

Committing Africa for Action to Ending Violence against Children



CONCEPT NOTE

A Regional Consultation
29-30 September 2016 | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



BACKGROUND

Violence against children is a significant problem throughout the African continent as it is around the world. In 2006, the UN Secretary General submitted a report on ending violence against children that set the agenda around the world.

The persistence and magnitude of the problem 10 years later require stronger call to end the phenomenon. To this end the world leaders adopted the agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in September 2015 and set specific goals to end violence against children.

In the course of the past decade, Africa has achieved a lot of progress in ensuring the protection rights of children. Many countries have undertaken legislative and policy measures and programmatic interventions. For instance, violence, torture, cruelty and mistreatment are prohibited in almost all African Constitutions and children are protected under the general provisions of the majority. The right to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment is recognised in 49 African Constitutions and is explicitly defined as a non-derogable right in six.

As of July 2015, seven states have achieved prohibition of violence against children in all settings, including the home; governments of at least 13 others have expressed a commitment to enacting full prohibition, including in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council. Eight states have prohibited corporal punishment in all alternative care settings and day care, 26 in all schools, 29 in penal institutions and 47 as a sentence for crime.

While all countries have laws prohibiting sexual violence, abuse and exploitation, 16 countries criminalise child prostitution and child pornography or both. Some countries have introduced legislation on computer- facilitated offences or cyberspace violence including Egypt, Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa and Tunisia.

Despite significant progress, many children remain exposed to various forms of violence¹:

- about 60 per cent of children experienced physical punishment by family members.
- in many countries in Africa, one in four children, experience sexual violence.
- a significant number of children in Africa are engaged in hazardous labour in plantations, mines and as domestic workers, routinely exposed to severe forms of neglect and sexual and physical violence.
- each year three million girls are at risk of genital cutting in Africa and millions of girls are married before the age of 18.
- more than 43 per cent of boys in residential care institutions had suffered physical violence, while 20 per cent of children reported having experienced sexual violence of one or another form.

¹ The African Report on Violence Against Children (ACPF 2014)

WHY A COLLECTIVE FRONT TO ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN?

Despite encouraging progress in addressing violence against children on multiple fronts, most of the existing efforts have been plagued by fragmentation and duplication. The existing collaboration in addressing violence against children among child protection actors is only limited to those having a focus on curative, victim-support services. Very limited efforts have been made to bring actors working around both prevention and response together. The former are often excluded from child protection debates and collaborative initiatives. For instance, actors and stakeholders working around prevention such as those working in the areas of better parenting, family- and community-based child protection, care reform and child-sensitive social protection are almost always excluded from collaborative initiatives in addressing violence against children.

This has partly to do with the fact that very few opportunities existed for bringing together these players to learn from each other and speak out through a united voice. The result is that care reform efforts and social protection schemes lack rigor in their treatment of protection of children from violence, while initiatives to protect children from violence make very little effort to use care reform or better parenting interventions as entry points to address violence against children.

At the global level and as a follow up to the UN Secretary General Report of 2006 and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, there are renewed calls for collective accelerated action to end violence against children; such as *High Time to End Violence*² and *End Violence against Children: The Global Partnership*.³

Violence against children is a major hindrance to Africa social and economic transformation agenda as envisioned in the Africa Union's Agenda 2063.

We find it timely to convene a regional consultation bringing together governments, civil society actors and experts working on care reform, better parenting, social protection and response services to victims of violence against children. The consultation will facilitate dialogue and cross-learning among these actors as well as paving the way for creating a collective continental front towards the elimination of violence against children in Africa.

We have conducted extensive consultations with relevant actors in both the prevention and response spectrum of the child protection field and are developing a strategy towards the establishment of a partnership that brings all relevant actors together: *The African Partnership to End Violence against Children*. The partnership will, among others, advance collective efforts to comprehensively address violence against children along the prevention-response continuum. It also aims to facilitate the uptake of the draft Agenda 2040 for Children in Africa and the SDGs-child protection targets in Africa through collective programming, knowledge building and sharing.

The consultation is expected to deliberate on the draft framework for establishing the African Partnership and to identify continental and regional priorities and entry points for preventing and responding to violence against children in Africa.

² Office of the UN SRSG-VAC

³ Initiative from child-rights focused agencies: UNICEF, Save the Children, SOS-Children Village, Child Fund, World Vision International

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION

The main objective of the consultation is to present robust evidence towards accelerating collective regional efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children with the ultimate end of facilitating national action. The consultation also aims to:

- Identify priorities for continental, regional and national action to prevent and respond to violence against children
- Facilitate cross-learning and dialogue among organizations working on the protection of children against violence
- Facilitate evidence-based consensus around the need for collective, systemic efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children in Africa

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

1. Strategies and focus agreed for the ***African Partnership to End Violence against Children***
2. Potential strategic linkages of the partnership with similar African and global initiatives clearly identified
3. Governance structure agreed upon
4. Preliminary membership profile of the partnership developed
5. Commitment from potential members obtained
6. Potential continental and regional entry points and opportunities identified for the Partnership's immediate engagements

PARTICIPANTS

The event is estimated to be attended by some 70 participants representing:

- Representatives of the African Union Commission and the ACERWC
- Representatives of EAC, ECOWAS, ECCAS & SADC
- Government representatives
- Representatives of pan-African, sub-regional and national CSO coalitions and networks
- Representatives of children and youth
- Representatives of UN SRSG-VAC and UN Agencies
- Representatives of INGOs
- Representative of The Global Partnership to End Violence against Children
- Experts/resource persons
- Representatives of the media

DATE AND VENUE

The consultation will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 29-30 September 2016.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES INFORMING THE CONSULTATION

The following key documents will inform the consultation:

- a) A draft strategic document on “*The African Partnership to End Violence against Children*”
- b) *The African Report on Violence against Children*
- c) The Joint *Inter-Agency Statement on Strengthening Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa*, which is a call for the different actors in child protection in Africa to take concrete steps to strengthen child protection systems
- d) *End Violence against Children – The Global Partnership: Strategy 2016-2020*
- e) *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*

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