



child rights connect
NGO Working Group on
Children and Violence

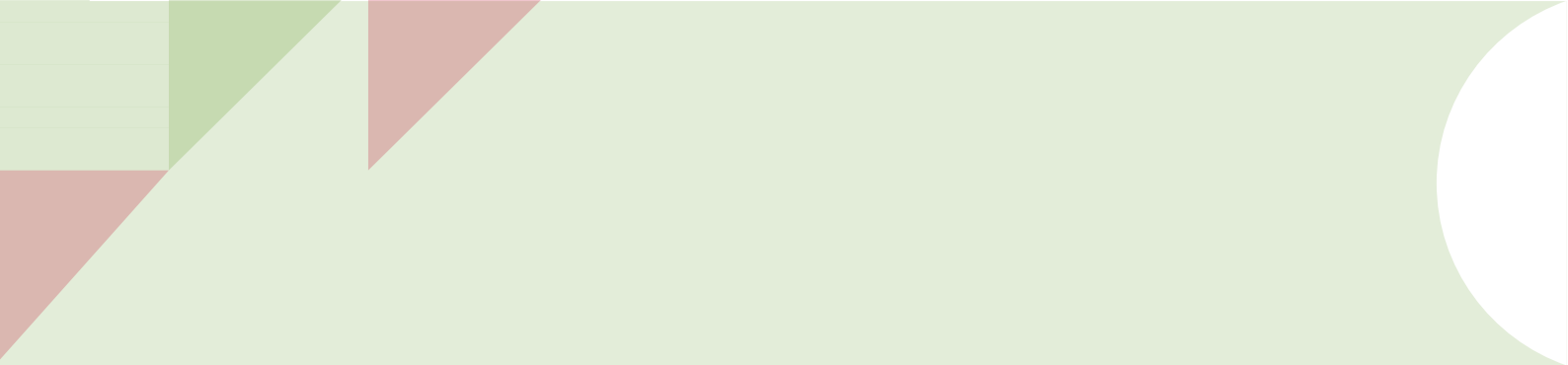
ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN:

PROMOTING THE ADOPTION OF EFFECTIVE
MEASURES FOR ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST
CHILDREN THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS
ENGAGEMENT

Child Rights Connect Working Group on Children
and Violence

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Child Rights Connect Working Group on Children and Violence (WGCAV) brings together international civil society organizations advocating for children's human rights and working to end violence against children. The group coordinates member actions and aims to speak with one voice in the relevant human rights and international development spaces in Geneva and beyond.

▼ **WGCAV members**

- Arigatou International (co-convener)
- Defence for Children International
- Defence for Children International – Costa Rica
- ECPAT International
- International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)
- International Movement ATD Fourth World
- Kindernothilfe – Germany
- Plan International
- Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia (Spain)
- Plateforme CDE – Morocco
- Railway Children Africa
- Save the Children International
- SOS Children's Villages International
- Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF)
- Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF)
- World Council of Churches
- World Organization Against Torture
- World Vision International (co-convener)

Background: In 2018, the WGCAV began a review of the actions undertaken by the Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the issue of violence against children in 47 countries.¹ A further WGCAV analysis, conducted in 2020, found that, although progress to prevent and address violence against children has been made as a result of advocacy to and from UN human rights mechanisms, stronger alignment is needed to accelerate actions at the national level.²

▼ CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 7 |
| UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS | 11 |
| OTHER INSTRUMENTS AND MECHANISMS | 13 |
| EFFECTIVE MEASURES | 14 |
| ▼ COMMITMENT, LEADERSHIP & AUTHORITY TO ACT | 15 |
| ▶ POLITICAL WILL & LEADERSHIP | 15 |
| ▶ LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK | 16 |
| ▶ NATIONAL CHILD RIGHTS POLICY & EVAC ACTION PLAN | 18 |
| ▶ GUIDANCE FOR STATES: COMMITMENT, LEADERSHIP & AUTHORITY TO ACT: | 20 |
| ▼ SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE & RESOURCES | 21 |
| ▶ SUFFICIENT BUDGET ALLOCATION | 21 |
| ▶ DISAGGREGATED DATA | 22 |
| ▶ MONITORING & EVALUATION | 23 |
| ▶ CAPACITY STRENGTHENING | 24 |
| ▶ GUIDANCE FOR STATES: SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE & RESOURCES | 25 |
| ▼ A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH | 27 |
| ▶ AWARENESS-RAISING AND PUBLIC EDUCATION | 27 |
| ▶ MULTI-SECTORAL COLLABORATION | 28 |
| ▶ INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN | 29 |
| ▶ GUIDANCE FOR STATES: A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH | 31 |
| ▼ INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & ACCOUNTABILITY | 32 |
| ▶ INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION | 32 |
| ▶ INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY | 33 |
| ▶ GUIDANCE FOR STATES: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & ACCOUNTABILITY | 34 |
| COUNTRY CASE STUDIES | 35 |
| ▼ COLOMBIA | 36 |
| ▼ INDONESIA | 39 |
| ▼ MONTENEGRO | 43 |
| ▼ PARAGUAY | 48 |
| ▼ SIERRA LEONE | 52 |
| ▼ SWEDEN | 56 |
| ▼ ZAMBIA | 59 |
| CONCLUSION | 63 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS | 64 |
| ENDNOTES | 66 |

ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| EU | European Union |
| EVAC | End Violence Against Children |
| FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| FSU | Family Support Units |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GSHS | Global School-based Student Health Survey |
| HBSC | Health Behaviour in School-aged Children |
| HLPF | High-Level Political Forum |
| ICBF | Colombian Institute of Family Welfare |
| ICVAC | International Classification of Violence Against Children |
| INSPIRE | Implementation and Enforcement of Laws; Norms and Values; Safe Environments; Parent and Caregiver Support; Income and Economic Strengthening; Response and Support Services; and Education and Life Skills |
| LMICs | Low- and Middle-Income Countries |
| MICS | Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys |
| MoWECP | Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection |
| NCP | National Child Policy |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| O/SRSG VAC | Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children |
| SAIEVAC | South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children |
| SBC | Social and Behavioral Change |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SGBV | Sexual and Gender-Based Violence |
| SIMFONI PPA | Online Information System on Protection of Women and Children |
| S.M.A.R.T | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound |
| SNPHAR | National Children and Adolescents Life Experience Survey |
| UN | United Nations |
| UN SRSG VAC | UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSG VAC) |
| UPR | Universal Periodic Review |
| VACS | Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys |
| VNR | Voluntary National Review |
| WGCAV | Child Rights Connect Working Group on Children and Violence |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

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INTRODUCTION

Violence affects children in every country of the world — at home, in the community, at school, and online. At least one billion children experience violence every year.³ Violence is compounded by existing patterns of poverty, discrimination, and inequality, and further exacerbated by crises including armed conflict, climate change, natural disasters, political instability, and forced displacement. Violence has a devastating impact on children's current and future lives and prevents them from accessing their other rights, including education, health, protection, and their right to be heard.

Every child's right to be protected from all forms of violence is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),⁴ its Optional Protocols,⁵ and other international and regional human rights instruments.⁶ Protecting children from violence has been consistently interpreted as requiring the full prohibition and elimination of violence.⁷ Ending violence against children is a human rights obligation.

Since its inception in 1989, the CRC has been a catalyst for reforming legal protections for children and influencing social norms, attitudes, and behaviors.⁸ Human rights mechanisms have also been instrumental in mobilizing support for ending violence against children. In 2001, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, in Resolution 56/138, and acting on the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,⁹ called for an in-depth study on the topic. The study was published in 2006 and was followed by the appointment of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children in 2009, who was

tasked with promoting the dissemination of the study and advocating for effective follow-up on its recommendations.

Support, guidance, and accountability from UN human rights mechanisms, combined with strategic advocacy by civil society at local, national, and international levels, have also been instrumental in influencing these changes. As a result, an ever-growing number of initiatives developed by governments and other stakeholders in society, including children, demonstrate that violence against children can be prevented.¹⁰

Building on these milestones and as a result of efforts over the years to promote and prioritize a holistic approach to ending violence against children in all its forms, the UN unanimously agreed in 2015 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children by 2030, making this target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ending violence against children is not only a standalone target but also considered central to realizing all the other SDGs.

The seven strategies included in the INSPIRE framework, launched in 2016 alongside the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, provide a significant contribution to the advancement of research and understanding of evidence-based strategies that work effectively to end violence against children. These are: (i) implementation and enforcement of laws; (ii) norms and values; (iii) safe environments; (iv) parent and caregiver support; (v) income and economic strengthening; (vi) response and support services; and (vii) education and life skills.

SEVEN STRATEGIES



Implementation and enforcement of laws



Norms and values



Safe environments



Parent and caregiver support



Income and economic strengthening



Response and support services



Education and life skills

Source: INSPIRE Handbook: action for implementing the seven strategies for ending violence against children. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

A country pathfinding model was launched in 2016 as the signature initiative of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. By the end of 2023, 38 States had become pathfinders, each one making a formal, public commitment to end all forms of violence against children.¹¹ Among them, 25 States have launched national action plans to end violence against children, and of these, 11 States have furthered their commitment with fully funded strategies for EVAC.¹

In January 2024, following the transition of the Global Partnership to End Violence against

Children to new operational arrangements, the workstream on pathfinding countries was entrusted to the SRSG VAC. The Pathfinding EVAC 2.0 will be launched at the first-ever Global Ministerial Conference in Bogota, Colombia (7-8 November 2024).

Similarly, the workstream to end corporal punishment is now hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and is overseen by a multi-partner Steering Committee. As of April 2024, 66 States have prohibited corporal punishment in all settings, and governments of at least 27 other States have expressed a commitment to

38

States had become pathfinders, each one making a formal, public commitment to end all forms of violence against children

25

States have launched national action plans to end violence against children

11

States have furthered their commitment with fully funded strategies for EVAC

¹ End Violence Against Children, Country Dashboard (<https://www.end-violence.org/country-dashboard>)

enacting full prohibition. Draft legislation that would achieve prohibition in all or some settings is under discussion in some other States.¹²

Despite substantial gains, significant progress is still needed.¹³ Violence against children is still lawful in many countries, and where legislation exists, its enforcement is often inadequate. Widespread social and cultural attitudes and practices continue to condone violence against children. The lack of knowledge, data, and understanding of violence and its root causes limits effective and sustainable responses. Efforts to end violence against children are often under-resourced and fragmented.

This publication summarizes critical measures needed for States to prioritize and effectively address violence against children at the national level. Part 1 of the publication illustrates how

UN human rights mechanisms, particularly the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Periodic Review, as well as international development commitments set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, have made significant contributions to strengthening national efforts to address violence against children. Part 2 introduces measures that have been found to enable governments to take effective and sustainable action to end violence against children.

The measures introduced in Part 2, summarized below, were selected using a combination of requirements from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, including General Measures of Implementation and Guidance in General Comments, as well as early criteria for pathfinding countries.



COMMITMENT, LEADERSHIP & AUTHORITY TO ACT

- Political will and leadership
- Legislative framework
- National child rights policy and EVAC action plan



SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE & RESOURCES

- Disaggregated data
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Sufficient budget allocation
- Capacity strengthening



A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

- Awareness-Raising and Public Education
- Multisectoral Collaboration
- Involvement of children



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & ACCOUNTABILITY


- International cooperation
- International accountability

The success achieved when these measures are prioritized is illustrated in the case studies from Colombia, Indonesia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Sierra Leone, Sweden, and Zambia, which are presented in the Country Case Studies section. The achievements in these countries demonstrate that these measures are mutually reinforcing and accelerate countries' abilities to adopt evidence-based interventions to protect children from all forms of violence. These case studies were selected based on


criteria including geographic/regional balance, coverage of different political and cultural backgrounds, levels of development, and progress made toward ending violence against children.

The publication concludes with recommendations for the Committee on the Rights of the Child to guide and hold States accountable in their efforts to fulfil their obligation to eliminate violence against children.


The publication is intended to:



Showcase examples of States that are successfully implementing EVAC measures to inspire States to prioritize and take concrete actions to end violence against children;



Support UN human rights mechanisms in their efforts to provide specific, measurable, achievable and relevant EVAC guidance and recommendations to States;



Support civil society in its strategic advocacy to encourage States to implement EVAC recommendations provided by the UN human rights mechanisms and hold States to account.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Reinforced by international standards, UN human rights mechanisms, such as treaty bodies, special procedures and the Universal Period Review (UPR),¹⁴ have helped States better fulfil their human rights obligations by

bringing laws, policies, and practices in line with international standards. Their targeted recommendations have resulted in significant gains in the prevention of and response to violence against children.

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has been instrumental in encouraging States to address this issue by providing both a guiding and monitoring role. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols (OPs), reinforced by international guidance in the Committee's General Comments,¹⁵ provide a robust normative framework for preventing and responding to violence against children. Building on these, the Committee's regular dialogues with States

as part of the CRC reporting process have provided ongoing opportunities to examine national progress made to end violence against children and to provide States with advice and recommendations on identifying gaps and taking further action. As a result of this longstanding commitment, the Committee has influenced national legislation, policies, budgets, and programs of action to increase the protection of children in countries across every region of the world.

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

Since its inception in 2006, the UPR has become a powerful advocacy tool for raising awareness and strengthening accountability related to violence against children. An analysis conducted in 2020 found that, during their last UPR review,¹⁶ every one of the 47 States¹⁷ in the study had received UPR recommendations relating to ending violence against children.¹⁸ International advocacy and child rights coalitions in different

countries are increasingly demonstrating that the UPR can be a catalyst for change and help accelerate action to end violence against children. Advocacy led by the end corporal punishment workstream, for example, ensures that all States that have not yet prohibited corporal punishment in all settings receive recommendations to prohibit all corporal punishment of children, and has resulted in more

measures taken by States to enact prohibition.¹⁹ However, despite strong progress in some areas, issues relating to children are still considered “soft issues” and can remain low on the national

agenda compared to other national and regional priorities.²⁰ Continued advocacy is needed with Permanent Missions to ensure that eliminating violence against children is a UPR priority.

OTHER UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Other UN treaty bodies, as well as Special Procedures and the Human Rights Council — through its resolutions — also issue recommendations. When making recommendations relating to ending violence against children, UN human rights mechanisms with specific mandates tend to provide recommendations relating to their particular area of focus. The Committee against Torture, for example, often issues specific recommendations on violence against children in the penal system, the CEDAW addresses violence against girls, for instance on issues related to FGM, child marriage, etc., and the Committee on Disabilities addresses the issue of violence against children with disabilities. On the other hand, formulation of recommendations provided by UN human rights mechanisms relating to “violence against children” in general that do not make reference to specific types of violence or state which children are most at risk are not helpful in guiding States to take the specific actions needed to target particular issues or groups, nor do they provide clear guidance to civil society organizations to keep governments accountable. Furthermore, UPR recommendations relating to children, for example, are often incorporated into women’s rights, reducing the focus on children as full subjects of rights.

Recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms must include specific actions

expected from States to end violence against children: A State cannot implement recommendations that are not clear, or that it does not understand. Equally, civil society depends on specific, focused recommendations to monitor governments’ progress and hold them to account for not meeting their obligations to end violence against children.

Human rights mechanisms are only able to develop recommendations based on the information that they receive. This places responsibility on civil society to submit focused and accurate reports which raise the visibility of the additional risks of violence experienced by children in particularly vulnerable circumstances, to comment on the State reports, and to provide specific recommendations on actions each State can take to address the issues raised.²¹

Continued advocacy is needed with UN human rights mechanisms to ensure that violence against children is a priority. This includes ensuring that the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Member States make child-specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T) recommendations for actions needed to end violence against children. Continued efforts are also needed to support children’s participation in UN human rights mechanisms to ensure that children’s own experiences of violence are heard and taken into account.

OTHER INSTRUMENTS AND MECHANISMS

▼ 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs are solidly anchored in human rights standards. With the explicit commitments to end violence against children in target 16.2, end violence against women and girls in targets 5.2 and 5.3, and to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, in target 8.7, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has put ending violence against children firmly on the international development agenda, making it a global priority for the first time. The global commitment to EVAC is further reinforced by SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG

4 (Education), and other goals and targets that enhance the protection of children, such as access to documentation including birth registration, social protection, and orderly and safe migration. The process of assessing and presenting national progress made on implementing the 2030 Agenda, through the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), provides Member States with the opportunity to share examples of strong practices, innovative approaches, and effective policies and programs for addressing all forms of violence against children, as well as identifying ongoing challenges.

▼ NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

The role of national human rights institutions is critical for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. A number of countries have created such bodies, which are known by different names and involve different

responsibilities and functions, including Children's Ombudsperson, Children's Advocate, Child Rights Commissioner, and Committee on Child Rights.

EFFECTIVE MEASURES

States are best able to mobilize all relevant actors to take action to achieve effective and sustainable progress on preventing and responding to violence against children when they prioritize and demonstrate a holistic, strategic approach, involving positive actions from every segment of society. This approach includes: demonstrating commitment, leadership, and authority to act at the highest level; ensuring that adequate human and financial resources are in place; coordinating involvement and collaboration with all key stakeholders, including children; and cooperating with and being accountable to the international community, including UN human rights mechanisms. Such a systemic approach supports the development of a functional national child protection system, which, by following the CRC principles and articles, provides a clear path to eliminating violence against children.

The effective measures identified below correspond with provisions in the CRC, including article 4,²² and article 19,²³ and additional information provided by the Committee on the

necessary requirements to prevent violence against children. This information includes the clarifications and further detailed guidance provided in the Committee's General Comments NO. 5 (2003),²⁴ No. 8 (2006),²⁵ and No. 13 (2011).²⁶

When these measures are not prioritized, even States which make an effort often end up with a compartmentalized approach to ending violence against children and are less likely to mobilize all the vital actors — within government, in civil society, and in communities — to work in unity to address violence against children.

These measures are less effective in isolation. Rather, they complement and support each other to provide an enabling environment that is conducive to implementing effective, sustainable, evidence-based interventions to prevent and respond to violence against children.

Ending violence takes time and requires a sustained commitment to implementing measures over the long term.

▼ **COMMITMENT, LEADERSHIP & AUTHORITY TO ACT**

▼ **POLITICAL WILL & LEADERSHIP**

State commitments to end violence against children should be reflected in ratifying the CRC, and its provisions to end all forms of violence against children. They should also be evident in political agreements that States make to end all forms of violence against children, including achieving all the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.²⁷ However, a lack of political will and leadership by governments continues to limit, prevent, or even reverse progress on ending violence.²⁸

Decision-makers at the highest level must be motivated to end violence against children and invest their time, energy, resources, and political capital into leading necessary actions to end this practice. Evidence shows that rapid reductions in violence are possible if there exists political will and strong leadership, combined with evidence-based policies and interventions (see p.18-20), and adequate finance (p. 20-22).²⁹ (See Case Studies: Paraguay, Zambia)

Personal and collective political will can be influenced by increasing awareness of the many ways violence affects children, the costs it has on society, and the benefits of eliminating it. This can be achieved by: Encouraging States

to collect data on violence against children (see p. 22-23), strengthening the capacity of government actors to address violence against children (see p. 24-25); encouraging multi-sectoral collaboration (see p. 28-29), especially with civil society, including children (see p. 29-30). Political will can also be enhanced by encouraging good governance through the adoption of appropriate legislation and policies (see p.17-18), and international cooperation and accountability (see p. 31-22).

Political motivation can be further influenced by persuading decision-makers that their influence and reputation can be enhanced by leading positive actions for change. Eliminating violence against children is a widely agreed moral imperative, with substantial impacts on children, their families, and society at large. It can also have significant positive repercussions on the reputation of the decision-makers leading that change, at local and national levels. Prioritizing action on this issue and demonstrating State compliance with relevant human rights obligations can also raise a government's international profile. This can potentially result in further positive outcomes for the State, such as increasing international political influence.

▼ LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The CRC commits States to taking all appropriate legislative measures to protect children from all forms of violence (CRC, article 19). States Parties to the CRC are required to enact laws that protect every child within their jurisdiction from all forms of violence, including neglect, physical and mental violence, sexual violence, child labor, child marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM), in compliance with international and regional instruments. The Committee on the Rights of the Child clarifies that this means ensuring that all relevant national, provincial, and municipal legislation prioritizes the prevention of violence against children and that all relevant regulations are in place and functional.³⁰

The CRC, accompanied by civil society advocacy, has been a significant catalyst for positive reforms in national legislation, better protecting children from violence.³¹ Examples of legislative progress to address particular types of violence against children over the years are given below. Even though the following specific examples addressing one type of violence represents advancement towards the protection of children from violence, the CRC promotes a holistic pathway and a framework to adopt legislation that prohibits all types of violence.

- Before the CRC's adoption in 1989, only three countries had laws prohibiting all corporal punishment of children. Today, more than a third of Member States have prohibited corporal punishment in all settings, including the family home.³² However, despite strong progress, many children remain without specific legal protections of any kind, and about 10% of the world's children lack any legal protection against corporal punishment.³³
- To date, 51 countries have prohibited FGM under their national laws, either through a specific anti-female genital mutilation law or by prohibiting FGM under a criminal provision in other domestic laws such as the criminal or penal code, child protection laws, violence against women laws or domestic violence laws.³⁴ However, FGM is still legally permitted in 45% of the 92 countries where FGM is practiced.³⁵

Legal prohibition is a critical milestone toward ending violence. Appropriate legislation holds those who breach the law to account and enables the authority to frame national guidance and policy. When accompanied by awareness-raising and public education, it can also be a powerful communication and education tool, helping to influence behavior and attitudes

relating to violence against children (see p. 26-28). In turn, this creates an environment conducive to achieving large-scale change. For example, evidence finds that, when well implemented, the legal prohibition of corporal punishment correlates with a significant decline in the approval and use of violent punishment of children.³⁶ (See Case Studies: Sweden, Zambia)

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has requested that States:



Ensure full ratification of the Optional Protocols to the CRC and other international and regional human rights instruments that provide protection for children, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.³⁷



Review and withdraw declarations and reservations contrary to the object and purpose of the CRC or otherwise contrary to international law.³⁸



Review and amend domestic legislation in line with CRC article 19 and ensure its implementation within the holistic framework of the CRC and ensure absolute prohibition of all forms of violence against children in all settings as well as effective and appropriate sanctions against perpetrators.³⁹

▼ NATIONAL CHILD RIGHTS POLICY & EVAC ACTION PLAN

To end violence against children, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has requested that States establish a comprehensive policy on child rights: without such a policy, isolated programs and activities to address violence against children are unlikely to be successful.⁴⁰ National policies and agendas that agree to the realization of every child's right to be protected from violence should prioritize the provisions and principles of

the CRC in all government and public actions affecting children.⁴¹

The Council of Europe Policy Guidelines on Integrated National Strategies for the Protection of Children from Violence advises States to ensure that national child rights policies to protect children from violence:

- ▼ aim at reducing inequality, poverty, and marginalization;
- ▼ support families, addressing unemployment and income gaps;
- ▼ address social tolerance, beliefs, and values that condone and sustain violence;
- ▼ improve social networks; and
- ▼ facilitate the social inclusion of migrants and their families.⁴²

National policies to eliminate violence against children should be further articulated in a clear and well-defined strategy or plan of action⁴³

that includes evidence-based prevention and response interventions, such as those set out in INSPIRE.

INSPIRE Evidence-Based Strategies to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children

| Strategy | Approach |
|--|--|
| Implementation and enforcement of laws | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws banning violent punishment of children by parents, teachers, or other caregivers • Laws criminalizing sexual abuse and exploitation of children • Laws that prevent alcohol misuse • Laws limiting youth access to firearms and other weapons |
| Norms and values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing adherence to restrictive and harmful gender and social norms • Community mobilization programs • Bystander interventions |
| Safe environments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing violence by addressing “hotspots” • Interrupting the spread of violence • Improving the built environment |
| Parent and caregiver support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered through home visits • Delivered in groups in community settings • Delivered through comprehensive programs |
| Income and economic strengthening | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfers • Group saving and loans combined with gender equity training • Microfinance combined with gender norm training |
| Response and support services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling and therapeutic approaches • Screening combined with interventions • Treatment programs for juvenile offenders in the criminal justice system • Foster care interventions involving social welfare services |
| Education and life skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase enrolment in pre-school, primary and secondary schools • Establish a safe and enabling school environment • Improve children’s knowledge about sexual abuse and how to protect themselves against it • Life and social skills training • Adolescent intimate partner violence prevention programs |

As of December 2023, increasing numbers of countries, including 25 pathfinding countries, are developing national strategies, action plans and road maps that set out a multi-sectoral approach to eliminate violence against children.⁴⁴ Through a multistakeholder and bottom-to-top national consultation process, Pathfinder EVAC 2.0 countries will be encouraged to develop roadmaps that set out priorities, key actions, responsibilities, timelines and budgets.

To be effective, national policies and action plans should be coordinated by a high-level focal point, at a ministerial level with officially granted authority, and with leadership responsibilities in this area, supported by adequate human and financial resources, and effectively evaluated.⁴⁵ Where possible, children should be involved in their development, implementation, and evaluation (see p. 29-30). (See Case Studies: Colombia, Paraguay, Zambia).

▼ GUIDANCE FOR STATES: COMMITMENT, LEADERSHIP & AUTHORITY TO ACT

To eliminate violence against children, States should:

- ▼ Appoint a senior government focal point, with high-level endorsement, to lead the in-country process of EVAC through a whole-government approach that also includes ministries with responsibility for planning, finance and budget.
- ▼ Indicate political will to end violence against children at the highest level in an official government statement.
- ▼ Ensure full ratification and effective implementation of all international and regional human rights treaties and soft law instruments that protect children,⁴⁶ and withdraw declarations and reservations contrary to the object and purpose of the CRC.
- ▼ Prioritize the prevention of all forms of violence against all children and safeguard the rights of the child in national legal frameworks, ensuring that domestic legislation, policy, and practice are fully compatible with CRC article 19, for every child in the State's jurisdiction.
- ▼ Guarantee no impunity for those who commit violent offenses against children.
- ▼ Drawing on children's own experiences, develop and implement a comprehensive child rights/EVAC policy and strategy, with a focus on the protection of children from vulnerable groups.
- ▼ Invest in child-sensitive and gender-responsive integrated social and child protection systems and services that are accessible to all children, and their caregivers, leaving no one behind.

SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE & RESOURCES

SUFFICIENT BUDGET ALLOCATION

The CRC requires that States allocate adequate budget for the implementation of legislation and all other measures adopted to end violence against children, to the maximum extent of available resources.⁴⁸ This should include providing sufficient budgets to fund data collection, and the services, personnel, and training necessary to implement relevant laws, policies, and interventions.

Evidence shows that investment in violence prevention and child protection by most governments is currently low and insufficient.⁴⁹ A WHO survey of 155 countries found that, while 80% had at least one national action plan to prevent violence against children, fewer than one in four (<25%) had fully funded their plans.⁵⁰ While many action plans are ambitious, most have substantial funding gaps. Many governments look to development partners and bilateral donors to find other funding solutions. Financing of action plans is not transparent, especially when budgets are spread over government ministries and are not visibly consolidated.⁵¹

While national budgets remain low, international investment is also underfunded. By the end of 2020, ODA investment in ending violence against children was still less than 1% of total ODA. The amount of funding — especially taking into account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, armed conflict and climate change on children and their associated costs — remains “shockingly low and heavily concentrated among only a few donors and

recipient countries.” The evidence shows that ODA investment to end violence against children has decreased by 10% since 2018 and that the amount of ODA investment per child is just US\$ 0.64 in 2020 — down from US\$ 0.68. The great majority of ODA for ending violence against children comes from 10 donors that account for about 86% of total investment.⁵²

Investing in violence prevention can also prevent long-term negative impacts on investments in children’s health, education, and other social sectors,⁵³ and prevent a loss in potential earnings of individuals and businesses which would result in lower tax revenue for governments.⁵⁴

Violence against children is expensive, with substantial economic and social costs for its victims, families, and economies in the short and longer term.⁵⁵ Studies estimate that the economic burden of violence on society could be 5% of national GDP and as high as 7% of global GDP.⁵⁶ Investments in violence prevention and child protection by national governments and donors are currently too low to significantly address violence against children in many countries.⁵⁷ Even evidence-based policy and practical action are unlikely to succeed without sufficient financial resources.

Increasingly, research finds that investing in effective violence prevention programs can provide social and economic benefits that exceed their costs.⁵⁸ (See Case Study: Indonesia).

DISAGGREGATED DATA

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its communications with States, as also reinforced by the guidance provided in its General Comments, frequently observes that a lack of accurate data prevents governments from making informed decisions in responding to and preventing violence against children.⁵⁹ Existing gaps in data are identified by other human rights mechanisms, which rely on accurate national data for international accountability and to inform global interventions. For example, the SRSG VAC, notes that Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) rarely include data on SDG target 16.2 in comparison with other targets related to children, and where data does exist, it is often not systematically collected.⁶⁰ Without accurate data, policymakers are not able to assess progress toward ending violence against children at national and international levels.

Until recently, a lack of an internationally agreed comprehensive definition of violence,⁶¹ and the absence of internationally recognized best practices for measuring the prevalence of violence against children, contributed to variations in data at national and international levels, limiting the availability of comparable data.⁶² Significant variations still exist in the disaggregation of data on violence against children across ministries/agencies at national levels, presenting additional challenges in fully understanding the variations in children's experience of violence.⁶³ Overall, official statistics often underestimate the rates of violence against children.⁶⁴

Despite remaining challenges, there has been an increase in data collection on children's exposure to violence in household-level surveys, censuses, and health and education systems in recent years, thanks to initiatives driven by scientists, donors, and policymakers, as well as concerted advocacy from civil society organizations.⁶⁵ Since the mid-1990s, UNICEF

has worked in partnership with governments in 118 countries to carry out one or more Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), generating data on children and women, including violence against children.⁶⁶ MICS include separate questionnaires covering children under five, and children and adolescents ages 5-17.

- To date, government-led, nationally representative, Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) have been or are being carried out in households in 26 countries,^{67,68} accelerating targeted efforts to collect information about violence affecting adolescents and young people ages 13 to 24.
- WHO has also supported 103 countries to measure and assess the behavioral risk factors and protective factors among young people ages 13 to 17 years in low-cost global school-based student health surveys (GSHS).⁶⁹ The survey uses a self-administered questionnaire to obtain data on young people's health behavior and protective factors related to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among children and adults. (See Case Studies: Colombia, Indonesia, Montenegro)

The International Classification of Violence Against Children (ICVAC), agreed in 2023, now provides a comprehensive agreed definition of violence and an international statistical standard on violence against children for the first time. ICVAC defines violence against children as a deliberate, unwanted, and nonessential act, threatened or actual, against a child or against a group of children that either results in death or in injury or other forms of physical and or psychological suffering.⁷⁰

States should proactively collect accurate data to fully identify the prevalence of violence

against children. Data should be disaggregated using indicators including, but not limited to, age, sex, location, and (dis)ability to understand the diverse ways children are affected by violence. Data should also be collected on perpetrators, victim-perpetrator relationships, and the multiple types of violence children have experienced. Understanding these variations helps inform targeted evidence-based interventions to address violence in all its complexities.

Careful consideration must be given to the design of survey tools and data-gathering processes to ensure that children with disabilities can share their unique experiences of violence.⁷¹ In addition, proper safeguarding measures must always be in place to ensure that no child is put at any greater risk when they share information about their experiences. These include obtaining informed consent, appropriate child protection responses, and ensuring the selection of appropriately trained researchers or facilitators.⁷²

▼ MONITORING & EVALUATION

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has requested that States establish and apply standards, indicators, tools, and systems of monitoring, measurement, and evaluation to fulfil their obligations and commitments to protect children from violence.⁷³ States are encouraged to do this in collaboration with other stakeholders, including national and local agencies and organizations, and civil society.⁷⁴

Gaps in documentation and evaluation are highlighted in regional and global analyses of actions to prevent violence against children.⁷⁵ These gaps are often exacerbated by inadequate administrative data systems and the limited number of acts of violence against children reported to official sources such as education, health, justice, or social welfare systems.⁷⁶ The Committee has also observed that it is an “omission when measures and programs are not equipped with sufficient means to assess, monitor and evaluate progress or shortcomings of the activities to end violence against children.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, capacity is not often allocated at national, district, or provincial levels to monitor and evaluate administrative data on violence against children.⁷⁸ Staff members are more often expected to perform

these functions in addition to other duties, and staff assigned to the monitoring and evaluation of administrative data in general do not necessarily specialize in violence against children.⁷⁹ As a result, data on violence against children is typically disaggregated only in simple ways — by sex, age, region, and type of violence — rather than producing more complex analyses that would require in-depth knowledge of the issue.⁸⁰

The ongoing measurement of how violence against children changes over time is fundamental to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of policies, laws, and evidence-based interventions. This information is vital to assist States in identifying gaps that need urgent attention, to better accelerate EVAC efforts at the national level. It also strengthens opportunities for countries and communities to learn from each other and helps inform the evidence base at regional and global levels. Monitoring and evaluation are cross-cutting activities within the INSPIRE framework, recognizing them as essential requirements for any evidence-based, multi-sectoral intervention.⁸¹

Data on violence against children collected in nationally representative population-based surveys and facility-based administrative systems (such as hospitals, police records, and social services), for example, are essential standards for measuring the magnitude of violence against children, identifying vulnerable groups, and measuring progress.⁸²

States should make efforts to ensure that children are involved in the monitoring and evaluation of measures to prevent violence.⁸³ (See pp. 29-30). (See Case Studies: Colombia, Montenegro)

▼ CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

The Committee has urged States to ensure that government staff and other violence prevention and response stakeholders are sufficiently equipped with the appropriate capacity and expertise to protect children from violence and are supported by regular training.⁸⁴ The importance of having professionals with the appropriate capacity to prevent and respond to violence against children is widely recognized.⁸⁵ Building violence prevention capacity at national levels is a strategic priority for the World Health Organization Violence Prevention Unit, for example.⁸⁶

However, a global lack of knowledge and skills hinders national efforts to address violence against children. An assessment of ten countries⁸⁷ in Africa, for example, found the number and competence of staff in institutions concerned with EVAC to be inadequate.⁸⁸ Further staff challenges were caused by unfilled positions, high turnover rates and training gaps, and a lack of investigative skills of law enforcement personnel in these countries.⁸⁹

An adequately sized multi-sectoral workforce is needed to implement evidence-based strategies to prevent and respond to violence with professionals working to end violence in the government, health, education, social welfare, law enforcement, and justice sectors.⁹⁰ To attract highly skilled staff and encourage staff retention, professionals should be well-paid and well-resourced to carry out their functions, and their performance should be monitored to maintain the highest standards of quality.


All staff should receive regular high-quality training to equip them with the skills to prevent, identify, and respond to violence against children. They should receive training on: relevant laws, policies, and guidelines; emerging forms of violence against children; and child safeguarding to ensure that all staff can protect children from harm and are aware of how to respond should a suspected safeguarding incident arise. Child safeguarding policies and monitoring mechanisms should be in place and operational for all professionals.

The Committee has requested that States provide initial and in-service general and role-specific training on a child rights approach to CRC article 19 and its application in practice, for all professionals and non-professionals working with, and for, children (including teachers at all levels of the educational system, social workers, medical doctors, nurses, and other health professionals, psychologists, lawyers, judges, police, probation and prison officers, journalists, community workers, residential caregivers, civil servants and public officials, asylum officers, and traditional and religious leaders).⁹¹ In addition, States are requested to develop officially recognized certification schemes in association with educational and training institutions and professional societies to regulate and acknowledge such training, and to ensure that the CRC is part of the educational curriculum of all professionals expected to work with and for children.⁹² (See Case Studies: Montenegro, Sierra Leone)

▼ GUIDANCE FOR STATES: SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE & RESOURCES

To eliminate violence against children, States should:

- ▼ Assess the cost of violence against children at the national level and the return on investing in violence prevention.
- ▼ Allocate sufficient budget for the prevention of and response to violence against children in relevant national plans and policies.⁹³
- ▼ Adopt and promote an integrated and systematic approach to collecting, structuring, and analyzing accurate disaggregated data on violence against children to accurately inform evidence-based interventions, using the international definition of violence against children provided in the ICVAC.⁹⁴
- ▼ Ensure that data collection prioritizes an intersectional approach that identifies inequalities that place children at heightened risk of violence, highlighting which children are most affected, and why.
- ▼ Ensure that data collection proactively seeks the experiences of children of all ages including the most vulnerable and marginalized.
- ▼ Create centralized, anonymized, publicly available information systems or databases that host data on children affected by all types of violence, abuse and neglect.
- ▼ Conduct nationally representative surveys including questions on violence against children.
- ▼ Incorporate preventing violence against children and other vulnerable groups into national economic growth and development strategies, as an integral part of investing in human capital.

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- ▼ Develop indicators and data collection systems to track spending on child protection and violence prevention. Budgeting processes must always be systematic and transparent to ensure accountability.
 - ▼ Ensure that sufficient government and non-government professionals are working across all relevant sectors to eliminate violence against children.
 - ▼ Provide training to equip all staff with the skills to prevent, identify and respond to violence against children, training on relevant laws, policies, guidelines, and emerging forms of violence against children, as well as training for professionals working with children on child protection and child rights as part of the core curriculum.
 - ▼ Ensure that child safeguarding policies and monitoring mechanisms are in place and operational for all professionals. Provide regular training on child safeguarding to all staff to ensure that they can protect children from harm and are aware of how to respond should a suspected safeguarding incident arise.

▼ A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

▼ AWARENESS-RAISING AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Committee emphasizes that educational measures are needed to address attitudes, traditions, customs, and behavioral practices which condone and promote violence against children.⁹⁵ States should make the principles and provisions of the CRC widely known to adults and children alike, by appropriate and active means (CRC, article 42), by:

- raising awareness, through public information and media campaigns, on the rights of the child, including the right to be protected from all forms of violence;
- supporting parents/caregivers, teachers and others to adopt positive, non-violent discipline approaches; and
- incorporating children's rights into school curricula and promoting a child rights approach in education at all levels.

Concerted efforts are needed to challenge deeply ingrained social and cultural norms and behaviors which continue to violate children's rights with alarming regularity. In many contexts, corporal punishment, including at home and in schools, remains a legitimate form of punishment, and child marriage, for girls and boys, is still normalized. In some contexts, younger boys are forced to participate in gang violence as a "rite of passage"; and fears of stigma and shame prevent children from reporting violence.⁹⁶

Positively influencing deeply ingrained social and cultural norms and behaviors by building a culture of respect for the rights of the child is a prerequisite for preventing violence against children.⁹⁷ Changing harmful social norms and attitudes takes time but is achievable, especially when all segments of society, including faith and community groups, cultural leaders, and children themselves are involved.⁹⁸

Evidence from INSPIRE finds that reduced acceptance of violence against women and children potentially results in:

- reductions in early and forced marriage,
- more favorable beliefs about gender equity and gender-equitable division of labor,
- more favorable attitudes about non-violent approaches to parental discipline,
- greater recognition of what constitutes abusive behavior toward intimate partners and children,
- increased bystander intervention to prevent violence against children and intimate partners, and
- reductions in physical or sexual violence by a parent or intimate partner.⁹⁹

Strategic and sustainable mass media/social mobilization campaigns can play a very valuable

role in awareness-raising and public education. To reach all segments of society, information must be provided in community languages and appropriately diverse formats. Parenting programs informed by social and behavior change (SBC) have also been found to be effective in reducing violence perpetrated against children by parents in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), when implemented by trained facilitators.¹⁰⁰ Other promising

approaches include community mobilization programs and bystander interventions.¹⁰¹

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended that, if necessary, States seek technical assistance from, among others, UNICEF and UNESCO, concerning awareness-raising, public education, and training to promote non-violent approaches.¹⁰² (See Case Studies: Paraguay, Sweden)

▼ MULTI-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

Violence against children is multi-dimensional, impacting many different sectors, including health, education, justice, finance, the private sector, and others. For example, violence in and around schools has significant impacts on children's health, education, and well-being.¹⁰³ Preventing and responding to violence is the responsibility of multiple sectors and line ministries, who are not all resourced in the same way.¹⁰⁴

To prevent and respond to violence against children, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has requested that States establish effective multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms at central, regional, and local levels, including civil society.¹⁰⁵ Engaging multiple sectors can prevent violence by addressing the underlying risk and protective factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of violence.¹⁰⁶ Multi-sectoral collaboration supports outcomes that no one sector can achieve alone.¹⁰⁷

Progress has been made in strengthening collaborative approaches to ending violence against children.

- The Collaboration Multiplier Tool, launched by the Prevention Institute, Violence Prevention Alliance, and the End Violence Partnership in 2020, helps States maximize effective multi-sectoral collaboration.¹⁰⁸ Focusing on public health, criminal justice, social service, and education sectors as examples of multi-sectoral players who have a role in preventing violence, the tool assists governments, civil society organizations, and businesses to understand the similarities and differences across sectors and support them to work together towards the shared ambition of ending violence against children.
- Multi-sectoral actions and coordination is a cross-cutting activity within the INSPIRE framework. Pathfinding countries are required to convene and support a multi-stakeholder group within the first 18 months of pathfinding status being confirmed.¹⁰⁹
- In May 2021, at the 74th World Health Assembly, Member States adopted a resolution on ending violence against children by strengthening health systems and implementing multi-sectoral approaches.¹¹⁰

Comprehensive, coordinated, and multi-sectoral prevention and response to prioritize the efforts needed to end violence against children require political will and leadership (see p.16), capacity

(see pp.24-25), and sufficient budget allocation (see pp.20-22) . (See Case Studies: Paraguay, Sweden, Zambia)

▼ INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN

Governments have an obligation to guarantee children's rights to participate in decision-making processes relating to their protection and well-being (CRC, article 12).¹¹¹

The Committee on the Rights of the Child and other international agencies and bodies¹¹² consistently remind States that children's participation should be central to child protection strategies and programs and urge States to take children's views into account.¹¹³


Approaches at local, national, and international levels are increasingly supporting children's involvement in public decision-making to realize their right to live free from violence. For example:

- The UN Secretary-General Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming is a very significant step in addressing the need for a systematic application of a child rights approach across the UN System. It includes a strong element on child participation, for the UN to be more inclusive and equipped to interact with children in a safe, empowering and sustained way, and for meaningful child participation to make children's voices heard at the UN level.¹¹⁴
- The Committee encourages children's participation in several key decision-making processes. These include the reporting process of States Parties' implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols; Days of

General Discussion; development of general comments; commemorative events, in-country visits, and other events.¹¹⁵

- Increasing numbers of Member States involve children in the development of their human rights reports: in 2021, children contributed to nearly half of the VNR reports.¹¹⁶
- Pathfinding country governments are expected to consult with a wide variety of stakeholders, including children, and to adhere to partnership standards on child participation.

Children share their experiences and opinions in a variety of ways including: contributing to surveys and polls; online or in-person meetings, including focus groups, and interactions with decision makers, such as national legislative bodies; and participation in international meetings. Rapid developments in IT and communications have significantly increased opportunities for many children to participate beyond geographic or cultural borders. Despite this, significant progress is still required to overcome persistent barriers to children's participation. This includes countering negative attitudes about children's capacity to claim their rights and removing legal and practical barriers that prevent them from exercising their civil and political rights at the national level.¹¹⁷ (See Case Studies: Paraguay, Zambia)



Concerted efforts are still needed to foster an environment that listens to children. This should include addressing adult attitudes, providing training and support to adults to engage with children, raising awareness about the benefits of child participation with the wider community, and providing inclusive dedicated spaces and platforms for children to come together and participate in decision-making processes. Children's involvement should be voluntary, and they should always be treated with respect. All processes should be fully transparent and clearly

explained to all involved. Processes should be child-friendly, safe, and sensitive to risk.

The Committee has requested that States implement the standards set out by the Committee's Basic Requirements for the Implementation of the Right of the Child to be Heard to ensure that processes involving children are safe and meaningful.¹¹⁸ Proactive measures are also needed to involve vulnerable children who are most at risk of experiencing violence and seek the experiences of children of all ages, not just adolescents.

▼ GUIDANCE FOR STATES: A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

To eliminate violence against children, States should:

- ▼ Make information on children's rights, including the protection of children from violence, widely available among children and adults in ways that they understand and can access.
- ▼ Collaborate with other relevant stakeholders, such as the media, civil society, including children, and religious, traditional, and community leaders to prioritize raising awareness about the unacceptability of all forms of violence against children through public information campaigns.¹¹⁹
- ▼ Conduct strategic and continuous awareness-raising and public education initiatives that involve all the community, including parents and children themselves.
- ▼ Strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration between relevant government departments at provincial and regional levels, and civil society, including children, to work together to eliminate violence against children.
- ▼ Engage children and ensure that their voices are heard during sessions of the Human Rights Council, particularly during the Day of General Discussion.
- ▼ Appoint a senior government focal point with the endorsement at the highest political level to establish a multi-sectoral coordination process.
- ▼ Remove legal barriers to children's enjoyment of their rights to engage in civic action, including the rights to assemble peacefully, to associate, and to express themselves.
- ▼ Secure every child's right to participate in national law and policy, supported by sufficient investment to ensure that mechanisms are sustainable and effective.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The CRC, as regularly reinforced by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its guidance and communications with States, emphasizes the State obligation of international cooperation for the protection of every child.¹²⁰ This includes:

- providing international support for child protection programs, including training;¹²¹
- providing human, financial, and technical resources at the international level;¹²² and
- regional and international cooperation to address child protection issues that cut across national borders, including cross-border movement of children, child trafficking, conflict that cuts across borders, and disasters that impact several countries simultaneously.¹²³

The requirement for international cooperation to bridge financial gaps for the implementation of strategies and policies to prevent and respond to violence against children and to promote their well-being by responding to the consequences of violence has been further emphasized by other international agencies, including WHO.¹²⁴

International cooperation has been crucial to the progress of global efforts to end violence against children. This includes, for example, global agreement to end the abuse, exploitation, and all forms of violence and

torture against children by 2030;¹²⁵ and the subsequent launch of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children in July 2016 by the UN Secretary-General.

Examples of regional commitments to end violence against children include:

- Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children, developed by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Aspiration 7)¹²⁶ ;
- The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (Thematic Area 3)¹²⁷;
- African Partnership to End Violence Against Children¹²⁸;
- South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC)¹²⁹;
- The ASEAN Regional Plan to End Violence Against Children¹³⁰;
- OAS General Assembly's Declaration on Violence against and Exploitation of Children¹³¹;
- League of Arab States establishment of LAS Steering Committee on Violence against Children to coordinate efforts and review progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children.

International and regional fora and partnerships for countries to come together to explore the most effective strategies for ending violence against children include:

- The WHO Milestones in a Global Campaign for the Prevention of Violence;
- The US National Academies Forum on Global Violence Prevention;
- The Arigatou International Fifth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children;
- Together for Girls; and

- The Africa Union Commission through the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development – Child Protection Unit Technical Working Group.

States are urged to actively participate in regional and international partnerships to end violence against children. Some States are increasingly taking a leadership role in international groupings, actively trying to raise the issue of violence against children and keep it on the international agenda, becoming champions for EVAC. (See Case Studies: Colombia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Sierra Leone)

▼ INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

International human rights mechanisms play a fundamental role in supporting States' efforts to protect children from violence and holding them to account for fulfilling their legal obligations. Establishing effective accountability through cooperation within and between regional and international human rights bodies, mechanisms and United Nations agencies is essential to ending violence against children.

States are expected to describe actions they have taken to realize children's rights, including their right to protection from violence, in regular reports to, and dialogue with, international human rights mechanisms including, but not limited to, the Committee on the Rights of the Child,¹³² UPR, and HLPF. This includes submitting regular progress reports, hosting visits by UN representatives, implementing UN human rights recommendations,¹³³ and measuring the impact of States' actions to inform further reporting. Reporting on progress on ending violence against children and its drivers in VNRs is helping

to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, for example.¹³⁴

The reporting requirements under the CRC are outlined in CRC article 44, the treaty-specific reporting guidelines (CRC/C/58/Rev.2 and Corr.1), and in General Comment No. 8 (para. 53). The Committee also recommends that States Parties include information on progress made toward implementing the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children (A/61/299, para. 116).

In CRC/C/GC/13 (para. 9), the Committee specifies that reporting should comprise laws and other regulations taken to prohibit violence and to intervene appropriately when violence occurs and also measures for the prevention of violence, awareness-raising activities and the promotion of positive, non-violent relationships. The reports should also specify who has responsibility for the child and family at each stage of intervention (including prevention), what those responsibilities

are, at what stage and under what circumstances professionals can intervene, and how different sectors work together. The Committee consistently reiterates that States should involve children in the reporting process.

Recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms can have a significant impact on national efforts to address violence against

children (See Section: UN Human Rights Mechanisms).

States can also play an active role in monitoring human rights. The UPR, for example, provides States with the opportunity to make recommendations to other States regarding violence against children. (See Case Studies: Montenegro, Zambia)

▼ GUIDANCE FOR STATES: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

To eliminate violence against children, States should:

- ▼ Adopt and implement bilateral, regional, and international agreements and partnerships with other countries to prevent violence against children.
- ▼ Accede to all international treaties and other international agreements relating to ending violence against children.¹³⁵
- ▼ Include children's rights and violence prevention in SDG implementation and monitoring processes, such as the VNRs.
- ▼ Make UPR recommendations to other States relating to preventing and responding to violence against children, in all its forms.

COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

The following case studies highlight effective measures taken by seven States to prioritize effective measures to protect children from all forms of violence. These case studies were selected based on criteria including geographic/regional balance, coverage of different political and cultural backgrounds, levels of development, and progress made

toward ending violence against children. They demonstrate that these interrelated measures are mutually reinforcing and accelerate countries' abilities to adopt evidence-based EVAC interventions. They do not necessarily encompass all the positive EVAC actions these States are taking.



COLOMBIA



Overcoming violence against children and adolescents in all its forms is one of the catalysts that can propel the country into a social and cultural transformation that would allow us to consolidate Total Peace. The Colombian government's intentional actions are demonstrated in the creation of institutional offers from all sectors of the government to prevent violence and address them in effective ways. This national commitment denotes a cultural change and a long-term commitment with which we hope to de-normalize violence against our children and youth.



Institute of Child Welfare, Government of Colombia

In response to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Government of Colombia conducted a Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) in 2018, providing it with detailed information to inform targeted actions to prevent and respond to violence against children. A combination of

subsequent actions, including multi-sectoral collaboration, prioritization of a strategic approach, legislative reform, and international cooperation has supported Colombia in making progressive strides toward realizing its goal to end violence against children in all its forms.

BARRIERS TO EVAC

In its concluding observations to Colombia in 2015, the Committee expressed deep concern that children in Colombia were confronted with high levels of violence and recommended that Colombia prioritize the elimination of all forms of violence against children. It urged Colombia to take specific actions, including establishing a comprehensive information system that includes disaggregated data on cases of violence against children.

EVAC MEASURES



Data collection:

In 2018, Colombia became the first country in South America to conduct a Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS). A selected team of skilled interviewers, native to the region and familiar with the culture, was the key to building trust and listening carefully to children who shared their experiences in the survey. In addition to providing a nationally representative sample of the prevalence of violence affecting children, the Colombia VACS also included

representative data from high-violence conflict areas, providing a baseline for measuring progress on peacebuilding processes. The survey identified that 40% of those surveyed had been victims of some type of violence as a child and that 72% of these violations occurred at home. The findings from the survey alerted and enabled the Government of Colombia to take a series of subsequent measures to prioritize ending violence against children.



Multi-sectoral strategic approach and multi-sectoral collaboration:

Colombia's 2018-2022 National Development Plan sets a 14.3% reduction goal in the rate of violence perpetrated against children and adolescents. The Government identified the need for a national multi-sectoral strategic approach to achieve this target. The National Alliance to End Violence against Children was launched in 2019, led by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF). This coalition of technical advisors, composed of representatives from different agencies of the Government of Colombia, civil society and academic organizations, and international agencies, aims to ensure the consolidation of protective spaces for children at home, in public institutions, and digital spaces. It does this by: (i) coordinating and strengthening a multi-sectoral response to preventing different forms of violence against children (VAC); and (ii) providing comprehensive support to government authorities to prevent VAC.

In the same year, 2019, Colombia became a pathfinding country. The adoption and adaptation of the INSPIRE model to prevent violence against children in Colombia was set out in the National Plan of Action to End Violence against Children and Adolescents (2021-2024) approved by the Executive Committee of the National Family Welfare System of Colombia in June 2021. Prioritizing collaboration, the National Plan was designed in consultation with multiple stakeholders, including children. It aims to address identified priorities, including: the need to address norms and value changes, particularly around sexual violence; the need to increase or address work with parents; and the need to address interventions at the school level in education and life skills. The National Plan includes 184 initiatives to protect children from violence, focusing on: (i) strengthening the legal framework; (ii) social mobilization; (iii)

risk prevention; (iv) protective environments; (v) timely and comprehensive care; (vi) institutional strengthening; and (vii) data and evidence. To address violence against children throughout the country, the National Plan of Action has been disseminated in 32 sub-national action plans. As of 2022, almost half of Colombia's departments had approved their plans, and 17 were in the process of approving them.

In 2022, Colombia further adopted the National Pedagogical & Prevention Strategy Against Corporal Punishment and Cruel, Humiliating or Degrading Treatment of Children and Adolescents, 2022-2030 to transform sociocultural beliefs and behaviors. This strategy articulates promotion and prevention actions designed to promote nurturing care and education, democratic relations, respectful parenting, and giving importance to the voices of children. The Government has prioritized several initiatives to realize the plans' goals, including strengthening families as guarantors of safe and nurturing environments for the development of children and adolescents and the protection of their rights. To ensure the strategy's implementation, technical assistance has been provided to family ombudsmen's offices, providers of protection services, and foster families at the regional and local levels. ICBF also meets regularly to support the implementation of planned activities.

The Government of Colombia has further prioritized children in its current National Development Plan, Colombia, World Power of Life (2022-2026). Recognizing that children and adolescents are the fundamental nucleus of society, the plan includes a series of measures to protect children, guarantee their rights, and strengthen the environments in which they grow and develop.



Monitoring and evaluation:

The Government monitors the implementation of its National Plan of Action by measuring the impact on national indicators and the reduction of the national rate of violence against children, presenting the findings in annual reports, and

in intermediate and final evaluations of the implementation of the entire plan. ICBF monitors the progress of the plan's implementation, using output and outcome indicators in the short, medium, and long term.



Legislative reform:

Colombia fully prohibited corporal punishment of children in Act No. 2089/2021, adopted in March 2021. This significant milestone was reached as the result of over five years of strategic lobbying and advocacy by an alliance of NGOs. This included a campaign to prohibit

corporal punishment, led by Alianza por la Niñez Colombiana, a network of civil society organizations made of up more than 700 international and national groups, networks, and allies.



International cooperation:

Colombia prioritizes working in partnership with international agencies to mobilize resources to implement actions aimed at the prevention and care of all types of violence against children, for the implementation of the NAP and Departmental Action Plans. Colombia has also participated in and led international actions to end violence against children. For example, the former First Lady of Colombia, Maria Juliana

Ruiz, and the ICBF Director, Lina Arbeláez, hosted a high-level meeting in June 2020 to discuss support from international agencies on this issue. In November 2024, Colombia will host the first Ministerial Conference on Violence Against Children, with the support of WHO, in collaboration with the Government of Sweden, the O/SRSG VAC, UNICEF and WHO.

INDONESIA



The Government of Indonesia is committed to preventing and dealing with violence against children in order to create a healthy generation and ensure that children can grow and develop optimally. The realization of this priority for Indonesia requires needs-based interventions that are appropriate to each child development age and individual characteristics of children.



Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia

In response to recommendations from international human rights mechanisms, Indonesia has focused its attention on preventing

violence against children in recent years by allocating budget to EVAC and collecting data to inform a strategic approach.

BARRIERS TO EVAC

The Government of Indonesia recognizes the challenges in the full enforcement of laws regarding children's rights, which contribute to the physical, emotional, and sexual violence that children in Indonesia face at home, in school, and in their community. Despite these obstacles, the Government of Indonesia has prioritized taking concrete measures to respond to violence against children in appropriate and timely manner, demonstrating their commitment to overcoming these barriers and ensuring the safety and well-being of all children in Indonesia.

EVAC MEASURES



Budget allocation:

Demonstrating commitment to address violence against children, in 2019, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP) enacted a special allocation fund to supplement

local government budgets, addressing existing limitations in their ability to increase child protection budgets at the local level.



Data collection:

- The recommendations from the concluding observation of CEDAW (2012) and Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014)

urged the Government of Indonesia to collect data on violence against children and develop strategies to provide complaint

services and facilities for child victims of violence. In response, the Government allocated a significant budget for data collection and conducted the National Children and Adolescents Life Experience Survey (SNPHAR) in 2021 and is preparing one for 2024. The SNPHAR (2021) exposed the scale of violence against children in Indonesia. It found that 46% of girls and 37% of boys ages 13-17 living in both cities and rural areas have experienced violence over the past 12 months; 4% of boys and 8% of girls between the ages of 13-17 had experienced sexual violence; and about 14% of boys and 43% of girls have experienced indirect psychological violence online through cyberbullying.

- The Government of Indonesia continues to collect administrative data on violence against children from various sources. These include: the Women and Child Protection Units at Indonesia National Police; the Online Information System on Protection of Women and Children (SIMFONI PPA) and Integrated Service Centers for Protection of Women and Children at the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection; the Ministry of Social Affairs; Centre for Health Data and Information at the Ministry of Health; Indonesian Commission on Child Protection; National Commission on Violence against Women, and limited data from Court Cases at the Supreme Court. NGOs including PUSKAPA UI, ECPAT Indonesia, and LPAI also provide administrative data on violence against children.
- Paper-based registration/record-keeping systems and computer-based management systems are used to collect this data. In 2016, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection established SIMFONI PPA, "a computer-based online document

management system that enables staff to collect and collate data from all districts and provinces throughout Indonesia and produce real-time analyses." Such analyses can be used to coordinate the delivery of services for women and children, formulate policies, promote coordination of social welfare and child protection services, and report on national indicators and the SDGs. Despite significant progress, data management remains a challenge in Indonesia. For example, reporting forms across ministries/agencies and sectors record only physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence. These four types of violence are not clearly defined and restrict data on other forms of physical and sexual violence experienced by children.

- Since 2021, new types of violence, namely human trafficking and exploitation (both economic and/or sexual) have been added to SIMFONI PPA to better reflect the condition of children's vulnerability to violence and exploitation.
- As an application system for recording and reporting violence against women and children, SIMFONI PPA can be accessed by all relevant service units handling victims of violence against women and children at the national, provincial and district/city levels in an up-to-date, real-time and accurate manner, thus making progress toward the goal of "One Violence National Data."
- Since 2023, a MoWECP Ministerial Regulation was issued to regulate the governance of gender data and child data to produce data that is accurate, up-to-date, integrated, and accountable, as well as easy to access and use for all users, via the Gender and Children Information System, a sub-system of SIMFONI PPA.



Strategic approach:

In its National Long-Term Development Plan (2005-2025), Indonesia made a long-term commitment to: strengthen child protection in various development sectors; decrease the number of cases of violence, exploitation, and discrimination against children; and strengthen child institutions and networks at national and local levels. It has subsequently made progress toward preventing violence against children, despite many remaining challenges. A subsequent milestone was reached in 2022 when Indonesia's president signed and adopted Indonesia's National Strategy on Elimination of Violence against Children (2022-2024). This strategy outlines a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen the efforts to prevent and respond to the various forms of violence against children by 2024. The strategy is informed by the results of the 2018 National Survey of Child and Adolescent Life Experiences (SNPHAR) and aims to integrate INSPIRE evidence-based strategies into government development planning and other policies.

There has been a focus on the health sector as a key actor in handling cases of violence against women and children — from promotion, to prevention, early detection, curative, and rehabilitative measures. The health sector has a role in advocacy, comprehensive services, training of health workers, early detection, referral, education on gender equality, and reproductive health.

The Government has implemented various related regulations and guidelines to address violence against children. One of these regulations mandates medical personnel to report suspected cases of violence against children to the police. While services are available at health centers and hospitals, where Community Health Centers handle victim identification, management, and outreach for prevention and intervention. Meanwhile, hospitals provide comprehensive 24-hour support, adhering to standards, maintaining documentation and fostering network cooperation.

Promotional services addressing violence against children include educating the public about what constitutes violence using posters, videos, and social media, as well as involving various stakeholders such as community, religious, community and school leaders.

Indonesia, through cross-ministerial collaboration, has also implemented comprehensive age-appropriate reproductive health education within educational institutions. This initiative includes enhancing teacher competency in delivering comprehensive reproductive health material, including awareness-raising and the prevention of violence against women and children.



Legislation:

Indonesia's commitment to protect children from violence and ensure a better life is reflected in its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 through Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990. Legal prohibition of all forms of violence against children in Indonesia remains to be achieved in settings such as the home, alternative care settings, day-care, and schools, and is used as a sentence for crime.

However, the momentum to address this issue, notably in the inclusion of EVAC in Indonesia's long-term development planning, becoming a pathfinding country in 2016, and accepting the recommendation to prohibit all corporal punishment of children made during its Universal Periodic Reviews in 2017 and 2022, suggest that full prohibition may be the logical next step.



International cooperation and accountability:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia plays an instrumental role in formulating and bridging issues related to the prevention of violence against women and children at both the national and international levels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively works to advise and align progress within the country, facilitating the exchange of best practices and experiences, including through engagement with all relevant stakeholders.

This includes closely instrumenting, overseeing, and facilitating the submission of periodic reports and the implementation of recommendations of the UPR, CRC, CEDAW, and other relevant human rights mechanisms. The Ministry also plays a crucial role in participating in various EVAC-related agendas including at the Human Rights Council, the UNGA, the Security Council, and the CSW.



Impact:

Although challenges in collecting data on violence against children remain, recent surveys detect a reduction in the use of physical punishment. By 2020, 48.4% of households with children (ages 1–17) experienced physical

punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers, compared to 54.8% in 2014. Children also feel safer. By 2020, 61.27% of children (0-17) feel safe walking alone around the area they live, compared to 52.03% in 2017.

▼ MONTENEGRO



We are aware that exposure to violence has long-term consequences for a child's mental and physical health. It affects their social inclusion and educational achievements, has negative economic repercussions, and often leads to increased poverty. Therefore, prevention and protection of children from violence is one of the top priorities in the field of children's rights in Montenegro. We, therefore, continuously work on improving the legislative and normative framework, strengthening the capacity of professionals who are in charge of providing support to children, strengthening the national system by introducing a multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral and multi-thematic response, as well as changing social norms and raising public awareness about this important issue.



*Government of Montenegro - Ministry of
Labour and Social Welfare*

During the last decade, Montenegro has intensified its political efforts to adopt positive social norms and improve policies, and legal and institutional frameworks, with the aim of more effective prevention and protection of children from any form of violence, abuse, and neglect.

Montenegro's strong commitment to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms, supported by advocacy from civil society, and multi-stakeholder cooperation, has supported strategic and transformative actions to accelerate progress towards ending violence against children.

BARRIERS TO EVAC

International concern about violence against children in Montenegro is reflected in the many child rights recommendations it received over several years. In 2018, the Committee on the Rights of the Child shared concerns about the high prevalence and tolerance of violence against children in Montenegro and the general lack of understanding of what constitutes violence against children. The Government of Montenegro recognized these challenges. The child welfare/child protection system traditionally depended on institutional care and the distribution of financial aid, rather than supporting children and childcare providers through, for example, psychosocial assistance or counselling. Before independence, the institutionalization of children was understood in Montenegrin society as a "right of the child," and considered a first resort, particularly for children with disabilities.

EVAC MEASURES



Legislative reform influenced by international cooperation:

Since gaining independence in 2006, Montenegro has demonstrated a strong record of

cooperation with human rights mechanisms. This is in part motivated by the country's ambition

to become a member of the European Union (EU), for which one criterion is the alignment of its national laws and practices with international human rights standards, including children's rights. It has acceded to all international treaties and other international agreements to which the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was Party and has demonstrated a strong commitment to implement recommendations made by UN treaty bodies. It ratified the CRC in October 2006. Montenegro's engagement with human

rights mechanisms has provided an opportunity for child-focused organizations to advocate for and support substantial reforms needed for Montenegro to better protect its children from violence. Montenegro has taken further progressive steps to improve its legislative and normative framework to better protect children. For example, it made considerable amendments to Montenegro's Family Law, prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings in July 2016.



Disaggregated data and monitoring:

In 2013, Montenegro carried out its first survey on adverse childhood experiences. It identified a high prevalence of violence and other adversities in childhood at a policy dialogue supported by the World Health Organization. In the same year, the research institute Ipsos, with the support of UNICEF, carried out a survey on awareness, attitudes, and practices of violence against children. In 2016, Ipsos surveyed the public related to violence against children, with support

from international partners. Research has also been conducted on the online experiences of children and parents within the Global Kids Online research network developed by UNICEF Innocenti, in collaboration with the London School of Economics. The government collaborates closely with the Institution of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms and non-governmental organizations to monitor the situation of children in Montenegro.



Strategic approach:

Montenegro became a pathfinding country in 2017. It subsequently developed the Draft Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence and the Action Plan, 2017–2021 through multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral consultations that included the Government, UNICEF, NGOs, academia, the media, and youth networks. Planned actions included the Ministry of Health strengthening home care services and developing a protocol on the work of health care institutions in prevention and response to violence against children;

the Ministry of Interior issuing guidelines for institutions to identify and prosecute cases of child marriage and domestic partnership; and in 2018, the pilot of the Parenting for Lifelong Health Program, implemented by health centers, kindergartens, and non-governmental organizations to help enhance parenting skills and ultimately, reduce rates of child abuse and neglect. Montenegro is in the process of developing a new strategy for the prevention and protection of children from violence for the period 2025-2028, which will define priority



areas for the relevant departments. It will include the prevention of peer violence, safe use of the Internet, promotion of non-violent disciplining of children, the establishment of a national Children's House (Barnahus model) for child victims of severe forms of violence, and additional strengthening of administrative and professional capacities in all departments involved in the protection of children from violence. The Ministry of Labour and Social

Welfare began drafting the Deinstitutionalization Strategy in Montenegro for the period from 2024 to 2028 with support from UNICEF and UNDP. This strategy aims to improve the rights of the most vulnerable children, youth, adults, and elderly in Montenegro living in large residential institutions and to accelerate the process of deinstitutionalization by improving the provision of support to families to prevent the separation of children.



Multi-stakeholder collaboration:

Montenegro has prioritized a multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral response to address violence against children. In 2017, for example, the government established a task force composed of representatives of the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare, Education, Health,

Justice, Culture and the Interior, as well as a representative of the NGO sector to monitor the implementation of the Strategy for The Prevention And Protection Of Children Against Violence And The Action Plan, 2017–2021.



International cooperation and accountability:

Cooperation with human rights mechanisms has further contributed to Montenegro's strategic commitment to end violence against children. The Committee's concluding observations on the combined version of both the second and third periodic reports of Montenegro were used as guidelines during the preparation of Montenegro's Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child (2019-2023). On her visit to Montenegro in 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, including Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Other Child Sexual Abuse Material, noted a serious lack of specialized professionals dealing

with victims and potential victims of abuse and exploitation, and no institution in Montenegro providing a holistic forensic examination of children exposed to the most severe forms of violence and sexual exploitation. This concern was addressed in the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child (2019-2023), by including plans to construct a Barnahus – Children's Home, where forensic interviews and medical examinations of child victims of sexual abuse will be conducted. Montenegro also welcomed the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (November 2019).



Strengthening capacity:

The government has prioritized strengthening the capacity of professionals who provide support to children. After the introduction of a new methodology of case management in the Centres for Social Work, Montenegro adopted the Protocol on the Procedure, Prevention, and Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in 2011, amended in 2018. Guidelines for healthcare providers to protect children and adolescents from violence, abuse, and neglect have also been adopted. In 2020, the government developed the Standard Operating Procedures, a guide for all professionals involved in protection and work with child victims of violence and exploitation in Montenegro. In 2023, the Government shared its commitment to enhancing capacity in the Centres for Social Work, police, courts, prosecution offices, teachers, and healthcare workers to provide support to children. Continuous work is being done to strengthen the capacities of employees in the fields of social protection, police, prosecutor's office, judiciary, and health. The government plans to conduct specialized training for professionals working in social work, health psychiatry, and psychology. Training is also planned to improve the professional capacities of police officers and

representatives of the judiciary to work with child victims of violence, respecting the principles of justice tailored to the child. Plans are in place for a specialized program of support for psychosocial and mental health and rehabilitation of children victims of violence, sexual violence, and witnesses of gender-based violence, as well as the development of a parenting program for lifelong health adapted to parents of children ages 2-9 from the Roma and Egyptian communities.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, in cooperation with UNICEF, is implementing a project to strengthen the system of protection for the prevention and protection of children from all forms of violence and exploitation, funded by the European Union. The implementation of the project envisages that at least 100 professionals from different sectors, through cross-sectoral training (in the fields of social and child protection, health, and education) strengthen the capacities to provide preventive, multi-sectoral, and holistic support and response to violence against children, including sexual violence, abuse and exploitation, as well as the application of standard operating procedures for working with children, victims of violence.



Public engagement:

Changing social norms and raising public awareness about violence against children remain one of Montenegro's pivotal priorities. The government has committed to continued awareness-raising campaigns targeting parents, teachers, and all experts working with children to change attitudes and entrenched patterns related

to violence against children. The Government, in cooperation with UNICEF, conducted a campaign against violence against children, which addressed online violence as well, in 2016, while the second phase of the campaign focused on domestic violence and the relationship between parents and children (2017).



Regional cooperation:

Montenegro has agreed on protocols for regional cooperation to combat human trafficking and child abuse with North Macedonia (2018) and Slovenia (2021).



Impact:

In 2023, Montenegro reported on the progress it has made to combat violence against children in its UPR report and VNR. Recent actions it has taken include increasing licenses to conduct child protection activities and making continued efforts to reduce the number of children placed in protection institutions.

PARAGUAY



Paraguay prioritizes the fight against violence against children, in response to the great sensitivity of authorities and civil society leaders regarding the need to change cultural patterns to eradicate violence and position the child as a subject of rights, ensuring the full enjoyment of all their rights. To this end, it has formulated constitutional norms, ratified international human rights instruments, promulgated laws, and formulated and executed public policies in the field of prevention and fight against violence against children and adolescents.



Directorate of Human Rights - Ministry of Children and Adolescents, Government of Paraguay

Paraguay's commitment to multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration is central to the country's commitment to eliminating violence against children. Children are considered key

stakeholders in the State's efforts to end violence against children, and their involvement is prioritized in the government's decision-making processes.

BARRIERS TO EVAC

In its last Concluding Observations to Paraguay in 2010, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern at the lack of data on violence against children and observed that limited efforts were being taken to involve children in decision-making processes.

EVAC MEASURES



Data collection:

Data has been central to informing Paraguay's efforts to address violence against children. In 2011, Paraguay published the first representative sample on violence against children at the national level. In 2016, the Government of Paraguay launched the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, which covered nearly 8,000 homes across

Paraguay, and in 2017, a total of 3,149 students, ages 13-17, participated in the Paraguay Global School-Based Student Health Survey (GSHS). This school-based survey measured indicators including: alcohol use; physical activity; protective factors; sexual behaviors; and violence and unintentional injury. In 2017, the



Government published subsequent research on violence against children in a report, entitled “The Drivers of Violence Affecting Children in

Paraguay.” In 2023, Paraguay began the design phase of a second MICS.



Strategic approach, multi-sectoral collaboration, and legislative reform:

The Government shared its progress on and goals for addressing violence against children and achieving SDG 16.2 and other SDG targets in Paraguay in “Child Protection Against Abuse and All Forms of Violence in the New 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.”¹³⁶ This plan was developed in collaboration with a coalition of child-focused agencies. Paraguay achieved

full prohibition of corporal punishment in 2016. It became a pathfinder country in the same year, and subsequently launched the National Plan of Action for the Protection of Children Against Abuse and All Forms of Violence (2017-2021). This strategy promotes positive parenting to children, families, communities, and public officials working with children.



Political will and leadership:

The political will of ministerial authorities and the Executive Branch and a robust legal framework to ensure the rights of children and adolescents have influenced government ministries, such as the Ministries of Education and Health, to adjust their regulations and create new directorates to ensure effective compliance with the rights of children and adolescents.¹³⁷ The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents (SNNA) has been raised to the rank of Ministry of Children and Adolescents (MINNA) by Law No. 6174/18 and has worked to strengthen the capacities of the National System of Promotion and Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents. The MINNA is also responsible for coordinating actions at the regional and

local levels, through the establishment and consolidation of Departmental Councils for Children and Adolescents in each of the 17 departments of Paraguay, as well as Municipal Councils for Children and Adolescents and Municipal Advisories for the Rights of Children and Adolescents. The MINNA leads and coordinates the National Council for Children and Adolescents, approving public policies regarding children and adolescents. It has also established the Network of Departmental Secretariats to strengthen inter-institutional coordination and exchange of training and technical cooperation to achieve the well-being of children and adolescents in all the departments.



Multi-stakeholder collaboration:

A multi-stakeholder approach has been central to Paraguay's progress in addressing violence against children. The Ministry for Children and Adolescents coordinates the National Commission for Prevention and Response to Violence against Children and Adolescents. This multi-sectoral commission, comprised of representatives from government ministries and agencies, local governments, the justice sector, and civil society, has accelerated Paraguay's efforts to eradicate violence against children. It leads multi-sectoral coordination among response services and raises the visibility of violence against children on the public agenda, especially concerning sexual violence against girls.¹³⁸ A coalition of child-focused agencies cooperates with the Ministry of Childhood

and Adolescence to provide technical support and develop actions to implement SDG 16.2 and related targets.¹³⁹ Within this framework, an Interinstitutional Intervention Roadmap for Comprehensive Attention of Sexual Abuse against Children and Adolescents has been approved, through articulated work between MINNA, public institution and CSOs. The Roadmap establishes the stages of comprehensive attention for children and adolescents who are victims of any type of sexual violence, including detection, protection and support, and has also established the Prevention and Comprehensive Attention Program for Children and Adolescents who are victims of sexual abuse (PAIVAS).



Child participation:

Paraguay prioritizes the meaningful participation of children in EVAC actions, directly contributing to Paraguay's commitment to making the country more inclusive, participatory, and child friendly.¹⁴⁰ The National Council for Children and Adolescents has representatives of children's organizations. The MINNA promotes the participation of children and fosters the conformation of Departmental and Municipal Councils with the involvement of children and adolescents to engage them in the local affairs of their municipalities, for the promotion and defense of their rights, and to ensure that their voices are taken into account in the formulation

of public policies and municipal plans. Through MINNA, the Government organizes accountability sessions of the Executive Branch aimed at children and adolescents. Other EVAC initiatives children have been involved in include, but are not limited to:

- Contributing to the development of Paraguay's National Platform for Children and Adolescents.
- Sharing their experiences and concerns related to development issues and challenges in a Child Friendly Accountability Methodology, including an open-source



child-friendly accountability mechanism and an information and communications technology platform.¹⁴¹ The approach enables children to monitor the performance of child protection systems, engage in an informed dialogue with decision-makers, and work with key stakeholders to realize positive changes at community and national levels.

- Participating in the International Seminar on the Participation of Children and Adolescents in the Eradication of Violence against Children, hosted by the government of Paraguay in May 2018, attended by government representatives, civil society organizations, and regional bodies. At the end of the seminar, participating

organizations agreed to disseminate and replicate the initiatives presented in the seminar within Latin America and the Caribbean region, with the full involvement of children.¹⁴²

- Contributing to Paraguay's 2021 Voluntary National Review by sharing their concerns related to development issues and challenges they believe Paraguay faces in achieving the SDGs, as well as identifying priority issues for children and young people. Children also participated in discussing the report in an online multi-stakeholder meeting organized by the government in partnership with UNDP, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Children and Adolescents.¹⁴³



Public engagement:

To raise public awareness about the importance of alerting and reporting acts of violence against children, Paraguay has been steadily promoting the #Green Ribbon campaign, "We are all responsible." This campaign is promoted with greater emphasis in May of each year, a month of commemoration of the fight against

sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents. All State agencies and entities are involved and carry out awareness-raising actions to put protection on the public agenda and to urge the involvement of society in the protection of children by reporting situations of violation of their rights.



Regional cooperation:

Paraguay is an active member of the Permanent Commission of the Child – South Initiative from Mercosur, which addresses child-protection issues in Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, and Argentina. As President Pro Tempore of the bloc, Paraguay hosted the XXXI Meeting of Human Rights Authorities of Mercosur RAADHH

in June 2018, where civil society organizations, including children and adolescents organized through the National Network of Childhood and Adolescence, presented advances and their experiences on ending violence against children.¹⁴⁴

SIERRA LEONE



Sierra Leone joins hands with the global community to raise awareness, promote prevention, and stand against the heinous crimes that threaten the well-being of our children. We shall continue to uphold a deep commitment to the protection and welfare of our children, and building a world where they can thrive without fear, their innocence is preserved, and their rights are upheld.¹⁴⁵



*President Julius Maada Bio,
President of Sierra Leone*

In recent years, the Government of Sierra Leone has made strides in its quest to prevent violence against children, with a particular focus on sexual and gender-based violence. A combination of political leadership, a multi-stakeholder

approach, international cooperation, capacity strengthening, and data collection are among the actions that have accelerated the government's attention to this issue.

BARRIERS TO EVAC

In its last Concluding Observations to Sierra Leone in 2016, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed serious concerns about the high incidence of violence against children, especially sexual violence, and the use of harmful practices, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), despite great efforts by the government. The Committee also shared serious concerns about the capacity of professionals to protect children from violence, including the staff at the Family Support Units (FSUs) at the village level, who have the mandate to investigate all forms of child abuse and violence against children, as they are challenged with mobility and other logistics to reach out and support victims in the many remote areas of the country. The Committee urged the government to strengthen the technical and operational capacities of FSUs to increase their outreach.

EVAC MEASURES



Political will and leadership:

Under the leadership of President Julius Maada Bio, Sierra Leone has been building strong institutions with expressed mandates and inherent powers to combat violence against children and also specifically against women and girls, including the “Hands-off our girls”

campaign launched in December 2018 by the First Lady, Her Excellency Fatima Maada Bio, and the amended the Sexual Offences Act that include increased penalties such as life imprisonment for perpetrators.



Multi-stakeholder approach:

In 2020, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs launched six pilot One-Stop centers to provide multidisciplinary services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including psychosocial counselling, free medical services, and legal assistance. The main goal of the centers is to ensure survivors would not have to go to the police to report cases of sexual or gender-based violence. In July 2020,

the government set up a sexual offences court, a special court to expedite the trials of sexual-related offences and reduce the backlog of cases. The FSUs also work in partnership with the child protection technical working group, led by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, to report, refer, and respond to cases of gender-based violence and abuse.



International cooperation and capacity strengthening:

In 2021, the Government of Japan provided Sierra Leone with support to develop the capacity of the 80 different FSU stations in Sierra Leone, to improve access to and develop the capacity of a GBV prevention and response system. As a result of Japan's cooperation and assistance, links have been established between FSUs and relevant social and legal services, including the Magistrate, High and Appeal courts. The information management system has been strengthened, enabling investigative officers to log cases they are handling at the district level.

This data is then analyzed at the national level, alerting stakeholders of the extent and nature

of violence against children and flagging areas where cases of violence against children are most pronounced. In addition, awareness raising, and information dissemination has alerted children and caregivers to recognize potential signs of child abuse and provide them with information on where such cases can be handled. It is anticipated that the FSUs' strengthened operations, combined with increased community awareness about how to report cases of violence against children, will lead to reduced cases of violence within communities, and that effective responses will be carried out when an offence is committed.



Public engagement:

In July 2024, Sierra Leone together with Luxembourg and the Dominican Republic, advanced a resolution at the Human Rights Council, cosponsored by 43 other states, to consider and draft a new optional protocol to the CRC explicitly recognizing every child's right to early childhood education, free public pre-primary education, and free public secondary education.¹⁴⁶

In 2022, Sierra Leone co-sponsored a Resolution at UNGA to declare November 18 as the World Day for the Prevention of, and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence. In February 2019, the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone declared rape and sexual violence a national state of emergency due to the alarming number of sexual abuse cases. The

criminalization of sexual violence was supported by advocacy efforts by CSOs, including World Vision Sierra Leone's five-year campaign, "It Takes a World to End Violence Against Children," focused on ending sexual violence against children.

Sierra Leone endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in June 2015, contributing to global efforts to protect education and improve compliance with international law.¹⁴⁷ Sierra Leone has expressed their political commitment to protect students, teachers, and schools during times of armed conflict, ensuring the continuation of education during armed conflict; and the implementation of the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.¹⁴⁸



Legislation:

Full legal prohibition of all forms of violence against children in Sierra Leone is still to be achieved, although positive strides have been taken, including laws and regulations that provide some pathways to report violence against children. The Child Rights Act provides that any person with information on child abuse or a child in need of care and protection shall report to the district council. In 2019, the President of Sierra Leone passed into law the amended Sexual Offences Act to make provision for the increase in the maximum penalty for rape and sexual penetration of a child from fifteen years to life imprisonment. In addition,

the Amended Act makes provision for the introduction of the offence of aggravated sexual assault and provides for an alternative conviction of aggravated sexual assault.

Sierra Leone's Free Quality School Education (FQSE) initiative³, implemented since 2018, aims to provide both free and compulsory education across the country. Under this policy, tuition fees are covered from pre-primary to senior secondary levels, and core learning materials are provided. The program emphasizes compulsory education, making it a legal obligation for parents to send their children to school. Incentives such as



free meals in remote rural schools encourage attendance, while penalties are imposed on parents who fail to comply. The FQSE program strives to unlock every child's potential by ensuring access to quality education. In 2021, Sierra Leone adopted its National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools¹⁴⁹, which aims to remove "all infrastructural and systemic policy and practice impediments" to learning, with a particular focus on pregnant and parenting girls and children with disabilities, who are more likely to be out of school.

Sierra Leone's Parliament passed the Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act 2023 into law in April 2023. This progressive Act seeks to reform the education system by making it more inclusive, accessible and rights-based and lays out regulations to eliminate violence and improve learning outcomes in the country. The Act covers a wide range of regulations, such as ensuring the inclusion of children with physical or learning disability, banning discrimination, legalisation of youth advisory groups and, prohibition of corporal punishment and protection from violence and abuse.¹⁵⁰ In 2023, Sierra Leone prohibited corporal punishment in schools.

Children in Sierra Leone are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, resulting from human trafficking, and forced labor in mining. In 2022, Sierra Leone made some advancements to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, which increased prison terms for sex trafficking and established a trust fund for survivors of human trafficking to pay for shelter, medical services, and legal aid. The government also launched a hotline to report trafficking crimes and established a National Migration Policy to promote the rights of migrants and increase public awareness of human trafficking. Work is still needed to address all forms of child labor and meet international standards.

In June 2024, Sierra Leone's parliament approved The Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill 2024. The new bill includes provisions for enforcing penalties on offenders, protecting victims' rights, and ensuring access to education and support services for young girls affected by child marriage.



Building on a strong tradition of progressive child protection policy, the Government of Sweden is firmly committed to ending all forms of violence against children

Camilla Waltersson Grönvall – Minister for Social Services, Children's Rights and Disability Policy



Sweden's long-term commitment and prioritization of EVAC precedes its decision in 1979 to prohibit the corporal punishment of children. Its accompanying actions including extensive and ongoing public education

campaigns, support for parents, and the active role of an emerging civil society, have directly contributed to a substantial reduction in the number of children subjected to violence.

BARRIERS TO EVAC

It is estimated that in the 1960s, roughly 90% of the preschool children in Sweden had been subjected to corporal punishment by their parents at least once.¹⁵¹ Violence against children in the home was much more widely accepted.

There has been a long-term decline in corporal punishment of children over several decades. However, in recent years, the positive trend has been broken. The same is true for deadly violence against children. While available data indicate that these crimes are still relatively uncommon, there has been an increase in killings associated with adolescent gang crime.¹⁵² In some contexts, such as dating, institutional care and online activity, violence against under 18s has only recently been attended to.¹⁵³ Moreover, reviews of public authorities reveal shortcomings in responses to children at risk of gross violence and abuse.

EVAC MEASURES



Legislative reform:

Sweden first began to address violence against children as early as the 1920s. In 1928, the Education Act was amended to forbid corporal punishment in secondary schools, and the Parenthood and Guardianship Code was amended in 1949 to address the level of violence permitted toward children in the home. Despite these legal reforms, corporal punishment was still permitted in both the Parents' Code and

the Penal Code as well as in other childcare settings. Further explicit legislative changes were subsequently made in the 1950s and 1960s to provide children with more protection. This was accompanied by increasing public support for an end to the use of violence against children. In 1965, 53% of the public thought corporal punishment was necessary, but by 1971, this percentage had fallen to 35%. A public



education campaign was launched to increase awareness of the fact that physical violence was no longer legally sanctioned, further influencing social norms on this issue. However, a lack of clarity remained in the law regarding the extent

to which corporal punishment was forbidden. This was finally addressed in 1979, when Sweden became the first country in the world to prohibit all corporal punishment of children.



Awareness-raising and public engagement:

In 1979, the Ministry of Justice launched a large public campaign to raise public awareness of the new law prohibiting corporal punishment. The prohibition was widely publicized in the media, and a 16-page color pamphlet explaining the reason for the law and providing alternatives to corporal punishment was given to every household with a young child. These pamphlets were also distributed at medical offices and childcare centers and translated

into all immigrant languages. For two months, information about the law was printed on milk cartons, to ensure that it was present at family mealtimes when parents and children could discuss the issue together. Information about the ban on violent punishment of children has also been incorporated into the school curriculum, information for immigrants, and parenting classes.



Multi-sectoral collaboration:

The growth and influence of civil society was another significant factor that contributed to the success of the implementation of laws prohibiting violence against children, and changes in

attitudes. This included a strong children's rights movement, represented by Rädde Barnen (Save the Children Sweden) and Barnens Rätt i Samhället (Children's Rights in Society).



Interventions:

Another contributory factor was the priority of placing children's welfare at the center of social policy formulation, demonstrated in Sweden's highly developed and heavily subsidized day care system, generous parental leaves, parental sickness insurance, children's dental insurance,

and broad array of welfare measures that have nearly eradicated child poverty. Additionally, the provision of free-of-charge responsible parenting courses, at all levels of education, further supported this change.



Data collection:

Sweden has carried out ongoing monitoring and prevalence studies on violence against children since 2000, through the Children's Welfare Foundation. The Linköping University (the national knowledge center on violence against children), the Ombudsman for Children, and the National Board of Health and Welfare are also among the agencies and authorities that conduct research and share knowledge on the issue of violence against children.¹⁵⁴ Supported by other government agencies, the National Board of Health and Welfare performs reviews of deadly and other forms of gross violence against under 18s with the aim of providing the government with a basis for decisions on preventive measures. In 2016, the government granted funding to the Children's Welfare Foundation to carry out the Violence Against Children 2016 Swedish National Survey, deepening its understanding of children's experiences of corporal punishment, sexual violence, psychological violence, neglect,

domestic violence, and bullying, and a report was issued in 2022.¹⁵⁵ Despite strong efforts to collect data on children, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its Concluding Observations in 2023, shared concerns about the lack of data disaggregated by disability, ethnic origin and socioeconomic and migration background. It recommended that Sweden: strengthen its data-collection system regarding both qualitative and quantitative indicators that encompass all areas of the Convention, and ensure that the data are disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, ethnic and national origin, and socioeconomic background; strengthen the collection and analysis of data on discrimination against children; and ensure the effective coordination and sharing of data among relevant ministries and entities, professional groups and civil society, and the use of data for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and projects on children's rights.



Impact:

These measures had an unprecedented influence on social norms. By 1981, over 90% of Swedish families were aware of the prohibition on corporal punishment. This level of knowledge is unmatched in any other study on knowledge about law in any other industrialized society. Since then, there has been a significant

decline in adult support for the use of physical punishment. By 1999, parental support for corporal punishment had declined to 10%, further reflecting a decline in authoritarian parenting practices, and the support for corporal punishment continues to decline, currently standing at around 1%.



Overall, the Government of Zambia has made significant strides in addressing Violence Against Children. Apart from the Children's Code Act and its accompanying policy frameworks, the Government is committed to revitalizing the National Coordinating Committee for Children that is also existent at the community and district levels, ensuring a localized and timely response to the needs of children.



Government of Zambia, Ministry of Community Development and Social Services

Prioritizing a strategic approach, political will, a multi-sectoral approach, multi-sectoral collaboration, legislative reform, and international accountability are among the

measures that have led to transformative actions to address and prevent violence against children in Zambia in recent years.

BARRIERS TO EVAC

In its concluding observations to Zambia in 2016, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that violence against children was still lawful in some settings and noted the lack of other sufficient measures, mechanisms, and resources to fully prevent and combat violence, abuse, and neglect of children. The lack of sustained political will, isolated interventions, and the lack of a national plan of action were among other identified challenges preventing progress on this issue.

EVAC MEASURES



Strategic approach:

In recent years, Zambia has taken progressive and integrated measures to address violence against children. For example, in 2016, Zambia adopted the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2016-2021). Aiming to end child marriage by 2030, the strategy sought to: strengthen multi-sectoral responses; align policies and legislation; influence negative attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and practices; facilitate the provision of child-sensitive services; and mobilize sufficient financial resources for programs aimed at reducing children's vulnerability to marriage. Zambia further formalized its public commitment to end all

forms of violence against children by becoming a pathfinding country in 2020, subsequently adopting the National Prevention and Response Plan to End Violence Against Children (2021-2025). Following the enactment of the Children's Code Act, the Government of Zambia further established two frameworks namely the National Child Safeguarding Framework and the National Child Participation Framework. While the former establishes guidelines on safeguarding children from all harm, the latter ensures that children participate in decision-making in all issues affecting them.



Political will:

High-level political will has been critical in accelerating positive interventions to end violence against children. The election of President Hakainde Hichilema in 2021 has led to transformative multi-sectoral action to eliminate violence against children. His commitment is shared by members of other government departments including at the provincial and district levels. For instance, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services developed a specific workplace Child Safeguarding Policy meant for ministry staff, suppliers, contractors, organizations and individuals who have contact with the ministry. It has also developed specific guidelines for sectors

dealing with children such as media. The Ministry of Education developed guidelines for learners and teachers aimed at safeguarding children.

Leadership at the Department of Child Development has also been instrumental in promoting and coordinating activities to prevent violence against children.

Further, the Government, with other stakeholders including non-governmental organizations, has developed a Child Friendly Version of the Children's Code Act and efforts are underway to translate it into the seven major languages in Zambia.



Multi-sectoral approach:

The government of Zambia now prioritizes multi-sectoral involvement in addressing violence against children. For example, informed about the drivers of violence at the community level, including the role that being out of school plays in increased levels of violence, in 2022, President

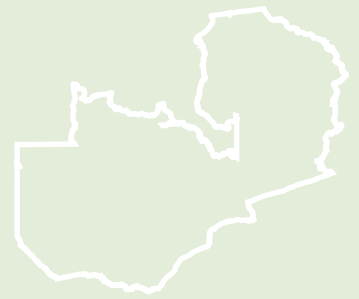
Hichilema introduced free education in Zambia for all children from preschool to grade seven. This progressive directive has seen many children go (back) to school, accompanied by a massive teacher recruitment drive.



Multi-stakeholder collaboration:

Zambia now makes concerted efforts to coordinate activities at the national level, making space for collaboration with and involvement of

other key stakeholders. Civil society, including children, for example, is increasingly recognized as an equal partner in technical working groups



on Child Safeguarding and Child Participation, among other relevant working groups and processes. As a result, they can actively contribute their knowledge and expertise from their direct engagement in communities to help guide the government's decision-making processes.

While children have often participated in key commemorations, such as the Day of the African Child, where they have made statements or advocated on specific issues that are of concern, the Government is increasingly involving children directly in its decision-making process. The role of children is now formalized in the Child Participation Framework, launched in 2023, to promote and advance child participation and fulfilment of their rights as provided for in the Children's Code Act.

Zambian traditional leaders have also been playing a key role in addressing GBV through the House of Chiefs. Bylaws prohibiting harmful traditional practices and GBV have been developed and are being implemented in most chiefdoms as a result of sensitization efforts. Some of these traditional leaders have even taken steps to reintegrate child brides back into school.

Working in collaboration with civil society, the Government of Zambia has significantly advanced collaboration with religious leaders, including addressing conflicts between

customary law and the Constitution on issues relating to child protection. For example, in customary law, a child remains a child until puberty, whereas Zambia's Constitution recognizes the definition of children as anyone under 18 years of age, in line with the CRC. The Children's Code Act has been the catalyst to help address this. Religious leaders are now more aware that they need to reform traditional laws to ensure that they are informed by a better understanding of issues relating to child protection. As a result, increasing numbers of religious leaders have enacted chiefdom laws to ban practices including child marriage and direct against corporal punishment. Actions to influence this have included advocacy led by civil society and awareness-raising efforts about the negative effects of violence on children. Religious leaders have also participated in workshops from the government and civil society to strengthen their understanding of the importance of ending violence.

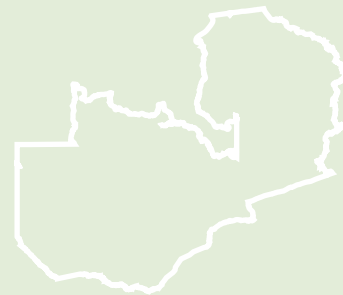
The private sector has been another very influential stakeholder. Toyota Zambia and ABDA Bank, for example, have supported projects in selected communities where need has been identified. These include the provision of education facilities, the construction of schools and health centers, and supporting vulnerable children to continue with education. These actions in the community have motivated and mobilized children, parents, and traditional leaders to also take action on this issue.



Legislative reform:

The Government's motivation to end violence has also resulted in substantial legislative reform. Although discussions about a legal

framework to prevent violence against children in Zambia began in 2002, it took two decades for a robust legal framework to come into force.



The adoption in 2022 of the Children's Code Act marked a historic milestone in Zambia's legislation, consolidating Zambia's laws relating to children and bringing the country's child protection measures in line with regional and international standards. To ensure that the Act is

understood and accessible, the government is currently collaborating with civil society to widely disseminate and simplify the technical language of the Children's Code Act to ensure that it is accessible to community members, including children.



International accountability:

In 2023, Zambia reported to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review that it had enjoyed overwhelming support from the United Nations' human rights mechanisms concerning the implementation of recommendations.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Violence Against Children, Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, concluded her first visit

to Zambia in April 2024 at the invitation of the Government of Zambia⁴. During her visit, she engaged with local stakeholders, assessed the situation, and discussed strategies to address violence against children in the country. The SRSG's presence underscores the commitment to safeguarding children's rights and promoting their well-being in Zambia.

CONCLUSION

Despite a shared commitment, every country highlighted above is in a different stage of its journey toward eliminating violence against children. These case studies illustrate that, despite the other significant challenges that countries may be trying to address, prioritizing these measures enables countries to implement evidence-based strategies to end violence against children effectively. This is supported by academic research which has found that the success of interventions to secure sustainable change depends on the interaction of

foundations, including political will, matched by resource commitment. No country has achieved success overnight. Rather, eliminating violence is a process and a long-term commitment.¹⁵⁶

UN human rights mechanisms, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, can accelerate this progress by providing States with S.M.A.R.T recommendations to build and strengthen these foundations, to implement effective and sustainable evidence-based strategies to eliminate violence against children.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for States are based on the effective measures presented in this publication as well as the successful experiences of States that have prioritized ending violence against children as part of their national strategies.

▼ **Appropriate legislation**

- Adopt and/or strengthen and implement domestic legislation that complies with all international and regional human rights instruments that protect children and is fully compatible with article 19 of the CRC and is inclusive of every child within the State's jurisdiction.

▼ **National Child Rights policy and EVAC action plan**

- Develop and implement a comprehensive child rights EVAC policy, strategy and action plan, with a focus on the protection of children from vulnerable groups.

▼ **Disaggregated data**

- Establish and implement a systematic national data collection system to routinely collect and analyze disaggregated data on the magnitude, nature and consequences of violence affecting children, including which children are most affected, and why. Ensure that data collection proactively seeks the experiences of the most vulnerable and marginalized children.

▼ **Sufficient budget allocation**

- Allocate a significant increase in financial investment for the prevention and response to violence against children, and track spending with specific indicators and data collection systems in the national budget and accountability systems.

▼ **Capacity strengthening**

- Support coordinated and ongoing efforts to train government and non-government staff across all sectors with the knowledge and skills to prevent, identify and respond to violence against children. Ensure that child safeguarding policies and monitoring mechanisms are in place and operational for all professionals that have contact with children.

▼ **Involvement of children**

- Prioritize the involvement of children of all ages, and including the most vulnerable, in decision-making processes relating to ending violence against children, including engaging them in sessions of the Human Rights Council and other international accountability spaces. Make sure that children have access to child-friendly information about their rights and ensure that children's participation adheres to the Basic Requirements for the Implementation of the Right of the Child to be Heard (CRC/C/GC/12).

▼ **Awareness-raising and public education**

- Prioritize collaboration with relevant stakeholders, such as the media, civil society, including children, and religious, traditional, and community leaders to prioritize raising awareness about the unacceptability of all forms of violence against children through public information campaigns that reach parents, schools, children and the entire community.

▼ **Multi-sectoral collaboration**

- Increase multi-sectoral collaboration between relevant government departments, and relevant non-government agencies, including children, to work together to eliminate violence against children. Appoint a senior government focal point to establish a multi-sectoral coordination process.

▼ **International cooperation**

- Accede to all international treaties and agreements relating to ending violence against children and withdraw declarations and reservations contrary to the object and purpose of the CRC.
- Expand bilateral, regional and international partnerships to prevent violence against children, including through international technical assistance.

▼ **International accountability**

- Include children's rights and violence prevention and response in SDG implementation and monitoring processes, such as the VNRs.

ENDNOTES

¹ This country selection was based on contexts where most WGCAV organisations are present. It represents a combination of development and humanitarian contexts.

² Child Rights Connect Working Group on Children and Violence (October 2020): *Ending Violence Against Children: A Review of Priorities at International and National Levels* [internal report]

³ S. Hillis, J. Mercy, A. Amobi, H. Kress (2016): *Global prevalence of past-year violence against children: A systematic review and minimum estimates*, *Pediatrics*, 137 (3) 10.1542/peds.2015-4079.

⁴ CRC provisions relating to violence: Protection from violence, abuse and neglect (article 19); Protection and assistance for refugee children (article 22); Abolishment of traditional practices prejudicial to children's health (article 24 para 3); School discipline consistent with child's human dignity (article 28.2); Rights for indigenous children to enjoy their own culture (article 30); Protection from economic exploitation (article 32); Protection from drugs (article 33); Protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse (article 34); Protection from abduction, sale & trafficking (article 35); Protection from other forms of exploitation (article 36); Protection from torture, degrading treatment or punishment (article 37a); Protection of children deprived of liberty (article 37 b-d); Protection of children affected by conflict (article 38); Promotion of recovery and social reintegration (article 39); Ensuring the dignity of children in conflict with the law (article 40). Implementation of article 19 must also be situated in the context of provisions on parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities (article 5), separation from parents (article 9), parental responsibilities and state assistance (article 18); and adequate standard of living (article 27).

⁵ Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), and Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC).

⁶ For instance, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children, EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child.

⁷ For instance, CRC/C/GC/8, para. 2. Also see UNICEF (2007): *Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of The Child* (Fully Revised Third Edition), p.249.

⁸ See, for example, ChildFund Alliance, Joining Forces Coalition, World Vision International, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes (2019): *A Second Revolution: Thirty years of child rights and the unfinished agenda*.

⁹ In overseeing the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee held two days of general discussion on the issue of violence against children within the family and in school (2001) and State violence against children (2000). The request for an international study on the question of violence against children was an outcome of these days of discussion.

¹⁰ See, for example, *Report of*.

¹¹ Pathfinding countries (August 2023): Armenia, Brazil, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nigeria, Paraguay, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tanzania, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

¹² End Corporal Punishment (2024): *Global progress towards prohibiting all corporal punishment*. <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/legality-tables/Global-progress-table-commitment.pdf>

¹³ See, for example, ChildFund Alliance, Joining Forces Coalition, World Vision International, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes (2019): *A Second Revolution: Thirty years of child rights and the unfinished agenda*. This report highlights the minimum conditions that governments need to establish and demonstrate to enable all actors to take action to end violence against children.

¹⁴ The Committee against Torture, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are among other UN treaty bodies that have increasingly issued concluding observations on violence against children.

¹⁵ For instance, CRC/C/GC/8, CRC/C/GC/13, and CRC/GC/2003/5.

¹⁶ Either 2nd UPR Cycle (2012-2016) or 3rd UPR cycle (2017-2022).

¹⁷ States considered in the review.

¹⁸ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children (2021): *Ending Violence Against Children: A Review of Priorities at International and National Levels*.

¹⁹ <https://endcorporalpunishment.org>, accessed 8 August 2020.

²⁰ Child Rights Governance Global Initiative Save the Children (2014): Report on "Advancing Children's Rights through the Universal Periodic Review: Achievements, Challenges and Lessons Learned," side event held at UN Palais des Nations, Room XXIII, 5 May 2014.

²¹ Save the Children (2011): *Monitoring implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: To strengthen follow up by civil society on Concluding Observations and recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*.

²² CRC art. 4: "States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention."

²³ CRC art. 19(1): States Parties shall take **all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures** to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or

abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child; and CRC art. 19(2): Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other **forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up** of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

²⁴ General Comment No. 5 (2003), General Measures of Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6), CRC/GC/2003/5.

²⁵ General Comment No. 8 (2006), The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, CRC/C/GC/8.

²⁶ General Comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, CRC/C/GC/13.

²⁷ SDG targets relating to violence against children include the following. Target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children; Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation; and Target 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

²⁸ World Vision International (2021): *Counting Pennies 2: A review of official development assistance to end violence against children*.

²⁹ World Health Organization: *Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children, 2020*, p.19. ISBN: 9789240004191. Available at: <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention/global-status-report-on-violence-against-children-2020> <<< I moved the blue part here from one below, putting it here in the first mention.

³⁰ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 40.

³¹ ChildFund Alliance, Joining Forces Coalition, World Vision International, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes (2019): *A Second Revolution: Thirty years of child rights and the unfinished agenda*, p.12.

³² End Violence Against Children, End Corporal Punishment: (March 2023): *The positive impact of prohibition of corporal punishment on children's lives: messages from research*.

³³ End Corporal Punishment: *Global Progress*, accessed 4 March 2024.

³⁴ Equality Now: A Just World for Women and Girls: FGM: A *Global Picture*, accessed 7 September 2023.

³⁵ Equality Now: A Just World for Women and Girls: FGM: A *Global Picture*, accessed 7 September 2023.

³⁶ End Corporal Punishment (2023): *The positive impact of prohibition of corporal punishment on children's lives: messages from research*.

³⁷ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 41(a).

³⁸ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 41(b).

³⁹ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 41(d).

⁴⁰ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 39.

⁴¹ UN SRSG VAC: National Policies, accessed 2 April 2024.

⁴² Council of Europe (2009): Integrated strategy against violence: Council of Europe Policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence, p.21.

⁴³ UN SRSG VAC: National Policies, accessed 2 April 2024.

⁴⁴ World Health Organization: (2020): Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children, 2020, pp. 21-28.

⁴⁵ See, for example, UN SRSG VAC: *National Policies*, accessed 2 April 2024.

⁴⁶ These should include the three Optional Protocols to the CRC, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

⁴⁷ Council of Europe (2009): *Integrated strategy against violence: Council of Europe Policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence*.

⁴⁸ CRC/C/GC/13, VI, (h).

⁴⁹ Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, et al (2022): *The Violence-Prevention Dividend – Why Preventing Violence Against Children Makes Economic Sense*.

⁵⁰ World Health Organization (2020): *Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children, 2020*.

⁵¹ World Vision International (2019): *Small Cracks, Big Gaps: How governments allow violence against children to persist*.

⁵² World Vision International (2022): *Counting pennies. Assessment of Official Development Assistance to end violence against children*.

⁵³ UNICEF, Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, World Vision International, ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International (July 2022): *The Violence Prevention Dividend – Why Preventing Violence Against Children Makes Economic Sense*.

⁵⁴ UNICEF et al, I, July 2022, *The Violence Prevention Dividend – Why Preventing Violence Against Children Makes Economic Sense*, p.5.

⁵⁵ UNICEF et al (July 2022): *The Violence Prevention Dividend – Why Preventing Violence Against Children Makes Economic Sense*; and World Vision International (2021): *Counting Pennies 2: A review of official development assistance to end violence against children*.

⁵⁶ ChildFund Alliance and ODI (2014): *The costs and economic impact of violence against children*.

⁵⁷ See, for example, World Health Organization: *Global Status Report on Preventing Violence against Children, 2020*.

⁵⁸ UNICEF, Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, World Vision International, ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International (July 2022): *The Violence Prevention Dividend – Why Preventing Violence Against Children Makes Economic Sense*, p.5

⁵⁹ See, for example, CRC/C/GC/13, para. 12.

⁶⁰ O/SRSG VAC: *Ending Violence Against Children: Reflections on reporting in the 2020 Voluntary National Reviews*.

⁶¹ UNICEF (30 June 2023): *International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC)*.

⁶² Cappa, C. & Petrowski, N. (2020). *Thirty years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Progress and challenges in building statistical evidence on violence against children*. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Vol. 110, Part 1.

⁶³ UNICEF (2020): *Strengthening Administrative Data on Violence against Children: Challenges and promising practices from a review of country experiences*.

⁶⁴ Cure Violence Global: *Measuring Violence Against Children*, accessed 28 February 2024.

⁶⁵ ChildFund Alliance, Joining Forces Coalition, World Vision International, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes (2019): *A Second Revolution: Thirty years of child rights and the unfinished agenda*.

⁶⁶ UNICEF, MICS: <https://mics.unicef.org/about>, accessed 5 September 2023.

⁶⁷ Together for Girls: *The largest source of data on violence against children in the world*, accessed 5 April 2024.

⁶⁸ Completed VACS surveys (date report launched): Botswana (2019); Cambodia (2014); Colombia (2020); Côte d'Ivoire (2022); El Salvador (2019); Eswatini (2022); Haiti (2014); Honduras (2019); Kenya (2012); Lao PDR (2018); Lesotho (2020); Malawi (2015); Moldova (2020); Mozambique (2022); Namibia (2021); Nigeria (2016); Rwanda (2018); Tanzania (2011); Uganda (2018); Zambia (2018); Zimbabwe (2012). VACS surveys in progress (as of April 2024): Ethiopia, Jamaica, United States of America.

⁶⁹ World Health Organization (2021): *Global school-based student health survey*.

⁷⁰ UNICEF (2023): *Presentation of the international classification on violence against children*.

⁷¹ Kyegombe, N., Banks, L.M., Kelly, S. et al.: *How to conduct good quality research on violence against children with disabilities: key ethical, measurement, and research principles*. BMC Public Health 19, 1133 (2019). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7456-z>

⁷² Kyegombe, N., Banks, L.M., Kelly, S. et al.: *How to conduct good quality research on violence against children with disabilities: key ethical, measurement, and research principles*. BMC Public Health 19, 1133 (2019).

⁷³ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 72(j).

⁷⁴ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 72(j).

⁷⁵ World Health Organization (2020): *Regional Status Report 2020: Preventing Violence Against Children in the Americas: Results at a glance; and Global status report on preventing violence against children*. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

⁷⁶ World Health Organization: *Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children, 2020*.

⁷⁷ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 32

⁷⁸ UNICEF (2020): *Strengthening Administrative Data on Violence against Children: Challenges and promising practices from a review of country experiences*.

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⁸⁰ UNICEF (2020): *Strengthening Administrative Data on Violence against Children: Challenges and promising practices from a review of country experiences*, pp. 37.

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⁸² World Health Organization: *Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children, 2020*, p.332

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⁸⁴ See, for example, Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001), *Day of General Discussion*:

Violence against children within the family and in school, para. 16.; and CRC art. 4; CRC/C/GC/13, para. 59

⁸⁵ See, for example, Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): *Strategy to End Violence Against Children, 2023-2030*.

⁸⁶ World Health Organization Violence Prevention Unit: *Approach, Objectives and Activities, 2022-2026*.

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⁸⁸ African Partnership To End Violence Against Children (APEVAC) and African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) (2021): *National Capacity to Address Violence Against Children: Assessment in Ten African Countries*.

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⁹⁰ World Health Organization (July 2020): *Violence Prevention through Multi-sectoral Collaboration: An International Version of the Collaboration Multiplier Tool to Prevent Interpersonal Violence*.

⁹¹ CRC/C/GC/13. para. 44(i).

⁹² CRC/C/GC/13. para. 44(i).

⁹³ Seventy-Fourth World Health Assembly (WHA 74.17).

⁹⁴ ICVAC defines violence against children as a deliberate, unwanted and nonessential act, threatened or actual, against a child or against a group of children that either results in death or in injury or other forms of physical and psychological suffering. <https://www.end-violence.org/articles/launch-international-classification-violence-against-children-icvac>, 30 June 2023.

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¹⁰⁹ End Violence Against Children: *Annual Report, 2021*, p.17.

¹¹⁰ WHA 74.17.

¹¹¹ Children's participation is guaranteed by the CRC (art. 12) and further reinforced by other civil and political rights set out in the CRC affirming their right to expression (art. 13), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14), freedom of association and peaceful assembly (art. 15) and access to information (art. 17).

¹¹² See, for example, WHA 74.17, p.4: to include children, as appropriate to their evolving capacities, in advocacy, policy development and action, taking into account their experiences and needs, in the prevention and elimination of violence against children and to provide accessible and age-appropriate information to children.

¹¹³ See, for example, CRC/C/GC/13, para. 3(e); and CRC/C/GC/13, para. 73.

¹¹⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Guidance-Note-Secretary-General-Child-Rights-Mainstreaming-July-2023.pdf>, accessed February 2024.

¹¹⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2024year published): *Child participation in the work of the Committee*. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/child-participation-work-committee>

¹¹⁶ O/SRSG VAC: *Ending Violence against Children, Reflections on reporting in the 2021 Voluntary National Reviews*, p.31

¹¹⁷ Save the Children (2021). *Together We Decide: Strengthening Child Participation in UN Processes*.

¹¹⁸ CRC/C/GC/12.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Committee on the Rights of the Child, DGD 2001, *Violence against Children, Within the Family and in Schools*.

¹²⁰ See, for example, CRC preamble and art. 4; other CRC articles relating to international cooperation, including arts. 4, 7 (2), 11 (2), 17 (b), 21 (e), 22 (2), 23 (4), 24 (4), 27 (4), 28 (3), 34, 35, and 45; CRC/C/GC/13, para. 7; and CRC/C/GC/13, para. 76.

¹²¹ CRC/C/GC/13, para. 74.

¹²² CRC/C/GC/13, para. 75.

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¹²⁵ UNICEF, Universal Human Rights Group (2020): *Realizing Rights, Changing Lives: Changing Lives: The Impact of the United Nations Human Rights System on the Enjoyment of Children's Rights*.

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¹³¹ Organization of American States (2014): General Assembly, Proceedings Volume I. Available at <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fscm.oas.org%2Fpdfs%2F2014%2FAG06712E04.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

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¹³³ UNICEF, Universal Human Rights Group (2020): *Realizing Rights, Changing Lives: Changing Lives: The Impact of the United Nations Human Rights System on the Enjoyment of Children's Rights*.

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¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ <https://www.end-violence.org/impact/countries/paraguay#collaboration> (accessed 23 July 2024)

¹³⁹ Ibid. (accessed 23 July 2024)

¹⁴⁰ Paraguay VNR 2021

¹⁴¹ End Violence Against Children: Paraguay.

¹⁴² Instituto Interamericano del Niño, la Niña y Adolescentes (2018), International Seminar «Participation of children and adolescents in the eradication of violence against children and adolescents, 03/05/2018

¹⁴³ O/SRSG VAC: Ending Violence Against Children: Reflections on reporting in the 2020 Voluntary National Reviews p.32

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.end-violence.org/impact/countries/paraguay#action>

¹⁴⁵ President Julius Maada Bio on the occasion of the adoption of the Resolution to declare November 18 as the World Day for the Prevention of, and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence. <https://x.com/PresidentBio/status/1725818710173106344>

¹⁴⁶ Resolution for an Open-ended intergovernmental working group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the rights to early childhood education, free pre-primary education and free secondary education. A/HRC/56/L.8/Rev.1

¹⁴⁷ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, "Safe Schools Declaration Endorsements" (webpage), 2023, <https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/endorsement/> (accessed November 9, 2023).

¹⁴⁸ Information submitted by Human Rights Watch as part of the 74th Pre-Sessional Working Group to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/19/>

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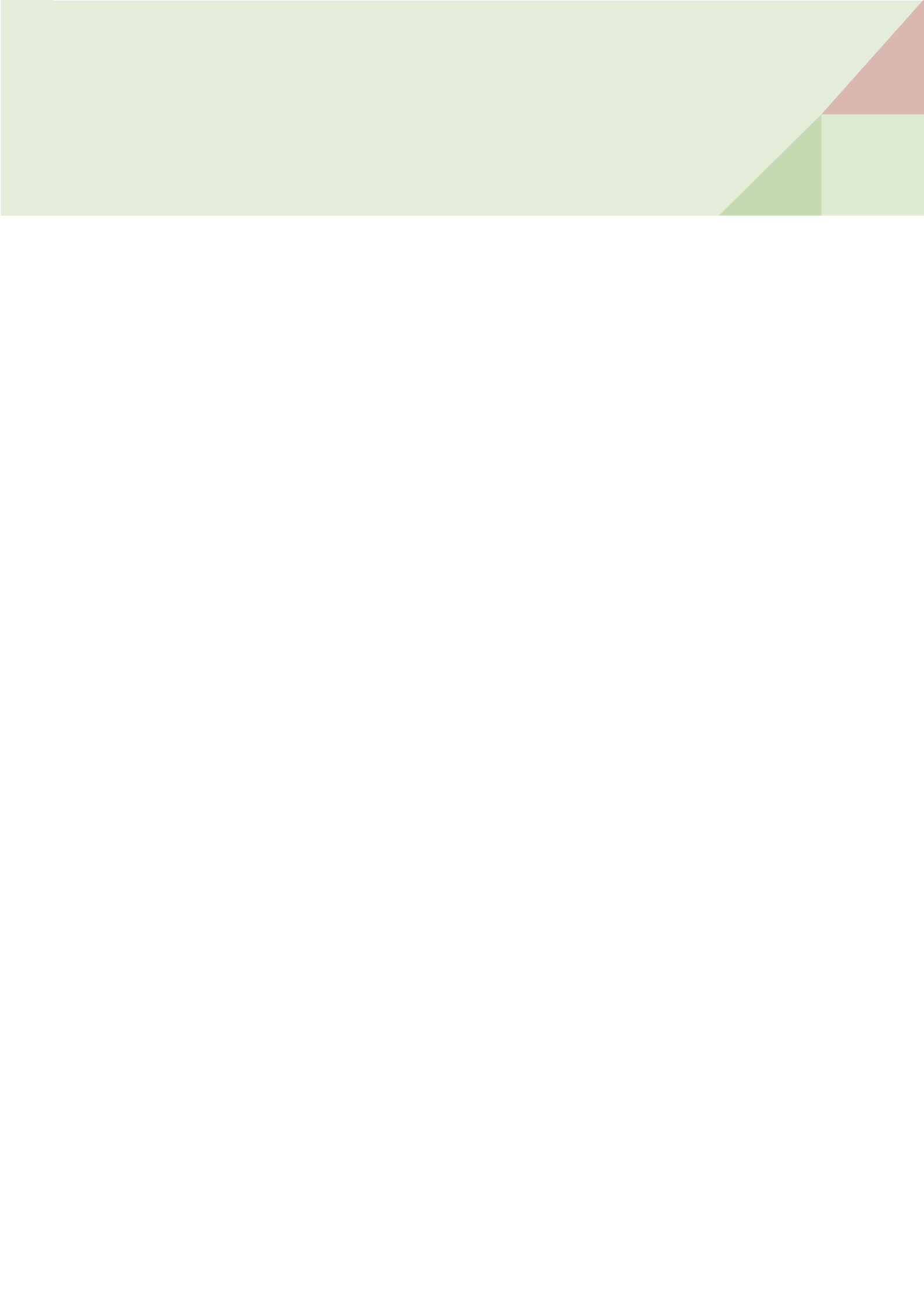
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