



Children as part of the solution in ending violence

A child-friendly version of:

2022 report to the Human Rights Council

By the Special Representative to the
UN Secretary-General on Violence
Against Children



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



'Dear children, dear friends. I hope this report becomes a useful tool that you can use as part of your advocacy, and your initiatives. You'll be able to read about what we are doing well, what you think we could improve, but most importantly, what we can do together. For us, you are key partners and key actors of change, leading the way.'

Najat Maalla M'jid



United Nations

WHAT'S THE UN?

The 'United Nations' or the UN, is an organization of almost all the countries in the world, created to resolve conflict, promote development and help countries keep their promise on human rights.



MEET NAJAT MAALLA M'JID: THE UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The head of the UN, **Antonio Guterres**, is the 'Secretary-General'. He selects people to work on specific issues. One of them is the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, **Najat Maalla M'jid**.

Her role is to advocate for ending all forms of violence against children, in all settings, **always putting children first**.

She reports to governments all over the world on the work she does. And now it's time to report to children like YOU, who are also taking action to put a stop to violence everywhere.

REPORTING TO CHILDREN: A TWO WAY COMMUNICATION CHANNEL



We need to do more

The situation is unfortunately worse. Two years of COVID-19, together with crises caused by climate change, conflict and other emergencies, have affected violence against children: there's more violence, but we see less of it.

This report is a child-friendly version of her report to the Human Rights Council, and looks to present three main key messages to you:

Children are agents of change

Children like you everywhere are being part of the solution for ending violence, and need to be considered as key partners.



We need to invest in children

It's urgent for countries to invest in children, and to involve them in the process when doing so.



VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN:

there is more but we see less of it

After two years of the pandemic:

The situation is worse:

The world was already unequal, and the pandemic worsened it, affecting the poorest and most vulnerable even more than others.

There's more violence against children in the home, in the community and online.

We are seeing more violence against girls.

There's more risk of child labour, child sexual exploitation, child trafficking, smuggling, child marriage, and children being drawn into criminal and armed groups.

More needs to be done!

More than **1.3 million** children worldwide **lost at least one parent or guardian** in one year due to COVID-19.

The digital divide became more clear as **two thirds of the world's** school-aged children do not have access to the Internet at home, **not being able to access online education during lockdown.**

More children are on the move and looking for a better future because of COVID-19, the humanitarian crises, climate change, and poverty: By the end of 2020, more than 33 million children worldwide were displaced from their homes, leaving many of them with no access to services, separated from their families, and detained.

"Your voice matters so much more than you may know. Raise it, and someone's going to listen. Keep raising it, and a lot of people are going to listen. The power to create a better world lies within you. Believe in your strength, and use your voice."
Ojaswi - 17, India

A YEAR IN REVIEW



So much was done in the last year and in so many places! Here are a few examples



We are working closely with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to better understand how children are using the Internet to be safer, by accessing helplines, protection systems and peer support groups.

"No matter how hard it feels to fight for change as a young person, you, your thoughts, and your advocacy hold much importance to those who are affected by the problems we fight against. Believe in yourself and don't ever forget that, one day, even the smallest steps will make an enormous change in the world".

Carolina, 17, Brazil.



We signed a collaboration with Scouts (WOSM) to globally promote stronger action to keep children safe and to support them to have their voices heard.



COLOMBIA

Najat, the Special Representative, met with the First Lady to support the country in their efforts to end violence against children.



In Latin America and the Caribbean, we supported '**Zoom a tus derechos**', a regional contest encouraging children to submit music videos addressing ethnic and racial discrimination. We also participated in the launch of the **Latin American and Caribbean regional observatory** in October 2021, which collects information on violence against girls in the region.



We supported this year's **African Girl Summit**, which was about accelerating the eradication of child marriage and harmful traditional practices against girls.



We contributed to consultations that led to the European Union Strategy on the rights of the child, which was finalized and published in March 2021.



Najat participated as a keynote speaker in the Third World Anti-Bullying Forum in Sweden. **A new definition of bullying is being proposed**, which includes the digital dimension and the role of culture and norms.

JORDAN AND LEBANON

We visited Jordan and Lebanon and met refugee children while supporting the countries addressing the rights of migrant children.



Education continues to be a priority for children. In collaboration with Arigatou International, we supported the **'Wear My Shoes'** campaign to mobilize children and adults to support children's safe return to school.



ARAB FORUM ON Sustainable Development 2021:

Najat strongly encouraged Arab States to do more to end violence against children, and has continued to work closely with the League of Arab States.



CHAD AND NIGER

Najat met with the President, parliamentarians, organizations, and children themselves.



NAMIBIA

We met with around 30 child parliamentarians and learned about how they were helping address violence and other issues.



NIGERIA

We participated in a policy dialogue to end violence against children.



PHILIPPINES

Our team helped to evaluate the progress of the national plan of action to end violence against children.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



A few years ago the world agreed on the Sustainable Development Agenda, so by the year 2030 countries all over the world would meet a number of goals, including goal **16.2 - to end all forms of violence against children** - and other goals like ending hunger and tackling climate change. These are called the 'Sustainable Development Goals' or 'SDGs', and they all impact violence against children.



During 2021, among other things Najat and her team:



We met with 38 countries (in the UN we call them Member States) to encourage them to report on the situation of children, and to include children like you in the development of their Voluntary National Reviews (the document governments present to report on what progress they are making to meet these goals).



Helped countries with guidance on how they can use their Voluntary National Review processes to report on ways of **addressing violence against children, and to include children like you in their review process** (like online polls, in person meetings, and online focus groups).

"You are not alone and you can change anything as long as you try, but act instantly before you change your mind, before you decide to ignore and don't hesitate to reach out. I know how hard it is to make people listen but if you contact the right people then they will listen and they will act with you so don't give up!"

Nomundari, 16, Mongolia



CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Ending violence against children is everyone's responsibility: governments, civil society organizations, businesses, the UN, the community and families, and children like you.

Children like you play an important role. You have shown us that you are taking action to address violence, and that you are leading these actions, supporting your peers and communities, connecting with decision-makers, and reaching other children.

And children like YOU are leading the way!

Children like you are also mentoring others: For the second year, Najat and her team continued to support CovidUnder19, a civil society led initiative by more than 30 global partners, where children lead the way and build the capacities of their peers so they can also address challenges and create change at a country level.



MEXICO

The 'Tremendas' Mexico network led by adolescent girls has focused on tackling violence against girls and child labour by educating and empowering girls in school from a young age.



GHANA

Children are using drama, poetry and dance to create awareness of the poverty and abuse faced by many children living in the streets.



INDIA

Children and adolescents supported by the civil society organization 'Terre des Hommes' are developing arts-based projects to address child abuse, child labour, child marriage, unsafe migration and gender inequality.



CAMBODIA

Children in street situations, working children, and children whose parents have migrated connect with other young people and local authorities to help reduce violence against children. These same children then educate other children in their communities.

But even though you are acting and leading the way, **many children continue to face barriers for participation**, like having to work, or not being able to go to school, or being forced into marriage, for example.



Sometimes children are exposed to violence as a direct consequence of their activism.



Millions of children who don't have Internet access, and children from poor and marginalized groups still lack opportunities to express themselves and to be involved in action to end violence.

Dear children:
you are not just the future. You are the present and deserve to be part of the solution. More must be done to remove these barriers to children's participation, to ensure your safety, and to empower you as agents of positive change.



VIOLENCE HAS A TERRIBLE COST

for children, families and societies

As children who are active in achieving change, you know that violence is a violation of your rights. Violence is always unacceptable, it can be stopped, all forms of violence can be prevented, and we know how to do it.

Additionally, violence against children has a high cost!

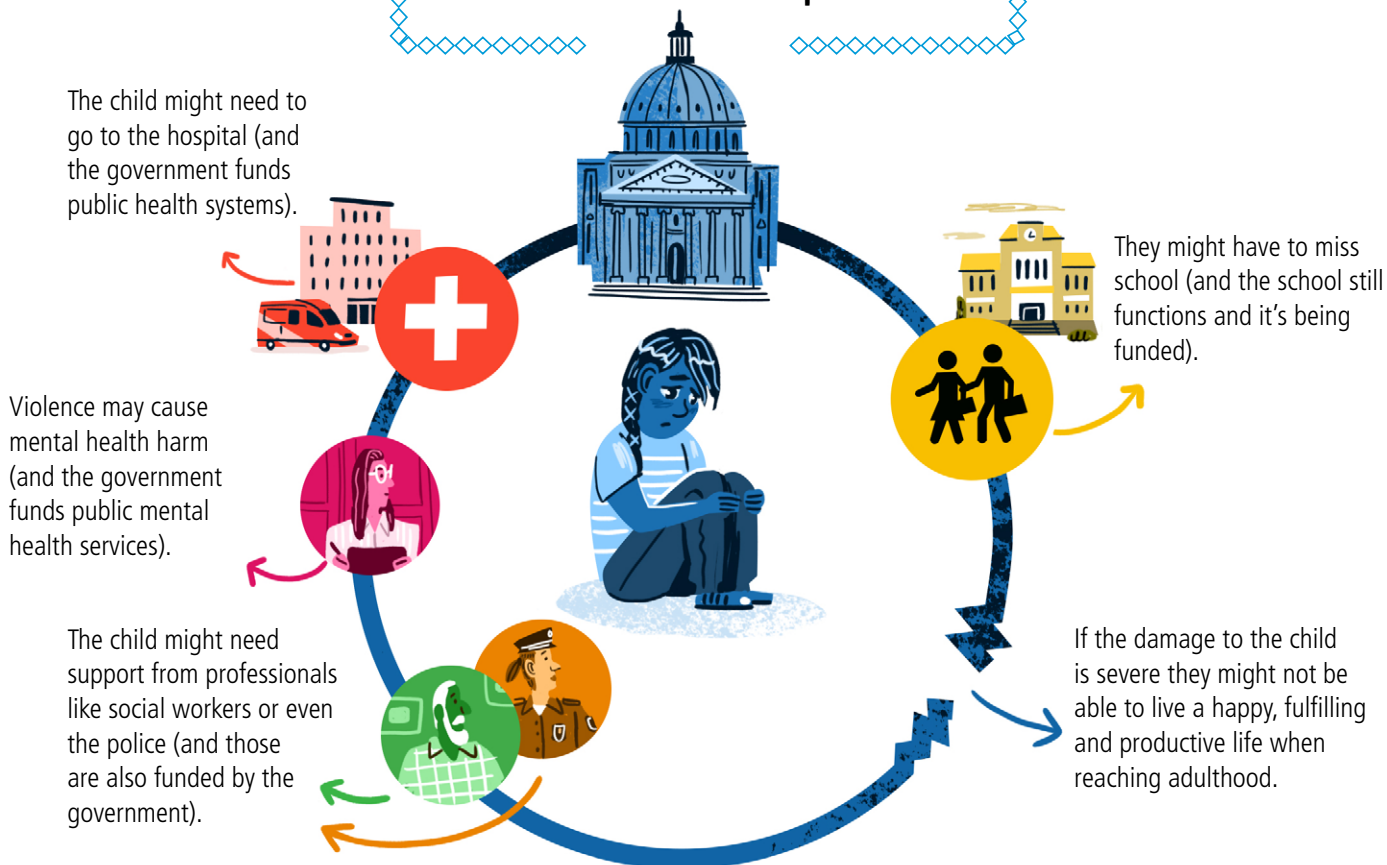
And sometimes governments don't realize that when children are victims of violence - something that should never happen - it also costs their countries a lot of money.



"You must be a young generation who has strength, a young generation that has the courage to speak and act. You have to believe that you can make a big impact! Because if we don't take the role, who will? Let's unite our voices for the protection of children!"

Indy, 18, Indonesia

Every time a child is a victim of violence, the government has to spend money to provide the necessary services to respond to what violence caused. For example:



We need to invest more in children:
in preventing violence, in children's participation,
and in better services.

**We need a new approach centered
on children, centered on YOU.**

LOOKING AHEAD

Violence against children prevents children like you from learning, being healthy, playing, developing their potential and many other rights: it needs to be stopped.

Governments need to invest money in preventing violence, and connect all services to do it together with children at the center. If they invest money today, they will be saving money for the future. They need to invest money in children like you.



Children are not just the future, they are the present. They are part of the solution and active agents of change. We must invest in their empowerment to prevent violence.



Ending violence against children cannot wait, and we have only 8 years left to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals deadline. Since COVID we have seen a number of things that were not working well, and we have the opportunity to rebuild many aspects of society.



To end violence against children everyone has a part to play: governments, civil society, the UN, businesses, communities, families, students, children, EVERYONE, including you.



To end violence against children YOU have a role to play: as agents of change you can help point the world towards the right direction. With you, WE CAN keep the promise of ending all forms of violence against children, EVERYWHERE.



YOU have the opportunity to help the world build back better after COVID. How will you be a part of it?

Messages from children to other children of the world

'Violence leads nowhere. Instead of fighting you can join our cause, and you can help prevent violence.'

Amadou, Niger, 14

"Your voice matters, it always has and it always will. Although it may seem like you can't make a change on your own and that your voice will get lost in all the chaos, your small steps can lead to tremendous effects. And there are lots of children like you, who have so much to say but are too scared to speak or don't have the privilege to. You deserve better, don't settle for what's given to you. So don't hesitate to use your voice and fight for a better future for all children. It always starts with one person, so what are you waiting for?"

Farah, 17, Egypt

Let's
continue the
conversation



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