WHAT IS AT STAKE?

- South Africa’s children are the future of the country, and national investments to ensure their health and education are prioritized. Yet the high rates of violence that many children experience are causing lasting physical, mental and emotional harm and jeopardizing their ability to become social, responsible and productive members of society.

- Violence is a daily reality for many children and includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse. In the most severe cases it can result in early death. Many children experience repeated and multiple forms of violence, most often by people they are close to and in places where they should feel safe - at home, in their communities and in schools. In many disadvantaged, and especially urban communities, children lack opportunities and safe spaces to learn, play and just be kids.

- Exposure to violence during childhood impacts on children’s health, well-being and academic performance. It also contributes to wider acceptance and normalization of violence in families and communities, thus reinforcing intergenerational cycles of poverty, inequality and violence.

- Violence against children also has financial implications for the country. It contributes to loss of productivity, disability and decreased quality of life, while at the same time incurring high costs for law enforcement and health systems, all of which impact on national economic growth. In 2015, the estimated cost of violence to the South African economy was over 238 billion Rand.

- Unless South Africa curbs the current levels of violence against children and ensures their protection, it will be difficult to harness the full development potential of its younger generations.
HOW DOES UNICEF HELP?

With over 70 years of experience working for children’s rights and well-being, UNICEF brings together evidence from across the globe to advise governments and partners on how best to implement proven strategies to end violence against children. By combining technical expertise on health, education, and social protection, UNICEF South Africa helps to collect evidence, promote quality dialogue, identify solutions, and ensure national strategies to prevent and respond to violence build on what is already working. By considering all aspects of the child’s life, UNICEF helps to design holistic programmes that aim to integrate action across government departments, development partners and civil society. While deliberately focusing on the most vulnerable and deprived communities in the country, UNICEF provides the South African Government with valuable technical advice to strengthen legislative frameworks and systems and ensure a responsive and protective approach for all children at risk of violence.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

UNICEF is working with Government and partners to strategically address violence from the grass roots level in communities all the way up to national policy and systems levels. A key strategy is to build on the well-established social assistance system and strengthen it further by linking cash (child support, foster care and dependency grants) with better-tailed and more responsive care and protection services. At the same time, it is essential to work closely with communities to strengthen social cohesion and build their capacity for self-sufficiency and resilience. By leveraging religion, music, and sport to promote greater connectedness and circles of care in communities, caring and nurturing environments for children can be reinforced. In view of these objectives, UNICEF is providing support towards a range of strategies across the spectrum of prevention, early intervention and protection.

Prevention:

Strategies to prevent violence aim to shift attitudes and norms in communities, and empower parents, family members, caregivers and educators to foster safe and supportive environments wherever children live, learn and play. This includes scaling up evidence-based programmes to support positive parenting and encourage the role of men in caregiving; ensuring safe and nurturing learning environments in early childhood development centres and schools; and providing safe spaces in communities for play and recreation of children. Equally important is to empower children and adolescents themselves through school and community-based programmes that build resilience, strengthen life skills and help them to safeguard their sexual and reproductive health. Promoting youth participation and enabling children to speak out against violence and other issues that concern them, helps them to act as agents of change in their communities and break intergenerational cycles of violence.

Early Intervention:

Identification of children at risk is essential to ensure early intervention and referral to appropriate care. This requires an integrated case management approach to assess children holistically, ensure the most at risk children are targeted and prioritized, and that services are appropriately tailored to their vulnerabilities. The digitized Child Status Index (CSI) provides a framework for this approach and includes a simple dashboard to track and analyse real-time data on food and nutrition; shelter and care; protection from violence; health and HIV; psychosocial support; and education and skills training. By strengthening communication and accelerating cross referral pathways between community care workers, teachers, health workers and justice, children who experience violence or abuse can be quickly identified and cared for. Ensuring child and youth friendly services is also important, especially for adolescents, who may otherwise be reluctant to seek assistance or stay in care for issues that can relate to violence, such as alcohol and substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and HIV. For teenage mothers, for example, the support of youth friendly health and community care workers helps them to take care of themselves and their babies, and ensure a nurturing and safe environment in the home.

Protection:

For children who experience or witness violence, ensuring rapid access to child- and survivor-centered justice, as well as child friendly care and support services is essential. Violence against children is largely under-reported in South Africa, and there is a need to strengthen the quality of the system, including Sexual Offences Courts, to ensure better tracking of cases and increased conviction rates. This also requires improving referral and collaboration between early intervention programmes, including child and youth care workers, and statutory child protection services.
Violence Against Children: Focus areas and critical actions

At home and in communities:

- Ensure all children are registered at birth and all eligible households access the child support grant.
- Promote an integrated case management approach that uses the digitized Child Status Index (CSI) to identify and prioritize the most at-risk children, and involves a holistic assessment of the child; development of a tailored action plan; support and referrals across education, health and child protection services to implement the plan; and a process of review and adaptation where necessary to ensure the plan continues to address the child’s needs.
- Increase access to family strengthening services for vulnerable households through Isibindi home visits that provide tailored support to families and enhance child protection; and positive parenting programmes such as Sinovuyo which focuses on ensuring nurturing care for adolescents and MenCare which promotes the role of men in caregiving.
- Expand the number of safe spaces in disadvantaged communities through Safe Parks - safe spaces for children to play, do homework, learn skills and receive a meal - by establishing social compacts that combine the efforts and resources of Government, civil society, private sector and the community.
- Strengthen child - and survivor - centred justice, including increasing access to and quality of sexual offences courts for child victims and witnesses of violence.

In early childhood development (ECD) centres and schools:

- Implement national norms and standards for ECD programmes that prohibit violence against, and punishment of babies and young children by caregivers and educators.
- Ensure safety in schools through implementation of the School Safety Framework, a diagnostic tool for schools which provides standard guidelines that help schools to develop, implement and monitor school safety plans and promote positive discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment in schools.
- Build resilience and life skills of children and adolescents by strengthening the life skills curriculum, providing psychosocial support, and building partnerships with parents, learners and community stakeholders, as part of the implementation of the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Programme (CSTL), as well as promoting Sport for Development Programmes and Girls Education and Boys Education Movement (GEM/BEM) clubs.
- Engage adolescents and young people to speak out and change attitudes and social norms related to violence and gender equality through iSchool Press Teams and Young Reporters Network as well as through U-report, a mobile platform to amplify the voice of young people on issues that concern them.
HOW CAN YOU HELP?

No violence against children is justifiable and nearly all violence is preventable. With sufficient commitment and investment, creative approaches to prevention can make a difference. The South African National Development Plan – Vision 2030, and Sustainable Development Goals put forth clear targets to reduce risk and prevent violence against children. Yet these can only be achieved through collective effort by all sectors of society.

Supporting UNICEF and Government to prevent and respond to violence in South Africa represents a tremendous opportunity to help the country’s most vulnerable children to survive, thrive and reach their full potential. Through new and unique partnerships with Government, the private sector, bilateral donors and civil society, UNICEF builds on the knowledge, expertise and innovation of each to ensure the most effective and efficient use of combined resources. By uniting with UNICEF, you gain a credible and respected partner who can support a comprehensive and results focused corporate social investment (CSI) strategy that makes a lasting difference in the lives of children.

CONTACT US

To explore concrete and tailored partnership opportunities, please contact:

- **Sandra Bisin**
  Chief, Communications and Partnerships
  Email: sbisin@unicef.org

- **Carine Munting**
  Partnerships Manager
  Email: cmunting@unicef.org

- **Mayke Huijbregts**
  Chief, Social Policy and Child Protection
  Email: mhuijbregts@unicef.org