

THE F-WORD WE *shouldn't* USE

It's unarguably a humanitarian crisis – South Sudan has been gripped by a conflict-driven hunger emergency that could leave thousands of children and adults facing death. But how to talk about it to the public has been challenging.

The F-word on all our lips – is famine. For months, we've been expecting it to be declared. Violent clashes in South Sudan have so far forced 1.7 million people to flee their homes, leaving behind crops, food supplies and entire livelihoods.

Thirteen-year-old Chuol* recalls leaving his family's land, where his father and siblings were shot. "We just ran. We were running through crossfire with bullets flying all around. We had to leave without any belongings, without our cattle... they even took our cattle."

Others, like Nyandong* have stories of survival that would be traumatic for any mother. "We were all in Bor when the fighting started. Innocent people were killed ... we crouched and hid behind a fence ... I could see the scared faces of my children, and armed men walking the streets looking for people to kill," she says.

"When the sun set, we left. We took nothing and it took us 30 days to walk here. We ate the leaves off the trees and thought we would die of thirst."

Enduring perilous journeys to safety, many have survived the fighting only to now face starvation in camps and border villages where food is scarce and crops have not been planted. Children eat grass and leaves to stave off the ongoing hunger which, if not

addressed immediately, could see the death of 50,000 malnourished children by Christmas and escalate into full-blown famine.

Only, because it's not famine right now the world has not taken notice, preoccupied with more attention-grabbing crises like Gaza/Israel, Iraq and Ukraine.

Davina Jeffery, a Save the Children Food Security and Livelihoods Advisor, travelled to South Sudan where she says famine is still a few months off, but that more people will die before famine is formally declared.

"What is happening is not a new problem and was documented following the Horn of Africa famine in 2011," says Davina.

"A study on the crisis found more deaths occurred during the period before the large humanitarian scale-up, before famine was declared" – which meant that more people died in the "emergency" phase than during the famine phase.

Davina is also acutely aware that not using the F-word now, means little media attention and even less funding, which causes other problems.

"Late funding leads to late delivery of seeds to affected areas ... if full funding for seed delivery is not received before October, famine is likely to hit South Sudan in the first half of 2015," explains Davina.



Call it what you will – children and adults in South Sudan are extremely and distressingly hungry. We launched a "hunger" appeal and called on Save the Children supporters to help.

Already many have given generously and helped reach more than 180,000 children and adults in desperate need.

This includes reaching as many dangerously malnourished children as possible with highly nutritious food and emergency healthcare. And it includes giving seeds and tools to families so they can plant much-needed crops immediately.

We don't know how this will unfold. It's still estimated that by the end of the year 7 million people – half the South Sudanese population – will be in need of humanitarian aid. Let's hope the world responds before the dreaded F-word becomes a reality. ■

Give now and help stop famine being declared at savethechildren.org.au/southsudan

*Names have been changed to protect identities.

NOT JUST *angry boys*

A lot of kids see the dark side of life much too soon.
For many, where they've come from is frightening.
And what lies ahead is a life of anger and more crime
- unless something fundamental changes.

Often what society sees is a bunch of trouble-makers. There is very little empathy for angry boys with a tough exterior, even when beneath it all they are just trying to protect themselves in the only way they know how.

Poverty, family violence, abuse and drug and alcohol use are all factors that lead boys to anger and crime. Research shows there is a direct link between the abuse and neglect of children and their involvement in criminal activity.

Once caught up in the juvenile justice system, there is limited support to help children transition back into the community after they're released, which manifests in the devastating statistic that

68 percent of young people who appear in the New South Wales Children's Court will be arrested for crime as adults.

We probably can't change some of the difficulties they've faced as a child, but with the help of our supporters and The Smith Family we can change what happens next by giving these kids a different choice.

Take Peter* and Noah. They're the best kind of friends – they love hanging out, they trust each other and they learn about the world together.

Both live in Sydney's western suburbs but there's a bit of an age difference. Peter is 12 years old and Noah is 35. Together they attend Save the

Children's mentoring program on Wednesday afternoons, with Peter coming straight from school and Noah volunteering to take time out from his job and community work studies to mentor Peter.

Peter's anger hasn't landed him in jail yet – but he was getting into trouble and his teachers believed it was just a matter of time.

In the beginning, it could be tough. "Peter would withdraw from the group. He would be an angry boy, and because of his anger he would break away from the group and not participate," says Noah.

"But because of the mentoring, there was always someone to hang out with him. We helped him realise there's an alternative way of acting. I think, in terms of his anger, he's come a very long way."

Our Stability through Support mentoring program works with boys in Sydney's western suburbs aged nine to 12 years old who are in contact with the criminal justice system or who are experiencing behaviour problems.

With a positive role model and someone who cares about them, young people are more likely to overcome some of the psychological and environmental problems that lead to school drop-out and juvenile offending.

In 2013, every single boy in our program reported more positive feelings about school, home and police since participating in the project.



Photos: Robert McKechnie/Save the Children



"WHAT ARE WE SAVING THESE CHILDREN FROM? ... WE'RE SAVING THEM FROM MAKING BAD CHOICES."



"Our mindset is focused on believing in these kids and knowing they can be better. We know we're up against other role models in their lives, so every time they come to the program we're challenging role models outside of the program," says Noah.

And Noah isn't the only one who can see a difference. Peter can see it himself.

"When I'm down, I talk to Noah about stuff that I'm not happy about at school. And stuff in our family. I can trust him. I can talk to him," says Peter.

"The program's awesome. I've learnt new skills like how to control my anger. I hope to make something out of it someday – maybe I could become like the youth workers here." ■

Find out more about the Stability through Support program you've helped make happen by watching our video at savethechildren.org.au/stabilitythroughsupport

*Name has been changed to protect his identity.



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If you hop on the mobile health bus in India's New Delhi, you might find Sunita Grover – a community health volunteer with Save the Children – working in a slum area of the city.

She's one of many dedicated health workers who are bringing healthcare to the doorstep of some of India's most disadvantaged families.

"I work with small children, pregnant women, children under two, newborns. I work on their health. I speak to them, I give them advice and I take care of them," says Sunita.

New Delhi is home to almost 17 million people. More than half of its population resides in slum areas, unauthorised colonies and Jhuggi Jhopdi (shanty) clusters. Delhi's urban poor do not have access to basic healthcare and sanitation, which impacts the health and survival of children.



"The main problem is that it is difficult for women to get out. It's a slum area and a conservative area. The hospital is very far away so if women or their children have a fever or a headache, they feel 'What's the point in going?'" explains Sunita.

"If they do go to hospital there are long queues so sometimes they have to come back empty handed, without seeing the doctor. So they only go to hospital when things get critical."

The mobile red bus not only brings essential healthcare to the slum areas, but Sunita also helps take women and children to nearby hospitals and health centres, giving them the support they need.

"If we go with them to the hospital then their case is looked at," she explains.

Sunita believes that once a mother receives the care she needs, her children can then benefit.

"Every mother should have a health worker so that she learns how to take care of her child, so her child has good nutrition and is fully immunised," she says.

"For India, for the future we need healthy children because only healthy children can make our future brighter and can make the countries brighter. If the root is weak how will the tree bear fruit and prosper?"

"We have made a beginning with Save the Children. People are now much more aware."

Save the Children, with our supporters, are working with the local government in Delhi to 'bring healthcare to the doorstep'. Through this program, we are providing around 600,000 women, men and children with access to healthcare.

You can help us reach more children with life-saving vaccines and healthcare through programs like this. [Donate to our Vaccinations Appeal](#).

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PROTECTING CHILDREN BY NIGHT

Project name: Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service (KNPYS)

Location: Kununurra, Western Australia

Project theme: Child protection

Objectives:

- Ensure children and young people who are on the streets at night are cared for by a responsible adult
- Support children and young people to be safe when they are on the streets at night

Project cycle: 2012–2016

Total budget: AUD \$1.35 million



Since 2013 the project has engaged 1,331 children



881 late night recreation activities and life-skills sessions have been conducted



More than two-thirds of night patrol staff are Aboriginal



In the first three months of 2014 there were 35% fewer children on the streets compared to the same period in 2013

When the sun sets

The landscape around the remote town of Kununurra is breathtaking. It's a scene of waterholes, red cliffs and open spaces, and the people who live here have a strong connection to country. Yet there are social problems stemming from historical trauma and poverty that make Kununurra a difficult place to live.

Dusk can be a risky time for children and adults alike. After dark, many children find themselves on the streets well into the night when home isn't offering peace and safety. The longer children and young people stay out on the streets in Kununurra, the more likely they are to be involved in crime and high-risk activities like drug and alcohol abuse, sexual behaviour and truancy when they are too tired to go school the following day. In Western Australia, Aboriginal young people made up 77 percent of juveniles in custody at the end of June 2014², highlighting the desperate need to address how Aboriginal children are supported in their communities during these times.

To help prevent Kununurra children getting caught up in negative patterns, Save the Children runs a night patrol bus as part of the Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service (KNPYS). Staffed by local Aboriginal people, the bus does rounds of the town on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, offering lifts to young people who are out on the streets. Once on board, a child nominates a 'safe place' where they want to be dropped off for the night. It may be home, a relative's house or the youth centre (Youth Hub). The bus staff check the nominated place is safe. If it's not, they will try somewhere else. There is always a female staff member on board offering specialised support to girls.

After school hours, with few activities available to them, children have a greater chance of becoming involved in crime. The project runs an after-school chill space from 3–6pm, along with day and night-time activities for all children at the Youth Hub, like sport, art and movies, as well as group dinners, back to country day trips and mentoring for the most at-risk children. Group girl dinners, for example, are great avenues for informing girls about how they can protect themselves when they are out late on the street. The project uses the Youth Hub to provide one-on-one support for high-risk children in the form of mentoring and counselling. In this space, staff can provide guidance on alcohol and drug use, avoiding crime, and safety and protection from bullying, child abuse and violence.

“Investing in young people over many years is critical to really affect their lives and contribute to generational change.”

Changing the nightscape

KNPYS emerged in response to high levels of crime, substance abuse, neglect and poor school attendance – all issues that affect children's rights, growth and development. KNPYS is the only night service in the community for children, even though taking children and young people off the street is seen as a community priority, as it removes them from being both the victims and perpetrators of crime.

From the perspective of community stakeholders, the project is having a positive impact. They say without KNPYS, children and young people would sleep on the streets or stay out all night. Girls and young women would experience more assaults, crime levels would remain high and young men and boys would be more likely to offend, leading to time in juvenile detention. The success of the KNPYS is evident in the numbers. In the first three months of 2013 there were 483 pickups, while during the same period in 2014 this had dropped to 227 – less than half, which means fewer children on the streets at night.

Much of the project's success is attributed to the hiring and training of local Aboriginal staff. It's a tight-knit community. With skill development in child protection, first aid, and drug and alcohol support, these local staff members now have the knowledge to better support young people, building on existing trusted relationships.

The project's success is also attributed to linking with other local groups. KNPYS works with Community Response for Our Children (CROC) – a local child-protection working group – by sharing information that can help them identify community needs and special cases. This has been key in identifying the most at-risk youth.

“The tie in with CROC is the greatest success...it streamlined our ability to have better and pointed targeted services,” said a local community worker.

There has been local recognition surrounding the importance of the project – 75 percent of local service providers interviewed as part of a program review in 2014 agreed the project was a good response for child neglect and street presence.

“Prior [to this project] children were being brought to the prison lock-up because there was nowhere else to bring them,” said a Save the Children staff member.

For young women and girls, they feel the night patrol keeps them safer at night, while boys often report it keeps them out of trouble. Perhaps unsurprisingly, girls are recorded as using the service twice as much as boys.

Acknowledging the gaps

While there is no doubt KNPYS is valuable and much-needed in Kununurra, the long-term sustainability of the project needs to be addressed for it to have the best impact for children.



Young people at a Save the Children activity in Kununurra.
Photo: Robert McKechnie/Save the Children

There was limited community consultation when the initial project was designed, leading to two project designs and two theories of change in two years. The first design came from Save the Children's Perth office with inadequate local participation. Outcomes were difficult to measure, and staff did not have access to external data or the training to collect data. As a result, the local project team never adopted this first design, finding it to be unrealistic and overly ambitious. In June 2014, a second theory of change was developed by the local team: *To protect young people and improve their resilience by building their capacity to respond positively to adversity and enhancing fortitude.*

A second gap became evident around the engagement of parents and caregivers. The stretch on resources and the lack of time staff had to engage with parents resulted in insufficient local stakeholder engagement when the project was designed, and this gap has persisted when it comes to parent and carer involvement. They know about the night patrol bus but not much about the other project activities. Some community stakeholders also caution the project may be removing parental responsibility to supervise their children. What is emerging is recognition that increased participation of parents and carers in KNPYS would improve the ownership of the project in the community and provide more holistic support to children and young people.

Likewise, greater engagement of local staff could create greater change with limited investment. One of the most celebrated achievements of the project is the predominant hiring and training of local Aboriginal staff. Yet there has also been some criticism that these workers are from just a few families and that they are not representative of the community, which could impact who uses the service.

A big limitation of KNPYS is its ability to meet the full needs of the most at-risk children. To provide a better service, the project needs more dedicated engagement with these children, which of course requires more staffing hours. Currently, the most at-risk youth receive less than one hour of one-on-one guidance each week. Importantly, more staff hours would mean there would also be time for staff to meet and build relationships with families and other community agencies, strengthening the systems that are needed to start to embed this service in the community and bring about long-term change.

Building on what we know

KNPYS has taken two years to build the trust of children and young people in the community. These things take time. But with just two years left of the project cycle, we recognise there is a need to reassess how we approach the project if we want to meet our objectives by 2016. While the project

has gotten to the heart of after-dark and long-ignored issues facing children on the streets in Kununurra, the lack of other services, a permanent safe place for children and young people and a lack of community ownership will compromise the sustainability of the project.

Investing in young people over many years is critical to really affect their lives and contribute to generational change. A project like KNPYS shows that great work can be done and that this work is supported by the community workers and Elders. But, as so often happens, these projects don't receive funding for the time it takes to really instill the work and bring about community ownership.

Talking to parents

It's the local community stakeholders who have the best solutions for how to engage parents and we are listening to them. They believe it will take a concerted focus on communicating project objectives and outcomes with parents, and building a relationship with them. In this way, parents and carers would become more aware of their child's circumstances and the project could better assist families in a holistic way – instead of just focusing on the needs of young people. But we recognise this also requires stronger local support systems and greater resources – a constant challenge.

“You should physically go to the house – build that relationship. Talk to the person, understand where the families are coming from. You can't get that through a report,” said a local community worker.

Embedding systems

At this stage in the project we need to focus on building the systems that will enable local ownership, and sustain the services beyond Save the Children's involvement. This means working more closely with local staff to both train and involve them in the long-term objectives of the project. It's also about working better with parents and carers, and finding a way to make them part of the project so their sense of responsibility for these children is nurtured.

It's time to really leverage our position with local actors, like the CROC working group and others, to formalise referral pathways, strengthen outcomes in individual case management and build a stronger evidence base for change. There's a strong case for increased focus on local schools to offer traineeships and leadership development, building ownership from the ground up. There also needs to be greater advocacy to engage government bodies and private sector investment. Their involvement could generate greater community engagement and keep valuable spaces, like the Youth Hub, open for all children to access.



Taking time to see the change

Andrew* is a vulnerable and volatile boy. He had the highest rate of school suspension in 2014 and the highest street presence out of any young person in Kununurra. He's been constantly violent towards other young people – both girls and boys.

As a high-risk child, Andrew has been receiving one-on-one support from the Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service. And, over time, Andrew has started to change.

“I'm amazed at Andrew's behaviour when he is with Save the Children,” says Rob*, Save the Children's Youth Coordinator. “He now shows more emotional control of his temper and is far less responsive and reactive to teasing and provocation from peers. I have known Andrew for two years and only seen real improvement in the last six to eight weeks.”

There are no quick-fixes for the children in Kununurra. Giving Andrew and other children like him the support they need takes time, which is why long-term sustainability of the Kununurra Night Patrol and Youth Service is so important for changing the lives of Kununurra's kids.

*Names have been changed to protect identities

Kids enjoy one of Save the Children's back-to-country activities.
Photo: Robert McKechnie/Save the Children