

# Ending violence against children in the Asia-Pacific

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ChildFund Australia

July 2018





## About ChildFund Australia

ChildFund Australia is an independent and non-religious international development organisation that works to reduce poverty for children in developing communities. We work in partnership with children and their communities to create lasting change by supporting long-term community development, responding to humanitarian emergencies and promoting children's rights. We want every child to be able to say: "I am safe. I am educated. I am heard. I can make a difference. I have a future."

ChildFund Australia implements programs with a range of local partners in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, and other Pacific nations, and manages projects delivered by partner organisations throughout Asia, Africa and the Americas. Our work is funded through child and community sponsorship, government grants as well as donations from individuals, trusts and foundations, and corporate organisations.

ChildFund Australia is a member of ChildFund Alliance – a global network of 11 organisations which assists more than 14 million children and their families in over 60 countries. ChildFund Australia is a registered charity, a member of the Australian Council for International Development, and fully accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which manages the Australian Government's overseas aid program.

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# Why ending violence against children must be a regional priority

**Ending violence against children is recognised as a priority in the global development agenda. This includes Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 (ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children), and other related targets.**

Reducing violence is not only imperative to alleviate children's suffering but also key to ending extreme child poverty and to ensure we leave no child behind. Worldwide an estimated 1 billion children experience regular physical punishment, about 120 million girls are subject to sexual assault, 100,000 children annually are victims of homicide and one in three children report being bullied.<sup>1</sup>

Neglect and exploitation of children is widespread with severe impacts, particularly for children without parental care, homeless children, children engaged in hazardous work and those who are trafficked.

Violence and exploitation of children is acute across Asian and Pacific nations. Estimates across the region find:

- 17-35% of low-income children are subject to physical violence;
- 11-22% of girls experience sexual abuse;
- up to 40% of children are emotionally neglected or abused; and
- nearly 1 in 10 children are engaged in child labour.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, problems of early and forced marriage, online exploitation, unsafe migration and trafficking are among the highest of any region.

Neglect in early childhood can have lifelong adverse effects such as poor physical and mental health, developmental delay and learning difficulties.<sup>3</sup> Children who are subject to abuse or neglect are more likely to under-achieve at school, or drop out and miss out on the opportunity of a complete education.

Children who are regularly exposed to violence are at a greater risk of homelessness and mental illness, and have a greater risk of engaging in high risk and harmful behaviours.

It makes economic sense to invest in programming that protects children and provides environments in which they can thrive. Healthy, educated and happy children go on to be active, productive adult citizens in their communities.

Conversely, inaction imposes significant financial burdens on governments. Research commissioned by ChildFund Alliance, and undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute, finds physical, psychological and sexual violence perpetrated against children costs governments globally up to US\$7 trillion per annum.<sup>4</sup>

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region are under pressure to respond to the protection needs of children and women, and are in the process of supporting



Developing child-friendly learning environments is a feature of ChildFund's work around the globe.

governments to establish national child protection systems and child-focused social services.

The time is right for the international development sector to adopt violence against children as a top priority and to support a range of initiatives that protect children in our region.

Programs should be evidence-based and adapted to local contexts. They must address the seven domains initiated by the World Health Organisation – the INSPIRE strategies – as critical to ending violence against children.

These strategies are grounded on the emergent research that violence against children is preventable and there is growing global acceptance that it will no longer be tolerated.

**It makes economic sense to protect children and provide environments in which they thrive.**

## The INSPIRE strategies

- Implementation and enforcement of laws
- Norms and values
- Safe environments
- Parent and caregiver support
- Income and economic strengthening
- Response and support services
- Education and life skills

# ChildFund Australia: working towards SDG 16.2 in local communities

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**ChildFund Australia believes every child deserves to grow up in an environment free from violence. We acknowledge that children of all ages, genders, disabilities, ethnicities, sexual orientations and socio-economic status are at risk of experiencing violence.**

In line with the UNICEF definition of violence, ChildFund recognises violence against children as a range of physical, psychological, sexual and emotional abuse, and can involve neglect and deprivation.

A gender lens is recommended when mitigating children's risk of experiencing violence and when implementing interventions. Gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination are underlying causes of many forms of violence and add to the acceptance that violence against girls is the social norm. This can result in the actual prevalence of violence being under-reported, particularly for girls.

Studies have reported that boys are more likely to be victims and perpetrators of homicide and assaults, while girls are more susceptible to sexual abuse. It is also estimated that 18% of girls experience a lifetime prevalence of child sexual abuse, as opposed to 8% of boys.<sup>5</sup>

Other contributors to the hidden nature of violence against children include a reluctance by children to report violence, as many fear they will not be believed, or may be stigmatised. As a result, under-reporting in official or mandated health and justice systems is significant.

As a member of ChildFund Alliance, ChildFund Australia supports and is an implementing partner of the Global Partnership to End Violence. We have advocated for countries in which we work to consider seeking status as a pathfinder country: defined as those committed to accelerating achievement of the End Violence goal. This means their actions will be rights-focused, child-centred, universal, gender-responsive, inclusive, transparent, evidence-based, and results-focused.

Our Child-Friendly Accountability project is enabling children to meaningfully participate in making certain that those charged with protecting and fulfilling children's rights fulfil their duties and responsibilities.

ChildFund Australia has significant experience in the development and implementation of programs that respond to the multiple risks faced by children, strengthening the capacity of governments and their communities to keep children safe from harm, and assisting in developing child protection laws and services.

ChildFund Australia, with support from Australian Aid, is working with governments and community groups in the Asia-Pacific region to develop preventive and responsive child protection systems.

## Child protection priorities

ChildFund Australia's programmatic response to ending violence against children is focused on two areas:

- Child protection systems development: strengthening national child protection services and community processes to protect children; violence prevention initiatives; targeted projects for high risk groups of children.
- Building children's social and emotional skills through programs that develop their resilience and competencies so they can manage challenges and crises.



Papua New Guinea is one of the countries where ChildFund is helping to implement child protection systems.

## ChildFund Pass It Back: building young leaders in Asia

ChildFund Pass It Back builds children's resilience through sport, by delivering an integrated life skills and rugby curriculum for children and young people in disadvantaged communities across Asia. The project provides youth with the opportunity to take part in leadership and life-skills training, enabling them to overcome challenges and "pass it back" to their communities. This includes challenging negative behaviours that can result in violence, while increasing their understanding about the gendered nature of violence in communities. Working with peers as coaches creates an environment where young people are comfortable to raise their problems and, with strong safeguarding protocols in place, issues can be raised and addressed.



## Swipe Safe: online safety for youth and communities

The Swipe Safe project in Vietnam, funded by the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, empowers young people to make the most of the online world, through educating them on internet risks and protective strategies, and by equipping their parents and teachers to be online-safety partners. This participation of youth and parents is driving the success of child protection mechanisms at the school and community level, with young people now leading information campaigns about child safety online,



and more broadly in the community. The role of parents to understand and engage with their young people's online behaviour is creating an ingrained social mechanism to protect children and youth from online violence.

## The Pacific: strengthening child protection systems

To support the development of national child protection systems among Pacific island nations, ChildFund's programs are addressing the challenge of limited professional capacity in Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Nauru. Social workers and other child protection workers are benefiting from participation in a high quality, capacity-building program that delivers coaching and mentoring to frontline workers in core child protection concepts and skills. This extensive program includes 25-days of face-to-face training delivered over nine months.





## 1 Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain: addressing gender-based violence

ChildFund has established Papua New Guinea's first national violence hotline, providing survivors of gender-based violence and their families with an immediate and comprehensive support package that includes access to information, confidential counselling and referral to other service providers. It is available in three languages – English, Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu – and has recently expanded to include Psycho-Social Support (PSS) provision to children who are victims of, or witnesses to, domestic violence.



## ChildFund Alliance: towards a safe world for children

The 11 members of ChildFund Alliance, including ChildFund Australia, implement child-focused development programs in more than 60 countries globally. ChildFund Alliance is committed to preventing violence at all levels; protecting children from violence; and enabling children to meaningfully participate in decisions affecting their lives, by supporting the following global targets:

- SDG 4A: provision of safe learning environments;
- SDG 5.2: elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls;
- SDG 5.3: elimination of harmful traditional practices such as child marriage;
- SDG 8.7: elimination of the human trafficking and the worst forms of child labour;
- SDG 16.2: end the abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children;
- SDG 16.9: provision of birth registration.

In addition, ChildFund Alliance has recognised the need for stronger advocacy at regional, national and local levels, to ensure violence-related targets are effectively implemented through decisive actions.

As one of its strategic priorities, ChildFund Alliance is calling on governments to have strong and functioning child protection systems, and ensure a targeted budget and

sufficient allocation of resources to prevent and respond to violence against children. It wants national governments to review and effectively implement legal frameworks to protect children from all forms of violence and exploitation.

ChildFund Alliance is also calling for the implementation of transparent data collection systems, and urging governments to listen to the voices of children, particularly in the monitoring and evaluation efforts related to SDG target 16.2 and related targets.

National governments are also being encouraged to endorse and implement the INSPIRE package of seven strategies initiated by the World Health Organisation and other partners, and implement a regional approach to address transnational threats of violence against children (eg. online sexual exploitation, violence against migrant children or children on the move).

ChildFund Alliance is also calling for the protection of children to be put at the centre of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and peacebuilding strategies, and be a key part of emergency interventions in all humanitarian responses.

# References

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<sup>2</sup> Violence Against Children in East Asia and the Pacific – a regional review: [https://www.unicef.org/eapro/Violence\\_against\\_Children\\_East\\_Asia\\_and\\_Pacific.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eapro/Violence_against_Children_East_Asia_and_Pacific.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> The costs and economic impact of violence against children, Overseas Development Institute.  
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<sup>5</sup> A global perspective on child sexual abuse: Meta-analysis of prevalence around the world. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21511741](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21511741)

**Cover image:** Children in Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia.

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ChildFund Alliance is working in more than 60 countries to help create safe environments where children can thrive.



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NEEDS A  
CHILDHOOD**

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