THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO LIVE

FREE FROM VIOLENCE

SEPTEMBER 2018

PLAN INTERNATIONAL POSITION STATEMENT: THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE

Every child and young person has the right to live a life free from any form of violence, and deserves to grow up in a safe, peaceful, nurturing and enabling environment where they can fully exercise their rights.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

➤ Plan International strongly condemns all forms of violence against children. We consider global levels of violence against children to be absolutely unacceptable. As many as three-quarters of all children have experienced violence in the past year, underlining how normalised the problem has become. Under international human rights law all children and young people have the right to live free from the fear or threat of violence. Plan International urges everyone to recognise the enormity and gravity of violence against children, and to prioritise ending this human rights abuse urgently.

➤ Plan International recognises that children experience different forms of violence at different stages of their development. We know that girls face more violence in their lives, and that girls and boys experience different forms of violence. Responses to violence against children must be inclusive, gender transformative and age-sensitive, to ensure that all children's experiences of violence are understood, responded to, and ultimately prevented.

➤ Plan International knows that ending violence against children, and particularly against girls, is complex. Nevertheless we believe that this is an achievable global goal – and is a strong legal, rights and development imperative. Ending violence against children requires action at international, national and community levels, increased financial and political commitment, and strengthened partnerships.

➤ We recognise that violence against children can be hidden and involve complex factors – both contribute to it going under-reported. We call on all actors to ensure that prevention and response mechanisms take into account the needs and concerns of victims. These must include child-friendly, gender and age-sensitive reporting mechanisms; strong child protection mechanisms to recognise the signs of violence early; and response mechanisms that prioritise the needs of the child.

GIRLS AND VIOLENCE

➤ Plan International recognises that there are multiple forms of violence, and that there is a need to understand the distinction between gender-based violence, sexual violence and violence against girls. We recognise that these types of violence intersect and overlap. Girls are at an increased risk of violence as they reach adolescence and their gender roles become more defined.

➤ The violence that boys face must not be ignored. As a children's rights organisation, Plan International is committed to protecting the rights of all children. However, the evidence clearly shows that girls and young women face more violence – much of it hidden or normalised – throughout their childhood, adolescence and early adult years than boys and young men. Gaps in legal protections for girls who are at risk, or who are survivors, of violence must be addressed. Pervasive gender norms that condone the use of violence to control girls' sexuality must be overturned.

➤ For these reasons, Plan International prioritises ending gender-based violence, and violence against girls. We will dedicate time, resources and focus in order to achieve this. We urge all actors to take concerted action to increase global understanding of and response to violence against girls. We call for increased political will and financial resources to end this deplorable abuse of girls' rights.

➤ Plan International emphasises that girls must never be held responsible for the violence that happens to them. Violence is the sole responsibility of the perpetrator, who must be held accountable according to national or international legislation. Fear or threat of violence must not restrict girls from living free

and full lives, and from realising their full potential.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK AND MECHANISMS

➢ Plan International believes that States must ratify and fully implement all conventions or agreements that relate to violence against children and gender-based violence. This includes all action points listed in obligations in those documents, as well as treaty body General Comments and treaty body Recommendations. This requires governments to align all national and local laws and policies accordingly.

➢ We know from our own research that international treaties fail to adequately protect girls from violence. This is both because these treaties are gender blind and because of reservations that limit their applicability. We respect cultural traditions, religious beliefs and social norms where these do not undermine human rights. However, countries should not use these to make reservations to international conventions and agreements in relation to violence against children and gender-based violence. States, along with other actors, must work to close the gaps in international law that allow violence against girls to continue.

➢ We believe it is important to collect data disaggregated by age, sex, ethnicity, religion, disability, location, wealth, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and migratory status (with due protections for privacy and human rights). Data collection for adolescents must include the age range 10 to 14 years in order to make younger adolescent girls and their needs visible and to track progress against commitments, policies and programmes on girls and young women.

➢ Plan International also supports the call in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for States to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against girls and women.

➢ Plan International strongly condemns those who seek to undermine human rights standards, and in doing so weaken the protection of children against violence. We call on all governments to respect the human rights standards currently in place, to use these as a starting point for negotiations for progress on human rights issues, and to fight efforts to undermine or weaken these standards.

➢ Plan International calls on all governments to be transparent and accountable in implementing their commitments on the rights of children to live free from violence. All girls, boys, women and men should be able to access information about national legislation and policy, and corresponding budgets and implementation plans.

➢ Plan International recognises the critical roles played by civil society, international organisations, campaigners and activists. This includes ensuring accountability, collecting data, galvanising political will, increasing pressure and securing adequate resources to end violence against children.

➢ Gender dynamics drive violence against children, particularly girls. We call upon international actors, particularly those with a child protection mandate, to recognise and respond to these dynamics, and to increase efforts to tackle the high levels and differing forms of violence against girls. We commit to working in partnership with others to ensure transparency, accountability, mutual learning and strong results.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT INCREASED RISK OF VIOLENCE

➢ Plan International believes that approaches to ending violence against children must be holistic. They must ensure that systems are in place to protect every child from violence. However, we recognise that certain groups of children are more vulnerable to violence. Typically they are girls, children with disabilities, those with no legal identity or who speak out, those who come from ethno-linguistic minorities, those living in extreme poverty or affected by crisis, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or questioning (LGBTIQ). Early childhood and adolescence are both stages at which children are more vulnerable to violence. We must prioritise those who are the most vulnerable and excluded, directing increased attention, resources and safeguarding to them, to ensure that no one is left behind.

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

➢ Plan International believes that it is the responsibility of national governments, as the primary duty bearer, to uphold the rights of their citizens. But without comprehensive child protection systems, it is impossible to ensure the safety of all children. National governments must therefore ensure that effective, age-sensitive,

gender transformative child protection mechanisms are in place. Others, such as civil society, UN agencies and the private sector should support national child protection mechanisms where appropriate. Systems must be fully funded and able to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

SOCIAL NORMS AND VIOLENCE

➢ Plan International believes that the acceptance of violence in itself is a norm that must be challenged as a matter of urgency. It is crucial to challenge gender inequality and social norms that justify violence against children, adolescents and young people, and in particular against girls and young women, placing blame, shame and stigma on victims. Traditional, cultural or religious grounds should not be used to justify these norms. Violence is never acceptable, in any circumstance, and must at all times be considered a gross human rights violation. Violence is not a private matter – it must be uncovered in order for it to be challenged.

➢ Plan International believes that we must all promote and strengthen norms and values that support non-violent, respectful, nurturing, positive, gender equitable relationships for all children and adolescents, including the most vulnerable and excluded.

➢ To change attitudes, norms and behaviour, it is crucial to promote inter-generational dialogue on violence against children. Community dialogue can challenge negative attitudes around punishment and dominance, and views that children are the property of power holders rather than rights holders themselves. Dialogue should include children, adolescents, young people, parents, caregivers, traditional and religious leaders, health workers and teachers, and should be inclusive and accessible to all.

➢ Plan International opposes patriarchal systems that reinforce gender inequality and seek to control the lives and sexuality of girls and women through socially defined gender norms. These give lower status to girls and women and are used to justify violence against them. We recognise that girls and women have the right to bodily autonomy and to control their own sexuality. To end gender-based violence, we believe that these prevailing systems of power must be challenged and changed.

➢ We believe that creating positive change in behaviours requires an approach that engages boys and men as well as girls and women. Involving boys and men as stakeholders, rights holders and as agents of change is key to

challenging dominant norms of masculinity, and to developing equal, safe, respectful and responsible, non-violent relationships.

➢ Plan International will also work with others to challenge discriminatory attitudes, norms and behaviours which drive stigma, discrimination and violence towards the most vulnerable and excluded children, particularly children, adolescents and youth who identify as LGBTIQ.

VIOLENCE AT HOME AND WITHIN FAMILIES

➢ Plan International considers the home to be the most important place in a child's upbringing – a space where they should feel cared for, nurtured and supported. With loving mothers, fathers or legal guardians, children can grow, navigate adolescence and transition into adulthood within safe bounds and with positive role models. No child, adolescent or young person should be subject to violence of any description in the home – including neglect, emotional, psychological, physical or sexual violence – or witness violence against others.

➢ Plan International strongly condemns intimate partner violence, and recognises that it disproportionally affects girls and women. Protective measures for victims of violence, including victims of incest, sexual violence and rape, should include effective mechanisms to ensure care, support and protection, including the provision of safe houses, access to healthcare (including emergency contraception), psychosocial support, access to safe abortion services and effective means to seek justice and redress. Support services should respond to violence against girls in a way that does not reinforce harmful attitudes.

➢ Plan International condemns the practice of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and sees it as a form of violence against girls. We call for the prohibition of the practice under national and customary law, and for the full and effective enforcement of these laws. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) General Comment No. 4, Plan International believes that the minimum age for marriage should be 18 and that this should apply equally to both men and women, regardless of any provisions concerning parental or judicial consent.

➢ We condemn violent punishment within the home, and believe that corporal punishment is never an acceptable form of discipline. Positive parenting support and advice should include information and advice to reduce harsh

parenting practices and create positive parent–child relationships.

VIOLENCE IN AND AROUND SCHOOLS

➢ Plan International asserts that every child has the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, free from the fear or threat of violence. This is an integral part of a quality education. Yet for many children, particularly girls, school is a place of threat and fear. Addressing attitudes and behaviours that support or legitimise violence at national, local, school and community levels, is a key intervention to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence.

➢ Plan International believes that it is unacceptable that any child should be a victim of violence either in school, or on the journey to and from school. This includes sexual violence or harassment, bullying and intimidation, and corporal punishment. Vulnerable and excluded children, such as children with disabilities, ethno-linguistic minorities, or children who identify as LGBTIQ, are particularly exposed to violence in and around school, either perpetrated by peers or by adults. This constitutes a serious rights violation, particularly when committed by those in positions of care or authority, and impacts on children's ability to enter, transition and complete school. Eliminating this violence should be a priority for all actors.

➢ Plan International recognises that quality education has a protective function, especially for girls and young women in humanitarian settings. We believe that a quality education is comprehensive, empowering, promotes respect for the dignity and value of all people, and provides a broad range of learning processes that include wider life skills and comprehensive sexuality education. Quality education should provide children and young people with the necessary skills and knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to lead positive and productive lives and to be responsible, active citizens promoting peace and non-violence.

➢ Plan International believes that all children, adolescents and young people – without discrimination – are entitled to comprehensive sexuality education to gain knowledge, explore values and attitudes, and develop the skills they need to make conscious, healthy and respectful choices about relationships and sexuality. Parents and educators should be supported to embrace children's learning about their bodies, relationships and sexuality from early childhood to allow children to explore, clarify and form lifelong healthy attitudes and practices, free from coercion, violence and discrimination.

VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SPACES

➢ Plan International believes it is vital that the communities in which children, adolescents and youth grow up are safe environments that do not pose a threat to their safety and development. No child, adolescent or youth should face violence, harassment and abuse in the street, in public spaces, on transportation, or on their journey to or from school. Fear and threats limit adolescents' and young people's capacity to live a free and full life. Communities have a collective responsibility to nurture safe, supportive environments that do not tolerate violence, and to prevent and respond to violence that takes place.

➢ Plan International urges national and municipal governments to undertake gender reviews of laws, policies and guidelines to ensure that urban planning is gender responsive. Girls are affected disproportionally by violence in the community, and responses must therefore take the gender and age dynamics of such violence into account. Sufficient budget must be allocated at national and local levels to ensure full implementation.

➢ Plan International strongly condemns all harmful practices, including female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). We regard FGM/C to be a community-sanctioned form of violence against girls. FGM/C is a human rights violation and needs to be treated as such. FGM/C is linked to a perceived need to control female sexuality. Plan International believes that every girl and woman should have the autonomy and necessary knowledge to be able to make free and informed decisions about her body.

➢ Plan International believes that it is important to tackle FGM/C both through effective legislation and through awareness raising with communities about the physical and mental harm and long-term adverse impacts that result from this practice. It is crucial to engage families, communities and traditional and religious leaders in changing attitudes and norms around this harmful practice to ensure that it is no longer tolerated.

COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

➢ Plan International believes that no child should be subject to exploitative labour. While we recognise that some reasonable levels of work can be beneficial to children in addition to attaining an education, we demand an immediate end to labour that exploits children, causes them physical, emotional or sexual harm,

interferes with their right to education, or puts them at risk of other hazards.

➢ Plan International strongly condemns the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), which disproportionately affects girls. CSEC puts children in grave danger – risking their emotional, psychological, physical and sexual health – and is a gross violation of their human rights. We urge governments to ensure that legal and protection frameworks are robust and can respond to and prevent such forms of violence. Child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are entitled to support, reparations and remedies, in line with international human rights law.

➢ Plan International is gravely concerned at the levels of violence experienced by young women and men engaged in sex work. We urge governments to review policies to strengthen legal protections and ensure that sex workers, particularly young women, can access support services and justice mechanisms.

➢ Child and social protection systems have failed children who live and work on the street. Their rights to food, shelter, protection and health have been violated. As a matter of urgency they must be able to access care and protection services.

➢ Plan International recognises that children, and girls in particular, make up a significant proportion of human trafficking victims. We strongly condemn this practice, and urge all actors to address it as a priority. The trafficking of people across borders will not stop without international cooperation.

VIOLENCE IN EMERGENCIES

➢ Plan International believes that States must uphold their responsibilities under international law to all children without discrimination. Children seeking asylum or with refugee status have an equal right to protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect under the UNCRC. Children are individual rights holders under the 1951 Refugee Convention, entitled to all assistance and protection afforded to refugee adults.

➢ We recognise that during emergencies, particularly in situations of forced displacement, children are placed at heightened risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. Risks are particularly acute for unaccompanied and separated children who lack the immediate protection provided by parents, families and/or primary caregivers.

➢ We recognise that under the UNCRC and international humanitarian law, separated children have a right to be reunited with parents, relatives or guardians. States should pursue all practical measures to reunite children with their families.

➢ We recognise that risks for children in humanitarian settings vary depending on gender and age. In emergencies, child protection responses often overlook adolescent girls, yet they face specific risks due to both their gender and age. These include risks of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. Both child protection interventions and interventions to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence must be gender and age-sensitive.

➢ Plan International believes that strengthening the protection of children on the move should be a priority investment for governments of host countries and donors. This involves increased and more effective resourcing of both national and community-based child protection systems, to meet the needs of children on the move.

➢ We also believe that greater attention should be given to preventing and addressing the root causes of child protection issues in humanitarian contexts. This includes increasing access to education and social protection; expanding opportunities for families to generate income; and supporting community dialogue and engagement towards conflict resolution.

VIOLENCE ONLINE

➢ Plan International believes that advances in information and communications technology present new and positive opportunities to children. Nevertheless the online space has led to a rise in abuse, harassment and violence against children that constitutes a human rights violation, and that must be tackled as an urgent priority. The associated dangers that the internet presents for children must not be underestimated, and global actors must increase efforts to ensure children's online safety and protection.

➢ Plan International condemns practices that seek to silence the voices of girls and women online. We urge all actors to ensure that responses to violence online do not lead to suppressing girls' and women's freedom of expression. Girls must not be encouraged to step away from the digital world. Responses must focus on creating a safe online space, strengthening reporting

mechanisms, and punishing perpetrators of violence, harassment and abuse.

➢ We must continue to ensure that digital media does not perpetuate negative gender stereotypes, the sexualisation of girls and women, and unrealistic expectations of female image. Diverse representations of women and girls, men and boys in the media can have a positive impact on social norms around gender identity. The extremely damaging impact of pornography, particularly violent pornography, and the ease with which children can access it, must also be recognised as a significant issue globally. Responses must ensure that children are protected from accessing harmful materials online.

➢ The use of the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse and exploitation of children is an abhorrent crime. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is no less a crime if it takes place online, and instances of this are rising. Governments and other actors must tackle this crime as a matter of urgency, with greater resources dedicated to investigating and prosecuting perpetrators.

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INTRODUCTION

Plan International believes that every child and young person has the right to live a life free from any form of violence, and deserves to grow up in a safe, peaceful, nurturing and enabling environment.

This internal paper provides Plan International's position and global influencing priorities on the right to freedom from violence, as well as an analysis of: the current global situation; the legal and political framework; and specific issues in relation to ending violence against children. The analysis and positions in this paper are founded on human rights, global evidence, consultations with children and young people, and Plan International's programmatic work.

This paper supports the Global Strategy 2017–2022, which sets a bold purpose to "strive for a just world that advances children's rights and equality for girls", and commits the organisation to an increased focus on gender equality and girls' rights.[1] The strategy renews and refocuses our commitment to ending violence against children, and particularly girls and excluded groups. We have committed to contribute to ensuring that vulnerable and excluded children, and particularly girls, thrive and grow up equally valued and cared for, free from discrimination, violence and fear, supporting progress towards Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 8, 11 and 16 of Agenda 2030.

This paper also supports Plan International's International Advocacy Strategy, which includes a specific goal on Safe Spaces for Girls, and aims to increase global awareness of, and action to prevent the gender dynamics that drive violence against all children and particularly girls.

Offices will be expected to put this position paper into practice using their judgement and analysis of the key issues in their specific context.

Plan International recognises that it is the responsibility of national governments, as the primary duty bearer accountable for their commitments and obligations under international human rights law and within Agenda 2030, to ensure that every girl and boy is able to grow up free from the fear or threat of violence. Plan International also recognises the role of the international and national community – donors, civil society, UN agencies and the private sector – in supporting national governments to guarantee this right.

This paper addresses the key issues around violence against children that concern Plan International, starting with the scale of the problem globally; outlining the human rights frameworks prohibiting violence against children; discussing the social norms that underpin violence, and the consequences of violence for children, communities, societies and economies. The paper then discusses violence against children, and particularly girls, in the spaces in which they grow, play, learn and develop into young adults: the home and family, in schools, in the community and public spaces, in spaces where children are commercially exploited and abused, and violence online, finally looking at violence against children in humanitarian and emergency contexts.

There are a number of important areas that were considered beyond the remit of this paper. This paper does discuss violence against children at different stages of childhood – including early childhood – but it does not deal with early childhood care and development more broadly, as this will be covered in a separate document. Equally, the paper does not discuss alternative care and justice systems, or self-directed harm – e.g. suicide. These issues were felt to be outside Plan International's area of expertise and added value.

"I feel all types of violence affect girls more than boys. After a certain period of time, boys come out of the violence, either by force or by financial independence. Girls have to carry on [accepting this], as they are financially dependent on men." 14-year-old girl, India

Plan International chooses to focus on girls, and particularly adolescent girls (aged 10 to 18 years) as a distinct, exposed group who face heightened and specific risks of violence across the globe. Girls' needs are too often marginalised within those of "all children" or "women and girls".[2] Plan International's experience shows that when girls' rights are grouped with children's rights or women's rights, their unique, specific vulnerability and lived inequalities resulting from being both children and female are overlooked, with serious consequences. Evidence shows that girls everywhere face significant barriers to their human rights, simply because they are young and female. It also shows that gender-based violence is a manifest, egregious violation of girls' human rights, and is widely considered a global health problem of epidemic proportions.[3]

Plan International recognises that the violence that children experience changes and evolves as they grow up, and does not disappear the moment they reach a legally recognised age of adulthood. As such, violence issues facing young adults will also be discussed in this position paper. A life-cycle lens is applied to allow us to understand the violence that girls and boys experience in the context of various transitions – including from childhood into adolescence, and from adolescence into adulthood.

DEFINITIONS

ACTUAL AND PERCEIVED SAFETY: A girl's **perceived safety** is made up of her feelings about the physical environment, the social environment, and her or her friends' personal past experiences in certain areas. Perceptions of safety are subjective, change over time and across different places, and are different for various groups of girls. **Actual safety** relates to crime statistics and data. Crime statistics, while relevant, do not provide a complete picture of safety in cities. Safety issues that particularly affect girls, such as sexual harassment, may be so normalised that statistics may not even be collected and/or girls may be discouraged from speaking up about it. Also, data may or may not influence a girl's sense of safety.

BULLYING, INCLUDING CYBER-BULLYING: is unwanted aggressive behaviour by another child or group of children who are neither siblings nor in a romantic relationship with the victim. It involves repeated physical, psychological or social harm, and often takes place in schools and other settings where children gather, and online.

CHILD: Every human being below the age of 18 years.

CHILD MARRIAGE: is a marriage in which at least one of the parties is a child. **Early marriage** is often used interchangeably with "child marriage" and refers to marriages involving a person aged below 18 in countries where the age of majority is attained earlier or upon marriage. **Forced marriage** is any marriage which occurs without the full and free consent of one or both of the parties and/or where one or both of the parties is/are unable to end or leave the marriage, including as a result of duress or intense social or family pressure. Also referred to collectively as child, early and forced marriage or CEFM.

CHILD PROTECTION: refers to all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to prevent and respond to all forms of physical or mental violence, maltreatment, abuse, neglect and exploitation affecting children. Child protection aims to address child rights violations and deficits related to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, including the precursors and repercussions for children who are in conflict with the law or those children who have been victims of or witnesses to a crime. The nature and scale of child protection issues are diverse, multi-faceted and inter-connected. Gender sensitive, responsive and transformative child protection reflects different stages of integrating gender dimensions into measures and processes that prevent and respond to violence against all children. While **gender sensitive child protection** takes into account specific ways in which violence is differently affecting girls, boys and children with other gender identities,

gender responsive child protection takes proactive steps in addressing and responding to different gender dynamics driving violence. **Gender transformative child protection** both addresses immediate needs of children affected by violence, while addressing the root cause of the problem, ensuring that the overall situation of every child and the way she or he is being treated is improved on a continuous basis and with lasting positive effects.

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES: are understood as a cluster of multidisciplinary services responsible for providing child protection, which includes preventing and responding to reports of child abuse or neglect. Prevention of child abuse and neglect, immediate and long-term medical assistance and counselling, psychosocial support in coping with abuse-induced trauma, legal assistance and protection, prevention of family separation, placement in foster and adoptive care are examples of the variety of functions delivered by these services, complemented by a broad spectrum of professional social work. There are different types and models of Child Protection services, including general, specialised and intensive services, which are commonly delivered by a range of governmental or non-governmental providers in close interactions with law enforcement agencies.

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS: operate within the framework of the law and a coherent regulatory framework of policies, procedures and guidelines. They provide a multi-sector approach to support the prevention of and response to protection risks and violations, including violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Typically, one ministry or department, such as a ministry of social welfare or its equivalent, interacts with all other sectors, such as justice, education, health and security, to lead and coordinate effective child protection responses.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: is a broad category that, at its core, defines the harm caused to children by forcing or coercing them to engage in sexual activity, whether they are aware of what is happening or not. It is defined as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are – by virtue of their age or stage of development – in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim. The sexual abuse of children requires no element of exchange, and can occur for the mere purpose of the sexual gratification of the person committing the act. Such abuse can be committed without explicit force, with other elements, such as authority, power or manipulation being determining factors.

COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE: refers to violence committed by larger groups of people and can be

subdivided into social, political and economic violence. Cross-cutting each of these categories is the nature of violent acts. The nature of acts can be physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, or one of neglect. The classification of violence according to both type and nature of the violent act provides a useful framework for understanding the place of child maltreatment within the complex patterns of violence.

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN: (CSEC) is sexual abuse by an adult accompanied by remuneration in cash or in kind to the child or third person(s).

COMMUNITY: is a group of interacting people who live in some geographical proximity to one another and usually shares common values and interests. The term refers to a social unit larger than the household. This definition applies equally to rural and urban settings.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE: is broken down into violence by acquaintances and violence by strangers. It covers youth violence, assault by strangers, violence related to property crimes and violence in workplaces and other institutions.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT: is any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light.

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE: involves both isolated incidents and a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or caregiver to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment. Acts in this category may have a high probability of damaging the child's physical or mental health, or its physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Abuse of this type includes: the restriction of movement; patterns of belittling, blaming, threatening, frightening, discriminating against or ridiculing; and other non-physical forms of rejection or hostile treatment.

EXCLUSION: Exclusion is the process that prevents certain individuals or groups from fulfilling their rights. Exclusion is caused by inequality in the distribution of resources and power, by inequality in the value assigned to different groups, and by the social norms that perpetuate these differences. These causes are interlinked and compound each other. It is most often those who are not valued whose rights are not realised. For example, girls, boys and youth with disabilities are often stigmatised and not valued; schools are not designed to be accessible and teachers are not adequately trained which means that their specific needs are not addressed and subsequently their right to an education is denied.

FAMILY/FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS: comprises individuals who are related, usually through blood or marriage, and/or who provide emotional, physical and psychological care to children. The term "family" should be understood loosely, referring to both the core family or household, or alternatively an extended kinship network. Many forms of families exist beyond the "traditional" nuclear family and recognising that families exist in different forms also emphasises that there is not one "ideal" social model/version/definition of "family" that is preferable to others. Regardless of the form that families take, according to the UNCRC, the primary responsibility for raising children rests with parents. When parents are unable to do so, the State has a duty to assist them. At the same time, however, Article 19 refers to the State's obligation to "protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child".

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING (FGM/C): comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. WHO defines four classifications:

TYPE 1: Often referred to as clitoridectomy, this is the partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals), and in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris).

TYPE 2: Often referred to as excision, this is the partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora (the inner folds of the vulva), with or without excision of the labia majora (the outer folds of skin of the vulva).

TYPE 3: Often referred to as infibulation, this is the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without removal of the clitoris (clitoridectomy).

TYPE 4: This includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising the genital area.

GENDER: refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – the norms that govern roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught

appropriate norms and behaviours – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. When individuals or groups do not "fit" established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV): When directed against girls or boys because of their biological sex or gender identity or sexual orientation, any type of violence can also constitute gender-based violence. GBV results in physical, sexual and psychological harm to both women and men and includes any form of violence or abuse that targets women or men on the basis of their sex. Unequal power relations between men and women significantly contribute to GBV, which is intended to maintain gender inequalities and reinforce traditional gender roles for both women and men. Although men and boys are also victims of GBV, especially in trafficking, conflict and educational settings, the majority of GBV victims worldwide are female. Gender-based violence cuts across public and private spheres, including: home, school and work, and takes place during peacetime and conflict. It is both a human rights and a development issue, with negative consequences for both women and men.

GENDER EQUALITY: means that all persons, regardless of their gender, enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. Gender equality does not mean that women and men, or girls and boys are the same. Women and men, girls and boys, and individuals with other gender identities have different but related needs and priorities, face different constraints, and enjoy different opportunities. Their relative positions in society are based on standards that, while not fixed, tend to advantage men and boys and disadvantage women and girls. Consequently, they are affected in different ways by policies and programmes. A gender equality approach is about understanding these relative differences and intersecting identities, appreciating that they are not rigid and can be changed. It is important to keep these differences and intersecting identities in mind when designing strategies, policies, programmes and services. Ultimately, promoting gender equality means transforming the power relations between women and men, girls and boys and individuals with different gender identities in order to create a more just society for all. One part of a strategy to achieve gender equality is gender equity. A gender equity approach is the deliberate process of being fair in order to produce equal and measurable outcomes.

GENDER IDENTITY: refers to how an individual feels about their own gender. Individuals may identify as male, female or as something else and their gender identity may or may not be the same as the sex that they were assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity and expresses their gender in a unique and personal way.

GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH: means that Plan International explicitly tackles the root causes of gender inequality, particularly unequal gender power relations, discriminatory social norms and legislation, in all our work. In this way we aim not only to improve the daily condition of girls but also to advance their position and value in society. We work together with girls, boys, women and men to achieve these objectives. While our projects benefit both girls and boys, adopting this transformative approach ensures that our work results in positive changes and sustainable outcomes for girls. We work strategically at three dimensions of change: norms, attitudes and behaviours; social and economic resources and safety nets; and policy frameworks and budgets. This might involve promoting and applying, where necessary and useful, affirmative action for girls and women so that longstanding gender gaps are closed and inequalities are overcome. We make global, regional and national efforts to influence and programme for adequate protection of girls' rights and the promotion of measures and strategies that advance their strategic interests.

GIRLS' RIGHTS: Girls everywhere face significant barriers to rights simply because they are young and female. To support girls effectively and achieve equality, it is essential to recognise that girls as a cohort represent one of the largest excluded social groups. Yet, as a group they have the potential to achieve collective agency and work together as a movement for change and achieve common strategic interests. Girls are rights holders in their own right and not only a sub-group of "women" or "children". Girls' rights are covered by both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, even though girls face particular risks and barriers to the realisation of their rights, and have specific needs that require special protection under law, the binding international human rights framework rarely explicitly spells out their specific rights. Different sources of international soft law may specify, though, girls' rights or contain references to girls' specific needs and vulnerabilities. Therefore, if we are to leave no girl behind, an important first step is to ensure that girl-specific rights are recognised, and realised as human rights. Therefore Plan International firmly believes that securing the rights of girls is the critical social justice issue of our time, and that girls' rights are human rights.

HARMFUL PRACTICES: are defined as and constitute violence against children and include, but are not limited to, corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); amputations, binding, scarring, burning and branding; violent and degrading initiation rites; force-feeding of girls; fattening; virginity testing (inspecting girls' genitalia); child, early and forced marriage (CEFM); so-called "honour" crimes; "retribution" acts of violence (where disputes between different groups are taken out on children of the parties involved); dowry-related death and violence; accusations of "witchcraft" and related harmful practices such as "exorcism". These are commonly based on tradition, culture, superstition and religion and related misinterpretations.

INCEST: refers to the sexual activity between two people who are very closely related in a family, for example siblings, or parent and child. Incest involving a child constitutes sexual abuse.

INCLUSION: Inclusion is about bringing people into a process in a meaningful manner. It is the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society and to fully enjoy their rights. It requires addressing the root causes of exclusion and understanding how intertwined the roots of different forms of exclusion are. Inclusion involves improving the opportunities available to girls, boys and youth, in particular those who are vulnerable and excluded, including children with disabilities, who are excluded on the basis of the social groups they identify with or are associated with, as well as respecting their dignity.

INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE: refers to violence between individuals. The category is subdivided into family and intimate partner violence, and community violence. The former includes child maltreatment, intimate partner violence and elder abuse.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: involves violence by an intimate partner or ex-partner. Although males can also be victims, intimate partner violence disproportionately affects females. It commonly occurs against girls within child, early and forced marriages. Among romantically involved but unmarried adolescents it is sometimes called "dating violence".

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX, QUESTIONING (LGBTIQ) CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS OR YOUTH: This is a broad category of those who self-identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. LGBTIQ-related issues can emerge at different ages. For example, some people's intersex identity is clear at birth, and some transgender people are aware from early childhood that their real gender identity differs from that assigned at birth. Many realise their sexual orientation during adolescence. Being

LGBTIQ is central to a person's identity and their physical and emotional wellbeing.[4]

NEGLECT: includes both isolated incidents and a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or other family member to provide for the development and wellbeing of the child – where the parent is in a position to do so – in one or more of the following areas: health; education; emotional development; nutrition; shelter and safe living conditions. The parents of neglected children are not necessarily poor, they may equally be financially affluent.

ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN can include: sexual exploitation that is carried out while the victim is online; identifying and/or grooming potential child victims online with a view to exploiting them sexually; or the distribution, dissemination, importing, exporting, offering, selling, or possession of, or knowingly attaining access to, child sexual exploitation material online.

PEER VIOLENCE: is commonly concentrated among children and young people aged 10 to 24 years, occurring most often in community settings either among acquaintances or perpetrated by strangers. It includes physical assault with weapons (such as guns and knives) or without weapons, and may involve gang violence.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: of a child is defined as the intentional use of physical force against a child that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating. Much physical violence against children in the home is inflicted with the object of punishing.

SAFE SPACES: are both physically safe (physical environment, infrastructure) and socially safe (social environment, girls' perception of safety, what people use the space for, how they use it and at what times of day). A safe physical space is a clean and open area with streetlights, street signs and good roads and sidewalks. A safe social space is an area where girls feel safe and do not feel vulnerable to violence. In a socially safe place, all types of people have equal access to the space at all times of day and night. The physical environment of a space has an impact on its social environment for adolescent girls, and vice versa.

SELF-DIRECTED VIOLENCE: refers to violence where the perpetrator and the victim are the same person. It is subdivided into self-abuse and suicide.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: is distinguished from other forms of child sexual abuse by the underlying notion of exchange present in exploitation.

SOCIAL NORMS: are a pervasive feature of all our lives. Norms are shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour in a group of people, including women, girls, men and boys. Social norms are like informal rules, which also influence (and are influenced by) formal rules such as laws and regulations. Norms shape expectations and attitudes and can sustain and prescribe gender inequality. Around the world, social norms on gender shape the unequal status of girls and women and the expectations of their role in society.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE: refers to systematic ways in which social structures harm or otherwise disadvantage people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Structural violence is subtle, often invisible, and often has no one specific person who can be held responsible for it.

STUNTING: is the impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection and inadequate psychosocial stimulation.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: implies all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, emotional or psychological violence. This is an "umbrella term" that includes all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation against children, in accordance with the UNCRC and General Comment No. 13 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS: is one of the most systematic and widespread human rights violations. It is rooted in gendered social structures rather than individual and random acts; it cuts across age, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries; affects all societies; and is a major obstacle to ending gender inequality and discrimination globally. Violence against girls is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.[5]

WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR:
Article 3 of *ILO Convention No. 182*:
"(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
(b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
(c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
(d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children."

YOUNG PERSON/YOUNG PEOPLE/YOUTH: Plan International uses these terms interchangeably. According to the UN definition, youth is "a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence". For statistical purposes, the UN defines "youth" as the 15 to 24-year-old age group.

THE ISSUE AT STAKE

"All children – girls and boys – will experience differently, different forms of violence at different stages of their lives."
Dr Shiva Kumar[6]

Plan International aligns to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) when referring to violence: "all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (see definitions in Annex).[7] Plan International also understands violence to be both *direct* – experiencing violence – or *indirect* – witnessing or being exposed to violence.[8] Plan International refers to violence as physical, emotional, sexual and structural.

For too many children, violence remains a harsh reality in their daily lives, as they move between the places where they live, learn, play and develop into adults.[9] The 2017 *Know Violence in Childhood Global Report* estimates that in 2015, at least three out of every four children – 1.7 billion children – had experienced interpersonal violence in a previous year.[10] The Global Partnership for Ending Violence against Children estimates that every five minutes a child dies as a result of violence.[11]

Violence against children occurs in every country in the world, cutting across boundaries of geography, race, class, religion and culture. Children are subjected to violence in all the spaces where they spend their childhood. Children are abused and bullied in schools, emotionally abused by their parents or caregivers, neglected in institutions and homes, disciplined through violent means and sexually assaulted in the privacy of their homes and schools or sexually harassed on public transport or in the community. They are trafficked, sold and exploited for economic gain, groomed online, stigmatised and ill-treated as a result of harmful practices and manipulated in organised crime. They are engaged in the worst forms of child labour, recruited by armed groups and forces, caught in the crossfire of war or natural disasters and forced to flee their communities. Children on the move or in evacuation or detention centres are more vulnerable, with a higher chance of being subject to all the above-mentioned forms of violence, abuse and exploitation.

The forms of violence that children experience are multi-faceted and intersecting, and include physical, sexual and mental (psychological) violence and neglect or negligent treatment.[12] Forms of violence do not occur in isolation. As they grow up, children can simultaneously experience multiple forms of violence which spill across different settings leading to what is known as "poly-victimisation".[13] Children who are abused within the home or at school have an increased risk of being victims of violence in the community, for example.[14] With the emergence of new technologies, the perpetration and victimisation of violence overlaps between online and offline spaces.[15]

Violence is often perpetrated by people with whom children interact every day and should be able to trust – including those closest to them, such as their parents, family members, boyfriends or girlfriends, partners, caregivers and teachers.[16] As a result, there is a complex emotional framework surrounding violence against children: children often love their perpetrators and so may not report the violence they experience for fear of the negative consequences for the perpetrators or, in the case of family members, that they may be separated from them.

Violence is too frequently perpetrated with impunity, a result of weak national legislation and policies which fail to explicitly and comprehensively prohibit and criminalise violence against children, or guarantee children and young people protection from all forms of violence in all settings. Stigma and weak legal sanctions against violence also drive violence against children.[17]

Adults and other children commit acts of violence against children, exploiting their dependency on others to provide for their health, development and wellbeing. In general, children have less experience, knowledge, maturity and, in many cases, physical strength than adults, and this puts them at increased risk of being perceived as easy targets.[18]

Violence against children is driven by deeply entrenched social norms that support the unequal and low status of women and children. A tolerance of patriarchy, male dominance, power and privilege in society fosters a culture that also often justifies or legitimises violence against women and children.[19] Violence can also be accepted as a means of discipline and a way to resolve conflict, which is compounded by power relations and notions of privacy within the family home (see section on social norms).

Social norms that consider girls and women as inferior to men and boys and support notions of male power and female subordination render men and boys the most likely perpetrators of violence against women and girls. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), at least one girl in three has experienced violence in her lifetime.[20]

Child marriage is a harmful practice, and therefore constitutes an act of violence. However, child marriage also exposes girls to violence committed by their husband or others in the household, in situations where the girl has moved into the husband's family home. Violence directed at girls and women by an intimate partner is the most common form of gender-based violence.[21] One in three (approximately 84 million) adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 who are in formal unions worldwide have been victims of emotional, physical or sexual violence committed by their husbands or partners at some point in their lives.[22]

Girls are at great risk of sexual violence as they grow up: the lifetime prevalence of childhood sexual abuse for girls is 18 per cent, compared to just 8 per cent for boys.[23] An estimated 120 million girls globally – approximately one in ten – have been victims of sexual violence, including rape or other forced sexual acts.[24] According to UNICEF, a

large share of girls and women report that they were first sexually victimised as adolescents, between the ages of 15 and 19.[25] However, girls do report incidents of sexual violence at even younger ages, and it is estimated that up to 50 per cent of sexual assaults worldwide are committed against girls aged under 16.[26]

Yet boys too experience sexual violence and the scale of this phenomenon remains unknown and a global estimate is unavailable. Sexual violence against boys remains shrouded in silence and stigma, is invisible and a taboo – particularly in patriarchal systems.

Children and young people who are excluded, marginalised and ostracised in their communities are particularly susceptible to violence.[27] This includes children and young people with disabilities, with a different sexual orientation or gender identity or those from ethnic minorities.

Emergencies can intensify pre-existing violence or threats and/or expose children to new risks. The impacts of disasters, conflict and displacement are felt particularly acutely by children, especially girls, putting them at heightened risk of violence and victimisation. Thousands of girls and boys under the age of 18 are recruited in conflicts across the globe. While the majority of those threatened with forced recruitment into armed groups are boys, an estimated 10 to 30 per cent of children in fighting forces are girls.[28]

GIRLS AND VIOLENCE

Plan International defines gender-based violence (GBV) as violence directed against girls, boys, women or men because of their biological sex, gender identity or sexual orientation. Such violence is intended to maintain gender inequalities and reinforce traditional gender roles for both women and men. Any type of violence (e.g. physical, sexual or psychological) can therefore constitute GBV. Sexual violence is one form of GBV, but the two terms are not synonymous. However, it is important to note that GBV against girls and women is largely used to control their sexuality, and to exert power and dominance over their bodies. Although men and boys are also victims of GBV – especially in trafficking, conflict and educational settings – the majority of GBV victims worldwide are female.

Girls face differing forms of violence to boys, and girls and women face more violence in their lifetimes than boys and men. Girls are more likely to experience sexual violence, harmful practices such as child marriage or female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), or sexual harassment. **Violence against girls** is a global problem, which manifests in every region. The global data is inadequate for understanding the levels of violence that girls face, as most studies only collect data from respondents who are 15 years and older. Nevertheless, the available data is alarming. WHO global and regional estimates of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence against girls (aged 15 and above) and women show that prevalence is more than 35 per cent globally.[29]

Data from the *Violence Against Children Surveys* is collected from the age of 13, giving a better insight into the violence faced by girls. From a cross-section of three countries from different regions, Zimbabwe, Cambodia and Haiti,[30] it is possible to see that sexual violence against girls is prevalent across all regions.

> ➢ For 41 per cent of girls in Zimbabwe who reported having had sex prior to the age of 18, the intercourse was forced or coerced. This figure is 24 per cent in Cambodia, and 23 per cent in Haiti.
> ➢ In Zimbabwe, 78 per cent of perpetrators of sexual violence against girls were their intimate partner or boyfriend; as were 29 per cent of perpetrators in Haiti and 24 per cent in Cambodia.
> ➢ In Haiti, 78 per cent of perpetrators of sexual violence against girls were more than ten years older than them; as were 61 per cent in Cambodia and 29 per cent in Zimbabwe.

Once girls reach early adolescence, they are more likely to have their lives restricted because of violence – they are more likely to be told that they cannot go out on their own, to avoid certain places or spaces, or to be blamed for the violence that happens to them. At adolescence in particular, girls' worlds shrink. This is partly because girls' vulnerability to violence increases as they reach puberty and are perceived by boys and men as sexual beings. It is also due to the widespread social perception that girls are the custodians of family honour, and that if a girl's body is violated, this brings shame to the girl and to her family.

Plan International's position
> ➢ **Plan International recognises that there are multiple forms of violence, and that there is a need to understand the distinction between gender-based violence, sexual violence and violence against girls. We recognise that these types of violence intersect and overlap. Girls are at an increased risk of violence as they reach adolescence and their gender roles become more defined.**
>
> ➢ **The violence that boys face must not be ignored. As a children's rights organisation, Plan International is committed to protecting the rights of all children. However, the evidence clearly shows that girls and young women face more violence – much of it hidden or normalised – throughout their childhood, adolescence and early adult years than boys and young men. Gaps in legal protections for girls who are at risk, or who are survivors of violence must be addressed. Pervasive gender norms that condone the use of violence to control girls' sexuality must be overturned.**
>
> ➢ **For these reasons, Plan International prioritises ending gender-based violence, and violence against girls. We will dedicate time, resources and focus in order to achieve this. We urge all actors to take concerted action to increase global**

> **understanding of and response to violence against girls. We call for increased political will and financial resources to end this deplorable abuse of girls' rights.**
>
> ➤ **Plan International emphasises that girls must never be held responsible for the violence that happens to them. Violence is the sole responsibility of the perpetrator, who must be held accountable according to national or international legislation. Fear or threat of violence must not restrict girls from living free and full lives, and from realising their full potential.**

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE

Violence has devastating effects on children that are both immediate and lifelong, and that harm their quality of life and their childhood. Prolonged exposure to violence or violent situations can lead to "toxic stress", which is known to have damaging effects on learning, behaviour and health across a person's lifetime.[31]

Children who have been severely abused or have grown up witnessing violence in their household or community can internalise and normalise violence as a means of resolving disputes.[32] This means that they will be more likely to use violence in other settings, such as in schools or on the streets.[33] They are also more likely to repeat the pattern of violence and abuse against their own spouses and children later in life – leading to a cycle of violence.

As well as at the individual level, violence has far-reaching consequences on human development; it has serious economic and social costs as a result of lost potential, reduced productivity and associated costs in responding to violence.[34] The implications of these costs are significant at national, community, family and individual levels – impacting opportunity, resources and support services.

Preventing violence against children is a moral and human development imperative. It is also a human rights imperative: violence negatively impacts on other fundamental rights guaranteed to children in the UNCRC including their inalienable right to the best possible health, access to quality education and respect for their human dignity and physical and psychological integrity.[35]

Children's survival and their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development are threatened by violence, both in the short and long terms.[36] The consequences of violence include the following aspects described below.

Child mortality

Any form of physical violence against children can cause internal and external injuries that can be life threatening and lead to premature death. Every year, there are an estimated 41,000 homicide deaths in children under 15 years of age.[37] Abusive head trauma is a common cause of injuries in very young children, including skull fractures, retinal haemorrhaging, neurological disabilities, cortical blindness and seizures.[38] Children can experience immediate physical injuries as a result of sexual violence,

such as abdominal pain, back pain, limited mobility and gastrointestinal disorders.[39] The rape of small children leads to injuries that can result in their death.[40]

Sexual and reproductive health consequences

Violence also has long-lasting consequences for children and young people's sexual and reproductive health. Across the globe, 60 per cent of women survivors of sexual violence face reproductive health issues.[41]

For adolescent girls, sexual violence can lead to unintended pregnancies, induced abortions, gynaecological problems and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Girls and women who have been physically or sexually abused are 1.5 times more likely to have a sexually transmitted infection compared to women who have not.[42]

ActionAid research from 2017 shows that of the estimated 212.5 million unintended pregnancies that have occurred within 69 countries over the past five years, at least 31.8 million will have involved a woman or adolescent girl who has experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence.[43]

Adolescent girls growing up and/or temporarily living in a conflict-affected country often face an increased risk of early, unprotected sexual activity, as a result of consensual sex, sexual exploitation and/or gender-based violence.[44] This can result in unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortion, maternal mortality/morbidity, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, trauma and social isolation, and a perpetuating cycle of ill health and poverty.

Psychological and emotional consequences, and mental health disorders

Experiencing violence can lead to a range of emotional problems during childhood, in adolescence and later in life, including feelings of rejection, impaired attachment, trauma, fear, anxiety, insecurity and shattered self-esteem.[45]

Prolonged exposure to violence and/or chronic abuse or neglect at a young age can lead to "toxic stress response".[46] Studies indicate that such stress can have an adverse impact on brain development and architecture, and creates a weak foundation for later learning and behaviour. Toxic stress can also cause lifelong impairments in physical and mental health.[47]

It can also result in a range of serious mental health disorders, including depression and anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and eating and sleep disorders.[48] A New Zealand study revealed that children who had experienced sexual abuse had rates of mental health disorders that were 2.4 times higher than those of children not exposed to sexual abuse.[49]

Suicidal thoughts and suicide is another grave consequence of violence. A 2014 WHO report found that suicide is now the second-highest cause of death among adolescent girls aged between 15 and 24.[50] Recent Violence Against Children Surveys (VACS) in Swaziland

have shown that girls and young women between the ages of 13 and 24 who have experienced childhood sexual violence are 2.3 times more likely to have suicidal thoughts, and are twice as likely to attempt suicide.[51]

Consequences for human development

The effects of violence extend beyond the individual level, and impact families, communities and societies as a whole. These effects have far-reaching consequences for human development, both from an economic and social perspective.

A human development approach highlights what children are capable of doing or becoming in their lives, including, for instance, the capability to lead a long and healthy life, to be well-nourished, to enjoy bodily integrity and not to be abused, and to engage in various forms of social interaction. Childhood violence disrupts the formation of these capabilities. Violence breeds fear, violates the dignity and rights of children and robs them of the joys of childhood. Freedom from fear is as fundamental to life as freedom from want and freedom from hunger, and is essential for harnessing human potential.[52]

Experiencing violence in childhood can lead to a number of anti-social and destructive relationships and social problems. This includes alcohol and drug abuse, which are key risk factors for several leading causes of death, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic lung diseases, liver disease and other non-communicable diseases.[53]

A 2016 study in South Africa and Malawi found a strong correlation between children experiencing violence and poor education outcomes. Children exposed to psychological violence as a form of discipline were more than ten times less likely to be enrolled in primary education, and harsh discipline was associated with poor school progress.[54]

The study showed that violence against children has significant health consequences that can last into a child's adult life, and that increase the burden on healthcare systems. A study in the UK found that children living in a household in which there is domestic violence appear to be between 55 per cent and 61 per cent less likely to have their health rated as "excellent".[55]

Violence can have far-reaching consequences for education. Violence may lead to children being forced to drop out of school, or being physically or psychologically unable to continue with their education. Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and sexual violence can lead to early pregnancy. For many girls, this leads to school dropout due to negative social norms and cultural taboos preventing them from re-entering education, or due to structural barriers such as lack of child care provision. Married adolescents, pregnant teenagers and adolescent mothers are rarely supported or assisted in continuing their education. In Tanzania, for instance, it is against the law for young mothers to return to school.

A recent study by ChildFund Alliance and Overseas Development Institute estimates that the global economic impacts and costs resulting from the consequences of physical, psychological and sexual violence against children can be as high as $7 trillion per year.[56] The global costs of physical, psychological and sexual violence against children are extremely difficult to calculate. However, it has been assessed to be roughly 3 to 8 per cent of global GDP per year,[57] many times higher than the investment required to prevent much of this violence taking place.

The cycle of violence

"From childhood, girls are taught to be docile and non-aggressive. They have been told that this is how all girls should be. Even in my own family, when my brother grew up, he has been given more freedom (than me). He observes my father and also shouts at my mother. This way I feel that when he will grow up, he will see his wife the same way and when I grow up, the similar behaviour which is taught by my mother will be expected by my in-laws. So, this keeps on happening."
14-year-old girl, India.

Children internalise and normalise violence during early stages of their childhood,[58] increasing the chance that they will use violence against other children, and at later stages of their lives – such as against their own children or spouses. In this way, the impact of violence can be perpetuated across generations. Recent research also finds that girls who are exposed to violence, either as victims or witnesses, are at greater risk of experiencing physical or sexual violence in adulthood. The research also finds that men who are abused or neglected as children are significantly more likely to report perpetrating physical or sexual violence against women.[59]

Moreover, children who experience one form of violence are often exposed to others. For example, girls who become pregnant before the age of 18 – as a consequence of sexual violence and CEFM – face a heightened risk of experiencing violence during pregnancy within a marriage or partnership.[60]

Plan International's position
➤ **Plan International strongly condemns all forms of violence against children. We consider global levels of violence against children to be absolutely unacceptable. As many as three-quarters of all children have experienced violence in the past year, underlining how normalised the problem has become. Under international human rights law all children and young people have the right to live free from the fear or threat of violence. Plan International urges everyone to recognise the enormity and gravity of violence against children, and to prioritise ending this human rights abuse urgently.**

➤ **Plan International recognises that children experience different forms of violence at different stages of their development. We know that girls face more violence in their lives and that girls and boys experience different forms of violence. Responses to violence against children must be inclusive, gender transformative and age-sensitive, to ensure that all children's**

experiences of violence are understood, responded to, and ultimately prevented.

➢ Plan International knows that ending violence against children, and particularly against girls, is complex. Nevertheless we believe that this is an achievable global goal – and is a strong legal, rights and development imperative. Ending violence against children requires action at international, national and community levels, increased financial and political commitment, and strengthened partnerships.

➢ We recognise that violence against children can be hidden and involve complex factors – both contribute to it going under-reported. We call on all actors to ensure that prevention and response mechanisms take into account the needs and concerns of victims. These must include child-friendly, gender and age-sensitive reporting mechanisms; strong child protection mechanisms to recognise the signs of violence early; and response mechanisms that prioritise the needs of the child.

Plan International's recommendations

➢ Everybody has a responsibility to prevent and respond to violence against children. Plan International's theory of change outlines three tactics to end violence against children – tackling negative social norms; ensuring social and economic assets and safety nets are in place; and ensuring strong policy frameworks and budgets are in place.

Social norms

➢ All actors must work to promote norms and values that are respectful of the rights of children, and promote peaceful, non-violent behaviours and conflict resolution practices. Violence must not be expected, accepted or go unchallenged.

➢ All actors must ensure that individuals, families, communities and societies are able to access education and life skills training that promote non-violent conflict resolution and respect for human rights.

Social and economic assets and safety nets

➢ National actors must ensure that parents and caregivers are able to access support mechanisms such as health and social care from pregnancy throughout parenthood. Support is particularly crucial in early childhood. Support must be inclusive, age-sensitive and gender transformative, and must encompass access to information, advice and services.

➢ All actors must ensure that individuals and families are able to gain sufficient income to provide for their household through decent work. Interventions to reduce the economic vulnerability of individuals and families and to empower them to provide for the essential needs of the children whom they care for must also be in place.

Policy frameworks and budgets

➢ All actors must work to ensure that legal and policy frameworks protect the rights of children to live free from violence and fear. Laws and policies must be developed inclusively, be enforced appropriately, and have budget allocated for implementation. Effective access to justice and accountability mechanisms and/or procedures must be in place, and discriminatory provisions in legal frameworks, including punitive provisions, must be removed.

➢ All actors must work to ensure that children are able to grow up in safe environments. Violence reduction strategies must be implemented at the family and community levels, and include strategies for safe schools and other institutions. Planning should take place in consultation with community members – including children. Children should be able to access information about the violence prevention and response mechanisms available to them, and be able to report unsafe spaces.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK AND MECHANISMS

To be protected from violence and to live a life free from all its forms is a fundamental human right and is enshrined in numerous international human rights frameworks and standards. These include (but are not limited to) the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its three optional protocols; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour) and Recommendation 190; the UN Protocol on trafficking in persons (and Palermo protocols on transnational organised crime); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and Agenda 2030 (specifically Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, 8, 11 and 16).

There are also a number of regional instruments that address violence, including the Maputo Protocol (African Union), the Istanbul Convention (European Union), and Belem do Para (Latin America), among others.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) clearly states that children have the right to be protected from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse". There are many other articles in the Convention that touch upon various elements of a child's right to be protected from violence, including:

- ➢ Article 11: cross-border trafficking
- ➢ Article 25: protection of children in alternative care environments
- ➢ Article 32: economic exploitation and from child labour
- ➢ Article 35: abduction, sale and trafficking of children
- ➢ Article 36: all forms of exploitation
- ➢ Article 37: no cruel or inhumane punishment (including death penalty, life imprisonment, or otherwise)
- ➢ Article 38: children in armed conflict
- ➢ Article 39: the responsibility of the State to rehabilitate child victims of neglect, abuse and exploitation.

In addition to the many articles of the Convention dealing directly and indirectly with many forms of violence, two of the three Optional Protocols to the Convention deal with two specific forms of violence against children: the use of children in armed conflict, and the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child published a General Comment (No. 13) in 2011 on "the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence". This General Comment aims to further provide guidance to States Parties on their obligation under the UNCRC (in particular Article 19) to protect children from all forms of violence. In this General Comment, the Committee emphasises that child protection must begin by proactively preventing all forms of violence, and all responses must take a child rights-based, comprehensive and integrated approach, avoiding fragmented initiatives. This General Comment is the first official UN document to articulate a definition for a child rights-based approach.[61]

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) does not actually explicitly mention violence as such (although it does mention trafficking and exploitation). However, the Committee has developed several General Recommendations to make clear that States Parties, as part of their obligation under the Convention, do have a responsibility to protect women's right to be free from violence, under General Recommendations 12 and 19, which have recently been updated as General Comment 35. Furthermore, the CEDAW Committee, in partnership with the UNCRC Committee, developed joint General Recommendation 31/General Comment 18 on harmful practices.

CASE STUDY: INSPIRE

The World Health Organization's INSPIRE framework has contributed a helpful outline of both the levels at which interventions must happen, and the strategies which must be put in place to end violence against children:
1. Implementation and enforcement of laws
2. Norms and values
3. Safe environments
4. Parent and caregiver support
5. Income and economic strengthening
6. Response and support services
7. Education and life skills

The INSPIRE strategies, when implemented together, form a holistic approach to ending violence against children. Such complex strategies require multi-sectoral, multi-partner approaches, meaning that they are more complex to design, implement and evaluate. However, where they work they can do much to close the gaps to ensure that children are able to grow up free from the fear or threat of violence. This can happen by:
- ➢ creating safe, sustainable and nurturing family environments, and providing specialised help and support for families at risk of violence;
- ➢ modifying unsafe environments through physical changes;
- ➢ reducing risk factors in public spaces (e.g. schools, places where young people gather) to reduce the threat of violence;
- ➢ addressing gender inequalities in relationships, the home, school, the workplace etc.;
- ➢ changing the cultural attitudes and practices that support the use of violence;
- ➢ ensuring legal frameworks prohibit all forms of violence against children and limit youth access to harmful products, such as alcohol and firearms;
- ➢ providing access to quality response services for children affected by violence;
- ➢ eliminating the cultural, social and economic inequalities that contribute to violence, closing the wealth gap and ensuring equitable access to goods, services and opportunities; and
- ➢ Coordinating the actions of the multiple sectors that have a role to play in preventing and responding to violence against children.

In its General Recommendations, the CEDAW Committee ensures that States Parties understand violence against women (and girls) as a form of gender-based discrimination. In General Recommendation 19, the Committee clearly states that, "violence which is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" is a form of discrimination, and as such, a violation of their human rights. In this way, all of the obligations outlined in the Convention regarding a State's obligation to take steps to ensure that girls and women can live free from discrimination, also apply to violence.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Violence on the whole, as well as specific forms of violence against children, women and girls, are featured prominently in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, peace – that is, fostering "peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence," (A/RES/70/1) – is one of the key pillars of the Agenda.

The full elimination of "abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children" is enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a standalone target (16.2), separated from SDG 16.1 on "significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere".

Additionally, gender-based violence also has its own standalone goal, which aims to, "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); the elimination of harmful practices, including child marriage, also has its own goal (5.3).

Furthermore, States have committed to:

…take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. (8.7)

Other goals contain provisions that are crucial for children's safety, such as Goals 11.2 on safe transport, 11.7 on safe cities, and 4.a on safe, inclusive learning environments.

Implementation of international frameworks and agreements
"I am not aware about the human rights instruments. I only know UNCRC. These instruments provide rights to the children, but it is not practised by governments, as they do not make sure that these are translated into actual action."
14-year-old girl, India

All of Plan International's work is grounded in international human rights law. In line with Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we believe that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and

rights". This of course includes girls and young women. Too often, however, girls' and boys' right to be free from all forms of violence is not respected, and children all over the world continue to live in fear every day.

Children's right to freedom from violence is enshrined in many instruments of international and regional law. It is, indeed, one of the principles in international law upon which there is broad consensus. However, implementation continues to be a challenge, for many reasons. One significant challenge is that many cases of violence against children occur in the private sphere. Although the UNCRC stipulates that States have a responsibility to prevent and address violence wherever it occurs, including in the home, States are often hesitant about "interfering" in the private sphere. Initiatives tabled by states in the United Nations Human Rights Council and General Assembly to "protect the [rights of the] family" are a manifestation of this reluctance. In certain cases, the violations that may occur within the family are masked or even justified under the pretext of "protecting" the "family unit", to serve the greater good of the "family" or for the sake of family "honour".

Many countries have ratified conventions or agreed to consensus documents, but have made reservations to certain provisions, thereby effectively undermining them. Plan International's new research *Girls' Rights are Human Rights* reveals that a large portion of the reservations made concern issues related to family life, gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights – issues critically linked to the elimination of violence against children and gender-based violence. Moreover, many countries have also ratified conventions or agreements but have failed to implement them. This is a challenge for the international community as it prevents real progress towards realising international frameworks and agreements and thus hinders implementation of human rights.

"For us [at] Children Forum Network, we have been working with many stakeholder organisations like Plan International Sierra Leone which today have brought the UNCRC into law but we're still worried about the enforcement of these laws."
18-year-old girl, Sierra Leone

There are some positive movements however. In 2016 at least 16 countries adopted national policies and plans to address sexual violence against children. Other legislation and policy reform relates to promoting gender equality, addressing specific aspects of gender-based violence, prohibiting child marriage and tackling domestic violence.[62] Nevertheless, there is a long way to go, with shortcomings including weak legal frameworks and inadequate enforcement of laws that can result in impunity for perpetrators.

There is a clear and alarming trend away from human rights, which should, in fact, be called an anti-rights trend. Conservative governments and civil society organisations are making concerted, organised and strategic efforts to undermine human rights and gender equality. This means that human rights standards that have been taken for granted for decades (from the adoption of CEDAW in

1979 all the way through to ICPD in 1994 and the Beijing Conference in 1995) are now being fundamentally challenged. Governments are seeking to call into question language used in the United Nations that has long been agreed upon, opting at best for more conservative and less rights-based language, and at worst rolling back individual human rights.[63]

The Sustainable Development Goals can be used as a mechanism to counter this argument. The SDGs contribute towards individual rights through the intersection of economic development, environmental protection and social development that will lead to sustainable development. Realising human rights and gender equality is inherently linked to the eradication of poverty, improving health, preventing and resolving conflicts, mitigating climate change and achieving food sovereignty and nutritional security.

International action to uphold children's right to live free from violence

International structures and actors play a significant role in supporting the implementation of children's right to protection and in holding states accountable as primary duty bearers pursuant to the UNCRC and other international rights instruments. International actors establish mechanisms for reporting, review, monitoring and evaluation, complaints and limited redress. International entities also contribute to the development of research, data analysis, information and database management and advocacy campaigns. International agencies also coordinate child protection responses in emergencies.

At the global level, it is important to galvanise political will and attention to the issue of violence against children. The SDGs have gone some way towards ensuring the question of ending violence against children has remained on the political agenda. However, the SDGs are broad, and progress across all 18 goals is varied. Progress towards ending violence against children is not on track, and at current rates, violence against children will still be a widespread reality in 2030. The 2017 SDG progress report outlines that:

➢ violent forms of child discipline remain pervasive
➢ no region is immune from human trafficking (including trafficking of children)
➢ one in ten children are engaged in child labour
➢ levels of violence against girls and women remain high
➢ child marriage and FGM/C are in decline, but not rapidly enough.

Tellingly, much of the data used in the report is not up to date – with some not covering 2015 onwards at all, which makes it difficult to measure progress against the SDGs. This shows that more rigorous data collection (including disaggregated by sex, age and gender) is needed to ensure that we are collecting the data that will allow us to gauge whether progress towards the SDGs is being made. Within the Together for Girls partnership, countries implementing the Violence Against Children Surveys (VACS) are supported in their efforts to link national data to effective multi-sectoral prevention and response actions. Led by task forces of ministries and civil society

groups, countries including Cambodia, Haiti, Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe have used national VACS data and processes to drive implementation of the types of strategies outlined in INSPIRE (see box on next page).

The international sphere is also a key space in which to ensure accountability for States' obligations under international law, and commitments under the SDGs. Reporting mechanisms at the Human Rights Council are a crucial means of ensuring that progress on realising the rights of all persons is being made. Equally, reporting procedures to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, are key mechanisms to ensure States are meeting their obligations to protect children's and girls' rights. The voluntary national review process at the UN High-Level Political Forum provides an opportunity for States to share progress towards achieving the SDGs. Data collected can provide evidence for what works, and the forum can therefore be used to show best practice.

Significantly more funding needs to go towards ending violence against children. A recent report on global spending estimates that in 2015, $238 million was spent on projects that fully address violence against children, equal to just over 0.1 per cent of total gross official development assistance (ODA). The report noted that a further $837 million (0.5 per cent of total gross ODA) financed projects only partially addressing violence against children. Less than 0.6 per cent of total ODA for 2015 was allocated to ending violence against children. The 107 recipient countries were home to 1.66 billion children who were living there at the time, yielding an average investment estimated to be less than $0.65 per child per year, according to the report.[64] There is currently no global estimate for the proportion of national and international financing that goes towards ending violence against children, but it is clear that the amounts currently being spent are not enough.

International law, agreements and policies too often group girls together with children or with women, obscuring some of the specific barriers and forms of violence they face. The issue of gender-based violence against girls must be differentiated from violence against children and violence against women, which is not currently the case.

Finally, UN efforts to end violence against children also need to be effectively coordinated at the global level, in order to ensure efforts are not being duplicated, that we are learning from our actions, and that we are sharing resources. There are a number of significant global initiatives that facilitate different actors in coming together to explore the most effective strategies for ending violence against children. These include:

➢ The WHO Milestones of a Global Campaign for the Prevention of Violence Meetings take place every other year, where the state of violence prevention science and its uptake at national level are reviewed and strategies for increasing uptake developed.

- ➢ Together for Girls is a public–private partnership that convenes five UN agencies, multiple agencies of the United States government, the government of Canada, the private sector, and partner governments to promote a data-driven multi-sectoral approach to violence prevention and response, and is now active in 22 countries.
- ➢ End Violence Against Children: The Global Partnership is an overarching initiative that aims to unite separate mechanisms and initiatives behind the shared goal of ending violence against children.
- ➢ The role of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, currently held by Marta Santos Pais, is an important function to support progress, collaboration and accountability on ending violence against children.
- ➢ INSPIRE is a set of seven strategies that have shown success in reducing violence against children. It was developed by WHO along with several key partners across government and the UN.

Plan International's position

- ➢ Plan International believes that States must ratify and fully implement all conventions or agreements that relate to violence against children and gender-based violence. This includes all action points listed in obligations in those documents, as well as treaty body General Comments and treaty body Recommendations. This requires governments to align all national and local laws and policies accordingly.

- ➢ We know from our own research that international treaties fail to adequately protect girls from violence. This is both because these treaties are gender blind and because of reservations that limit their applicability. We respect cultural traditions, religious beliefs and social norms where these do not undermine human rights. However, countries should not use these to make reservations to international conventions and agreements in relation to violence against children and gender-based violence. States, along with other actors, must work to close the gaps in international law that allow violence against girls to continue.

- ➢ We believe it is important to collect data disaggregated by age, sex, ethnicity, religion, disability, location, wealth, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and migratory status (with due protections for privacy and human rights). Data collection for adolescents must include the age range 10 to 14 years in order to make younger adolescent girls and their needs visible and to track progress against commitments, policies and programmes on girls and young women.

- ➢ Plan International also supports the call in CEDAW for States to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against girls and women.

- ➢ Plan International strongly condemns those who seek to undermine human rights standards, and in doing so weaken the protection of children against violence. We call on all governments to respect the human rights standards currently in place, to use these as a starting point for negotiations for progress on human rights issues, and to fight efforts to undermine or weaken these standards.

- ➢ Plan International calls on all governments to be transparent and accountable in implementing their commitments on the rights of children to live free from violence. All girls, boys, women and men should be able to access information about national legislation and policy, and corresponding budgets and implementation plans.

- ➢ Plan International recognises the critical roles played by civil society, international organisations, campaigners and activists. This includes ensuring accountability, collecting data, galvanising political will, increasing pressure and securing adequate resources to end violence against children.

- ➢ Gender dynamics drive violence against children, particularly girls. We call upon international actors, particularly those with a child protection mandate, to recognise and respond to these dynamics, and to increase efforts to tackle the high levels and differing forms of violence against girls. We commit to working in partnership with others to ensure transparency, accountability, mutual learning and strong results.

Plan International's recommendations

- ➢ Governments should adopt, budget for, implement and monitor national legislation and policies to ensure all children, adolescents and young people are able to live free from the fear or threat of violence, abuse and exploitation. This should include legislation that protects girls and young women from violence and harmful practices. Legislation and policies should also be fully consistent with international human rights law and take precedence over conflicting customary or religious laws.

- ➢ States must be held to account for violations of international human rights law. This includes utilising the existing accountability mechanisms in place, such as the International Criminal Court, the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council, and the Committee on the Rights on the Child.

- ➢ Governments should regularly report to their parliaments on progress in implementing national

legislation and policies to prevent and respond to violence against children, to ensure transparency and accountability. Children and young people should be enabled to engage in the legislative and budgetary process, through democratic means and meaningful consultation.

➢ Governments must ensure children and young people have access to information about their rights. As a minimum, governments should raise awareness about the UNCRC, including Optional Protocol 3 – Communications Procedure – which outlines an international complaints procedure allowing children from States that have ratified the UNCRC to bring complaints about violations of their rights, including against freedom from violence, directly to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child if they have not found a solution at national level.

➢ Governments should ratify all relevant conventions and agreements in relation to violence against children and gender-based violence, and fully implement these. Governments that have ratified conventions but made reservations to provisions relating to violence against children and gender-based violence should withdraw these reservations.

➢ Governments must work to counter the rights roll-back. Human rights are universal and indivisible, and children are recognised as rights holders. There can be no barriers to children attaining their right to live free from violence, nor can their rights be secondary to the rights of the family – which are not recognised as a human right.

➢ Governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and others must commit to collecting more and better data, disaggregated by age, sex, economic and ethno-linguistic background. States should use the opportunity of the voluntary national review process at the annual UN High-Level Political Forum to show progress towards goals relating to ending violence against children, and to share evidence on what works.

➢ States must recognise violence against children as a significant political, development and rights issue, and must accord it higher political attention commensurate with the scale and gravity of the problem.

➢ States must increase financial resources available for ending violence against children, both through bilateral aid and through multilateral fora such as the Global Fund to End Violence Against Children, recognising that this is a significantly underfunded area, and noting that the costs of preventing violence against children are far outweighed by those of responding to it.

➢ International human rights frameworks can and should also be strengthened to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence at the global level, and that global mechanisms can be effectively utilised to support strengthening of laws and policies to end violence against children at the national level.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT INCREASED RISK OF VIOLENCE

There are factors, both intrinsic and external, that mean some children are at an increased risk of violence than others. This section outlines the factors that are indicators of children being at increased risk of violence – including age, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, adolescence, poverty and economic inequality, children with disabilities, children from ethno-linguistic minorities, and children living in emergency contexts.

The intersection of gender and age dynamics

"We have witnessed girls who have sadly dropped out of school because of not being protected from being forced into marriages."
14-year-old girl, Malawi

Children's vulnerabilities to violence stem from the fact that, generally, they depend on their parents or caregivers for their development, health and wellbeing. In addition to this, social norms which view children as the property of their parents or caregivers render them extremely vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.[65]

Gender dynamics add another layer of vulnerability. Gender influences the way violence is perpetrated against children and how they experience it. Gender-based violence against children refers to the violence inflicted on a child due to stereotypes and roles or social norms attributed to or expected of them according to their sex or gender identity (see section on *social norms*). Gender-based violence is considered a global public health problem of epidemic proportions and a fundamental violation of women's and girls' human rights.[66]

Patriarchy entails the subjugation of girls and women, and manifests in gender inequality and the construction and control of female sexuality.[67]

In their work *Sexual Rights for All*, Runeborg and Andersen describe the mechanisms through which a rigid patriarchy restricts girls' sexuality. "It mandates sexual purity in order to uphold family and community honour, placing this burden squarely on the shoulders of girls. It can promote violent punishment if girls dishonour the family. It requires the tight monitoring of girls' mobility. It structures the lower priority given to girls' education than to boys'. It puts pressure on the most economically disadvantaged families to view marrying their daughters early, while dowry is lower, as the only viable option. Moreover, marrying girls early is favoured so that they are

easier to teach to be submissive – sexually, socially, and economically – to their husbands and in-laws, and to remain focused on bearing children and taking up their domestic roles. Patriarchy operates through all of these controls of sexuality."[68]

It is important to acknowledge that control of female sexuality underpins many forms of violence against women and girls, and to challenge patriarchy in order to prevent this violence.

In situations of increased stress, such as humanitarian crises, family or community members often use girls in order to "gain" an income: by exploiting them sexually, selling them as brides, and using them for domestic labour and other paid labour to ensure the survival of the family. In Jordan, for example, the rate of child marriage in refugee communities increased significantly, from 12 per cent in 2011 to 32 per cent in 2014.[69] Some of these marriages – such as *Nikah mut'ah* (short-term marriages recognised by some sects of Islam) – amount to prostitution, and leave girls particularly vulnerable.

Girls at all stages of their childhood are disproportionately affected by certain forms of gender-based violence as a result of unequal structures of power which discriminate against girls and women, and see them treated as inferior to boys and men. The possibility and threat of violence informs girls' choices, constrains their potential, and intimidates them into conforming to the oppressive status quo and adopting typical "feminine behaviours". According to researcher Judith Bruce, violence "conditions [girls] to avoid opportunity in order to manage risk. As girls internalize their responsibility for managing this risk, they begin to pre-censor their potential."[70]

Adolescence
Children are more likely to experience certain forms of violence at differing stages of their childhood (see Annex 2). However, for all children, the violence that they experience worsens as they enter adolescence.[71] As children grow up, they experience a series of life stages involving changes in a child's cognitive, physical and moral development. Plan International's research on social norms in Uganda, for example, has shown that adolescence is a period of an individual's life in which

they are expected to become more independent and "look after themselves".[72] Families and communities may expect adolescents to take on increasingly adult responsibilities. As adolescents become more independent and begin interacting with peer groups and people outside their family environment, they become more susceptible to violence.

For girls in particular, adolescence is a time when their worlds start to shrink, when families and communities start to restrict their opportunities and when their vulnerabilities increase.[73] During their transition into womanhood, sexuality and gender roles assume greater importance in how adolescent girls are viewed by society. Girls become more vulnerable to violence, which is used as a tool to control female sexuality.[74] As they grow up, they are at heightened risk of sexual victimisation outside the home through increased exposure to both strangers and peers, the latter in the context of both friendship and intimate relationships.[75] The threat or fear of such violence and its consequences often leads families and communities to impose restrictions on girls' mobility and life choices. Adolescent girls may encounter more unwanted and insistent sexual advances as they physically mature. The heightened perceived risk of violence in adolescence also hugely impacts on girls' independence, and on their social and physical mobility.

Children with no legal identity
Around the world, 230 million children have not had their births registered and more than 100 developing countries do not have well-functioning systems in place to register key life events like births, deaths and marriages.

Birth registration is the first step towards a legal identity and is necessary for children to be able to go to school or get medical treatment. When children are registered and there is documentation to show their identity, they are better protected from child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) or from being trafficked and forced to work in exploitative conditions. Furthermore, a strong civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system means a government has the most reliable source of data possible about a population at its fingertips.

CASE STUDY: Real choices, real lives

Plan International is following the lives of 142 girls living in poverty in nine countries, across three continents, over their first 18 years. We are documenting the detailed experiences of these girls and their families, including the voices of the girls themselves as they describe their hopes and dreams and their daily realities.

In 2017, the girls in the study turned 10 – a transitory age between middle childhood and early adolescence. The 2017 report shows increased incidences of violence as the girls begin to transition into adolescence, due to increased mobility and the onset of puberty (associated with prescribed sexualised identities along with gender norms).

The majority of the violence reported occurs at school, with peers being the main perpetrators. However, the report also found that violence is now often used at home to teach a curriculum of gender roles and chores.

Experience and the fear of sexual violence is also beginning to constrain girls' opportunities and aspirations for the future. The girls are already reporting ways in which they have changed their behaviour and actions to reduce the threat of violence.

The impact of not being registered is most strongly felt by those who are already on the fringes of society, such as migrant populations, ethnic minorities or children with disabilities. Children whose births are not registered are much more vulnerable to violence, because they are outside any formal system, and have no protection mechanisms.

Children who are stateless are also more vulnerable to violence. It is estimated that approximately 70,000 children are born stateless each year. Stateless people are more likely to be forcibly displaced, both within their country of habitual residence, as internally displaced persons (IDPs), and across international borders. Stateless children are at a higher risk of becoming involved in hazardous work, sexual exploitation, trafficking and recruitment into armed groups. Stateless and displaced individuals may also find it more difficult to cross international borders as neighbouring states may be unwilling to allow stateless people to enter; this has been the case for stateless Palestinian refugees from Syria, who have faced serious barriers in attempting to flee the conflict. Lack of proof of identity, nationality or country of origin can also mean that stateless children are at greater risk of being detained or forcibly returned.[76]

Poverty and economic inequality

"Some children spend most hours of the day at home and at school but some spend more time in their communities selling sachet water and small items on the street where they are exposed to many forms of abuse and exploitation."
16-year-old girl, Sierra Leone

Violence and poverty have a complex mutual relationship – with high levels of violence driving poverty, and high levels of poverty exacerbating violence.[77] Exposure to violence is more prevalent in communities that are impoverished or isolated.[78] Poverty can be associated with alcohol abuse and high levels of family stress, which are in turn associated with higher levels of violence in the home. Economic assets can therefore be a protective factor, reducing violence against children. Structural poverty also means that prevention and protection mechanisms are less likely to be in place. This leads to victims being unable to seek help and support, and to perpetrators being able to act with impunity. Where high levels of violence do exist, these factors drive poverty due to the widespread consequences of violence, and the considerable impact on human and economic development.

Violence against children is a global problem affecting both high income countries and low to middle income countries. However, research has shown that the burden of child injury and violence is heaviest in low to middle income countries.[79] Plan International's research in Colombia and Uganda indicates that violence is driven by the intersection between economic poverty and social norms.

Intimate partner violence, both against girls and young women, and witnessed by children, is also driven by poverty. Research shows that while intimate partner violence is experienced by women from all backgrounds regardless of their socio-economic status, poverty is a

key driver at the individual level.[80] Qualitative research also suggests that in contexts of economic marginalisation, men who are unable to achieve markers of "masculinity" and "respect" by providing financially in relationships may establish alternative forms of masculinity, which reinforce control and dominance over women, including through the use of violence.

Conflict and gang violence is also driven by individual and structural poverty. Research across six countries showed that 40 per cent of young people join gangs or rebel groups due to unemployment.[81] Two-thirds of all child homicides take place in either low or lower-middle income countries.

Income and economic strengthening interventions can benefit children by reducing child maltreatment and decreasing intimate partner violence. This can minimise the likelihood that children witness such violence and suffer the consequences, including the potential that children themselves become victims or perpetrators of violence. In addition, increasing women's access to economic resources strengthens household economic status in ways that can prevent the abuse and neglect of children: by increasing the share of household income that women control, either through their own earnings or cash transfers, household spending is changed in ways that benefit children. For example, women are more likely to increase investments in their children's education, thereby improving school attendance – a protective factor for violence against children.

Children with disabilities

As outlined in Plan International's *Tackling Exclusion Framework*, gender norms and inequalities intersect with other forms of exclusion[82] and patterns of discrimination. Children with disabilities experience extremely high levels of violence compared to children without disabilities – despite the SDGs rallying the world behind the promise to "leave no one behind".[83] Girls and boys with different types of impairments are vulnerable to many forms of violence, but violence is most noticeable for children with intellectual impairments and communication difficulties. Children with disabilities might find it difficult to access child protection mechanisms due to a range of barriers including environmental, social and institutional barriers. Negative social and cultural norms within the community around disability were strongly identified in Plan International's research on children with disabilities, in particular a view that children with disabilities are perceived as "useless" and that they are seen as an "easy target" for violence.[84]

Disability intersects with gender dynamics, and girls with disabilities are more likely to report emotional and sexual violence than girls without disabilities. According to research carried out by Plan International Norway, girls with disabilities reported significantly higher levels of emotional violence from school staff (24 per cent of respondents reported this) and peers (39 per cent) than girls without disabilities (8 per cent and 13 per cent respectively).[85]

Children with a "different" sexual orientation or gender identity

LGBTIQ adolescents and youth are often deliberately targeted and victimised as a result of their sexual orientation or identity. In counties where same-sex relationships are criminalised and discrimination is state-sponsored, LGBTIQ people often suffer from arbitrary arrests, judicial violence, imprisonment and torture.[86] However, hate crimes, violence and killings also happen in countries that are considered "liberal". For example, in 2014, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights documented the pervasive nature of violence against LGBT people in the Americas, including murders. Through its Registry of Violence, the Commission found that, during this period, at least 594 people who were LGBT, or perceived to be so, were killed.[87]

Recent moves at the UN in favour of "protection of the family" undermine the rights of individuals within family contexts, and conflict with established principles of international human rights law, including universality and indivisibility. All over the world, various forms of family exist. The family is diverse. A standardised approach to "the family" excludes, discriminates against and stigmatises many forms of families.

Ethno-linguistic minorities / indigenous groups

"In my ethnic group more value is placed on boys to be educated. At 16 years my parents wanted to send me into marriage, I refused and that separated us."
19-year-old girl, Sierra Leone

Evidence shows that children, adolescents and youth from ethno-linguistic minorities or indigenous groups, are more likely to experience violence. This is because race and ethnic discrimination, age, gender and dispossession of lands put them in positions that expose them to higher rates of violence. Studies have found that indigenous and ethnic minority groups in Nepal, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Taiwan, Bolivia, Thailand and Uganda disproportionately face hazardous economic and sexual exploitation.[88] Bolivia, India and the Philippines all report higher rates of intimate partner violence faced by indigenous/scheduled tribal women and girls.[89]

Higher rates of gender-based violence targeting indigenous women have been documented in the context of forced displacement and political conflict in Central and South America, the Asia-Pacific as well as East and Central Africa.[90] At its very worst, violence against ethno-linguistic minorities can amount to ethnic cleansing, as has been seen against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. Widespread murder and rape – including the rape of children and infants – and the burning down of entire villages, has driven more than half the population to flee over the border to Bangladesh.[91]

"Children's rights have to be respected in all countries, for example here people treat Haitian people with [a] certain difference, and I believe that Haitian people are like us, we all have the same blood… Haitian children, as Dominican children, feel, and are, human. Otherwise they would be named Dominican rights instead of human rights."
13-year-old girl, Dominican Republic

Children who speak out

Children who choose to speak out about issues that affect them – whether political, social or cultural – can be subject to abuse because of their views. Feminists are frequent targets of violence and abuse all over the world. In some cases, groups or individuals are targeted more systematically, as a means of silencing them. Feminist activists and women human rights defenders are a targeted group who experience persecution because of their political views. The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) publishes an annual tribute to women activists and human rights defenders who have died or been killed. In 2017, more than half of those on the list had been murdered or disappeared in suspicious circumstances. The list includes a number of young women murder victims: Jennifer Lopez, 23, from Mexico, Micaela Garcia, 21, from Argentina and Hande Kader, 23, a transgender woman from Turkey.[92]

A growing means of silencing children and young people who speak out is through online abuse and intimidation. From recent research in the UK, Plan International found that 43 per cent of girls admitted to holding back their opinions on social media for fear of being criticised.[93]

Humanitarian emergencies

Often, forms of violence are pre-existing before conflict, disasters and displacement occur, but are exacerbated and intensified by emergencies with serious consequences for children, especially girls. Emergencies threaten livelihoods and increase poverty and food insecurity, all of which can result in heightened financial pressures in families and can generate anxiety, tensions and stress among parents and caregivers struggling to survive and provide for their families.[94] Plan International research with Syrian refugees in Jordan suggests that widespread bullying, physical violence and domestic violence committed against children can be partially attributed to rising levels of stress within those families.[95]

Changing family dynamics, particularly the loss of male family members who join armies, migrate or are killed as result of conflict, leaves behind disproportionate numbers of women, children and older people. It can also lead to increased numbers of female-headed households, which can be more vulnerable, and are generally poorer. Families may also take in relatives or neighbours, including orphans or children who have been separated from their families.[96] These changes in family dynamics may cause further emotional and financial stress, particularly for single parents or caregivers – and can result in violence against children.[97]

In some instances, emergencies can shift traditional gender roles, including when men can no longer maintain their role as "breadwinner" and women start to take up income-generating activities.[98] While this has been linked to increased economic opportunity for women and girls, men may resent these changes and attempt to reassert male power and dominance by resorting to violence against their families and towards other women and girls.[99]

Emergencies are also associated with the breakdown of institutions, including legal, medical and social services.[100] Informal community systems and networks, which play a critical role in child protection, also tend to be disrupted by emergencies and the related displacement. These factors lead to weakened community coherence, diminished social support and isolation, all of which make it more difficult for violence against children to be recognised, reported and prevented.[101] The breakdown of institutions and informal systems also opens up a gap for criminal and corrupt exploitation of the most vulnerable, particularly children.[102]

In humanitarian emergencies, protective family and social structures become strained or broken. In contexts where gender inequality and vulnerabilities stemming from childhood mean that girls already hold little to no political, social or economic power, humanitarian emergencies can exacerbate the violence that they experience. For example, recurring natural disasters in countries where gender-based violence is already dominant such as in the Philippines mean that girls and women face continued cycles of heightened risks of violence. Almost a quarter of young women aged 18 to 24 years living in areas of the Philippines hit by Typhoon Bopha in December 2012 reported experiencing intimate partner violence during or immediately after the typhoon or during longstanding conflict in Mindanao.[103]

Plan International's position

➢ **Plan International believes that approaches to ending violence against children must be holistic. They must ensure that systems are in place to protect every child from violence. However, we recognise that certain groups of children are more vulnerable to violence. Typically they are girls, children with disabilities, those with no legal identity or who speak out, those who come from ethno-linguistic minorities, those living in extreme poverty or affected by crisis, and those who identify as LGBTIQ. Early childhood and adolescence are both stages at which children are more vulnerable to violence. We must prioritise those who are the most vulnerable and excluded, directing increased attention, resources and safeguarding to them, to ensure that no one is left behind.**

Plan International's recommendations

➢ **Governments must ensure that protection systems are adequately equipped to deal with the protection needs of all children, and that additional support and resources are available to those from vulnerable or excluded backgrounds, so that all children, adolescents, young people and their families and communities are able to access support.**

➢ **Governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations should collect data, disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other intersectional categorisations, in order to offer a better understanding of where violence is being**

perpetrated, against whom and how we can tackle and prevent it.

➢ **Where relevant, governments must de-criminalise homosexuality, and ensure that those with a different sexual orientation or gender identity are equally able to access protection mechanisms. As a matter of urgency, governments must work to curb the high levels of violence that LGBTIQ individuals face. Governments must also refuse calls for the "protection of the family" in international human rights law, as this undermines individual human rights, and discriminates against many forms of families.**

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Ending violence against children requires strong child protection systems: coordinated formal and informal structures working together to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence against children.

The state is the primary duty bearer, responsible for implementing children's rights to protection. The majority of formal components of the child protection system are put in place and implemented by government authorities at different levels.

Plan International defines a child protection system as: a comprehensive, interactive and sustainable series of functions and structures including laws, policies and services (at all levels) within a country with the purpose of preventing and responding to all forms of violence against all children in that country.

Inclusive, gender transformative and age-sensitive child protection systems recognise the differing needs of children, at different stages of their childhood, and their differing and evolving capacities. These systems also recognise that girls and boys experience different forms of violence, and may therefore have different requirements of prevention, response and support mechanisms. As such, they are adaptive to the needs of the individual. Systems that are responsive to these needs do not require multiple mechanisms; rather all parts of the system should be sensitive to the differing needs of children and the adults with whom they interact.

An effective child protection system comprises not only the institutions of government, but also the children themselves, their families, communities and wider civil society. Each has its responsibilities and plays its role in protecting children.

Increasing the proportion of children who receive response and support services requires the implementation of effective child-focused services and mechanisms for children to seek help, support and care, and to report violent incidents. These can include counselling and referrals to child protection services such as the police, healthcare providers and social welfare

workers, and assistance with securing temporary accommodation when necessary.[104]

Child protection systems must be uniquely adapted to their context. Countries differ in terms of their resources, laws, practices, cultures and capacities to achieve realistic changes within a given period of time. However, national systems should encompass some recognisable features such as the following:

➢ A legal and policy framework that provides agency structures and mandates, service standards and regulations, and judicial responses for children in need of special protection. This framework may include local level, customary by-laws, as well as a penal code that stipulates offences against children.
➢ Services for families and children that are designed to promote child and family welfare and protection and to respond to child protection concerns. These include healthcare, education, social services, social protection mechanisms, legal services and police services. They may be overseen by a single agency, but are often mandated across and provided by a number of different departments and agencies.
➢ Family and community support mechanisms, including forms of mediation, parenting support, kinship care and restorative justice. These processes are often not formalised by legal regulation.

Child protection systems are supported by:

➢ A range of professionals, volunteers and community actors (some mandated by law) who work to protect children. These may be social workers, health workers, law enforcement personnel, lawyers, teachers, village committees, religious and community leaders, child peers, among others.
➢ Coordination mechanisms and networks charged with managing the child protection system, ensuring its effective functioning – such as ombudspersons, local government officials, civil servants, non-governmental or civil society organisations, community leaders.
➢ Active civil society organisations that represent children, promote their interests and deliver services.
➢ Specialised budgets and funds for implementing the system, aiming to make the system function optimally for the protection of children.

A systems approach recognises the interconnectedness of children's rights and the complex causes and consequences of violence. It seeks to contribute to comprehensive, lasting social change, led by governments that fulfil their primary responsibilities as duty bearers for all children in their country. The approach also recognises that a fragile state (e.g. in situations of emergency) needs support and necessary guidance to build back these mechanisms.

Plan International's position

➢ **Plan International believes that it is the responsibility of national governments, as the primary duty bearer, to uphold the rights of their citizens. But without comprehensive child protection systems, it is impossible to ensure the safety of all children. National governments must**

therefore ensure that effective, age-sensitive, gender transformative child protection mechanisms are in place. Others, such as civil society, UN agencies and the private sector should support national child protection mechanisms where appropriate. Systems must be fully funded and able to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Plan International's recommendations

➢ **Ultimate responsibility for coordination lies with governments. Mechanisms for the leadership and coordination of violence prevention and response activities – including key rule of law institutions – should be established or strengthened where they are non-existent or weak.**
➢ **Governments must improve access to good quality health, social welfare and criminal justice support services for all children who need them – including for reporting violence – in order to reduce the long-term impact of violence.**

➢ **Governments should provide universal access to gender responsive, child-friendly critical services for all survivors of violence. This includes access to appropriate health services, including emergency contraception and psychosocial support; legal assistance; confidential reporting services; and safe houses.**
➢ **Members of the emergency response system, healthcare workers, police and judiciary at local, regional and national levels should be required to undergo training on detection of and response to violence against children and on gender sensitivity. This is to ensure appropriate judicial and health response mechanisms to incidences of harmful practices, sexual violence and exploitation are in place.**
➢ **Governments should ensure efficient and effective linkages with and coordination between relevant sectors with a child protection remit, including the health, education and justice sectors to effectively prevent and respond to violence against children. Systems for exchanging information between sectors should be established, where representatives of relevant sectors can identify emerging problems (and their underlying risk factors) so that appropriate and timely interventions can be made.**
➢ **Where governments are unable to immediately fulfil their responsibilities as primary duty bearers, particularly in the case of conflict, emergencies or humanitarian crises, other actors – UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations – should offer technical, financial and programmatic support.**

SOCIAL NORMS AND VIOLENCE

"People pay more attention to those that are in positions of power such as chiefs and members of parliament at community level."
14-year-old boy, Malawi

There is a tendency to treat violence against children, particularly if it is severe in nature such as child sexual abuse or homicide, as an "out of the ordinary" occurrence perpetrated by an "abnormal individual".[105] This tendency overshadows the fact that for the most part violence against children is a deeply embedded, pervasive social problem that is largely accepted based on social norms, attitudes and beliefs. Social norms interact with different risk factors to create an environment in which violence against children occurs.

It is important to note that social and cultural norms are diverse, and vary according to context and the type of violence. This section provides a broad overview of the social norms that can drive violence against children across diverse settings.

Social norms: the unwritten rules that drive violence against children

Social norms are a pervasive feature of all our lives. Norms are shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour in a group of people, including women, girls, men and boys. Social norms are like informal rules, which also influence (and are influenced by) formal rules such as laws and regulations. Norms shape expectations and attitudes and can sustain and prescribe gender inequality. Around the world, social norms on gender shape the unequal status of girls and women and the expectations of their role in society. While social norms can protect children from violence, they can also inherently tolerate, normalise and even encourage the victimisation of children, especially girls, and the perpetration by adults and peers.[106] When social norms are internalised, they influence individual attitudes and beliefs as well as the ways in which people behave.[107] For example, norms that support violence can be used to justify violent behaviour and practices, excuse perpetrators' actions and blame victims while trivialising their suffering.[108]

Norms around childhood

In some contexts, social norms around the unequal and low status of children in the family and in society exist, whereby children are viewed as property belonging to their parents or caregivers, rather than individuals with their own rights. This is in stark contradiction with the UNCRC, a pivotal premise of which is that children must be recognised, respected and protected as distinct and unique rights holders.[109] A child's inherent dependency on others for their health, development and wellbeing, and their general vulnerabilities due to their age, can intersect with such norms and render them susceptible to violence.

Social norms and beliefs about what girls or boys of different ages should say or do influence the way that adults let children participate in decisions. When children are young, they are often not allowed to express their views at home, school or in the community. This can restrict children's sense of agency and their freedom to speak out, including against violence and other rights violations. Social norms directly inhibit children's right to be heard with due consideration; a right enshrined in Article 12 of the UNCRC.

Social norms around gender and sexuality

"Girls are made to understand that tolerance is their life. As soon as they will learn it, they will be in peace." 15-year-old girl, India

Social norms also place expectations on acceptable behaviours based on a person's sex. These norms dictate what types of behaviours are generally considered acceptable, appropriate or desirable for women, men, boys and girls. They are usually centred on the notions of "femininity" and "masculinity".[110]

Gender norms are expectations about how girls, boys, men and women should behave. Gender norms govern the roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places.

Where gender norms impose rules and limitations on girls and women, they reinforce gender discrimination and low social status. Girls face discrimination based on their sex at every stage of their lives, even from before birth (with cases of sex-selective abortion). These gender norms intersect with norms around childhood, and render girls particularly susceptible to violence as they grow up and transition to adulthood. Plan International's research in Uganda has shown how these beliefs play out in every sphere, from within the family unit to leadership roles in the community.[111]

Girls are expected to comply with, and conform to, certain defined gender roles. The Plan International research highlights how "good" girls are expected to be submissive and responsive to the demands of their fathers, mothers and brothers in Uganda.[112] Similarly, our research in Colombia affirms gendered norms around girls' roles in the household; respondents reported that "good" girls spend time in their homes doing chores, and are rarely seen in public spaces. They highlighted that parents can enforce this by restricting girls' movements in public spaces.[113]

Our research in Uganda shows the sense of shame and stigma attached to those who do not conform to gender norms. One girl stated that:

"The cost of girls who do not follow the norms is losing respect and the result is humiliation. She wouldn't pass in the community without people pointing fingers at her or insulting her in public."[114]

Moreover, if a girl transgresses from socially defined gender norms, it can in some contexts be seen as justification for violence by both men and women. This includes wife-beating and harassment, groping and rape of girls in public spaces.[115] This violence becomes normalised, justified and accepted.

This restriction on girls' freedoms is linked to the notions of girls being defenceless, lacking agency, and being in need of protection from violence or threats outside the home.[116] Girls in Colombia widely reported that they had to seek and obtain permission to leave their house.

Research has suggested that rigid social norms around mobility are some of those that place girls and young women at the highest risk of intimate partner violence.[117] Limiting girls' mobility also has a major impact on their ability to develop broad social networks and peer-to-peer friendships as well as access resources outside the home environment. Where violence does occur within this space and girls do not have direct access to an external support network, they may find it difficult to report such cases and avoid the abusive environment.

In some contexts, girls are viewed as commodities that can be transferred from their parents' home to a husband's home without any voice or agency on their part.[118] Plan International research in Pakistan has shown how girls are considered property of the men in their families, and of their husbands and are "treated like cattle".[119] Plan International's 2017 research in Uganda echoes this, showing that parents' neglect of girls contributes to patterns which perpetuate an intergenerational cycle of household poverty and further entrench attitudes in which girls' bodies and sexual activity are commodities to be bartered.[120]

Girls may be valued first and foremost according to their marriageability or their reproductive capacities – particularly in adolescence.[121] This often results in families seeking to forcibly marry their daughters early, and puts pressure on girls to become pregnant soon after they are married. As such, these norms can mean that girls are forced into sexual slavery. As a wife, girls are also expected to provide for male sexual desires, and it is seen as culturally unacceptable for women to refuse a husband's right to sex.[122]

Social norms and perceptions that female sexuality needs to be controlled and that girls and women should not experience sexual pleasure is deep-rooted and also serves as a driver of harmful practices such as FGM/C.[123] It can also result in girls and young women entering sexual relationships under the impression that they should be submissive and that they should not express their needs and desires.

The justification of violence against girls and women is intrinsically linked to patriarchy, power and control, and a man's perceived right to assert power over women and children, as outlined in Michael Kaufman's article on "the Seven Ps of Men's Violence".[124] This includes widespread social norms around a man's entitlement to "correct" and discipline female behaviour, especially if she does not conform to ascribed gender roles.[125] In some contexts, physical and sexual violence is often seen as a "legitimate" way to exert this control.[126]

Social norms around sexual activity also play a role, and many men believe that they have the right to sex regardless of consent. A recent ActionAid study conducted in the Asia-Pacific region found that the most common motivation reported by male rapists was related to beliefs around sexual entitlement. In most sites of this research, this was reported as justification by 70 to 80 per cent of rapists.[127]

In some contexts, a man's honour is linked to a woman's behaviour, including their sexual behaviour; any deviation from sexual norms disgraces the entire family, which can lead to honour killings and other extreme acts of violence against girls.[128] UNFPA estimates that there are some 5,000 "honour" killings worldwide each year.[129]

This in turn relates to social norms around masculinity and perceptions of "manhood". Research in Bangladesh by the Overseas Development Institute has shown how men are supposed to be angry, tough and aggressive and hold power and control over their wives.[130] Men and boys can also be encouraged and expected to use force and violence to protect the status quo.[131] In some contexts, such as South Africa, sexual activity, including rape, is a marker of masculinity.[132]

Boys who do not fit into conventional notions of masculinity can be emotionally or physically abused, most frequently by their peers. Our research in Colombia has shown that boys who do not demonstrate "macho" behaviours are discriminated against, or labelled as homosexual, which then serves as justification for violence. This can escalate into violence against those

who do not conform to gender norms, putting those with differing sexual orientations or gender identities at extremely high risk.[133] Research in Colombia also suggests that boys who work with and in solidarity with girls to support gender equality are stigmatised, criticised and ostracised for challenging social norms that reinforce male power and privilege.[134]

Violent discipline: links between corporal punishment and wife-beating

Norms around childhood pave the way for parents to control and coerce their children's behaviours, which can escalate into the acceptability of corporal punishment.[135] In relation to child rearing, in some contexts violent discipline is seen as a "normal" and acceptable method of controlling an "unruly" child. UNICEF data across 59 countries reveals that the proportion of adults who think that physical punishment is necessary to properly raise or educate children ranges from a low of three per cent to a high of 82 per cent.[136]

In some countries the acceptability of violent discipline is linked to social norms around violence as a means to resolve conflict, and also links to attitudes around wife-beating. Where norms dictate that girls and women should comply with, and conform to, certain defined roles of "devoted mothers and wives", violence may be seen as a justified form of punishment if such roles are not fulfilled.[137] In many national surveys around the world, substantial proportions of women and men agree that wife-beating is justified for at least one reason, though figures vary widely by country.[138]

Girls themselves internalise these harmful norms. Globally, nearly half (44 per cent) of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 think that a husband or partner is justified in hitting or beating his wife or partner under certain circumstances – if a wife argues with her husband, if she goes out without telling him, neglects the children, refuses to have sexual relations with him or burns the food.[139] Shockingly, in Uganda, some girls reported that there was a harmful myth that wife-beating was a sign of love.[140] In fact, in the least developed countries, girls and women are more likely than boys and men to believe that wife-beating is justified.[141]

Research suggests direct links between acceptance of wife-beating and corporal punishment of children. In surveys from 25 low and middle-income countries, mothers who believed that wife-beating was justified were significantly more likely than other women to believe that corporal punishment is necessary for raising children.[142]

The privacy of the home

Social and cultural acceptance of violence, including sexual violence, as a "private affair" keeps others from intervening when they see or suspect that a child is being harmed. These norms that prioritise family privacy over the wellbeing of the victim also prevent children from speaking out. Findings from a recent UNICEF study on the drivers of violence against children in Swaziland have shown how the notion of "privacy" and "keeping it in the family" – *Tibi Tendlu* – allows for violence to be perpetrated with impunity.[143]

This also relates to intimate partner and domestic violence, where violence between intimate partners is viewed as an ordinary, personal matter in the context of marriage or other formal unions.[144] In five national surveys from Latin America and the Caribbean, between a quarter and a fifth of women said that people outside the family should not intervene when a husband abuses his wife.[145] Plan International's research in Zimbabwe for the *Counting the Invisible* report supports this: 68 per cent of the 121 respondents, girls between the ages of 15 and 19, stated that women put up with violence in order to keep the family together.[146]

Social norms and legislation

Social norms are informal rules that both influence, and are influenced by, formal rules such as laws and policies.[147] This relationship is critical to our understanding of violence against children.

In some contexts, national laws and policies reflect, and foster, social norms. For example, in some states laws still condone "reasonable" or "lawful" corporal punishment and reflect societal approval of violence when it is described (or disguised) as "discipline". In fact, only 53 countries worldwide have prohibited all forms of corporal punishment.[148] Weak legal frameworks and inadequate enforcement of laws can also result in impunity for perpetrators – for example, where laws protect perpetrators of rape from punishment if they marry their victim (this is the case in Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Philippines, Tajikistan and Tunisia).[149]

Decision makers and policy makers at different levels – national to local – may themselves ascribe to social norms, particularly around gender. This hampers progressive laws and policies, and can be particularly evident around issues of violent discipline. Moreover, social acceptance of violence against children undermines political decision makers' motivation and will to invest in improving or enforcing legal frameworks or to invest in protection systems.

Yet, strong legislation can be a key tool in influencing social norms. Laws and policies that ban all forms of violence against children, make violent behaviour a criminal offence, and legitimise actions required to safeguard children's safety and protection at all times, send a strong message in society that such violence is not acceptable.[150] But, the effectiveness of legislation hinges on a number of factors, including its perceived legitimacy. If a law strays too far from social norms, it will be seen as an affront on social and cultural values and customary law; people are unlikely to respect it, and it will not be enforced at local levels.[151]

For example, analysis around the 2005 Domestic Violence Law in Cambodia suggests that prevailing norms around the harmony of the family hindered its efficacy. Victims of domestic violence were still pressured into reconciliation with the husband, and made to believe that they should keep silent about domestic violence in order to keep the family together.[152]

The magnitude of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), even where there has been widespread

legislative change across the globe, highlights the challenges around enforcing national legislation – particularly where it conflicts with established, and deeply ingrained, social norms which can lead to change in practice more quickly than formal legal provisions.[153]

In addition, many countries face the challenge of plural legal systems, incorporating customary or religious law. Where these frameworks contradict or conflict with national legislation, children's rights can be undermined. In the case of child marriage, in some countries dual legal systems allow customary or religious laws that set lower minimum ages of marriage to take precedence over national law. Such exceptions undermine the efficacy of legal protections against child marriage. In Uganda, for example, there are contradictions between customary and statutory laws, which operate side by side. Where state laws emphasise justice for the victim and prioritise the formal reprimand of offenders, traditional justice mechanisms are designed to assure social and cultural stability and "harmonious co-existence". Therefore, it is common that criminal cases are settled amicably through compensation with money and property instead of pursuing legal recourse.

Blame, shame and stigma: silence and under-reporting

A significant obstacle in efforts to end violence against children is the silence that surrounds it. Not only does significant under-reporting stymie efforts to generate accurate statistics and reveal the magnitude of the problem, it also prevents authorities and others from intervening and helping. Due to the shame and stigma that survivors often face when coming forward, current global statistics do not reveal the true magnitude of sexual and gender-based violence.[154]

Violence against children is a complex emotional problem; children often love their perpetrators, and don't want to be taken away from them and put into institutions.

This often results in children protecting their abusers by remaining silent about violence perpetrated against them.

In many settings, social norms lead to victim blaming, rather than blaming perpetrators, reinforcing male sexual entitlement and a man's perceived right to control women. Attitudes stemming from this have been linked to high levels of sexual violence against girls and women in diverse settings, including in the Asia-Pacific region and in South Africa.[155]

In some settings, large proportions of survey respondents considered it acceptable to kill a wife, sister or daughter who "dishonours" their husband or family. It is also reported as acceptable to sexually harass or victimise girls and women who dress in ways deemed to be provocative.[156] In an Eastern Caribbean study, around 77 per cent of respondents said that the way girls dress draws sexual attention from men, placing the responsibility of violence on girls' shoulders.[157]

Normalising victim blaming promotes a belief and attitude among girls that sexual abuse, violence and risky behaviour can be avoided if they themselves change. Many girls in Plan International's research in Uganda and Nicaragua for the *Counting the Invisible* report stated that they could reduce their risk by moderating their own behaviour – for example, by dressing appropriately and restricting their presence in public spaces.[158]

Social norms around blaming the victim mean that many children are unwilling or unable to report violence. Many children are too fearful of the consequences – that they will be blamed or punished – especially when the perpetrator is an adult, family member, or someone in a position of authority.[159] Plan International research in Cairo revealed that girls did not inform parents of sexual harassment on public transport on their way to school out of fear that their parents would stop them from going to school.[160]

CASE STUDY: Plan International Malawi[1]

Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world: around 50 per cent of women aged between 20 and 24 years were married or were in unions before the age of 18. Child marriage rates in Malawi have remained unchanged since 2004.[1]

Plan International has been supporting youth advocacy in Malawi since 2011. In 2014, young people identified child, early and forced marriage as one of the main issues that was keeping girls out of school. They made advocacy to end this harmful practice a priority.

Youth advocacy focused at a national level, lobbying decision makers to strengthen legislation to end child marriage, as well as at sub-national levels, changing social norms by targeting traditional leaders and advocating for inclusion of rules that prevent child marriages in community by-laws.

In 2015, the parliament of Malawi passed the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill, which states that the minimum age of marriage is 18 years. The Constitution was also amended in 2017, removing the provision that allowed children to marry from the age of 15 with parental consent.

Following this success, youth advocates lobbied for traditional leaders to prevent child marriage by ensuring community by-laws stipulated 18 as the minimum age of marriage, and to enforce these by-laws. There has been some success so far, with traditional leaders accepting 18 as the minimum age for marriage in the by-laws in ten districts.

Sexual violence brings with it a particular sense of shame and stigma. Research has shown that between 30 and 80 per cent of child victims do not disclose experiences of sexual abuse until adulthood, while many others remain silent for their entire lives.[161]

Girls find sexual violence particularly difficult to talk about in contexts where they are likely to encounter shame and humiliation for their "behaviour".[162] This is also the case for boys who experience sexual violence, who are expected to adhere to social norms around masculinity.

A staggering statistic that emerged from the recent UNICEF *Violence against Children* study in Swaziland reveals that for every girl known to the Social Welfare department as having experienced sexual violence, there are an estimated 400 girls who have never received help or assistance for acts of sexual violence.[163]

Sometimes, children are unable to report acts of violence because of institutional barriers and a lack of safe, confidential or child-friendly reporting and response mechanisms. In different contexts, whether in schools or alternative care, there may be no officials or people of authority with whom a child can register a complaint. Even when these exist, a lack of trust in the designated officials, or in the safety and confidentiality of a reporting mechanism, may discourage children, and their families, from reporting cases of violence.[164]

Plan International research in Pakistan highlights girls' perception that it would be better for victims of violence to stay quiet rather than speak up. Girls reported that if the news of a girl's rape spreads, it would bring shame on their family and/or her husband, which could then cause further violence to be directed at the girl.[165]

When girls do seek help, most will turn to their families for assistance.[166] Yet, research suggests that parents may also prefer to remain silent particularly if the offender is a family member or an important official as the harassment that could follow might make the situation even more traumatic for the girl and the family.[167] The reputation of families, perpetrators and institutions is also often prioritised over the wellbeing of the survivor. Many families and children do not talk about the violence within their homes because they are afraid of a "loss of face".[168]

Some children and young people, especially girls and young women, do not realise that what they experienced was a form of violence or did not see abuse as a problem. A significant part of the problem is that girls and young women internalise harmful gender norms and blame themselves, believing that they deserve the violence perpetrated against them or that they were asking for it. As such, girls are conditioned into accepting and defending the use of force against them.[169]

In humanitarian emergencies, the overwhelming majority of girls and women do not report violence not just because of shame or stigma, but even more so because in emergencies there are extremely few ways to report safely, to receive help or to be treated with dignity.[170]

Plan International's position

➢ **Plan International believes that the acceptance of violence in itself is a norm that must be challenged as a matter of urgency. It is crucial to challenge gender inequality and social norms that justify violence against children, adolescents and young people, and in particular against girls and young women, and that place blame, shame and stigma on victims. Traditional, cultural or religious grounds should not be used to justify these norms. Violence is never acceptable, in any circumstance, and must at all times be considered a gross human rights violation. Violence is not a private matter – it must be uncovered in order for it to be challenged.**

➢ **Plan International believes that we must all promote and strengthen norms and values that support non-violent, respectful, nurturing, positive, gender equitable relationships for all children and adolescents, including the most vulnerable and excluded.**

➢ **To change attitudes, norms and behaviour, it is crucial to promote intergenerational dialogue on violence against children. Community dialogue can challenge negative attitudes around punishment and dominance, and around views that children are the property of power holders rather than seen as rights holders themselves. Dialogue should include children, adolescents, young people, parents, caregivers, traditional and religious leaders, health workers and teachers, and should be inclusive and accessible to all.**

➢ **Plan International opposes patriarchal systems that reinforce gender inequality and seek to control the lives and sexuality of girls and women through socially defined gender norms. These give lower status to girls and women and are used to justify violence against them. We recognise that girls and women have the right to bodily autonomy and to control their own sexuality. To end gender-based violence, we believe that these prevailing systems of power must be challenged and changed.**

➢ **We believe that creating positive change in behaviours requires an approach that engages boys and men as well as girls and women. Involving boys and men as stakeholders, rights holders and as agents of change is key to challenging dominant norms of masculinity, and to developing equal, safe, respectful and responsible, non-violent relationships.**

➢ **Plan International will also work with others to challenge discriminatory attitudes, norms and behaviours which drive stigma, discrimination and violence towards the most vulnerable and excluded children, particularly children, adolescents and youth who identify as LGBTIQ.**

Plan International's recommendations

➢ Governments, UN bodies and civil society organisations should ensure the participation of communities, families, children, adolescents, young people (including girls and young women), traditional and religious leaders, health workers and teachers on achieving positive change on violence against children and gender-based violence, setting up effective mechanisms for meaningful consultation. This should be with a view to raise awareness of the impact of harmful social and gender norms as well as to mobilise these actors to change harmful attitudes and norms.

➢ Governments need to implement all international and regional commitments, frameworks and policy documents that deal with violence against women and girls, in order to work towards achieving gender equality and engaging boys and men. In this regard, it is crucial that States refer to guidance developed by treaty bodies, particularly the CEDAW and UNCRC Committees.

➢ Boys and men should be supported and enabled to actively participate as agents of change, rights bearers and beneficiaries to challenge existing gender inequalities, harmful gender stereotypes, toxic masculinities and sexual entitlement. Work to engage men and boys should always be carried out with a purview of realising women's and girls' empowerment and rights, and gender justice for all.

➢ Governments, UN bodies and civil society organisations should help children, adolescents and young people, especially girls and young women, to understand and claim their rights. Governments and these organisations should explain how girls and young women can access justice, including through human rights education and dissemination of human rights information in child- and youth-friendly formats. This is critical to children being able to claim their rights.

➢ Children must be recognised as rights holders, as outlined in the UNCRC. Children continue to be viewed as the property of those in whose care they reside, and this leads to significant barriers to them accessing their rights.

➢ States must end impunity for perpetrators and end the blame and stigmatisation of victims. Laws and policies must be strengthened to ensure that violence is never justified under the law. Customary or traditional laws must be harmonised with statutory law, to ensure legal loopholes that allow perpetrators to act with impunity are closed. Local leaders should be supported to become change makers in this process.

VIOLENCE AT HOME AND WITHIN FAMILIES

"Children's rights to life, survival, development, dignity and physical integrity do not stop at the door of the family home, nor do States' obligations to ensure these rights for children." *UN Violence Study, 2006*

The family holds the greatest potential to protect a child and provide for their physical and emotional safety. The UNCRC and international human rights frameworks assert that the family is the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of all its members – and particularly that it is the primary site for a child's healthy, loving and safe upbringing.[171]

The term "family" should be understood loosely, referring to both the core family or household, or alternatively an extended kinship network. Many forms of families exist, beyond the "traditional" nuclear family; by recognising that families exist in different forms also emphasises that there is not one "ideal" social model, version or definition of "family" that is preferable to others.

The importance and complexity of the home

For most children, the home is a place of nurture, safety and security in which they can grow, play, learn and develop without fear.[172] With individual care, attention and support from loving mothers, fathers or legal guardians, children can grow, navigate adolescence and transition into adulthood within safe bounds and with positive role models. The home should also be a space where young adults are free and supported in their decision-making, including about whether, when and whom to marry.

Yet, too often the home and family are spaces where children and young people experience all forms of violence. In fact, evidence suggests that the largest share of violence against children occurs in the family context.[173] Hidden from view, those often closest to a child or young person – including parents, caregivers, grandparents, siblings, extended family, spouses and partners – can abuse their position of trust and subject them to violence and abuse,[174] both directly (through victimising children and young people) and indirectly (through exposing them to domestic violence, for example).

Globally, emotional violence by caregivers is the most common form of violence against children across age groups.[175] Emotional violence can be a form of violent discipline, which an average of seven in ten children experience.[176] Name calling, isolation, rejection, threats, emotional indifference and belittling all undermine a child's psychological development and wellbeing.[177] Emotional and psychological violence are often intrinsically linked to other forms of violence – including physical punishment.

In Plan International's research in Zimbabwe and Nicaragua, girls spoke about the centrality of the family in their lives, and how they highly valued having a family member to talk to about their problems, for support and advice. On the other hand, many girls spoke of the violence they endured at home, and described their home and family as a space where they were badly treated,

undervalued on the account of being a girl, and seen as an unnecessary cost to the household.[178]

For girls, the home can be a particular "site of struggle".[179] Violence, and indeed the threat of violence, is used as a means to control girls – their behaviour, bodies and decisions – and to trap them into inferior positions and economic dependency. It also perpetuates fear of current or former intimate partners (in the case of child marriage) and other abusive family members.

Addressing violence against all children in the home is extremely challenging, particularly because the home and the family are seen as the most "private" of spaces.[180] This poses significant obstacles in monitoring a child's wellbeing, implementing policy, applying legal measures of protection, and ensuring access for child care professionals.[181] Accurate and reliable data on violence in the home is also notoriously difficult to collect. [182]

countries showed that the prevalence of physical violence against pregnant girls ranged from 1 per cent in Cabo Verde up to 17 per cent in Pakistan.[186] In several countries studied, including Haiti and Pakistan, the rates of physical violence during pregnancy for adolescents were also found to be substantially higher than those among older women.

In some societies, violence can set in before a girl is born in the form of gender biased selective abortion. There are approximately 117 million girls and women missing worldwide, largely the result of this manifest violation of girls' human rights.[187] Gender biased selective abortion has led to distorted levels of sex ratio at birth, which reaches as high as 120 male births per 100 female births in several countries, particularly in South and East Asia.[188] There are high social costs of such a demographic imbalance, which particularly affect girls, including abduction, early and forced marriage, trafficking for sexual purposes and sexual violence.[189]

CASE STUDY: Positive parenting

Plan International Vietnam has been implementing the project "Prevention of Physical and Emotional Punishment against Children" in eight provinces across Vietnam. As a contribution to supporting wider positive parenting programming, Plan International has developed training courses and support materials on positive discipline, and has conducted training to ensure that these materials are used effectively.

The positive parenting manual was developed in conjunction with education and psychological specialists, teachers, parents and government officers. Our aim is to help parents and teachers gain a better understanding about children's psychology and the consequences of punishment, while equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively apply positive discipline as an alternative to physical and emotional punishment.

The materials teach adults to refrain from taking their anger out on children. They demonstrate positive disciplines and help their children to behave well without forcing harsh, harmful punishments upon them.

As a result of the training programme, parenting practices have changed over a short timeframe, and parents report having seen favourable changes in their children's behaviour.

However, the home is also the most crucial space within which to address violence. Parents or caregivers are the most important factor in keeping children safe, nurturing them and supporting their development through childhood and into adulthood. Mothers, fathers and caregivers are often the primary and central role models for their children, and play a core role in shaping their children's behavioural and social development. This includes shaping their attitudes around the acceptability of violence. Children who grow up in non-violent, gender equal homes with positive male and female role models, are less likely to be violent, or to agree that violence is acceptable.[183]

Violence during pregnancy
Children born of victims of violence face a higher risk of disability and problems in their nervous system and brain.[184] Domestic violence against pregnant women by their partners, spouses and other members of their family can result in complications in child birth, stillbirths and miscarriages.

Girls face a heightened risk of being subjected to violence when they are pregnant.[185] Data collected from 30

Infanticide and homicide
In some communities that uphold the low status of girls and women and value son preference, female babies and infants can be killed soon after birth.[190] While infanticide has declined since the early 1980s with the rise of technologies that allow for sex-selective abortion, UNFPA still notes it as a form of sex selection and it is an egregious act of violence.[191] Data is not available on the killing of infants with disabilities, but evidence suggests that the proportion is high. Research with the Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network highlighted that this was an issue across every region.[192]

As children grow up, they face gendered risks of homicide. Evidence suggests that boys are more likely to be killed by strangers and girls are at particular risk of being killed by those closest to them. Globally, almost half (47 per cent) of female homicide victims of all ages are killed by family members or intimate partners, whereas the share is just 6 per cent for men.[193]

Violence in early childhood
Infants and young children are the most vulnerable and are more likely to experience violence by primary

caregivers and other family members, because of their dependence on adult caregivers, their lack of mobility and their limited independent social interactions outside the home.[194] Very young children are the least able to draw attention to or report the violence they experience or witness in the home. The violence in their lives is often the most "invisible".[195]

Neglect – the failure to meet children's physical and emotional needs, protect them from hunger or obtain medical or other services when needed – particularly affects children in the early years. Boys are biologically weaker than girls. They are more likely to be born prematurely and are more likely to die in the first years of life: therefore child mortality rates are expected to be higher among boys.[196] However, neglect can particularly affect girls as they grow up, especially in communities that discriminate against and place little value on girls, where they are often breast-fed less and given less food, or poorer quality food, than boys. Research in India in 2015[197] showed that medical and nutritional neglect of girls is believed to be the cause of the considerably higher female mortality rate in children aged one to five years.[198]

In lower and middle-income countries, rates of child abuse and homicide for children from birth to four years are reported to be more than double those for children in the 5 to 14 year age group.[199] Research from a number of countries indicates that "shaken baby syndrome" – the abuse of small children by shaking – is frequently related to head injuries and severe brain injuries.[200]

Research suggests that early exposure to violence and other circumstances that produce persistent fear and chronic anxiety can have lifelong consequences by disrupting the developing architecture of the brain.[201] Violence in early childhood increases a child's risk of developmental delays, as well as stress-related health problems later in life – such as heart disease, substance abuse and depression. [202]

Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment is a means to control and discipline a child's behaviour in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. It includes acts such as kicking, pinching, spanking, shaking or throwing children, hitting them with a hand or object (such as a whip, stick, belt, shoe or wooden spoon) or forcing them to ingest something.[203]

Corporal punishment violates the UNCRC, specifically Article 19's guarantee of protection from all physical and mental violence and Article 37's protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. Yet, at least 78 per cent of children across the globe face some form of violent discipline in the supposed safety of their own homes,[204] with boys particularly vulnerable. Children with neuro-developmental disorders and behavioural problems are particularly vulnerable to corporal punishment, as parents frequently find it more difficult to form a strong emotional attachment.

Parents and caregivers are often cited as perpetrators of violent discipline. In most instances, parents do not

believe that they are harming their children. For example, results of the 2016 National Baseline Study on violence against children in the Philippines reveal the influence of social norms and values that accept or condone some forms of violence, particularly corporal punishment, which is seen to be "necessary" and even perceived to be "helpful" to children.

Young children are extremely vulnerable to corporal punishment. Data for two to four year olds across 58 countries shows that children within this age group who experienced any violent discipline in the surveyed month ranged from almost 90 per cent in some countries such as Algeria, Morocco, Swaziland, Yemen, Cameroon, Central African Republic and Tunisia to 45 per cent as the minimum level in Panama and Mongolia.[205]

A frequent driver of violent discipline is when parents do not understand young children's behaviours – and when what constitutes normal behaviours run counter to their expectations for good behaviour. Helping parents and caregivers to understand the importance of positive, non-violent discipline in child development and of close, effective parent–child communication reduces harsh parenting practices, creates positive parent–child interactions and helps increase bonding between parents or other caregivers and children – all factors that help prevent violence against children. Supporting families, parents and caregivers to learn positive parenting can prevent the separation of children from families, the risk of child maltreatment at home, witnessing intimate partner violence against mothers or stepmothers, and violent behaviour among children and adolescents.[206]

Studies suggest that laws prohibiting corporal punishment can also reduce the use of violent punishment against children, deepen understanding of the negative effects on children of violent punishment, and change attitudes towards the use of such punishment.[207] A systematic review showed that legislative restrictions on corporal punishment in 24 countries were closely associated with decreased support for and use of corporal punishment as a child discipline approach.[208]

The WHO, Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), UNICEF and the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) are currently developing the Nurturing Care Framework, which explains the importance of parents/caregivers providing responsive caregiving and early learning opportunities; adopting key practices for children's health and nutrition; and keeping children safe, secure and protected from violence and toxic stress.

A number of countries have recently adopted legislation prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment in the homes. However, as of December 2016, there were 127 states where children could be lawfully hit in the family home.[209]

Incest

Sexual violence against children is particularly acute when a child's family exploits their position of trust to perpetrate acts of violence. Both girls and boys under-report incest. However, it is most commonly reported as

perpetrated by male family members – brothers, uncles, step-fathers, fathers – against girls.[210]

Incest is associated with shame, secrecy and denial, and a particularly pervasive culture of silence. It is associated with significant gaps in evidence and data.[211] Children who have been sexually abused by family members are particularly hesitant to report this for fear of what will happen to them and their families; that their families will reject them; or that they will not be believed.[212] Girls who disclose such sexual violence risk being blamed, beaten and even killed.

Intimate partner violence

"I believe that parents should solve their problems together, sit around a table and talk, because there are parents that fight and hit their children… then children go to school as if they were lions that can hit everybody, they should meet and talk to them, tell them things as they are."
14-year-old girl, Dominican Republic

Violence directed at girls and women by an intimate partner is the most common form of gender-based violence. In societies that sanction male dominance over women, violence between intimate partners may be perceived as an ordinary aspect of interpersonal dynamics between husband and wife.[213] Sexual violence within marriage is a blurred policy area, and a mere 52 countries legally recognise rape in formal unions as a crime.[214]

One in three (approximately 84 million) adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 who are in formal unions worldwide have been victims of emotional, physical or sexual violence committed by their husbands or partners at some point in their lives.[215] Research shows that girls who marry in childhood are at greater risk of intimate partner violence than their peers who marry later.[216]

Those in informal relationships can be equally vulnerable to intimate partner violence.[217] Dating violence – which refers to a pattern of controlling or violent behaviours by a former or current dating partner – can escalate into serious forms of physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Experiencing such violence can lead to lifelong abusive relationships. In Plan International's research in Pakistan, four out of ten girls interviewed accepted violent behaviour from boyfriends.[218]

The UN Violence Study estimated that anywhere between 133 million and 275 million children worldwide witness domestic violence annually,[219] severely inhibiting their wellbeing, personal development and social interaction in childhood and adulthood. Recent research has shown a direct correlation between violence against children and violence against women: children are more likely to be physically abused in homes where women are victims of intimate partner violence, with estimates of the likelihood of the two co-occurring ranging from 18 to 67 per cent. Intimate partner violence also has an impact on women's mental health and in turn on their capacity to provide responsive care to their children.

Heavy alcohol consumption is a risk factor for most forms of violence against and among children, including child maltreatment, physical and sexual violence among male and female adolescents, and intimate partner violence.[220] Globally, 17 per cent of male and 6 per cent of female adolescents aged 15 to 19 years are estimated to be heavy drinkers.[221] Laws and policies limiting children's access to alcohol and adults' and children's misuse of alcohol can therefore play an important role in preventing violence against children.

Small group programmes targeting adult men and women and adolescent girls and boys report a number of significant violence prevention outcomes.[222] Boys and men in India participating in the Yaari-Dosti programme were found to have 20 to 30 per cent decreases in perpetrating intimate partner violence.[223]

"Most of the time, women and girls live in fear to express the violence they face, as everyone in the community takes it to be normal."
16-year-old girl, Malawi

Violence and CEFM and other under-age, formal unions

"Our greatest disadvantage here in Sierra Leone is the cultural diversity on many issues. Most people believe that these harmful practices are not in the first place harmful but rather help to strengthen women for decision-making in their homes."
22-year-old man, Sierra Leone

Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) is, in itself, an act of violence. It constitutes a life-changing decision that is out of the hands of the girl concerned and subjects her to the negative and harmful consequences of that decision. This includes imposing adult roles and responsibilities before she is physically and psychologically prepared, preventing her from being able to continue her education, imposing social isolation and subjecting her to unequal power dynamics.

In almost all cases, CEFM leads to physical and sexual violence by partners, premature onset of sexual activity, coerced sexual intercourse or rape, and has a severe impact on the health and wellbeing of the girl concerned.[224] The greater the age disparity, the less power a girl has within her marriage, and the greater the chance of violence. Young girls married to older men are less able to make decisions, negotiate within their relationship, or have control within the home.[225] They can be exposed to sexually transmitted infections, may become pregnant before their body is ready and subsequently experience complications during pregnancy resulting in disability or even death.[226]

In the worst cases, child marriage is a widely socially legitimised form of slavery, particularly where the child is subjected to control and a sense of "ownership" in the marriage through violence, abuse and threats. This occurs where a bride price is paid; where the child is exploited by being forced to undertake domestic chores within the marital home or labour outside it, and/or engaging in non-consensual sexual relations; and where

the child cannot realistically leave or end the marriage, leading potentially to a lifetime of slavery.[227]

While the majority of countries have, in recent years, outlawed CEFM – most recently El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala – social norms continue to undermine legislation and the harmful practice continues: at current prevalence more than 150 million girls are likely to marry by 2030.[228]

Plan International's position

➢ Plan International considers the home to be the most important place in a child's upbringing – a space where they should feel cared for, nurtured and supported. With loving mothers, fathers or legal guardians, children can grow, navigate adolescence and transition into adulthood within safe bounds and with positive role models. No child, adolescent or young person should be subject to violence of any description in the home – including neglect, emotional, psychological, physical or sexual violence – or witness violence against others.

➢ Plan International strongly condemns intimate partner violence, and recognises that it disproportionally affects girls and women. Protective measures for victims of violence, including victims of incest, sexual violence and rape, should include effective mechanisms to ensure care, support and protection, including the provision of safe houses, access to healthcare (including emergency contraception), psychosocial support, access to safe abortion services and effective means to seek justice and redress. Support services should respond to violence against girls in a way that does not reinforce harmful attitudes.

➢ Plan International condemns the practice of CEFM and sees it as a form of violence against girls. We call for the prohibition of the practice under national and customary law, and for the full and effective enforcement of these laws. In line with the UNCRC General Comment No. 4, Plan International believes that the minimum age for marriage should be 18 and that this should apply equally to both men and women, regardless of any provisions concerning parental or judicial consent.

➢ We condemn violent punishment within the home, and believe that corporal punishment is never an acceptable form of discipline. Positive parenting support and advice should include information and advice to reduce harsh parenting practices and create positive parent–child relationships.

Plan International's recommendations

➢ Governments should strengthen laws protecting children within the home. This includes laws prohibiting violent discipline within the home; preventing alcohol misuse; prohibiting marriage under the age of 18, regardless of parental,

judicial or religious consent; and laws criminalising violence within marriage – including recognising marital rape.

➢ Governments should invest in raising public awareness of laws and policies that prohibit violence within the home, as well as the harmful consequences of violence, and support mechanisms that are available for victims of violence. Children in particular should be made aware of their right to protection and of appropriate, child-friendly mechanisms to report any fears of, or actual incidences of violence. They should be given the assurance that their reporting will be taken seriously by professionally trained adults and without threat of backlash.

➢ Governments should ensure that dedicated, child- and youth-friendly support systems and mechanisms are available to children, adolescents and young people who have been victims of violence within the home. This requires a multi-systemic response from the local level to the national level, including legal assistance, healthcare, psychosocial support and educational services.

➢ Training should be provided to ensure that all workers within the child protection system are able to respond to violence against children in an inclusive, gender and age-sensitive manner. This includes the judiciary, law enforcement personnel, social workers, teachers and health workers.

➢ People in contact with families with young children, such as primary healthcare workers and community health workers (particularly in the first three to four years before they start any sort of pre-school) need to be trained to identify where there is risk of violence or abuse; to identify children who have been victimised and to know what to do in these cases.

➢ Governments should invest in positive parenting programmes, including training and support delivered in groups in community settings or as part of comprehensive programmes, to ensure that parents are able to access the support and information they need to care for their children.

➢ Governments and other service providers should ensure the provision of universal access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) for all children, adolescents and young people, both in and out of school. CSE should start in the pre-school years, with the content tailored to the evolving capacities of the child. Those conducting CSE should be trained and equipped to deliver CSE that is non-discriminatory, inclusive and accessible, non-judgemental, scientifically accurate, rights-based, gender transformative and effective. Information should be available to parents, caregivers, traditional and religious leaders and other gatekeepers to

VIOLENCE IN AND AROUND SCHOOLS

Globally, children spend the most time outside their homes in schools or educational settings in the care of adults.[229] Schools have an important role to play in protecting children from violence, and adults who oversee and work in educational settings have a duty to provide a safe environment that supports and promotes children's dignity and development.

However, millions of children across the world are exposed to violence in and around schools and educational settings, and on the journey to and from school. The failure to protect children from all forms of violence, including during their school lives, is a violation of their rights, a serious barrier to realising the right to education, and compromises their development and wellbeing.

The Special Representative to the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children recognises that education plays a crucial role in safeguarding children's rights, and that violence-free schools are a catalyst for non-violence in communities.[230]

School-related gender-based violence

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) refers to acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence inflicted on children in and around schools because of stereotypes and roles or norms attributed to or expected of them due to their sex or gendered identity. It also refers to the differences between girls' and boys' experiences of and vulnerabilities to violence.[231]

SRGBV often occurs in unsupervised and private spaces – such as in school toilets, dormitories, in classrooms outside teaching hours, in teachers' residences or around school perimeters. However, where violent behaviour is normalised it can also take place in plain sight – in the classroom or school corridors. In this environment, bystanders who fail to intervene when witnessing acts of violence are complicit in that violence.

SRGBV is not restricted by region or income. SRGBV can be perpetrated by other students, or by teachers or other school staff, and can be in the form of: bullying, sexual violence and corporal and other degrading or violent forms of punishment.[232]

SRGBV is correlated with lower academic achievement and economic security, as well as greater long-term health risks.[233] Where schools do not challenge negative gender norms, they may reinforce damaging attitudes and beliefs – thus schools have an increased responsibility to challenge gender inequality and gender-based violence in all its manifestations.

In most societies, unequal power relations between adults and children and the gender stereotypes and roles attributed to girls and boys leave school girls especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, transactional sex or "sex for grades", non-consensual touching and sexual relationships, rape, coercion, exploitation and discrimination from teachers, staff and peers. Boys and girls who do not conform to dominant notions of heterosexual masculinity or femininity are also vulnerable to sexual violence and bullying.

Despite progress in data collection, there remains a lack of global data on violence that takes place in and around schools. This is because it is an under-funded and under-researched area, but also because school children do not always have access to safe, child-friendly reporting mechanisms, and do not always understand that cultures of violence are not acceptable, and therefore violence in schools often goes unreported.

While teachers are often key allies in preventing SRGBV, they can exploit their authority and power to perpetrate violence against children. In some contexts is not uncommon to find teachers promising higher grades, school supplies or reduced school fees in exchange for sex with girls and, less frequently, with boys. Teachers may even blackmail girls to engage in sexual activities with them by, for example, threatening them with negative assessments of their school achievement or by refusing to issue them with a school certificate. In West and Central Africa, this exploitation of girls has led to the reported practice of "sex for grades".[234] It is a symptom of unequal power relations and, often, gender inequality in schools.

In a UNICEF study in Botswana 70 per cent of respondents had experienced sexual harassment, and 20 per cent had been asked for sex by a teacher.[235] In an ActionAid study in Kenya, five per cent of girls reported having been forced to have sex with a teacher.[236] Recent research by Plan International shows that 22 per cent of women in the UK had experienced sexual touching, groping, flashing, sexual assault or rape in or around school when they were students.[237] More than a quarter of girls responding to Plan International's *Hear Our Voices* study, which surveyed children and young people from 11 different countries, also claimed they "never" or "seldom" felt safe on their way to school.[238]

Female toilet facilities can also be a dangerous place for girls in schools. Recent Plan International research in Nicaragua and Ecuador has shown that 74 and 70 per cent of girls respectively disagreed that they always felt safe using toilets or latrines in school.[239]

Bullying

One of the most pervasive forms of violence in schools is bullying. Bullying refers to repeated aggressive episodes where there is a power imbalance between the bully and his/her victim, and is a subset of "peer violence".[240]

Surveys show that between a fifth (China) and two-thirds (Zambia) of children reported having been victims of verbal or physical bullying.[241] Up to 60 per cent of adolescents in Ghana aged between 13 and 15 reported being victims of physical attacks in the last 12 months, according to UNICEF data on child protection.[242] Data from global school-based Student Health Surveys shows that worldwide, more than one in three students between

the ages of 13 and 15 reported being the victim of bullying in the last year.[243] Children with disabilities are more likely to be victims of discrimination and bullying from their peers,[244] as are LGBTIQ children.[245]

The 2006 UN study on violence against children underlines that almost all bullying is sexual or gender-based in nature, aimed at putting pressure on children to conform to cultural values and social attitudes, especially those that define perceived masculine or feminine roles.[246]

Although the prevalence of bullying has been shown to be similar for girls and boys, the experience of bullying is different for girls and boys. While boys are more likely to engage in physical bullying, girls will more often engage in verbal forms of harassment of their peers – which can involve actions such as excluding others or spreading rumours.[247] Research also suggests that around half of all children involved in bullying are both victims and perpetrators – they are both bullied and bullies.[248]

Relational violence, which specifically targets a girl's critical social relationships, can increase her risk of long-term socio-psychological distress.[249] Educators and policy makers often overlook this as a mere expression of "girls being girls", despite these long-term consequences. Physical violence, used more often by boys, can cause physical and long-term psychological harm.

Teachers themselves may engage in psychological bullying when they speak in a derogatory way to students based on the student's sex, race or class. Girls and boys may be made to feel worthless, unteachable or stupid if they are viewed as behaving in a manner inconsistent with their assigned role in society.[250] Furthermore, children who are bullied will often show a marked decline in achievement and a reluctance to participate in school activities.[251]

Corporal punishment in school

"In my community, the school environment does not seem to be safe for children. Children are being beaten, asked to kneel down in the sun and stand on one foot while holding up a big stone..."
18-year-old girl, Sierra Leone

The UNCRC calls on States Parties to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the principles and provisions of the Convention.[252] Yet, school corporal punishment continues to be a legal means of disciplining children in a third of the world's countries.[253]

Half of all school-aged children aged six to 17 live in countries that do not fully prohibit corporal punishment in schools, leaving an approximate 732 million children without full legal protection and living in fear of being physically abused under the guise of discipline.[254]

In some countries more than 80 per cent of students suffer corporal punishment at school.[255] Corporal punishment is a direct violation of children's human rights, and as with other forms of violence and abuse, cruel, degrading or violent punishment used in schools is

a result of negative cultural and social norms, and is rooted in the power given to authority.

Cruel, degrading or violent punishment is also linked to discrimination, being disproportionately inflicted on students with disabilities or from minority backgrounds.[256] Corporal punishment has been shown to be the least effective form of discipline at school, and it perpetuates a school climate that is volatile and creates resentment.[257]

Corporal punishment is not gender neutral, but is tied to the gender-based values of masculinity and is experienced differently by girls and boys.[258] Although both girls and boys are victims of corporal punishment, the types of punishment and resulting impacts vary according to sex. For instance, boys are more likely to be physically assaulted, whereas girls are more likely to be publicly humiliated or otherwise ostracised.[259]

Evidence suggests that boys are more likely than girls to experience school corporal punishment, with the Young Lives study showing constantly higher rates for boys. In Singapore and Zimbabwe, gender discrimination is written into national legislation, and corporal punishment is only legal when perpetrated against boys.[260] Other vulnerabilities – such as having a disability or being from an ethnic minority – also leaves children at greater risk of school corporal punishment.

Education's role in protecting children

Schools have a dual role in protecting children from violence. Firstly, places of education have a responsibility to ensure that children are learning life skills and information about non-violent, positive relationships. Secondly, as places with a responsibility for the care of children, schools and other education institutions have a responsibility to protect children, and to link with other services that constitute child protection systems.

Education can have the power to challenge discriminatory social norms and gender inequality. Gender sensitive curricula, along with gender responsive classroom teaching and learning practices, can acknowledge and address issues of inclusion, promote gender equitable learning and help girls and boys to challenge traditional gender stereotypes.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is an effective mechanism to empower children, adolescents and young people to make informed, autonomous decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and current and future relationships. It can also be part of a holistic approach to challenging gender inequalities and preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Plan International's research in Cambodia and Uganda shows that there are strong links between CSE provision and violence reduction.[261] CSE can address harmful notions of masculinity, gender roles and stereotypes both in school and the wider community.

Part of ensuring safe, healthy, participatory learning environments for all children means ensuring that education systems work well with other systems. Governments are increasingly aware that cross-sectoral strategies are needed to ensure the wellbeing of all

children, and that no child falls between the gaps in the system. It is important to note that strong ties between education, health and child protection systems are vital to ensuring the wellbeing of all children. Children who are the victims of violence or neglect in one area of their lives, are more likely to be victims in other areas too. This process of poly-victimisation is important to understand and to combat, to ensure that children from neglectful or abusive homes do not fall prey to neglect or abuse in the education system. Stronger links between child protection services and the education system mean that children can be identified early, can be monitored and can receive increased support as needed.

In many displacement settings, schools provide physical protection from hostile surroundings and from rights violations such as child labour, exploitation and recruitment into armed forces.[262] The protective function of education is particularly critical for displaced girls and young women. Education reduces the risk of sexual exploitation, sexual and gender-based violence, and CEFM. In countries with the highest rates of CEFM, each year of additional secondary education reduces by five to six percentage points on average the likelihood of girls marrying while still children and of having a first baby before the age of 18.[263] Education also allows for the dissemination of key survival messages, including on landmine safety or HIV/AIDS prevention.

Plan International's position

➢ **Plan International asserts that every child has the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, free from the fear or threat of violence. This is an integral part of a quality education. Yet for many children, particularly girls, school is a place of threat and fear. Addressing attitudes and behaviours that support or legitimise violence at national, local, school and community levels, is a key intervention to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence.**

➢ **Plan International believes that it is unacceptable that any child should be a victim of violence either in school, or on the journey to and from school. This includes sexual violence or harassment, bullying and intimidation, and corporal punishment. Vulnerable and excluded children, such as children with disabilities, ethno-linguistic minorities, or children who identify as LGBTIQ, are particularly exposed to violence in and around school, either perpetrated by peers or by adults. This constitutes a serious rights violation, particularly when committed by those in positions of care or authority, and impacts on children's ability to enter, transition and complete school. Eliminating this violence should be a priority for all actors.**

➢ **Plan International recognises that quality education has a protective function, especially for girls and young women in humanitarian settings. We believe that a quality education is comprehensive, empowering, promotes respect for the dignity and value of all people, and provides a broad range of learning processes that** include wider life skills and comprehensive sexuality education. Quality education should provide children and young people with the necessary skills and knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to lead positive and productive lives and to be responsible, active citizens promoting peace and non-violence.

➢ **Plan International believes that all children, adolescents and young people – without discrimination – are entitled to comprehensive sexuality education to gain knowledge, explore values and attitudes, and develop the skills they need to make conscious, healthy and respectful choices about relationships and sexuality. Parents and educators should be supported to embrace children's learning about their bodies, relationships and sexuality from early childhood to allow children to explore, clarify and form lifelong healthy attitudes and practices, free from coercion, violence and discrimination.**

Plan International's recommendations

➢ **National governments must adopt and implement comprehensive and multi-sectoral national action plans, integrated into their education sector plans, to prevent and respond to all forms of violence in and around schools, including SRGBV. Plans should be gender responsive, support the most vulnerable populations (including children with disabilities), take into account the diversity of experiences and needs of marginalised girls and boys, and look specifically at the school context. Law enforcement, the judiciary, child protection authorities, the transportation sector and civil society organisations must be partners in addressing the vulnerability of children in schools, and journeying to and from schools.**

➢ **National governments must review and strengthen laws and policies to protect children from violence, ensure accountability and treat all children equally. This includes strengthening laws for prohibition of corporal punishment in schools.**

➢ **National governments and civil society organisations should also address attitudes and behaviours of both adults and students in school, and of families and communities, to reinforce the recognition that some common behaviours, such as bullying, sexual harassment and corporal punishment, are forms of violence.**

➢ **Girls and boys must be recognised as key participants in developing solutions to address violence, bullying and SRGBV. Children should be encouraged in peer-to-peer learning and support, and taught non-violent approaches to conflict resolution.**

➢ **Parents, schools, local government and national governments must ensure that children understand their rights, and are able to access**

> reporting and response mechanisms. These must be safe, child-friendly, clear, proportionate and consistent with the UNCRC, and must be effectively implemented.

➤ **Teachers and school administrators must be well trained, equipped and supported to understand, prevent and respond to gender-based violence and other types of violence in and around schools. This includes ensuring that teachers are trained on positive discipline methods, and are able to challenge negative gender norms.**

➤ **Schools should establish and clearly advertise codes of conduct to tackle all forms of SRGBV – including bullying and corporal punishment – so that all students and staff understand their rights and responsibilities, as well as how to report SRGBV and other incidences of violence. Mechanisms must be put in place to hold to account teachers, school staff and students who violate those codes.**

VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SPACES

The communities in which children grow up should be places of safety and protection. Where strong community-based child protection frameworks exist, the community can act as a safe haven for children and protect them from violence. However, communities can also be sites of struggle. Where there is poverty, high population density, transient populations, low social cohesion, unsafe physical environments, high crime rates and the existence of a local drug trade, communities can become unsafe environments, exposing children and young adults to violence and exploitation.

Community members (such as local leaders, teachers, elders and neighbours) continue to play a significant role in the lives of children: nurturing and socialising children, educating and disciplining, caring and protecting. Unfortunately, communities can also be environments that (either directly or indirectly) tolerate and perpetuate violence against children.

As children grow up and become more independent, they will venture outside their homes and into the community. A child's first experience in the community will often be on their journey to and from school, or as they carry out domestic chores – such as walking to collect water or firewood. As they become more independent, they become more vulnerable to violence in the community. As such, adolescents and young adults are at the greatest risk of violence in the community, and girls and young women are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence.[264]

Harmful practices and the "continuum" between the home and the community

"We have Child Protection Schemes in our villages but it does not work well."
14-year-old girl, India

The Special Representative on Violence against Children observes that there is a "continuum" between the community and the home. Communities that are peaceful and uphold values of mutual respect and non-violent conflict resolution are likely to foster these positive values at the individual level, ensuring that they are replicated in the home.[265]

However, communities that uphold widespread harmful traditions, social norms and values are likely to have harmful repercussions for children in their homes. In communities where certain forms of violence are tolerated and condoned, the community can provide impunity for perpetrators; this is especially clear in the case of corporal punishment, and harmful, traditional practices.

Harmful practices, carried out in the name of social, cultural and religious tradition, take place in the privacy of homes across the globe. Although they are often perpetrated in private, they are rooted in the community – particularly in deeply embedded social and cultural norms, values and beliefs around value of girls and women, power and control. Even if family members do not want to harm their children, the pressure to conform to community values and expectations and "to belong" can drive families to carry out harmful practices against children, often with lifelong consequences.

"During initiation rites, some put an egg into the private parts of the girl so as to make it big in preparing her to have sex with elders."
16-year-old girl, Malawi

"Honour" killings (discussed above) are also perpetrated by family members but driven by the community. Law enforcement officials may turn a blind eye or fail to enforce sanctions where a family member has killed a girl due to her "inappropriate" behaviour. Police and community members may even help the perpetrator's family to hide the crime by refusing to register it, or by delaying the process and allowing the perpetrator to escape.[266]

The most commonly researched and discussed harmful practices are CEFM (see above) and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), although in reality there are many additional forms of harmful practice (see Definitions in Annex 1). A joint CEDAW and UNCRC General Comment in 2014 outlines States' obligations in preventing and eliminating harmful practices inflicted on women and girls. The international community has agreed to accelerate efforts to eradicate harmful practices. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a target to eliminate these practices by 2030, specifically FGM/C and CEFM.[267]

It is estimated that at least 200 million girls and women have been subjected to FGM/C – with more than half of these coming from Egypt, Ethiopia and Indonesia.[268] Some harmful practices may be committed in plain sight, such as initiation rites that mark a girl's passage from childhood into adulthood and change their "sexual status". This can involve FGM/C, enforced nudity or partial nudity in front of community members, the

obligation to provide sexual services, ritual beatings or rape.[269]

FGM/C remains prevalent in several countries, mainly (but not solely) in Africa, despite the fact that most countries now have laws in place criminalising the practice. This is because harmful practices such as FGM/C are driven by deeply entrenched beliefs that they are necessary to secure a girl's future and acceptance in the community, to make them viable for marriage or to protect them from violence.[270] In addition to strong legislation, tackling these views and changing norms and attitudes is critical to eliminating FGM/C.

In 2012, the UN General Assembly adopted a milestone resolution calling on the international community to intensify efforts to end the practice of FGM/C. However, current progress is insufficient to keep up with increasing population growth and there is a danger of FGM/C increasing significantly in the next 15 years if current trends continue.

Violence, threat and fear in public spaces

"I think that we need to also discuss the violence with girls in the public transportation. This is something I have always observed and faced. Boys, men, everyone do bad things to girls."
14-year-old girl, India

Across all settings, children and young people experience violence in public spaces. As girls become more independent, particularly in adolescence, they endure significant amounts of sexual harassment and abuse in their communities.[271] Domestic chores that require walking long distances such as to collect water, fuel or food, are usually assigned to girls in poor, rural areas, and expose them to the risk of violence on a daily basis.[272] Whether in rural or urban settings, girls and young women worldwide face verbal harassment – including lewd comments or catcalling – and groping in plain sight. They are also face the possibility of rape, sexual assault and other violent crimes. [273]

Natural growth of urban populations and migration to cities in search of work have contributed to rapid urbanisation, with more people now living in cities than in rural areas. Each month, 5 million people are added to the cities in developing countries. More than one billion children now live in urban settings [274] and by 2030, approximately 700 million[275] girls will live in urban areas. The vast majority of children living in urban contexts will be in poorer, informal and fast-growing settlements in the Global South.[276] Girls in cities contend with the duality of increased risks and increased opportunities. On the one hand, girls face increased sexual harassment, exploitation and insecurity as they navigate the urban environment, while on the other hand, they are more likely to be educated, less likely to be married at an early age, and more likely to participate in politics.

Rapid urban growth, overcrowding and the deterioration of urban areas create what have been termed "no-go zones", where state presence is either non-existent or extremely weak.[277] Recent research carried out by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)

and Plan International shows that the areas most heavily impacted by violence are peripheral, poor neighbourhoods with limited access to basic services and limited state presence.[278]

Studies from Brazil, Canada, South Africa and the USA show that many instances of youth violence occur in specific places (e.g. in particular streets, clubs and bars).[279] Violence can therefore be reduced if prevention efforts are systematically focused on these "hotspots". However efforts to prevent and tackle youth violence must extend beyond surface-level solutions such as curtailing youth gatherings or mobility but must assess the root causes of violence which may include limited employment opportunities and economic hardship as well as political disenfranchisement and mistrust of the state and local government.

Plan International's work shows that parents' concerns about safety affect children from early childhood. Safety concerns are a reason for parents not letting young children out to play and explore the world and interact with others, which is important for their cognitive and socio-emotional development. Girls from even the youngest age may be kept at home while boys will be allowed to go out to play. Concerns about safety on the way to pre-school and school are also a reason why in some communities girls start school later than boys.

Millions of people across the globe live in informal, slum communities – situations of extreme poverty in cities marked by high economic disparity and social inequality. They are also settings where children experience violence on a daily basis. UNICEF estimates that one in three people who live in urban contexts live in slum conditions; in sub-Saharan Africa, this ratio is six in ten.[280] Slums are often not formally recognised by governments. Consequently, they are usually poorly developed, meaning alleyways, public toilets and other infrastructure is not properly planned – often to the detriment of girls' safety – and residents do not have access to services. [281]

Some rural girls and women migrate to cities under a misconception about the opportunities they will find there; some will have been tricked, coerced or misled.[282] Many find themselves living in exploitative, slum conditions – far from the promise of thriving opportunities.[283] Young women and girls who live in slum areas are exposed to verbal abuse, sexual harassment and unwanted contact such as touching, groping or rape.[284]

Camps for internally displaced persons or refugees are notoriously unsafe environments for women and girls; they are overcrowded and lack privacy and adequate housing, lighting and security.[285] Moreover, forcibly displaced girls and young women in host communities – where they are perceived as a stigmatised minority – are also vulnerable to violence, threats of violence and verbal abuse as they attempt to rebuild their lives, including on their journeys to work, during work, and on public transport.[286]

There are indications that, within a climate of systematic and brutal violence against LGBTIQ communities, young

people who identify as LGBTIQ can be at especially high risk of violence. Such community members may be seen as "easy targets" – compared to LGBTIQ adults, they have particularly low knowledge, skills and/or opportunities to speak out and seek help. In its report *Not Safe at Home*, Human Rights Watch documented how in Jamaica, the 40 per cent of young homeless people who are LGBTIQ are even more likely than adults to be the subject of violence (including rape) by the public and the police.[287]

For many girls, the external threats lead to a perception that they are always unsafe in public spaces. A girl's sense of safety can be made up of: feelings about the built environment around her (for instance, lighting and signage); the social environment (for instance, who is using public spaces, and how); the social norms around girls' safety (for instance, victim blaming); and their own or their friends' personal past experiences in certain areas. While the perceived level of safety may not always correspond with recorded levels of actual safety, both categories must be taken into account when responding and the perceived dimension must not be ignored.

Plan International's research and experience has shown that girls often feel unsafe in both rural and urban public spaces. Research from 2015 with girls aged 15 to 19 across four countries shows that 21 per cent of girls in Nicaragua believe that girls should not be seen in public spaces after dark. This rises to 41 per cent of girls in Ecuador, 66 per cent of girls in Pakistan and a shocking 85 per cent of girls in Zimbabwe.[288]

Plan International research from our Safer Cities for Girls Programme – conducted in five focus areas: Cairo, Delhi, Hanoi, Kampala and Lima – highlights common, perceived safety issues across urban contexts.[289] An analysis of girls' views across each city identified common problems, including: inadequate lighting, dark corners or spaces where someone can hide, and piles of garbage on the streets. The issue of lighting came out strongly, with girls reporting that they felt the most unsafe when on streets or in alleys that lacked lighting.[290]

The presence of drugs and alcohol in cities was also identified as a pressing issue. Girls in Delhi emphasised how groups of people who have been drinking (usually men) loiter outside shops causing uneasiness and fear among girls. Girls in Cairo and Kampala pointed out the effects of drug abuse and the violence and fear that it generated in them. [291]

The threat and fear of violence in communities and public spaces can prevent girls from being able to live a full and free life and access the full range of rights that they are entitled to. This fear deters girls and young women from wanting to leave their home alone, and may encourage families to restrict their freedom of movement to protect their safety. This restriction in mobility is a violation of girls' rights and can hamper their opportunities – including access to education and employment.

Girls are particularly vulnerable to violence in public spaces if they choose to become more visible and outspoken. Adolescence and early adulthood is a time when individuals often choose to expand their social networks and become interested in issues outside their immediate environments. They can often become involved in student and youth-led associations that campaign on social justice issues. However the potential of violence can often limit or prevent girls and young women from becoming effective drivers of social and political change in their communities and beyond. Fear of retribution and violence from governments, opposition groups or members of the community, which often occurs in public spaces, can curtail girls' and young women's ability and ambition to take part in civic and collective action. Young human rights defenders are reporting their increasing fear and real experiences of threats and violence to their physical and mental wellbeing when participating in activism. For example, in 2016, the Young Feminist Fund FRIDA reported that more than half of the 1,500 young women, girl and trans-led organisations that participated in their research regularly felt unsafe because of the work they do.[292]

In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted and endorsed the New Urban Agenda. This agenda commits signatories to:

> *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal rights in all fields and in leadership at all levels of decision-making, by ensuring decent work and equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value, for all women and by preventing and eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence and harassment against women and girls in private and public spaces.*[293]

Where governments promote a safe and enabling environment for all children and young people, particularly girls and young women, they are able to participate without fear or threat of violence in collective action for social and political change, as a pathway to political participation in adulthood. This means promoting a zero-tolerance approach to attacks and threats of violence against young human rights defenders and ensuring that public spaces remain open and unrestrictive to youth-led civil society and social movements.

Plan International's position

➢ **Plan International believes that it is vital that the communities in which children, adolescents and youth grow up are safe environments that do not pose a threat to their safety and development. No child, adolescent or youth should face violence, harassment and abuse in the street, in public spaces, on transportation, or on their journey to or from school. Fear and threats limit adolescents' and young people's capacity to live a free and full life. Communities have a collective responsibility to nurture safe, supportive environments that do not tolerate violence, and to prevent and respond to violence that takes place.**

➢ **Plan International urges national and municipal governments to undertake gender reviews of laws, policies and guidelines to ensure that urban**

planning is gender responsive. Girls are affected disproportionally by violence in the community, and responses must therefore take the gender and age dynamics of such violence into account. Sufficient budget must be allocated at national and local levels to ensure full implementation.

➢ Plan International strongly condemns all harmful practices, including FGM/C. We regard FGM/C to be a community-sanctioned form of violence against girls. FGM/C is a human rights violation and needs to be treated as such. FGM/C is linked to a perceived need to control female sexuality. Plan International believes that every girl and woman should have the autonomy and necessary knowledge to be able to make free and informed decisions about her body.

➢ Plan International believes that it is important to tackle FGM/C both through effective legislation and through awareness raising with communities about the physical and mental harm and long-term adverse impacts that result from this practice. It is crucial to engage families, communities and traditional and religious leaders in changing attitudes and norms around this harmful practice to ensure that it is no longer tolerated.

Plan International's recommendations

➢ **Governments should put in place effective legislation criminalising the practice of FGM/C, including through medical procedures. Legislation must be fully implemented and enforced.**

➢ **Governments and other development actors should invest in awareness raising about girls as rights holders and about the laws that protect them from FGM/C. They should support behaviour change by working with traditional, community and religious leaders as well as parents, teachers, girls, boys and community members, to bring about an end to the practice.**

➢ **National and municipal governments should undertake gender reviews of laws, policies and guidelines to ensure gender responsive urban planning in order to ensure that children's rights to a safe, inclusive and accountable community are being met. Sufficient budget must be allocated at national and local levels to ensure that gender responsive laws, policies and initiatives are fully implemented.**

➢ **Governments should collect and publish open, accessible, standardised data, disaggregated by sex, age and other intersectional categorisations, to ensure accountability and track progress on implementing the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. Governments should track and monitor all forms of gender-based violence, including children's and particularly girls' perceptions of safety and incidences of sexual harassment in public spaces.**

➢ **Governments should put in place effective legislation to ensure girls' safety and inclusion in public spaces, including criminalising all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment. Legislation must be fully implemented and enforced. Gender sensitive and child-friendly response and support services must be in place to ensure child protection and safeguarding. Survivors of violence must be treated with dignity and respect, and be able to access age-appropriate and gender sensitive services to support their recovery.**

➢ **Governments must ensure a gender transformative, child-friendly and child/youth participatory approach to community and urban planning. Governments should enable and promote high quality, meaningful and effective participation of children and young people, and particularly girls and young women, and youth and women-led civil society organisations in local, municipal, national, regional and global decision-making bodies and processes, including urban programming and governance.**

COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Child labour

In many cultures and settings, families will need children to contribute to their family income. In some situations, children's work is beneficial to child development and can support family finances – for example, working in the fields with family members, or contributing to a home-based business.[294] However, when child labour is exploitative, puts children at risk of hazards, significantly interferes with a child's right to education or is harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, it is a violation of children's rights (see Definitions in Annex 1).[295] The worst forms of child labour are particularly prevalent in humanitarian crises, and are compounded by conflict, natural hazards and displacement.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that some 168 million children are in child labour across the world. More than half of them, 85 million, are in hazardous work, and most of these children will be working in the informal economy. Asia-Pacific has the largest numbers (almost 78 million or 9.3 per cent of its child population), but sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the highest incidence of child labour (59 million, more than 21 per cent).[296] The UN estimates that only one in five children who work are in paid employment.[297] Forced labour in supply chains is used to provide goods and services to markets around the world, though these chains are often hidden from view and shielded from accountability.

Plan International youth consultations in Uganda and Egypt supported evidence to suggest that child labour is widespread in displacement situations.[298] In displacement contexts and faced with economic hardship and the loss of livelihoods, families often increasingly rely on their children to contribute to the household income. Moreover,

if a child becomes unaccompanied or separated, they are more vulnerable to child labour as a means of survival.

There are a number of provisions in the UNCRC that protect children from any form of violence in places where they "work",[299] and Article 32 specifically states that governments should protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health, their education or hamper any of the rights in the Convention. Closely linked to SDG 16.2, SDG 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Agenda provides that States "take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms".

Violence affects children who work both legally and illegally. The worst forms of child labour – which often involve violence, such as forced labour, use of children by armed forces or groups, and sexual exploitation in illicit activities and hazardous work – threaten to harm a child mentally, physically or morally, and inherently constitute violence against children.

ILO Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour proclaims children's right to be protected from the most harmful and exploitative forms of child labour. Strengthened by Recommendation 190, Convention No.182 stresses that immediate action is needed to tackle the worst exploitation of children, and that measures taken by authorities should be time-bound. As of September 2017, 181 countries had ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, leaving six that have not yet ratified – Eritrea, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu (noting five out of six of these are small island developing states, with high reported levels of intimate partner violence).[300]

Violence against children through domestic work

Domestic work[301] can take the form of unregulated, informal employment and, in such cases, is often associated with exploitation and sometimes slavery and servitude. The ILO defines child labour in domestic work as situations where domestic work is performed by children below the relevant minimum age in illicit and hazardous conditions or in a slavery-like situation.[302]

In some countries, child domestic work is accepted, condoned and encouraged as a protected and non-stigmatised type of work, especially for girls.[303] Domestic work is the most common form of child labour for girls, with most girls working as housekeepers, nannies or caregivers. The ILO estimates that 67.1 per cent of child domestic workers are girls, so exposing them disproportionately to risks of violence.[304]

The violence that child domestic workers experience, including physical, sexual and psychological violence and verbal abuse, often goes unseen or unreported. This includes name calling, threats, shouting and screaming, beating, kicking, whipping, scalding, overwork and denial of food, sexual harassment and abuse (perpetrated by employers, or male members of the family for whom the girl is working).[305] Sexual abuse can cause a girl to fall pregnant, which may lead to her being thrown out of the house and forced to fend for herself on the streets, unable to return home because of the shame and stigma associated with this violence.[306] In some settings where children live in extreme poverty, families sell girls out of financial desperation to work as servants in the houses of richer people, often far away from their homes. In Nepal, for example, thousands of girls are engaged in bonded labour and modern slavery in the homes of usually higher-caste landowners, business people or civil servants under the *Kamalari* system.[307] Alone and without family or community support, these girls become entrapped in slavery and extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual violence.

CASE STUDY: Safer Cities for Girls

Safer Cities for Girls is a globally united, locally led programme promoting gender equality and girls' rights in urban contexts. The programme aims to increase girls' safety and access to public spaces, their meaningful participation in local governance and urban planning and their autonomous mobility in cities. The programme addresses gender-based violence, discriminatory social norms, and unequal power relations. It also challenges the intersecting barriers hindering girls' meaningful participation in urban governance and builds on young women's multiple assets to become agents of change. Using a multi-sectoral, multi-level approach, key stakeholders (e.g. government, civil society organisations, women's movements) are linked for dialogue and partnership on girls' safety. Boys and young men are engaged to reflect on gender equality and girls' rights and their role in upholding social norms. Through intergenerational dialogues between youth and their parents, discriminatory gender norms and barriers to girls' rights are discussed and challenged.

There is a gap in research and programming pertaining to adolescent girls' safety in urban spaces, as girls tend to be ignored in programming aimed at "youth" or "women". For example, many urban safety and crime prevention initiatives target young men, and many women's safety initiatives focus only on adult women and only in the domestic sphere.

Plan International's work with girls in urban settings has taught us that girls experience limitations in accessing public spaces and services due to unequal gender norms, roles and values. Girls are often not aware of their rights to be safe in the city and they are rarely included in decisions that affect their safety.

Child labour and armed forces or groups

ILO Convention No.182 recognises that the forced or compulsory recruitment and use of children in armed forces or groups constitutes a worst form of child labour. It is a violation of children's human rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict prohibits all recruitment – voluntary or compulsory – of children under 18 by armed forces and groups. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court makes it a war crime to conscript or enlist children under the age of 15 years or use them to participate actively in hostilities.[308]

Children who are associated with armed forces or groups are at high risk of being exploited in a number of ways. Some are used as fighters and take direct part in hostilities while others are used in supportive roles – such as cooks, porters, messengers or spies.[309] They can be abducted, forcefully recruited, trafficked or personally decide to enrol (for instance, for survival, for protection or for vengeance). In almost all cases, children are coerced or forced to sign up, or taken under duress and in ignorance of the consequences.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is an abhorrent violation of children's fundamental human rights and constitutes a grave form of violence against children with serious consequences. CSEC refers to the exploitation by an adult of a child or adolescent under 18 years of age; it is often accompanied by a payment to the child, or to one or more third parties. The UNCRC enshrines children's rights to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in Articles 34 and 35, and these provisions are augmented by the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The ILO considers CSEC to include the following: the use of girls and boys in sexual activities remunerated in cash or in kind in the streets or indoors, in such places as brothels, massage parlours, bars, hotels and restaurants; the trafficking of girls and boys into the sex trade (to be examined later in this section); child sex tourism; the production, promotion and distribution of pornography involving children (including online); or the use of children in sex shows – both public and private.[310]

Perpetrators of CSEC are mainly adult men, who take advantage of the power imbalance resulting from the age, gender, social and education differentials that separate them from their young victims, although women and peers can also be perpetrators. The vast majority of perpetrators of child sexual abuse are situational abusers who do not usually have a sexual preference for children, but take advantage of a situation in which children are made available to them by other abusers. However, some abusers will be paedophiles who target children specifically. ECPAT International outlines three levels of perpetrators of commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children: 1) offenders who engage directly in CSEC, such as purchasers of commercial sexual acts with children and users of child sexual abuse materials; 2) exploiters (individuals or groups) that foster the sexual exploitation of children, acting as intermediaries between offenders and victims, including traffickers, pimps, brothel owners, criminal networks, corrupt police and government officials or tour operators; and 3) environmental factors that create the conditions which help to perpetuate or even swell the demand for sexual exploitation of children. These include discriminatory sexual and gender norms, exploitative economic and political systems, abusive sexual attitudes towards children or the non-conducive influence of media and advertising.[311]

UNCRC Articles 34 and 35 state that governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and take all measures possible to ensure that they are not abducted, sold or trafficked. The Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography augments these provisions, and also protects children from being sold for non-sexual purposes – such as other forms of forced labour, illegal adoption and organ donation. As of September 2017, 25 countries had not yet ratified the Optional Protocol.[312] The failure to ratify and implement the provisions of these international standards into domestic laws can lead to violations of the rights of children as enshrined in the UNCRC.

CASE STUDY: Modern slavery: the coercive exploitation of the most vulnerable

There is no agreed definition of modern slavery. Plan International defines modern slavery as:

The condition in which a person is forcibly exploited by an individual or group who exercise any or all forms of power over them, attributed with de facto ownership or possession. This power is exercised through control or coercion, restriction of movement, and the inability of the person to leave the situation. Modern slavery takes various forms including, but not restricted to; forced or bonded labour; commercial sexual exploitation; child trafficking; use and recruitment of children by armed forces and armed groups, and; forced marriage or sexual slavery.

The forms of modern enslavement may vary, but the crux of them is the same – coercive exploitation of the most vulnerable. Although there are similarities and a certain overlap between the trafficking of children, contemporary forms of slavery and worst forms of child labour, it should be recalled that these phenomena are not identical, and contain certain crucial differences, including in terms of their legal definition.

For vulnerable children and youth, modern slavery can be a crushing legacy, nearly impossible to break out of once entrapped.

Most countries have domestic laws in place, though their strength varies depending on the legal definition of a child, what constitutes child sexual abuse and exploitation, and the extent to which the laws are enforced. For example, though virtually all countries have laws prohibiting statutory rape, such laws are fully enforced in less than two-thirds of countries. The issue of age of sexual consent also presents as a barrier to justice and legal remedies for victim-survivors. Where age of consent is low (for instance, in the Philippines the age of consent is 12 years old), perpetrators of sexual violence against children are usually subject to lesser penalties.

A recent Plan International and ECPAT International report has concluded that CEFM, when linked to economic transactions or financial gains benefiting adult parties involved, constitutes commercial or economic sexual exploitation of children. [313]

Children become victims of commercial sexual exploitation in a number of ways: parents and family members can facilitate it; they can fall prey to local inhabitants who exploit children; they are trafficked into the sex trade across international borders or within the child's own country; they become victims of predators who take advantage of impunity or weak law enforcement to sexually abuse children during their visit to a region or country (sex tourism); they are used for live sex shows or pornography that may get sold over the internet. [314] Forcibly displaced girls and women can be driven or coerced into prostitution in order to survive or provide for their families.[315]

Child victims of commercial sexual exploitation suffer severe physical and psychological harm. They not only risk injuries from physical violence, unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, they also lose self-esteem, feel humiliation, guilt and sadness, and may develop problems with verbal and written communication.[316]

Girls as part of the Partnerships for Empowerment of Vulnerable Women and Girls in Urban Slums (PEVUS) project in Kampala, Uganda spoke of the violence and discrimination they faced in their communities. One girl spoke of how she and her child had to repeatedly move to different communities because of the physical violence and verbal abuse that she was exposed to when it became known that she was a sex worker. Men in the neighbourhood felt that they were entitled to her, and she feared for her safety and the safety of her child.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is akin to modern slavery; once entrapped in the sex trade, it is extremely difficult for them to leave. If they do, they might live in fear of retribution and be traumatised through social stigmatisation, marginalisation and even rejection from their families and communities. It limits their prospects of engaging in decent work. [317]

There is a particular lack of quantitative data around CSEC, largely because its victims constitute a "hidden population" that is inherently challenging to research.[318] The ILO estimates that there could be as many as 1.8 million children exploited worldwide through prostitution and pornography.[319] This data should be used with caution as it is based on 2000 global child labour figures and the true, current global scale of the problem remains unknown.

Young women engaged in the sex industry or in sex work

It is important to make a distinction, on legal grounds, between children under the age of 18 who are sexually exploited for commercial gain, and young women who are

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CASE STUDY: Plan International Indonesia

Plan International is part of Down to Zero, an alliance of six organisations that aims to end commercial sexual exploitation of children. The programme is being implemented in 11 countries, with a total budget of €15 million over five years (2016 to 2020).

Plan International Indonesia is working with local partners Bandungwangi in Jakarta to support child victims of sexual exploitation to obtain help, and to support young women sex workers to reach the support that they need. The programme works with children who have been sexually exploited, or who are at risk of becoming so; young women sex workers; families and communities; local and national government, police and justice departments; and local businesses.

The programme is not without is challenges. Staff report that many victims do not want help due to stigma, or that the families of victims can be hostile. They are not able to access some areas with mobile clinics because they are threatened by pimps and gang members. Some CSEC victims go to traditional healers for abortions, which are unhygienic and frequently lead to infections.

However, in spite of the challenges, the programme reaches 3,000 children and young women across Jakarta, and works across 165 services to coordinate support to victims of CSEC. Most staff members of Bandungwangi are CSEC survivors themselves, which means they are able to relate to victims and offer strong emotional support. They have also had successes through advocacy, lobbying for increased mobile health clinics, and advocating for caesarean sections to be made available for HIV-positive sex workers – so as to reduce the chances of passing on infection.

engaged in sex work. [1]The former group are victims of a grave form of violence, which is always a crime. While the legal distinction is vital in order to protect children's rights, in reality, the difference between sexual exploitation of those aged under 18 versus those aged over 18 is often not distinct. Many young women engaged in sex work were child victims of sexual exploitation.

Young women and men face a high risk of being commercially sexually exploited when they engage in sex work. Plan International's research in the Philippines, Vietnam and Uganda shows how young women in cities engaged in sex work are exploited – they are paid too little, subjected to violence and abuse both by clients and at home, denied their sexual and reproductive health and rights and are discriminated against, abused and stigmatised in their communities.

The reasons why young women become involved in sex work vary according to context. Plan International's research in the Philippines and Vietnam suggests that many sex workers are young female migrants from disadvantaged, uneducated backgrounds in rural areas with limited opportunities.[320] They will have migrated to cities in pursuit of the promise of jobs but, once there, are confronted with a disappointing reality and a lack of economic opportunities. Cut off from families and their communities, these young women are put in a desperate situation and might feel that they have no option to earn an income other than to engage in sex work. Many migrants work on the streets, or as part of their "formal" employment in restaurants, bars, karaoke clubs, massage parlours or beer gardens.[321]

Some young women in these situations will be victims of trafficking. Plan International research has shown how young women from disadvantaged, uneducated and poorer backgrounds were characterised as being "lured", "trapped" or "forced" into illegal forms of work such as the "sale of sex for money".[322]

Research has found that girls and young women who are sexually abused as children are more likely to engage in sex work later in life.[323] This is particularly pertinent in post-conflict settings where many girls and women will have been subjected to sexual violence. Plan International's study in Liberia found that the sexual violence that young women had experienced had led them to view their bodies differently, and that trivialising sexual intercourse through engaging in sex work was a coping mechanism – a way to protect themselves from traumatic memories and a means for survival and an income.[324]

All young women and men in sex work are extremely vulnerable and are at risk of gender-based violence both during and outside work. [325] They experience violence from "clients" and their "employers" including: physical violence such as beating, kicking, threatening with a weapon; economic violence in the form of cheating, refusing to pay, under-paying or stealing; emotional and psychological violence such as humiliation and insults; and sexual violence such as forcing a woman to engage in sex acts against their will, refusing to use protective contraception, prolonged sex, rape or gang rape – all with impunity, behind closed doors and completely hidden from view.[326] They also run an increased risk of being victims of homicide. Young women working in sex work are criminalised and can be arbitrarily arrested, deprived of their liberty and put at risk of further violence and exploitation through law enforcement.

The sexual and reproductive health consequences of engaging in sex work can be serious. Consultations with girls and young women who are involved in Plan International's Partnerships for Empowerment of Vulnerable Women and Girls in Urban Slums (PEVUS) project in Uganda spoke of how they are paid less to have sexual intercourse with a condom, denying them their sexual and reproductive health rights. Moreover, male clients may pay less and then refuse to use a condom, exposing girls to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and putting them at heightened risk of early and unintended pregnancy.

Young women engaged in sex work represent one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Governments have a responsibility to ensure that they are able to access services and protection mechanisms, as well as support in leaving the sex industry, without discrimination or stigma.

Children and young people in street situations

"Children who serve as street hawkers are easily bullied and abused. Some adult will take their items and refuse to pay. Sometimes they steal their money and are only left at the mercy of those who send them to the street." 18-year-old boy, Sierra Leone

Children and young people in street situations are especially susceptible to violence in the community. The UN estimates that up to 150 million girls and boys live or work on the streets,[327] often as a result of violence, drug and alcohol abuse in their families, the death of a parent, family breakdown, war, natural disaster or socio-economic collapse. Many destitute children are forced to

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[1] *Plan International uses the term 'sex work' in both our programming and our influencing work to describe a range of activities involving sexual acts in exchange for money. There is currently no global agreement on the definition of 'transactional sex', 'prostitution' or 'sex work'. These terms are not clearly defined and are used in different contexts, sometimes interchangeably. Some sex worker organisations object to the use of the term 'prostitute', thus we do not use this term as in some contexts this stigmatises a population we know to be*

vulnerable. Plan International has chosen to use the term 'sex work' in this position paper as it represents the broadest definition of a fluid range of activities. We recognise that in certain contexts and frameworks different terminology will be used. In using the term sex work we are not inferring that this equates to decent work under the ILO definition. ([ILO](#)).

make a living on the streets through scavenging and begging.[328]

Children in street situations risk discrimination, violence and exploitation on a daily basis. They are vulnerable to falling into the control of criminal networks engaged in sexual exploitation, and risk being trafficked for sexual purposes. Girls and boys who live and work on the streets can be drawn into high-risk lifestyles, including being sexually exploited through prostitution, and into alcohol abuse – which puts them at greater risk of sexual and physical violence. Those who live and work on the streets are often viewed as "delinquents",[329] and are at risk of being arrested and detained, deprived of their liberty and exposed to violence and abuse in detention facilities or perpetrated by law enforcement personnel.[330]

Child trafficking

"We have often heard on social media how young people especially girls are taken to other countries to seek jobs but later abused and send voice messages on social media for support."
16-year-old girl, Sierra Leone

The trafficking of human beings, including children, within countries and across international borders is a pressing, global concern. Trafficking is included in this section as most victims are trafficked into violent, forced labour and commercially exploitative situations, predominantly for sexual exploitation and forced labour.[331] People are also trafficked for a range of exploitative purposes including forced marriage, forced begging, child soldiers and the removal of organs.[332]

All children have the inherent right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and abduction, sale and trafficking, as enshrined in UNCRC Articles 34 and 35, strengthened by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Trafficking is inherently characterised by violence. Recruiters into trafficking may have deceived children, and/or their parents or caregivers. These children are exposed to sexual and physical violence at all stages as they are transferred to their destination, held captive and during their "work" placement.[333] In 2012–2014, 63,251 victims of trafficking were found in 106 countries and territories.[334]

According to the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), children made up more than a quarter of detected trafficking victims worldwide in 2015 (28 per cent). Trafficking is heavily gendered: girls and women make up approximately 71 per cent of detected trafficking victims.[335] In 2014, girls made up 20 per cent of detected trafficking victims and boys 8 per cent.[336] The majority of girls and women are trafficked for sexual exploitation and become trapped in sexual slavery; the most recent data shows that of the 23,000 detected victims trafficked for sexual exploitation between 2012 and 2014, 96 per cent were female.[337] Countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Central America and the Caribbean showed far higher rates of detected child victims than adult victims in 2014: 64 per cent and 62 per cent respectively in these regions.[338]

Forced displacement leaves children, particularly girls and unaccompanied and separated children, extremely vulnerable to human trafficking at all stages of displacement – including on journeys and in refugee or displacement camps. Where displacement camps and urban areas host long-term displaced populations, there is a significant risk of children being trafficked into armed groups. Conscription into armed forces during conflict can be a major factor in families or communities fleeing, yet it can continue into displacement, a notable example of which is through Al-Shabaab in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya.[339]

Men and boys are mainly trafficked for forced labour, with 86 per cent of detected male trafficking victims involved in this form of exploitation. Some men and boys are involved in sexual exploitation, but this amounts to less than 7 per cent of detected male victims.[340] It is also well documented that the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of child trafficking are men. This is linked to prevailing patriarchal structures, and beliefs surrounding male dominance and machismo, male power and control as well as the viewing of children, especially girls, as the objects of possession.[341]

The harm caused by trafficking is also gender specific, and the consequences of sexual exploitation (predominantly affecting women and girls) are different to those of forced labour (mainly affecting men). The ways that girls' and women's bodies are abused in the cases of sexual exploitation cause gender specific physical, gynaecological and mental health problems as well as risks to life and trauma.[342]

The number of countries which criminalise most forms of trafficking in persons (in line with the definition used by the UN Protocol to Prevent and Punish the Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children) increased from 33 to 171 from 2003 to 2016.[343] However, UNODC notes that as most progress has happened very recently, there are still relatively few convictions and too many trafficking crimes and traffickers go unpunished. National criminal justice systems must have resources in order to be able to detect, investigate and successfully prosecute cases of trafficking in persons.

Plan International's position
> **Plan International believes that no child should be subject to exploitative labour. While we recognise that some reasonable levels of work can be beneficial to children in addition to attaining an education, we demand an immediate end to labour that exploits children, causes them physical, emotional or sexual harm, interferes with their right to education, or puts them at risk of other hazards.**

> **Plan International strongly condemns the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), which disproportionately affects girls. CSEC puts children in grave danger – risking their emotional, psychological, physical and sexual health – and is a gross violation of their human rights. We urge governments to ensure**

that legal and protection frameworks are robust and can respond to and prevent such forms of violence. Child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are entitled to support, reparations and remedies, in line with international human rights law.

➤ Plan International is gravely concerned at the levels of violence experienced by young women and men engaged in sex work. We urge governments to review policies to strengthen legal protections and ensure that sex workers, particularly young women, can access support services and justice mechanisms.

➤ Child and social protection systems have failed children who live and work on the street. Their rights to food, shelter, protection and health have been violated. As a matter of urgency they must be able to access care and protection services.

➤ Plan International recognises that children, and girls in particular, make up a significant proportion of human trafficking victims. We strongly condemn this practice, and urge all actors to address it as a priority. The trafficking of people across borders will not stop without international cooperation.

Plan International's recommendations

➤ Governments should ratify and domesticate ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and invest in raising public awareness about the laws protecting children from the worst forms of child labour.

➤ Governments must initiate programmes and strategies to combat child labour including recognising and defining exploitative informal types of work in national laws and policies instead of only emphasising a minimum age; implementing mandatory universal post-primary education for girls and boys; strengthening social protection mechanisms to enhance the family's capacity to provide financial support and care to children; and creating strategies to eliminate exploitative work assigned to vulnerable children.

➤ Governments should adopt legislation combating human rights abuses in global supply chains, including the use of child labour. Legislation may include banning the import of all goods produced or manufactured using forced labour, slave labour, child labour, or labour of persons who have been trafficked. Legislation should apply broadly, and should require all entities to conduct due diligence on human rights abuses in supply chains, and include penalties for non-compliance.

➤ States must take all appropriate measures to prevent commercial sexual exploitation of children. Specific laws that clearly define and criminalise the different forms of such exploitation are needed. In particular, states must criminalise the purchase of sex or other sexual

acts with children under the age of 18. Moreover, these laws must be enforced and exercised, as well as being regularly reviewed and updated to address emerging trends. Disaggregated data of the different offences and sexual violations against children is required to assist in strengthening the evidence, the investigative process and the robust prosecution of traffickers, pimps, paedophiles, child sex tourists and child sex abusers. Governments should partner with youth, civil society and the private sector for stronger results.

➤ Governments should adopt legislation to criminalise trafficking in persons in line with the definition used by the UN Protocol to Prevent and Punish the Trafficking in Persons.

VIOLENCE IN EMERGENCIES

The UNCRC protects every child, everywhere, from all forms of violence and has special provisions for those affected by emergencies: Article 22 for the protection of refugee children and Article 33 for children affected by war and armed conflicts. Children feel the impacts of disasters, conflict and displacement particularly acutely, putting them at heightened risk of violence. Emergencies can intensify pre-existing violence or threats and/or expose children to new risks. They often lead to additional strain on, or the breakdown of, existing child protection systems.

Sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation in emergencies

The ways in which both girls and boys experience and are affected by violence during emergencies are shaped by their age and gender. Girls often face particularly marked violations of their rights; they face specific protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence.[344] In 2013, Save the Children estimated that children under the age of 18 comprise the majority of survivors of sexual violence in conflict-affected societies, potentially representing as many as 80 per cent of all survivors of sexual violence.[345]

Young women and girls are most acutely affected by escalating sexual violence, and are at risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence. They can become systematic targets in conflict situations, whereby sexual violence can become a weapon to terrorise and break apart families and communities. Where sexual violence is deployed systematically, to achieve military or political objectives, it constitutes a war crime under international law.[346] There are reports of gender-based violence and child marriage used as a weapon of war in Syria and Iraq, with those in the Yazidi minority group targeted in particular.[347]

In the Philippines, emergencies exacerbate cultural norms such as *rido* or clan feud. Girls and young women face increased risk of gender-based violence, including sexual abuse, exploitation and CEFM in emergencies. Reporting sexual violence can lead to *rido* (a family feud), and thus a culture of silence dominates in the affected community.[348]

When rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced marriage or any other form of sexual violence is committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population, it constitutes a crime against humanity.[349] Perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings are often allowed to act with impunity, leaving survivors with little chance of accessing justice, reparations or the care and services they need.[350]

Sexual and gender-based violence against men and boys as victims must not be overlooked despite a scarcity of data. Some reports show how men and boys face sexual violence, including "forced perpetration", harassment, humiliation, sexual assault and genital mutilation in order to "emasculate" the victims – i.e. undermine their gender identity.[351]

Outside conflict contexts, girls and women are subject to rape and sexual violence, particularly in refugee and IDP camps and informal shelters. These incidents are generally considered manifestations of extreme gender inequality prior to the disaster that leaves girls and women vulnerable. Displacement camps are notoriously unsafe environments; they are overcrowded and lack privacy and adequate housing, lighting and security.[352] Camps and shelters also frequently do not have separate bathroom and shower facilities and sleeping areas are not secure. Unaccompanied and separated children may sleep together without separation by gender, putting girls at risk of assault. Girls and women on their own in marked tents are also at risk of being targeted for sexual violence.

Girls and women in refugee camps typically continue to be responsible for fetching a family's firewood and water, often going outside the vicinity of the camp which exposes them to increased risk of sexual violence from militants, locals and men and boys they know from the camp. Authorities rarely prosecute the perpetrators.[353] Girls are also at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse by those intended to protect them in humanitarian contexts – including peacekeeping troops, armed forces and humanitarian aid workers.

Prostitution as a survival strategy in humanitarian contexts has been commonly recorded, particularly when there are UN or humanitarian forces present, normally with more resources than the local community, creating an economic opportunity for many girls who are unable to make a living elsewhere.[354] However, although transactional sex becomes a basic source of survival, the girls and women who engage in it are highly stigmatised in their communities, leaving them exposed to further exploitation, abuse and violence.[355] Research in West Africa found that displaced girls and women face increased pressure to engage in transactional or "survival" sex.[356] Plan International's research in Rwandan refugee camps affirms this:

"When you are hungry you don't really have a choice at all. All you think about is what to put in your stomach. It doesn't matter how you are going to find food or at what cost. So men and boys take advantage of this [vulnerability] to have sex with young girls in the camp.

They have sex in exchange for giving a girl a cup of milk, cakes, bread, body lotion, and so on."[357]

Harmful practices in emergencies

Faced with the stress and trauma of emergencies, heightened insecurity and economic hardship, affected communities may resort to negative coping mechanisms and harmful practices, such as CEFM, FGM/C and child labour.[358] These impact on the rights of girls and young women.

There is evidence that emergencies can exacerbate the problem of CEFM, especially in protracted displacement settings.[359] It is sometimes viewed by families as a means of protecting the "honour" of young girls, which may be at risk if food insecurity forces girls to resort to survival or transactional sex.[360] Studies have found that during crises the practice of CEFM may increase among families who would not have considered it before, and threatens even younger girls.[361] The availability of quantitative data on child marriages in refugee and displacement contexts is limited and difficult to access, however recent research has shown a 167 per cent increase in registered Syrian marriages in Jordan involving girls under the age of 18 between 2011 and 2014.[362]

Forced displacement can expose communities to different social norms and practices in new locations.[363] There is some evidence to suggest that FGM/C can also increase during forced displacement.[364] Plan International research shows that the daughters of displaced communities in northern Mali (where FGM/C was not traditionally practised) living in host communities in the south of the country (where it is commonly practised) were being ostracised and marginalised because they had not undergone the practice.[365] Many families from the north felt pressured to perform FGM/C on their daughters as a means of better integrating their daughters and offering them opportunities while in displacement. Other examples have been recorded in Sudan and Nigeria.[366]

Forced displacement: child protection failings

Under the UNCRC, all children, including those seeking asylum or with refugee status, have a right to protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, and States party to the UNCRC are obliged to provide children under their jurisdiction with the appropriate protection and assistance to help them realise all the rights within the UNCRC, based on the principle of non-discrimination. Children are also individual rights holders under the 1951 Refugee Convention, entitled to all assistance and protection afforded to refugee adults. This protective framework for forcibly displaced children is bolstered by regional human rights law and regional refugee law and by the 1951 Statelessness Convention.

Serious gaps in international and national laws and policies meant to protect children on the move leave them at heightened risk of violence. Deprived, unprotected and often alone, children on the move become easy prey for traffickers and others who seek to abuse and exploit them.[367]

CASE STUDY: Plan International Nigeria

Violence and military counter-operations related to Boko Haram continue to affect 26 million people living in north-east Nigeria. The conflict has led to large-scale displacement (1.8 million internally displaced people), weakened an already fragile education system and severely disrupted livelihoods. There are widespread reports of violence, including gender-based violence.

Plan International is providing protection, education and livelihoods support services to children, working in partnership with the local government and local community-based organisations in Borno and Adamawa State. Plan International has taken an integrated age and gender sensitive programming approach. Interventions include:

➤ **Case management:** plans are developed for each registered child to adequately support them and their families through psychosocial support, parenting programmes and information on further support activities, and through referrals to other service providers.
➤ **Non-formal education and income-generating activities:** these are for girls and young women who were affiliated with Boko Haram. The activities aim to prevent young women and girls from using negative coping mechanisms to make a living.
➤ **Community-based support:** procedures for identifying and selecting beneficiaries are coordinated with communities to avoid further stigmatisation of affected children.
➤ **Psychosocial support** through community-based mechanisms, including child-friendly spaces, is provided to girls and young women to support their reintegration.
➤ **Cash transfer programme:** this enables improved access to relief goods in order to meet the basic needs of vulnerable and at-risk children and their families.
➤ **Mobile units:** consisting of a case officer, community engagement officer, nurse, nutrition adviser and driver, to access remote and hard-to-reach communities. The teams provide an integrated response to the needs of vulnerable children and organise information sensitisation sessions on child protection, psychosocial wellbeing, nutrition, SGBV and the reintegration of children and young women who are stigmatised because of their former affiliation with Boko Haram.

To date, more than 5,000 children have received case management support, and more than 11,000 children have been included in CFS activities. Parents and caregivers of children reached by psychosocial activities at the CFS reported improvement in their children's wellbeing. A survey of children who had participated in CFS activities found that 88 per cent of children reported that they were very happy after attending CFS activities, and 97 per cent reported feeling respected and safe. Among parents, 90 per cent highlighted that the cash received was used to provide food to their family. Others revealed that they were able to channel certain amounts towards the re-enrolment of their children/wards into school.

Although under the UNCRC host governments are responsible for protecting all children under their jurisdiction, in reality, when their ability to protect national children is limited, non-national children, including those on the move, are often left excluded from national systems on a formal or de facto basis. Even in countries with relatively robust national child protection systems, the ability to protect non-national children may be compromised in situations of sudden influx.[368] Even in the case of IDP children, systems often become overwhelmed and, despite being nationals in their country of displacement, authorities may be unable or sometimes unwilling to meet their needs.

Where national child protection systems are found wanting, parallel arrangements for the protection of children on the move may be established, but these are often inadequate, and affected by lack of coordination and clarity over responsibilities. At the same time, forced displacement weakens or breaks down formal and informal community-based structures, networks and systems that may have traditionally protected children. [369]

Child protection failings may stem from tensions with immigration enforcement. This can result in States limiting the coverage of national child protection systems to exclude refugee and asylum-seeking children and

subordinating the best interests of children to the goals of immigration deterrence.[370] Related to this is the fact that asylum processes are often not child-sensitive, and the failure to adapt refugee status determination and asylum procedures to children can result in protection failings at all points of the process.

Recruitment of children into armed forces or groups

UNICEF estimates that approximately 300,000 girls and boys under the age of 18 are used in conflicts across the globe.[371] While the majority of those threatened with forced recruitment into armed groups are boys, an estimated 10 to 30 per cent of children in fighting forces are girls.[372] Children are also increasingly used as forced labour and human shields. Boys and girls associated with armed groups can be forced to fight, act as spies, carry heavy loads as porters, be forcibly married to fighters and used as sex slaves, or forced to commit crimes and atrocities.[373]

In 1997, the UN General Assembly established a mandate for a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Children and Armed Conflict. The SRSG reports annually to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and raises challenges faced by children in war to the UN Security Council, as well as

relevant governments. The SRSG reports on the 'six grave violations' of children's rights in armed conflict: killing and maiming of children; recruitment or use as child soldiers; sexual violence; abduction; attacks against schools or hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access for children. Since 1999, the UN Security Council has adopted a number of resolutions that have placed the issues on children and armed conflict in the context of peace and security.

A UN Security Council Resolution 2331 (2016), condemns the sale of, or trade in, persons seized by ISIL in Iraq as well as trafficking in persons by Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and other groups for purposes of sexual slavery, and exploitation and forced labour. The Resolution calls upon UN Member States to investigate, disrupt and dismantle the networks involved, including through the use of anti-money laundering, anti-corruption and counter-terrorism laws, underlining the need for strong international cooperation in law enforcement.[374]

More than 50 groups around the world have recruited children, both into serving national forces and irregular forces. The Lord's Resistance Army fighting in Uganda and now located in the Central African Republic (CAR) is thought to have forcibly recruited thousands of children over decades. However, recruitment can take sinister new forms. In Syria, children as young as seven have been used as executioners.[375] There is also an alarming rise in the numbers of children who are used as suicide bombers. According to a UN report, 117 children – more than 80 per cent of them girls – have been used since 2014 in "suicide" attacks across the Lake Chad region.[376]

The trafficking of girls and women in conflict situations for use as sexual slaves, forced marriage, forced prostitution and early pregnancy, is part of the wider range of sexual violence carried out against civilians during and in the aftermath of conflict.[377] For example, an estimated 7,000 children and women of the Yazidi minority group have been enslaved by ISIL in Iraq.[378]

Particularly vulnerable groups in displacement

Even where national child protection systems are well resourced, it can be difficult to identify and reach out to some groups of children who are in particularly vulnerable situations. Stateless children, children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities and those who identify as LGBTIQ are all less likely to access child protection services, but are all at heightened risk.

The youngest children are particularly vulnerable in humanitarian contexts, which may have long-term and significant impacts on their physical and psychological wellbeing. There are often misconceptions that young children will not be able to understand the horrors of emergencies, but in fact evidence shows that natural disasters and armed conflict can severely impact the healthy mental and emotional development of young children.[379]

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) face particular risks of violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and trafficking as they lack the immediate protection of parents, families and/or primary caregivers. They also have additional requirements for alternative care and family tracing. Yet children themselves may resist contact with authorities because they fear interruption of their journeys, their ability to work, detention and deportation. UASC may also be difficult to reach because they lack information about asylum procedures or because they are under the control of traffickers.[380]

Adolescents are also often overlooked and excluded from broad-based protection responses, which can group their needs and vulnerabilities with those of younger children or adults. Adolescents are at a vulnerable time of transition between "childhood" and "adulthood" as they begin to assume adult responsibilities and roles, but without the key skills, networks and capacities to safely navigate the beginnings of adulthood in displacement.[381] Adolescent girls are particularly susceptible to sexual and gender-based violence, early and forced marriage and trafficking.[382] Adolescent boys are at a higher risk of becoming separated from their parents and families,[383] and in some situations are at risk of forced recruitment into armed and extremist groups.[384]

Plan International's position
➢ **Plan International believes that States must uphold their responsibilities under international law to all children without discrimination. Children seeking asylum or with refugee status have an equal right to protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect under the UNCRC. Children are individual rights holders under the 1951 Refugee Convention, entitled to all assistance and protection afforded to refugee adults.**

➢ **We recognise that during emergencies, particularly in situations of forced displacement, children are placed at heightened risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. Risks are particularly acute for unaccompanied and separated children who lack the immediate protection provided by parents, families and/or primary caregivers.**

➢ **We recognise that under the UNCRC and international humanitarian law, separated children have a right to be reunited with parents, relatives or guardians. States should pursue all practical measures to reunite children with their families.**

➢ **We recognise that risks for children in humanitarian settings vary depending on gender and age. In emergencies, child protection responses often overlook adolescent girls, yet they face specific risks due to both their gender and age. These include risks of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices such as CEFM. Both child protection interventions and interventions to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence must be gender and age-sensitive.**

- Plan International believes that strengthening the protection of children on the move should be a priority investment for governments of host countries and donors. This involves increased and more effective resourcing of both national and community-based child protection systems, to meet the needs of children on the move.

- We also believe that greater attention should be given to preventing and addressing the root causes of child protection issues in humanitarian contexts. This includes increasing access to education and social protection; expanding opportunities for families to generate income; and supporting community dialogue and engagement towards conflict resolution.

Plan International's recommendations

National governments, particularly governments of host countries should:

- Strengthen and invest in national and local gender transformative child protection systems to enable them to operate effectively before, during and after disasters. Governments must ensure that sufficient economic and human resources are in place to make them accessible and responsive to the specific needs of children in emergencies, on the move and at all stages of the migration process, and particularly unaccompanied and separated children.

- In situations of cross-border displacement, strengthen cross-border coordination and cooperation in order to provide immediate and long-term protection, care and support for children involved in mixed migratory flows at each stage of their journey.

- Include a full mapping of child protection systems and structures along with analysis of existing and potential risks to children in national and local level preparedness policies and procedures. Authorities responsible for child protection should also implement adequate contingency planning and budgeting.

- Improve the generation and use of sex and age disaggregated data and evidence in order to better understand and respond to child protection risks during emergencies. This includes the systematic collection and use of sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADD) at a minimum.

Humanitarian and development actors:

- The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict should: report on, unpack and seek to address the gender-related dimensions of grave violations perpetrated against children in armed conflict contexts; advocate for adequate resources for the inclusion of child protection advisers and gender advisers in all conflict-affected country teams; prioritise consultation with boys and girls affected by armed conflict; and ensure that all briefings and reporting clearly reflect the specific violations faced by girls, and the needs of girls in armed conflict.

- Humanitarian and development actors in general should ensure that all child protection programming in emergencies adheres to the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS).[385]

- Ensure that needs assessments are gender and age-sensitive and employ participatory methodologies in order to capture protection concerns for girls and boys of different ages and allow responses to be tailored to their specific needs.

- Strengthen coordination and collaboration between humanitarian sectors, and between humanitarian and development actors in all emergency responses in order to ensure that interventions in other sectors contribute to, and do not undermine, the protective environment for children.

- Community mechanisms and capacity for child protection should be supported and strengthened. This includes awareness raising, parenting education, early detection systems and strengthening community-based child protection and anti-trafficking groups and networks.

- Support and strengthen the protective capacities of families and take measures to keep families together. This includes support for positive parenting programmes or referral to specialised family services. In refugee situations governments should also develop and implement clear policy guidance to prevent children from being separated from their parents, particularly during the asylum process.

- Prioritise a comprehensive and age-sensitive approach to preventing and responding to SGBV in all responses, which takes account of and responds to the specific needs of adolescent girls in particular. This includes ensuring that measures to protect girls and mitigate risks of SGBV are implemented and that procedures are in place to identify and provide appropriate support, including psychosocial support for all survivors. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence must become a standard operating procedure in all forced displacement responses.

- Ensure the full and swift implementation of the Minimum Initial Service Package in camps, reception and detention centres, to include awareness raising and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services and information, and the earliest transition to full services and supplies.

- Respond to the needs of adolescent girls holistically with comprehensive, cross-sectoral

programming that addresses both life-saving immediate needs, including protection needs and promotes long-term resilience. Plan International's work with adolescent girls affected by gender-based violence in north-east Nigeria exemplifies how this approach can work.

➢ **Ensure that specific programming to respond to the needs of UASC is prioritised in the first phases of an emergency response. Alternative care should be provided, which builds on positive practices within the displaced and host communities and supportive monitoring structures should be in place to prevent and respond to exploitation and abuse.**

➢ **Interventions to ensure that the immediate needs of children who have been exposed to physical or psychological danger must include both basic and specialised psychosocial support services to girls and boys and young women and men. These should be culturally relevant, gender sensitive and age appropriate.**

➢ **Child protection actors should ensure that child protection responses map and link to existing and available child protection services. Referral mechanisms to other agencies and providers should be established, and displaced people, including children, should receive information on available services and their right to access them.**

Donors should:

➢ **Ensure that violence prevention and protection needs are prioritised and fully funded. This includes ensuring funding for child protection is included in the first phases of emergency response, and that timely, predictable, multi-year and flexible funding is provided to sustainably address the protection needs of children in humanitarian contexts, including protracted crises.**

VIOLENCE ONLINE

Today, children spend an increasing amount of time online and in virtual spaces. The online world has been increasingly recognised as a distinct space and a new platform where violence, exploitation and abuse is perpetrated against children.

An ECPAT International report outlines:

> *Children can be abused through the Internet in two main ways. Firstly, they can be exposed to illegal or other harmful materials which they are ill-prepared to deal with e.g. child pornography, hard-core adult pornography, bomb-making or financial scams. Secondly, children can come into direct contact with, and possibly fall prey to, sexual exploiters.[386]*

As ECPAT points out, often those who publish harmful or illegal material, such as child pornography, and those seeking to make contact with children through the internet for illegal or improper ends, are one and the same.

Global policy framework

As with all new technology, use of the internet has outpaced the legal and policy frameworks that govern the space. The internet is a vast, rapidly evolving and ever-changing space, presenting significant problems for attempts to regulate it. This makes it a more easily navigable space for individuals and groups who want to commit crimes or exploit others. As such, the internet can be a dangerous space for children, who can be subject to violence, abuse and exploitation online.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development refers to the role of technology throughout the SDGs; most importantly, within SDG5 on Gender Equality, target 5.b calls for "enhancing the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women".

As outlined above, the UNCRC Articles 34 to 36 require States to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and require States Parties to prevent the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials; the abduction of, the sale of or trafficking in children for any purpose in any form; and to protect children against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of their welfare.

In addition, the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was created in 2002, which focuses exclusively on addressing child sexual abuse and exploitation. It addresses this issue in online spaces, expressing concern 'about the growing availability of child pornography on the Internet and other evolving technologies', and recalling the conclusion of the International Conference on Combating Child Pornography on the Internet, which called for the 'worldwide criminalisation of the production, distribution, exportation, transmission, importation, intentional possession and advertising of child pornography, and stressing the importance of closer cooperation and partnership between Governments and the Internet industry'.

Children are also protected from online sexual abuse by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (which has been ratified by 183 States), which can be applied to the prevention, investigation and prosecution of any "serious crime", as defined in Article 2(b) of the Convention, that is transnational in nature (Article 3(2)), involves an organised criminal group, and is committed with the intent to achieve a material or financial benefit. Importantly, the term "benefit" has been interpreted to include "sexual gratification, such as the receipt or trade of materials by members of child grooming rings, the trading of children by preferential child sex offender rings or cost-sharing among ring members".[387]

The rise in violence, harassment and abuse online was discussed during the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, where concerns about emerging online threats coming from online media, particularly social media, were raised. Cyber pornography was recognised as a new form of child sexual exploitation, as was the urgent need to create a safe information and communications technology environment for children, requiring a combination of national efforts and international cooperation.[388]

Nevertheless, States vary considerably in their approach to addressing child abuse and exploitation. While many States criminalise acts such as production of child sexual abuse material, they may differ on the concrete elements of the crime and the definitions of "child".

Cyber-bullying

"Boys and others send dirty messages and make calls to girls and harass them. They are generally shy to share these things with their parents. People make dirty videos and threaten to share and exploit girls."
14-year-old girl, India

A significant proportion of the abuse and harassment that children face online is due to bullying on social media platforms. Online forums mean that bullying takes place in plain sight of others, increasing the humiliation. It can lead to anxiety, depression, self-harm and even suicide. Rivers and Noret note that "girls are more likely to experience ongoing cyber-bullying than boys and are more vulnerable to different kinds of risk, particularly of chatting to people online they do not know; being asked for personal details; receiving unwanted sexual comments; or being disturbed by violent or offensive pornographic context".[389] In the UK, for example, half of all girls are bullied online. Plan International's own research shows that girls experience pressure to be sexually desirable and knowledgeable at an early age, as they negotiate a digital communications landscape that permeates almost all of their social spheres.[390] The internet has therefore come to be seen as a particularly unsafe space for girls and young women.

In Plan International's recent research in Colombia, some girls described the pressure to be popular, stating that popular girls are more respected and consequently more valued by other girls. Interviewees cited the pressures they face to be popular in virtual social network circles and how social media can be used by other girls to monitor and stigmatise girls. One girl reported the risk of having your profile damaged by associating with the wrong girls, explaining how her cousin was being labelled a slut by other girls and that to avoid damaging her own profile she disassociated herself with her cousin so that other girls "did not speak badly of me". Social networks were also described as a vehicle for bullying. Another girl, who identified as Afro-Colombian, described how her "black friend whose skin is darker than mine and she has short hair" was discriminated against on account of her ethnicity and different style. She explained: "many times people told her she did not fit in and she was even a victim of cyber-bullying in social networks".[391]

As Gould notes, it is essential that we approach the question of digital safety, access and voice not simply from an individual, one-to-one perspective, but also as a core structure in the communication tools of our society, and pivotally, as a platform for active citizenship and voice. Responses to ensure girls' safety and freedom from harassment as well as their access and use of digital platforms must address the question of girls' right to have a voice.[392] It is important to also recognise that gender-based trolling and abuse often also comes layered with other discriminatory practices. A recent EU report found that online hate attacks against Muslim women are increasing, with verbal abuse and hate speech being the most common incidents.[393]

Online sexualisation of women and girls

Cultural and social norms influence girls' and young women's self-esteem through idealised body images and objectification. Portrayal of women in the media – through advertising, film or video games, often highly sexualises women, and in some cases re-produces or dramatises sexual violence, highly sexualised images and degrading stereotypes. This can reinforce negative gender norms, and normalise violence against women. The pressure to fit in and adhere to these norms as well as the impact of

the sexualisation of girls and young women in many societies can have serious consequences.

In many countries, particularly where access to mobile technology is widespread, pornography is easily accessible to children online. For example, figures in the UK show that about 53 per cent of 11 to 16-year-olds have seen explicit material online.[394] Pornography presents an unrealistic image of sex, and often shows highly aggressive or violent sexual acts. Exposure to such material at an early age can have a profoundly damaging impact on children, adolescents and young people, giving them unacceptable messages about sex and intimacy. In Australia, child welfare experts state that pornography is inextricably linked to the growing number of young sexual offenders in Australia, with pornography a factor in 100 per cent of cases of sexual violence against a child perpetrated by another child.[395]

A recent significant concern regarding girls and digital life has been girls sharing sexual images and messages online, commonly described as sexting.[396] Harassment following sexting is usually directed by young men towards young women. Sexting is not a gender neutral practice; it is shaped by the gender dynamics of the peer group in which, primarily, boys harass girls, and it is exacerbated by the gendered norms of popular culture, and by families and schools failing to recognise the problem or support girls.[397]

Online sexual abuse and exploitation

"Boys and girls have social media accounts at an early age, but do not know how to take care of themselves."
13-year-old girl, Dominican Republic

As the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) outlines, the main forms of ICT-facilitated child abuse and exploitation are: child sexual abuse material (child pornography); commercial sexual exploitation of children; and cyber-enticement, solicitation and grooming. Girls account for the majority of victims of child abuse and exploitation, although boys are increasingly at risk as well. Prior abuse and family dysfunction may elevate the risk of victimisation, particularly for commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Poverty and migration and social isolation can also have negative repercussions on patterns of CSEC. Very young children are increasingly victimised in child sexual abuse material and child sex trafficking and exploitation, although adolescents face the highest risk of cyber-enticement, exposure to harmful material and cyber-bullying.[398]

The latest technologies and social media are serving traffickers and recruiters in new ways. The UN's Special Rapporteur on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zenab Hawa Bangura, testified to the growing use of social media for trafficking women and girls, selling them in the same websites as weapons.[399] In addition, recruiters for conflict are increasingly using social media to target teenagers, grooming for both fighters and for "brides". Apps such as Threema, Twitter and WhatsApp have all been manipulated for trafficking as well as online grooming for early marriages.

The precise number of children who are victims of online child sexual exploitation is unknown. According to the International Association of Internet Hotlines, the number of webpages containing child sexual abuse materials increased by 147 per cent from 2012 to 2014, with girls and children of 10 years or younger portrayed in 80 per cent of these materials.

UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kate Gilmore states that online sexual exploitation is likely to rise in the coming years with the demand for new child sexual abuse material. This new material includes the circulation of self-generated content, such as sexting, and child sexual abuse live streaming where adults pay a fee in order to direct and view a live video of children performing sexual acts in front of a webcam.[400]

At the same time as the internet offers a sense of anonymity to perpetrators, and can present some challenges to offender identification, it also offers many opportunities for law enforcement investigations, including through the generation of clear evidence trails. Where governments dedicate resources to tackling the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, progress towards ending it can be made. Image analysis and databases, as well as digital forensics (the recovery and investigation of material found in digital and computer systems) can all go some way to rescuing victims and capturing perpetrators. However, investigation is time-consuming and requires dedicated resources.

Particularly with regard to child sexual abuse material, international law enforcement operations have been instrumental in increasing arrests and convictions and bringing awareness of the crime. Mutual legal assistance – the process whereby States formally request judicial assistance from another State in criminal investigations – can facilitate investigations. However, this process can be too slow for criminal investigations, in which evidence and leads can be time-sensitive. The formation of multi-agency partnerships has emerged as a common practice for combating technology-facilitated crimes against children.[401]

A Plan International Philippines study on *Children and the Sex Trade in the Digital Age* in 2016 cited that the CSEC landscape has greatly changed with the advance of technology. It has become easier to facilitate CSEC while containing and controlling it has become more complex as transactions are facilitated through the internet with the use of smartphones and computers. The report made clear that online sexual exploitation is a global problem, with new technologies being abused in developing countries and among impoverished communities.

Plan International's position
> **Plan International believes that advances in information and communications technology present new and positive opportunities for children. Nevertheless the online space has led to a rise in abuse, harassment and violence against children that constitutes a human rights violation, and that must be tackled as an urgent priority. The associated dangers that the internet presents for children**

must not be underestimated; global actors must increase efforts to ensure children's online safety and protection.

➤ **Plan International condemns practices that seek to silence the voices of girls and women online. We urge all actors to ensure that responses to violence online do not lead to suppressing girls' and women's freedom of expression. Girls must not be encouraged to step away from the digital world. Responses must focus on creating a safe online space, strengthening reporting mechanisms, and punishing perpetrators of violence, harassment and abuse.**

➤ **We must continue to ensure that digital media does not perpetuate negative gender stereotypes, the sexualisation of girls and women, and unrealistic expectations of female image. Diverse representations of women and girls, men and boys in the media can have a positive impact on social norms around gender identity. The extremely damaging impact of pornography, particularly violent pornography, and the ease with which children can access it, must also be recognised as a significant issue globally. Responses must ensure that children are protected from accessing harmful materials online.**

➤ **The use of the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse and exploitation of children is an abhorrent crime. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is no less a crime if it takes place online, and instances of this are rising. Governments and other actors must tackle this crime as a matter of urgency, with greater resources dedicated to investigating and prosecuting perpetrators.**
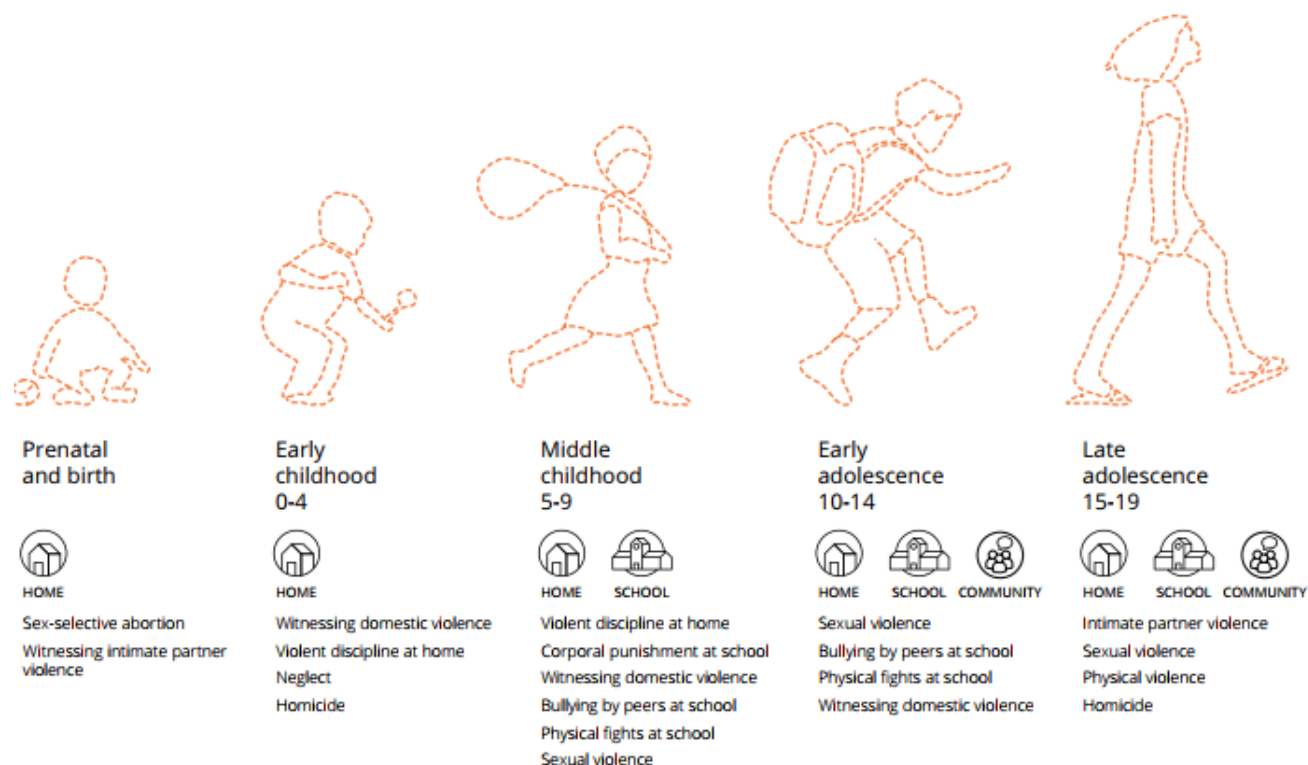
Plan International's recommendations

➤ **A General Comment on children and the digital environment should be passed by the UN, in order to provide a coherent, principled, evidence-based framework with which to recognise and address children's rights and best interests for governments and organisations that work with children.**

➤ **Governments should ensure that children are educated about the dangers associated with online spaces, as well as the benefits. Children, and particularly girls, should be equipped with an understanding of their rights, as well as information about how to protect their safety online, and how to report abuse, harassment or exploitation.**

➤ **Governments should work with the technology industry to ensure better coordination to eliminate online abuse or exploitation; to increase reporting of and response to abuse through social media**

platforms; and to strengthen and implement restrictions on the display and circulation of pornographic materials online, in order to limit the ways in which children can access these. Stronger punitive measures should be in place to sites that do not adhere to such restrictions.

➤ **Governments must domesticate international legal frameworks, and strengthen national legislation to prevent and respond to the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. This must include ensuring additional resources are available to tackle online crime, as well as working in collaboration with other governments and the private sector to tackle cross-border organised crime.**

ANNEX 1: VIOLENCE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF CHILDHOOD

FIGURE 4: Exposure to violence through stages of childhood.

Prenatal and birth

HOME

Sex-selective abortion

Witnessing intimate partner violence

Early childhood 0-4

HOME

Witnessing domestic violence

Violent discipline at home

Neglect

Homicide

Middle childhood 5-9

HOME   SCHOOL

Violent discipline at home

Corporal punishment at school

Witnessing domestic violence

Bullying by peers at school

Physical fights at school

Sexual violence

Early adolescence 10-14

HOME   SCHOOL   COMMUNITY

Sexual violence

Bullying by peers at school

Physical fights at school

Witnessing domestic violence

Late adolescence 15-19

HOME   SCHOOL   COMMUNITY

Intimate partner violence

Sexual violence

Physical violence

Homicide

Source: Know Violence in Childhood 2017.

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