

- 1 This WASH Watchdogs club presents an action song at their primary school assembly in Ethiopia. The catchy beat helps everyone at school remember the words: "Being dirty brings disease. We can protect ourselves by washing our hands, washing our faces, washing our hair, washing our bodies, cutting our fingernails and brushing our teeth." The word WASH stands for Water, Sanitation and Health. After learning about how sickness spreads, the students realised they could help other children stay healthy. All the students learned the song and sing it at home with their families. It's a great way to make sure everyone takes action!
- 2 Cardboard vegetable cut-outs make learning fun for this class of 5 to 7 year olds in the Philippines. They're learning about healthy eating from older students who have volunteered to help. Fifteen-year-old Daryl says: "It's our small contribution to our community. Sharing our knowledge and teaching them about the importance of eating nutritious food could reduce the number of malnourished children in our village." Daryl and his friends are child facilitators which means they've learned about children's responsibilities and rights. The young children go home and tell their families what they've learned about healthy eating.
- 3 Four young students in Thailand demonstrate a clever bicycle-powered water pump they made for their school garden. Their agriculture group grows vegetables and mushrooms, and farms chickens, pigs and fish. Students in the group work after school and in their school holidays to look after the garden and care for the chicken coop, fish pond and other animals. Some of the food gets used for their school lunch programme. Group members share left over produce, either taking it home or selling it. The idea started up with some help from World Vision but grew after their teachers got other funding. The agriculture group has won a national award from Thailand's King for their sustainable ideas, such as creating biogas from pig manure. The biogas is a fuel that's used for cooking the school lunches.
- 4 Niño is 11 years old and lives in the Philippines. He first learned about child rights when he became a sponsored child through World Vision. He remembers an art session where the teacher encouraged him to express his ideas creatively. Afterwards, Niño began painting child rights pictures on his t-shirts and wearing them to mufti days at school each Wednesday. Niño's classmates asked what his t-shirt meant so he explained that the peaceful community with children playing shows that "every child has the right to be given opportunities for play and leisure". Although Niño isn't a confident speaker, he proudly shares child rights messages through his drawings. "I'm using my talent to advocate for the rights and responsibilities of children."
- 5 Nearly 200 children participated in World Environment Day (June 5) in a suburb of Delhi, India. Children tied green ribbons on their wrists symbolising unity in creating a clean, green city. The Children's Club and Youth Club organised the event. Groups from the Children's Club were in charge of different activities. Some created handmade posters on issues like reducing pollution, improving hygiene and keeping the planet clean. This Road Stars team cleaned the streets, while the Angels team spread the message that "Good health is only possible if we keep our environment clean". Rahul (14) said, "There's a lot of pollution in our area. We need to reduce pollution because it causes sickness." During the event the Youth Club president, Yogender, presented a petition to the Deputy Mayor about the lack of safe places to play. Yogender asked for more parks to create a healthier, cleaner environment and pledged that the clubs would look after them. The Deputy Mayor spoke about protecting the environment and appealed to the participants to educate their parents. He promised to build parks and plant trees because healthy environments help children reach their potential.
- 6 The Children's Club in Majlish Bagh village, India, started after a child rights workshop for students. Participants decided that they needed to take responsibility for all the children in their village. Club members range in age from 8 to 18 years old. They hold regular club meetings on the school veranda to talk about any problems they're facing and to help each other find solutions. To fund their activities they run a vegetable garden and a mango tree nursery. Nine-year-old Sajini shared that her parents were struggling to make a living and might need to mortgage their land to pay for their children's schooling. Club leaders understood that once land is mortgaged there is little chance that the family could repay the loan to get their land back. Thirty club members rallied to support Sajini's family using income from selling vegetables plus membership contributions. "Our aim is to support children. We want to help children who are sick or whose parents cannot afford to send them to school," said Konak, the 18-year-old club president. The club is now working towards opening a library in their community so that children can borrow books.

7	<p>Rina (15) presents a regular one-hour broadcasting spot on a local radio station in Indonesia. She uses her 'on air' opportunities to advocate for child rights and health issues. The community radio station is only a small soundproof room but it broadcasts up to seven kilometres away. During her programme she reads important announcements, profiles well-known figures and checks her mobile phone for messages from listeners to read out. She searches the computer for songs to play and browses the internet for background information. She's a confident speaker and aims to keep her programme lively and entertaining. Now at senior high school, Rina is also a peer educator and involved in Child Forum activities. The Child Forum she attends offers computer and English courses. They also organise activities like celebrating National Children's Day to increase awareness of child rights in their community.</p>
8	<p>Adem (14) dreams of a peaceful Kosovo, symbolised by the drawing he's holding of a peace dove. His country, Kosovo, was part of Yugoslavia but Serbian and Albanian ethnic groups disputed the territory. During the Kosovo war, citizens got caught in the conflict and violence. People took sides which divided the country. In the fighting, Adem's family home was burned to the ground. His brother and sister were abducted by Serbian police and never seen again. After the war, Adem's older sister Fatmira was only 11 years old when she came up with the idea of Kids for Peace clubs. World Vision helped her get the first club started in 2002. These days there are 17 clubs throughout Kosovo with more than 300 children participating. Through the clubs, children like Adem learn to make friends and build understanding with children who they once considered enemies. While it is difficult for Adem to forget his painful past, he does not want to get revenge. Adem says: "Kids for Peace clubs have helped me forget the violence in my past life and to look forward to a better future with peace."</p>
9	<p>On the International Human Solidarity Day (20 December), a youth group of 50 young people from Lezha, northeast Albania, held a demonstration to raise awareness about exploited children in their city. They had noticed a dramatic increase in the number of children dropping out of school too young with no skills or qualifications. The only option for these children was poorly paid manual labour so they struggled to earn enough to buy food. Denise (17) was one of the youth group members who came up with the idea of a demonstration. Their youth group was started through World Vision's development work in their community. Before the demonstration, the young people worked with World Vision for two weeks to develop their ideas into a professional presentation. The message was: "It's time to change." One group did a chant and held banners saying things like: "I have lost my dreams", "I feel lonely", "Is there someone who can protect me?", "If we are equal before the law, why do I feel discriminated against?", "Try to see the world through my eyes". Another group performed a flash mob dance entitled: "Searching for the Sun". They invited local media and a TV crew to broadcast their message so they reached more people than those in the city centre.</p>
10	<p>Outspoken activist, Raphael (12), lives in a remote village in Rwanda. At celebrations for the Day of the African Child (June 16), he advocated for child rights and child protection. A year ago, Raphael realised that child abuse was increasing. "Many children were dropping out of school. There were many cases of child abuse and corporal punishment such as caning or slapping. Some children were kicked out of home at night to sleep in the cold as punishment." Raphael formed a group with ten friends – girls and boys aged 10 to 13 years. They met with the local World Vision manager where Raphael explained their initiative. The group would identify and report child abuse cases so that World Vision could provide follow-up support. Raphael shares their approach: "We get close to them and invite them to play with us – mostly football. By the time we finish the game, we are friends. We sit and ask them questions and they open up and talk to us. We've talked street children into quitting drugs and many have gone back to live with their guardians. Some children tell us they don't have school books or stationery so they've dropped out of school. We ask World Vision to support them. In some cases, we've lent them our own supplies to get them back to school quickly." One villager reports that, "The kids are making a big difference. Harsh punishments have reduced dramatically and parents know that the kids won't hesitate to report them to local leaders." The World Vision manager praises them. "It's amazing! After investigation, almost all the child abuse cases they report are true. They've even helped us identify children with severe malnutrition. I now strongly believe that kids can make a difference in their community!"</p>

- 11** The Child Parliament in Beni city, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, started in 2006. Members come from diverse backgrounds and experiences: some are well-educated, some have been abused, and others were child soldiers or sex workers. They all live, work or go to school in the city. Their group's mission is to protect children. They advocate for the rights of children, fight all kinds of abuse, promote equality and encourage children to become leaders in their communities. The Child Parliament places posters around town and presents a weekly spot on a local radio station to discuss child rights and how children can fight any injustice they're facing. They put pressure on local politicians, look for ways to prevent abuse, and educate others. They also organise sporting and cultural events to discourage young people from getting into street violence, fighting or prostitution. The Child Parliament has a child protection network active in local schools to educate teachers and students about child rights. They work alongside the education ministry and teachers union to promote child rights messages in schools. A committee runs the Child Parliament, led by a president, secretary, vice-secretary and a public relations officer. Six committee members each manage a different part of their work: quality education, health, child protection, reducing child poverty, peace and security, and care of children. At their meetings each week, everything is democratic. They discuss and vote on all issues and activities. The Child Parliament receives support through World Vision's community development work. The parliament also partners with a local lawyer who champions their ideas and fights their causes in court. Recently they won several legal battles to release unfairly detained children from jail and they are now pressuring the mayor to shut down brothels in the city.
- 12** Child rights abuses are widespread in the Gonder Zuria district of Ethiopia. "Children are the targets of all forms of abuse and harmful traditional practices. We are the most at-risk segment of society. People knowingly or unknowingly harm us," says 16-year-old Liyuwork, Chairperson of the district's Child Parliament. "Our peers are forced into marriage at an early age, children are stolen and taken to remote areas for hard labour, and some children are raped and their abusers aren't taken to court. Some families make their children look after cattle rather than go to school." World Vision helped the young people in Gonder Zuria district start a Child Parliament and supports them with training, advice, visits to other parliaments and activity costs. Each village area sets up a Child Parliament committee with 10-12 members. Whenever they hear rumours of rights violations or illegal activities involving children, the committee follows the case and reports it to village leaders. If they don't respond in time, the committee reports back to the Child Parliament. The parliament works closely with the district police to follow up these leads and take appropriate action. Since their parliament began in 2008, it has undertaken a number of child advocacy initiatives and freed several children from harsh abuse. "We have taken abduction, rape and child trafficking cases to court and the offenders have been penalised with up to 15 years imprisonment," reports Liyuwork. Their contribution is valued by the wider community and their actions have improved children's lives. As part of their prevention strategy, they also organise positive activities such as sports and cultural events to educate and raise awareness in the community.
- 13** Shapla (16) lives in Bangladesh and uses her experience of facing underage marriage to help others in similar situations. Her parents struggled to earn enough to survive and hoped to improve their situation by arranging for Shapla to get married when she was 15 years old. Her future husband was young like her, but his parents were financially secure. Even though it's illegal in Bangladesh, more than 60 per cent of girls face underage and forced marriage. Shapla didn't want to get married and tried to tell her parents how she felt, but they wouldn't listen and stopped her from going to school. Marrying off daughters early can be a way to ease a family's financial burden and, to some extent, a way to protect and provide for a daughter's future. It's a tradition fuelled by poverty and gender inequality. One evening at home while reading her Life Skills textbook, Shapla came across a chapter about underage marriage. Reading it over and over she became afraid of the consequences: young pregnancy, high birth rates, maternal mortality, domestic violence, and low education levels, leading to more poverty. She shared her problem with friends at the local Child Forum and urged them to get someone to help her. A community leader spoke with her parents, making them angry at first, but now their views have changed. They hadn't realised the consequences and have postponed her marriage until she is 18. Shapla's parents are proud of her now and feel positive that she'll get a good job in the future. Shapla appreciates how the Child Forum helped her learn about issues that affect her future. Their meetings and discussions made her more aware and gave her the support she needed. Her experience has also motivated her to help stop the underage marriages of two other girls she knows.

Children's Club, Youth Group, Child Forum, Child Parliament

Although these groups have different names, rules, types of leadership and ways of organising themselves, they are very similar. They are organised and run by children or young people who decide on the group's focus or purpose. Adults, teachers and parents only have a supporting role and don't take responsibility or make any decisions.