

# GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN 2020





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World Health  
Organization



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON  
**VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**



**End Violence  
Against Children**

Global status report on preventing violence against children 2020

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# Foreword

The Sustainable Development Goals contain a bold, ambitious and clear call to eliminate violence against children, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child includes a right to freedom from violence. This report is about the extent to which governments around the world are taking evidence-based actions to achieve these targets, and it provides a baseline against which governments can monitor their progress over the course of the next decade.

An estimated one billion children – or one out of two children worldwide – suffer some form of violence each year. In addition to its immediate harms to individuals, families and communities, violence against children has pernicious, lifelong effects that undermine the potential of individuals, and when aggregated across billions of people, may impede economic development.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the physical distancing measures imposed in response to it have greatly increased the risk of intra-family violence and online abuse. School closures have impacted more than 1.5 billion children and youth. Movement restrictions, loss of income, isolation, and overcrowding have heightened levels of stress and anxiety in parents, caregivers and children, and cut families and individuals off from their usual sources of support. As this report shows, reports of child abuse and of children witnessing violence between their parents and caregivers have increased.

Ending violence against children is increasingly within our reach. Data to identify the scale of the problem are available in a growing number of countries. We know what works to prevent violence against children, and technical guidance on how to do this is readily accessible in the seven INSPIRE strategies, a collection of evidence-based recommendations on how to prevent and respond to violence against children, including implementation and enforcement laws; norms and values; safe environments; parent and caregiver support; income and economic strengthening; response and support services; and education and life skills.

As experience has shown, stopping the epidemic of violence against children can provide wide-ranging and substantial health, social, and economic benefits, both nationally and globally, as well as for subsequent generations. Success will mean that children can grow up free from violence and can thrive, becoming a new generation of adults able to experience healthy and prosperous lives. These rewards clearly justify – and outweigh the cost of – the resources expended on preventing violence against children.

For this report, over 1000 decision-makers from 155 countries collaborated to build a picture of global efforts to end violence against children. This collaboration has revealed a growing uptake of evidence-based solutions,

alongside untapped potential to accelerate implementation. Government officials from all countries acknowledge the need to scale up their efforts. For instance, the report shows that on average, 88% of countries have laws in place for preventing violence against children, but just 47% of government respondents felt that these laws were being enforced strongly enough to ensure violators would be penalized. And while around 56% of countries provide some national support for implementing the INSPIRE prevention and response approaches, just 25% considered this support as sufficient to reach all, or nearly all, who need them.

By implementing the proven solutions set out in the INSPIRE package, we can nurture generations of children and adults who are free from violence. Providing the necessary financial and

technical support to all countries requires a global effort. At the local level, we need to implement evidence-based strategies, and monitor them closely to ensure they are correctly delivered and reach all who need them. We need people-centered action to build a violence-free world, through our roles as parents, teachers, peers and friends. As citizens, we must hold our governments accountable for their commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Please join us in using the findings of this report to generate an enduring movement for the further uptake and implementation of INSPIRE and its evidence-based actions. By working together, as a local and global community, we can end the epidemic of violence against children.



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