

Remarks from Michael Rose, Chairman of the Board of Directors of ChildFund Alliance

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by ChildFund Alliance

Ensuring that violence against children is addressed in the post-2015 development agenda was the call from the Board Chair of ChildFund Alliance, Michael Rose, during an Ambassador's breakfast briefing attended by a number of missions to the UN.



I would like to begin my brief intervention by asking a very basic question: What do we know about violence against children?

I think we know a lot –as UN entities, as well as academics and many colleagues from civil society organizations have made available a wealth of knowledge on the causes and effects of violence against children; on its implications for health, education, and gender equality; and on effective ways to prevent it and respond to it.

We know, for example, that more than 95,000 children and adolescents under the age of 20 were homicide victims in 2012 alone. And that almost a billion children between the ages of 2 and 14 are regularly subjected to physical punishment by their caregivers.

We know that violence against children takes place in every country of the world –in developing and developed countries–, and that preventing and responding to all forms of violence and exploitation, in all contexts, is essential to ensure children's rights to survival, development and well-being. In short, addressing this issue must be a global priority.

We also know that while the costs of violence and exploitation are very personal to children, families, and communities, there are also enormous costs to the economy. In a recent study by ChildFund Alliance, the Overseas Development Institute reveals that the total costs of physical, psychological and sexual violence against children can be as high as US\$ 7 trillion. This is more than the Gross Domestic Products of Australia, Canada, India, and Mexico combined.

The study also estimates that the global costs of the hazardous forms of child labour can amount to more than US\$97 billion every year; and that the annual costs of children being recruited by armed forces and groups can go up to US\$144 million.

But spending on preventive and responsive actions in relation to violence against children remains very low. This needs to change, because we know that prevention actually pays.

The sheer size and scale of the problem make the case for the prevention of violence and exploitation against children to be included as a standalone target in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda; and that given its negative effects on health, education, gender equality, on economic growth, on the promotion of equality, on the creation of peaceful and non-violent societies, and on the rule of law and governance it will also be fundamental that the issue of violence against children is included across the different goals.

And we know that to ensure this happens, we need to change the perception that violence against children is less important than other issues, or that people simply do not care about it. To do this ChildFund Alliance and World Vision commissioned Ipsos Reid to ask a question on the need to prioritize the prevention of violence against children at the global level. This was done in the context of a wider survey commissioned by World Vision on awareness and attitudes towards violence against children.

The findings are unambiguous: there is indeed a political dividend to prioritizing violence against children. When asked if they thought that addressing violence and exploitation perpetrated against children should be a global priority, 93% of respondents in 28 countries said yes.

But it is not only adults who want this issue to be prioritized. Over that past two years, ChildFund Alliance has undertaken consultations with over 16,000 children in over 40 countries across the world. In these consultations, children have made their views very clear. They have made a resounding call to world leaders to finish the job they started 15 years ago with the Millennium Development Goals and for the prevention of violence to be included in the new agenda.

In our latest consultation, children in 82% of participating countries asked for the prevention of violence to be one of the new global priorities. They also want existing MDGs to go further, and aim for quality education and healthcare systems for all. This means violence-free schools, and adequate response mechanisms to violence against children.

Because we know what we know, we need to keep working to ensure that violence against children is addressed in their new global agenda.

Today, we call on Member States:

- To maintain and build upon the level of ambition of the proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and ensure that the prevention and elimination of violence against children continues to be a priority across the goals of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, as well as a standalone target with measurable indicators;
- To express your support for this during the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations in New York;
- To ensure that within Financing for Development the protection of children from violence and exploitation is prioritized along with survival and development; and
- To support a global partnership to protect children from all forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse, as part of the post-2015 development agenda.