

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



## Violence and exploitation against children in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda: target and indicators



## ABOUT CHILD FUND ALLIANCE

ChildFund Alliance is a worldwide alliance of 12 children’s development organisations working in 58 countries to improve the lives of vulnerable and excluded children, helping them overcome poverty and achieve their rights. More information at: [www.childfundalliance.org](http://www.childfundalliance.org).

## ABBREVIATIONS

CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TST	Technical Support Team (for the Open Working Group on SDGs)
UN	United Nations
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNMC	United Nations Millennium Campaign
UNSDSN	United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network
UNTT	United Nations Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WHO	World Health Organization

## Our call:

As the inter-governmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prepares its report to the General Assembly, ChildFund Alliance calls for the proposal for the SDGs to explicitly include and address the issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children in its different manifestations, with clear and measurable indicators.

## Main points:

- Given the size and scale of the problem, violence and exploitation against children should be included as a **standalone target** within the SDGs, with measurable indicators.
- Given that violence against children cuts across different focus areas as currently highlighted by the co-chairs of the Open Working Group, it will be fundamental that the issue of violence against children is also included across the goals and targets for focus area 1 (poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality), focus area 3 (health and population dynamics), focus area 4 (education and life-long learning), focus area 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment), focus area 8 (economic growth, employment and infrastructure) and focus area 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions). This will contribute to achieve positive outcomes in these areas and finish the unfinished business of the MDGs, as well as to ultimately achieve the elimination of all forms of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

**TARGET:** Eliminate all forms of violence against children.

### INDICATORS:

- **Poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality:**  
Number of boys and girls from marginalized and vulnerable groups gaining access to national child protection systems.
- **Health and population dynamics:**  
Rate of boys and girls per 100,000 subject to those forms of violence at home, in institutions or in the community that are banned by national laws.  
Rate among boys and girls per 100,000 of violent deaths and injuries resulting from violence.  
Number of boys and girls subject to sexual violence.
- **Education and life-long learning:**  
Number of boys and girls subject to any form of violence in schools.  
Number of boys and girls subject to sexual violence in schools.  
Number of boys and girls out of school because of conflict, insecurity, disaster and violence in schools.
- **Gender equality and women's empowerment:**  
Percentage of cases of violence against women and children that are investigated and sentenced.  
Number of girls married before the age of 18.
- **Economic growth, employment and infrastructure:**  
Number of boys and girls involved in the worst forms of child labour.
- **Peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions:**  
Number of boys and girls recruited by armed forces or groups.  
Percentage of children under age five whose birth is registered without cost with a civil authority, regardless of ethnicity, class, gender or race.

## Introduction

*Violence can be prevented and its impact reduced, in the same way that public health efforts have prevented and reduced pregnancy-related complications, workplace injuries, infectious diseases, and illness resulting from contaminated food and water in many parts of the world.*

World Health Organization, 2002

Throughout the post-2015 and SDGs processes, the currency of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the foresight of the Millennium Declaration, which explicitly envisioned a world where the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) would be fully implemented, have been the corner stone of the discussion. To realise this vision the issues of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children must be addressed. For the international community to finish the job of the MDGs, it will be essential to reach those who are furthest from national averages and baselines, and most in need of protection from violence and exploitation.

We welcomed the UN Secretary-General's report "A life of dignity for all," and particularly the illustrative goals and targets advanced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN) and the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, both of which acknowledged the importance of the issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children, and advanced the bold vision of eliminating it in all its forms.

As the inter-governmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) works on its report to the General Assembly, we recommend that violence and exploitation perpetrated against children is explicitly included as a target in its proposal.

As the report of the Open Working Group will be paramount in the discussion about the SDGs, we would like the following points to be taken into account:

- Violence against children occurs everywhere and cuts across class, culture, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status and religion.
- Violence against children affects both boys and girls, and addressing it for all children is fundamental for achieving gender equality.
- The inclusion of the prevention of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children will be consistent with the widespread call to recommit to the foundational principles of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the CRC, and the Millennium Declaration.
- It is necessary to differentiate between children and youth, as two distinct constituencies with their own aspirations, claims and needs; and while they sometimes converge, their particular needs and rights must be also given their due attention.
- Children need to feature prominently in the SDGs, as they will be drivers and stakeholders of the transformations needed to attain sustainable development.

## **The problem**

Violations to children's right to protection from violence and exploitation cut across class, culture, race and religion: they are massive, under-recognised and under-reported.

Throughout the world, children are subject to the worst forms of child labour, living and working in the streets; to harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage, and female genital mutilation and cutting; to sexual abuse; to the impact of armed conflict, including the use of child soldiers by armed forces and groups; to lack of access to justice, and to unnecessary institutionalization, among others.

Preventing and responding to all forms of violence and exploitation, in all contexts, is essential to ensure children's rights to survival, development and well-being. The impact of violence and exploitation is known. Countries with high rates of child labour tend to have low rates of school attendance. Children who study in a violent environment achieve lower academic results than those who do not. A child victim of abuse and exploitation can be affected emotionally, mentally and physically, and his or her ability to learn and socialize can be seriously hampered, as well as their capacity to contribute to the economy and society in the long term. This affects the long-term viability of economic growth and peace.

## **The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs**

The Millennium Declaration was driven by the political will across nations to realise the universal values of equality, freedom, respect for nature, shared responsibility, solidarity, and tolerance.<sup>1</sup> The 189 Governments that adopted the Millennium Declaration committed themselves "to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want."<sup>2</sup>

The formulation of the MDGs in September 2000 was intended as a call to public opinion worldwide to shift global priorities. Indeed, the MDGs have been almost unanimously regarded, despite their shortcomings, as a useful tool to mobilize all sorts of stakeholders in joint action to address poverty. As part of a broader human rights strategy, the MDGs have contributed to lift millions out of poverty, as a means to realise civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

Throughout the process to formulate the successors of the MDGs, Governments, UN entities, civil society organisations and citizens throughout the world have argued for the currency of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, not only highlighting their successes, but also the challenges that still remain to realise their vision.

Whilst the MDGs do not relate to reducing violence and exploitation against children, the Millennium Declaration acknowledges people's right to "live their lives [...] free from fear of

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55L.2), para. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., para. 11.

violence, oppression or injustice.”<sup>3</sup> Protection of the world’s most vulnerable populations, including children, is part of the agreements that underlie the MDGs. In this sense, the Millennium Declaration commits Member States to “encourage the ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.”<sup>4</sup>

Freedom from violence and exploitation for all children is one of the underpinning rights of the CRC. And indeed its full implementation –as called for by the Millennium Declaration– depends on addressing several child protection issues: preventing family separation (Article 9); ensuring family reunification across borders (Article 10); stopping the illicit transfer of children (Article 11); protecting children from violence, injury, abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation (Article 19); reviewing and ensuring appropriate and alternative care (Article 20); protecting children from economic exploitation and hazardous work (Article 32); protecting children within juvenile justice systems (Article 37); protecting children in armed conflict, including recruitment (Article 38); and ensuring recovery and reintegration (Article 40).

Freeing children from violence and exploitation is not only part of the Millennium Declaration, but also an issue of great importance for finishing the job initiated by the MDGs. The UN Task Team (UNTT) on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda acknowledges this: “Sustainability also implies ensuring inter-generational justice and a future world fit for children. This entails safeguarding a sustainable future in which children will be able to grow up healthy, well-nourished, resilient, well-educated, culturally sensitive and protected from violence and neglect.”<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the UN Development Group (UNDG) has identified “freedom from insecurity and violence” as a fundamental issue for development, but one that was crucially omitted by the current MDGs;<sup>6</sup> and the UN Secretary-General’s has argued that “upholding human rights and freeing people from fear and want are inseparable; [and that] it is imperative that we do more to act on this basic truth.”<sup>7</sup>

## **Finishing the unfinished business of the MDGs**

Throughout the last decade and a half, the concerted efforts of national Governments and the international community have saved more children than ever before from preventable diseases, and have provided them with access to clean water and sanitation. In the same way,

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., para. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., para. 26.

<sup>5</sup> UN Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda (2012), *Realizing the Future We Want for All: Report to the Secretary-General*, para. 64.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Development Group (2013), *The Global Conversation Begins: Emerging Views for a New Development Agenda*, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Secretary-General (2013), *A Life of Dignity for All: Accelerating Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and Advancing the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015*, para. 12.

the number of out-of-school children of primary school age dropped from 102 million in 2000, to 57 million in 2011.<sup>8</sup>

In this sense, ChildFund Alliance calls on Member States to continue to build on the progress achieved for children in the areas of child survival, education, gender equality and HIV and AIDS; so that all children, particularly those who suffer the worst deprivations, have access to clean water and sanitation services, to adequate education and healthcare, and other services necessary for their survival, development and well-being.

In order to further the achievements of MDGs 1 through 6, and reach the most marginalised and vulnerable populations, the SDGs will require a focus on precisely those groups that are most at risk and in need of protection. If we truly want the survival agenda to be fully achieved, the reality is that we will need to guarantee that children are protected and can engage, grow and thrive as active citizens in their communities, across every stage of their life cycle.

Without targets and indicators that capture the disparate impact on children of violence, exploitation and abuse, there is no way a country will be able to ‘get to zero.’

ChildFund Alliance thus calls for the SDGs to finish the unfinished business of the MDGs, while building on the progress achieved so far, and explicitly acknowledging and addressing the different manifestations of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

Our hope is for the international community to continue to build on the progress achieved for children, but also to address with the same commitment and vigour the issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

## **The way forward**

Given the size and scale of the problem, violence and exploitation against children should be included as a standalone target within the SDGs, with measurable indicators. Furthermore, given its negative effects on health, education and gender equality outcomes, on the achievement of employment and decent work for all, on the promotion of equality, on the creation of peaceful and non-violent societies, and on the rule of law and governance it will also be fundamental that the issue of violence against children is included across the different focus areas. This will contribute to achieve positive outcomes in these sectors and finish the unfinished business of the MDGs, as well as to ultimately achieve the elimination of all forms of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

The following section sets out the direct links between violence against children and several of the focus areas outlined by the co-chairs Open Working Group in their recent document to Member States, namely poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality; health and population dynamics; education and life-long learning; gender equality and women’s empowerment; economic growth, employment and infrastructure; and peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations (2013), *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*, p. 14-17.

### **a) Focus area 1: Poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality**

Reports from the High-Level Panel, the UNSDSN, UN entities and civil society organisations have highlighted the importance of ensuring that no person, regardless of their condition, is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities; that development actions help “not just the largest number of people, but the neediest and most vulnerable.”

Addressing inequalities and promoting equality is in line with the Millennium Declaration, which calls for the protection of the world’s most vulnerable populations, putting them at the heart of the agreements that underlie the MDGs.

In this sense, the High-Level Panel was right to point out the currency of these frameworks, and the need for them to bear on any successor, by keeping in mind not only the successes they have achieved in the last decade, but also the challenges that still remain to realise their vision.

If the SDGs are to further the positive impacts achieved through the MDGs, and if the next set of priorities is to finish the job of the current one, it will require a focus on the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, on precisely those groups that are most at risk and in need of protection.

Children are one of the populations that most disproportionately suffer the consequences of exclusion, inequality and poverty. Children make up more than 50 per cent of the world’s poor, and poverty takes the lives of 22,000 children under the age of five every single day. Furthermore, 1 billion children are deprived of one or more services essential to their survival and development: 148 million under the age of five are underweight, 57 million are not attending primary school, and 22 million are not protected from disease by routine immunization.

While violence against children takes place in every society and within every country, the most vulnerable children are at increased risk of being subject to some form of violence. For example, there is a gender component, as girls are more likely to face child marriage, while boys are more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour and coming into conflict with the law. At the same time, children with disabilities are at a higher risk of violence than their peers; and inequalities in income expose children to exploitation and entering the justice system.

Reaching them –those who are furthest from national averages and baselines– ensures the education, health and well-being of all, and is indispensable to achieve the current MDGs. It is the only way to break the poverty cycle and bring intergenerational prosperity and well-being about.

We therefore propose the following indicator to realize and monitor progress on the target to eliminate all forms of violence against children:

- Number of boys and girls from marginalized and vulnerable groups gaining access to national child protection systems.

### **b) Focus area 3: Health and population dynamics**

Violence and exploitation against children has detrimental effects on health outcomes, and could affect the full realisation of MDG 4 –on reducing child mortality. For example, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), in a year alone an estimated 31,000 deaths in children under 15 years of age were attributed to homicide globally –a figure that underestimates the scale of the problem, as many violence-related deaths are incorrectly attributed to burns, drowning, falls and other causes.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, children who survive violence are also at risk of developing serious health issues. It has been proven that violence in early childhood causes stress that is associated with disruption in early brain development, and that can impair the development of the nervous and immune systems. Toxic stress response in children’s bodies and brains can lead to greater susceptibility to stress-related physical illnesses –i.e. cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes–, as well as mental health problems.

What happens to people during their childhood can have major effects thirty, forty and even fifty years later. The health effects of being subjected to violence and exploitation during childhood surpass death and injury, and include major impairments to the victim’s mental and physical health and development during adulthood.

In this sense, WHO has argued that exposure to violence during childhood is associated with risk factors and risk-taking behaviours later in life –such as alcohol and drug abuse, depression, obesity, smoking, and unintended pregnancy.<sup>10</sup> These risk factors and behaviours, in their turn, can result in some of the principal causes of death, disease and disability, including cancer, heart disease, sexually transmitted diseases and suicide.

This means, in short, that violence against children contributes to a broad range of adverse health outcomes that are costly to victims and society alike. Indeed, these life-long consequences mean that Governments throughout the world are already spending inordinate portions of their health allocations treating the consequences of violence against children.

According to the WHO study, for example, sexual abuse during childhood can account for 6 per cent of cases of depression, 6 per cent of cases of alcohol and drug abuse, 8 per cent of suicide attempts, 10 per cent of panic disorders, and 27 per cent of post-traumatic stress disorders.

Beyond these impacts on health outcomes, violence and exploitation against children entail great economic costs, including those of hospitalization, psychological treatment, child welfare, and longer-term healthcare.

It is apparent that violence –in general– and violence against children –in particular– constitute a public health issue that should be addressed accordingly. A public health approach to violence requires a scientific method to advance the solution to this particular problem. According to WHO, there are four key steps to this method: first, uncovering as much basic knowledge as possible and systematically collecting data about all the aspects of violence; second, conducting

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<sup>9</sup> World Health Organization and ISCPAN (2006), *Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide to Taking Action and Generating Evidence*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

research on the causes, consequences, costs and prevention of violence; third, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating interventions to prevent violence, based on the information gathered; and fourth, implementing, in a range of settings, interventions that appear promising, widely disseminating information and determining the cost-effectiveness of programmes.<sup>11</sup>

We therefore propose the following indicators to realise and monitor progress on the target to eliminate all forms of violence against children:

- Rate of boys and girls per 100,000 subject to those forms of violence at home, in institutions or in the community that are banned by national laws.
- Number of boys and girls subject to sexual violence.
- Rate of violent deaths and injuries resulting from violence among boys and girls per 100,000.

#### **c) Focus area 4: Education and life-long learning**

As acknowledged in a global survey on violence against children conducted by the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, “children in most countries spend more time in the care of adults in educational settings than anywhere else outside of their homes.”<sup>12</sup> Schools, by definition, should be places where children feel protected and safe, and where their dignity and development are upheld.

Violence is amply recognised as an obstacle to achieving education outcomes, both in terms of coverage and quality, as it hinders effective learning and has a negative effect in school attendance and enrolment –for example, it has been proven that violence in schools has a direct impact on dropout rates. But despite the need for children’s right to education to be realised in a safe environment, schools are settings where children are exposed to violence, subjected to violence, and taught violence. For example, 20 to 65 per cent of school children report being physically or verbally bullied.<sup>13</sup>

The critical role that education plays in the reduction of poverty has been explicitly acknowledged in the formulation of MDG 2, and while major advances have been made in the last fifteen years, these will never be enough if children remain too afraid to go to school.

The aforementioned global survey shows that violence against children in schools ranges from physical and psychological violence –including bullying and peer-to-peer violence, but also corporal punishment– to sexual violence –to which both boys and girls are subjected. In Uganda, for example, a recent study revealed that 8 per cent of 16 and 17-year-old boys and girls had had sexual relations with their teachers, and 12 per cent with other staff.<sup>14</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*.

<sup>12</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*, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Paulo Sergio Pinheiro (2006), *World Report on Violence against Children*.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in 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*, p. 34.

every day boys and girls are faced with sexual violence while travelling to and from schools and within schools.

Physical punishment is a particularly significant problem in terms of violence in schools. As of March 2014, 70 countries had not yet fully prohibited teachers to cause pain on children as a form of punishment; and in some cases, even when physical punishment is banned, the law is rarely enforced. Evidence shows that boys are more likely to be subjected to physical punishment than girls.<sup>15</sup>

Bullying –including not only physical violence, but also blackmail, name-calling and social exclusion– is also a significant issue. In the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) conducted between 2003 and 2005 between one fifth and two thirds of children in developing countries reported having been physically or verbally bullied in the previous 30 days.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, single country studies reveal that the situation in developed countries is not any better.

In ChildFund Alliance’s report “Children speak about being free from violence and exploitation,” being safe in school ranked as the most common answer to the question of what makes children feel free from violence and exploitation. Furthermore, children identified the ‘sex-for-grades’ practice, corporal punishment on the part of teachers and other adults, and being subject to harassment and violence on the way to and from school as salient obstacles to their safety and the realisation of their right to education.<sup>17</sup>

Besides the physical and psychosocial consequences, children who experience bullying, physical punishment and other forms of violence in schools are more likely to drop out of education; and even for those who remain in school, their ability to learn is affected by fear –with concentration problems and learning difficulties. In addition, violence in schools contributes to the perpetuation of cycles of violence –as is the case, for example, of both bullies and victims of bullying.

Violence in schools is not only an obstacle to the attainment of MDG 2, but also of MDG 3 –on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Indeed, the impact on girls of violence in schools can be shattering, especially when compounded with a dire economic situation in the family or with cultural expectations against girls’ education.

We therefore propose the following indicators to realise and monitor progress on the target to eliminate all forms of violence against children:

- Number of boys and girls subject to any form of violence in schools.
- Number of boys and girls subject to sexual violence in schools.
- Number of boys and girls out of school because of conflict, insecurity, disaster and violence in schools.

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<sup>15</sup> Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, at <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org>. Accessed on March 25, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Paulo Sergio Pinheiro (2006), *World Report on Violence against Children*.

<sup>17</sup> ChildFund Alliance (2013), *Children speak about being Free from Violence and Exploitation*. Available at [http://freefromviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/CFA\\_FGDs\\_Report\\_full.pdf](http://freefromviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/CFA_FGDs_Report_full.pdf).

#### **d) Focus area 5: Gender equality and empowerment of women**

Discrimination and gender inequality do not only violate the UDHR and other human rights instruments, but also have been recognised as major obstacles for economic growth and poverty reduction. Gender equality was recognised in the Millennium Declaration as one of its fundamental values, stating the need to ensure the “equal rights and opportunities of women and men,” as well as the commitment to promote it as an effective way “to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.”<sup>18</sup> The MDGs included the goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women.

The past decade and a half has seen great progress, which has yielded several benefits for the economic and social development of nations. However, much work is still needed to realise the vision of the Millennium Declaration, as only two countries have achieved gender equality at all levels of education, the average share of women members in parliaments worldwide is just 20 per cent, and 40 per cent of wage-earning jobs in the non-agricultural sector are held by women.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the post-2015 process, this issue has been recognised as a key concern for the next development framework to address –including the issue of violence against women and girls. As acknowledged by UN Women, violence is one of the most palpable manifestations of discrimination and gender inequality, with negative effects on education and health outcomes, as well as on public spending.<sup>20</sup> Ensuring personal security for all is a fundamental step for consolidating peace and achieving sustainable development.

In particular, child marriage has been recognized as one of the obstacles to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls being disproportionately most affected than boys by this phenomenon. Throughout the discussions around the next set of global priorities, child marriage –defined as the formal or informal union before the age of 18– has been highlighted as one of the issues that must be addressed –for example, by the High-Level Panel, UNSDSN, the UN Secretary-General and others.

According to UNICEF, girls who marry before the age the age of 18 tend to drop out of school and the education system, in addition to being at risk of violence and exploitation, and lacking freedom to engage and participate in the life of their communities. Also, pregnancy and childbirth are an important component of mortality for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 – accounting from more than 70,000 deaths each year. Furthermore, newborns of underage mothers are at a substantially higher risk –60 per cent– of not surviving their first year, in comparison to newborn whose mother are aged 19 and above. They also tend to suffer from lower birth weight, under-nutrition, and late physical and cognitive development.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55L.2), paras. 6 and 20.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations (2013), *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*, pp. 18-23.

<sup>20</sup> UN Women (2013), *A Transformative Stand-alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women’s Rights and Women’s Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>21</sup> UNICEF (2009), *State of the World’s Children: Maternal and Newborn Health*.

We support and welcome the advancement of the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, as set out in the proposals from UNSDSN, the High-Level Panel and the Secretary-General. Violence against children and other vulnerable populations not only are persistent issues across the globe and an obstacle for growth, shared prosperity and sustainability, but addressing it will also foster throughout society the necessary cultural and social foundations to ultimately eliminate all forms gender-based violence altogether. In this sense, WHO has acknowledged that “exposure to child maltreatment or witnessing violence in the family” is one of the risk factors for being a perpetrator of intimate partner and sexual violence against women.<sup>22</sup>

To truly achieve equality –including gender equality– across the different population groups, the SDGs cannot afford to ignore the whole spectrum of constituencies that experience violence as a manifestation of discrimination, exclusion and inequality.

We therefore call for the following indicator to realise and monitor progress on the target to eliminate all forms of violence against children:

- Percentage of cases of violence against women and children that are investigated and sentenced.
- Number of girls married before the age of 18.

#### **e) Focus area 8: Economic growth, employment and infrastructure**

A quantum leap and a paradigm shift in economic thinking and practice are needed, by embracing sustainable patterns of consumption and production, as well as by ensuring that every citizen –regardless of their age and condition– has access to social security and other services needed to grow and prosper. The co-chairs of the Open Working Group rightly highlighted this issue as fundamental to attain employment and decent work for all.

When it comes to children, the stakes are particularly high in this regard. It has been amply demonstrated that guaranteeing and realising children’s rights to development, protection, survival and well-being is an investment in the future of society in general. The argument is simple, without access to quality education and healthcare, and without protection from violence and exploitation, today’s children will not be able to productively join tomorrow’s workforce, and reap the benefits of the proposed economic transformation.

But children will not only face the effects of our economic failures in the future. They are experiencing them in the present. For sustainable development to provide employment and decent jobs for all those seeking work, as called for by the co-chairs of the Open Working Group, the issue of child labour –particularly the worst forms of child labour– needs to be addressed. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), approximately 168 million children are involved in some sort of work that deprives them from their childhood, dignity and potential; 85 million of which are involved in hazardous work, endangering their health, safety and moral development.

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<sup>22</sup> World Health Organization (2013), ‘Intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Factsheet No. 239.’

While not all forms of work done by children are considered prejudicial for the well-being of the child, in some cases it can deprive children of an education and the opportunity to acquire skills.

The envisioned transformation will simply not occur if the issue of child labour, with a priority on addressing the worst forms of child labour, is not explicitly addressed by the SDGs.

We therefore propose the following indicator to realise and monitor progress on the target to eliminate all forms of violence against children:

- Number of boys and girls involved in the worst forms of child labour.

#### **f) Focus area 16: Peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions**

To create peaceful and inclusive societies, enhance the rule of law and promote capable institutions, the SDGs must address the issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

##### **i. Peaceful and inclusive societies**

Central to peaceful and inclusive societies is the elimination of all forms of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children, which we believe should be one of the targets in whatever framework is agreed upon by Member States.

To build peace, Governments need to honour their commitments and be held accountable for their duty to protect their citizens from violence.

Furthermore, and if this focus area is to include emergency situations, it necessary to remember that children are often the most affected by them, whether related to conflict or to climate change and environmental degradation. As a result of conflict and natural disasters, children may lack food, healthcare and shelter. They are more likely to be affected by disease or injury. Their emotional and physical development may be halted. They may not receive basic literacy and other essential life skills, and their education could be interrupted. They are often abandoned or orphaned, or become separated from their families. Emergency-affected children are also more vulnerable to abduction, sexual abuse and trafficking.

In conflict situations, children are particularly vulnerable to being recruited by armed forces and armed groups. According to the Paris Principles on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict of 2007, a child associated with an armed force or an armed group is “any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes.”

According to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, hundreds of thousands of children are used as soldiers or otherwise in conflicts around the world. Recruited children, whether in combat or non-combat roles, run the risk of being killed or injured. Separated from their families and homes, they may be forced to participate in or witness atrocities, their emotional and physical development being seriously affected.

According to Article 1 of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, “States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities.” Furthermore, the recruitment and use of children is one of the six grave violations against children identified by the UN Security Council, while ILO Convention No. 182 has declared the recruitment of children as one of the worst forms of child labour, and ILO Recommendation 190 has recommended the criminalization of child recruitment. Finally, the aforementioned Paris Principles suggest states to ensure that armed groups within their territory do not recruit children, and also to respect the international standards for recruitment.

We therefore propose the following indicator to realise and monitor progress on the target to eliminate all forms of violence against children:

- Number of boys and girls recruited by armed forces or groups.

## ii. Rule of law and capable institutions

Good governance is not only a matter of institutions, as the proper functioning of these institutions also requires an active citizenry. Citizens are the ultimate custodians of accountability and participation, and all citizens must be counted, as it is only through them that good governance can be effectively operationalized.

Poverty, exclusion and violence can hamper children’s active and engaged exercise of citizenship in adulthood. As a general rule with notable exceptions, it can be argued that children that experience these issues today will most likely not become the active and engaged citizens that good governance requires. Ensuring children’s rights to development, protection, survival and well-being constitutes an investment in the future enhancement of governance – and its correlate effects on addressing inequalities and poverty alleviation today.

Furthermore, for good governance and active citizenship, the issue of legal identity is paramount. Guaranteeing free and universal birth registration across all sectors of society contributes to achieve healthy democracies, and thriving economies, polities and societies.

Despite the legal obligation contained in Article 7 of the CRC, 51 million children are still not registered at birth every single year.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, only 57 countries –out of the 192 members of the WHO– have registrations systems that reported on births and deaths for at least 90 per cent of the population.<sup>24</sup>

In this sense, to further advance the progress on the current MDGs and to successfully implement and monitor whatever future framework is agreed upon, a key shift in governance

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<sup>23</sup> UNICEF (2007), *Progress for Children: A World Fit for Children Statistical Review*. Available at [http://www.unicef.org/progressforchildren/2007n6/index\\_41401.htm](http://www.unicef.org/progressforchildren/2007n6/index_41401.htm)

<sup>24</sup> Lexi Bambas (2005), ‘Integrating Equity into Health Information Systems: A Human Rights Approach to Health and Information,’ in: *PLoS Med* 2(4): e102. Available at <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/fetchObject.action?representation=PDF&uri=info:doi/10.1371/journal.pmed.0020102>

would be to ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, class, gender or race, are registered at birth.

Registering a child at birth is the gateway to citizenship and to the realisation of that child's rights. A birth certificate not only is proof of age, nationality, parentage and place of birth, but it is also considered in many instances a fundamental identity document, required to apply for other documents as children advance into adulthood –i.e. a driver's license, a national identity card, a passport.

But the absence of birth registration not only hinders access to other identity documents. It also constitutes a barrier for children to access the education and healthcare systems, and other essential services for the realisation of their human rights. Access to justice and the realisation of the rule of law are also significantly affected under these circumstances: children that have been not registered at birth cannot have their rights protected in courts of law. Furthermore, proof of age that comes along with birth registration is fundamental in preventing and responding to violence against children –for example, when prosecuting perpetrators of crimes against children, such as child trafficking, recruitment of children into armed groups, sexual violence against children, etc.

In adulthood, the implications are exponentially multiplied across the civil, political, economic and social dimensions of citizenship. A person without a birth certificate will not be able to enter into marriage, own or inherit certain types of property, access the banking system, access the formal labour market, or even register his or her own children at birth.

Registration is also key in the implementation of child protection systems to prevent and respond to violence and exploitation against children. Universal birth registration is required to enforce governmental policies regarding minimum age for labour and marriage, as well as an invaluable asset to reunite children who have been separated from their families in situations of conflict, disaster or any other emergency.

Only by guaranteeing this right, as per Article 7 of the CRC, can these systems be put in place, particularly in what refers to accurate and actionable data that Governments need to properly plan, implement and monitor social policies and service delivery. In short, all the progress that has been achieved through the MDGs and that will be further achieved after 2015 will not be accurately measured until universal birth registration has been achieved –with the implications this entails for accurate and disaggregated demographic data.

This is part of the many cycles that perpetuate inequalities and poverty throughout the world, and that can be easily broken by political will to make birth registration accessible, decentralized and free.

A child that has not been registered will most likely not be able –throughout his or her life cycle– to access the education, healthcare and justice systems, to access the banking and labour markets, to run for office or vote for his or her elected officials.

We therefore propose the following indicator to realise and monitor progress on the target to achieve universal birth registration, and to eliminate all forms of violence against children:

- Percentage of children under age five whose birth is registered without cost with a civil authority, regardless of ethnicity, class, gender or race.

## **Consultations: What people are saying?**

The inclusive and open process that Governments, UN entities and civil society organisations have undertaken for the past two years, with online and offline consultations and outreach activities to engage citizens and stakeholders throughout the world, is not only an acknowledgement of the lessons yielded by the MDGs experience, but also a once-in-a-generation opportunity to foster true ownership and facilitate the implementation and accountability of whatever framework is agreed upon.

ChildFund Alliance conducted series of focus group discussions with over 1,300 children in 41 countries around the globe, to gather their views on the issues of violence and exploitation, and their place in the next set of global priorities.

Results from this study indicate the importance that children and young people place on addressing violence and exploitation perpetrated against them and/or their peers. Consistently, participating children expressed the need to eliminate all forms of violence and exploitation, as they constitute obstacles to the exercise of their fundamental freedoms and violations to their rights.

Throughout the world, children are calling for world leaders to create and enforce legislation against violence; to fund and run awareness campaigns at all levels; and to ensure offenders and perpetrators are punished so that children feel safe. Furthermore, children stated that they felt free when they were actively listened to, have access to safe schools and the opportunity to play.

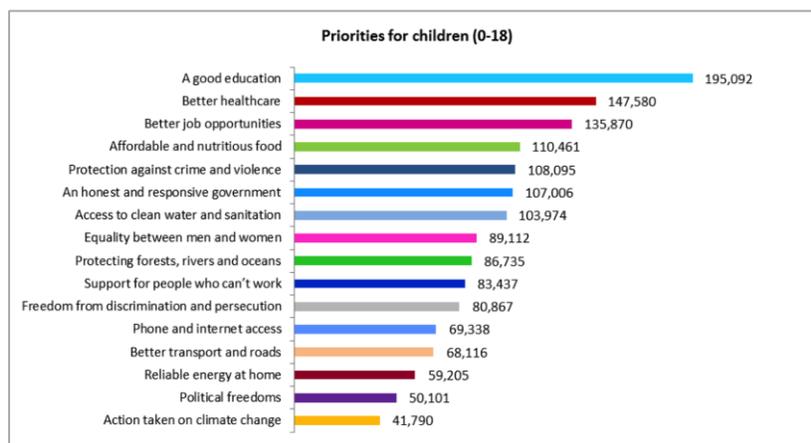
From these focus group discussions, there were a series of common concerns and themes that children identified regarding their own protection from violence and exploitation. They include:

- Children aspire to have their rights fulfilled and to be able to exercise their fundamental freedoms –including the right to non-discrimination, and the right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.
- The experience of violence and exploitation perpetrated against these children takes many different forms, most prominently sexual violence, child labour, and physical and humiliating punishment.
- While many children stressed that both girls and boys are victims of violence and exploitation, they pointed to the fact that girls are more exposed to violence and exploitation related to their sexuality, while boys are more at risk of being subjected to physical harm.

Moreover, as part of our *Small Voices, Big Dreams* report, ChildFund Alliance conducted 6,500 one-on-one interviews with children in 47 countries, asking them to rank what is important for them and their families, according to the UN Millennium Campaign's (UNMC) MY World survey. Protection against crime and violence was globally the second most voted priority, with 3,465

votes (or 53% of the votes). Furthermore, it was ranked as a top priority for children in both developing and developed countries.<sup>25</sup>

This is certainly in line with the global results for MY World, in which children between the ages of 0-17 have consistently ranked this issue as one of the top priorities they would like the next development framework to address.



Source: MY World (September 2013)

In the national and thematic consultations conducted by the UNDG, the issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children was also identified as a priority.

For example, from 17 December 2012 to 18 January 2013, UNICEF and UN Women conducted an online consultation on Young People and Inequalities, in which hundreds of children and youth participated. The discussion synopsis highlights that “human rights and the protection of those rights was [a] thread that ran through many of the responses.”

As a result of this process, participating children and youth issued a series of recommendations for the post-2015 development framework, among which there is the recommendation to “protect human rights of girls and advance gender equality, especially from all forms of child abuse, violence, exploitation, trafficking, and work towards the elimination of harmful practices.”<sup>26</sup> The Summary Report of the Global Public Consultation on Addressing Inequalities echoes this claim and explicitly acknowledges that “gender-based violence and violence against children, LGBTI people, ethnic minorities and others require integrated efforts to ensure full legal protection, properly implemented protection and response services, and measures to reduce the incidence of violence.”<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, in the frame of the thematic consultation on Violence, Conflict and Disaster, over

<sup>25</sup> ChildFund Alliance (2013), *Small Voices, Big Dreams: A Global Survey of Children’s Views on Peace, Violence, Heroes and Happiness*. Available at <http://www.childfund.org.au/sites/default/files/publications/ChildFund-Small-Voices-Big-Dreams-2013.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> UNICEF et al., *Young People and Inequalities: Online Discussion Synopsis*. Available at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/file/307837/download/334466>.

<sup>27</sup> UNICEF and UN Women (2013), *Synthesis Report on the Global Thematic Consultation on Addressing Inequalities*, p. 60.

150 delegates from 32 countries met in Panama City, Panama, for a two-day meeting on Violence, Citizen Security and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. In the outcome document, delegates explicitly acknowledge that “many forms of violence are holding back states and societies from fulfilling their development potential including achieving the MDGs,” that “although there has been progress toward many MDG targets [...] violence threatens the sustainability of these gains,” and that “prevention and reduction of violence [...] can yield major development dividends.” In this sense, delegates recommend that the post-2015 development framework contains a standalone goal to “reduce violence, and promote freedom from fear and sustainable peace,” and acknowledges that calls were also made to include a goal on the “protection of children and youth from violence.”<sup>28</sup>

Finally, civil society organisations have consistently brought this issue forth in during the outreach activities at High-Level Panel meetings in Monrovia, Liberia, and Bali, Indonesia. For example, children representatives at the meeting in Monrovia came together to issue a declaration on their own priorities for post-2015, among which was an explicit call for “protection from violence, including harmful traditional practices, and exploitation.” This call was replicated by civil society in its communiqué to the High-Level Panel.<sup>29</sup>

In UNDG’s final report on consultations the “strong call for an expanded agenda” was heeded, one that fully addresses the issue of violence –including all forms of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.<sup>30</sup>

The different technical and political bodies that have contributed in the process to define the next generation of development goals also heeded this call. Thus, the UNSDSN advanced the bold vision of a world with “gender equality, social inclusion, and human rights for all,” and called for a target to “prevent and eliminate violence and exploitation, especially for women and children.”<sup>31</sup> In the same vein, the High-Level Panel proposed targets to end child marriage, provide free and universal legal identity, and eliminate all forms of violence against children. Finally, the Technical Support Team (TST) for the Open Working Group has advanced a target to “eliminate all forms of violence against children, women and other vulnerable groups,”<sup>32</sup> and has recommended the elimination of all forms of violence against children as an effective way to address inequalities.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Global Thematic Consultation on Violence, Citizen Security and the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Panama City, Panama, 31 January-1 February 2013), Key Conclusions. Available at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/file/306337/download/332698>.

<sup>29</sup> CSOs Monrovia Consultation for the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Monrovia, Liberia, 30 January-1 February 2013), Outcome Document. Available at <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BxBatz1AmF7xMWVaMFE4ck13OUU/edit>.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Development Group (2013), *A Million Voices: The World We Want. A Sustainable Future with Dignity for All*, pp. 32-36.

<sup>31</sup> Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2013), *An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report for the UN Secretary-General*, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Technical Support Team (2013), *TST Issues Brief: Conflict Prevention, Post-conflict Peacebuilding and the Promotion of Durable Peace, Rule of Law and Governance*.

<sup>33</sup> Technical Support Team (2013), *TST Issues Brief: Promoting Equality, including Social Equity*.

## Conclusions

To fully realise the vision of the Millennium Declaration and to finish the job that the MDGs began, the SDGs should explicitly recognise and address the issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

Addressing violence and exploitation against children will have a positive impact on health, education, gender equality, employment, and equality outcomes, as well as on the creation of peaceful and nonviolent societies, the rule of law and governance.

Given the fact that communities and children themselves are calling for actions to create a world free from violence and exploitation, we recommend that this issue be explicitly included in the proposal of the Open Working Group to the General Assembly.

To realise and monitor progress on the target of **eliminating all forms of violence against children** we suggest the following indicators:

- **Poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality:**  
Number of boys and girls from marginalized and vulnerable groups gaining access to national child protection systems.
- **Health and population dynamics:**  
Rate of boys and girls per 100,000 subject to those forms of violence at home, in institutions or in the community that are banned by national laws.  
Rate among boys and girls per 100,000 of violent deaths and injuries resulting from violence.  
Number of boys and girls subject to sexual violence.
- **Education and life-long learning:**  
Number of boys and girls subject to any form of violence in schools.  
Number of boys and girls subject to sexual violence in schools.  
Number of boys and girls out of school because of conflict, insecurity, disaster and violence in schools.
- **Gender equality and women's empowerment:**  
Percentage of cases of violence against women and children that are investigated and sentenced.  
Number of girls married before the age of 18.
- **Economic growth, employment and infrastructure:**  
Number of boys and girls involved in the worst forms of child labour.
- **Peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions:**  
Number of boys and girls recruited by armed forces or groups.
- Percentage of children under age five whose birth is registered without cost with a civil authority, regardless of ethnicity, class, gender or race.



