



TOGETHER

There are thousands of Christians across the world responding to the needs of children at risk and many of these people are being led to work together. The needs of children at risk will always be too great for any one person or group to tackle alone, and as projects and ministries connect and partner we are beginning to see the fulfilment of Jesus' profound prayer in John 17:

"I pray also for those who will believe in me through [the disciples'] message ... I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."
John 17 v 20 -23

Yet Jesus didn't want unity simply for its own sake: he calls for unity *so that* the world can know the love and power of God. In the same way we believe that working together is not something we do just because it makes the work easier or because it seems the right thing to do. We want to work together *so that* more children have a better chance of becoming all that God intends for them to be.

This booklet looks at what unity can help to accomplish across seven major spheres of influence in society. These areas shape the thoughts and values of different cultures in different ways, and this can have both good and bad effects on children. Each section gives examples of issues children are facing and shows how Christians working in unity really can make a difference. We hope their stories will inspire and guide your prayers.

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Although this booklet has been produced for the 2011 World Weekend of Prayer, it is available as a general resource to motivate and lead prayers for children at risk all year round. All the stories are real examples from Viva's work or the work of our partners around the world, although names have been changed for child protection purposes. All Bible verses are taken from the New International Version.

Family and Education

'Education is the very best anti-poverty strategy, the best economic development programme. There is simply no better means to empower the powerless, and to put their future directly in their own hands.'

Two of the biggest areas of influence in a child's life today are their own family experience and their educational opportunities. Both of these areas are fraught with challenges: globally there would appear to be more family break-downs than at any other time in history, and although the number of children attending primary school is increasing across the developing world, the rate of that growth is slow.

Poverty is one of the largest factors influencing family life and education. Many families are separated because one parent needs to find paid work, often far away from home. Also when parents are struggling to provide for their families they can end up turning to alcohol or drugs to escape the pressure, with the potential knock on effect of divorce and family separation. Poverty also affects children's likelihood of receiving an education, as many children are unable to afford the basic requirements for school attendance.

Did you know?

² David Green, director of the Institute for the Study of Civil Society, comments: *"If you take almost any measure - how well children do in school, whether they turn to crime, whether they commit suicide, etc - it's better to have two parents."*

The 2011 theme for International Day of Families endorsed by the United Nations is 'Confronting Family Poverty'

³Family breakdown not only imposes a huge cost on society in terms of human unhappiness, but also in financial terms - it costs an estimated £20 billion to repair the damage caused by family breakdown. UK

⁴In South Asia 35 million primary school-age children are out of school, and in sub-Saharan Africa it is 46 million.

Ephesians 6 v 4

'Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.'

¹ UN general assembly special session on children 10 May 2002

²<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6542031.stm>

³ <http://www.familylaw.co.uk/articles/CentreSocialJustice07122010-5423>

⁴ <http://www.childinfo.org/education.html>

Sri Lanka

Sharma was born in Jaffna, Northern Sri Lanka, in the middle of the civil war. Her parents had been too afraid to move outside of their own village compound and so had postponed registering her birth. That was twelve years ago. Still with no birth certificate and unsure of her exact date of birth she is unable to register to attend school. Sharma's parents did not survive the war and so she ended up in a refugee camp with no one and nothing to identify her.

Thanks to a sympathetic family who befriended her she found a place to stay in the Palaam Children's Home, a church-based project helping children at risk. Sharma is now being helped to pursue birth registration so that she can go to school and be empowered to learn for a better future.

Pakistan

Aalia had three children when her husband ran off with another woman, leaving her to support the children alone. She took on several jobs, but was still unable to earn a good wage. At 13, 11 and 8 years of age her children ended up leaving school because they were unable to pay the fees.

However, through a local church Aalia was introduced to Viva's city-wide network in Rawalpindi. The team visited her house and prayed for the family, and then worked with that church and other local projects to arrange schooling, books and uniforms for Aalia's children.

We pray together that:

- child-headed households, children who are trying to keep family life together, will be given emotional and practical support
- single parent households – often headed by women who are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, are supported and find ways out of poverty
- educational opportunities are given to the poor
- children experience an holistic education, meeting spiritual, health, nutritional and academic needs and having opportunity to learn basic life skills
- Christians in the educational field will be able to influence for good through modelling Kingdom principles

Thoughtful responses

Look around you at the needs of your local community – are there any families who need support? Are there any children who are left to fend for themselves? Are there any children who need support with their education? Do you know people working in the educational system and would you be prepared to pray for them on a regular basis?

Business and Government

⁵*“It is indeed a terrible indictment of our civilisation that in spite of economic growth, technological advance and food surpluses in so many countries, over 800 million people in the world – mainly women and children - still go hungry every day.”* United Nations general assembly

These two spheres of influence can make or break the future for several generations within Nations. Legislation and trade practises can affect society at large for good or bad.

There is a growing call that large and small organisations alike should demonstrate a level of ownership and corporate responsibility towards society. It is sad to see that business motivation is often for financial gain at the expense of morality and good practise. Corruption in various forms would appear to have infiltrated the structure of many governments, shaping not only business practice and legislation but ultimately permeating the value systems of entire societies and global communities.

Did you know?

⁶An estimated 218 million children aged 5 to 17 are in forced labour worldwide

⁷Over 42 million people in the world today have been forcibly displaced from their homes by civil war and persecution. Half of these people are children under 18 years old. Countries with the highest number of displaced people include Sudan, Iraq, Colombia and Afghanistan.

Less than 50% of child refugees attend school, giving little hope of a secure and comfortable future.

Psalm 89 v14

‘Righteousness and justice are the foundations of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.’

⁵ UN general assembly special session on children May 10 2002

⁶ Maude Barlow, Water as Commodity - The Wrong Prescription, The Institute for Food and Development Policy, Backgrounder, Summer 2001, Vol. 7, No. 3, cited on <http://www.urbanministry.org/global-poverty-statistics>

⁷ <http://iafr.org/downloads/map/Map%20of%20Refugee%20Highway%20v201006.pdf>

United Kingdom

'Heaven's Attic', a UK retailer of gifts and accessories, are an amazing example of how businesses can stand against injustice and be intentional about making a difference for children at risk. They say: ⁸*We passionately believe that, by making right choices, we can make a real difference in our world and add value to others. We share our profits with various charitable causes throughout the year, and we aim to source more products from disadvantaged communities around the globe.*

Another small business, 'Prosperity Brownies', also hold to strong principles and commit 10% of their profits to children's charities. Here's their fun message ⁹*Profit - yes please! Humungous amounts to bring about massive change in the lives of children at risk. Pleasure - We take great dollops of it as we transfer some of your wealth to lift as many kids as possible out of their poverty. Purpose - We all have one, this is part of ours and you can play a part too!*

El Salvador

Violence is one of the biggest issues affecting communities and children in El Salvador, due to the presence of gangs. One of Viva's local networks has started an important campaign, promoting the good treatment of children. The main leaders of this advocacy work are actually the children themselves, who are called "Peace Ambassadors". These children have so caught the attention of different communities that even the Vice President of El Salvador, and some other government authorities, have become involved. These authorities have now committed themselves to work together to stop the violence.

We pray together that:

- business men and women who already support those who are vulnerable and who give resources to enable much Kingdom work for children at risk, will be blessed and that many more will follow their example
- more businesses would hear the voice of the child at risk in their communities and that they would be moved to action on their behalf
- righteousness and justice will prevail particularly through government legislations
- those elected to government would have pure motives and that our elected leaders would be moved with compassion for the next generation and those yet to be born
- governments would be called to account for their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals and that progress would be made towards their being reached by 2015

Thoughtful responses

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love." How could our love today make a difference in our communities? What might that look like at local government level? What might that look like in terms of our response to local and small businesses, or large national ones, and how we engage with them?

⁸ www.heavensattic.co.uk

⁹ www.prosperitybrownies.com

Media, Arts and Entertainment

¹⁰“The importance of culture, leisure and sport in addressing issues such as social inclusion, health and crime is becoming increasingly apparent.”

We have been created in the image of God and are creative beings so it should not surprise us that these spheres of influence can be used in redemptive ways. In recent years technological advances have widened the scope of influence that media, arts and entertainment have on society and significantly increased the impact on the next generation.

Statistically, many children in the UK and USA now spend more time getting information and learning life skills from television than they do from home or school. This can be for good or bad depending on who is making the decisions and shaping these key spheres of society. Children are potentially more at risk and vulnerable to abuse through unregulated access to media and the viewing of inappropriate or defiling images.

Did you know?

¹¹By bringing attention to issues affecting children, the media have a unique role in realising child rights. Greater awareness of child rights deprivations and violations is, in part, due to increased media focus on these issues.

¹²One in seven children who use the internet have been sexually solicited in some way

Genesis 1 v31

‘God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.’

Cambodia

¹³Veng is 10 years old, and lives in a poor rural village in Cambodia. One day as she was gathering wood in the jungle not far from her house, a man approached her. He had mud all over his face to disguise his identity and he threatened to kill her with a knife if she dared to speak to anyone about what he did to her. Veng returned home very injured and traumatised.

Veng was treated for her injuries and began to physically recover, she also began meeting with an arts therapist. In the beginning she couldn’t speak. At first the therapist just sat with Veng in silence, then she began to draw a picture on some paper and invited Veng to join in. Veng picked up a red crayon and

¹⁰ UK Government Department for culture, media and sport

¹¹ http://www.childinfo.org/files/SOWC_SpecEd_CRC_EN_2010.pdf

¹² Internet Filter Review, cited on <http://www.safefamilies.org/sfStats.php>

¹³ www.ragamuffinproject.org

tentatively smiled. Soon they were drawing pictures together, slowly building up trust. Veng's first picture was a little bird with all its wings broken. Veng started to cry, saying "the bird is so sad it feels like it can never fly again. Someone broke its wings. The bird dreams of living with their family but it is scared because bad things live in the trees that hurt little birds so the little bird is not safe to go back home".

Through the picture and the story Veng created, she began to find her voice again and express her pain. She soon discovered she loved to dance and sing, and with ongoing help from the arts therapist she is slowly beginning to trust people again and to feel safe and happy.

Uganda

¹⁴ **Sitting Duck Media** have recently developed an initiative called **Community Albums**, which uses music, photography and video to empower poor communities across the world, giving them a voice to raise awareness of the issues they face. Just a few weeks ago they went out to work with Viva's city-wide network in Kampala, Uganda, to create a short video about keeping children safe.

This clip was presented to the Ugandan Parliament, along with a petition asking for things like better government support of children with disabilities and more social workers to help the police when they investigated crimes against children. As a result the government have already promised to fulfil some of these requests, and are working on a response the others.

We pray together that:

- those working in the media would use it to communicate life giving and Kingdom principles which will influence compassionate and Godly responses in viewers towards issues facing children in our world today
- there will be great favour shown towards those who are working positively to influence the mindsets of this next generation.
- those with ungodly intentions will be exposed and children protected from having their minds defiled
- creativity in arts and entertainment can be used for the Glory of God and in order for children to express their God given design
- people working creatively with children at risk would be given divine strategies and idea that will help release children from the effects of hurt and abuse

Thoughtful responses

How much does media and entertainment influence us or the lives of our children? Is it all good? What good stories have happened in our lives or communities concerning children that are newsworthy? How could we get good stories into our local media? How do we express our creativity and encourage that in others, particularly children?

¹⁴ www.communityalbums.com

Religion

'They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.' John 17: 16 -19

There is huge opportunity for the church to shine in this sphere of influence. It is an area where we can example the truth of Jesus and His love and show the transformational power that is available when we work together. The political, economic and cultural contexts into which children are born have a significant impact on their life opportunities. The prevailing world view (whether religious or secular) shapes the way in which children are able to engage with and grow in the emotional and spiritual aspects of their lives. History gives us too many examples of things being done in the name of religion that are contrary to what we know of the love of God through Jesus.

No one religion or world view has the monopoly on being the worst or the best able to care for children, and we have a lot that we can all learn from each other. We need more confidence in demonstrating the positive impact that people of faith can have on children worldwide, particularly as the church and in the light of Jesus' prayer.

Did you know?

¹⁵Faith-based groups provide approximately 40% of the healthcare in African countries- a higher percentage than any other single group, including the government.

In Nepal more than 70 churches have come together to fight child trafficking, working in unity to protect young girls from being taken over the border into India and exploited.

There are at least 250,000 church congregations in the AIDS-affected areas of East and Southern Africa– more than enough to support the reported 12 million orphans. Many churches are keen to do more and be more effective, but need help to know how to respond.

James 1:27

'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.'

¹⁵ <http://www.tearfund.org/webdocs/Website/Campaigning/Policy%20and%20research/Faith%20untapped.pdf>

Democratic Republic of Congo

12 year old Belinda is restless, disruptive, and prone to extreme behaviour. Not all that surprising as, following the death of her aunt, she was accused by her own mother of being a 'witch' and causing the death. Her uncle punished her by running a burning iron over her back and legs.

Thankfully Belinda managed to escape, and fled to a local church-led refuge. They had only recently opened, providing a refuge for girls like Belinda, where they can come as an interim step before returning to their families where appropriate, or moving into foster homes. The team working at the refuge offered Belinda care, guidance, and unconditional love, and although she still has many behavioural issues the home are praying that God will heal her scars, both physical and emotional.

Costa Rica

The congregation of the City of God church work with over 500 of San Jose's poorest children. They knew that it was important to make sure that the children received the best possible care and attention, and so they were keen to improve their safety measures. After attending a training about Child Protection the first thing the pastor did was to make sure windows were installed in all of the children's classrooms, *"so that we can always be watchful, and look out for the children and for one another."*

The church leaders also worked together to form a child protection policy that was really relevant to their congregation, and taught them how to report any mistreatment of children. As a result several cases of child abuse have now been properly addressed, and the church is confident that their children are much better protected.

We pray together that:

- Christians will be in place to positively influence and be a credible voice on behalf of children at risk when asked to speak out on issues of injustice
- Local churches will be expressions of God's love in their communities particularly responding to the needs of children on their doorsteps
- Churches may have one heart and mind to minister to children as Jesus would
- Children can become examples of God's love and become godly leaders themselves
- Children can take their place alongside adults as co labourers in Christ

Thoughtful responses –

How can we respond to the challenge of coexisting with people of faiths? Two reactions could be to either shrink fearfully and silently into our ghettos, or to do the opposite and come out fighting in ways that are not honouring to God or our neighbours. As we seek to care for children we must balance the need to be *'confident about the hope we have in us'* with humility. Jesus prayer in John 17 was full of hope, that the world would know the love of God through God's glory reflected in our lives. This then is our challenge that we walk in the glory of the Lord and to His great honour.

Ways to use this guide in a...

service

Invite to the front of the church four people who, through their work or hobbies, each represent one of the spheres of influence. Also prepare four children to stand in front of the adults and read a short prayer for that area of society and its effect on children around the world.

@ PowerPoints available

sermon

We are all able to influence society in the various roles we take on in life. Help people to look afresh at what God might be asking them to do and be in their current roles to bring about positive change, specifically for the next generation.

small group

Divide into four groups and assign each a particular section of this guide. Give every group a copy of the relevant pages and allow them 10 minutes to plan a prayer activity around the information given. Now let each group in turn lead the whole group in prayer.

@ Print off PDF's

children's group

Ask the children to take turns acting out a scene or activity related to each of the spheres of influence, whilst others try to guess what they are. When they are done discuss how each area might influence children, thinking of one good thing and one bad thing. Then pray for each area.

prayer event

Set up different stations around the room to represent the four sections of this guide. Have a creative activity at each one, or give people something to take away that will inspire them to pray even when they leave the event. After about half an hour gather people together and lead them in a time of corporate prayer.

@ Find helpful links
and YouTube clips

For more ideas and additional resources see viva.org/wwp

What now?

Pray regularly

To read our prayer blog, receive regular prayer updates from around the world, or find other useful resources check out **viva.org/pray**

Stay informed

A quick visit to **viva.org** will allow you to sign up to our global news list, read the blog and follow us on Facebook and Twitter, keeping you up-to-date with all our latest news and stories

Get involved

Whether you give regularly or just a one-off and whether you give as an individual, a family or you get your church or business involved, you can be a part of the united action for children at risk you have seen in this booklet. Just go to **viva.org/whatyoucando**

Your feedback

We would love to hear your feedback and find out how you used this prayer guide. You can fill in the online questionnaire at **viva.org** or email **pray@viva.org** with the following details:

- Where did the event happen?
- How many adults and children participated?
- How long did the event last?
- Was the booklet useful and how did you use it?
- What were some of the highlights of your prayer event?

Alternatively you can write to us with feedback at: Viva, Unit 8, The Gallery, 54 Marston St, Oxford, OX4 1LF

Children are suffering. We all know that.

Thousands of people are working to help them. We all know that too.

Yet the problems persist. Children are still suffering.

In cities all over the world there are projects doing great work, but a lack of money, people and time means there is a limit to what they can achieve alone.

We need to work together.

Imagine what would happen if the people caring for children joined up.

If child care workers, local churches, governments and international charities came together to tackle the issues faced by children.

Whole cities would be transformed.

Together we would have the power to bring about real change for children, not just chipping away at the surface of the problems but fighting them right at the root.

At Viva we are doing just that.

Through our 44 city-wide networks we are increasing the unity, quality and impact of work for children at risk, our joint action changing the lives of over 1 million children around the world.

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