



Children & youths in Myanmar during a campaign to raise awareness about COVID-19. Photo taken by Stromme Foundation.

# Global Programme Report

## 2020

## 1. Introduction

ERIKS Global Programme Report 2020 is produced for the Board of Directors of the organisation. The report summarizes and highlights the most important results from the organisation's international programmes and presents challenges in terms of implementation of the programmes. Furthermore, the report provides an opportunity for staff of the organisation to reflect on lessons learnt, risk management and strategic development.

The table below lists the regions and programme countries that the global programme report 2020 include.

Region	Country Programme
Eastern Europe	Romania
	Moldova
	Belarus
South Asia	India
	Bangladesh
South East Asia	Myanmar
	Laos
	Cambodia
East Africa	Ethiopia
	South Sudan
	Uganda
	Kenya
West Africa	Benin
	Burkina Faso
	Mali
<b>Total</b>	

## 2. Reporting process

ERIKS Global Programme Report 2020 has been compiled at ERIKS' head office in Huskvarna and is based on ERIKS' annual country reports, which in their turn are based on annual reports from each partner organisation. The country reports, which include data and input from field visits, evaluations and risk assessments, are prepared at the regional offices by regional managers, programme monitoring officers and financial monitoring officers. As of 1st of January 2021, the Quality Assurance and Programme Advice team (QAPA) at head office in Huskvarna is supporting the regional office teams to ensure quality in program operations according to ERIKS' development policy and other applicable steering documents. The QAPA team has therefore supported the regional offices in drafting their country reports for 2020. Also, the financial reports are consolidated and reviewed by the organisation's financial controller at the head office. The analysis and compilation of the individual country reports into the Global Programme Report is performed by the Donor Relations (DR) team at head office in Sweden together with programme director and deputy programme director. As of 1st of January 2021, the DR team at head office in Huskvarna is working with institutional funding for both the global programmes as well as the national programmes. The results found are presented in this document; ERIKS – Global Programme Report 2020.

The year of 2020 brought about significant challenges due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges impacted all levels of the organisation, including implementing partners and the rights-holders ERIKS is called to serve, and will be highlighted throughout the report. Due to the global pandemic and the unique situation where ERIKS had vacancies and absences of staff at several of the regional offices, ERIKS asked the Board of Directors for permission to postpone submission of the Global Programme Report 2020 from June to September. The request was approved by the Board of Directors. Furthermore, an exception was approved for the regional office

in Burkina Faso, to not have to submit country reports for all their countries due to the challenging circumstances. The Regional Office in Burkina Faso has therefore decided to not submit an annual report for 2020 for the programme and projects in Mali.

Although ERIKS has one on-going project in Laos and a few in both Ethiopia and India, there are no country strategies for these specific countries and hence no country reports for 2020. The narrative report is therefore based on the country reports for Burkina Faso, Benin, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Romania, Belarus and Moldova.

## 3. Results

Under this section, the results found in the country reports are presented. To facilitate the reading, the results are divided as per ERIKS' five global goals: partnership, education, health, protection and humanitarian assistance.

### Partnership

Many of the country reports highlight that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been less partnership initiatives such as physical meetings, networking and collective advocacy efforts during 2020. Moreover, some evaluations and organisational assessments initially planned for 2020 has been postponed due to existing restrictions of travel and gatherings. At regional office level, the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruption on many levels, particularly in relation to partner visits, monitoring of projects, networking opportunities and training events. However, both staff at head office, regional office and implementing partners have during the COVID-19 pandemic shown great ability of being flexible and have adapted projects and programmes to the challenges in order to continue the important work of ERIKS. An example of this flexibility is how regional office staff conducted their monitoring and follow-up meetings virtually as many planned field visits were cancelled. This limited the negative impacts since online communication enabled the work to continue and gave the regional offices the possibility to, with more flexibility, support implementing partners based on their challenges and needs. At head office level, the pandemic meant that most visits to regional offices and implementing partners had to be cancelled or postponed. It also affected the annual global meeting that usually gathers ERIKS' regional and head office-based staff for a full week of meetings and training in Huskvarna. The 2020 global annual meeting was instead held online. Although 2020 was a challenging year with the COVID-19 pandemic, the collaboration between ERIKS and partners continued to thrive thanks to principles of flexibility, mutual respect, needs and responsiveness.

In each country, workshops and trainings on relevant subjects related to partnership have been organised and following are a few examples highlighted in the country reports. In Kenya, a forum was held virtually to explore the possibilities for resource mobilisation in the region. Partners in Kenya have also been trained on Outcome Mapping and Harvesting. In Myanmar, focus for 2020 have been on technical support on situational analysis and risk analysis as well as to strengthen the Child Rights-based Approach. Refresher trainings on Outcome Mapping and Harvesting have also been provided virtually in Myanmar. In Moldova, capacity building and partnership have during 2020 mainly focused on integrating child rights in programme activities and to develop child protection policies with help from different experts and stakeholders.

Networking and advocacy are important tools for sustainable and structural change. ERIKS is continuously promoting and facilitating participation of our partners in relevant child right networks. For example, an important advocacy action in Burkina Faso that implementing partners participated in during 2020 were advocacy for local development planning and budgeting sensitive to gender and to child protection. The advocacy event targeted all mayors of the 350 municipalities in Burkina Faso and contributed to a requirement from the national association of mayors of Burkina Faso to integrate budget and activities for the promotion of gender and child protection in all communal development plans.

### A. Education

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools all over the world have been closed and children have missed out on important learning opportunities. Although many schools have transitioned to online learning platforms, many children in the countries where ERIKS' global programmes are implemented, stand no chance at engaging in online learning and the number of children out of school have dramatically increased. The progress achieved regarding school enrolment and performance, and inner motivation to continue the education path, has been marked by challenges. However, the country reports for 2020 provide numerous examples of successful transition to online learning platforms or other learning methods used to ensure children's access to quality education. Below examples are to be seen as illustrative results reported during 2020.

In Bangladesh, ERIKS's partner organisation Friendship is working to improve the access to quality primary and secondary schools in remote and inaccessible areas in Bangladesh. Without Friendship's schools, most children living in these areas would not have access to education. As in most countries globally, all schools in Bangladesh closed as part of COVID-19 restrictions during 2020. Friendship therefore organised alternative ways of teaching including organising children in small groups outside of the school, keeping teacher-student contacts via telephone, and children meeting with their teachers individually. A total number of 2 666 children completed the full school year in 2020 in the 37 primary schools supported within the ERIKS' funded project. Although it was not possible to organize the national P5 leaving exams, Friendship, based on informal tests, could promote 396 children to grade 6. Even in Cambodia, one of ERIKS' partner organisation, together with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) have made significant efforts to provide e-learning for all students. However, most students in rural areas do not have access to the devices needed for online learning. Teacher in four provinces in Cambodia have therefore collaborated with different stakeholders and village chief to arrange small learning groups (10-15 students/group). The implementing partners furthermore had regular communication via phone call with parents to follow up on the results of children's learning, to distribute the homework and monthly examination and encouraged parents to spend more time to support and follow up on their children's study.

The challenges to obtain access to quality education varies. In Kenya, different projects sought during 2020 to improve access by expanding school infrastructures and facilities such as access to safe drinking water as well as construct latrines. Other projects contributed to create public awareness on children's rights, social inclusion, and negative social norms that hinder children from accessing education. One common challenge regarding education is for children to stay in school. The dropout of girls is a global challenge which has been even further deteriorated during the pandemic. The dropouts are mostly caused by early and undesired pregnancies, child labour in domestic activities, child marriage, the low value of education for girls and the lack of healthy leisure time for vulnerable children. In 2020, ERIKS and its partner organisations have therefore continued to develop initiatives aimed to combat the root causes of this situation. Among others, actions to information regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), have been provided as part of projects relating to education. This has, in Burkina Faso, contributed to the significant reduction in cases of early pregnancy, which constitutes one of the factors of school dropouts in the area. This can be seen in the municipality of Kourouma, where the drop-out rate for girls dropped from 33% in 2019 to 3% in 2020. In South Sudan, the project Girls without Dowry by ERIKS implementing partner Manna Development Agency South Sudan (MADA) also focus on education for girls. One component of the project aims to address menstrual poverty that leads to adolescent girls dropping out of school through information relating to SRHR and distribution of dignity kit to help the girls maintain school attendance. As a result of the project and these interventions, in 2020, all the girls who were re-enrolled into school by the project were eligible to sit for the final primary school examination. The girls passed with high grades and were all admitted to secondary school.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, new education projects have been able to start up in Bangladesh and in Belarus during 2020. In Bangladesh, one of the new projects aims to establish educational support centres where children, who have dropped out of school, have been enrolled for an accelerated learning program. The other new project focuses on teaching children about disaster preparedness and how to disseminate messages regarding disaster risk reduction and climate adaption. In Belarus, a new project focus on inclusive education where around 1 200 children with disabilities in residential institutions and children attending rehabilitation centres all over Belarus have been introduced to children's rights through various means using elements of alternative communication, including posters and cartoon.

A prerequisite to reach sustainable results regarding access to education is to address legal and moral duty-bearers on all levels, including teachers, school management and parents. An example of such sustainable results can be found in Romania, where all implementing partners during 2020 have reported increased interest in Roma children school integration. This is the result of the constant communication and interaction between ERIKS' partners, representing the Roma community, and the state structures. Moreover, parents in Romania have expressed concerns about the fact that their children are missing school due to the pandemic, which is a good indication of families recognising the value of education. Awareness-raising activities towards parents can here, and in many more projects, work as a very important part in ensuring children's right to education. Once the parents understand the importance of education the likelihood of children entering and completing their studies increases, which is portrayed in the above-mentioned example from Romania.

## **B. Health**

In order to ensure children's right to quality health care and good health conditions, ERIKS has throughout 2020 continued to focus on preventative measures, including access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health education, nutrition, maternal care, pre- and postnatal care, psycho-social support for children, support to children with mental and or physical disabilities and information regarding SRHR. Below examples are to be seen as illustrative examples of results reported during 2020.

During 2020, the thematic area regarding health has mainly focused on direct actions to improve children's health – namely to provide information on how to prevent oneself from COVID-19. During the global pandemic, ERIKS' implementing partners in Myanmar worked to support the hygiene of the children through providing information on good hygiene practices and on how to protect themselves and others from COVID-19. As result, children became active in participating in discussions related to health and dared to express their opinions for activities they were involved in. Even in Romania, partners reported children being receptive and curious on the topic of COVID-19. Besides raising awareness on the danger of this virus and preventive measures, children in Romania have learned to recognise and manage emotions and have been supported to deal with anxiety and fears caused by the virus and isolation. As highlighted in the country report, these children have become more confident in asking questions about health and hygiene matters.

In 2020, ERIKS' implementing partners have continued to contribute to the indirect improvement of children's health through awareness raising activities. In Burkina Faso, one of ERIKS' project focused on awareness raising on the issue of early and/or unintended pregnancies for girls enrolled in schools. As a result, only two (a rate of 0.14%) cases of pregnancy were recorded in secondary schools in Bilanga and Matiacoali (compared to 2.92% in 2019). Moreover, the country report also emphasises a change in behaviour since the awareness raising and provision of information on the topic has made parents talk more about reproductive health with their children than before.

A prerequisite to reach sustainable results is to address legal and moral duty-bearers on all levels to ensure that adequate WASH facilities are available, as well as adequate health care and information on health issues. In Belarus, two projects implemented by ERIKS' partner organisation World without Borders (WWB) have been focusing on children with disabilities living in residential institutions, where changes in the legislation have been made to prevent the institutionalisation of children with disabilities and plans of action have been presented to develop family-type care services. During 2020, the first management decision regarding a plan for deinstitutionalisation of children was adopted based on the roadmap for deinstitutionalisation developed by WWB. Additionally, more than 250 professionals – representatives of local authorities, state institutions, public organisations responsible for the provision of social services to children with disabilities – have increased their competencies on the realisation of children's rights to a family, prevention of institutionalisation and planning deinstitutionalisation activities. This is one out of many examples where different stakeholders have been given the opportunity to collaborate for sustainable results and where both legal and moral duty-bearers have been addressed to take responsibility.

In addition, the parents inevitably play a key role in ensuring the wellbeing of their children. To highlight one example, 420 members of the Village Committees in Benin have received information through ERIKS implementing partner Bureau des Projets de Développement et des Oeuvres Sociales (BUPDOS) on the parent-child dialogue and the sexual and reproductive health issues, to bring them to unravel this social construction and contribute to the regression of child pregnancies. The trained members have drawn up an action plan to advocate for more dialogue within the families, but also the introduction of a module on the thematic in the secondary school programme. Overall, there has been significant progress in knowledge of SRHR among project targets.

## **C. Protection**

Due to consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, children across all regions have been, and still are, facing a much higher risk of becoming victims of trafficking, exploitation, and abuse as many parents have lost their income and as many children have lost their educational opportunities. For instance, country reports note an increase of child marriage because of reduced incomes. To ensure children's right to protection, rehabilitation and reintegration, ERIKS has throughout 2020 continued to focus on children living in conflict with the law, subjected to trafficking or abuse, living on the streets, as well as children encountering negative cultural and religious norms that are harmful for an individual. Examples below are to be seen as illustrative cases of results reported during 2020.

In Belarus and regarding preventative work and awareness-raising, one project has focused on protection for children in conflict with the law. In the 29 regions of the country involved in the project, 175 teenagers in conflict with the law have participated in the development and implementation of their resocialisation plans. They have learned to identify risks and opportunities for themselves and set goals for realising opportunities. As a result of the work carried out by specialists in the field, some adolescents have shown a desire to become partners in prevention activities among adolescents like them. Furthermore, 85 children in conflict with the law are in permanent communication with a contact person from who the children receive support and assistance in their everyday life. In Cambodia, implementing partner organisations reached 8 587 abused children. Most of the projects in Cambodia focuses on both efforts to rescue children as well as the process of reintegration and rehabilitation. 92 children were rescued from physical violence (5), rape (52) and trafficking (35). With case management and legal supports from implementing partners, all survivors then received regular counselling services, legal

support, education materials, medical treatment and sanitation materials. Through this psychosocial support, the survivors reported improved well-being and resilience enabling some of them to go back to school.

Besides working in different stages of protection, another prerequisite to reach sustainable results is to address legal and moral duty-bearers on all levels to ensure adequate child protection structures and mechanisms. During 2020 various capacity building activities have therefore been carried out to contribute to this outcome. In Cambodia, ERIKS' implementing partners and other stakeholders have been influencing legal duty-bearers at regional, national, and sub-national levels to fulfil their obligation and take appropriate measures to protect girls and boys from abuses, negligence, and exploitation in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. ERIKS' implementing partners therefore contributed with their expertise, financial support and advocacy to influence the changes regarding the national strategy plan, principal guidance, and policy implementation strengthening for the best interest of vulnerable and surviving children of abuse in Cambodia. In Bangladesh, ERIKS's partner organisation Community Development Center (CODEC) reached a total of 2 600 children and adolescents in the Rohingya refugee settlements and surrounding host communities in Cox's Bazar with child protection-related information. Children from the Rohingya community in Bangladesh as well as the host community learned about their rights. In total, 266 weekly sessions on trafficking and abuse were held with adolescent and their parents, as well majis (community leaders) reaching 4 245 male and 8 455 female participants. These sessions have helped inform communities on the risks of trafficking, and hopefully this leads to an increased awareness among children and their parents on how to safeguard themselves and others in their communities. According to the project, the sessions on child-rights and trafficking and abuse have influenced local communities in the sense that local government members and teachers are discussing the issue of trafficking at their respective meetings and networks. Moreover, the prevalence of child abuse within families has been reduced in the local communities. Furthermore, ERIKS and its implementing partner East Africa Center for Human Rights (EACHRights) were during 2020 engaged in holding the Kenyan Government to account through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The recommendations accepted by the government of Kenya included, among others, ending female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. Following this, ERIKS and the implementing partner EACHRights supported stakeholders of UPR to develop an implementation plan towards addressing the recommendations. ERIKS are currently awaiting the validation and adoption of the Government plan for implementation.

## **D. Humanitarian assistance**

As a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions, ERIKS experienced an increase of requests from partners to respond to urgent needs during 2020. ERIKS therefore decided to respond to a larger number of countries/a greater number of partners compared to earlier. As a result, most of the humanitarian projects were limited to smaller budgets than past years.

During 2020, ERIKS introduced a requirement to report disaggregated data in all humanitarian projects. As of 2020, the total number of reached individuals in ERIKS humanitarian projects is 53 040. In addition, ERIKS has also humanitarian components in other more long-term projects and the individuals reached by these efforts are not included in the 53 040.

Countries where ERIKS have engaged in larger humanitarian actions include Burkina Faso (nutrition) and Bangladesh (floods). An increase of local humanitarian crisis related to floods and storms have been noted in both East Africa (Kenya, Uganda) and South East Asia (Cambodia). The humanitarian assistance related to natural disasters and climate change during 2020 is further described under section 5 'Risk Management'.

During 2020, all humanitarian projects, including the above mentioned that is further presented under section 5, have included components of awareness raising on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Other focus areas have included food security and WASH. Besides humanitarian actions related to natural disasters, ERIKS has had two humanitarian projects during 2020 solely focusing on mitigating the spread of COVID-19, one in Myanmar through ERIKS' implementing partner Wunpawng Ninghtoi (WPN) and one in India through the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR). In camps for internally displaced people (IDP) in Myanmar, there has been, and still is, an increased risk of the spread of the virus among vulnerable people with limited access to health care and information on COVID-19. The lack of access to sufficient food is urgent as well as means to mitigate the spread. ERIKS' humanitarian intervention in Myanmar during 2020 has therefore focused on distributing food and hygiene packages, information sessions regarding COVID-19, and providing support to a set up a quarantine centre for COVID-19 infected people. In India, lockdowns measured to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on the population that is living close to, or below the poverty line. For the large majority that normally receives their income through day-labour, the consequences of not being able to provide for their families has rapidly created a need for a humanitarian intervention. The priority has therefore been to address the urgent lack of access to food. To further mitigate the vulnerability of people affected by the crisis, hygiene and protections packages have been distributed together with sensitization on how to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

## 4. Strategic Development

Strategic development is something that is taking place over time, therefore the aspects raised in this annual report are, to a large extent, things that have been highlighted also in earlier reports. In 2020, several steps in the reorganization of the international programme department, at Head Office (HO) and Regional Offices (RO) were taken. The Deputy Programme Director took over responsibility as line manager for a number of staff members at the Head Office. In return, the Programme Director took over as line manager for the Regional Managers, and the Regional Managers' responsibility for the regional teams was extended. During the year, a Global HR Manual and a Global Financial and Administrative Manual were elaborated, a harmonised accounting system for the Regional Offices was introduced, and a global review of salaries for international staff was carried out.

In January 2021, ERIKS has taken the last steps in the reorganization of the international programme department. A larger operational mandate has been given to the Regional Managers and their teams. At Head Office, the Programme Coordinator roles have been exchanged for two teams called Quality Assurance and Programme Advice (QAPA) and Donor Relations (DR). The idea behind this is to avoid duplication of regional responsibility at HO and RO, increase capacity for organizational learning and capacity development of partners, and be better equipped for sustaining and developing relations to institutional donors.

Linked to the delegation of responsibilities to the Regional Offices, there is a recruitment plan for gradual strengthening of their staff capacity. In 2020, an additional position was created at the South East Asia office as Financial Monitoring Officer. A second recruitment for a Programme Monitoring Officer in Eastern Europe was initiated but had to be withdrawn due to the financial insecurity caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This recruitment was however relaunched and finalised early 2021.

An important aspect of strategic development is the choice of new partner organisations. In 2020, ERIKS initiated partnership with a new organization in Mali, AMAPROS. In Mali, ERIKS has, in the last years, been forced to terminate partnership with a couple of organisations who were not able to adapt their work to the increasingly insecure environment in the country. In AMAPROS, ERIKS has found a partner that is able to work in a very needy part of the country and handle the political instability in the area. In Cambodia, ERIKS initiated partnership with two new organisations in 2020, KPY and Hagar. KPY is an organisation who is strong at different types of training on livelihood as well as child rights. Hagar is a very competent organisation in the areas of child protection issues and humanitarian assistance.

## 5. Risk management

This section includes an overview of the major risks and trends that have been identified in the country reports.

### Effects of the global pandemic

The global COVID-19 pandemic has, as mentioned throughout the report, had major implications for ERIKS throughout 2020. Children's lives have been negatively affected by the pandemic in multiple ways and the consequences thereof cannot be fully estimated at the time the report is being compiled. It is likely that ERIKS' partner organisations will see the impact in children's lives for many years to come.

As presented under section 3 'Results' - partnership, education, health, protection and humanitarian assistance - a deterioration related to children's rights in most regions and countries has been seen. These developments mean that ERIKS and its partner organisations will have to plan and prepare to meet the changing needs of children and families and continue to adapt programmes and projects accordingly. It also means that ERIKS' will have in mind that similar pandemics constitute a real risk to ERIKS' global programme going forward – and lessons learnt from 2020 will thus provide a good foundation in terms of preparedness and experience.

### Mismanagement of resources and weak internal control systems

ERIKS believes that mismanagement of resources is a risk that need continuous attention and is therefore working proactively by providing training to partner organisations to strengthen systems of internal control and ensure compliance with ERIKS' standards as well as national legislation. ERIKS' staff at the regional offices regularly monitor and visit partner organisations to provide support and detect any mismanagement at an early stage. During 2019, specific trainings on finance was provided to partners in Mali, Benin and Burkina Faso. The sessions included legal requirements and obligations related to tax requirements, and action plans were developed between ERIKS and each partner organisations – which ERIKS regional office staff have followed-up on during 2020.

## Increased security concerns due to conflicts or political instability

Violence and conflicts continue to be of serious concern in many parts of the countries where ERIKS is involved. These developments mean that ERIKS and its partner organisations will have to plan and prepare to meet the changing needs of children and families and continue to adapt programmes and projects accordingly. Some examples of countries encountering increased level of conflicts and political instability are listed below.

**Mali** - A political crisis resulted 2020 in an overthrowing of the government through a military coup. Controversial parliamentary elections, among others, that were marred by violence and irregularities provoked massive demonstrations in the country. As a result of the violence, over 40,000 civilians fled their homes. Out of the areas where ERIKS operate, the security situation mostly affects Niono and Bankass. Association Protestante de la Sante au Mali (APSM) ran 20 speed schools in Niono in the beginning of 2020 and ERIKS took the decision to discontinue support to these schools in mid-2020 due to serious threats to the lives of children and teachers. Moreover, one of Organisme de Développement pour l'Espérance au Mali (ODES)'s project in Bankass has since 2019 been discontinued due to the same reasons.

**Burkina Faso** - The past two years have seen a sharp deterioration in the security situation across the country's northern and eastern regions due to the presence of non-state armed groups – many with cross-border ties to extremist groups or movements in neighboring Mali and Niger. In 2020, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) classified the situation as a "non-international armed conflict". The conflict and violence have led to the displacement of more than one million people and has left 3.5 million people in need of assistance – a 60 per cent increase from January 2020 to January 2021. In response to the situation in eastern Burkina Faso, one project of Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques (ODE) had to relocate to the east central parts of Burkina Faso. Moreover, during the second half of 2020, ERIKS started to prepare for a humanitarian intervention in Bam, focusing on preventing malnutrition among IDPs and host communities. The intervention started in January 2021 and will be completed at the end of April 2021. .

**Uganda** – During the COVID-19 pandemic 2020, Uganda went through campaigns for positions of political office. This continued in 2021 due to presidential campaigns with open campaign rallies particularly among the members of the opposition. Several political opponents were treated with brutality in various parts of the country although most arrests were concentrated in the Central parts of Uganda. Some of those arrested have not yet been accounted for. In Kaabong District, where Manna Development Agency (MADA), one of ERIKS supported partners is based, insecurity resulting from cattle rustling in the region has influenced community engagement and project activities. The insecurity caused delay in implementation of planned activities. The security risk level remains high.

**Myanmar** – On 8 November 2020, Myanmar held their second national democratic election after a period of 50 years of military regime. The National League for Democracy (NLD) won 80% of the parliamentary seats and this has affected the power and influence of the military. The military denied the results of the elections and consequently there has been widespread violation of laws and procedures.

**South Sudan** – During 2020, a transnational government was implemented which gave some hope that the situation would normalise in the country. However, there are still no major improvements to be seen as South Sudan continues to struggle with widespread conflicts, insecurity and increasing humanitarian needs.

## Political interference and shrinking space

Civil society independence continues to be challenged in countries where ERIKS operate.

**Cambodia** - a network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) has been formed to gather ideas and strategies to improve articles in the "Law on Associations and NGOs". In response, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has organised regular partnership forums between CSOs and the MoI, starting in 2019. ERIKS' partner organisations have engaged with NGO networks in dialogue and negotiation on issues of concern regarding environment, civic engagement, rights to access information and freedom of expression.

**Uganda** - The situation throughout 2020 was considered relatively stable for ERIKS' partner organisations in the country even though the country suffered high inflation which increased the cost of running projects and programmes. However, ERIKS allowed partners to revise their budgets to align to the economic conditions, which helped to ensure adequate resources for implementation of the planned activities.

## Natural disasters

Natural disasters and climate change affected several of ERIKS' country programmes during 2020. These developments mean that ERIKS and its partner organisations will have to plan and prepare to meet the changing



needs of children and families and continue to adapt programmes and projects accordingly. The most affected countries in 2020 were Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Uganda and Burkina Faso.

**Bangladesh** - There were severe flooding during July – September in north-western Bangladesh where ERIKS' partner Friendship operates. Regular project activities were interrupted, and buildings and crops suffered significant damage. Community preparedness has helped to mitigate the effects of the floods. Emergency food distributions were organised to families including livelihood support with agricultural seeds and hygiene kit support to address diseases and waterborne infections and installation of tube wells and hygienic latrines to prevent further spread of infections caused by contaminated water.

**Cambodia** – Flash floods affected 117 cities and over 500,000 people between September and October 2020. Houses, buildings, fields, schools, crops, roads, bridges and canals were destroyed. ERIKS' partner organisation Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC) were active in an emergency response, along with a network of local churches. The intervention focused on child protection, WASH and food security.

**Kenya** - Heavy torrential rains have affected Kenya and caused flooding, which displaced hundreds of thousands from their homes and destroyed infrastructure such as road and bridges. Rains pounding various parts of the country continue to claim human and animal lives. Supported by ERIKS, I Choose Life and Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) have assisted households with food packets, buckets, jerricans as well as access to clean and safe water.

**Uganda** - Both Spring and Summer rains have decreased in Uganda during the past 25 years, threatening prospects of future food production. ERIKS has explored the possibility of promoting modern farming practices to address the challenge of poverty and climate change. Flooding has also been a challenge and has affected several beneficiaries. ERIKS has therefore supported RODA - Redeemed Church and Lake Albert Children Women Advocacy and Development Organization (LACWADO) to respond to the needs by constructing temporary shelter and offer emergency support for those affected by flooding.

**Burkina Faso** – Part of the severe and multifaceted crisis in Burkina Faso is linked to natural disasters and the vagaries of climate change resulting in food and nutrition insecurity. ERIKS is collaborating with ODE to meet the needs of populations in some of the worst affected areas. The focus of their interventions is to reduce acute malnutrition particularly for children under five and respond to the urgent needs of IDPs through a food and nutritional security project.

## 6. Learnings

Throughout 2020, several learnings have been identified and documented from project level to country programme level. Learning is key in order to ensure as relevant and efficient programmes as possible. ERIKS believes that we constantly need to learn from the context where we and our partners operate to make sure that the strategies and activities developed are relevant and that the needed actors are involved to make sure that the implementation is as efficient as possible. The contexts where our partners are implementing projects are constantly changing, hence the need to systematically gather learnings and document them. The following text attempts to outline the main learnings from the last year, 2020.

### Adaptation to new situations

The main challenges, as well as learnings, during 2020 highlighted in all country reports refers to the effects from the global COVID-19 pandemic. As mentioned throughout the report, partners have been forced to either postpone, find other ways to organise project activities and, in some cases, cancel activities. One of the most important learnings related to the effects from the global pandemic is therefore the importance of flexibility regarding both budget as well as adaptation of activities and methods of working during a crisis. Most of the country reports have mentioned the possibility of using ten percent of the budget for outbreak prevention as something that made it possible to prepare communities and better protect individuals against COVID-19, but it also enabled the continuation of working for and with children in nearly the same extent as before the pandemic.

Another important learning due to COVID-19 has been to digitalise work and efforts to support partners more effectively, which in the long-term provides even more satisfactory results. To be able to adapt to an online format of events, staff needed to be trained in online communication and equipment needed to be provided. Online meetings and activities rather than to meet face-to-face was at first met with some difficulties and confusion. Also, school closures and switching to online education disrupted some of the routines that had been established over time. However, most were after a few months familiar with the different medias and found it useful. Furthermore, partners realised that they could have meetings and activities more often and reached a bigger

audience compared to the past face-to-face events. Most of the country reports therefore emphasises the rapid technological adoption as crucial to enable better communication, cost-effective events and expand the number of participants. In Moldova, Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) reported that the online format of events also strengthened the position of children, as they mastered the new technologies better than their teachers. Teachers also mentioned that they had discovered other pupils in the online environment, who opened up and felt more comfortable to express themselves virtually than face-to-face. However, not all children could participate in the online events as they did not have access to a phone, computer or internet, which is important to have in mind in planning future projects and activities.

## **The importance of adaptive approaches as well as continuously building partnership**

Common for all country report is the importance of partnership, collaboration and cooperation as well as adaptation of new approaches – both within ERIKS as well as with different stakeholders involved in a project.

Many country reports highlight the importance to engage various stakeholders in a project to create the best possible prerequisites for good outcomes. Engagement for all actors and stakeholders that are directly or indirectly affected by the project have created a culture of consultation, information sharing and support for projects during 2020. For example, the country report for Benin emphasises that the empowerment and commitment of the various stakeholders in child protection contributes and facilitates the awareness of communities to better respect the rights of the child. Indeed, community child protection mechanisms made up of local human resources are engaged in the promotion of children's rights in local languages to reduce cases of child abuse. The enhancement and empowerment of these community structures contribute to the sustainability of achievements. In Uganda, the engagement of various stakeholders has resulted in strengthened child protection safety nets. For example, through a network, 202 children were rescued from the streets at the onset of the lockdown in March 2020. These rescues have been carried out in collaboration with the government, city authority, and other likeminded agencies, to enable increased sustainability.

Even though a common understanding and approach is essential when working with different stakeholders, it can be challenging to achieve. In Belarus, ERIKS implementing organisation WWB describes that the organisation wants to – and believes that it is fundamental – to educate teachers involved in developing a manual for teaching children's rights. However, WWB do not have the capacity to do so, which creates a challenge when the demand is clearly portrayed but the resources and capacity of the organisation need to be located elsewhere. Furthermore, there is in Belarus a clear commitment from national authorities towards deinstitutionalisation of children but where the organisation meet resistance to change at regional and local level. The lack of capacity and the resistance met in Belarus highlights the importance of sometimes unforeseen aspects of a project's implementation which requires additional efforts and time in building capacity for stakeholders as well as partners.

However, even though such challenges can be time-consuming and requires additional efforts, it is essential to continue to learn, develop and adapt new perspectives. This enables all levels of the organisation to work flexible, more effective and based on context. Improvements through capacity development have been highlighted in several projects during 2020. For Burkina Faso, the context of the security crisis in the country is emphasised since the risks of the emergence of conflicts are numerous. In such a context, the design and implementation of projects must pay particular attention to the effects they produce. Therefore, these programs are effective when they are managed in a conflict sensitive manner, that is, when their interventions help to mitigate the impacts of conflicts, not to aggravate them. Working in a conflict sensitive project requires conflict sensitivity analysis and ERIKS will ensure that this is included into all future projects in Burkina Faso. In South Sudan, an entrepreneurship and skills development approach has been adopted. This approach has not only been effective in achieving the intended strengthening in household economic but was also a channel to facilitate dialogues between men and women and between different ethnic groups, thereby producing much more effects in strengthening peaceful coexistence. In conclusion, new approaches and collaborations with stakeholders, specifically developed for and in relation to a context and various stakeholders involved in a project, will lead to greater impact.

## **7. Childrens' voices**

Below are some examples of how children have benefitted in various way through the different projects. The stories included are focusing on children expressing their own views on implemented project activities during 2020.

**Natika, Benin.** Natika is 13 years old and a member of the Sindori children's club. "Having children's clubs in our school helps us a lot. There are many friends who like to come to school to take part in the different activities in the clubs. We are discovering a lot about our culture and the rights of the child to be protected. We are no longer afraid to speak in front of people and our parents encourage us to participate in activities. We sing, we dance, we

play riddles, and learn to tell tales about children's rights and our culture. All of this allows us to distract ourselves and have fun. We say thank you to BUPDOS and ERIKS who made all this possible through PRODEA project".

**Survivor girl, Cambodia.** After receiving counselling support and justice from the court trial, one survivor girl of rape, is getting out of fear and stays motivated to continue her studies. She said "Nowadays I do not care about my abuse from that man, I only care of my study and my grandparents. Before I thought that I cannot get money from him as compensation, but now I am happy because he was jailed to 8 years with 2000 USD as compensation, so I can find justice for myself."

**Samaria, Romania.** The kindergarten helps children and parents dream of a better life. Samaria, a 5-year-old girl, said "I would like to stay here forever - I can eat, here is clean - thank you my teacher!"

**Ma Wai Tha Zin Oo, Myanmar.** Ma, a 16-year-old girl said "My family's income is low, and food is a daily struggle. COVID-19 made our life bleak. I can no longer go to school, and I have missed an entire academic year. I miss my teachers and friends. But Lu Nge Sagar Wine makes me happy because I enjoy being with friends, having fun, and making jokes".

**Girl, Moldavia.** During the workshops with pupils from Anenii Noi in Moldova, CRIC team discussed the changes that have taken place in the school under the COVID-19 pandemic conditions and how these changes respect or violate children's rights. Children mentioned they like to participate in the workshops because they can freely discuss what is happening in the school, they can say what is disturbing, and find other pupils with the same experiences and support each other. The pupils mentioned there are positive and negative changes in the school. A girl, 14 years old said "Since the pandemic, teachers have changed, they have become more attentive to pupils' condition and more caring. They ask us how we feel and if we need help. So do the school staff, nurses, the guard became more responsible, the classroom and the toilet are cleaned up."