The World Vision International Child Empowerment Program in Yahim Village: Implementation, Impacts and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia guarantees the right of every child to enjoy protection from the state, including protection from sexual and economic exploitation that threatens their lives. This study attempts to assess the implementation, the impacts, and the challenges of the WVI child empowerment program from the time it was first introduced in Yahim village in 2018 to the year 2021. A qualitative method is used in this study in conjunction with a descriptive approach to explain the topic. Primary sources, such as interviews, field notes, personal documents, and other official documents, as well as secondary sources, such as books, journals, and media articles, are also used in this study. This article shows that WVI implemented the programs successfully, despite facing some external challenges. The program has had some impacts, including a decrease in cases of violence against children, an increase in children's interest in literacy and gender equality, and children's activeness in expressing their voices about their rights. A key conclusion is that providing children with access to empowerment programs should be sustained as it will result in better long-term outcomes. Hence, WVI and other humanitarian organizations need to expand similar programs to other villages/ communities.

KEYWORDS

Children's rights; Empowerment; WVI; Yahim

INTRODUCTION

The work of humanitarian organizations is principally driven by their commitment to alleviating human suffering, empowering communities, and protecting the rights of everyone from any form of harm. This includes protecting social, economic, and political rights and keeping children safe from sexual exploitation and abuse. Humanitarian organizations usually have their own programs centered on community development. They implement a wide range of activities for local communities, such as capacity building for local institutions, local knowledge building, and raising awareness on issues dealing with development policy and human rights. Humanitarian organizations are also embedded with the task of controlling government programs and ensuring their accountability in providing social and economic programs for the communities they serve. The government bears the obligation to make sure that its programs benefit the people and promote their well-being.

The work of World Vision International (WVI) is no exception. As an international humanitarian organization, World Vision has implemented various humanitarian programs across the globe. Established by Robert Pierce in 1950 in the United States, the primary goal of the World Vision originally was to alleviate the burden and respond to the impact of war in the Korean peninsula on children (WVI, 2019a; Japalatu, 2021). Nowadays, this organization has emerged as one of the key leaders in delivering humanitarian assistance and aid throughout the world, particularly in areas where children are the victims of conflicts, communities are neglected, or people live in poor living conditions. WVI entered Indonesia on May 5, 1962, with its first office in Malang, and German Edey became its first director (WVI, 2019a; Japalatu, 2021).

In 1972–1973, WVI started to implement its program focusing on marginal and poor community empowerment. In 1998, WVI in Indonesia changed its name to Yayasan Wahana Visi Indonesia and became a partner with World Vision International (WVI, 2019a; Japalatu, 2021). These two organizations collaborated to implement transformative programs targeting disadvantaged communities, especially children (Japalatu, 2021).

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) existed and began to carry out their humanitarian programs across Indonesia in 1998, just after the collapse of Suharto's authoritarian regime (Hadiwinata, 2002). In Papua, for instance, Yayasan WVI[1] came in 1999 and started its community development and other humanitarian programs in 1999 in the district of Merauke. It adopted a transformational approach and worked in three areas of priority, namely health, education, and community capacity building. For education, the program aimed at developing children's core literacy skills (Trio, 2022).

In addition, WVI had a strong partnership with the government, and this partnership allowed WVI to ensure that every decision and regulation made by the government would benefit the children and that its development program would address the best interests of

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[1] For the following discussion, Yayasan Wahana Visi Indonesia will be simply written WVI.

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children. Importantly, Indonesia has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child with the issuance of presidential decision No. 36/1996. Later, it was ratified by Law No. 23/2002 on October 22, 2002. This later ratification has a legally binding character, meaning that Indonesia has a legal obligation to implement the agreement and make the rights available to all children. In principle, the substance of Law No. 23 has covered the rights of the child, as it is regulated in the provisions of the Convention (Kemenppa, 2020). Therefore, with the partnership, WVI could push the government to initiate a pro-children policy and oversee the government to develop a program for children in line with the convention.

The government has implemented various programs to develop communities and children, but in practice, the rights of children are not fully fulfilled. There might be various reasons, and certainly every region poses different challenges as to why such rights are not fulfilled. In Sentani, Papua, for instance, WVI has identified five main problems, namely poverty, low literacy, a high rate of drop-out, low birth certificate ownership, and exploitation and violence against children (WVI, 2022a). In fact, the problems exist across Papua, making itself the most vulnerable group in Indonesia (WVI, 2021). As a humanitarian organization, WVI has directed its programs to promote and secure the fulfillment of children's rights according to the international convention. Referring to the convention, it is stated that the rights of children fall into four main categories: 1) the right to life; 2) the right to protection and to be free from violence, exploitation, and discrimination; 3) the right to grow to their full potential; and 4) the right to assemble and express their views (Rahwiku, 2022).

Given this background, this article attempts to assess the implementation, the impacts, and the challenges of the child empowerment program from the time it was first introduced in Yahim village in 2018 to the year 2021. Although the program has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which entered Indonesia in 2020, the implementation and impacts of the program throughout the period brought some positive outcomes. This research focuses on Yahim village in Jayapura because it was one of the areas where WVI has prioritized carrying out its child empowerment program since 2018.

This paper is divided into three main sections. The first section provides the theoretical frameworks used in this study. The second section discusses methodology. The third section discusses the main findings, covering a brief overview of Yahim village, followed by the implementation of the children's empowerment program, the impact, and the main challenges. The last section concludes this research and summarizes the main findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As this article focuses on child empowerment programs and deals with the rights of children, it adopts a set of relevant conceptual frameworks.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The international community has introduced several legal instruments to promote the rights of children and end crimes against children. The UN (United Nations), for instance, has taken a legal measure to protect children from any harm by adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. Since the adoption, almost all member countries, except the United States, have ratified (Human Rights Watch, 2023). This convention was born after women activists demanded the rights and access of children. Women saw children and women as the most vulnerable groups. Indeed, the demands were essentially driven by the suffering of women and children as the result of war. Eglantyne Jebb (the founder of Save the Children) was one of the women activists who introduced ten principles guiding children's rights. She listed what constitutes the rights of children and how they should be protected. These lists then received global acceptance and became a declaration, which was adopted in 1923. In 1924, the League of Nations adopted the declaration, now famously known as the Geneva Declaration (Nurusshobah, 2019).

Although the war has ended, the violence and violations against children have not ceased. Even the cases of exploitation of children continue to happen and tend to increase at an alarming rate (OHCHR, 2022; End Violence Against Children, 2021; ILO, 2015), including Indonesia (WVI, 2022b). Children now feel unsafe, becoming the victims of so-called development. For example, in West Papua, children have not enjoyed their rights, including rights to well-being, rights to primary education, and rights to be free from sexual abuse and violence (UNICEF, 2019).

The following are the technical dimensions of the convention. It contains important provisions that specify the nature of the convention and the rights of the child. The convention has 54 articles and is divided into three main parts: 1) survival rights, 2) participation rights, and 3) development rights (Cultural Survival, 2007). Meanwhile, the convention has two optional protocols, namely: 1) optional protocols on child involvement in armed conflict; 2) optional protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (ratified by Indonesia through Law No. 10/2012).

In addition, based on clusters, this convention has eight main clusters: 1) measures of implementation; 2) definition of children; 3) general principles; 4) civil and freedom rights; 5) family environment and alternative care; 6) health and basic welfare; 7) education, leisure time, and cultural activities; and 8) special protection measures (Doek, 2002; UNICEF, n.d.). This framework is relevant to the study because it is the international agreement that the Indonesian government has ratified, making itself bound, and WVI needs to make sure that those rights are fulfilled. Moreover, the work of WVI in promoting the rights of children should be based on this convention.

Concept of Community Empowerment

Community empowerment is a non-instructive program designed to build and strengthen individual and community capacity. The program is important to raise community awareness and make their voices heard so that they can identify and solve problems in their community. The program places an emphasis on local knowledge, capacity, potential, and infrastructure existing in the community to solve their problems. They can also rely on government and non-government organizations to help them with their problems.

Several pieces of literature have offered different perspectives concerning community empowerment. But in principle, they agree on the substance of the concept that community empowerment entails aspects of transformation, power and capacity building, and decision-making (WHO, n.d.; Steiner et al., 2023; Laverack, 2001). WHO (n.d.) defines community empowerment as a "process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives". According to the WHO, community empowerment is not limited to the involvement, participation, or engagement of communities but also to the change that the community could bring by utilizing their capacity and action. Similarly, Steiner et al. (2023) view community empowerment as the "capacity to make choices and to transform these choices into desired outcomes". Laverack (2001) claims that community empowerment is a process of enabling individuals and groups to bring about social and political changes. These definitions revolve around the power and capacity of communities to make their own decisions to change their conditions and make use of their own resources for the sake of their well-being.

Some scholars tend to place community empowerment within limited and broad dimensions. Chambers, for instance, points to community empowerment as a process of empowering people but tends to limit the concept within an economic dimension. He claims that community empowerment is basically about an economic empowerment program that contains social values. This concept reflects a new development paradigm, namely "empowering people-centered, participatory, and sustainable" (as cited by Koeswantono, 2014).

In contrast, Ife places community empowerment in a broad perspective. According to Ife, community empowerment principally contains four dimensions, namely: a) structural: empowerment is an attempt to liberate, transform structurally and fundamentally, and eliminate community from an oppressive system, b) pluralism: empowerment is an attempt to improve individual and group capacity to compete with others in a certain "*rule of the game*, " c) elitism: empowerment is an attempt to influence elites, form an alliance with the elites and to try to structural and discriminatory practices and policy, d) post-structuralist: empowerment is an attempt to change discourse and respect subjectivity in understanding social reality (as cited in Wardhono et al., 2022).

Similarly, Perkins and Zimmerman (1995, as cited in Perkins, 2010) talk about the characteristics of empowerment that operate at *multiple ecological levels—individuals, groups,*

organizations, and *whole communities*. At the individual level, people participate in a variety of grassroots community organizations, and by doing that, they expect to develop important resource mobilization skills. At the next level, groups and organizations are involved in collective decision-making and shared leadership processes that aim at building networks, developing various organizational development skills, and enhancing policy leverage. Finally, communities also engage in collective action to access resources, which will bring political impacts and civic improvement through coalition building, enhanced pluralism and diversity, and access to resources (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995, cited in Perkins, 2010).

Table 1. Level, Processes, and Outcomes of Empowerment

Levels	Processes	Outcomes
Individual	Participation in community organizations	Perceived control and resource mobilization skills
Organization	Collective decision-making shared leadership	Organizational development, networks, policy leverage
Community	Collective action to access resources	Pluralism, coalitions, accessible resources

Source: Adapted from Perkins & Zimmerman (1995, as cited in Perkins, 2010)

Furthermore, Friedman (1992) classifies community empowerment into three aspects:
1) *Enabling:* creating a condition for communities to maximize their potential. It assumes that every person or community has a capability or potential that can be developed. Empowerment constitutes an effort to develop people's potential and raise their awareness regarding their capabilities. 2) *Empowering*: strengthening the potential and capability through concrete efforts, including getting various inputs and utilizing empowerment opportunities; and 3) *Protecting:* protecting and defending the interests of marginalized communities. Communities should have their rights protected, including the right to participate in decision-making processes (Friedmann, 1992).

This discussion illustrates that community empowerment is about empowering individuals, people, and communities and raising their awareness to understand that they have the capacity and capability to make their own decisions or to demand policy change. Therefore, this framework is used to assess how the WVI program is directed towards raising awareness among children and empowering them so that they have the required life skills and capacity.

METHODS
This research adopts a qualitative-type descriptive approach. The main objective of qualitative descriptive research is basically to explain or describe a phenomenon (Nassaji, 2015; Doyle et al., 2020; Koh and Owen, 2020, Kim et al., 2017). For instance, according to Sandelowski, qualitative descriptive research uses data to explain the 'who, what, and where of events or experiences' from a subjective perspective (as cited in Doyle et al. 2020). Similarly, Nassaji (2015)

asserts that the goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics and tries to explain what questions (what happened) rather than how or why questions. In short, in principle, research that uses a descriptive approach aims to describe and explain phenomena, facts, or events systematically and accurately concerning a specific target, population, or specific characteristics of an area.

Meanwhile, qualitative research is research that is used to investigate the condition of an object by making the researcher the key instrument of investigation. The purpose of this qualitative research is to explain a social phenomenon by collecting data through journal articles, media articles, books, official reports, and interviews.

In a qualitative research method, data are collected through various sources, utilizing primary and secondary sources. Nassaji (2015), for instance, points out that in descriptive research, observation and survey are the often-used techniques, while Koh and Owen (2020) mention that survey is the most used. Meanwhile, Doyle et al. (2020), point out that in descriptive research, researchers mostly utilize different techniques to collect data, including semi-structured individual face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, telephone interviews, and online interviews, but the most common is face-to-face interviews.

Given the utility of this research, this article also used various techniques for collecting primary data, which included observation and semi-structured interviews. Observation was used to observe events and phenomena and systematically record the data. As the research focused on the Yahim village, the object of observation was the village, and it observed the impact of the program on the community, particularly children. Further, interviews play an important role in qualitative research. It is the most common method of data collection in social science research. In this research, semi-structured interviews were selected to gain information and ask for clarification if it was needed. This research collected data by interviewing several key informants in the year 2022. Before interview took place, the author has asked their approval for recording.

Table 2. List of Interviewees

Respondent	Number of respondents
Secretary of Yahim village)	1 person
Head of woman organization at Yahim village	1 person
Parents at the village	3 persons
Cadre of WVI who manages the reading housing, and one of the parents	1 person
Program manager of WVI, Sentani district	1 person
WVI staff	1 person

Source: Author's compilation (2022)

The two techniques of collective data above were complemented by analyzing village documents or archives. These data contained invaluable information, which was mostly used in qualitative research. According to Yin (2011), documents and archives are important data because they contain information about events, social phenomena, human interaction, policies, and other historical information. This research utilized village-written records, pictures, and other village archives because they might reveal information about the village, its development, and its social interaction. In addition to using the primary source, this research utilizes secondary materials, such as books, journals, and media articles, that are relevant to the research topic.

DISCUSSION

Yahim Village Profile

Yahim village is one of the new villages created after splitting from Dobonsolo subdistrict. Reaching the village is not difficult as it is accessible by all vehicles, at a distance of 6 km from the city center. Administratively, it is located in Sentani District, Jayapura Regency. Two figures below show the location of Yahim village. Figure 1 shows Yahim village and its borders with some villages and subdistricts: 1) to the north, it borders with Dobonsolo subdistrict; 2) to the south with Sentani Lake; 3) to the west with Kehiran (Ifale) village; and

4) to the east with Yobeh (Komba village), as shown in figure 1. Figure 2 clearly shows the whole area of Yahim village and its surroundings.
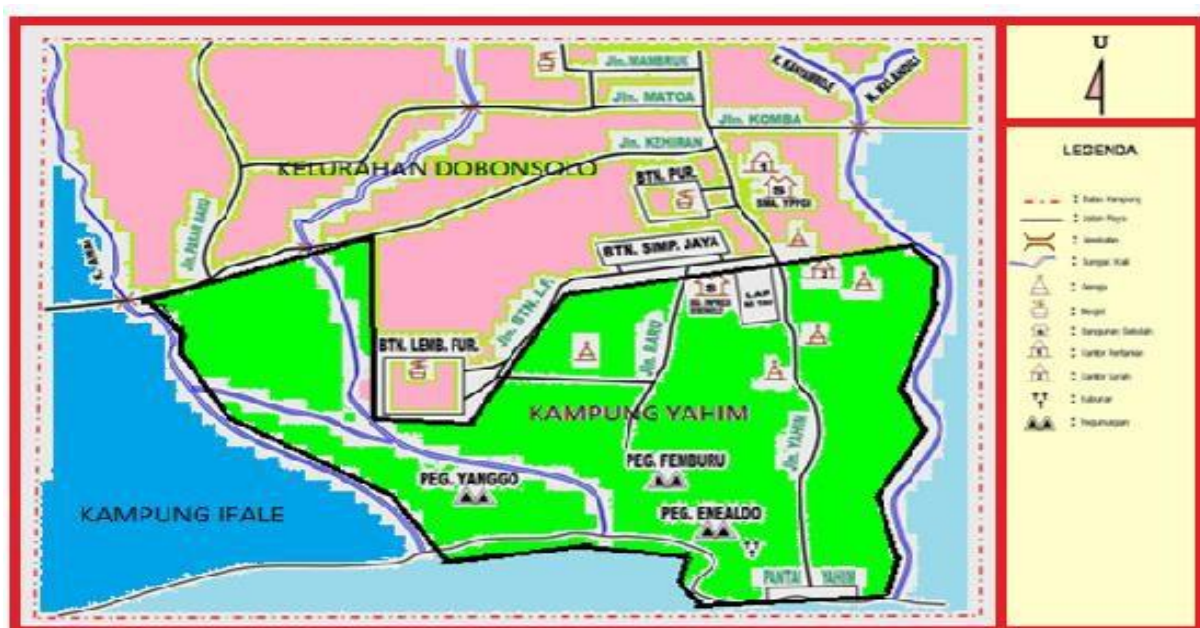

Figure 1. Map showing the location of Yahim village and its borders. *Source*: Yahim village government (2022)

Figure 2: Maxar / Digital Earth Satellite image of the Yahim Village coverage area (shown by its demarcation striped lines) and its neighbors. *Source*: Google Earth (2023)

Based on the village archives and confirmation from the village elders, Yahim village was created following a series of events that occurred in the past. The table below presents the events and development of Yahim village since 1974 based on the narratives of the village elders.

Table 3. Creation and development of Yahim Village

Year	Events/phase of development	Remarks
1974	Yahim used to be named Yabuay. The change occurred following the introduction in 1934. Yahim is the abbreviation of Yaupae Hilinaei Malainyaiei. According to the locals, the name was given by Rofele, the ancestor of Yaupae community whose descendants now inhabit Yahim village and Yobeh village.	The name Yabuay originally came from the utterance expressed by one of the people from outside the community. Therefore, when Christianity was brought to the village, the community began to consider changing the name back to the original name given by their ancestors.
1975	With the introduction of village development in Irian Jaya, Dobonsolo village was created, and at the time supervising four community villages: • Yahim village • Sereh village • Yobeh village	Administratively part of Dobonsolo village Deky A. Felle was elected as the first village chief

	• Jawa village The process of electing village chief with two candidates Deky A. Felle and Efraim Suebu	
1976	Program on Community Housing Development	Community-self funding
1978	The Agriculture Department granted a license to manage agricultural land for the whole community	-
1979	Markus Kallem was appointed village chief	The period in office lasted only one year
1982	Status of the Dobonsolo village upgraded to a subdistrict with structure as follows: Head of sub district: Decky A. Felle Secretary: : Demianus Felle Division of Governance: Yason Felle Public Affairs Division: Salmon Sokoy Division of Community Development: Salmon Felle	-
1983	Program of building housing for the community initiated by Dicky A. Felle	Permanent housing established
1983	Social assistance from Social Department, Irian Jaya Province to build houses for the community	-
1990 – 1992	Demianus Felle was appointed the head of the subdistrict	-
1992	Land certification program from the government for 974 land plots	For Yahim and Komba villages
1992 – 1993	Yoel Felle was appointed the head of Dobonsolo subdistrict replacing Demianus Felle	Building the office of Dobonsolo subdistrict Development of Vuria, Simpama and Purwodadi housing residence,
2003 – 2013	Wellem Felle appointed head of Dobonsolo subdistrict	Dobonsolo was divided and the village of Yahim created
2008 – 2013	Yahim Village was officially created on 17 December 2008	Head of the Yahim village chief Yusak Pangkali

Source: Adapted from an interview with village elders (2022)

Since its creation, the population in the village has been continuously increasing. For instance, in 2018, the population of Yahim village was 904, consisting of 464 males and 440

females. Meanwhile, the number of households in Yahim Village was 238 (BPS, 2019). Most people in the village earn their living by farming, doing small business, being government employees, police, and military. The number of people can be shown in the table below:

Table 4. Number of people in Yahim village

Male	Female	Total
464	440	822

Source: BPS (2019)

Implementation of the WVI Children Empowerment Program

WVI implemented inclusive humanitarian action towards children and the community. Although WVI is principally a Christian organization, in practice, it is open to all and strongly committed to helping children regardless of their backgrounds and religions. Mr. Okoka, WVI Program Officer, who is responsible for community engagement sponsorship and planning the education program, confirms the inclusiveness as follows:

> We are a Christian humanitarian organization committed to serving children, the most vulnerable groups, and their communities. We serve everyone regardless of their differences in ethnicity, religion, race, and gender. Our focus is children, as stated in our vision and mission. Children are our primary target because they have been embodied with specific rights since they were born. Although we are a Christian organization, we have no interest in converting people or spreading the gospel to attract children to the Christian faith. We are fully aware that some people suspect us of Christianizing the children, but we need to stress that we have no intention to do that. Moreover, some of our staff are non-Christians, and we also work together with the Muslim community and organizations in Papua. We only target to run the program for 15 years and divide our program into three phases, namely, early, mid, and final programs. For the program in Sentani, we have reached the final phases of our program, and we will soon end the program and evaluate the program's impacts. Based on our evaluation, we will learn and can apply the lessons to other districts (Okoka, interview with author, July 22, 2022).

Further, WVI did not implement its program for a short period, but mostly long-term. The long-term duration was perceived as more effective for seeing a change or transformation in a target group. For instance, in Yahim village, the target group or target beneficiaries were children, and WVI has set up a program implementation for a period of 15 years. Until 2022, WVI had carried out its program for about 10 years. The program has a primary goal, namely, to raise people's awareness that children since birth have been entitled to specific rights (Okoka, interview with the author, July 22, 2022). The program focused on developing children's capacity through three main programs: 1) Construct a reading house, 2) Hold a children's forum, and 3) Seek sponsorship. The respective program will be discussed below.

Reading House in Yahim Village

The reading house was built in September 2018 by Dellila, a villager and one of the parents. With the support of WVI, which provides learning materials, and the village leaders and elders, this reading house has turned into a center of knowledge in the village and a place where children can share their feelings and engage with one another. Sharing, reading, and playing together were viewed as the best ways to improve children's basic literacy skills.

Most of the dropped-out and illiterate children benefited from this reading house. It is worth pointing out that dropouts and illiteracy were common in the village. Interestingly, this house attracted not only elementary-school children but also students from high schools. Children learned basic reading, writing, counting, music, and crafting. They were also encouraged to keep journals to express their feelings. All the learning activities in this house were free of charge. Dellila, one of the child's parents and WVI's cadres, expressed his gratitude to the WVI, saying:

> I am thankful to WVI because it is the only NGO that operates in our village. It cares for children's education and development. I hope that this house will attract more children and keep growing. I also hope that the government will continue to support this house when the program has ended or WVI has left. This house has helped children tremendously, and I believe that more children will benefit from this program (interview with author, July 22, 2022).

It is important to note that before the presence of this house, there was already a mobile library. However, it was no longer running, and this has impacted the whole community, especially children, because they did not have access to books and materials to develop their basic literacy skills and to learn new things. For this reason, WVI took the initiative by implementing a program in support of Mrs. Dellila in running a reading house to meet children's needs. WVI perceived that this house can bring back children's motivation to love books and can increase their interests in reading and writing. In the end, it will decrease the level of illiteracy in the village.

Child Sponsorship Program

The sponsorship program was one of the main programs implemented by WVI in 50 regions in Indonesia, and in Papua, the program has been implemented for more than ten years (WVI, 2019b). The program centered on children by focusing on empowering them, their families, and communities. It connects a sponsor or donor with the most vulnerable children to improve their well-being. Thus, in this program, there were some key elements, namely, the sponsor (those who give funds), children, community, and WVI, acting as the mediator between the sponsor and the children.

The primary objective of this program was to support children with their basic needs so that they would not be left behind in their development. In Papua, the program is intended to empower children in their basic education through the sponsorship program. In achieving this aim, WVI engaged intensively with the community, viewing them as a strategic partner and the entry point on which WVI could rely for administering the program. The way WVI promoted a sponsorship program was as follows: First, listening. Through this instrument, WVI approached communities and listened to their problems. Second, developing. WVI worked together with communities to design programs and 5-year plans according to their needs and the challenges they have identified. Third, Acting. This means WVI worked together with the local government on how to design programs to empower communities and respond to their needs. Fourth, training. WVI developed human resources in communities by training them in capacity building with the hope of being leaders in their communities in the future (WVI, 2022c).

Engagement with communities played a critical role in the children's sponsorship program. As children are a part of and live in communities, communities need to take part in child empowerment. However, first, communities should have the capacity to identify the needs of children, their problems, and how to solve the problems concerning children's education. Engagement with communities was also important because the community could provide a conducive environment where children would feel safe in their learning, and the sponsorship program was dependent on this supportive environment. Lastly, with the help of the community, WVI could identify the most vulnerable children who needed sponsors.

Children's Forum

This forum targeted children under 18 years old. It functioned as an instrument of empowerment. The main emphasis was children's participation, and we trained them to express their opinions, thoughts, and feelings freely. This forum aimed at developing children in key aspects such as life skills, character, and value development, citizen education, and leadership in organizations (Okoka, interview with the author, July 22, 2022). A staff member from WVI continued to assist children in this forum, making sure that all children expressed their opinions, identified their strengths and weaknesses, and together worked for solutions to their problems. All of these views would then be brought to the Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Forum for Development Planning (*Musrembang*) so that the rights of children were put on the main agenda of village development.

Impact of WVI Program Implementation on Child Empowerment in Yahim Village Although the government has committed to upholding the rights of children, children still experience various forms of discrimination and violence across Indonesia. Papua is no exception. In Papua, the perpetrators of the violence are mostly parents and neighbors. The figure below shows the cases of violence against children from 2018 to 2021.
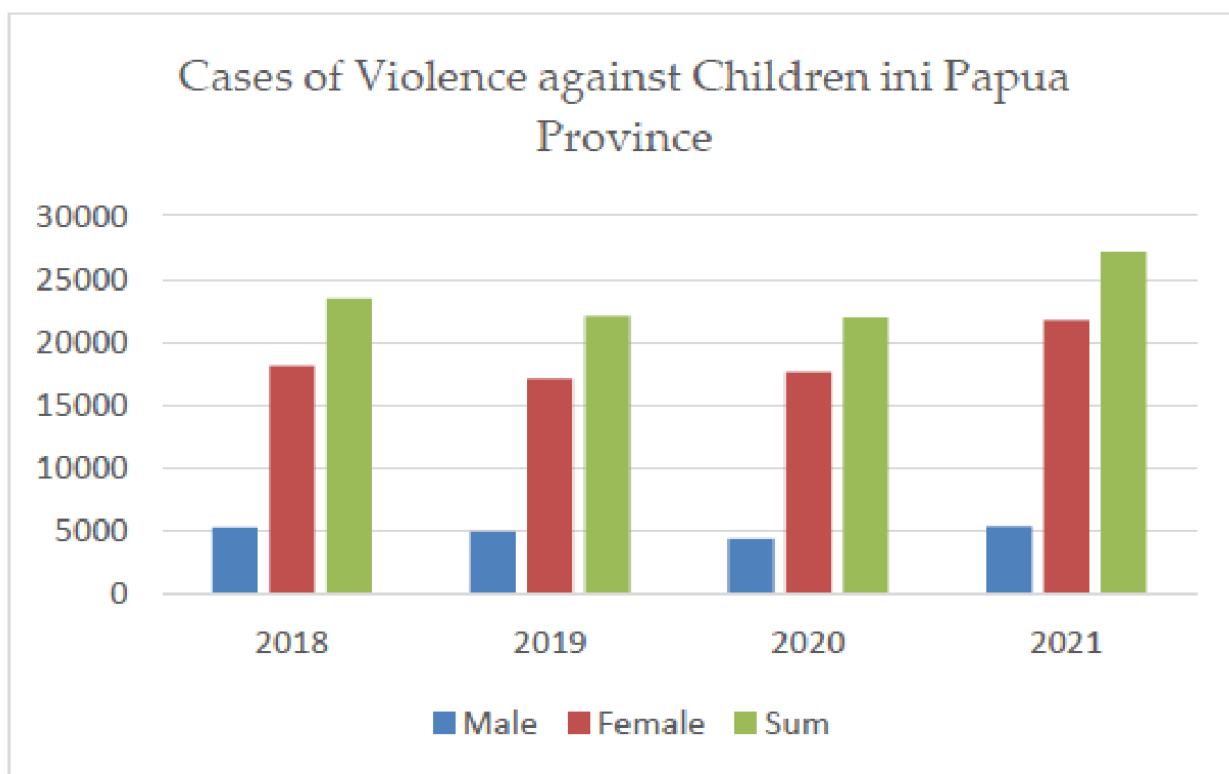
Figure 3. Cases of violence against children in Papua. *Source*: WVI unpublished report, data compiled by the author in 2022

As can be seen from the graph, violence against children, particularly girls, over the period continued to increase. This phenomenon presented the alarming fact that girls were the most vulnerable. In addition, this fact demonstrated that people and communities have no full understanding of the rights of children or did not know that there was an international convention that protects child rights, and Indonesia has ratified the convention, making itself legally bound. WVI has identified several factors leading to the rise of violence against children including cultural factor, lack of supporting system, low number of government regulations, and lack of coordination between central and local government (WVI, 2021).

Addressing the problems was not easy because the problems were closely linked to their families and culture. Dellila, for instance, pointed to cultural issues. She admitted that children, especially girls, could not continue their studies for higher education, mainly because of the tradition. These girls ended up in early marriage and spent most of their time farming (Dellila, interview with the author, July 22, 2022). For this reason, WVI adopted a transformational approach, aiming to change perception.

In addition, the vision and mission of WVI focused on raising people's awareness, and the program addressed the issue of violence against children, which was perpetrated by their parents and community. Most of the violence occurred in the village. Therefore, WVI targeted the community in the village. For instance, Okoka asserted that WVI implemented its program of child empowerment, focusing on isolated areas that were difficult to access. One of the areas

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is Yahim village, located in Sentani (Okoka, interview with the author, July 22, 2022).
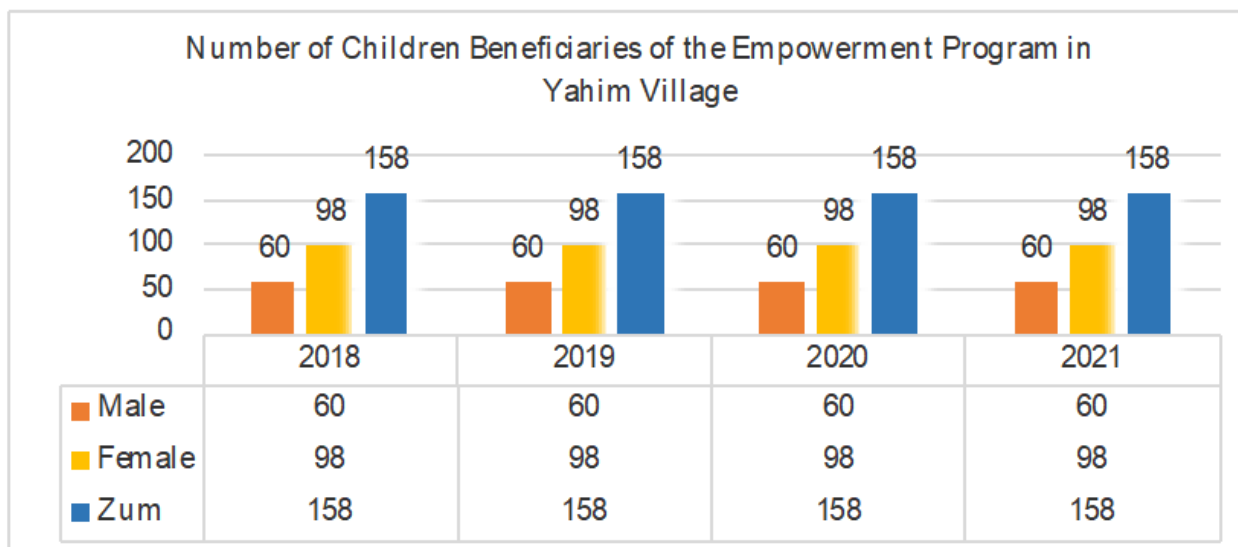

Figure 4. Number of Children Beneficiaries of the Empowerment Program in Sentani. *Source:* WVI unpublished report, data compiled by the author in 2022

Based on the data above, from 2018 to 2021, the number of children who benefited from the WVI program remained the same. One reason was probably the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic affected the program's implementation in terms of reaching out to the children and limited the children's activities. Based on the data, girls outnumbered boys, meaning that girls were the ones who benefited the most. WVI paid special attention to the girls because they were more vulnerable than boys in terms of violence and sexual exploitation, such as rape and girl trafficking.

Since the program implementation, our observation and confirmation by villagers, including parents and children, have demonstrated that the program run by WVI had a great impact on the children, parents, and community. Robert Felle, the village secretary, acknowledged that the WVI program has helped children in the village, not only in building their good characters and other essential skills for their future but also in developing their basic literacy skills (Robert Felle, interview with the author, July 22, 2022).

In general, parents felt that the program at WVI taught them the value of children's education and introduced them to various interesting teaching methods. As confirmed by Neti Felle, one of the parents:

> I do not know how to teach my children with a good method, but after WVI introduced the program in our village, I began to learn how to motivate my kids to read. The program also helped dropout children return to school (Neti Felle, interview with the author, July 26, 2022).

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Adriana Wally, another parent, also expressed her feelings: "I feel fortunate with the WVI program because it gives a lot of benefit to me and my children. I can teach my children what has been taught and teach them good characters" (Wally, interview with the author, July 26, 2022).

Specifically, parents pointed out the benefits of the reading house program for their children. Most parents expressed their gratitude to WVI because the program brought a change to their children. For instance, the program at the reading house helped the children develop their literacy skills. Edita Mangatouw mentioned that:

> We are lucky to have a reading house. In a week, children come twice, every Thursday and Saturday. They learn how to read, count, and write. I think if this continues, children will have an open mind, and their literacy skills will be improved. So, I think this program is very beneficial for children (Mangatouw, interview with the author, July 13, 2022).

In addition, through sponsorship programs, children can extend their networks and put into practice their learned literacy skills. For instance, according to Edita Mangatouw, "the WVI program has allowed children to make new friends, especially friends from abroad, and allowed them to practice how to write a gratitude letter to their sponsors (Mangatouw, interview with the author, July 13, 2022).

Furthermore, the children's forum has some good implications. For instance, children became more confident in expressing their views and standing in front of many people. In this program, WVI tried to identify their strengths and potential through what they called ASHA (*The Analytical Situation of Child Rights*). Through the ASHA program, WVI identified children's problems, sought solutions, and conducted advocacy. This forum then presented problems in *Musrembang* at the district and village levels.

All these benefits affirmed that WVI programs have positively contributed to children's development and to the increase of community and parents' awareness that the rights of children need to receive greater attention.

Challenges in implementing the program

The challenges that WVI faced in carrying out the child empowerment program were mainly external. This means that internally, from the side of WVI, there were no problems that hindered program management. The main challenges mainly came from the community, the parents, and the village government. However, these challenges only existed at the beginning.

Lack of understanding of child empowerment among the community and parents constituted the biggest challenge. For instance, Dellila admitted that parents at the   beginning did not know the purposes of the program. She said:

It takes some time to convince the parents about the benefits of the program for their children. When the program was introduced, most parents did not quite welcome it; some opposed it. But after 5–6 years of its implementation, they began to realize that the program has a positive value in it and has benefited their children (Dellila, interview with author, July 22, 2022).

Another challenge was that the presence of WVI in the village was not welcomed by the village government. In the beginning, the government opposed the program and perceived that it would alter the existing tradition. However, the perception changed after a new village head was appointed. This new leader was supportive of the program. The change of perception was the result of WVI and its cadres, who worked hard to convince the government about the program and the presence of WVI in the village. Dellila, for instance, acknowledged that "we had difficulty with the previous village head. He did not welcome our program or our presence at all. But thank God, finally, we got accepted by the new head, and under his leadership, we started to build coordination and cooperation" (Dellila, interview with the author, July 22, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The study of the children's empowerment program, which was run by WVI in Yahim Village, identified several positive outcomes. Although WVI faced several challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges faced by the parents and the village government at the beginning, the program was able to be implemented. The values of the program could be summarized as follows: First, in general, the program has helped children, the community, parents, and the government raise awareness of their rights, and instilled within them the responsibility of promoting those rights.

Second, the program improved children's basic literacy and numeracy skills, as indicated by an increase in interest in reading, math, writing, and gender equality. Moreover, the program decreased violence against children, and children became active in their community. The implementation of the program also impacted the local government, as the issue of child empowerment was brought to the local meeting fora so that children's issues were included in the agenda of the village development program. Finally, the study recommends ongoing continuity of the program even though WVI no longer works in the area.

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