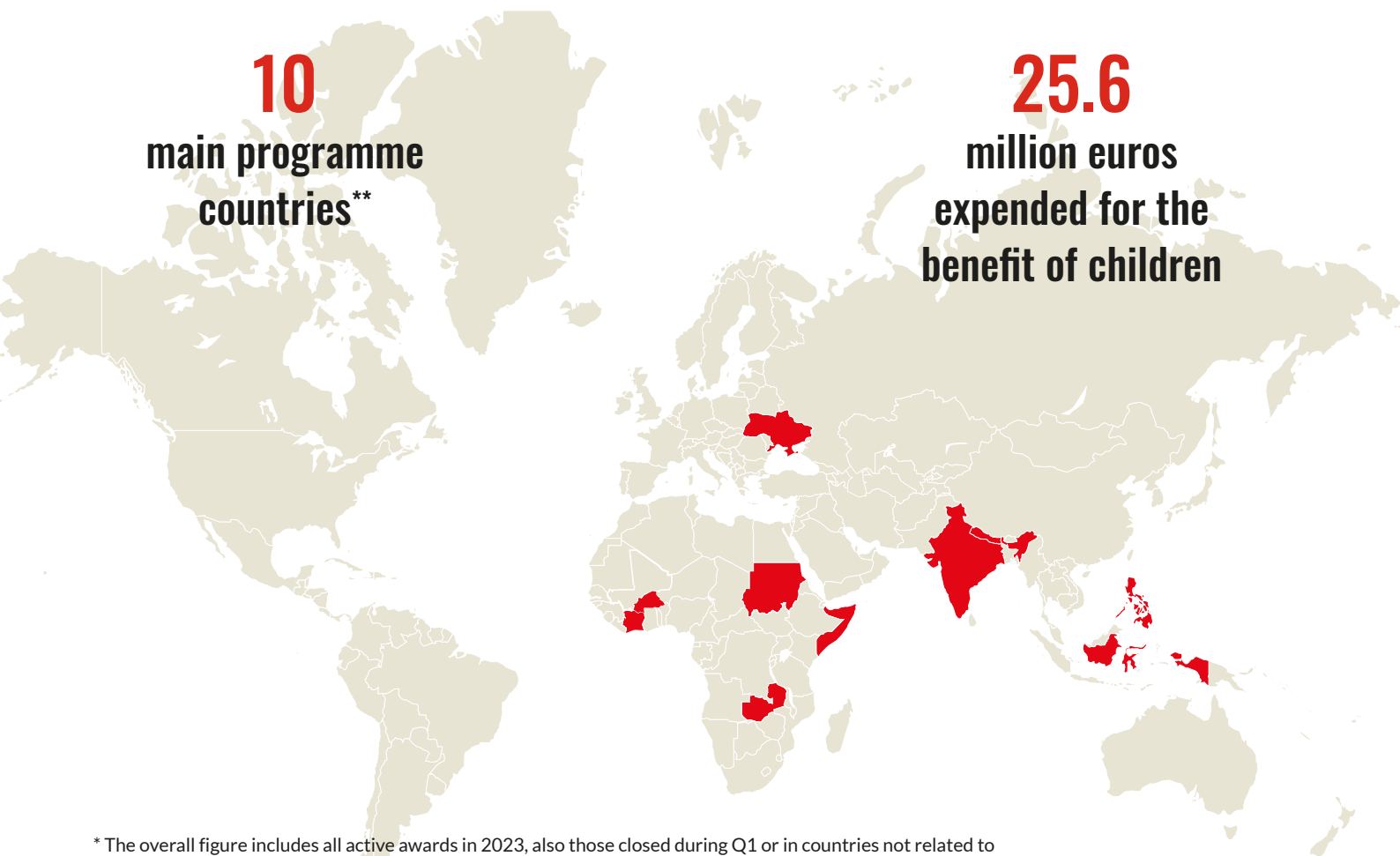
376,075
children reached
(52% of them girls)

260,858
adults reached
(59% of them women)

27
projects supported*

10
main programme
countries**

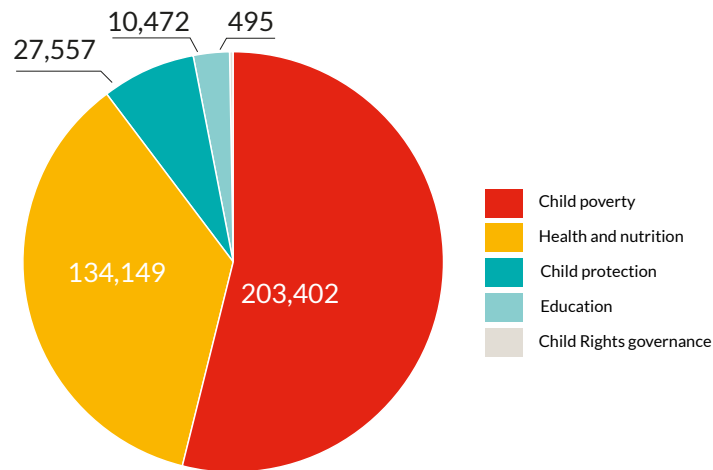
25.6
million euros
expended for the
benefit of children



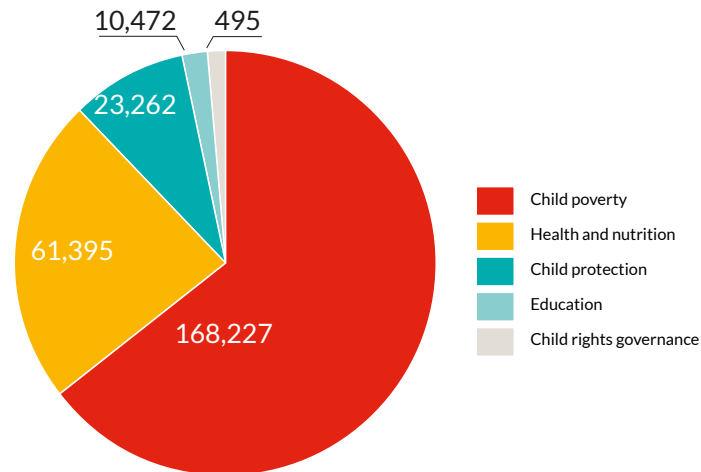
* The overall figure includes all active awards in 2023, also those closed during Q1 or in countries not related to Save the Children Finland anymore or awards with non-cost extensions.

** Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Ukraine, Zambia.

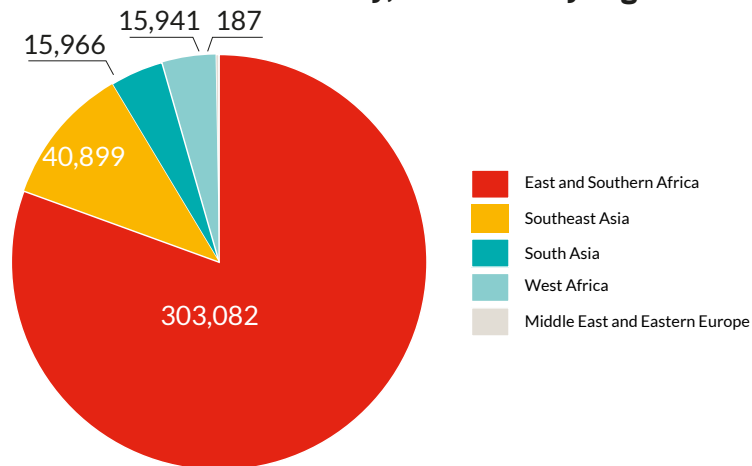
Children reached directly, classified by programme theme



Adults reached directly, classified by programme theme



Children reached directly, classified by region



2. SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND PROGRAMME COUNTRIES: THE OPERATIONAL CONTEXT AND THE PROJECTS

2.1. East and Southern Africa

Sudan

Sudan suffered a particularly difficult year in 2023 since a conflict broke out in April between the Sudanese Armed Forces and a paramilitary force, the Rapid Support Force. Today almost half of the country is a war zone, and nearly half the population, including 14 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance. The country is currently experiencing the world's largest crisis of internally displaced persons (IDPs), acute food insecurity and the near collapse of the health system.

By the end of 2023 there were no signs of a settlement of the conflict. Instead, civilians are being armed to actively engage in the conflict, this includes the recruitment of child soldiers. Along with the uprising of several diverse

and conflicting military groups, this means that an all-out civil war is a real possibility, something which would likely lead to the fragmentation of the country and severe consequences for the whole region. The infrastructure in the war zones has been severely damaged, limiting access to deliver much needed aid to civilians trapped in the conflict. There are power and water shortages in all war-affected areas. Nearly 25 million people, half of the country's population, needed humanitarian assistance in 2023. More than nine million people have been internally displaced, making Sudan the largest child displacement crisis in the world. In addition, 1.5 million people have moved to neighbouring countries. Around 10% of the IDPs are estimated to be living in schools and other public buildings.

The schooling of 19 million school-aged children has been severely disrupted by the conflict, putting Sudan's crisis at risk of becoming one of the worst learning crises in the world. Children out of school are being at risk of recruitment into armed forces, which has been witnessed by Save the Children staff based in Blue Nile State, and they are also exposed to gender-based violence and child



When the armed conflict erupted in Sudan in April 2023, Save the Children started responding to the needs of the affected children and families, and also began adjusting previously ongoing activities to the new situation. The image shows an aid delivery for displaced families in North Kordofan. Photo: Save the Children

marriage. While schools have tried to reopen in some states, this is only possible in very few locations and is met by many challenges. The health system in the country has virtually collapsed. Hospitals have been repeatedly targeted by the warring parties, the medical supply chain has been severely disrupted and health workers, in many cases, have moved to safer locations. Food supplies have dwindled, and almost half of the population is already facing high levels of acute food insecurity, with projections of catastrophic hunger levels in Khartoum and West Darfur. Other services, such as the banking system, have been severely disrupted and the cost of living has gone up to unprecedented levels because of hyper-inflation.

CIVICUS Monitor¹ continues to rate Sudanese civil society conditions as repressed. The movement of civilians has been restricted and a growing number of people are being arrested, tortured and sometimes killed on suspicion of supporting the other side. Sexual and gender-based violence is being systematically used on a large scale to terrorise communities, it has been reported that children are forcibly recruited to join active conflicts and communities have been brutally targeted due to their ethnicity / tribal affiliation. Sudan's civil society is complex and layered. There's a tier that has a track record of involvement in political processes, backed by the supposedly transitional administration that emerged after the coup. There are also established civil society organisations (CSOs) that work to provide essential services and advocate for rights. But the biggest source of opposition to armed rule has come from resistance committees, informal neighbourhood-level groups.²

Projects supported by Save the Children Finland (SCF) in 2023 in Sudan:

- Four humanitarian projects funded by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) provided crisis-affected vulnerable children and families with improved access to lifesaving and life-sustaining health and nutrition interventions; disaster risk reduction, shelter, non-food items, education in emergencies (EiE), child protection (CP), cash interventions and water, sanitation and hygiene services.

- A project called 'Inclusive Quality Education for the Most Vulnerable Children in Sudan', funded by the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) of the European Union (EU), targeted 83,000 children through formal and non-formal education and was implemented by a consortium of Save the Children, World Vision and four local partners.

Somalia and Somaliland

The year 2023 involved unprecedented challenges for Somalia, marked by concurrent crises. The ongoing armed conflicts and the government's efforts to reclaim territory from Al Shabaab led to the increased displacement of people. Somalia grappled with extreme climatic events, which included the worst drought since 1981 that nearly pushed the country into famine.³ At the end of the year, the drought was followed by intense flooding, exacerbated by El Niño. More than 2.5 million people were affected by these climate catastrophes, including 1.7 million people being displaced and 1.5 million hectares of farmland being flooded.

The extreme weather events, combined with the ongoing conflict and surging food prices, have left about 8.3 million people – nearly half of the population – in continuous need of humanitarian assistance and driven a historic 2.8 million people from their homes, many of whom are now living in camps.⁴

Due to the heavy rains and flooding at the end of 2023, scores of children are now at risk of malnutrition and disease outbreaks, including acute watery diarrhoea, cholera, malaria and acute respiratory tract infections, particularly among vulnerable children. Collapsing health, water and sanitation systems have cut off more than 250,000 people from regular access to clean water and sanitation, increasing the ability of disease to spread at the start of 2024. In Somalia 1.7 million children under the age of five are likely to suffer from acute malnutrition. Somali children still suffer most from the country's ongoing drought, floods, instability and conflict. The risk of recruitment by armed groups, physical violence, sexual abuse and abduction are the prevailing risks for children in many parts of the country.

1 monitor.civicus.org/

2 civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2024

3 reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-fund-annual-report-2023

4 Data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023

In Somaliland, which has been a much more stable environment than any of the other Somali areas, the inter-clan armed conflict in Las Anod, in the Sool Region, caused instability and spikes in needs in 2023. The conflict is multifaceted, encompassing historical, political, economic and ethnic dimensions. In addition, there was political tension between the Government of Somaliland and the opposition parties on the overdue presidential election.

Although the conflicts take attention and resources away from development and child rights, there have been great achievements on the policy front. The Somaliland Child Act, approved in late 2022 and officially launched in May 2023, provides a comprehensive legal framework that safeguards the rights of children and promises a safer future for children. The first-ever Somaliland Social Protection Policy, approved in late 2023, will provide a framework for social protection, minimum income guarantees and basic social care services for the most vulnerable families.

CIVICUS Monitor continues to rate Somalian civil society conditions as *repressed*.



Ansal and her six children lives in a camp for displaced persons in Abudwak in central Somalia. Ansal says: "Arriving at the camp, we had nothing. Hope was our only companion among others facing similar challenges." Ansal was selected to receive cash assistance. She went on to say: "This cash support transformed our lives for the better and improved our access to food and basic needs. Looking ahead, my deepest wish is to see my children leading better lives, educated and thriving." Photo: Save the Children

Projects supported by SCF in 2023 in Somaliland:

- A CP project funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Programme-Based Support (MFA PBS) which aims to strengthen CP systems and provide high-quality response and prevention services.
- An MFA PBS-funded child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) project which aims to establish and strengthen CSSP systems by enabling vulnerable children and their families to access child benefits, complemented with strengthened child and gender sensitivity through cash plus approaches.

Projects supported by SCF in 2023 in Somalia:

- The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) humanitarian funding enabled vulnerable IDP and host families in Galmudug State to receive emergency cash transfers as well as CP services, such as individual case management, and training for non-violent and gender-transformative parenting practices.
- The ECHO-funded Somali Cash Consortium, in which Save the Children and six international non-governmental organisations implement unconditional cash transfers in order to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable households recently displaced by an acute crisis.
- With German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau funding and under the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-programme, Save the Children implemented a cash transfer component in alignment with the national baxnaano social protection programme for pregnant and lactating women in the Mudug region of Puntland.

Zambia

In June 2023 the Government of Zambia reached a debt-restructuring agreement with its official creditors. This is expected to be beneficial as it provides the government with fiscal relief, thereby increasing disposable income that can be spent on sectors such as education, health and protection by the government. The benefits of this restructuring, however, had not yet had a significant impact on the economic outlook by the end of the year. The price of fuel continued to fluctuate

monthly, which resulted in the instability of prices of goods and services. The high cost of living continued to increasingly affect poor families and children, which may worsen children's, especially girls', vulnerability to violence and abuse. Despite the recent introduction of free education in Zambia, the access is still not full due to the most vulnerable families lacking the resources required to buy uniforms, books, bags and shoes.

The mining sector accounts for over 70% of total exports and 30% of government revenue in Zambia, it being the world's seventh largest copper producer. The production is concentrated in the Copperbelt Province, North-Western Province and Central Province, creating, on one hand, economic and employment opportunities for families but, on the other hand, exposing children to child labour and many other forms of harm and abuse, drastically affecting their school attendance and performance. SCF supports CP and CSSP projects in the Copperbelt Province. In addition, in 2023, SCF worked on a study that aimed to generate evidence by providing compelling stories of the extent and impact of mining activities on children in Kitwe.

The Zambia National Public Health Institute reported an outbreak of cholera, and by the end of 2023, there were 3,757 confirmed cases and 128 deaths, with a case fatality rate of 3.4%. Of particular concern was the evolution of the outbreak in Lusaka where, in just a week, the Ministry of Health reported an increase of 71% in cases and an increase of 175% in deaths.

Overall, the status of civil society has improved since, after the 2022 elections, the repression of citizens or CSOs has largely ceased.⁵ The CIVICUS Monitor rates Zambian civil society conditions as *obstructed*.⁶

The government increased their commitment and investment in CSSP in 2023. The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) introduced the Shock Emergency Cash Transfer to alleviate the economic challenges faced by vulnerable communities. The initiative aims to provide ad-

ditional support to beneficiaries grappling with rising living costs. The beneficiaries of the programme are receiving a bi-monthly pay amounting to ZMW 1200 for a duration of six months, which comes in addition to their regular Social Cash Transfer (SCT) amount.

Projects supported by SCF in 2023 in Zambia:

- The MFA PBS-funded 'Protecting Zambian Girls and Boys Offline and Online' project supports prevention and response efforts, targeting children, caregivers and service providers in the Copperbelt Province in order to improve children's access to formal and informal CP services and to strengthen the legislative framework and coordination between key CP stakeholders at local and national levels.
- The MFA PBS-funded 'Moving from Social Protection to CSSP in Zambia' project seeks to strengthen CSSP systems in order to contribute to improved child poverty and household vulnerability trends by enabling access to the SCT; this is then complemented with strengthened cash plus approaches. Simultaneously, the project helps to strengthen the government's capacity to be able to increase financial allocation to CSSP interventions and to lead CSSP interventions.



In Zambia, the programme focus is on child protection and poverty reduction.
Photo: Sacha Myers/Save the Children

5 V-Dem Institute Democracy Report 2024

6 CIVICUS Monitor 2024

2.2 West Africa

Burkina Faso

In 2023 Burkina Faso continued to grapple with a deepening humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by the combined impact of insecurity and climate change. Armed violence in 10 regions out of 13 has displaced more than two million people in the country. At the end of 2023, 6.3 million Burkinabè were in need of humanitarian assistance, compared with 4.7 million people the year before.

The multidimensional crisis is characterised by a geographical spread of security incidents, resulting in increased displacement, heightened human rights violations and a profound impact on civilian populations. In 2023 Burkina Faso faced a surge in deadly attacks by Islamist armed groups targeting civilians, alongside reported abuses by military forces and pro-government militias during counterinsurgency efforts.

Simultaneously, Burkina Faso experienced a political crisis in the aftermath of the two military coups occurring in 2022. The military regime has tightened control over media and dissent, resulting in a shrinking civic space. The vulnerability of the population has worsened, particularly for those living in hard-to-reach areas where the movement of civilians and traders is restricted. Moreover, in a move that could limit avenues for justice, Burkina Faso, along with Mali and Niger, announced their withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States in January 2024, while also severing ties with France, requesting the withdrawal of French special forces after over 20 years of their presence. CIVICUS Monitor rates the civic space conditions in Burkina Faso as obstructed.

The impacts of climate change – such as floods, violent winds and drought – further increase the vulnerability, having consequences related to food security and agro-pastoral livelihoods. With more than 40% of the population living below the poverty line, Burkina Faso is one of the most challenging places to live for children, youth and women who all struggle to access basic social services and economic opportunities.

Social services are under significant pressure due to the insecurity and displacement experienced by the country,

resulting in many displaced people, including children, not benefitting from adequate support in light of the trauma experienced. Such children are at risk of developing mental health problems, while others are exposed to violence and abuse. In addition, the education system has been severely disrupted due to violent attacks and threats of attacks on schools, teachers and students.

Access constraints and a shrinking humanitarian space challenge the humanitarian response, as does lack of global attention to the crisis. Since 2019, the Burkina Faso Humanitarian Response Plan has been critically underfunded; only 35% of the required USD 876.7 million was reached in 2023. Save the Children has managed to continue project implementation in this challenging context, reaching 571,039 people, of which 384,158 were children.

Projects supported by SCF in 2023 in Burkina Faso:

- An MFA PBS-funded CP project aims to strengthen the CP systems and the provision of appropriate care for child victims, strengthening the protective family environment and supporting communities and communes in taking action in order to prevent and respond to situations of exploitation, abuse or violence suffered by children.
- A UNICEF-funded CSSP project focused on reducing child poverty and vulnerability in the Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Nord, Nord and Est regions through building the capacity of its non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners in implementing activities related to family budgeting, youth resiliency and parenting. The programme ended in 2023.

Côte d'Ivoire

In September 2023, Côte d'Ivoire held municipal and regional elections, in which the Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace party (in power since 2011) won most of the seats and which, according to electoral observers, proved to be open and peaceful. Overall, the Ivorian economy has shown resilience to shocks such as COVID-19 and the effects of the war in Ukraine. Economic growth was expected to reach 7.3% in 2023 and inflation was to decline to an estimated 3.7% due to strong measures taken by the government to contain the rise in food prices and the cost of living.



Aicha, a mother of eight children is one of the beneficiaries of the CSSP project implemented in Côte d'Ivoire. She has participated in parenting training and income generation activities. Photo: Katja Selkimäki-Gray/Save the Children.

The worsening Central Sahel crisis in Mali and Burkina Faso (which border Côte d'Ivoire) and the numerous coups d'état in the region exacerbate the risk of the conflict spilling over into coastal countries. In November 2023, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that some 50,000 people had fled from Sahel to the northeast of Côte d'Ivoire, to the Tchologo and Bounkani regions which are the most affected by the insecurity of displacement. The humanitarian needs require an adequate response, but the Ivorian government, fearing negative impacts on the country's reputation and foreign investments, is reluctant to issue any official humanitarian alert.

However, in 2023, the civic space was favourable as CSOs carried out their activities freely and very often

benefited from the guidance and support of local state actors. CSOs are also actively involved in local government activities. The CIVICUS Monitor rates the Ivorian civil society conditions as *obstructed*.⁷ For example, in the Gontougo Region the Regional Council provides support to local CSOs in order to strengthen their capacities so that they can participate more actively in territorial management with public authorities and in regional development through the funding of interventions contributing to social cohesion, the strengthening of democracy and the development of productive services for the benefit of rural territories.

In 2023 the Bondoukou and Tanda children's parliaments were renewed through the reformation of their offices. Action plans have been drawn up and implemented, enabling activities (such as training sessions) in order to reinforce their knowledge, awareness-raising activities for their peers and radio broadcasts.

Projects supported by SCF in 2023 in Côte d'Ivoire:

- The MFA PBS-funded project 'Towards an Inclusive, Violence-free Environment for the Most Vulnerable Girls and Boys in Bondoukou' contributed to strengthening formal and informal CP mechanisms through girls' and boys' increased access to quality services in vulnerable communities, focusing on the prevention of violence.
- The MFA PBS-funded project 'Social protection in Côte d'Ivoire' aims to strengthen the social protection system by enabling the most vulnerable children and their families to access the national social protection system, which is complemented with a parenting programme.
- The UNICEF-funded project 'Afiba – Support for the Training and Integration of Young Girls in Bouaké and Abidjan' aims to contribute to the employability of vulnerable young girls and women through reforming the institutional system, improving educational pathways and offering them training.
- A GIZ-funded practical training programme for 320 vulnerable, out-of-school or drop-out young girls and boys, linking them to jobs in local agricultural value chains or to entrepreneurship courses. The project ended in July.

2.3. Asia

Nepal

Nepal is prone to natural disasters since approximately 80% of the population lives in rural areas that are vulnerable to droughts, earthquakes, floods and landslides. The high prevalence of natural hazards and the limited shock-responsive coping capacities of communities increase the vulnerability of families and children. In November 2023 a magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck western Nepal's Karnali Province and the western districts were heavily affected.

Immense progress towards improving the lives of children has been made in Nepal since the Child Rights Convention was adopted 34 years ago. However, there are still children who are left behind based on their caste, ethnicity, disability, family income, gender or geography. Despite the progress in reducing poverty, about 20% of Nepalese people live below the national poverty line.⁸ Children are also threatened by climate change and its associated risks, such as more frequent and severe disasters, increased air pollution, growing environmental health threats, the potential for future pandemics and natural disasters, conflicts and economic crises, all of which disproportionately affect children.

Despite of the strengths that civil society has gained in Nepal and the increasing number of CSOs, authorities continue to implement their surveillance powers. Violations of fundamental freedoms have been documented, including arbitrary arrests and the use of excessive force with impunity during protests, as well as targeting journalists through harassment, attacks and criminalisation. In 2023, the state of civic space in Nepal is still rated as obstructed by CIVICUS.

The Government of Nepal revised its Citizenship Act in 2023. The revised act allows people who do not have citizenship card due to various reasons related to their parents' identity to claim their right to citizenship. A citizenship card is a mandatory legal document if one wishes to register for social security allowances, eg. for the birth registration of children, which is in turn a mandatory legal document for a child grant. The revised act is an opportunity for people who were deprived of a citizenship



Distribution of relief items to families affected by the earthquake that struck Jajarkot in Karnali Province, Nepal.

Photo: Save the Children

certificate due to various legal issues to gain a citizenship certificate, which in turn increases the number of people eligible to receive social protection allowances.

Projects supported by SCF in 2023 in Nepal:

- The MFA PBS-funded 'Realising the rights of children through CSSP (Pahunch)' project aims to ensure that social protection policies and programmes are child sensitive and result in improved development outcomes for children. The focus is on the beneficiaries of the government's Child Grant through a parenting programme as well as through the capacity building of health staff.
- An ECHO-funded project that is a response to the children and families affected by the Jajarkot earthquake.

The Philippines

The Philippines has been one of the most dynamic economies in the East Asia and Pacific region, with increasing urbanisation and a growing middle class. Despite economic growth, one third of all children remain stunted or malnourished due to the persistent inequality of socio-economic well-being and the lack of quality social and health services. At the same time, the country ranks first in terms of disaster risk on the World Risk Index 2022, as well as being first in the East Asia and Pacific region on the Child Climate Risk Index.

Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and the climate change impact, such as rising sea levels and increasing temperatures, are affecting the health, nutrition and education of children, especially the most vulnerable children, such as poor children, children with disabilities, indigenous children, those in situations of armed conflict and girls. There are also global risks to the country's economic outlook, linked to the rising global inflation and the escalation of geopolitical tensions, which could hamper Philippine exports. High inflation affects the poor families, making it more difficult for them to afford necessities. Thus, improving the quality of the social protection system in the Philippines is essential in order to protect the poor and most vulnerable from economic and disaster-related shocks.

In 2023, one year after the presidential elections in the Philippines, there has been little action to improve the state of human rights. The practice of unjustly jailing activists and other dissenters, often on fabricated charges in order to justify their prolonged detention, and harassment of and attacks against journalists have continued. According to the human rights group Karapatan,⁹ one of the most alarming trends is the rapid rise in the number of involuntary disappearances (with eight victims of enforced disappearance in the first ten months of the new president's rule). CIVICUS has rated the state of civic space in the Philippines as repressed. Human rights defenders are at risk of arrest or even being killed, and restrictions on foreign funding for NGOs have also been documented.

Projects supported by SCF in 2023 in the Philippines:

- The MFA PBS-funded 'Advancing Child-Sensitive Social Protection in the Philippines' project.

Other areas in Asia

India: SCF continued to support the CSSP project in Dungarpur, Rajasthan, that aims to improve access to social protection programmes and strengthen the impact on children through parenting training sessions, funded by SCF's private fundraising and corporate funding.

Indonesia: During the first quarter of 2023, SCF concluded the project 'HEAL: Promote Human Rights and Equality to Achieve Sustainability', funded by DG INTPA.

2.4. Support to Ukraine

At the end of 2023 it had been almost two years since the war in Ukraine escalated in February 2022. An average of three children have been killed or injured every day in Ukraine since then. Every fifth person in need in Ukraine is a child (out of a total of 14.6 million people in need, 2.9 million are children). The humanitarian needs are most acute in the east and the south, where more than 3.3 million people in the front-line communities are in need of assistance, including those living in the occupied areas.

Save the Children has worked alongside partners to provide humanitarian aid and essential services to millions of families across Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. Throughout the second year of the war, families and children across the country faced constant threats to their livelihoods and strikes hitting civilian infrastructure, including the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam in June that led to massive flooding and the loss of clean water for hundreds of thousands of people. The impact of the past two years is compounded by the fact that many children in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk have now lived through 10 years of conflict.

An estimated 1.4 million homes in Ukraine have been damaged or destroyed since the escalation of the war. Because of ongoing violence, about four million people are still displaced within Ukraine and more than 5.9 million were forced to flee to neighbouring countries. Even though 67% of those IDPs say that they want to return home someday, many are unable to return to their homes as the war has shattered their communities and livelihoods. The vast areas of the country where active fighting has ceased remain gravely dangerous due to high contamination by explosive weapons, unexploded ordnances and other mines. Unexploded ordnances and mine incidents that result in civilian casualties, including children, are reported regularly.

Around 3800 educational institutions in Ukraine have been affected by bombings and shelling. Out of these, 365 have been completely destroyed. Among the institutions that remain functional, around a third do not have shelters and thus might not be available for offline and mixed learning, according to Education Cluster. Initial data for the 2023–2024 academic year suggests that only half of the schools (6593) operate in face-to-face mode while 20% of schools operate online and 30% in blended format. According to the country's education authorities, about 900,000 children can only study remotely. As the war moves into its third year, the possibility of further displacement is high.

3. STRATEGIC FOCUS AND PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Globally, Save the Children focuses its resources on achieving **three breakthroughs by 2030** – to ensure that all children survive, learn and are protected.

All Save the Children members and country offices are accountable for their contribution to the breakthroughs, which will be delivered through strategy cycles. SCF’s Strategic Goals 2023–2024 are contributing to the breakthroughs accordingly.

For the International Programme of SCF (IP), the expected outcomes for the programme period 2022–2025 and

how they link to the overall 2023–2024 Strategic Goals are illustrated above. Central to all programming is a focus on child rights and on partnerships with local actors and thus on a stronger connection between humanitarian aid and development nexus. For the International Programme outcomes, a corresponding selection of indicators is in place to capture the achievement of the outcomes and thus the impact of the programme. The indicators and the respective baseline, as well progress data, are available in a separate monitoring and evaluation plan.

VISION 2030

Save the Children Global Breakthroughs by 2030

<p>SURVIVE</p> <p>No child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday</p>	<p>LEARN</p> <p>All children learn from a quality basic education</p>	<p>PROTECTION</p> <p>Violence against children is no longer tolerated</p>
--	--	--

Save the Children Finland strategic goals 2023–2024

<p>Children and adolescents receive the services they need in a timely manner</p> 	<p>Children’s right to participation is reinforced</p> 	<p>Life without violence</p> 	<p>Safety nets and resilient families</p> 
---	--	---	---

Save the Children Finland International Programme Outcomes 2022–2025

<p>OUTCOME 1:</p> <p>Children’s and families’ access to services has improved</p>	<p>OUTCOME 2:</p> <p>Improved child development outcomes and protection of children through the strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children and the community</p>	<p>OUTCOME 3:</p> <p>Improved child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes</p>
--	--	---

Table 1: SCF Strategy for 2022–2024

A summary of programme results in 2023

The year 2023 marked the half-way point of the SCF 2022–2025 IP. In order to take stock of how our projects are progressing towards their outcomes, an internal midterm stocktaking exercise was organised across the MFA PBS-funded CSSP and CP portfolios in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, the Philippines, Somaliland and Zambia. Together with SCI country offices and partners, each project was assessed to find out how well the project is doing in the implementation of its outputs, as well as find out how well it is doing in relation to the cross-cutting themes of gender equality, disability inclusion and climate change adaptation. In addition, there was midline data collection for many programme and project-level outcome indicators, and mainly based on this data, the impact of the programme is illustrated in this report.

In the area of CP, SCF continued to support disadvantaged groups and communities in accessing good quality CP services in all our African programme countries in 2023. In fact, the service providers in Zambia, Somaliland, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire increased their quality level substantially, especially for formal service providers, where the overall average increase in quality level was 56%pt. In addition, there was a big increase the targeted children's confidence to ask for help in the case of violence and sexual violence, and also their ability to name at least one place/person they would go to for help: the average level of the respondents' confidence and ability in regard to these capacities in all four countries increased by 51%pt compared with the baseline level.

The Safe Families Common Approach, a set of guidance and tools for improved CP which Save the Children applies, is showing positive changes for caregivers and children within the SCF programme. Evidence shows that there is specifically improved caring practices, caregiver-child relationships and communication, improved children's confidence to protect themselves and improved children's knowledge of how to protect themselves. In 2023, an overall average of 57% of the targeted children reported a positive change in their interactions with their caregivers.

For CSSP, SCF continued working closely with local and national governments across the programme countries in Asia and Africa in order to support people in accessing



The projects implemented in Somaliland focused on improving access to relevant services, while also supporting caregivers to invest in their children's well-being and development. Photo: Save the Children

social protection programmes by institutionalising inclusive, transparent and accountable approaches. In Nepal, for example, 30 wards replicated a mapping exercise in order to identify all the people that are eligible for any of the social security allowances provided by the Government of Nepal. In addition, the wards implemented a total of 65 social protection camps that were set up to support people to access the Child Grant and the Disability Grant. These interventions resulted in a total of 12,875 people being supported in accessing social protection benefits during 2023. In Zambia, the advocacy and training measures have contributed to an increase in the number of the Government's Social Cash Transfer programme beneficiaries of between 75–80% across different project locations.

Within the CSSP parenting programme approach, a total of 6379 caregivers (5742 of them female and 637 of them male) in all countries were trained in 2023 through group sessions and home visits. As a result of these training sessions, evidence suggests that there was improvement in caregiver engagement across the programme. The engagement scale – which showed an increase, for example, in Nepal and Somaliland – measures the intensity of the interactions of the caregiver with the child, including reading books, showing affection and giving praise. In these same countries, results from the follow-up assessments indicate overall better feeding practices among children in the Save the Children intervention area in comparison to the control area and in relation to issues such as the timeliness of complementary feeding, the minimum dietary diversity and the minimum acceptable diet.

In the Philippines, a national cash transfer programme for poor households with children aged 0–18 years old, committed to scaling up the CSSP parenting programme to all 4.4 million households, meaning that the CSSP parenting programme would become a special training course that all parents receiving social protection must attend. In 2023, Save the Children trained 277 staff members of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on the programme, and more staff members will be engaged with in 2024. The national scale up is planned to start in November 2024.

A significant breakthrough was achieved in Somaliland in 2023 when the parliament approved and the president signed the first Somaliland Social Protection Policy. Since 2021, Save the Children has been facilitating the development of the policy, both financially and technically, as well as supporting the different ministries through advocacy and capacity building.

In Sudan, despite the devastating armed conflict which has forced nearly half the population, including 14 million children, into dependence on humanitarian assistance, Save the Children managed to run its operations in 12 out of 18 states. One component of this assistance was providing life-saving health and nutrition services to 237,379 vulnerable people. Through this ECHO-funded intervention, we were able to increase the average percentage of households with an acceptable food consumption score from 38% at the start of the action to 61%.

Furthermore, in Sudan, in a consortium with several partners, Save the Children is also implementing a large DG INTPA grant. The conflict has significantly impacted on the project, and the target of 83,000 children being addressed through formal and non-formal education was not achieved. Despite all of the challenges, the project managed to start back-to-school campaigning and has advanced children's access to education through our 28 Alternative Learning Programmes enrolling 1485 children (60% of them girls) and managed to train a total of 272 teachers (of which 69% were women). Alongside educational activities, several CP measures have also started with the setting up of community-based CP networks.

Multipurpose cash and voucher assistance was implemented in Somalia and Sudan where altogether 12,931 and 2777 households respectively were supported in meeting their families' basic needs. On average, the benefitting households reported a 15%pt decrease in their need to borrow money for essential basic living costs and also the need to purchase food on credit dropped from

72% to 66%. Moreover, the average Coping Strategy Index score decreased from 14.9 to 12.2 during the time-frame of May–October 2023.

In addition to its own programming, SCF also channels funds to the SCI humanitarian fund (HF). Flexible funding is then available for urgent and lifesaving humanitarian response needs at any time. In 2023, the HF allocated more than 145 million dollars to supporting conflict-related responses across the globe. SCF contributed roughly four million euros to the HF to help the situation of children and families (for example, in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen, Gaza and Somalia).

3.1. Children and Adolescents Receive the Services They Need in a Timely Manner: Humanitarian Projects in Sudan and Ukraine

In Ukraine, with MFA humanitarian funding since April 2023, SCF has integrated the EiE approach, including mental health and psychosocial support, in partnership with local partners in the Zaporizhya Oblast and the Kharkiv Oblast. The one-year project ensures that



Through education in emergencies interventions in Ukraine, children were able to continue with their learning that had been disrupted by the war. The project, supported by the MFA, also included mental health and psychosocial support. Photo: Save the Children

conflict-affected girls' and boys' right to education and protection is safeguarded despite the ongoing war and closure of schools, particularly in Eastern Ukraine. Altogether six digital learning centres were initiated to provide access to remote learning for children building on EdTech experience. These need to be established in safe places and challenges related to identifying locations with sufficient safety delayed the opening of the digital learning centres. By the end of 2023, altogether 37 potential sites were assessed, and six digital learning centres will open in 2024. In addition, teachers' capacity to provide remote teaching was supported, and materials were provided to enable children's remote learning; this activity covered the Kharkiv metro where in-person classes are being organised by the local education authorities.

In Sudan, despite the extremely difficult operational context in 2023, Save the Children managed to run its operations in 12 out of 18 states, providing life-saving assistance to 2.4 million people,¹⁰ of which, half (1.2 million) were children. Shortly after the conflict's escalation, the initial staff evacuation and the halt of operations, SCI re-established its country office in Port Sudan, the new temporary capital.

Through the ECHO-funded Health and Nutrition programme, life-saving health and nutrition services were delivered to 237,379 vulnerable people in South Kordofan, West Darfur, North Darfur and Central Darfur, Blue Nile and Khartoum in 2023. Continuation of the implementation of this project was challenging, and therefore, Save the Children decided to readjust and shift the remaining activities and budget from West and Central Darfur to South Kordofan and the Blue Nile State, supporting newly displaced populations in regard to having access to primary health care, nutrition and CP services, as well as supporting their access to basic needs through cash assistance. Through these interventions, we were able to increase the average percentage of households with an acceptable food consumption score by 23 %pt (from 38% at the start of the action to 61% by end of 2023). This means that an increasing number of households are consuming more diverse and nutritious food and are able to have meals more frequently.

During 2023, Save the Children provided treatment for malnutrition through 18 nutrition facilities, treating 1778 severely acute malnourished children. It has, however, been difficult to treat moderate acute malnutrition in the country due to the unavailability of ready-to-use supplementary food between January and November last year.

Despite of all the difficulties, Save the Children supported reproductive health by targeting safe deliveries and saving the lives of both mothers and newborns in Sudan. A total of 3150 live births were attended by a skilled member of health personnel who received formal training facilitated by the Ministry of Health.

The EiE work continued in 2023 with the funding of ECHO. The third year of the consortium – led by Save the Children and implemented with our partner, the Norwegian Refugee Council – was largely affected by the war as well. Before the war broke out, Save the Children had completed its activities in West Darfur and the Blue Nile State as per the workplan and had started the preparations for the new school year in Central Darfur. While generally the schools across the country remained closed as of September 2023 due to the insecurity and spreading violence, Save the Children succeeded in opening schools in Golo (Central Darfur) thanks to the permission obtained from the Humanitarian Aid Commissioner. Inside Golo, the humanitarian situation remains dire due to shortages of food, water and fuel, limited communications and electricity cut-offs, in addition to the skyrocketing prices of essential items and basic needs.

Save the Children conducted a back-to-school campaign in October 2023 which targeted schools and marketplaces in order to convey messages of school reopenings and to promote education's value, focusing mainly on girl's access to schools. A total number of 1300 students and local community members attended the back-to-school campaign in seven schools in Central Jabal Mara-Golo. Approximately 8000 girls and boys received learning materials. Furthermore, Save the Children rehabilitated and constructed 10 classrooms and constructed 6 new latrines, provided 72 handwashing facilities and 38 water tanks to 18 schools in Golo. Over 4600 students benefited from the rehabilitated classrooms. Overall, the consortium has reached 27,418 girls and 21,030 boys during the programme period. This is mainly a result of the improvements in both the basic infrastructure of the schools and quality of the educational materials given to children, which both encourage caregivers to send their children to the schools.

Despite of the successes, the challenges are huge: more than 50% of the existing schools in the country remain closed. The use of schools for military purposes and as emergency shelters for refugees and IDPs continues to hamper access to education for millions of children.

In addition to the above, since 2023 Save the Children, in a consortium with World Vision and four local partners,

10 The overall figure, including all programmes in Sudan.

Safe childbirth in times of conflict and displacement

In Sudan conflict has resulted in the internal displacement of over 10 million people, marking the highest displacement globally. The recent outbreak in April 2023 forced more than nine million people from their homes, some for the second or third time. Prior to this, various localised conflicts over the last decades had already displaced approximately three million people. Women who are uprooted from their homes often suffer disproportionately, especially when they lack access to healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth.

Limon is a 65-year-old midwife working in a health centre supported by Save the Children with funding from EU Humanitarian Aid. The centre is in Madina 9, a densely populated community hosting a large number of conflict-displaced families. Resources, such as healthcare, are severely overstretched. Limon herself had fled conflict in her home area a couple of years ago. She understands the plight of women who have lost their homes and belongings and is dedicated to ensuring the well-being of mothers and babies, regardless of the circumstances.

‘I love my work because I can support women who do not have the means to access standard healthcare. They need services and care during pregnancy and childbirth wherever they are and in whatever circumstances they find themselves’, says Limon.

Limon’s commitment to midwifery is rooted in a wealth of experience. Starting as a traditional midwife in her home village, she witnessed the challenges women faced during childbirth.

‘My sister worked as a midwife and asked me to help her. The first birth took four hours and the mother was in a lot of pain. When the baby finally emerged healthy, I was so relieved and happy. Ever since, I knew I wanted to become a midwife.’ she says.

Despite the wealth of traditional knowledge that is passed down through generations, Limon decided to undergo professional training at a midwifery school in 2015 to enhance her skills and obtain official certification. ‘I was eager to learn and improve my skills. My priority has always been to ensure that the women and their babies are safe’, she says.

In 2022, conflict disrupted Limon’s life, displacing her and hundreds of thousands of others. Following the stabilisation of the situation, Limon was asked to work at the health centre in Madina 9, a community hosting many IDPs from the state – a call she readily accepted.



Interviewer: Khalid Abdulfattah. Photo: Mossab Hassouna, 2024

‘Now, I work here in Madina 9, the camp for internally displaced people. I really want to help the women affected by conflict as much as I can. They need services like any other women otherwise the risk of death for the mother or baby is high.’ she noted.

Despite the challenging conditions, including nearly unpassable roads during the rainy season, Limon remains dedicated to reaching the health centre. Whether walking or utilising a motorbike, car or even a donkey cart, she ensures timely responses to calls for births, even during night-time emergencies. Limon acknowledges the limitations of medical tools but emphasises the importance of transferring mothers to hospitals in Damazin or nearby areas when complications arise. ‘When the baby is in the wrong position, it can be very dangerous. If I realise there is any complication, we transfer the women to larger hospitals’, she says.

Limon declares proudly that no woman or baby has lost their life since she started working at the health centre, even in the face of challenging births. She expresses gratitude for the support provided by Save the Children, funded by EU Humanitarian Aid, which ensures a consistent supply of necessary medical materials, enabling her to execute her work in the safest manner possible. The funding also covers the transfer of women to hospitals when experiencing complications during deliveries.

Save the Children supports the health centre through medical supplies, essential drugs, medical equipment and incentives for the staff’s operation and running costs, cleaning tools, clean delivery kits, lab equipment and information materials. Through this project, 130,935 vulnerable people are receiving life-saving healthcare interventions without cost across five states.



Emergency-affected children are supported in accessing education in Central Darfur, Sudan. Photo: Save the Children

is also implementing a EUR 30 million DG INTPA grant for Sudan, titled 'EU Inclusive Quality Education for the Most Vulnerable Children in Sudan'. The project targets 83,000 children through formal and non-formal education.

The project has been significantly impacted on by the conflict and has also relocated activities from the conflict-affected hot-spot states of Khartoum, North Darfur and Central Darfur to the safer states of Red Sea, River Nile and Blue Nile. Despite all the challenges, the project managed to start back-to-school campaigning and has advanced children's access to education through our 28 alternative learning programmes currently operational in the states of North Kordofan, South Kordofan and Sennar. In these learning centres 1485 children (60% of them girls) have been enrolled and have received student kits. The project managed to train a total of 272 teachers, of which 69% were women. Alongside educational activities, several CP measures have also started: in Sennar State, three new Community-Based Child Protection Networks were established with 50 members. Our partner SABAH has started campaigning for behavioural change and has conducted mobilisation and training activities that have reached 3733 people (629 boys, 580 girls, 1216 men and 1308 women). Also, 77 children were supported through case management. Finally, a mobile multipurpose protection centre targeting children affected by the emergency reached 1764 children (985 girls, 779 boys) in an IDP gathering site in North Kordofan.

3.2. Children's Right to Participate Has Been Reinforced

Participation is about having the opportunity to express a view, influencing decision-making and achieving change. *Children's participation* refers to the informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalised and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them, either directly or indirectly. Children's participation is a way of working and an essential principle that cuts across all programmes and takes place in all arenas – from homes to government, from the local level to the international level.

SCF measures the level of fulfilment of the key child-participation criteria in the projects SCF supports in order to drive accountability to children and communities and to strengthen project impact, safeguarding approaches, implementation and learning, and create opportunities for children's voices to be heard. In 2023, 95% of both humanitarian and development projects supported by SCF met the accountability criteria designed. This high proportion of projects meeting the criteria indicates, for example, that (i) children and communities receive relevant and timely information in languages, formats and media that are appropriate and accessible, (ii) children's feedback is taken into account in decision-making processes and (iii) they hear from Save the Children how their participation influenced decision-making. Children and communities also share feedback and concerns with us.

Asking children's views: The impact of mining on children in Zambia

Child labour is defined as 'work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous or harmful to children, and/or interferes with their ability to access and/or complete compulsory education'. Zambia has ratified international standards related to child labour and defines child labour as any work carried out by children under the age of 15, except for light work that can be done outside of school hours without risking a child's health and safety.

Despite this, tens of thousands of children in Zambia are estimated to be engaged in hazardous work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to them. Mining is one sector in which child labour takes place. Globally, the Copperbelt Province is one of the largest producers of processed copper and copper is Zambia's most important export. Copper is the third most used metal in the world, and the demand is growing. Renewable power generation technologies apply copper and support climate change mitigation. We need to be cautious, however, that it does not happen at the cost of undermining the health of some of the most vulnerable girls and boys.

SCF supported a study which gave children a voice: these children are engaged in mining activities in the mineral slag dump commonly known as Black Mountain in Kitwe Zambia. Mining activities in Black Mountain have been undertaken by local small-scale miners who employ children. Girls and boys, aged between 11 and 18, narrated several negative impacts of mining activities on them. The children were exposed to verbal, emotional, physical and even sexual abuse. They were at risk of injury due to the utilisation of limited and poor technology or machinery, and even at risk of falling into open mine shafts and being trapped or injured by collapsing tunnels. Children are also at risk of being exposed to health complications. The school attendance and performance of the boys and girls who are involved in mining and economic activities at mining sites are drastically affected.

The interviews revealed that for most of the children, high poverty levels and a lack of both food and access to school amenities in families pushed them to work, either directly in mining activities or in selling food and drink for workers. In some cases, a child had lost either one or both parents and needed to support the family. The quotations below illustrate the situation:

The main reason why I used to go to sell 'munkoyo' [a drink] at the mine was due to a lack of money. I would go to sell it in the



The study on the effects of mining on children in the Copperbelt Province in Zambia includes recommendations for further action to safeguard the rights of children.

morning, and in the afternoon, I would go to school. During our school holidays, I used to go to sell it every day. I used to get tired, which eventually affected me badly, but I did not have an option because if I did not go, there would be no food at home. (Mercy, a 13-year-old girl)

We were always coughing because of the smoke fumes and dust from the delivery trucks from the mine. (Mwelwa, a 13-year-old girl)

Whilst at Black Mountain, I saw young people and adults working at the mine site drinking, smoking and I heard others using abusive language. In addition, others would fight and insult me in my presence, which has really affected me mentally. I admire my friends who are going to school every day to learn so that they can have a better future. (Mike, an 11-year-old boy)

During the rainy season, it's always difficult for me to work here together with my father. The minerals here at Black Mountain contain acid which affects my legs; at times we had to use plastic to cover our legs so that we would not be burnt by the acid from the mineral ores. (Mulenga, a 17-year-old boy)

To strengthen child participation across its programmes, SCF has been working on an inclusive digital tool with which to collect children’s views on CP services. The application (an innovation of a Finnish company), named AskKids, is used on a tablet, allowing children to give their views on questions asked by themselves. This attractive and child-friendly application for children promotes confidentiality, facilitates self and free expression and makes it a fun and pleasant experience (as opposed to a regular interview session). Questions are available in local languages and have an audio option. This facilitates the participation of all children, including those who are illiterate or those with a disability. In West and Central Africa, this tool is particularly crucial as the region counts more than 500 local languages and most of them cannot be found in written form. SCF developed the tool together with the Finnish mobile software solutions company Pajat Solutions, and the application has a mobile cloud solution called Poimapper. In 2023 AskKids was used in four projects in Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso with 165 children using it in Côte d’Ivoire (84 of them girls) and 273 children using it in Burkina Faso (175 of them girls). The application was further jointly improved with the 50 trained staff members from both countries.

3.3. Life Without Violence: Child Protection

Outcome 1: Children and families have improved access to formal and informal high-quality CP services

A trained, motivated and adequately supported social welfare workforce, whether paid or voluntary, is crucial for any CP intervention. Save the Children works both with formal service providers, like national and local government ministries and NGOs, as well as with informal service providers, like community-based CP networks and committees. This is to achieve children’s improved access to quality, gender-sensitive and inclusive CP prevention and response services. The quality is measured through the fulfilment of the minimum quality standards of services and also through children’s knowledge of the existing service providers and the children’s confidence to seek help from these service providers if they face CP risks or have already been harmed.

At baseline, on average only a fifth of the formal CP ser-

vice providers and 5% of the informal CP service providers in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia met the minimum quality standards of CP services. According to 2023 monitoring data, the service providers had, on average, increased their quality level substantially, especially the formal service providers. Even though the increase in quality for informal service providers is noticeable compared with an almost non-existent baseline level, the average level still falls short of our target by quite a big margin. Some informal service providers have only been supported by training for less than a year and, in addition, some trained volunteers in community committees have dropped out due to socio-economic reasons or even security reasons in some areas of Burkina Faso.

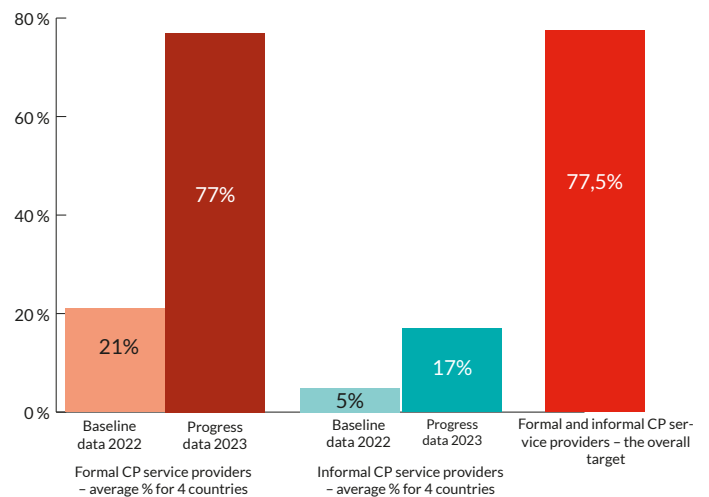


Figure 1. The share of service providers meeting the minimum quality standards of CP prevention and response services in African programme countries in 2023.

One of the elements of access to service is the ability to seek support when in need. In 2023 the evidence collected demonstrated a big increase in the extent to which the targeted children have the confidence to ask for help in the case of emotional or physical violence and sexual violence and their ability to name at least one place/person they could go to for help in regard to the emotional or physical violence and sexual violence. The average level of the respondents’ capacity in regard to having such confidence and skills in all four countries increased by 51%pt. As an example, when children in Zambia were asked if they would seek help when being hurt sexually, 92% of the participants responded in the affirmative. This shows a significant change from the baseline where

all 538 children and adolescent boys and girls interviewed indicated that they would not ask for help in the case of sexual violence.

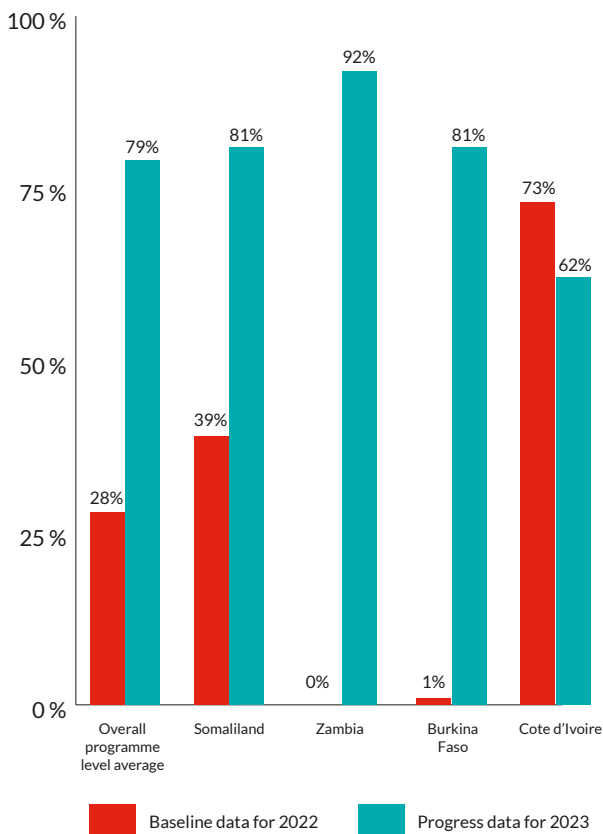


Figure 2: The share of children and adolescents who would ask for help in the case of violence in African programme countries in 2023.

In addition, children’s and caregivers’ satisfaction with the received case management process has increased from the average baseline value of 35% to 89% in 2023. However, both in Somaliland and in Côte d’Ivoire, children reported lower levels of satisfaction than their caregivers, which seems to be linked to the lower level of engagement of children in their case management processes.

In 2023, altogether 48,173 children and adults were direct beneficiaries of prevention and/or response CP services provided by Save the Children or its partners. The cumulative figure reached for this indicator in 2022 and 2023 is 61,443. This is a good result, although the reach of children with disabilities is still too low in all programme countries.



Follow-up surveys conducted in the project areas of the child protection intervention showed that children had a higher level of readiness to seek help if needed. Photo: Kelvin Mulenga / Save the Children

The analysis during the SCF Midterm Stocktaking Exercise also confirmed that the capacity building of the social welfare workforce, partners and volunteers offered by Save the Children in CP does have an impact. Good collaboration with governments and local actors (including collaboration at the local government level) is making our approach efficient and supporting sustainability. Capacity building, specifically in CP case management and caring for child survivors, is highly valued by the participants and shows results. The quality standard element which is the weakest link with all service providers is child participation. While children in all target areas have improved confidence and feel comfortable approaching and being engaged with the service provider, service providers must improve their knowledge, skills and attitude to ensure that children have an opportunity to contribute their views around the service given and that their wishes are taken into account in any decisions which directly affect them.

Outcome 2: Children are able to grow up in a violence-free environment

The Safe Families Common Approach, a set of guidance and tools on improved CP, which Save the Children applies, is showing positive changes for caregivers and children within the SCF programme. Quantitative and qualitative evidence shows that there is specifically an increase in improved caring practices, the caregiver-child relationship and communication, and improved children’s confidence and knowledge relating to protect themselves. Lots of interest is shown by caregivers and children in joining in the training sessions, and engagement by

community mentors and facilitators is, on average, good. Safe Families sessions are held weekly for a period of three months with the beneficiary groups, and they are held in parallel in different locations. The caregivers have 10 sessions and children from the same families have nine sessions; after completion, a second cohort is addressed in the same area in order to have a better impact in the same location. We have implemented this approach in our four programme countries but also in Somalia in a humanitarian setting, where CP was integrated with cash transfer support. Pre-assessment surveys are conducted before the sessions start and at the post-assessment is conducted at the end of the intervention. Over half of the children (52%) aged 10 to 17 showed improved psychosocial well-being, and a slightly higher number (57%) reported a positive change in their interaction with caregivers on average. In almost all countries, girls showed slightly better results than boys for both indicators. In some cases, boys had higher scores at baseline but the girls caught up with the boys during the programme implementation.

Good efforts were made in 2023 for male caregiver engagement through partnering with Men's Networks and by having only-male caregiver groups. Also, the participation of the caregivers of children with disabilities in Somaliland and Zambia increased. In Burkina Faso, mixed groups with both fathers and mothers (not from the same families) were invited to sessions and many testimonies from women show that Safe Families sessions have not only improved the communication of participants with their children but have also improved communication between parents, resulting in a positive impact on the whole household:

As a mother, I used to beat my children if they did something wrong, but we don't do it anymore. We have learnt that beating children is not the only solution, there are better ways to help your child do the things you want them to do. (an example of a change, narrated by a mother in the reflection workshop applying the Biggest Change-methodology in Somaliland)

We have a very good relationship with our children now: we take the time to listen to them, to explain things to them and support them when they don't seem reassured. (a 47-year-old male caregiver, Burkina Faso)

My parents don't scream, yell or even physically beat us. My parents now gently advise us and tell us what to do in the right way. (an example of the Biggest Change, narrated by children who participated in Safe Families sessions in Somaliland)



This child-friendly space is immensely important as it provides a protective environment for vulnerable children. According to Nimo, one of the facilitators at this child-friendly space in Abudwak, Somalia: "My role involves nurturing children both physically and mentally. I advocate for child rights and work towards eliminating abuses such as FGM and exclusion." Photo: Save the Children

I know my rights as a child and my responsibilities. (an example of the Biggest Change, narrated by children who participated in Safe Families sessions in Zambia)

Our parents are more concerned about us. They check up on our studies, our health and our mood. When I do something wrong, my parents don't hit me anymore, they advise me, we talk a lot, they explain what I have to do and why, and I do it. (a 16-year old girl, Burkina Faso)

While supporting children and caregivers in CP, it is crucial for communities to understand why children need to be protected, why violence is not tolerated and what role community members play in preventing and responding to violence against children. We measure this change by carrying out surveys among community members of different ages and diverse backgrounds. On average, 86% of the community members showed increased confidence in their ability to prevent and respond to CP risks in their communities. This is already well above the set average target for this indicator (61%).

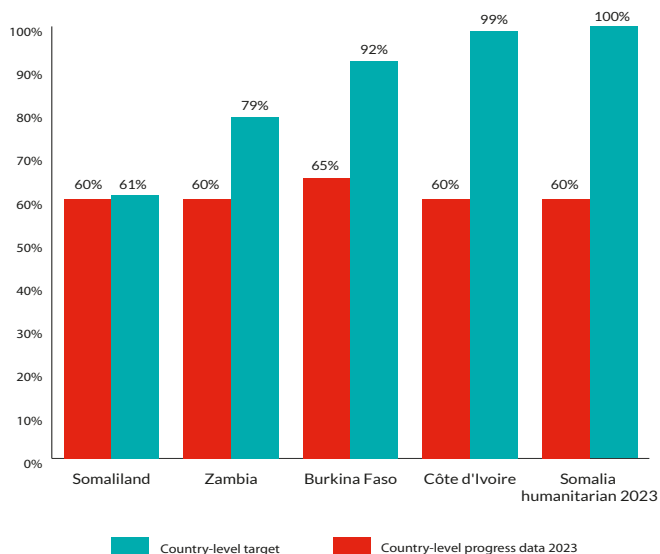


Figure 3: The share of community members who have increased confidence in their ability to prevent and respond to child protection risks in African programme countries 2023.

Outcome 3: CP laws, policies and structures are strengthened in order to promote zero tolerance for violence against children

One of the key elements in CP is to strengthen the public structures and legal frameworks in the countries in which Save the Children works. By 2023, SCF has been able to support 13 key laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks and studies that aim to protect children from violence – exceeding our target of nine such key laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks and studies.

In Côte d'Ivoire in 2023, Save the Children contributed to the development of two CP laws. The Alternative Care Law sets the norms and standards that are applicable to alternative childcare facilities. Institutions which provide childcare are now regulated and are obliged to follow minimum quality standards. In addition, the Foster Family Law, which regulates foster care and foster families, was finalised. This law ensures that there is a strict process for a family to be certified as a foster family. Save the Children participated in the technical groups and supported the Ministry of Social Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire in drafting technical guidance leading to these laws.

In Burkina Faso the development of technical guidelines regulating child-friendly spaces was supported. This was an opportunity for Save the Children to advocate for more community involvement in managing a child-friendly space and for improved process in choosing the sites for a child-friendly space, including the

stronger accountability of local government in providing the land. More strategically, Save the Children participated in the elaboration of the Child Protection Children's Code, which was passed in 2022 by the Ministry of Solidarity, Humanitarian Action, National Reconciliation, Gender and Family.

In Zambia, Save the Children supported the review of the Volunteer Policy and the Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority's national ICT survey tools. We also carried out a compendium of case studies regarding the impact of mining on children. The study presents information and case studies on the effects of artisanal and small-scale mining on children in the Kitwe District of the Copperbelt Province in Zambia. The study includes recommendations for further action to safeguard the rights of children.

Overall challenges in improving CP in the SCF programme

During the Midterm Stocktaking Exercise several challenges were identified in implementing the CP projects across the SCF IP programme. In all our programme countries CP systems have both formal and informal elements which need to be closely interlinked. Community-based, informal CP relies heavily on individual volunteers who need to have the right attitudes and interests to protect children and who also need to receive adequate training on procedures and ways of working. These volunteers and, for example, the volunteer-based CP committees support the identification and referrals of CP cases and specifically play a crucial role in working with communities and children to prevent and mitigate CP risks and harms – sometimes even saving lives. Some volunteers drop out, specifically when they have socio-economic challenges. It is therefore crucial to agree on policies and guidelines regarding how volunteers contributing to the implementation of the projects are motivated and supported. Clear guidelines should be developed in each context, in collaboration with other CSOs for consistency and uniformity. If there is an existing volunteer policy (for instance Zambia has had the National Volunteer Policy since 2022), we need to advocate for and support its implementation.

While there has been good progress in building the capacity of the social welfare workforce, the response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) needs more attention. There are still challenges in terms of reporting SGBV cases in different contexts, the service provision of reported cases often takes too long, and the gender- and



The child protection project in Zambia empowers children and adolescents to protect themselves from both online and offline harm. Photo: Save the Children

child-sensitivity of the services provided for survivors of SGBV needs to improve. Sexual and reproductive health rights issues need to be linked to our CP work more strongly by collaborating closely with health staff and facilities in our target areas. The use of creative methods in reaching out to adolescent girls and boys needs to be piloted (peer support/influencers, digitalised tools).

While there are already important wins in enacting laws and policies that the programme has contributed to, more attention is needed, specifically in regard to ensuring the implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks. This will need improved coordination at the country programme level for the development of advocacy plans and their joint implementation plans; these will be developed together with national partner organisations and staff.

Key strategies towards sustainability in CP

During the Midterm Stocktaking Exercise, it was sustained that supporting and strengthening national CP systems is SCF's key strategy towards sustainability. Save the Children defines a CP system as 'the collection of interlinking elements or components in society (at family, community, subnational and national levels) that are organised around the common goal of preventing, responding to and mitigating the effects of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children'. For example, strengthening the coordination structures (like district-level CP committees which bring together different service providers in the district) is one way to do this. In Somaliland we have worked very closely with the Berbera local government for several years. Based on the lessons learnt, the engagement with the Hargeisa local government and collaboration with both the leadership

and the established Hargeisa Municipality Child Protection Unit improved in 2023 substantially. In a recent evaluation of the social welfare workforce, we found out that the social workers have established a close and trusting cooperation with voluntary CP committees in the communities. Without them, many cases would remain hidden and unreported.

The systems-strengthening approach also means collaborating closely with other NGOs and CSOs, local governments and the ministries that are supporting and responsible for the CP sector in the target countries. Our work needs to build on an analysis of what is already in place and we need to identify weaknesses and gaps; thereafter, we need to prepare a concrete plan for improving the system by prioritising what we can do best. While the government should always, if possible, be in the driving seat, many actors are needed. Therefore, we and our partners are also actively participating in national- and local-level coordination groups and task forces in both development and humanitarian contexts.

Key thematic learnings on CP

In 2023, the Save the Children's global Parenting without Violence Common Approach was revised and renamed the Safe Families Common Approach. The revision and renaming were completed through an extensive consultation process, and sessions guidance for caregivers and children were revised by incorporating lessons learned from implementing countries. The new name better describes the approach as a universal parenting programme and also better reflects the important role of children and the children's sessions, which are fundamental aspects of this approach. SCF senior technical advisors actively supported the revision process and then built the capacity of the country offices' staff in applying it.

3.4. Safety Nets and Resilient Families: Child-Sensitive Social Protection

Outcome 1: Children and families' access to services has improved

During 2023, SCF worked closely with local and national governments across our CSSP programme in Asia

and Africa in order to support people in accessing social protection programmes by institutionalising inclusive, transparent and accountable approaches.

In Nepal, 30 wards (the lowest unit of local government) replicated a mapping exercise introduced by Save the Children as a means to identify all the people that are eligible for any of the social security allowances provided by the Government of Nepal. The mapping is undertaken on a neighbourhood basis during which the ward members collect information on people that match the eligibility criteria of any of the programmes. In addition to the mapping, the wards in the project area also implemented a total of 65 social protection camps that were set up to support people to access the Child Grant and the Disability Grant. These interventions resulted in a total of 12,875 people being supported to access social protection benefits during 2023.

In India a total of 32 local governments (Panchayats) in the districts of the State of Rajasthan have now adopted the Panchayat Management Information System, developed by Save the Children, which is based on software containing information on who is receiving various social



In Nepal, limited knowledge and administrative complexities are barriers to accessing social protection benefits and services. Eight-year-old Dhiraj was born with a physical disability, leaving him requiring ongoing support from other family members. Dhiraj's mother, Devi, told us, "I was not aware that he was eligible for the disability allowance until recently. During that time, the CSSP project team approached us and provided us with information about the process and required documents.". Photo: Chandan Kumar Shah/Save the Children

Program	Disaggregation	Baseline 2021	Additional access in 2022	Cumulative access 2022	Additional access in 2023	Cumulative access 2023
Child Grant	Girls	112,304	625	112,929	2983	115,912
	Boys	124,360	731	125,091	4164	129,255
Total		236,664	1356	238,020	7147	245,167
Disability allowance	Girls	858	5	863	83	946
	Boys	1329	8	1337	58	1395
	Women	4844	2	4846	283	5129
	Men	6091	8	6099	305	6404
Total		13,122	23	13,145	729	13,874
Senior citizen allowance	Women	50,551	9	50,560	2151	52,711
	Men	45,066	29	45,095	2329	47,424
Total		95,617	38	95,655	4480	100,135
Widow's / single woman's allowance	Women	36,023	36	36,059	515	36,574
Total		36,023	36	36,059	515	36,574
Allowance for people from an ethnic/endangered community	Girls	15	0	15	0	15
	Boys	22	0	22	0	22
	Women	179	0	179	1	180
	Men	191	0	191	3	194
Total		407	0	407	4	411
Grand total		381,833	1453	383,286	12,875	396,161

Table 1: Access to social protection / social security in Nepal 2021–2023.

protection programmes and on who is eligible for these programmes but not yet accessing them. The Panchayat Management Information System supports the local government in identifying who has been missed out and hence should be prompted to apply for an entitlement, such as that gained from the caregiver social protection scheme (Palanhar, Yojna), a widow's pension or a scheme for construction workers. Discussions with the District Government has indicated their interest in replicating the Panchayat Management Information System in additional areas of the district.

In the Philippines 31 local governments (Barangays) in the Visayas have adopted, through a resolution, the Barangay Social Protection and Related Initiatives approach developed by Save the Children as a way of increasing access to social protection and related programmes. Based on this model, the elected representatives of Barangay divide responsibilities between themselves and then support people in accessing programmes (such as the crop insurance programme, the agricultural inputs programme, the disability allowance, the solo parent programme and education-related benefits). The focus of the SCF-supported project is to identify the number of people who match the government criteria for various programmes in the project area and, subsequently, bring the consolidated data in front of the government, together with local CSOs, in order to demonstrate the discrepancies in the social protection programmes and negotiate for a cash transfer that can de facto support vulnerable people's livelihoods.

In Zambia access to social protection programmes and related services in the two project districts of the Copperbelt Province – Luwinyama and Kalulushi – was improved through establishing and strengthening of transparency and accountability measures in 2023. The administration of social accountability tools – viz., community score cards and public hearings – has facilitated bringing together the Social Welfare department (responsible for implementing the national SCTs) and the Health, Education and Community Development departments, as well as bringing together community members, including children. This has contributed to an increase in the number of SCT beneficiaries to 75–80% of those eligible to social protection schemes across different project locations. In addition to improved access to SCT, the administration of community score cards has also resulted in enhanced and active participation of the communities in regard to the monitoring of basic services, leading to the distribution of over 280 desks for children at primary schools. In addition, the community members raised the issue of the suspension of the school feeding programme

since November 2022, especially given that the government had allocated ZMW 30 million for the school feeding initiative in the 2023 national budget. Also, households have been supported in accessing schemes offered by the government, such as grants and loans, and the institutionalisation of public expenditure tracking surveys with SCT beneficiaries is also being undertaken. Elected officials and stakeholders at national and local level are being involved in the transparency and accountability promotion process as a strategic move in order to have them buy in, in order to make this a statutory process.

Social Protection Scheme in Zambia	Disaggregation	Cumulative access in 2022	Additional access in 2023	Cumulative access in 2023
Social Cash Transfer	Male	240	300	540
	Female	751	424	1175
Keeping Girls in School	Girls	95	20	115
Food Security Pack	Female	75	118	193
	Male	47	75	122
TOTAL		1208	937	2145

Table 2: Access to social protection schemes in Zambia, 2022–2023.

In Cote d'Ivoire, under the aegis of the Regional Directorate of Social Protection and Regional Directorate of National Education and Literacy, a community diagnosis was undertaken with the objective of understanding perceptions of communities on the targeting of localities and households for the national Productive Social Safety Nets programme and to identify possible measures for improving access to it in the project's target localities. The results of the diagnosis were presented under the presidency of the Directorate of Gontougo Prefectural body with the participation of the 20 chiefs of the project's target villages and social service managers. The recommendations from the plenary discussions were used to develop an action plan which constitutes the basis for improvement in the living conditions of beneficiaries of the Productive Social Safety Nets programme in the target localities.

In Somaliland/Somalia there are no government-led social protection schemes that target children, and hence, the SCF-supported project has been piloting a child grant in partnership with the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family of Somaliland (MESAF), where



Asli, a bright and determined nine-year-old girl, is one of the households supported through the CSSP project in Somaliland. Sahra, the mother of Asli, says, “As a mother, I cannot emphasise enough the profound impact of child grants on my family and children. These grants have not only alleviated the financial burden of education but have also opened doors of opportunity and empowerment for my loved ones. Photo: Save the Children

625 IDP and urban poor beneficiary households in the districts of Hargeisa and Berbera are provided with a monthly cash transfer of USD 20 along with focused cash plus interventions. The long-term ambition is that the government would invest its own resources and scale up a child grant of the government at the national level. The focus of the Save the Children transparency and accountability promotion component is therefore on improving the access of poor and vulnerable households to basic services. Some very encouraging results were achieved under this component during the reporting period, such as, the construction of school fences, the extension of classrooms in primary schools, the provisioning of payment for altogether six cleaners and six teachers in the three primary schools of the IDP camps in Hargeisa as well as the installation of streetlights to promote the security of the concerned IDPs.

Outcome 2: Improved child development outcomes and the improved protection of children through the strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children and the community

In order to bolster the impact on children in our CSSP programme, we continued implementing the CSSP parenting programme across all social protection projects in Asia and Africa. A total of 6379 caregivers (of whom 5742 were female and 637 were male) in all countries were trained on the parenting programme through group sessions and home visits. Plans were also initiated on how to sustain the parenting groups beyond the life and funding of the CSSP projects. In order to ascertain whether the parenting programme is having an impact on caregiver behaviour and child development, follow-up assessments were conducted to the baseline in most projects in 2023.

The impact on caregiver engagement

Evidence suggests that there was an improvement in caregiver engagement across the programme as a result of the CSSP parenting intervention. In Nepal, the parenting sessions were delivered in two provinces, Karnali and Madhesh, to 480 caregivers (mostly women) who are recipients of the government Child Grant cash transfer programme. Figure 1 below demonstrates that there was a significant increase in caregiver engagement with children among the beneficiaries of the Save the Children cash plus parenting programme compared with the control groups (families receiving only cash from the Child Grant). The engagement scale measures the intensity of the interactions of the caregiver with the child, including reading books, showing affection and giving praise.



Figure 4: The mean caregiver engagement score in Nepal pre- and post-assessment by study arm, as reported by caregivers.

Furthermore, the same impact was found in Somaliland. Figure 2 below shows the significant increase in caregiver engagement with children among the intervention groups (the recipients of Save the Children cash plus parenting programme) compared with control groups (the recipients of cash alone). In Somaliland these parenting sessions are being delivered in IDP settlements in Hargeisa and in urban settlements in Berbera, covering 625 caregivers (mostly women) and piloted in partnership with the MESAF.

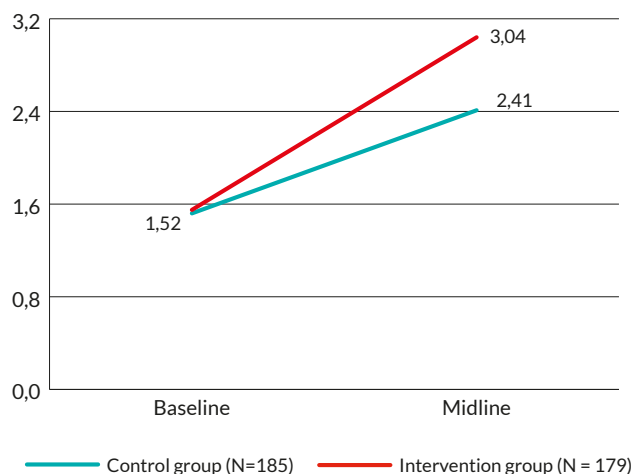


Figure 5: The average positive response regarding change in caregiver engagement in Somaliland, reported by children aged 8-12, baseline to midline.

The impact on the decrease of the maltreatment of children

The parenting programme also resulted in the reduced maltreatment of children, as is evident from the below figures from Nepal and Somaliland/Somalia. Caregiver maltreatment is measured through four subscales (i.e. the extent to which caregivers practice non-violent discipline techniques, resort to psychological aggression, resort to physical violence and neglect their children). In the parenting intervention group in Nepal (Figure 6) and Somaliland (Figure 7), there was substantial improvement in all four domains.

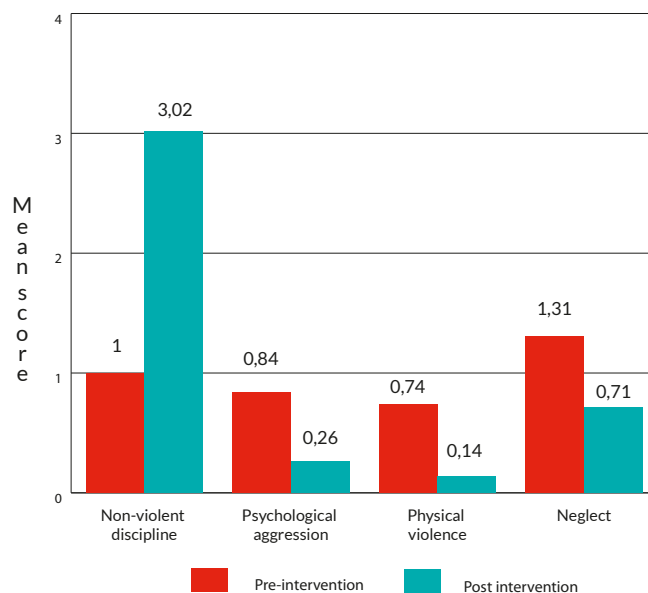


Figure 6. Changes in the frequency of behaviour among caregivers in Nepal, pre- to post-intervention.

The impact of parenting behaviour

The improvements in parenting behaviour were also substantiated through direct observations in the SCF CSSP projects in the three Asian countries. For this, a tool known as *Parenting Interactions with Children: A Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes* was used. This tool is a globally validated checklist of 29 developmentally supportive parenting behaviours that are related to the domains of affection, responsiveness, encouragement and teaching. It is a practical, culturally sensitive, valid and reliable tool for practitioners that shows how parents interact with and support their children’s development. We undertook direct pre- and post-observations of altogether 60 parent-child dyads in India, Nepal and the Philippines; the dyads were observed in their own domestic sphere. We found substantial improvements after the parenting sessions. The figure 8 (next page) shows the findings from the Philippines.

The ICPD training programme for caregivers aims to increase positive and sensitive interaction between parents and children.

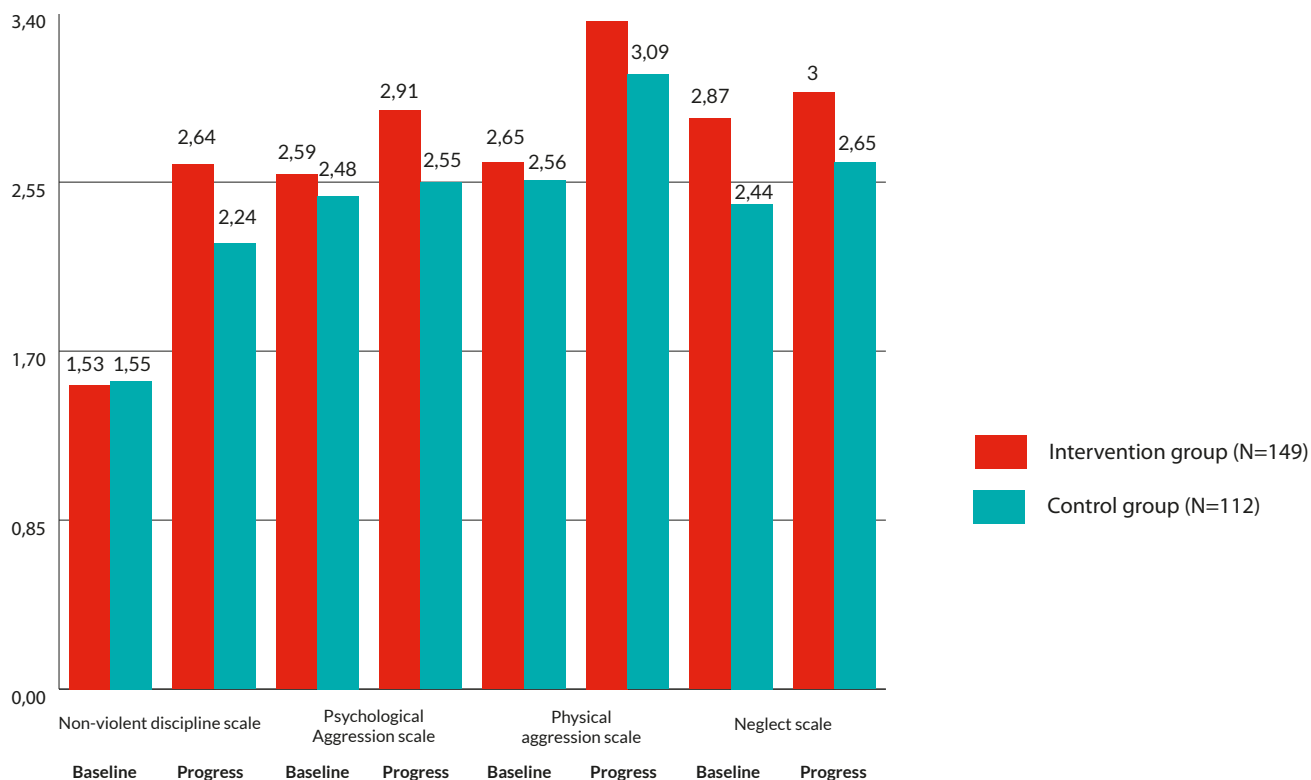


Figure 7. Changes in frequency of behaviour among caregivers in Somaliland, reported by children aged 8–12, baseline to midline.

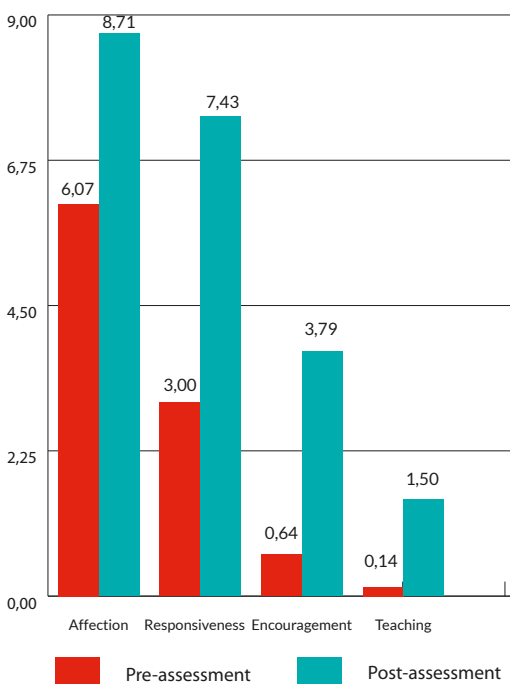


Figure 8. Changes in caregiver behaviour pre- and post-intervention based on the domains of Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes in the Philippines.

The impact on infant and young children feeding practices

As part of the CSSP parenting programme, sensitisation sessions on infant and young children feeding practices were undertaken with caregivers in Somaliland and Nepal where the social protection programme focuses on improving the nutritional status of infants and young children. The results from the follow up assessments in Nepal and Somaliland indicate better overall feeding practices among children in the Save the Children intervention area in comparison to the control area and in relation to issues such as the timeliness of complementary feeding, the minimum dietary diversity and the minimum acceptable diet. In Somaliland, the share of 6-23 months old children in target population who receive a minimum acceptable diet improved from 13% at baseline to 15% at midline stage.

In Nepal, the results of the measurements are shown in Figure 9 below.

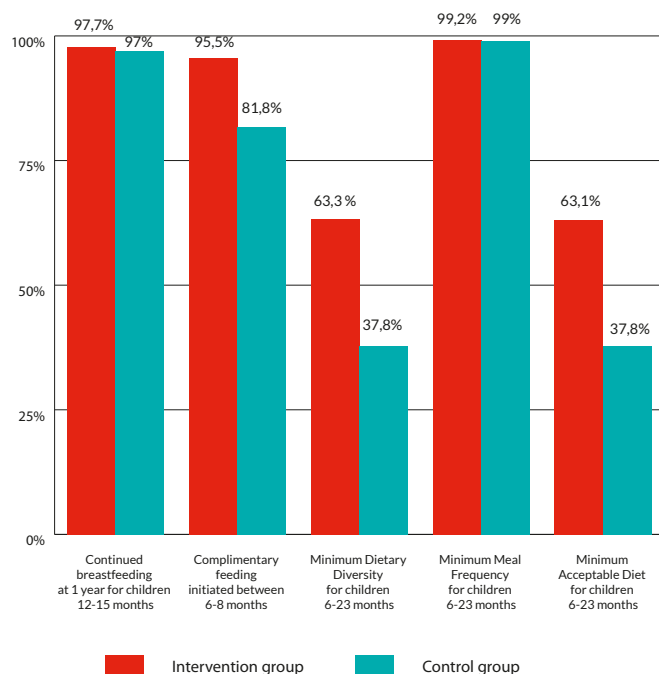


Figure 9: The frequency and proportion of children of the relevant age groups post-intervention who meet the World Health Organization infant and young child feeding indicators in Nepal, presented by study arm.

Outcome 3: The improved child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes

During 2023, SCF pursued efforts in different project countries with governments to replicate or scale up our CSSP parenting programme and assessed to what extent the governments do this or at least sustain the Save the Children-developed CSSP parenting programme.

In the Philippines, the DSWD – which is responsible for the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (4P), – a cash transfer programme for poor households with children aged 0–18 – already signed an agreement with Save the Children in 2022 committing to scaling up the CSSP parenting programme to all 4.4 million households that are recipients of their social protection. This means that the CSSP parenting programme would become a special training course that all parents must attend. Given the massive numbers to be reached, DSWD staff and affiliated field workers throughout the country will need to be trained on the parenting programme. In 2023 Save the Children Philippines trained 277 staff members of the

DSWD on the programme, and in 2024 more than 200 DSWD social workers will be trained. The national scale up is planned to start in November 2024.

In Nepal several local governments are recognising the benefits of the CSSP parenting programme as an important supplement to the Child Grant cash transfer and are consequently investing their own funds in hiring local persons as parenting facilitators. This is a relevant achievement of the SCF-supported project. The endorsement of a national guideline that promotes local governments to provide parenting training to Child Grant beneficiaries has been significant in creating a conducive environment in which to lobby local governments to take up the parenting initiative. In 2023 eight local governments from the CSSP project area endorsed the parenting guideline. In addition, five municipalities allocated EUR 24,827 in total from their internal sources to carry out the Child Grant parenting programme in their area.

In Zambia we have been implementing the CSSP ‘cash plus parenting’ approach in the two project districts of Lufwanyama and Kalulushi. During 2023, a national-level workshop was conducted with the MCDSS on CSSP and the cash plus parenting approach. The MCDSS recognised the positive impact that the CSSP parenting programme can have on outcomes for children and has expressed its interest in exploring scaling up / replicating the approach in other parts of the country as part of the government’s cash plus agenda. The MCDSS requested Save the Children to support them in putting together a concept note on the CSSP cash plus parenting approach in order to build it into a proposal that it is submitting to the US government for possible funding. The concept note elaborated by SCF was later submitted and a request was also made by MCDSS to train provincial staff on CSSP and cash plus approaches. This can be considered as an acknowledgement by the MCDSS of the relevance of the Save the Children approach.

In Cote d’Ivoire, where the CSSP project has been initiated since 2022, we have been working closely with the Regional Directorate of Social Protection to implement the cash plus parenting approach. Based on our experience of successfully engaging government structures in other countries, to the extent to which it is possible, in order to deliver the parenting sessions, we have been training the Regional Directorate of Social Protection staff of social workers and community guides on the CSSP parenting approach. In turn, they are implementing the parenting sessions with caregivers from households accessing the social safety nets programme in the 20 target localities of the project.



Laxmi, a health worker and mother of 13-month-old daughter Melina, was one of the 1856 caregivers reached through the “child grant plus” parenting programme of the CSSP project in Nepal in 2023. Laxmi says, “At the workplace, I talk with visitors about positive parenting. I advise them on how to take good care of children, giving them information about nutritious food, healthcare and so forth so they can provide the support necessary for their children’s overall development.” Photo: Dinesh Kumar Thapa / Save the Children

In Somaliland Save the Children has been a key partner and the most critical ally of the MESAF in working towards the development and approval of the Somaliland Social Protection Policy. Since 2021, Save the Children has been facilitating the development of the policy, both, financially and technically, as well as supporting the MESAF in advocating for the government’s executive branch to introduce members of the cabinet of Somaliland (i.e. the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Justice) to social protection and the draft national social protection policy. The efforts of the last three years finally came to fruition with the Somaliland National Social Protection policy getting approved and signed by the president. The launch of the approved policy was done in early 2024.

In Zambia Save the Children continued to support the review of the National Social Protection Policy in order to raise critical issues and gaps from a child-sensitive and child-rights perspective. Our recommendations were acknowledged by the government’s technical working group who are drafting the new plan. Save the Children was also successful in winning a World Bank assignment

(in consortium with Genesis Analytics) related to the inclusion of cash plus care for vulnerable children affected by COVID-19 within social protection programming in Zambia. The assignment focuses on two work streams: (i) reviewing the existing guidelines on targeting for the SCT programme and (ii) reviewing the existing community case management guidelines and suggesting how it can better cater for children affected by COVID-19 and other adversities.

A fiscal space analysis was undertaken for four countries (Somaliland/Somalia, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia) with the aim of developing an investment case for CSSP in East and Southern Africa. The objectives of the study included:

1. Understanding the benefits of investing in cash plus programmes as a form of CSSP
2. Recognising the benefits / rate of return for financial, educational and health outcomes
3. Assessing the available fiscal space in each priority country
4. Identifying financing options for scaling up CSSP, including identifying the feasibility of securing increased domestic public resources
5. Developing a concise investment case on a country-by-country basis

Country-specific reports were developed, based on which an influencing and advocacy strategy for each country will be developed in 2024 and pursued with the national governments’ donors in the four countries.

Cash and voucher assistance

In terms of budget size, the cash and voucher assistance projects, funded by ECHO and the MFA, formed a relevant share of SCF’s programme in 2023. With these projects, households in Somalia and Sudan were supported in meeting their families’ basic needs. Altogether 2777 households in Sudan and 12,931 households in Somalia benefitted from cash and voucher assistance in 2023. According to need, Save the Children coupled cash transfers with other complementing activities, such as livelihood support, CP services, family budgeting sessions, child feeding, appropriate care practices, prevention, and village saving and loans schemes.

Save the Children, in partnership with our local partner Somali Peace Line and funded by MFA humanitarian grants, has been supporting the most vulnerable drought- and conflict-affected families in IDP camps and host communities in the Abudwak District since 2021. In 2023 a new element was introduced through strengthen-

ing the linkages between CP and cash transfers in order to address the underlying causes of protection risks and to generate evidence on the effectiveness of integrating these two approaches. The project allocated a dedicated caseload of 60 households which received simultaneous case management services and Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance of four monthly transfers of USD 110. Based on the monitoring results, there was a significant improvement in food consumption among these 60 households: by the end of the cash distributions, 97% of the households had an acceptable food consumption score, compared with 20% of households having an acceptable score at the baseline. In comparison, 66% of those beneficiaries who received cash support but no case management services had an acceptable food consumption score.

Save the Children also distributed cash assistance with ECHO funding granted to the Somali Cash Consortium, led by Concern Worldwide. Three rounds of cash assistance per household were distributed by Save the Children in Burhakabo, Galkacayo, Kalabydh, Wajid, Haradhere and Beletweyne in order to address families' food insecurity and to meet their other essential needs. On average, the sample of 16,735 benefitting households reported a 15%pt decrease in their need to borrow money for essential basic living costs and also the need to purchase food on credit dropped from 72% to 66%, on average. Moreover, the average Coping Strategy Index (CSI) score decreased from 14.9 to 12.2 during the timeframe of May–October 2023. This indicates a decrease in the use of negative coping strategies within the families since the higher the score, the more often coping strategies are used. However, during the same period, there was a decrease in the acceptable Food Consumption Score results. Because the Food Consumption Score looks at dietary diversity and foods consumed in the seven days in the households preceding the measurement, the price of food and commodities at the moment of measurement impacts on the findings. With increased inflation in Somalia, food prices for the households will have increased, negatively impacting on their ability to purchase nutritious food.

Overall challenges in improving CSSP in the SCF programme

While we have successfully developed, implemented and established CSSP in several countries, there are quite a few challenges that also exist and need to be addressed. One of the shared challenges that exist across all programme countries is the lack of a well-established and

dedicated work force that can take care of implementing cash plus interventions, such as the parenting activity. The existing community-based structures and/or local government structures that implement the cash plus parenting intervention can result in huge outcomes from the cash plus interventions. Another challenge is how to maintain the quality of the parenting work when scaling up the approach to wider groups of recipients in countries on a large scale. We also face the limited scope of using technology in the communities in which we work; technology can play a noteworthy role in bolstering the impact of cash plus parenting interventions. Finally, the insufficient cash transfer values and sometimes unpredictable and irregular cash transfers limit parents from ensuring basic necessities for children and investing in their nutrition, health, education and overall well-being.

Key strategies towards sustainability in CSSP

The key strategy for implementing CSSP initiatives has always been forging strong partnerships with local, regional and national governments across the project countries. This partnership is important since, in most cases, we are working to strengthen the government's social protection system. Targeted capacity building and strengthening measures – such as training the staff of government line ministries and departments, as well as community-based institutions – form an integral part of this strategy. The CSSP programme also establishes and/or strengthens existing transparency and accountability mechanisms as a regular practice. This further facilitates community members' direct engagement with duty bearers in order to access social protection benefits and basic services on a regular basis.

Key thematic learnings on CSSP

At Save the Children, we understand that cash transfers as a social protection measure alone are not sufficient to sustainably reduce poverty. However, they form a necessary foundation, and when provided alongside access to basic services and complementary interventions (such as parenting sessions), cash transfers can be transformational in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Given the huge interest and acceptance of the SCF-developed CSSP parenting approach that is used by Save the Children globally, various governments and donors, initial steps have been taken to develop it into a Save the Children global Common Approach. The potential cash plus parenting Common Approach was pursued during 2023 with active engagement and discussions with

other Common Approaches (such as the Building Brains Common Approach). Alongside this process, Save the Children as a global movement decided to invest in two research and learning questions in the future:

1. Which influencing strategies, tactics and approaches have been successfully used by Save the Children and partners to influence improvements to social protection programs, strategies and policies that benefit children?

2. Has Save the Children supported cash plus social protection programmes which have included parenting training contributed to improved child development outcomes?

A synthesis of various impact studies and evaluations will be undertaken which will further help inform and strengthen evidence for pursuing the cash plus parenting Common Approach.



When Shivakala was expecting her second child, she participated in the parenting programme of the CSSP project in Nepal. Shivakala says, "I have put the things that I have learned into practice. I prepare nutritious food for my children using the locally available food. I have also gained valuable insights into interacting with my children, understanding their needs and creating a nurturing environment for them." Photo: Bimala Dahal / Save the Children

4. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

4.1. Gender Equality

Save the Children's Gender Equality Policy (2017) continues guiding us and our partners in ensuring that we directly address gender discrimination and promote gender equality. Save the Children believes that all our work should be gender sensitive as a minimum standard by ensuring that the different needs, abilities and opportunities of boys and girls, and men and women are identified, considered and accounted for. However, whenever possible, we aim to be gender transformative by addressing and positively transforming the root cause of gender equality with and for girls and boys, and women and men. We are committed to programming, advocating, partnering and organising (the way we operate) for gender equality.

Save the Children's Gender Equality Marker is our primary assessment guidance and measurement tool; it is used to ensure that all our submitted proposals are either gender sensitive or gender transformative. In 2023, out of 10 new funding proposals developed with support from SCF, 80% reached this key performance indicator of being either gender sensitive or gender transformative.

Our milestone for gender equality in 2023 was set to have carried out a separate analysis in all projects in order to track progress in addressing the root causes of identified gender inequalities and to document and share lessons learnt and best practices on gender mainstreaming and gender transformative strategies. We measured this milestone in 2023 in our internal Mid-term Stocktaking Exercise in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia and Zambia. One out of nine assessed projects' gender equality achievements are 'mostly on track' (in traffic-light scaling, half amber / half green). The CSSP project in the Philippines has reached the even higher level of being 'on track / almost achieved'.

The key strategies that are working on ensuring gender equality mainstreaming are very similar in all countries. These include the capacity building of staff, partners, service providers, community structures, and girls and boys. Awareness raising on gender equality and the prevention of and response to SGBV have also been important, both at the community level and by, for example, including specific gender sessions in parenting programmes and in capacity building trainings. All projects are collecting gender disaggregated data at the activity level in any studies/assessments and also at the indicator level, and they all ensure equal participation and access in activities for girls/boys and women/men. Most of the supported leadership structures (like community committees) have equal membership of women and men.

Gender transformative strategies are also applied: the CSSP projects have improved women's decision-making by including family budgeting sessions in the parenting programme. CP projects in Burkina Faso and Zambia have worked with adolescent girls and boys to challenge traditional gender norms of the masculinity of boys and submissiveness of girls. In the CP projects in Cote d'Ivoire and Sudan we are supporting specific girl-friendly spaces where girls can come together in a safe environment to discuss the problems they face and where female facilitators build girls' capacity to exercise their rights



All projects of Save the Children Finland are required to be gender sensitive and to contain elements of transformative change for gender equality. Photo: Save the Children

and protect themselves. In Burkina Faso, specific training and support have been provided to girls in children's groups to support girls in taking up leadership roles in the groups. In the Philippines, Burkina Faso and Somaliland we have piloted fathers' / male caregivers' parenting groups with promising results so far.

Some of the actions agreed upon to further improve gender equality are to ensure the continuation of the strategies that have been piloted (male caregivers' parenting sessions, adolescents' sessions, SGBV desks at the community level) with improved monitoring and impact evaluation. SGBV cases are still too often hidden and more needs to be done to ensure that they are identified and that the survivors of SGBV are supported professionally by building the capacity of social workers and community structures. Improved collaboration with the Women's Rights Organisation in advocacy and campaigns is also needed.

4.2 Disability Inclusion

Save the Children promotes the inherent dignity, respect of rights, individual autonomy and independence of both adults and children with disabilities. We recognise that a disability is one aspect of identity, and that many individuals with disabilities identify as part of a global disability community. We approach disability inclusion through a human rights and socio-ecological model and understand that ableism and exclusion cause inequalities for both parents and caregivers with disabilities and their children, as well as for children with disabilities and their families.

Save the Children's Global Disability Inclusion policy guides it in programming, advocating, partnering and organising with and for adults and children with disabilities in order that they can enjoy their rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others. The policy highlights key concepts and guiding principles for disability inclusion and the important role that each of us must play in translating the policy into action.

The milestones for measuring the promotion of disability inclusion across our programme countries (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia and Zambia) in 2023 were the following: (i) allocate resources and budgets for capacity building and dedicated human resources in the projects to advance disability inclusion; (ii) implement activities identified and proposed in the

specific projects in order to address barriers/challenges that persons with disabilities face; and (iii) forge partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities to advance our work on disability inclusion.

The Midterm Stocktaking Exercise of all CP and CSSP projects across the programme countries in Asia and Africa brought out that, with respect to the disability inclusion cross-cutting theme, the progress was 'mostly on track'. In Cote d'Ivoire, for example, a classroom for children with disabilities at a special education centre was renovated and a framework for collaboration with the regional association of people with disabilities was created. In Nepal, one of the main focuses of the social protection eligibility mapping and support system is that persons with a disability are mandatory participants in local social protection policy-related discussions. In Somaliland/Somalia, the establishment of disability peer support groups was initiated in the project areas, disability inclusion sessions were implemented with caregivers, SCI staff members were trained in sign language, and active engagement and collaboration was undertaken with disability focus organisations (i.e. Danish Red Cross, SNDF and the MESAF). In Zambia, partner NGOs were trained on disability inclusion, we specifically budgeted for activities on gender and disability inclusion promotion, and we made special efforts to include caregivers and children with disabilities in the parenting and child resilience activities.

4.3. Climate Change Adaptation

Through its largest-ever dialogue on the issues of climate change and inequality, with over 54,500 child participants in 41 countries, Save the Children produced a Generation Hope report in 2022. The report states that the climate emergency is deeply linked to inequality and that around one billion children – almost half of all children worldwide – live in countries extremely exposed to the effects of climate change. Data on the impact of the climate crisis shows that children are the most affected by climate change yet contribute the least to it. Consequently, the climate emergency is a child rights crisis as children are most affected by this emergency because they are at a unique stage in their physical and emotional development, a stage which exposes them to greater risks in disasters and times of hardship.



Marwan, 13, is one of the climate champions supported by Save the Children in Somaliland. Marwan advocates for positive solutions. He strives to influence both his own community and the decision makers of his country. Photo: Save the Children

Save the Children acknowledges that climate change is a cross-cutting issue for its programmatic themes as climate-induced risks – such as floods, droughts and heatwaves – impact on children’s food security, health and nutrition, as well as on their general protection and mental health. Save the Children developed its internal Environmental Sustainability and Social screening tool in 2023 to determine whether its new project activities could have a negative environmental and social impact. This tool has now been mandatory since September 2023, enabling all country offices to plan concrete actions to mitigate identified risks and ensure the mainstreaming of climate change into all their operations and programmes.

The milestone set for 2023 for climate change adaptation in the SCF IP Programme was to ensure that the projects had identified specific activities to address climate change and had an action plan to implement them. The Midterm Stocktaking Exercise showed that this milestone had been partially achieved in some countries, but not in all countries. For example, in 2023, as part of the CSSP project in the Philippines, the Community Clusters for Children, which oversee the identification of children’s needs and how to address them, also discussed environmental issues such as river pollution and waste disposal. As a result, the Community Clusters for Children were able to advocate for the adoption of a waste segregation ordinance and the allocation of a budget for river clean-up. In addition, through their practice of family budgeting and savings, families have been able to set aside savings to be used in the event of contingencies

such as heavy rains and flooding. Therefore, parents are better equipped to meet their children’s needs before, during and after emergencies or disasters induced by climate change.

In Somaliland, the training of Child Rights Groups on climate change was continued, and members took part in awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns related to climate change. In addition, the project also provided mental health and psychosocial support to children affected by climate-induced drought, floods and crop failure. Also, the ‘Safe Families’ Common Approach applied in the CP projects helped parents and children understand better how to cope as a family with periods of stress caused by floods and droughts.

4.4. Civil Society Strengthening and Collaborating with Local Actors

In 2023 we saw civic space being attacked and shrinking globally as never before, and in all SCF programme countries civil society actors continue to operate in an increasingly hostile environment in the shadows of crisis and conflict. In Sudan, the conflict has escalated rapidly and, for example, in Russian Karelia it was no longer possible to continue our long-term partnership with the project partner. All SCF programme countries are now rated as having a civil society space that is obstructed, repressed or even closed (Ukraine) with no encouraging elements of improvement in sight.

Local and national actors, whether related CSOs or local governance actors, are essential in supporting child rights and humanitarian needs in all contexts. Following the adoption of Save the Children’s Localisation Policy in 2020, concrete steps have been taken to enforce our commitment to shifting power and localisation across all our development and humanitarian programming. In 2023 we focused on identifying priorities such as and building a realistic and practical roadmap for implementation from 2023 onwards.

We partnered through formal project-related partnership agreements with 31 diverse local CSOs, as well as

Collaboration with local partners in order to build their capacity and strengthen civil society is an essential element of the localisation policy and programming of Save the Children. Photo: Save the Children

through more strategic partnerships aiming at strengthening broader civil society in our programme countries. At the community level we continued to engage with child and youth groups, women's groups, parents' associations and community committees to build their capacity to advocate for child rights and protect children. We also partnered with international NGOs, corporates and government actors at national, regional and local levels to strengthen their roles as duty bearers in child rights and child well-being.

In 2023 we entered into the second year of the long-term organisational capacity development (OCD) process with five of our strategic partners in Nepal, Zambia and Burkina Faso. The OCD is a partner-led and partner-owned OCD process which initially started back in 2019 in the previous MFA PBS-funding period with our Zambian and Burkina Faso partners to strengthen their capacity as independent actors. OCD refers to a specific approach in which the capacity strengthening is primarily based on a holistic analysis of the recipient organisation and prioritised, assessed weaknesses are addressed in a systematic way over the programme period. The OCD process consists of: (i) assessment, (ii) prioritisation, (iii) planning, (iv) implementation and (v) evaluation. The capacity-strengthening process is owned by the partner and builds on the organisation's priorities. That is, OCD is something the partners implement based on their priorities, not something that Save the Children does for partners. The OCD support is independent of other project-related support and focuses on strengthening an independent and sustainable civil society actor rather than ensuring compliance and our project implementation.

During 2023, several of our partners focused on further improving their organisational policies, systems, tools and procedures in the organisation's best interest and for the future sustainability of these organisations. In Nepal, the Community Development and Advocacy Forum Nepal and Social Protection Civil Society Network conducted an organisational capacity assessment workshop to identify strengths and areas for improvement.



In Burkina Faso, Association Heere Kadi developed an anti-fraud policy, a gender policy and an advocacy strategy and produced a guide to children's activities, with a focus on child-friendly spaces. Coordination Nationale des Associations des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs du Burkina focused, for example, on strengthening its staff's capacity to develop, manage, monitor and evaluate projects and programmes. In Zambia, the Young Women's Christian Association rolled out the organisation's new Child Safeguarding policy and invested in its human resources functions to enhance the effectiveness of human resource management and to support staff members' development and welfare.

One important element of localisation is close collaboration and coordination with relevant national and local governance actors in programme countries. As widely described in the previous chapters, for our thematic approaches and for sustainable development results it is vital to integrate our support with existing public structures and strengthen the capacities of the same in quality work, when needed. The successful example of the birth of the first-ever Social Protection Policy in Somaliland illustrates the impact of SCF's continuous and structured capacity building of ministry staff and coordination with relevant other entities in the country during several years. Similarly, the process of developing the Somaliland Child Act involved several stages, starting in 2011 when Save the Children conducted a Child Rights Situational Analysis in collaboration with the MESAF and culminated in the launch of the act in 2023. Alongside advocating for bringing this act into action, Save the Children continues to provide capacity building to local municipalities related to CP case management.

5. LEARNING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The year 2023 marked the half-way point of our 2022–2025 Global Programme. In order to take stock of how our CSSP and CP projects are progressing towards their outcomes, the internal Midterm Stocktaking Exercise was organised across the CSSP and CP portfolios in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, the Philippines, Somaliland and Zambia. Together with SCI country offices and partners, each project was assessed to find out how well the project is doing in the implementation of its outputs and regarding the cross-cutting themes of gender equality, disability inclusion and climate change adaptation. The stocktaking process looked at the achievements, failures and challenges of the projects and informed SCF, country offices and project partners of the key lessons learned and proposed recommendations for the adjustments needed for the remaining project implementation period. Project-level action plans to address these findings and recommendations were developed with partners for each project and will be followed up at the project level. Based on the project-specific assessments, a reflection workshop was organised focusing on drawing on lessons learned at the programmatic level. A programme-level Action Plan was developed to address the key lessons learned and the adjustment needs that were identified. Implementation of the Action Plan will be followed up regularly by the SCF IP Team.

The SCI Global Evidence and Learning Team and the Live Free from Violence Goal Team selected a SCF-supported CP project in Zambia to pilot the measurement of the effectiveness of gender-transformative elements of the Safe Families Common Approach in order to advance the Research and Learning agenda at both the Zambia level and globally. The purpose is to pilot new supplementary monitoring, evaluation and learning tools for the Safe Families Common Approach, specifically the new supplementary question blocks that aim at measuring the following indicators related to gender attitudes:

- The percentage of male and female caregivers who believe that men should actively participate in child rearing
- The percentage of boys and girls who hold gender-equitable attitudes

This piloting study, a collaboration between the SCI Zambia Country Office and the local partner, the Young Women's Christian Association, started towards the end of 2023 and will be completed in 2024 with co-financing from SCI. Pre-assessment data for seven Safe Families cohorts has been collected, including seven parents'/caregivers' groups and seven children's groups, with each group having around 25 participants. Two of the caregivers' groups are for fathers/male caregivers only. All the groups will run weekly Safe Families sessions for three months in 2024. Thereafter, post-assessment data will be collected, the findings analysed and a report will be produced and shared both in the region and at the global level.

As for accountability, SCI has developed a key performance indicator that tracks how well projects fare in aspects related to accountability. This accountability key performance indicator tracks the projects' performance in terms of the key requirements related to information sharing, participation, and feedback and response. During 2023, SCF-supported projects improved their performance in the accountability key performance indicator: at the start of the year an average of 86% of the projects met with the required criteria for accountability and 93% at the end of the year. We also have a movement-wide Accountability System Review tool in place for assessing how well our systems, procedures and practices support the realisation of accountability in our programming.



All programme parties, including partner staff and local communities, are systematically engaged in processes of learning, accountability and transparency. Photo: Save the Children

6. SUPPORT FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN FUND

SCI runs the global Humanitarian Fund, a global mechanism for ensuring the fast and efficient distribution of flexible funding to humanitarian responses. The HF covers all categories of responses: education, health, food security and livelihoods, including CVA, shelter, non-food items, CP, nutrition, water and sanitation. This enables our global organisation to prioritise early action and preparedness activities and to empower SCI country and field offices to respond to the needs of children, regardless of external funding forces.

Targets for SCI's humanitarian work are set in the annual humanitarian plans. Save the Children members, like SCF, fund the HF based on their appraisal of the expected fundraising income for the year. Flexible funding is then available for urgent and lifesaving humanitarian response needs at any time.

In 2023, the HF received over USD 114.7 million globally, allocating more than USD 145 million to supporting conflict-related responses across the globe. As of December, USD 51 million were allocated for Ukraine, Lithuania, Romania, Georgia, Poland, Türkiye and the North-west Balkans to support the Ukraine crisis and regional refugee responses. Additionally, the HF had allocated USD 9.2 million to the occupied Palestinian territory, Egypt and Lebanon for the Gaza crisis. The HF has also provided vital support to other countries experiencing protracted conflicts, including Syria, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

SCF contributed roughly EUR 4 million to the HF to help the situation of children and families in, for example, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen, Gaza and Somalia. In Ukraine, the HF enabled the implementation of emergency preparedness actions that strengthened the capacity of SCI and its partners' staff and built the capacity of communities to absorb emergency shocks in the country. Funds were also allocated to emergency shelter and protection support for conflict-affected people. In Afghanistan, the HF supported health and nutrition programmes. In Gaza, SCI responded with local partners and distributed food parcels, water and hygiene, and recreational kits within designated United Nations (UN)



In 2023, funds were raised to support the humanitarian work of Save the Children in, for example, the occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Ukraine. Photo: Save the Children

shelters and at household level, reaching over 106,000 people. Psychosocial support sessions were carried out for children in northern Gaza to improve their emotional well-being.

In Yemen flexible funding is helping maintain prepositioned stocks of essential medicines and supplies. In 2023, the Yemen Country Office spent over USD 47,000 on prepositioning medicines in addition to the buffer stocks purchased previously in 2022. Prepositioned stocks ensure that essential and emergency-related medication for children and the community can be accessed as needed and that stocks are available even with the erratic supply chain system of the country. This enables the team to implement health programmes continuously and minimises the impact of the slow importation of stocks into the country due to restrictions and access issues.

In Somalia, the Country Office utilised the HF's flexibility for budget adaptation by using the funding as seed funding to attract larger institutional donor investment. The HF provided Anticipatory Action seed funding to prepare for the impact of El Niño and to work with communities on various components of anticipatory action, through which Save the Children has been able to act in multiple crisis fast, ensuring nutritional and medical supplies, for example.

7. CHILD RIGHTS AND BUSINESS, CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS, COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

Child rights and business principles and corporate partnerships

Corporates continued supporting SCF's work in humanitarian crises and our programmatic work (e.g. in health and nutrition, and education programmes in Africa, Asia and in the war-affected Ukraine). Globally oriented foundations, including the Greta Maria Lindblom Foundation and the Red Nose Day Foundation, supported our work in Africa, especially in conflict-torn Sudan.

The work to promote child rights in the business setting, based on Children's Rights and Business Principles continued with the UN Global Compact Finland and UNICEF. A joint event for corporates on the benefits of the principles as well as on the upcoming EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive's estimated impact, was organised during Child Rights Week in November. SCF published a survey with recommendations; with topics including women's rights and child rights, as well as recommendations on family friendliness in the textile production in Bangladesh for S-Group (the largest Finnish retailing cooperative) in cooperation with the research company Work Ahead.

In addition, child rights in business were promoted jointly with umbrella organizations Fingo and Finnish Business and Society and in ministerial meetings and events for corporates and CSOs, organised by various ministries.

Advocacy

The advocacy objectives for the SCF International Programme in 2023 were initially focused on promoting the role of social protection in development policy in order to reduce inequalities caused by poverty and also focused on CP in humanitarian situations and conflicts. The right to education was a cross-cutting theme in relation to both goals: access to school in crisis situations strengthens the CP and social protection in developing countries supports the basic needs of the children and their families, often enabling them to attend school. These topics were highlighted as part of SCF programming in our advocacy messages. The third focus area for advocacy

activities was Finland's development co-operation funding. In addition to these, climate change adaptation as a cross-cutting theme was also an area where we worked together in internal and external networks and working groups. Building up further expertise in regard to children and armed conflicts (CAAC) was done through previously established networks and working groups both internally and externally. The external CAAC Network consists of a group of Finnish development NGOs with SCF in the leading role. National-level CAAC efforts remain important, especially regarding Finland's changed international position as a NATO member country. With the CAAC Network we organised an event that focused on the psychosocial well-being of children in conflict areas. In addition to the war in Ukraine, among other discussed topics were country-specific violations of child rights and broader human rights in Sudan. Since October, key advocacy messages of SCI related to the situation of children within the conflict in Gaza have been delivered for the Finnish Government and through public communication.

During the first half of 2023 the advocacy efforts were largely focused on the parliamentary elections in Finland. SCF raised child rights issues in an integrated manner, combining the messages of child rights concerns in developing and domestic contexts. After the elections, SCF provided key advocacy messages related to official development aid funding levels for the coalition government programming. SCF made a public appeal to citizens and also provided this appeal to the new Minister of Development. We worked very closely with other development NGOs to tackle the public spending cuts to official development aid.

Throughout the new political regime, SCF has established connections with the Cabinet of the Minister of Development and different parliamentary groups. We have delivered written inputs for the upcoming Foreign Trade and Development Policy, currently still in the process of being drafted. SCF also took part in a hearing organised by the MFA prior to the UN Human Rights Council's session, delivering our message on the issues of child rights violations in armed conflicts.

Communications

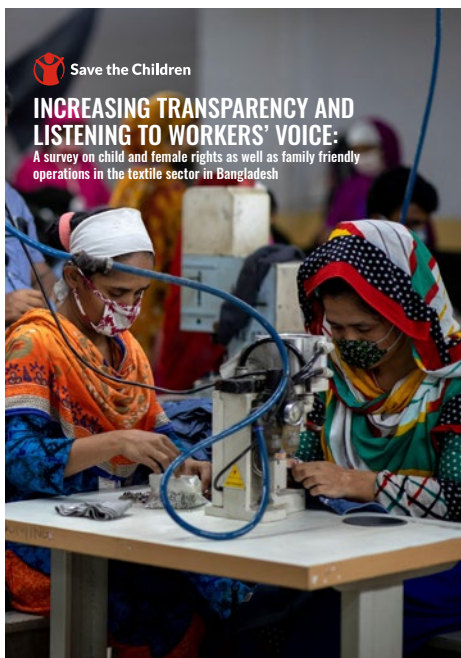
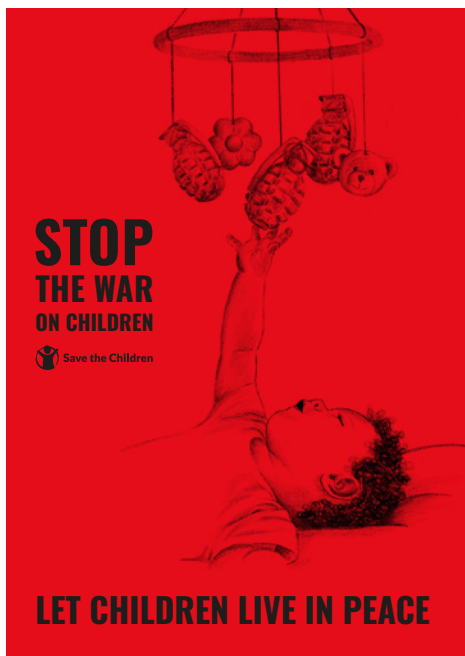
The prioritised themes in SCF communication work in 2023 were children in crises, child poverty, CP as well as climate and child rights.

Through media work, the organisation reached a wide audience. A total of 1112 news items related to the international activities of Save the Children were published. Media visibility was at the second highest level on record, with a 15% growth in total media visibility from the previous year.

All the communications channels of the organisation were utilised for disseminating information about programme progress, results and impact. SCF had a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, YouTube and TikTok. Our focus has been on developing new ways to reach and engage audiences, and ways to refine the focus of our media strategy from being on

quantity to being on quality. We have also enhanced our social media analytics tools and reporting capabilities. Following the social media strategy, the focus was on content that was informative but also richly emotive, engaging and visually compelling. Throughout the year, 802 social media posts on our international programmes and humanitarian work were disseminated. The content cumulated as many as 4,096,735 impressions across all social media platforms. The impression engagement rate was 2.79%, which implies that our audience found our content engaging and compelling.

In global education, collaboration continued with the training institutions of teachers and journalists through the provision of information resources and conducting guest lectures. SCF also participated in selected public events throughout the year.



The flagship report of the global Save the Children "Stop the War on Children" campaign, and others, gained wide media coverage.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

Save the Children has globally established a set of risk management policies, procedures and tools and assigned staff to put the policies into effect. There are 18 principal risk areas which must be included in all Country Office Plans and Global Risk Management Plans. These principal risks areas include, for example, Quality Programme Design, Programme Delivery, Harming Children and Adults, Safety and Security, Harassment and Bullying, People (failure to recruit, retain, support and manage staff), Fraud and Data (loss or misuse of data), Compliance, Financial Sustainability, and Delivery and Governance. In addition, 'not speaking out' – referring to Save the Children's failure to systematically speak out and influence long-term change for children, further affecting children's rights, partner relations and Save the Children's legitimacy or brand – was also identified as a principal risk. For each project, potential risks are assessed before the decision is made for proposal development, and later, for every project an award risk assessment is delivered in order to identify the challenges that could cause Save the Children to fail in its obligations and how they are managed.

In addition to the above standard risk management processes, in high-risk contexts – such as Ukraine, Burkina Faso, Sudan and Somalia – Save the Children has applied an additional risk assessment and mitigation tool, the Awards Aid Diversion Risk Assessment tool. This tool helps to assess and mitigate the potential risks associated with SCF resources being diverted to terrorists or other sanctioned entities.

During 2023 one of the risks identified in the annual risk management plan that was then realised was the risk of 'change in the political environment'. This happened in Afghanistan as the de facto authorities put a ban on female workers. This affected the implementation of the MFA-funded humanitarian project. However, later in 2024 the Afghanistan Country Office was able to continue programmes by adapting operations and by making contingency plans as mitigation measures. Also, the project in Russian Karelia was put on hold due to the EU-level sanctions. The changes in political environment are difficult to mitigate, but to some extent we can adapt to the changes.

One of the main realised risks during 2023 was definitely the unstable security situation in Sudan. SCF decided not to start the planned MFA PBS-funded CSSP project. The EU-funded projects in Sudan needed to be rapidly adapted to the conflict situation and, with much appreciated flexibility from the donors, we were able to adapt the approaches through reprogramming them into accessible locations with an increased number of IDPs and we could continue implementation. Save the Children was not able to resume operations in West Darfur and Khartoum due to the extremely volatile situation and ongoing fighting between warring parties. However, in Khartoum, Save the Children launched implementation via a local-community medical response team in order to provide basic communal health services in three health facilities in Omdurman and Khartoum and reached 5000 individuals with life-saving support. Due to the amount of the funding in Sudan and the high risks, the state of the project implementation is regularly followed by the SCF Senior Management Team and Board.

The risk regarding natural hazards was realised in Nepal as an earthquake hampered the CSSP project activities implemented in the Jajarkot District, but these were revived in January 2024. SCF also applied for and received ECHO funding in order to respond to the emergency for families in the same area.

The risk regarding the shrinking space of civil society due to legislation was one of the risks realised in India in 2023. The licenses for Indian NGOs to receive foreign funds is governed by the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. In 2023, this license was not renewed for Save the Children India, along with several other international non-governmental organisations, and resulted in Save the Children India becoming unable to accept foreign contributions after July. SCF's work in India was put on hold. Due to the sound legal and financial position of Save the Children India, they continue to be eligible for local donations, however. The advocacy work on the situation related to foreign funding is still ongoing in India. During 2023, SCF amended its risk management matrix with several internal risk factors, such as those related to financial, institutional, technical, environmental and cultural sustainability, and good governance. The risk management planning will be further continued in 2024.

9. INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN 2023

In 2023 SCF's International Programme accounted for 45% of the total institutional income of the whole of SCF, with a variety of funding sources. The EU continued being the biggest institutional donor, donating 64% (EUR 11.5 million) of the total institutional donor income. Out of this, 10% was development funding from DG INTPA and 54% was humanitarian funds from ECHO. The funding from the MFA contributed to 31% of the total donor volume (EUR 5.6 million) with long-term programme funding, humanitarian funds and support to the co-funding of EU awards. The two other institutional donors, UNICEF and GIZ, accounted for 4% of the total institutional funding.

Institutional income for SCF international work by funding source, in euros

Funding source	Income	Share (%)
EU ECHO	9,724,813	54%
EU DG INTPA	1,746,750	10%
MFA programme-based support	3,904,320	22%
MFA humanitarian funding	1,366,859	8%
MFA support for the co-funding of EU awards	356,207	2%
UNICEF	611,647	3%
GIZ (Germany)	174,732	1%
Other income from SCI	75,831	0%
Total	17,961,159	100%

Out of the total institutional funding volume for SCF's International Programme, approximately 66% was focused on humanitarian aid. The growth of the share of humanitarian aid in recent years correlates with the changes in the political and environmental context in the countries where SCF works. Many countries have faced a dramatic decrease in both civic space and human rights and an increase of poverty and armed conflicts, accelerated by the climate change and even leading to the outbreak of war in the case of Sudan.

In addition to our secured funding for 2023 and ongoing partnerships with the key donors (such as the EU and the MFA), we have been working closely with the other Save

the Children member offices, as well as with the country offices, in order to engage more intensively with the development banks. There is increasing interest in our thematic expertise from some of the development banks. In 2023, SCF particularly engaged in social protection with the World Bank in Nepal and in Zambia and also explored new partnerships with the African Development Bank and the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau in Burkina Faso.

In 2023, the MFA PBS funding was channelled to six countries: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Somaliland, Zambia, Nepal and the Philippines. Additionally, SCF received humanitarian funding from the MFA for Ukraine and Somalia. The MFA provided strategically important support to our EU awards' co-funding requirements, covering 50% of co-funding needs.

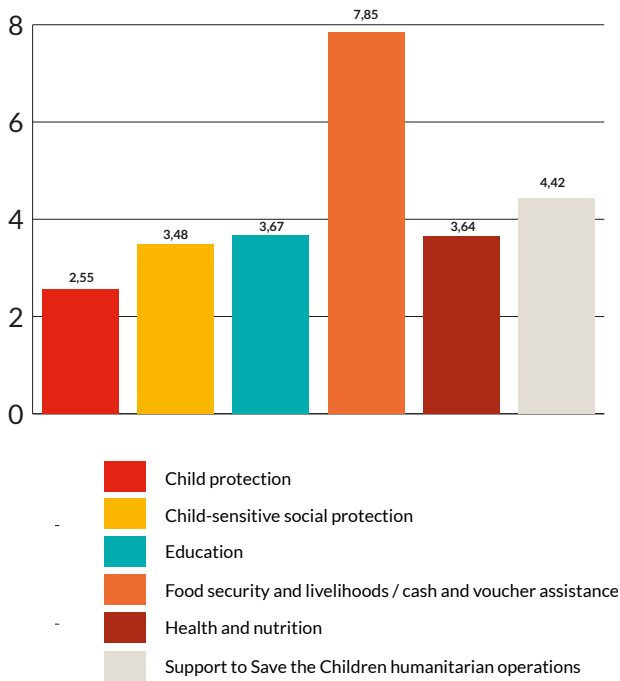
At the beginning of the year, we started our EUR 30 million education project in Sudan, funded by DG INTPA. Three months later the war broke out and posed major challenges to the implementation of a development cooperation project requiring adaptability and flexibility from the donor to ensure continued support for children with increased needs in this fragile context. In addition, during 2023 we secured close to EUR 9 million fundings from ECHO to support humanitarian life-saving interventions in Sudan, a cash assistance project in Somalia and the earthquake response in Nepal.

In 2023 we secured two new awards from UNICEF, totaling close to EUR 10 million. In addition to ongoing projects in Burkina Faso, UNICEF funding for youth employability in Cote d'Ivoire and a major award for the existing cash consortium in Somalia were initiated. We also continued supporting youth employability with GIZ funding in Cote d'Ivoire.

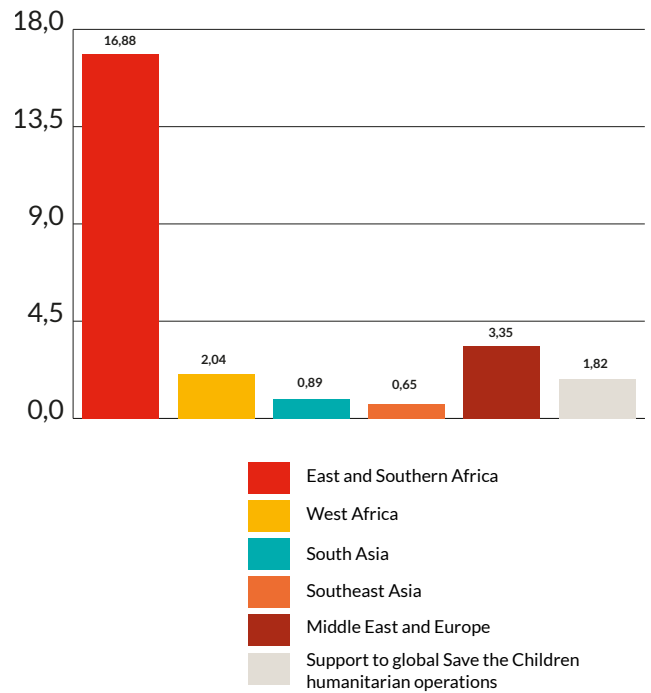


The European Union is one of the main institutional partners and funding sources of Save the Children Finland. The photo shows an EU-supported learning centre in Sudan. Photo: Max Holm / Save the Children

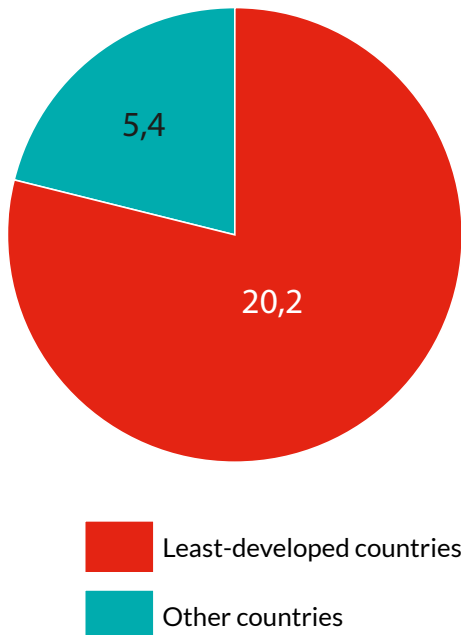
Expenditure by programme theme, in million euros (total 25,611,873)



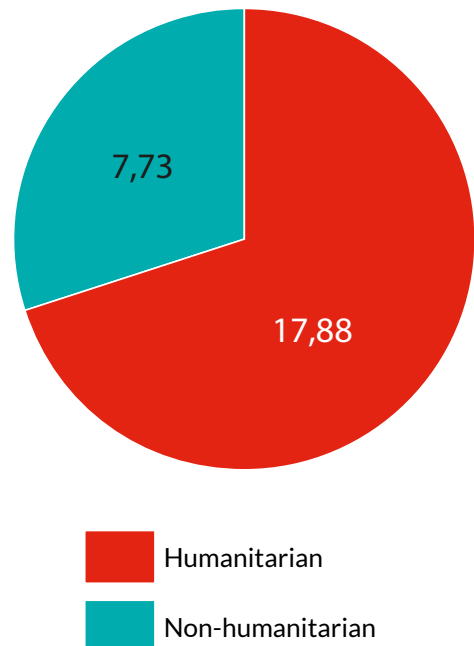
Expenditure by region, in million euros (total 25,611,873)



Expenditure by the development status of countries, in million euros (total 25, 611, 873 euros)



Expenditures by operational context, in million euros (total 25, 611, 873 euros)





Save the Children is the world's leading independent organisation for children.

OUR VISION

is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

OUR MISSION

is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

www.savethechildren.fi
info@savethechildren.fi

