

**FOR
EVERY
CHILD
IN
DANGER**

unicef 
UNITED KINGDOM

CHILDREN IN DANGER: ACT TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Right now, millions of children are in danger. All over the world, children are experiencing unspeakable violence. On city streets, in communities, schools and homes, children are attacked, exploited, abused and killed.

KEY STATISTICS:

- Every five minutes a child dies as a result of violence, with the vast majority of children killed outside warzones.ⁱ
- One in 10 girls under the age of 20 (about 1 in 10) have been subjected to forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some stage in their young lives.ⁱⁱ
- One in nine girls in developing countries are married by their 15th birthday.ⁱⁱⁱ
- More than 125 million women have been subjected to female genital mutilation/cutting, most in early childhood and adolescence.^{iv}
- One in six children are subjected to the most severe forms of physical punishment at home.^v
- The five countries with the worst child murder rates are: El Salvador, Guatemala, Venezuela, Haiti, and Lesotho. Nigeria has the largest number of young murder victims, with almost 13,000 deaths in 2012, followed by Brazil with approximately 11,000.^{vi}

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THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE

Across the world, children suffer **direct** physical and emotional violence that can be life-altering or even life-ending. They are damaged by the violence they **witness** in their homes and communities. And they pay the price when violence **erodes** the economies and societies on which their futures depend.

Violence has a lasting impact on the development of children's brains. For example, child victims' brains have similar patterns of activity to soldiers exposed to combat. Children who are exposed to violence find it harder to form normal relationships; studies of children who were exposed to domestic violence show that **a third of children become aggressive themselves**.

Violence also has economic consequences, including productivity losses as well as medical and health care, child welfare and criminal justice costs as a result of children's experiences of abuse. One study estimates that the **economic cost of child abuse in East Asia and the Pacific**

exceeds \$160 billion (in 2004 dollars) based on economic losses due to death, disease and health risk behaviours attributable to child abuse.^{vii}

A lack of global attention and commitment to tackling violence has made it impossible to deliver the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in full, despite unprecedented improvements in child wellbeing since the Goals were agreed. Child victims of violence are most likely to be left behind by global social and economic progress; furthermore, violence can have a lasting impact on health outcomes and education attainment.

If violence is not adequately addressed, we risk undermining future development progress in areas such as health, education and child survival.

In some countries, such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, and Venezuela, advances in child survival from 2000 until 2012 have been offset by adolescent deaths due to murder. In Brazil, 35,000 lives of children under 5 years old have been saved, 12,000 adolescent lives were lost to homicide.^{viii}

VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE

We know that rapid reductions in violence are possible, because they have been achieved in many countries. While levels of violence are still too high in the UK, violent crime – including against children – has seen dramatic declines over the past 10 years.^{ix} Similar progress has been seen in many other industrialised countries.^x

Meanwhile, across Latin America, extremely high levels of violence have prompted action at national and local levels, as a new generation of political and community leaders begin to get serious about the problem.^{xi}

These and many other examples show that governments and communities can take action, and that when they do, rapid gains for children are achievable.

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THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACT

Across the world, governments have agreed to protect children from violence, but they are yet to fully meet these obligations. Ending all forms of violence has not been seen as an overriding priority for international and national action. 2015 can be the year of change.

This year – in September – world leaders will agree new global goals that will guide the development of our planet for the next 15 years. These new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were created in 2000 and are due to expire this year. The next UK government will enter the negotiations at a critical time, just months away from the final adoption of the new framework at the UN.

They have an opportunity to take a decisive step towards ending violence against children by including a robust target to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children, signalling their

determination to make ending violence a priority for all countries. This will help deliver the action needed to prevent violence against children, to support survivors and ensure they get justice.



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THE UK'S ROLE

The UK has the opportunity to take a decisive step towards ending violence against children by:

- 1) **Leading the push to secure a global commitment to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children by 2030**

The UK should ensure the target proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development to “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children by 2030” (16.2) remains in its current form in the final post-2015 development framework. This target is fundamental to the future of the world’s children, and has the potential to ignite public interest in the new global development agenda.

- 2) **Working both at home and internationally to turn global commitments into actions that keep children safe**

The new development framework is universal, with both rich and poor countries needing to act to protect children from violence.

The Department for International Development (DFID) should develop a strategy to end violence against children and ensure that this strategy is central to DFID’s programming work. In addition, DFID should look to allocate a fair share of resources to support programmatic interventions to end violence against children.

At a domestic level, the UK must set out the policies and services that will be needed to end violence against children living in the UK and meet the universal post-2015 targets associated with this agenda.

- 3) **Ensuring that the epidemic of violence against children can no longer be ignored, by collecting the data and evidence needed to track progress and ensure accountability**

The UK must support the data revolution that is needed to measure progress against post-2015 targets to end violence against children, making sure that the international community accepts the need to collect new data and develop new violence indicators, rather than relying on existing inadequate data sources.



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HOW YOU CAN HELP PROTECT CHILDREN IN DANGER

- **Raise the issue of violence against children with your party leader.**
Ask them to commit to developing a strategy to tackle violence against children through the UK's international development programmes and work with other countries to ensure the target is implemented globally, so that children everywhere are kept safe from violence.
- **Show your support for children in danger** on Twitter, Facebook or your website using **#ENDviolence**.

For more information contact Ali Louis, Unicef UK Government Relations Adviser, on 020 7375 6071 or alil@unicef.org.uk

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