

Foreword

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Violence against children is a global crisis that spares no country, no community and no family. Each year, more than one billion children experience violence, yet so many cases remain unreported and under-prosecuted.

Violence against children (VAC) and violence against women (VAW) are duly interconnected. The intersections between violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) run deep. Children and women often experience violence in the same environments – such as homes, communities and online spaces. Both forms of violence are driven by shared risk factors such as poverty, inequality, conflicts, humanitarian crisis, displacement and harmful social norms. They also have common and compounding consequences and are characterised by intergenerational transmission.

These overlapping vulnerabilities mean that interventions should be holistic and inclusive, but often a lack of access to services increases vulnerability to violence for both women and children. Addressing both forms of violence together through coordinated, integrated programmes can lead to more effective prevention and response.

The human and economic costs of violence are staggering. Beyond the immediate physical and psychological harm, the effects of violence can last a lifetime and even extend across generations. Children who witness intimate partner violence often develop both immediate and long-term behavioural, emotional and cognitive difficulties that hinder their health, learning and social development.

The consequences for health and wellbeing are profound, undermining human potential and social cohesion. There is, therefore, a compelling economic as well as moral case for prevention and early intervention.

The case for investment should be integral to every government's economic and development strategy. Investing in violence prevention has a high return: it enhances human capital, which in turn increases productivity and overall gross domestic product (GDP); and the reduction of violence eliminates many of the costs currently borne by governments in health care, social welfare and the justice system. Many proven interventions are low-cost and scalable, meaning that even modest increases in spending can generate significant and sustained returns for societies and economies alike.

With less than five years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, ending violence against children and violence against women are not just targets – they are a prerequisite for progress across every goal, whether in health, education, gender equality or freedom from all forms of violence. If we fail to stop this violence, we jeopardise the entire 2030 Agenda and risk leaving too many women and children behind.

We cannot afford to wait. With the clock ticking toward 2030, we need a paradigm shift – moving away from fragmented, siloed plans and toward integrated, evidence-based strategies that tackle the root causes of violence. Preventing violence requires a chain of strong, accessible services that support families and communities early and across every life stage.



Child participation is essential to strengthen our efforts to both prevent and respond to violence. It includes providing children with age-appropriate information so that they know their rights and can access support services. It is also about creating safe spaces for children to raise concerns and share their views so that we can create services that are better attuned to their needs, as they did at Mitchell's Plain Hospital when developing this series of murals.

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