

free <sup>B</sup> from violence and exploitation

## Money Matters:

Six Lessons on Investing in the Protection of Children from Violence



## ABOUT CHILD FUND ALLIANCE

A worldwide alliance of children’s development organisations, we work in 58 countries to improve the lives of vulnerable and excluded children, help them overcome poverty, and achieve their rights.

Founded over 75 years ago, our members are not-for-profit organisations which work directly with children, families and their communities.

The Alliance seeks to speak with one global voice for, with and on behalf of children.

Our vision is a world in which children realise their rights and achieve their potential.

More information at:  
[www.childfundalliance.org](http://www.childfundalliance.org).

## ABBREVIATIONS

BfC	Budget for Children
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICPS	Integrated Child Protection Schemes
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNSDSN	United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WHO	World Health Organization

## Executive summary

Last year, UN Member States, in their proposal for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), advanced the bold vision of ending all forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse against children, as well as eliminating harmful practices and child labour –prioritizing the worst forms of child labour.

We have before us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that children’s right to protection from all forms of violence and exploitation is fully realized in all settings. Immediate prioritization and committed action is needed. But this is not going to happen if investments are not made and resources are not mobilized.

We know that investing in the protection of children from violence, in development and emergency contexts, is good value for money.

Past experiences and research have yielded six fundamental lessons on investing in the protection of children from violence:

1. Earmarked funding for the protection of children from violence should be strengthened through domestic resource mobilization, including child-responsive budgeting, and international public finance.
2. The low levels of investment in protecting children from violence as compared to other sectors should be addressed.
3. National and sub-national levels of government should coordinate and interact on their investments in protecting children from violence, in order to enhance their effectiveness.
4. Investments to protect children from violence should be commensurate to the scale and scope of the problem.
5. Investments in protecting children from violence can be complemented and supported by investments in other sectors.
6. Monitoring and evaluation of investments to protect children from violence should be participatory, and children should be provided with the opportunities to effectively, meaningfully, and safely engage.

## Introduction

2015 is a definitive year for children the world over, with governments coming together at the United Nations to define an agreed-upon way toward a more egalitarian, prosperous, and sustainable future. With negotiations still underway, there is reason for hope that 2015 will also go down in history as the year when the international community joined in decisive action to create a world where children are finally free from violence and exploitation.

While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have contributed to mobilising the international community toward unprecedented development gains, it is also true that having not prioritized action on violence against children has held back their full achievement and threatens the progress that has already been made –i.e. in education and health. And while the world has made progress in preventing and responding to violence against children – for example, on child labour, child marriage, and female genital mutilation and cutting – major challenges still remain, including new and emerging dangers, such as online violence and exploitation.

The costs of violence against children go beyond its inestimable effects on individuals. Violence against children slows economic growth, erodes human and social capital, and depletes human potential. These costs can include lost earnings and tax revenue as a consequence of premature death, plus the costs of alternative care, health and welfare services. Recent estimates indicate that the costs of physical, psychological, and sexual violence against children can be as high as US\$7 trillion. This is more than the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of Australia, Canada, India, and Mexico combined.<sup>1</sup>

Last year, UN Member States, in their proposal for the SDGs, advanced the bold vision of ending all forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse against children, as well as eliminating harmful practices and child labour –prioritizing the worst forms of child labour. In less than two years, the protection of children from violence and exploitation

### Box 1: Violence against children in the proposed goals:

- **Target 4.a:** build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- **Target 5.2:** end all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- **Target 5.3:** eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations
- **Target 8.7:** take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, eradicate forced labour, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms including recruitment and use of child soldiers
- **Target 11.7:** by 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
- **Target 16.1:** significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere
- **Target 16.2:** end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children
- **Target 16.9:** by 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration

<sup>1</sup> ChildFund Alliance and Overseas Development Institute (2014), *The Costs and Economic Impact of Violence against Children* (London: ODI). Available at: [www.freefromviolence.org](http://www.freefromviolence.org).

went from being a marginal issue in the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda to being a crosscutting issue in the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on the SDGs, the importance of which has been emphasized by governments the world over.

To fulfil the vision of no target being met unless it is met for all, the post-2015 sustainable development agenda must focus on the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, and on precisely those groups that are most at risk and in need of protection. Violence against children hinders economic growth, weakens democratic governance, perpetuates poverty, and accentuates inequalities. Children affected by violence are bound to suffer economic disadvantages from lost productivity, disability and decreased quality of life.<sup>2</sup> Reaching those who are furthest from national averages and baselines is the only way to break the poverty cycle and bring about intergenerational prosperity and wellbeing.

A permanent end to violence against children is possible.

**Setting goals, targets, and indicators is just the beginning.** Good intentions are not enough. For the lives of the millions of children who are subjected to violence and exploitation, year in and year out, the implementation of these goals and targets is what truly matters.

**Solutions exist but need to be scaled up.** Every day, evidence is growing as to cost-effective interventions to protect children from violence. These include changing long-established social norms, implementing community-based mechanisms, providing life-skills education, undertaking positive parenting programmes, working with teachers and students to prevent violence in schools,<sup>3</sup> as well as with communities to reduce the incidence of child labour and child trafficking.<sup>4</sup> In addition, gender-sensitive interventions have proven effective to protect both boys and girls from all the forms of violence that affect them, by acknowledging the gendered nature of violence and addressing specific needs.<sup>5</sup>

**Monitoring and evaluation is fundamental, and must be inclusive, open, and transparent.** National actions on violence against children must be accountable and engage civil society, children, and those that are traditionally marginalised. An informed and committed citizenry, with access to disaggregated, real-time, and reliable data is vital to hold governments to account.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2013), *Sustainable Development Starts and Ends with Safe, Healthy and Well-educated Children* (New York, NY: UNICEF). Available at: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF (2014), *Ending Violence against Children: Six Strategies for Action* (New York, NY: UNICEF). Available at: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

<sup>4</sup> Mike Wessels (2009), *What Are We Learning about Protecting Children in the Community? An Inter-agency Review of the Evidence on Community-based Child Protection Mechanisms in Humanitarian and Development Settings* (London, UK: Save the Children UK). Available at: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF (2014), *Ending Violence against Children: Six Strategies for Action* (New York, NY: UNICEF). Available at: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

<sup>6</sup> Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (2014), *A World that Counts: Mobilising the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development* (New York, NY: United Nations). Available at: [www.undatarevolution.org](http://www.undatarevolution.org).

**Money matters.** None of this is going to happen if investments are not made and resources are not mobilized. Investing in the protection of children from violence, in development and emergency contexts, is good value for money.

Members of the intergovernmental Group of Friends of Children and SDGs recently stated: “Investing in all children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized is a moral and legal obligation enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC]. It is also the smartest and the most leveraged investment we can make in social cohesion, inclusive economic growth and development, and sustainability of the planet and its natural resources.”<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of some research on investing in the protection of children from violence, and draw some lessons from past experiences that might shed light on the way forward.

We have before us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that children’s right to protection from all forms of violence and exploitation is fully realized in all settings. Immediate prioritization and committed action is needed.

---

<sup>7</sup> Statement by Luxembourg on behalf of 28 Member States of the Group of Friends on Children and SDGs at the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (April 21, 2015). Available at: [www.newyork-un.mae.lu](http://www.newyork-un.mae.lu).

## Six Lessons on Investing in the Protection of Children from Violence

Violence against children occurs everywhere – in developed and developing nations, in conflict and non-conflict situations – and cuts across class, culture, ethnicity, geography, race, and religion.

139 million babies will be born in 2016, and 4.2 billion people will be children at some point between 2016 and 2030.<sup>8</sup> The sheer size and scale of the problem, and its impact, make violence against children an issue that cannot be ignored. We know, for example, that every five minutes a child is killed by violence;<sup>9</sup> that more than 95,000 children and adolescents under the age of 20 were homicide victims in 2012 alone; and that almost a billion children between the ages of 2 and 14 are regularly subjected to physical punishment by their caregivers.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys have been subject to sexual violence in one year alone,<sup>11</sup> while the International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that 168 million children are involved in some sort of work that deprives them from their childhood, dignity, and potential, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development.<sup>12</sup>

With financial costs as high as US\$7 trillion or 8% of the world's GDP for physical, psychological, and sexual violence against children, US\$98 billion for the worst forms of child labour annually, and US\$144 billion for children's association with armed forces and groups annually, it is critically important to implement and scale up cost-effective interventions that have proven successful.<sup>13</sup> For example, in the case of physical and psychological violence against children, existing evidence from low- and middle-income countries also points toward the effectiveness of interventions to foster positive parenting practices, reduce abusive behaviour, and improve the relationships between parents and children.<sup>14</sup> Also, successful prevention strategies to

---

<sup>8</sup> David Steven (2014), *If Not Now, When? Ending Violence against the World's Children* (New York, NY: Center on International Development). Available at: [www.cic.nyu.edu](http://www.cic.nyu.edu).

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF UK (2014), *Children in Danger: Act to End Violence against Children* (London, UNICEF UK). Available at: [www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk).

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF (2014), *Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children* (New York, NY: UNICEF). Available at: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

<sup>11</sup> International Labour Organization (2013), *Marking Progress against Child Labour: Global Estimates and Trends 2000-2012* (Geneva: ILO). Available at: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).

<sup>12</sup> International Labour Organisation (2010), *Accelerating Action Against Child Labour* (Geneva: ILO). Available at: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).

<sup>13</sup> ChildFund Alliance and Overseas Development Institute (2014), *The Costs and Economic Impact of Violence against Children* (London: ODI). Available at: [www.freefromviolence.org](http://www.freefromviolence.org).

In addition, a recent study by UNICEF reveals that the costs of child maltreatment in the Asia-Pacific region can be as high as US\$200 billion every single year. See: UNICEF (2015), *Estimating the Economic Burden of Violence against Children in East Asia and the Pacific* (n.p.: UNICEF). Available at: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

<sup>14</sup> Amanda Sim et al. (2014), *Parents Make the Difference: Findings from a Randomized Impact Evaluation of a Parenting Program in Rural Liberia* (New York, NY: IRC). Available at: [www.rescue.org](http://www.rescue.org).

reduce the likelihood of children becoming engaged in the worst forms of child labour are linked to investments in education and social protection.<sup>15</sup>

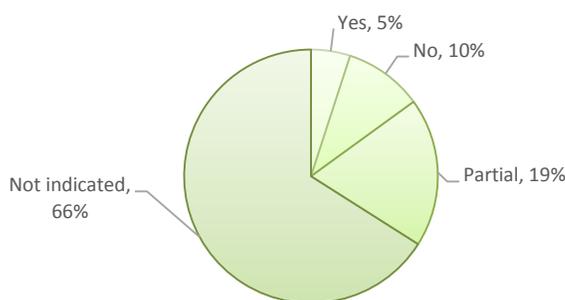
The following pages illustrate some major findings or lessons learned with respect to investing in the protection of children from violence.

**Lesson 1: Earmarked funding for the protection of children from violence should be strengthened through domestic resource mobilization, including child-responsive budgeting, and international public finance.**

The Global Survey on Violence against Children reveals that children’s protection from violence, exploitation, and abuse has gained increasing recognition on international, regional, and national agendas. In several countries, this has led to significant institutional and normative advancements in the implementation of measures to prevent and respond to violence against children, as well as the revitalisation of networks and strategic partnerships to support advocacy.

Progress could, however, be more robust. For example, only 67% of governments responding to the survey confirmed a lead institution was in place to coordinate action on violence against children nationally. In some cases, multiple coordinating bodies have been established and their collaboration is uneven. Efforts must be redoubled to institutionalise processes for coordination among different government offices, and between the central government and decentralised authorities.

**Figure 1: Percentage of countries with financial and/or human resources allocated to address violence against children**



In order to achieve this, human and financial resources to address violence against children must be committed. Few governments set specific funding aside for violence-related interventions, and most of them acknowledge a lack of resources for this area. In fact, from the 100 governments surveyed, only 4% indicated that they provided full resources for policies and

<sup>15</sup> Carel de Rooy and Mohammed Shafiqul Islam (2010), *Mitigating Socio-economic Inequalities to Accelerate Poverty Reduction: Investing in Vulnerable Children* (Dhaka: UNICEF Bangladesh). Available at: [www.unicef.org.bd](http://www.unicef.org.bd).

programmes to address violence against children, while 10% said resources were not allocated. Up to two-thirds of governments failed to answer this question.<sup>16</sup>

This weakness with respect to financing of policies and programmes related to violence against children is exacerbated by limited accessibility of budget and spending data on the prevention of and response to violence in most countries, despite progress made over the past decade with regard to increasing the transparency of child-centred spending –which is nonetheless mostly focused on education, health, and social protection.

But it is not only about domestic resource mobilization, for as a recent report from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) highlights, governments must realize that without adequate international public finance that counteracts failing tax capacity of the world’s poorest countries, the level of ambition of the SDGs will simply not be realized.<sup>17</sup>

## Lesson 2: The low levels of investment in protecting children from violence as compared to other sectors should be addressed.

A UNICEF analysis on child-centred spending in Mexico reveals that investments in children grew steadily in nominal terms from 2008 to 2011, implying an important prioritisation of children’s rights within the national budget. During this period, average spending on children was US\$59,706.75 million or approximately 5.7% of the country’s GDP.

Figure 2: Investment in Children in Mexico, 2008-2011 (in US\$ millions)



Note: Exchange rate used: 1 MXN=0.07646 USD.

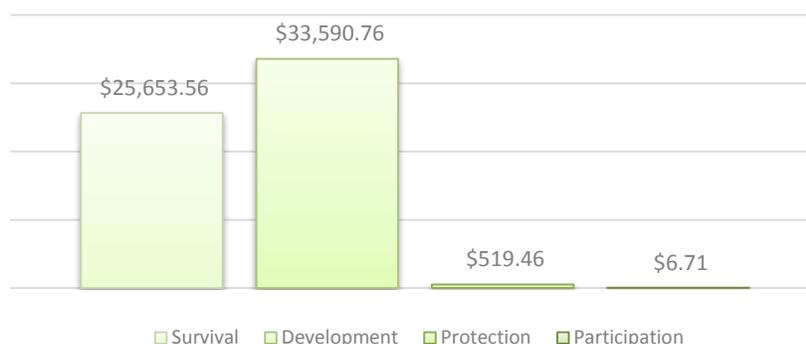
However, within investments to promote children’s rights, those linked to survival and development (such as health and education) have been predominant, receiving up to 99% of total resources spent on children. On the other hand, resources invested protecting children from violence amount to the remaining 1%.

<sup>16</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (2013), *Toward a World Free from Violence: Global Survey on Violence against Children* (New York, NY: United Nations). Available at: [www.srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org](http://www.srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org).

<sup>17</sup> Overseas Development Institute (2015), *Financing the Future: How International Public Finance should Fund a Global Social Compact to Eradicate Poverty* (London: ODI). Available at: [www.odi.org](http://www.odi.org).

Of every \$10 pesos invested in children \$8 pesos go to education and health, which accounted for 46.9% and 34.4% of total budget execution in 2010, respectively. At the same time, protection of children from violence, and children’s participation account for less than 1% each.

**Figure 3: Breakdown of Total Investments in Children’s Rights in Mexico, 2010 (in US\$ millions)**



The imbalance in investment in protecting children from violence with respect to other areas is indicative of a budget-planning problem in this sector. It implies insufficient spending on an issue that requires decisive and multi-sided actions, such as the development of legal frameworks, the formulation of policies, the implementation of programmes, the creation of information systems, and the strengthening of the justice system, among others.<sup>18</sup>

**Lesson 3: National and sub-national levels of government should coordinate and interact on their investments in protecting children from violence, in order to enhance their effectiveness.**

In South Africa, child welfare services fall under the purview of the Children’s Act, which outlines the way children’s rights are to be protected and realized, through a broad variety of programmes, including:

- Family care, parental care or appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment;
- Social services; and
- Protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, or degradation.

In this sense, child welfare includes, among others, such divergent services as crime prevention, prevention of and early interventions on violence against children, places of safety and safe homes, secure care facilities, etc.

At a national level, South Africa is a relatively good performer with respect to investments in the protection of children from violence. On aggregate, funding for services to children constitutes nearly half of the total funding for welfare services, emphasising the importance of

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF Mexico (2010), *Inversión pública en la infancia y la adolescencia en México. Versión actualizada 2008-2011* (Mexico City: UNICEF Mexico). Available at: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

children within this sector. Funding for child welfare services has also increased on average by 11% every year, compared with 7% for other welfare services over the same period.

Despite this generally positive trend, some salient imbalances are revealed when spending is analysed at the sub-national level. Results from an internal prioritisation exercise reveal that some provincial governments – for example, in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and North West – are not allocating sufficient funds to child welfare services from the total welfare services funds they receive, especially in the context of demographic data and per capita child expenditure for these regions.

Although child welfare budgets doubled between 2007 and 2014 for almost all provinces, annual growth is irregular, with significant increases recorded for some fiscal periods, and moderate and small increases for others. In some instances, however, provinces recorded negative growth –something which contravenes new legal obligations. The outlook for public investment in child welfare services at provincial level is not promising over the medium term, with five of the nine provinces projecting a 5% or lower annual average real increase.

Spending trends also indicate inefficiencies in the use of resources allocated to the protection of children from violence. Total funds unspent by social development departments over a five-year period (2007-2012) amounted to R1.2 billion, with unspent funds in 2010-11 accounting for more than half this amount (R690 million). This problem was particularly severe in some provinces. Where significant increases in child welfare budgets were observed, under-spending followed in some cases. This is an important finding inasmuch as it highlights that tracking spending all the way to the local level is necessary to assess the efficiency of investments made in the protection of children from violence.<sup>19</sup>

This case study evinces the complexity inherent to investments made to protect children from violence, which often span multiple agencies, programmes, and levels of government. Effective coordination and interaction between and within different levels of government is necessary to ensure that resources are invested in the most efficient manner.

#### **Lesson 4: Investments to protect children from violence should be commensurate to the scale and scope of the problem.**

A study by HAQ: Centre for Child Rights argues that there are several ways in which India fails to protect its children. The country has the world's largest number of sexually abused children, with a staggering rate of one in every 10. In India, every two and a half hours a child below the age of 16 is raped. Furthermore, several Indian states still adhere to traditional practices that are harmful to children, such as child marriage, sex-selective abortion, and female infanticide, as well as exorbitant rates of hazardous labour for both boys and girls. State governments have also failed to curb the rising incidence of organised crime against children, such as trafficking to work in domestic or slave labour.

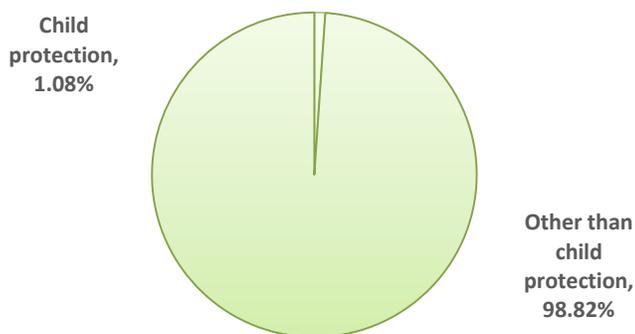
---

<sup>19</sup> Financial and Fiscal Commission (2013), *The Provision and Funding of Child Welfare Services in South Africa* (Midrand: FFC). Available at: [www.ffc.co.za](http://www.ffc.co.za).

Protecting children from violence was a key intervention in India's eleventh Five-Year Plan, which provides the country's framework for policy formulation and implementation. Importantly, India has recognised the right of children to be protected from violence in its constitution, and in several laws and policies that have been enacted over the years. But despite these commitments, there is an evident gap in the way they are being rolled out.

Of the four child-related sectors included in the Budget for Children (BfC) – i.e. child protection, early childhood development, education, and health – child protection has consistently received the smallest share in both the union budget and the BfC: an average of 0.05% and 1.08%, respectively, between 2004 and 2009. It is clear that India's budget to protect children from violence allocates too little money to tackle the magnitude of the problems facing children.

Figure 4: Average investments in child protection in India's BfC, 2004-2009



This is despite the fact that in 2007, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, along with civil society groups, formulated the new Integrated Child Protection Schemes (ICPS), aimed at looking at child protection in a holistic manner. After its creation, the ICPS was largely responsible for sharp increases of around 30% in allocated resources for protecting children from violence from year to year. Nevertheless, at 1.43% of the BfC, investments in protecting children from violence remains remarkably low considering the significant challenges children face and the immense costs of violence to individuals, society, and the state.<sup>20</sup>

As economies grow, governments should gradually increase their per capita spending in those critical sectors for children's survival, development, protection, and wellbeing. Robust data indicates that timely investments in children are indeed good investments in terms of economic and social returns. For example, the returns for increasing preschool attendance could be as high as US\$33 per dollar invested. In the past decade, several countries have achieved benchmarks of 1.2 to 1.5% of increased investment in education and health for each point of GDP growth. This same commitment should be made to protecting children from violence, which is currently an underfunded sector with the same life-altering and life-saving potential.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> HAQ: Centre for Child Rights (2009), *Rising but not Shining: Children's Share in the Union Budget. An Analysis from a Child Rights Perspective, 2004-05 to 2008-09* (New Delhi: HAQ).

<sup>21</sup> UNICEF (2015), 'Technical Brief of Financing for Development and Children.'

## **Lesson 5: Investments in protecting children from violence can be complemented and supported by investments in other sectors.**

Strategic interventions to promote access to quality education or to provide social protection floors to families and vulnerable children, for example, can also serve as important empowering mechanisms to protect children from violence and exploitation.

Across the globe, investments in social protection have been found to be effective in curbing child labour.<sup>22</sup> As part of its poverty reduction strategy, the government of Bangladesh has invested in this type of programmes to prevent vulnerable households from resorting to child labour as a buffer against negative shocks.

Social safety net programmes have been implemented throughout the country, with investments in 2009 reaching up to US\$2.4 billion out of the government's total budget of US\$16 billion –that is, 15.12% of the total budget or 2.42% of the GDP. Of the 84 social safety net programmes only 16 were directly related to children –totalling Tk19 billion or 9.8% of the investment.

To improve the situation for the most vulnerable children, including those in hazardous work, the government, with the support of UNICEF, launched three social protection programmes: Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children; Protection of Children at Risk; and *Amader Shishu* (Our Children). These programmes were aimed, respectively, at enhancing the developmental opportunities, living conditions, and livelihood opportunities of urban working children, street children, and orphaned children.

In 2009, 182,000 children benefited from these three programmes, with an average cost per child per year of \$74.3, which is remarkably low given the high costs that the worst forms of child labour entail, in terms of reduced productivity throughout the life of children. It has been estimated that if the entirety of the targeted populations (that is, 100% of urban working children, 100% of street children, and 100% of orphaned children) were progressively covered in a 10-year period, this would result only in a marginal increase in the overall safety net programmes' budget and in the national budget, as shown in the chart below.

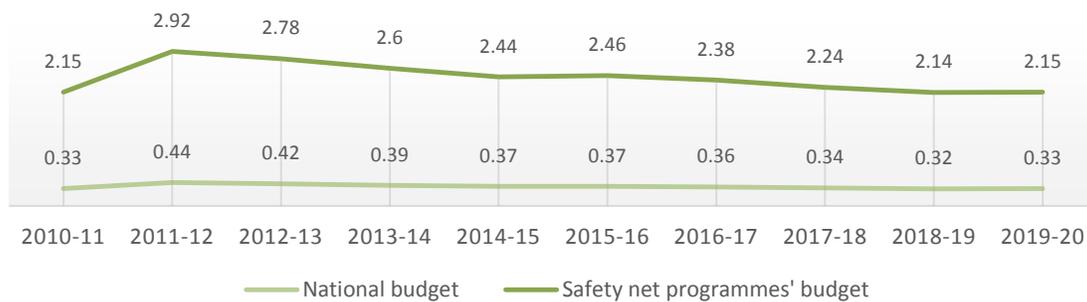
Since the retention period for each child varies from one to seven years, the share of these programmes in the overall safety net programmes' budget and in the national budget sharply increases in the first fiscal period (taken to be 2011-12). However, from the second year on, this share decreases gradually over time.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> International Labour Organization (2013), *World Report on Child Labour: Economic Vulnerability, Social Protection and the Fight against Child Labour* (Geneva: ILO). Available at: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).

<sup>23</sup> Carel de Rooy and Mohammed Shafiqul Islam (2010), *Mitigating Socio-economic Inequalities to Accelerate Poverty Reduction: Investing in Vulnerable Children* (Dhaka: UNICEF Bangladesh). Available at: [www.unicef.org.bd](http://www.unicef.org.bd).

**Figure 5: Percentage share of child-centred safety net programmes in overall budget and in national budget in Bangladesh**



Social protection safeguards vulnerable populations from shocks and helps them participate more effectively in the economic, political, and social arenas of their communities and countries, with spill over effects in children’s wellbeing, education, poverty reduction, among others.

**Lesson 6: Monitoring and evaluation of investments to protect children from violence should be participatory, and children should be provided with the space to effectively engage.**

Despite the fact that the commitments made in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda are not legally binding, Member States, as well as UN entities and civil society organizations, have recognized the need for a strong accountability framework to monitor progress since the onset of the process.

For the post-2015 sustainable development agenda to truly take hold within communities and be sustainable throughout time – despite an ever changing world – it is imperative that citizens are actively involved not only in defining the priorities set forth in the said agenda, but also in its implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

It is necessary that implementation is undertaken through all-of-society engagement and partnerships, facilitating modes of participation that are accessible, empowering, inclusive, and non-discriminatory, with a special focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Access to disaggregated, real-time, and reliable data will be crucial, and investments in strengthening countries’ statistical capacity and citizens’ data literacy are badly needed.<sup>24</sup> According to the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN), US\$1 billion per year will need to be invested in 77 of the world’s lowest-income developing countries for upgrades of statistical systems and data collection.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (2014), *A World that Counts: Mobilising the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development* (New York, NY: United Nations). Available at: [www.undatarevolution.org](http://www.undatarevolution.org).

<sup>25</sup> UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2015), *Data for Development: A Needs Assessment for SDG Monitoring and Statistical Capacity Development* (New York, NY: United Nations). Available at: [www.unsdsn.org](http://www.unsdsn.org).

Children should be at the center of these processes: not only should their development, survival, protection, and wellbeing be a crosscutting concern, but children themselves should be actively consulted, engaged, and listened to throughout the agenda-setting processes, as well as in any monitoring and evaluation efforts.

To this end, governments should:

1. Recognize children as key actors in their own development;
2. Regard participation as both a means and an end in and of itself; and
3. Ensure that all strategies implemented are safe and empowering for children.

Child-friendly monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will ensure that children appropriate the post-2015 sustainable development agenda as their own, with the potential of becoming champions for sustainable development. As these children grow up, their agency will only be enhanced by their engagement, and active citizenship will be effectively fostered across an entire generation. This can only lead to a more sustainable future.

Children's engagement should always be supported by adequate training for adults and children, and facilitated through child-friendly environments and procedures that are safe and sensitive to risk. It always has to be inclusive in terms of disability, ethnicity, gender, race, and any other socioeconomic marker. It also has to be relevant, respectful, voluntary, and transparent. Experiences with child-friendly accountability have been successful across a wide range of processes – for example, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

## Conclusions

Findings indicate that, even though there has been positive progress in some countries over the past five to ten years, with higher investments on policies and programmes to protect children from violence, the sector is severely underfunded compared to others, including other child-focused areas such as education and health.

This is not to say that strategic interventions to promote access to quality education or to provide social protection floors to families and vulnerable children, for example, cannot also serve as important empowering mechanisms to protect children from violence and exploitation.

But investment in the protection of children from violence is still very limited in relation to the size of countries' budgets, and more importantly in relation to the scale of the problem and to the enormous costs resulting from it.

Financing for development can play an important role in supporting governments to implement and scale up efforts to address violence against children –particularly where there is a complete absence of preventive and response services due to limited budgets and competing spending demands.



