

WAR CHILD IS
INCREASINGLY
FOSTERING AN
ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT
OF THE SOCIAL
ENVIRONMENT
OF CHILDREN,
INCLUDING PARENTS,
CARE GIVERS AND
TEACHERS.

Summary

Millions of children worldwide continue to experience the horrific consequences of war. They are forced to flee, have lost their parents or are even forced to fight as child soldiers. War Child finds this unacceptable and helps these children by investing in a peaceful future for them. War Child's goal is to empower these children via:

- Psychosocial programs in which creativity and sport are used to strengthen children's psychological and social development as well as their wellbeing;
- Creative and sports programs bringing together children driven apart by war in order to contribute to a peaceful society;
- Activities creating social support and generating assistance for the problems faced by children in war-affected areas.

Programs

In 2008 War Child reached 865,000 children and young people as well as 212,000 adults (parents, caretakers, teacher and social workers) in 13 countries. € 8.6 Million was spent on project activities of which € 6.4 million went to self implemented programs and € 2.2 million to partner organisations.

In 2008 War Child dedicated itself to the expansion of existing programs and the initiation of new ones. The number of activities carried out climbed 66% compared to last year, principally the number of creative and competitive (sport) workshops/life skills courses, counselling sessions, awareness raising events and educational activities. This shows that in addition to providing support to children and young people, War Child is increasingly fostering an active engagement of the social environment of children, including parents, care givers and teachers. By growing largely within existing country programs, War Child is working more efficiently and costs have increased relatively less than the number of activities.

Other program developments

- More intensive and sustained support: In line with the strategy, programs have become more intensive and provide sustained support, the goal being to improve children's situation permanently;
- Child rights: War Child's programs are now designed with more attention to the children's rights, as defined by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- More participation: Children and young people have asked that more attention be given to enabling them to make decision over events affecting their lives, for example, through TV-programs made by children in Afghanistan, theatrical performances in Colombia and child parliaments in Uganda;
- Education: War Child works to improve educational methods matching the needs of children and young people. War Child offers accelerated "catch-up programs" and vocational training to children who did not receive education on account of war.

War Child countries

War Child began operating in two new countries in 2008: Burundi and Lebanon. War Child has supported HealthNet TPO's work in Burundi since August 2008 expanding their psychosocial support for children and getting parents, teachers and local authorities involved in responding to the problems children face. Thanks to life skills sessions in schools, children are now able to reduce the psychological impact of war. They also receive individual coaching from a social worker and participate in recreational activities such as sports, music and dance. In Lebanon War Child supports two local partner organisations which reach out to Palestinian and Lebanese children with recreational and psychosocial activities (painting, acting, singing and dancing). Children from various backgrounds have formed 'peace clubs' in which they improve relations between their groups through cooperation.

In 2008 other programs continued in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Colombia, DR Congo, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, the Netherlands and Uganda and a one-time donation was made to former partners in Georgia.

Some highlights include:

Despite the decreasing security situation in Afghanistan children continue to want to learn, participate and have a 'normal' childhood. War Child works hard to make schools more child friendly so that corporal punishment is relegated to the past, girls and boys receive the same education, and more time is devoted to sport and play.

The program in Colombia has grown enormously in terms of the number of children involved, the number of activities organised, the number of employees and the budget. The program's content has also grown through, for example, the implementation of the I DEAL approach. I DEAL permits children to find solutions to their own issues through a workshop cycle reinforcing their own decision making and attitude development. One example of this is former child soldiers becoming less susceptible to recruitment by armed groups through the mutual support and life skills they develop as a result of the I DEAL program. Four schools in the Putumayo province have adapted their teaching program to I DEAL to make it more child oriented and structured.

In the Uganda 'ICT for peace' project, ICT and media are harnessed to improve children's access to education. During 2008 centres were opened where children can work with computers and the internet while 'ICT for peace' teams provided training to young people in both the centres and surrounding communities. In addition the project had a number of other unintended positive effects including young people rediscovering their desire to go to school. And because they had participated in meaningful activities, violence, crime and alcohol abuse all declined.

Personnel and organisation

To promote sustainability in War Child's project countries, War Child worked as much as possible with local groups and organisations. The number of local project staff employees increased by 46 to 137 in 2008. This is the result of the planned enlargement, increasing spending and active recruitment of local people in order to make programs more sustainable. In contrast to the 27 expats, 309 local staff members (including support staff) work for War Child. At head office more interns and office volunteers are employed on a more diverse range of assignments than previously. Seven new volunteer spokespeople accommodate the growing need for presentations in the Netherlands on War Child's work.

Board and management

In 2008 there were no changes to the board. Evert Greup's term was extended by three years to 2011. The expiring terms of Maarten van Dijk and Alexander van Meerwijk combine with the transition to the board of trustees in 2009 and thus they will not stand down before that date. Keeping this transition in mind, War Child will not add any new board members in the foreseeable future. The organisation's current management consists of the general director Mark Vogt who leads the executive organisation and the director of external affairs Willemijn Verloop.

Risk management

In 2008 War Child anticipated the following risks:

- Financial risks: the risk of fluctuating income is managed by spreading income sources, attracting structural donors, having a General Reserve, an Earmarked Reserve and a Continuity Reserve and by strict and cautious treasury management. The risk on fraud within the organisation and with partner organisations is reduced by the training of staff and by maintaining clear guidelines for financial administration, reporting and continuous monitoring;
- Security risks are reduced by training staff and implementing a strict security policy based on the United Nation's security system;
- Reputational risks are controlled through War Child's Child Protection policies and its code of conduct trainings. The ethical and honest approach to communications maintains the trust of donors, companies and other supporters. In addition, War Child regularly invites various media to visit its projects.

Fundraising and communications

In 2008 War Child was able to bring the issues of children in conflict areas, including child soldiers, to the attention of the public via a large number of public events. These were:

- In May the Four Freedoms Award for 2008 was awarded to War Child. This prestigious prize is given to people or organisations dedicating themselves to Franklin Roosevelt's four freedoms. War Child's founder Willemijn Verloop accepted the 'Freedom from Fear' Award on behalf of the entire organisation.

- 15,000 shoes with a small wish list attached formed the décor on the Dam for the kickoff of War Child's 'One present less - one more friend' campaign. This campaign called upon all Dutch people to give one less present during the holidays and use the money instead to become a Friend of War Child.
- December saw the royal premiere of the touching film 'Wit Licht' in the presence of Princess Maxima, Crown Prince Willem-Alexander and a number of Government Ministers. War Child was involved in the development of this film from the beginning, although the organisation did not contribute financially to it. War Child assisted with the film's content, ensuring that the story was as authentic as possible.

Fundraising

In 2008 expanding support was an important goal. In addition, growing support in the Netherlands encouraged War Child to continue its work in the field. Transparency, trustworthiness, authenticity and accessibility characterize War Child's fundraising and communications. In 2008 War Child generated € 13,770,460 in income, an increase of 33% over 2007. The percentage of this sum dedicated to fundraising costs was about 13% well under the norm of 25% set by the Dutch Central Office for Fundraising.

Finances

War Child received a significant contribution of € 1.6 million from the National Postal Code Lottery, of which 1 million was fixed, the remainder was an extra gift for a special project in Uganda. Governmental and institutional sources provided War Child with € 3.1 million, up 27% compared to 2007. This is the result of an intensive campaign among donors by War Child's field offices and head office. In 2008 War Child received its first grant from the European Union.

In 2008 total expenditures amounted to € 12,526,570, an increase of 34% over 2007. These expenses increased by 36% compared to 2007 and are included in the budget (€ 8.6 million). The 'Preparation & Coordination' expenses for assistance were 5% less than estimated at € 0.9 million. 'Communication & Awareness raising' expenses were € 0.8 million.

Expenses for 'obtaining government grants' were 23% lower than estimated and equal to that spent in 2007. War Child's expenses for 'Management & Administration' fell 9% under budget. The budget did take into consideration a slight increase in employees. Such an increase did take place, but was accomplished with volunteers rather than paid staff.

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DECEMBER SAW
THE ROYAL PREMIERE
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PRINCESS MAXIMA
AND CROWN PRINCE
WILLEM-ALEXANDER.

Forecast

War Child's dedication to a peaceful future for children in (post-)conflict areas will continue undiminished in 2009. The recently established programs in Burundi and Lebanon will be expanded, the Middle East program will expand to Gaza. At the beginning of 2009 a new five-year strategy plan for the organisation will be launched, becoming operational in 2010. Part of this plan includes the presentation of War Child's revised mission, vision and strategic objectives.

Investment in the field must grow in order to reach more children, while main office costs must continue to decline. In order to work even more efficiently and effectively the Marketing, Fundraising and Communication department will be reformed. War Child will also pursue further growth in own fundraising, taking the current financial crisis into account.