

Side-event on

**Sustaining Investments in Childhood:
We Can Eliminate Violence against Children**

Co-hosted by the Government of Canada, ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International, UNICEF, World Vision, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – July 13th, 2015

Experience and research indicate that, even though there has been positive progress in some countries over the past five to ten years, investments in the protection of children from violence is still very limited in relation to the size of countries' budgets, and more importantly in relation to the scale of the problem and to the enormous costs resulting from it.

Violence against children hinders economic growth, weakens democratic governance, perpetuates poverty, and accentuates inequalities. Ensuring that investments are made in the protection of children will be fundamental to finish the job that began with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and address other emerging challenges reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

As Governments from all over the world gather in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the Third World Conference on Financing for Development, the Government of Canada, ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF, and World Vision hosted a side-event entitled 'Sustaining Investments in Childhood: We Can Eliminate Violence against Children.'

The event took place on July 13th 2015, as a way to facilitate a discussion about the role of an emerging global partnership and associated fund to end violence against children as one of several financing mechanisms supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular target 16.2 and other related targets on violence against children.

Ms Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, the Hon. Saada Mkuya Salum, Tanzanian Minister of Finance, and Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, gave the opening remarks.

Ms Brandt remarked on why putting an end to violence against children is so important and urgent. She highlighted the fact that violence against children cuts across boundaries of age, ethnicity, geography, income bracket, and religion; and that it happens in times of conflict, but also in times of peace –recalling the staggering statistics published in UNICEF's [*Hidden in Plain Sight*](#). Ms Brandt also brought attention to the immense personal costs of violence to individuals, but also to its economic costs, which can be as high as US\$7 trillion. "Gains made in survival during the first five years of life can be lost in later years to the effects of violence. But violence is not inevitable: we know how to reduce it," she said. Finally, she reaffirmed UNICEF's

support for a global partnership built from the ground up, to accelerate momentum and galvanize commitment around the protection of children.

Minister Salum referred to the Tanzanian experience in preventing and responding to violence against children by conducting a survey to determine the extent of the problem, raising national awareness about the issue, and then taking decisive action through a multi-stakeholder partnership and building child protection systems in different regions. “Government cannot do everything alone, but rather we have to strengthen the capacity of the community,” she emphasized. “Together we can achieve what we want to achieve.”

Ms Santos Pais argued that ending violence against children is crucial to achieve sustainable development, underscoring the importance of greater investment to address the issue and counter its enormous financial implications. “The proposed new partnership and fund will be an essential component of the global partnership for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals,” she said. “I strongly support these important efforts, and I am committed to joining forces to help bring the partnership about.”

A panel discussion moderated by **Ms Mary Healy**, Executive Director of the Human Dignity Foundation, ensued. Panelists included: Mr Nick Dyer, Director Policy and Programmes at the Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom; Ms Gugulethu Ndebele, CEO of Save the Children South Africa; Mr Shar Kurtishi, Senior Associate and public finance specialist at Maestral International; and Mr Gary Cohen, co-founder of Together for Girls.

Ms Ndebele referred to the importance of investing in a global movement to tackle the violence that children face. She recalled how violence against children is everyone’s issue, and how the time for individual siloed actions is over. “We all need to be part of the movement to end violence against children,” she emphasized.

Mr Kurtishi built the financial case for preventing violence against children. He stressed that costing exercises are possible, and that prevention and early interventions are good value for money. For example, the return on investments made in prevention is of over US\$10 for every dollar spent, while in the case of investments to keep children outside of the welfare system the return is of US\$4. “The costs of violence go beyond human capital, the figures in terms of lost productivity, lost income, and service provision are sobering” he said. “At the same time, returns on investments in protecting children include better wages, better school performance, less crime, and more savings.”

Mr Cohen recalled the work of Together for Girls, as an example of multi-stakeholder action on violence against children, and outlined the potential roles that the private sector can play in a global partnership to end violence against children, including as advocates and investors, but also as an example to others: “The private sector needs to establish complete intolerance for violence, within and beyond its workforce,” he said. Mr Cohen further highlighted the importance of evidence-based action and data.

Mr Dyer talked about the fundamental role that financing, particularly through the new fund, will play in tackling transnational threats to children, such as online sexual exploitation. He also

highlighted the contribution of the Government of the United Kingdom in establishing the said fund. “We need three things for progress,” he said. “First, data; second, leadership; and third, money.”

The Hon. Christian Paradis, Canadian Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, gave the closing remarks. Minister Paradis reaffirmed Canada’s commitment to the issue, and stressed the links between maternal, newborn and child health, and violence against children. He highlighted how the costs of inaction on violence against children are felt across sectors and have impacted progress on the MDGs. He announced that the Government of Canada will contribute \$2 million to UNICEF’s Children Not Soldiers campaign, and \$20 million to efforts to tackle child marriage. “Canada is keen to see the fund to end violence against children up and running, sooner rather than later,” he said. “Children are not only our future, they are our present; right here, right now. The time is now!”

The side-event was innovative, as child protection and public health actors and advocates from around the world showed their commitment to and support for the partnership; exciting, as it was an opportunity to catalyze joint work to end violence against children and to create a global movement for the protection of children; informative, as participants learned about the scope for country-level actions, and other aspects of the partnership and fund; eye-opening, as it was made evident that a failure to invest in the protection of children leads to substantial economic losses, while also decreasing the effectiveness of actions on child survival and development; and promising, as panelists explained the cost-effectiveness of a set of preventive interventions, while identifying the gaps in investments at the national and international levels.