TOWARD A WORLD FREE FROM VIOLENCE

GLOBAL SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

SRSG ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The Global Survey is the first comprehensive assessment of progress in preventing and eliminating violence against children since the groundbreaking 2006 UN Study on Violence against Children. The Global Survey was informed by national reports received from more than 100 governments, as well as inputs from regional organizations and institutions, the UN, civil society, children and young people.

The Global Survey provides a strategic insight into how far the World has come in implementing the 12 recommendations of the UN Study to ensure children's protection from violence and what still needs to be done to give every girl and boy the opportunity of enjoying a childhood free from violence.

Across a number of settings, particularly in the home, on the streets, in schools, in the workplace, in detention centres and in institutions for the care of children, the understanding of how and why children are exposed to violence has deepened, and strategic actions are underway in a number of countries to translate this knowledge into effective protection.

This Survey has found that more governments have advanced national implementation of child protection measures and are rallying support with partners through public campaigns to overcome social norms and attitudes condoning violence against children.

- Every year, between 500 million and 1.5 billion children worldwide endure some form of violence

- Many of the greatest dangers are associated in early childhood, when violence can have an irreversible impact on children's development and well-being

- Many types of violence have a gender dimension, with girls particularly at risk of sexual violence and boys of more severe physical punishment and gang-related violence.

- Children with disabilities are more likely to experience physical, psychological or sexual violence than non-disabled peers

- 168 million children around the world are engaged in child Labour. Of these, 85 million children are exposed to hazardous work that poses a danger to their health and safety. According to the ILO, over 11 million girls around the world aged 5-17 years are involved in domestic work

- 100 million children live or work on the streets facing daily discrimination, violence and exploitation

Children and young people are actively joining these efforts, including through advocacy and peer education.

While achievements have been made since 2006, this survey highlights that progress has however been too slow, too uneven and too fragmented to bring violence against boys and girls to an end. Violence remains a pervasive phenomenon that blights the life of millions of children:

- Between 2007 and 2010 the numbers of child victims of trafficking rose from 20 to 27 per cent. Two in every three child victims are girls. Yet, the number of convictions for trafficking in persons remains low: 16 per cent of countries have not recorded a single conviction

- Three million girls are at risk of FGM/C each year

- More than one million children are held in police stations, pre-trial facilities,closed children's homes and other places of detention where they are at risk of humiliation, abuse and acts of torture

- 1 million children are coerced, kidnapped, sold and deceived into child prostitution or child pornography each year

- Children the world over are also exposed to sexual abuse and physical violence in schools.

- In 2010, 3.4 million children under 15 years around the world were living with HIV. The cumulative forms of vulnerability caused by the HIV and AIDS epidemic not only increases the risk of violence, but violence, including rape, also fuels the epidemic; especially among girls

Violence and its impact

Violence manifests itself in many forms: neglect, physical and emotional violence, sexual abuse, rape, trafficking, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, forced and child marriage, acid attacks, killings in the name of honour, forced begging, bonded labour and so many others. Such violence has serious and long-lasting consequences.

It compromises child development and increases the risk of poor health, poor school performance and long-term welfare dependency. It is often associated with poverty and deprivation, and acts as a brake on the potential of individuals and nations to develop.

The impact of violence also has detrimental effects on national economies. In the USA alone, the total lifetime costs of child maltreatment, including health care, child welfare, criminal justice, and the value of lost future productivity and earnings are thought to be US$124 billion every year. However, just as violence costs, so prevention pays. According to the European Union (EU), every euro invested in preventing violence produces a social return of €87.

Progress since the 2006 UN Study

1. **There is a growing visibility of violence against children on the policy agenda and in public debate,** and a gradual recognition of the human and social cost of this phenomenon, together with the high social return that investment in prevention can bring.

2. **Advocacy and mobilization are having a growing impact on adherence to international standards on children's protection from violence** particularly through the ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

3. **More countries have policies in place to prevent and address violence against children.** In 2006, 47 countries had some form of policy agenda on this issue – today, there are more than 80.

4. **More countries have an explicit and comprehensive legal ban on violence against children, at times in the Constitution itself.** In 2006, only 16 countries had legislation prohibiting violence in all settings. Today, 36 have a comprehensive legal ban on violence against children.

5. **There has been progress on the legal protection of children from sexual exploitation-** 90% of governments have legislation on sexual violence against children.

6. **Momentum is growing to ban violence as a form of sentencing.** More than 60 % of governments confirmed the prohibition of inhuman sentencing for children and youth, including life imprisonment and capital punishment, and many others have introduced a moratorium to this effect.

7. **An increasing number of countries are raising awareness of the risks to children associated with new technologies,** particularly the internet, social networks and mobile phones.

8. **There is a growing influence of regional organizations** and institutions that act as a bridge between international commitments and national realities, and play an increasingly important role in the cross fertilization of lessons and scaling up of positive experiences.

9. **Growing support for children's participation** with new international and regional platforms for children's engagement, growing involvement of children in research initiatives, and greater scrutiny of the gap between rhetoric and reality in this area.

10. **There is an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the risk factors and underlying influences that lead to violence** – social, cultural, political, economic and environmental – and how, in turn, this violence is experienced by children as they grow and develop.

Key Challenges and Concerns

1. **Insufficient investment in violence prevention,** despite the clear benefits for human and economic development, and the high social cost of inaction.

2. **Fragmented or non-existent national strategies.** Most governments have some sort of policy framework in place, but less than 20 per cent have a comprehensive agenda to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children in all settings.

3. **Uncoordinated policy interventions,** with weak communication and articulation across government departments and between central and local authorities.

4. **Unconsolidated and poorly-enforced legislation,** with gaps in children's legal protection, and between law and practice in many countries.

5. **A weak of focus on gender,** with up to 40 per cent of governments providing no information on laws, policies or advocacy on the gender dimension of violence.

6. **Insufficient attention given to the situation of particularly vulnerable children** who remain hidden and overlooked. This includes girls, children with disabilities, children growing up in poverty, children living and/or working on the street, indigenous children and those from minority groups.

7. **Inadequate attention to the cumulative impact of violence across children's life,** and insufficient investment in early childhood care and development and positive parenting programmes.

8. **Weak investment in child-sensitive mechanisms** for counselling, reporting and complaints on violence against children.

9. **Lack of recovery and reintegration services.** Where such services exist, they fail to address all forms of violence against children, and little information is available on their quality or impact.

10. **Scarce data and research,** with little information on the extent and impact of violence against children, the risk factors, underlying attitudes and the social norms that perpetuate the violence.

Overarching Recommendations

1. All governments should develop and promote **a national, child-centred, integrated, multidisciplinary and time-bound strategy** to address all forms of violence against children.

2. **Explicit legal bans on violence against children** should be enacted as a matter of urgency, accompanied by detailed measures for implementation and effective enforcement.

3. Policy initiatives and legal measures should be accompanied by greater **efforts to address the social acceptance of violence against children.**

4. There must be an ongoing **commitment to children's meaningful participation.**

5. All governments must work to ensure the **social inclusion of girls and boys** who are particularly vulnerable.

6. Governments must recognize the crucial importance of **collecting appropriately disaggregated data on violence against children,** and match this recognition with adequate policy making and support.

7. There must be a stronger focus on the **factors that influence levels of violence and the resilience of children,** their families and communities.

8. As the international community considers the future global development agenda beyond 2015, **violence against children,** including the most vulnerable and marginalized girls and boys, **must be made a priority and recognized as a cross-cutting concern.**

The human dignity of children and their right to protection from violence is not just common sense and basic morality; it is an international legal obligation, as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As discussions on the post-2015 global development agenda intensify and the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child draws closer; *ending violence against children should be at the heart of any agenda which fully recognizes the centrality of human security, both as a human rights imperative and as integral to development.*

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children is an independent global advocate in favour of the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children, mobilizing action and political support to achieve progress the world over. The mandate of the SRSG is anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments and framed by the UN Study on Violence against Children.