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## **VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AS SEEN BY CHILDREN**

*New ChildFund survey of thousands of boys and girls reveal significant insights into the global occurrence of violence against children*

A new global survey conducted by ChildFund Alliance of nearly 5,500 children from 15 countries reveals children feel poorly protected and believe the adults in their lives do not listen to them.

[Small Voices Big Dreams 2019](#), released today, shares findings from surveys and group interviews conducted with children aged 10 to 12 across five continents. The results provide significant and surprising insights into the perceptions of children and adolescents about violence against children, and the efforts of adults, or lack thereof, to protect them from it.

More than 40% of child respondents said they are not adequately protected from violence, with girls expressing a higher perception of insecurity, and one in two respondents believing adults do not listen to their opinions on important matters.

Children highlighted three main causes of violence: their own defenselessness, the cycle of violence, and adults' loss of self-control due to substance abuse. They also shared that they believe boys and girls are susceptible to different forms of danger.

During group interviews, participants said boys are at greater risk of being kidnapped, robbed, or involved in organized crime or child labor, and girls are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse, rape, forced marriage, and domestic work.

"Every year more than one in three children around the world experience violence and exploitation," said ChildFund Alliance Secretary General Meg Gardinier. "This is a global crisis that recognizes no borders. Decision makers rarely take into account the opinions and experiences of young people, yet the success of policies or actions aimed at children depends on our ability to actively engage them and respond to their voices."

With the 30th anniversary of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) just weeks away, the report calls for far greater involvement of children in decision-making on issues affecting them, particularly the prevention of violence and it urges world leaders to listen to children and take action based on their recommendations.

Other key findings of the survey include:

- Nine in 10 children said the most important thing adults can do to end violence against children is to love children more and listen to what they have to say.
- Nearly 64% do not agree with the idea that children cannot do anything to help put an end to violence.

- Participants perceived home and school as safe places, but see the internet and social media as unsafe, followed by streets and public transport.
- Children reported there is almost always a power imbalance between victim and aggressor in violent situations, with more than half saying violence occurs because children cannot defend themselves from adults or older children.
- 86% of children identified mothers as protectors who keep them safest, while only 18% said that people who govern act to protect them.

Jose Maria Faura, CEO of ChildFund Alliance member Educo, which oversaw the report and survey said, “Sadly, no matter where they live, and no matter who they are, no child is immune to violence. In many parts of the world, violence against children is occurring at epidemic levels. We know that when children experience violence, whether it be physical, sexual, or emotional, it can have a catastrophic impact on their sense of self-worth, their cognitive development, and their ability to achieve their full potential.”

Ainhoa, a child participant from Spain said, “What adults need to do most of all is try to understand what happens to children and try and understand how we are feeling.”

Noemi, a child participant from Honduras shared that, “We need to be listened to. Our voice is important.”

ChildFund is already seeing strong success incorporating children’s perspectives into its violence prevention efforts. In Central America, children are actively involved in the design and implementation of violence prevention programs to address the root causes of [irregular migration](#). In South Korea, a [Child Assault Prevention program](#) is teaching children greater awareness of their rights as well as self-defense techniques. In addition, our [Child-friendly Accountability](#) program now underway in six countries, is teaching children vital advocacy and leadership skills.

To download a copy of *Small Voices Big Dreams 2019* and learn more about the survey and our findings, visit [www.smallvoicesbigdreams.org](http://www.smallvoicesbigdreams.org).

#### **About Small Voices Big Dreams**

*Small Voices Big Dreams is an initiative involving all the members of ChildFund Alliance. Our aim is to elevate the voices of children on issues that directly affect them. The 2019 edition compiles the opinions of nearly 5,500 children on violence against children and reflects the opinions of young people from diverse geographical origins, living conditions, and cultural traditions. Children in Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Ecuador, Ghana, Honduras, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, New Zealand, Thailand and Vietnam participated in the initiative.*

#### **About ChildFund Alliance**

*Founded in 2002, ChildFund Alliance is a global network of 11 child-focused development organizations that helps nearly 13 million children and their families in more than 60 countries. ChildFund works to end violence and exploitation against children and to overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential. ChildFund Alliance works in partnership with children and their communities to create lasting change and to facilitate the meaningful participation of children in decisions that affect them.*