SDG TARGET 16.2: END ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Goal area 16 includes Target 16.2 – *End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture of children* – which is of critical importance to both the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and UNICEF’s mandate. As Governments are reporting SDG progress and plans, including for SDG 16.2, there is an opportunity to strengthen the connections between global reporting and national implementation.

Millions of children around the globe experience emotional, physical and sexual violence in homes, communities, schools, workplaces, detention centers, and institutions and online. Close to 300 million (3 in 4) children aged 2 to 4 experience violent discipline by their caregivers on a regular basis. Worldwide, around 15 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime. Every 7 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent is killed by an act of violence. Around half of students aged 13 to 15 worldwide – around 150 million – report having experienced peer-to-peer violence in and around school. The ambition in SDG target 16.2 to end violence against children is clearly relevant and necessary.

Targets to end violence against children are hollow however unless they are matched by a strong commitment to action. There is a legal and moral obligation to act, and a growing body of evidence from around the world that shows how societies can be made safer for children. With implementation of the right laws, systems, policies and investments, as well as adequate monitoring and evaluation and robust public education and campaigning, significant and sustained reductions in violence can be achieved.

### KEY ASKS

To achieve Target 16.2, progress must be driven from the national level. Governments must lead and be supported to implement multi-pronged evidence-based strategies to prevent and end violence.

UNICEF urges all governments to:

- Establish high-level oversight of a coordinated national policy agenda to end violence against children.
- Implement and reform laws to ensure the prohibition of all forms of violence against children in all settings.
- Strengthen national coordination efforts to implement multisectoral programmes to prevent and respond to violence against children, underpinned by a robust social services workforce.
- Promote norms that do not accept violence against women and children, by building capacity and promoting participation among communities, parents/caregivers and children to challenge harmful behaviors, and adopt positive norms.
- Mobilize and invest resources in scaling up proven, effective interventions, and those with promise of innovation.
- Monitor implementation of Target 16.2 through investment in the collection of quality, timely and disaggregated evidence on violence against children, and integration of data into national statistics systems and strategies.

### MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

UNICEF urges all Governments to prioritize the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of disaggregated data for key SDG indicators. This includes strengthening systems to collect administrative data on incidents of violence reported to authorities or service providers and collecting data on the prevalence and circumstances of violence through dedicated violence against children surveys or through the inclusion of modules to capture violence against children in other national household surveys.

#### 16.2.1: Proportion of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month.

UNICEF’s global databases include data for children aged 1-14 years. National statistical offices are required to expand this indicator to include children up to 17 years of age; methodological work is ongoing to assess whether modifications are needed to capture information relevant also for older adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17. Disaggregation by age and sex is required and disaggregation by household wealth, place of residence, and geographic location are also recommended.
There is currently no established best practice for measuring and producing statistics on the sensitive issue of sexual violence that has been agreed upon internationally. As a result, different approaches have been developed to gather data that has made comparisons between countries problematic. Underreporting on experiences of sexual violence generally and particularly among boys, is a challenge.

Specialized approaches to ensure safe, ethical and confidential disclosure, especially among children, need to be built into surveys, which must also include a referral process. For more information on how UNICEF supports data collection for child protection please see here.

INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Failing to prevent and effectively respond to violence against children can have lifelong impacts on health, well-being and attitudes towards family and relationships, which can perpetuate the cycle of violence. The consequences of violence against children may place an important economic burden on society – estimated at up to USD$ 7 trillion each year. However, in 2015, less than 0.6 per cent of Official Development Assistance (ODA) was allocated to ending violence against children. In terms of national budgets, the financial resources made available to support State’s obligations to protect children from violence are rarely perceptible.

UNICEF urges all Governments to establish or strengthen tracking of resource allocation for child protection as a necessary first step to assess the degree to which children’s right to protection from violence is realized. Depending on the country context, such mechanisms could include: a) a method of tracking the budget allocated to support implementation of national plans or strategies on children protection, b) a record/report of activities funded as part of the national plan in the past financial year; or c) a public expenditure tracking mechanism for investment in prevention and response to violence against children. Countries and donors are encouraged to use available tools to advance VAC (replace with Violence Against Children) results through the best use of ODA and public budgets.

INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

For national efforts to reach Target 16.2, they must tackle social acceptance of violence against children, including harmful attitudes and behaviors that exist among policy and law makers, government officials, front-line workers and communities; legislation which condones or fails to uphold violence; and lack of child-friendly reporting mechanisms.

Greater public awareness and stronger participation of children and adolescents, in particular in and around schools, and online, are key to the development of prevention strategies, better reporting and promoting positive social norms. As such, ending violence against children is an organizational priority for UNICEF, with sharpened focus and campaigning on child and adolescent participation to end violence in and around schools in 2018-2019.

To support child and youth awareness, action and meaningful participation on the topic of ending violence in and around schools, UNICEF’s partners -- the World’s Largest Lesson and Comics Uniting Nations -- have developed two tools to bring the principles of SDG 16 to children:

- A ‘Safe to Learn’ lesson plan for classes to learn about school based violence and discuss solutions.
- The ‘School Superhero Comic Contest’ asks children and youth to develop a superhero that can end violence in schools. The winner will develop a full comic book featuring their winning superhero to then raise awareness about the issue of violence in and around schools.

UNICEF urges all Governments to co-create powerful social change to end violence against children; and promote positive, protective social norms and practices. These efforts should be linked with legislative reform, for example, in the case of corporal punishment against children, to ensure a comprehensive prohibition in all settings – currently achieved in just 53 countries worldwide. Efforts should systematically include the participation and empowerment of children and adolescents, especially for identifying and addressing unequal power dynamics, wherever they may occur in the home, school or community — and within all contexts where violence can happen. All efforts must be underpinned by coordinated multi-partner action, including with the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and other partners, and draw on the common package of evidence-based strategies — INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children, which provides the first globally agreed set of actions to meet SDG targets for effective prevention of and response to violence against children.