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Contact: Betsy Edwards
BEwards@ChildFund.org
(804)756-2722

New Priority Among UN's Sustainable Development Goals: Violence Against Children

RICHMOND, Va., Sept. 25, 2015 – A new priority infuses the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) announced by the United Nations: Violence against children takes a prominent place among the world's next set of goals for addressing extreme poverty, which replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that expire in 2015.

The issue of child protection was a notable absence from the MDGs, one that ChildFund Alliance (including its U.S. member, ChildFund International) and other child-focused organizations sought to remedy as 2015 approached. With a unified voice, these NGOs have insisted that the SDGs must call for an end to abuse, exploitation and all forms of violence and torture of children.

The need for such an emphasis is urgent, as millions of girls and boys in every country face violence every day. Worldwide, about 60 percent of children ages 2-14 regularly experience physical punishment from their caregivers; 85 million children are involved in hazardous work; and more than 120 million girls have experienced sexual violence.

"Despite progress on many fronts since the Millennium Development Goals were launched in 2000, violence against children around the world is still at epidemic proportions," said Anne Lynam Goddard, president and CEO of ChildFund International. "Children everywhere have the right to grow up free from the violence that too many of them experience every day. We applaud U.N. member states for prioritizing violence against children across the SDGs and look forward to partnering with organizations, communities and children themselves to support the implementation of these goals and hold governments accountable for their commitments."

Over the last three years, ChildFund Alliance has conducted extensive research to learn what children themselves have to say about their primary concerns, consulting with more than 16,000 children in 50 countries: Prevention of violence rose to the top. The children's views help clarify not only the extent to which they are subjected to violence but also their strong investment in being part of the solution.

These findings also are the inspiration for ChildFund Alliance's Free From Violence campaign — a global effort that was created to ensure that the protection of children from violence and exploitation would become a priority in the new SDGs. More than 680,000 supporters worldwide signed our petition calling for governments around the world to more proactively address issues related to violence against children. The campaign has been the centerpiece of the Alliance's broader initiative to better protect children from physical violence, abuse and other dangers.

ChildFund Alliance welcomes the inclusion of violence against children in the SDGs and now calls on governments, the United Nations and civil society to realize this vision through decisive actions and investments.

For more information about ChildFund Alliance's campaign, please visit www.freefromviolence.org.

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ChildFund International is a global child development and protection agency serving more than 18.2 million children and family members in 30 countries. For 75 years, we have helped the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable children survive and thrive to reach their full potential and become leaders of enduring change. As a member of ChildFund Alliance, we create supportive environments in which children can flourish. For more information about ChildFund, visit www.ChildFund.org.