



**One Commitment to Accelerate Action to Achieve the SDGs:
End all forms of violence against children**

*Hosted by ChildFund Alliance, World Vision, SRSG to End Violence against Children
and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children*

Remarks by ChildFund Alliance Secretary General Meg Gardinier

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Each year, half of all children aged 2 to 17—an estimated 1 billion worldwide¹—suffer from physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect. As noted in our Joining Forces report, *A Second Revolution*, every five minutes a child dies because of violence. Violence against children is a grim and harsh reality that recognizes no borders. This is unconscionable. It is unacceptable. Moreover, it is preventable.

Ending this cycle of violence requires solutions that involve listening to children, incorporating their opinions and expectations in policies and actions, and elevating their voices so they can help lead efforts to prevent violence in their own communities.

Children have a great deal to contribute to this important mission, and the success of any policy or action aimed at them depends on our ability to engage and respond to their voices, opinions and expectations.

As we approach the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child², there is no better time than now to listen and engage children.

This is why ChildFund Alliance this year spoke with nearly 5,500 young people, aged 10 to 12 in 15 countries, to document their opinions and ideas. The results of our children’s survey, released earlier this month in our report, *Small Voices Big Dreams 2019*, provide significant and important insights on violence against children as seen by children. For example:

- ❖ More than 40% of child respondents said they do not feel sufficiently protected from violence in their country, with 80% citing physical violence, sexual abuse, and participation in war or organized crime as clear examples of violence faced by children.
- ❖ Children associated the internet and social media as the most unsafe places for children, followed by streets and public transport. They said that in violent situations, there is always a power imbalance between victim and aggressor, such as children’s inability to defend themselves.
- ❖ *Small Voices Big Dreams* reveals that boys and girls believe they are susceptible to different forms of danger. During group interviews, participants said boys are at a higher risk of being kidnapped, robbed, or being involved in organized crime or child labor, and girls are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse, rape, forced marriage, and domestic work.
- ❖ Half of the respondents reported that adults ignore them on matters most important to them. This is a missed opportunity given more than two-thirds (nearly 64%) believe they have valuable

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/vacs/onebillion-children.html>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

contributions to offer.

- ❖ By listening to what children have to say about violence, we learned an overwhelming 9 in 10 think adults can best end violence against children by loving them more and listening to them.

Partnerships are vital to helping accelerate actions to achieve the SDGs. It is why we became a member of Joining Forces, and it is why ChildFund is an active network of 11 members operating in more than 60 countries. Under Joining Forces, we are committed to working together to fulfil the broken promises of the UN CRC and making the case for a new era of commitment for children.

At ChildFund, we are leveraging the breadth and scope of our network to implement and strengthen comprehensive programs aimed at ending violence against children. As highlighted in our report, *Building Momentum* that we released during our High-level Political Forum event in July, we are already seeing strong success incorporating children's perspectives and suggestions into 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. Our Preventing Irregular Child Migration project leverages measures such as violence prevention training and reforms to government policies, but it also works with youth to identify options for them other than migration, while also empowering young people to drive improvements in their own communities.
- ❖ In South Korea, our child-assault prevention program, CAP, is teaching children greater awareness of their rights as well as self-defense techniques. CAP has reached nearly half a million children, 50,000 teachers and 65,000 parents through CAP workshops, and participants say the program has increased their awareness of their rights, their ability to respond in crisis situations, and their sense of empowerment.
- ❖ Our child-friendly accountability program that is now underway in seven countries is teaching children vital advocacy and leadership skills. Results include getting education officials to review policies on the safety of children in school, building a community center to address gaps in services for children, and increasing other young people's knowledge about violence against children and their rights. One mayor in Paraguay signed a commitment letter outlining specific actions the local government will take such as extending the reach of the local child welfare office and adding streetlights to improve safety.
- ❖ Our ChildFund Vietnam's Swipe Safe program engages tech-savvy youth volunteers to teach children to navigate the internet safely. Youth trainers can more directly relate to the experiences of other young people as well as better motivate them to adopt practices to keep safe online. The program is making inroads on cyber bullying, which is extremely important given that research shows one in three middle and high school aged students suffer from cyber-bullying in Vietnam (per the Minister of Information and Communications).

Together, we must do all we can to highlight solutions to end violence against children; discuss how to implement them for the greater good; and explore ways to accelerate them through increased investments, partnerships and actions.

ChildFund Alliance is committed to this important goal and we look forward to working with our 11 members and partner organizations to make continued progress as we approach the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.