



## CSO Forum to End Violence Against Children

# Call to Action

Despite significant progress over the past decade, 1 billion children—half of all girls and boys globally—still suffer some form of violence each year [1]. Nearly 300 million girls and boys aged 2 to 4 years, regularly experience physical punishment or psychological violence from parents and caregivers [2]. Additionally, 246 million girls and boys face violence in and around schools [3], 160 million are engaged in child labor [4], and 12 million girls are married during their childhood, each year; at this rate, it will take 300 years to eliminate child marriage [5].

The causes of violence against children are numerous and intertwined, including poverty, economic distress, harmful traditions and norms, conflict, displacement, weak safety services, and gender inequalities. Failing to prevent and respond effectively to violence against children has lifelong consequences, perpetuating a cycle of violence and hindering social and economic development. The financial burden of violence against children on the global economy is estimated at up to US \$7 trillion annually, with significant direct and indirect costs that erode economic development, increase instability, and exacerbate inequalities [6].

Governments worldwide have committed to ending violence against children by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), reinforced by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, progress has been uneven and insufficient despite investments in evidence-based prevention programs and services that enhance children's health, educational outcomes, and economic development. These investments can also avert the economic costs of violence, saving up to 5% of national GDP [7].

Children have a right to live in a world free from violence. With only six years remaining, we must step up efforts to end violence in childhood if we are to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A vision of world of peace, justice, and inclusion, where girls and boys are able to live free from violence. This year, the first ever global [Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children \(7-8 November 2024\) will be held in Colombia](#). Governments across the world will be working closely with national stakeholders to organise the [National Preparatory Sessions](#) (June – July 2024), and develop their pledges for the next decade.

As civil society organizations working at the forefront of addressing violence against children in communities and at national and global levels, we are encouraged by the prospects of harnessing stronger collective efforts to significantly reduce violence against children in every nation. Based on our field experience and understanding of the situation, we call on governments and other critical stakeholders to commit to the following 7 Urgent Calls to Action to End Violence Against Children:

**1. Adopt and Implement Policies and Legislation:** Laws should protect ALL children, in all their diversity from violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect, and harmful practices in all contexts without exceptions. Laws and policies should strengthen national child protection systems and must address prevention, early

intervention, and response. Support the implementation and scale-up of evidence-based approaches, such as those featured in INSPIRE, as well as child-friendly interventions such as child helplines.

**2. Provide a Continuum of Child Protection Prevention, Early Intervention, and Response Services:** Support parents and caregivers and prevent violence in schools. Connect girls and boys who have experienced violence through child-friendly referral mechanisms like child helplines to protection services, such as mental health and psychosocial support and access to justice. Provide family and community-based alternative care services as necessary.

**3. Enhance Data Systems and Capacity for Data Collection, Use, and Management:** Invest in robust, timely reliable, gender-sensitive, and sex-disaggregated data capture and analysis to inform evidence-based policy and practice decision-making. Link country-level information with global data collection efforts.

**4. Strengthen Multi-Sectoral and collaborative Approaches:** Commit to developing holistic, inter-agency, and multidisciplinary approaches and data sharing to address interrelated aspects of violence against girls and boys and to integrate protective measures throughout government policies and programs. Strengthen mechanisms for inter-ministerial, national, and sub-national government coordination of all agencies with a role in child protection and violence prevention. Promote cross-sector and cross-ministerial collaboration with CSOs, NGOs, community leaders, and the private sector.

**5. Increase Funding and Transparency in Budgets to End Violence Against Children:** Governments must ensure child-centered budgets and allocate adequate funding for legal and child protection systems, as well as for the provision of integrated services for children.

**6. Establish and Formalize Mechanisms for Meaningful Child Participation and Accountability** Listen to the lived voices and experiences of girls and boys at all levels of decision-making to understand outcomes and advance solutions. Ensure they are consulted on policies and decisions that affect them. Implement robust accountability mechanisms to ensure that children's feedback and perspectives are not only heard but also acted upon, with transparent processes for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their participation.

**7. Engage Communities in Child Protection:** Consult communities in the development of child protection laws and policies; implement intergenerational approaches and link community-based mechanisms to the child protection system; and establish child-friendly complaints mechanisms to report violations and ensure that children have access to justice.

Join us in our commitment to create a world where every child can grow up free from violence. Let's act now to end violence against children, ensure their active participation in decision-making, and build a brighter, safer future for all.

#### **References:**

1. UNICEF, "A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents," 2017.
2. UNICEF, "Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children," 2014.
3. UNESCO, "Global Education Monitoring Report," 2019.
4. International Labour Organization (ILO), "Global Estimates of Child Labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016."
5. UNICEF, "Child Marriage: Latest trends and future prospects," 2018.
6. Overseas Development Institute, "The costs and economic impact of violence against children," 2014.

7. World Health Organization (WHO), "INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children," 2016.

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