This brochure offers a snapshot of three forms of violence that many children and adolescents experience in the Middle East and North Africa region: physical force or verbal intimidation used as disciplinary methods at home; bullying, corporal punishment and (in times of conflict) attacks while at school; and violent deaths in adolescence.

It concludes with specific national actions and strategies that UNICEF and partners in the Middle East and North Africa have embraced to prevent and respond to violence against children.

Many countries in the Middle East and North Africa continue to lack comparable data on some forms of violence, which hinders their ability to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Notably, these data gaps include violence against adolescent girls and women, as covered by SDG 5, and sexual violence in childhood, under SDG 16.
GOAL 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age

5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

GOAL 16

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age

16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause

16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

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

16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18 to 29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18
KEY FACTS

In the Middle East and North Africa, around 106 MILLION (more than 8 in 10) children aged 2 to 14 are regularly subjected to violent discipline at home; 87 MILLION (around 7 in 10) are punished by physical means.

Just 7% of the world’s adolescents live in the Middle East and North Africa, but more than 70% of adolescents who died in 2015 due to collective violence were living in the region.

IRAQ and the SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC are among the top five most deadly places in the world for adolescent boys and girls.

AROUND 127 MILLION children and adolescents live in countries that have not fully prohibited corporal punishment at home, and 18 MILLION school-age children and adolescents do not have full legal protection from this form of violence while at school.

Among students aged 13 to 15, around 12 MILLION (close to half) experience bullying while at school.
Violent discipline at home is the most common form of violence experienced by children in the Middle East and North Africa. Some of the countries in this region such as Egypt and Tunisia have levels of violent discipline that are among the highest in the world. Although 7 in 10 children experience physical punishment in the home in the Middle East and North Africa, only 1 in 4 caregivers think it is a necessary form of discipline.

In the Middle East and North Africa, 85% of children aged 2 to 14 years experience violent discipline at home. Percentage of children aged 2 to 14 years who experienced any violent discipline in the past month, by type.
Three quarters of children in the region experience shouting, yelling or screaming as a form of discipline

Percentage of children aged 2 to 14 years who experienced violent discipline in the past month, by type

NOTE: These estimates are based on a subset of nine countries covering 62 per cent of the regional population of children aged 2 to 14 years.

Countries where corporal punishment at home is...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not prohibited</th>
<th>Fully prohibited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria; Bahrain; Djibouti; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Iraq; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Libya; Morocco; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Sudan; Syrian Arab Republic; United Arab Emirates; Yemen</td>
<td>Egypt; Israel; State of Palestine; Tunisia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only four countries in the region (Egypt, Israel, State of Palestine and Tunisia) have adopted legislation that fully prohibits the use of corporal punishment against children at home, meaning that of the 172 million children and adolescents under age 18 in the region, there are around 127 million without full legal protection.
Children and adolescents need a safe, nurturing and inclusive learning environment in which to grow, thrive and fulfill their potential. However, for many students the presence, or threat, of violence at school compromises their ability to fully benefit from educational opportunities. Available data suggest that bullying by schoolmates is by far the most common form of violence in schools; in 14 of the 17 countries with available data on bullying, more than 1 in 4 adolescents aged 13 to 15 reported being bullied at school at least once in the past couple of months. School violence comes in other forms too. In four countries in the region, corporal punishment at school is not yet fully prohibited, and in times of conflict, civil unrest or emergencies, schools can also become vulnerable to attacks.

Close to half of adolescents aged 13 to 15 in the region are bullied, with levels above 50 per cent in Egypt, the State of Palestine and Algeria.

Percentage of adolescents aged 13 to 15 years who reported being bullied at school at least once in the past couple of months

NOTES: Bullying occurs when a student or group of students say or do bad, nasty or unpleasant things to another student; when a student is teased repeatedly in an unpleasant way; or when he or she is deliberately left out of things. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or when teasing is done in a friendly and playful or fun way. Data for the State of Palestine are not nationally representative. The regional estimate is based on a subset of 17 countries covering 65 per cent of the regional population of adolescents aged 13 to 15 years.
ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS DURING CONFLICT

In situations of conflict and insecurity, schools can be vulnerable to both targeted and indiscriminate attacks and are sometimes used for military purposes or are affected by other disruptions of education. Such volatile situations interfere with normal school functions – they can hinder staff from performing their duties, curtail students’ attendance, force schools to shut down, and even result in the killing and maiming of schoolchildren.

The United Nations Security Council has explicitly condemned attacks on schools as a grave child rights violation. Since 2012, the Secretary-General’s Report on Children and Armed Conflict identifies and lists the armed forces and groups that have attacked schools or school personnel. According to the 2017 Report on Children and Armed Conflict, there were around 150 verified attacks or threats of attacks on schools during 2016 within the region, with an additional 77 documented attacks or threats of attacks on schools that remained unverified. These incidents were documented in six of the seven situations in the Middle East and North Africa on the Security Council’s children and armed conflict agenda – Iraq, Israel/the State of Palestine, Lebanon, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries where corporal punishment at school is…</th>
<th>Fully prohibited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not prohibited</td>
<td>Algeria; Bahrain; Djibouti; Egypt; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Israel; Jordan; Kuwait; Libya; Oman; Saudi Arabia; State of Palestine; Sudan; Syrian Arab Republic; Tunisia; United Arab Emirates; Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq; Lebanon; Morocco; Qatar</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
In 2015, an estimated 83,000 adolescents aged 10 to 19 died in the Middle East and North Africa. Collective violence (injuries due to police or military intervention and those resulting from war or civil conflict) was the second most common cause of death. Although counting the number of conflict-related deaths accurately remains a challenge, available estimates suggest that collective violence kills more adolescents in the Middle East and North Africa than in all other regions combined. Prior to 2011, global mortality rates from collective violence among adolescents remained relatively stable but have since increased, driven largely by crises concentrated in the region.

The mortality rate from collective violence in the Middle East and North Africa in 2015 was 10 times higher than the global average.

Percentage distribution of deaths among adolescents aged 10 to 19 years, by cause, in 2015

- Non-communicable diseases: 33%
- Collective violence: 27%
- Unintentional injuries: 23%
- Communicable diseases, maternal, neonatal and nutritional conditions: 11%
- Homicides: 3%
- Self-harm: 3%

Slightly more than 1 in 4 adolescent deaths in 2015 in the region were the result of collective violence.

Number of deaths and mortality rate (deaths per 100,000) due to collective violence among adolescents aged 10 to 19 years, global and in the Middle East and North Africa, by sex, in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of deaths</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: Collective violence refers to injuries to civilians and military personnel caused by war and civil insurrection, or injuries inflicted by the police, other law-enforcement agents and on-duty military personnel in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest lawbreakers, suppressing disturbances, maintaining order and other legal action. Some figures in this table have been rounded.
Mortality rate (deaths per 100,000) due to collective violence among boys aged 10 to 19 years, in 2015

The Syrian Arab Republic has by far the highest mortality rate from collective violence in the region among adolescents of both sexes.

The regional mortality rate from collective violence has increased dramatically since 2011

Mortality rate (deaths per 100,000) due to collective violence among adolescents aged 10 to 19 years, global and in the Middle East and North Africa, 2000 to 2015

NOTES: National death registration data were unavailable or unusable due to quality issues for Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen; therefore, the estimates are uncertain and should be interpreted with caution.
PROTECTING EVERY CHILD AND ADOLESCENT FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION

Every child and adolescent in the Middle East and North Africa has the right to be protected from violence, whether inflicted on them by parents, teachers, friends, intimate partners or strangers and whether occurring in times of peace or crisis. All forms of violence, regardless of the nature or severity of the act, are harmful and intolerable. Beyond the immediate hurt and pain it causes, violence undermines children’s and adolescents’ sense of self-worth and hinders their future development. Witnessing violence can also cause distress and harm. Children and adolescents who grow up in a violent household or community tend to internalize that behaviour as a way to resolve disputes, sometimes repeating the pattern of violence and abuse against their own partners and children.

Social norms and cultural practices that ignore or condone harmful actions undermine the safety and well-being of children and adolescents in every country in the region. Violence is often rationalized as necessary or inevitable. Humanitarian crises and conflicts in the region impact children and adolescents and can heighten their vulnerability to violence. In addition to conflict-specific victimization, certain forms of violence – such as intimate partner violence and violent discipline – can become more pronounced during times of conflict and crisis. This is most likely the result of heightened stress, the breakdown of social structures, and weakened judicial and law enforcement systems.

UNICEF prioritizes efforts to end violence against children across all its work in the Middle East and North Africa. It supports governments’ efforts to improve prevention and response services for children at risk and those affected by violence, and in developing policies and legislation that protect children. UNICEF helps communities, parents and children to prevent violence in all settings through awareness-raising activities, communication for development interventions to generate changes in social norms, and practical programmes such as parenting courses on positive discipline.

It is possible to prevent and end violence against children and adolescents with sustained political and financial commitment across all relevant sectors (social services, education, health, justice and finance) and by working in partnership with civil society, the private sector and the international community.

UNICEF calls on governments in the region to take urgent action in support of this agenda to end violence against children through the development of comprehensive, multi-sectoral and multi-year national plans of action with clear milestones and targets.

The INSPIRE package, a comprehensive tool developed and promoted under the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, provides governments with concrete guidance to accelerate action to end violence against children and reach results at scale. In line with the INSPIRE strategies, UNICEF is committed to accelerating work in the region with governments and other partners, focusing on the following priorities for action:

• **Implement and enforce laws and policies.** Harness and leverage political will and partnerships to ensure well-coordinated national action plans to end violence against children and adolescents – incorporating education, social welfare, justice and health systems, and engaging children, adolescents and the communities they live in.

• **Address social norms and practices.** Change behaviours of adults, including parents and other caregivers, and address factors that contribute to violence against children, such as economic and social inequities, social and cultural norms that condone violence, inadequate policies and legislation, insufficient services for victims, and limited investments in effective systems to prevent and respond to violence.

• **Strengthen the capabilities of the social services workforce.** Reinforce or build the capacities of social service systems to ensure that social workers have training on the provision of counselling, therapeutic services and referrals for children who have experienced violence.

• **Invest in education and life skills.** Provide opportunities to participate in Life Skills and Citizenship Education, an initiative to reduce violence and promote psychosocial well-being in and out of schools so that children, parents, teachers, and community members can recognize violence in all its forms and feel confident to speak out and report violence safely.

• **Collect and strengthen the use of disaggregated data.** Increase knowledge of, and access to, mechanisms that generate reliable and robust evidence on violence against children and adolescents to inform advocacy, policy and programming. Generate more high-quality research and derivative knowledge products, with a specific focus on the most disadvantaged children in the region.
## UNICEF’s Plans for Key Results in the Middle East and North Africa by 2021

### Accelerate Action to Bring Programme Results to Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Countries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT LEAST 9 COUNTRIES will have national gender-responsive plans and programmes to strengthen the social service workforce so it is better trained and equipped to respond to children and adolescents at risk or survivors of violence.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT LEAST 8 COUNTRIES will have evidence-based positive parenting programmes in place at the national level, aimed at preventing and reducing violence in the home.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 COUNTRIES will have a mainstreamed national programme for preventing violence and promoting psychosocial well-being in line with the UNICEF Life Skills and Citizenship Education Framework.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT LEAST 4 COUNTRIES will implement national evidence-based programmes that address and measure changes in practices and social norms related to violence against children and adolescents.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY CONFLICT AND CIVIL UNREST the military, police and other law-enforcement agents will be trained to address the specific needs of boys and girls in accordance with national and international laws and standards concerning the protection of children and adolescents.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Harness Resources and Partnerships for Children:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Countries</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT LEAST 4 COUNTRIES have joined the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children or are championing the end violence agenda in the region through other platforms at national level.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT LEAST 4 COUNTRIES will have in place costed and budgeted multisectoral gender-responsive national plans to address violence against children and adolescents in line with the global INSPIRE package.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS, NETWORKS AND PLATFORMS will be mobilized and leveraged to increase support to the countries most affected by violence in the region.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conduct Research, Generate Strategic Information and Promote Knowledge Management:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Countries</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT LEAST 10 COUNTRIES will have increased knowledge, capacities and/or access to mechanisms that can generate reliable evidence on violence against children and adolescents to inform advocacy, policy and programming at the national level.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCREASED EVIDENCE ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN will be generated to inform national advocacy and programming.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This data brief was prepared by the Data and Analytics Section of UNICEF with inputs from the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa.


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TECHNICAL NOTES:
The data presented in this brochure are from the most recently available sources identified for each country and reflect the set of countries outlined by the mandate of the UNICEF Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa. For this reason, regional estimates presented here may differ from those included in other UNICEF publications that apply a slightly different classification.

Collecting reliable data on violence against children is a complex undertaking that raises considerable methodological challenges and ethical issues. When interpreting these data, the recommended approach is to exercise caution and assume that figures underestimate the actual number of children and adolescents affected.

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DATA SOURCES:

Information on the status of corporal punishment legislation in countries was obtained from UNICEF country offices.