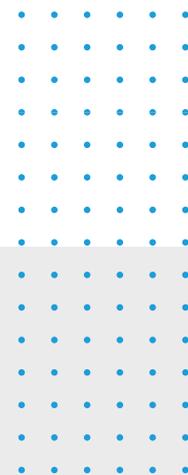




# Leaving violence against children behind

**Key achievements 2021  
and the way forward**

*Brief overview*



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

# Ending violence against children **CANNOT WAIT**

The pandemic has increased VAC and GBV.

The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities.

The pandemic and the ongoing humanitarian crisis have undermined the progress made to EVAC.

VAC impacts children's mental health, education and socialization.

Children's exposure to violence reverses hard-won gains in human capital development.

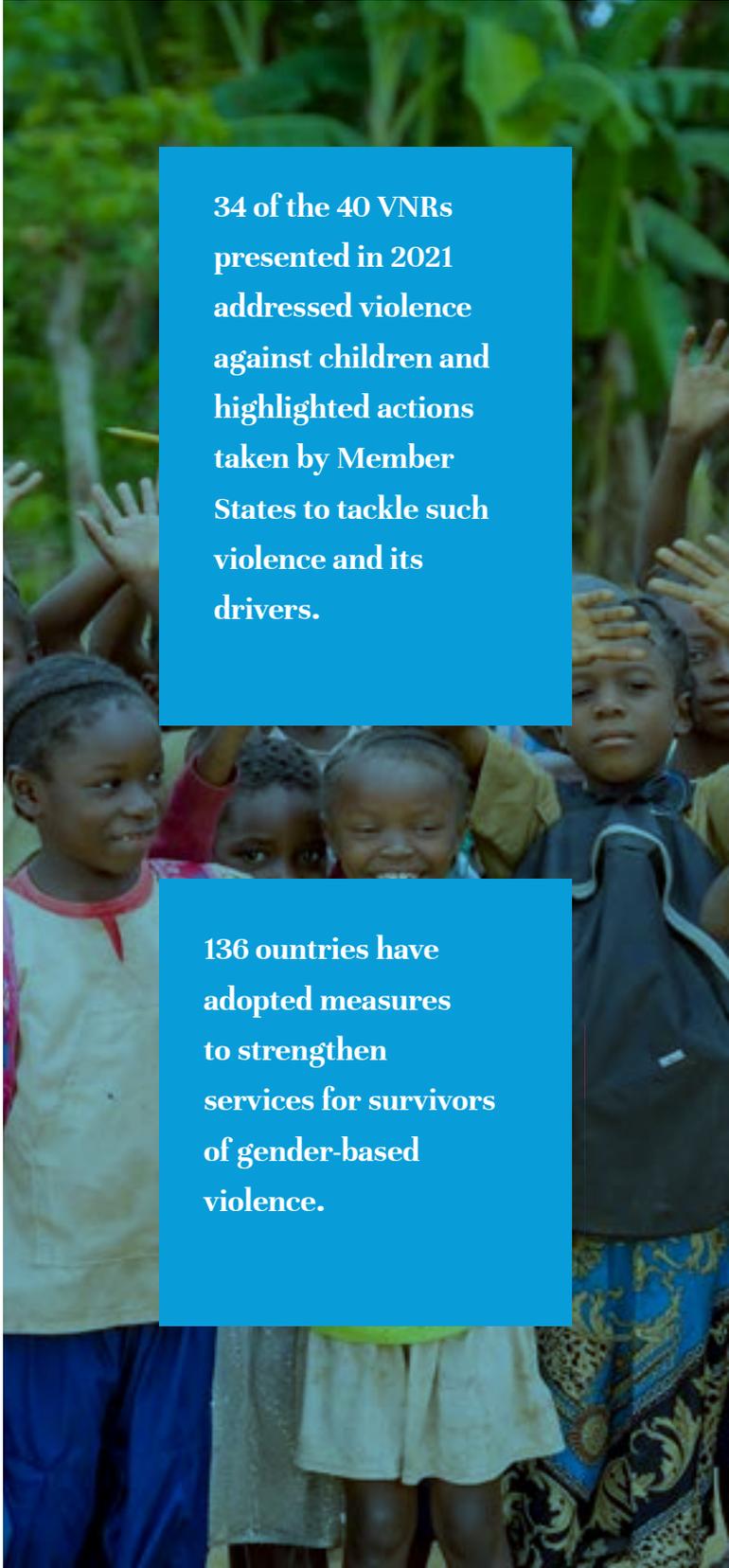
Violence against children have economic costs of up to 8% of global GDP -a waste of trillions of USD each year.

# Key Achievements

## 2021

The Special Representative actively engaged in strong mobilization and advocacy to end violence against children while building back better, through more than 250 online and in-person meetings with Member States (including 38 States presenting VNRs in 2021), intergovernmental regional organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations, the private sector, and academia.

In her position as chair of the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, the SRSG engaged with UN entities at the global, regional and national levels - including Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams - to advocate for the UN to promote integrated, cross-sectoral social services for children and their caregivers to tackling violence and its drivers across the whole 2030 Agenda, in line with Our Common Agenda and the Call to action for human rights.



**34 of the 40 VNRs presented in 2021 addressed violence against children and highlighted actions taken by Member States to tackle such violence and its drivers.**

**136 countries have adopted measures to strengthen services for survivors of gender-based violence.**

Through her role as chair of the UN task force on children deprived of liberty, the SRSG steered the process of achieving a common position on ending the immigration-related detention of children that has supported the implementation of alternatives to detention by numerous Member States. The SRSG has also worked closely with the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict, the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Advisor on Africa, and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council among others, through joint advocacy on situations of concern and joint support to Member States.

The SRSG continued to share evidence-based actions and develop tools to support Member States and others. She developed an advocacy brief outlining the enormous returns of investing in integrated services for children and their caregivers for economic growth and human capital development notwithstanding fiscal constraints. She promoted this paradigm shift through a dedicated VNR lab during the 2021 High-Level Political Forum and her bilateral engagement with Member States, the World Bank, the IMF and donors at global level and during her country missions.

The SRSG continued to meet regularly with children from all regions and backgrounds - including the most vulnerable - and channel their concerns and recommendations to decision-makers. She promoted and supported children's involvement in decision-making processes, including the development of new constitutions in Chile and Chad. In addition, she updated the global mapping of child-led and peer-to-peer initiatives, where they are taking action to promote and build safe, just, healthy and inclusive societies.

**More than 60 countries have implemented alternatives to detention of migrant children. More than 45,000 children were released from detention in at least 84 countries.**

**Socio-economic response plans in at least 99 Member States include actions to protect children from violence in response to COVID-19**

**The updated global mapping undertaken by the SRSG of child-led and peer-to-peer action to address violence has identified initiatives in more than 89 countries.**

# High level political engagements at country level

*Through SRSG's in person and online country missions.*

## 01. 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 through clubs established by the Cambodian Organization for Children and Development that allow children to build their capacities in child rights, conflict resolution, violence-free problem solving and data collection and reporting. These same children then educate other children in their communities.

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## 02. Chad

Close collaboration with the Government to ensure an inclusive and participatory national dialogue as part of the drafting process for the new constitution and to ensure children and young people are engaged in it.

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## 03. Chile

The Office has engaged with the "Defensoría de la Niñez" in Chile and different CSOs advocating for the meaningful participation of children in the drafting of the new constitution and participated in technical interviews and webinars on the importance and the benefits of the involvement of children. Drafters of the constitution have fostered the active participation of children, including those from vulnerable communities, to ensure no one is left behind.

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## 04. Colombia

Collaboration and technical support modalities for the National Pedagogical and Prevention Strategy Against Corporal Punishment and Cruel, Humiliating or Degrading Treatment of Children and Adolescents.

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## 05. Ghana

With the support of Catholic Action for Street Children, drama, poetry, and dance are used to create awareness of the poverty and abuse faced by many children living in the streets. They aim to engage communities, church organizations and traditional leaders in the fight against child abuse and neglect.

## 06. Iceland

Legislation to improve the lives of children in Iceland by integrating services that cater to their needs will make no real change in costs but will be a 9.6% per annum return from 2070 onwards.

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## 07. India

Children and adolescents supported by Terre des Hommes are developing arts-based projects to address child abuse, child labor, child marriage, unsafe migration, and gender inequality. Children advocate to manage harmful social norms in their communities and collaborate with child protection duty bearers on joint events to raise awareness about violence against children.

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## 08. Jordan

Dialogues were held with critical stakeholders including children, and local communities, and mobilized policymakers and partners to invest in integrated and social protection services for children and their caregivers. The Government committed to prepare a VNR for presentation at the HLPF in July 2022. The SRSG-VAC's mission has reinforced the importance of making ending the prevalence of violence against children a whole of Government and whole of society priority.

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## 09. Lebanon

The Special Representative launched a report with UNICEF while visiting Lebanon, bringing attention to the situation of one million children put in danger as the crisis in the country intensified.

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## 10. Mexico

Training programs for girls and boys on health and well-being, such as "Health is Life," which educates adolescents on mental, sexual, and reproductive health and addresses gender stereotypes.

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## 11. Mongolia

An increase in spending on child protection from 0.12% of consolidated government spending in 2017 to 0.264% in 2020 resulted in a 239% increase in spending on child protection.



### 12. Namibia

Participation in an inspiring and interactive dialogue during the Children's Parliament of Namibia with around 30 child parliamentarians invited to join the national delegation to the High-Level Political Forum.

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### 13. Niger

Promotion of constructive dialogues with stakeholders in making education a national priority to end gender-based violence and child marriage.

### 14. Nigeria

Contribution to reaffirm the country's commitment to ensuring that every child lives in a nourishing, enabling and safe environment, including implementing the Child Rights Act of 2003, guaranteeing universal birth registration and investing in services that protect children affected by violence.

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### 15. Philippines

Dialogue with Government representatives relevant ministries and stakeholders helped assessing progress and challenges in implementing the national plan of action to end violence against children.

# Children as agents of change



To further promote the key role of children in building back better from COVID, as agents of change and as part of the solution, the Special Representative partners with child-rights organizations and young people to launch a multimedia campaign based on a series of videos on mental health, featuring children from 19 countries across all regions, who shared experiences and recommendations on how best support peers' mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.



More and more, children are acting as agents of change in efforts to eliminate violence. The Special Representative partnered with children to demonstrate that through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, children should play a key role in building back better. In 2021, the Special Representative conducted a data collection exercise at a global scale to identify and map child-led initiatives that are available on the official website. The following examples illustrate how peer-to-peer action and peer support networks have intensified since the earliest stages of the pandemic, whether through capacity-building and knowledge transfer on peer support networks.

**Children from 246 organizations across 83 countries are taking part in actions for positive change.**

# The way forward

**Investing in child protection and violence prevention services is needed more than ever.**

Building back better during the pandemic and beyond must be seen as an opportunity that cannot be missed in order to prevent and to end violence against children in all settings.

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Investment in integrated and cross sectoral services should be viewed as a kind of “vaccine” against the pandemic of violence against children. Preventing violence through investment in proven, evidence-based programmes will bring a large dividend.

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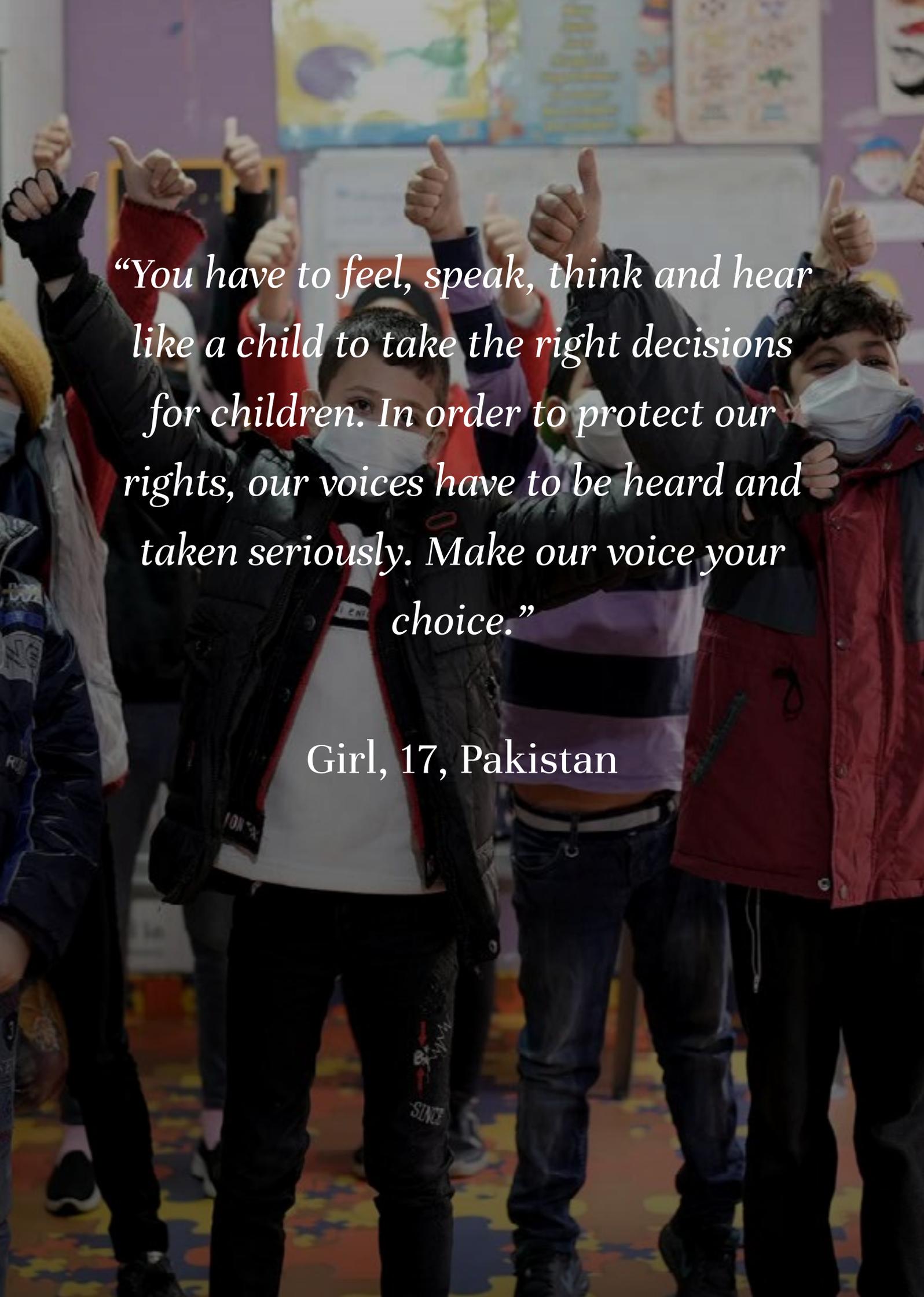
Children and young people who are already active worldwide, need to be more involved and be part of the solution.

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Strong political will, supported by sufficient financial resources, well-staffed services, evidence-based action, strong information and monitoring systems and robust accountability mechanisms is needed more than ever before.

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Wide and sustainable mobilization and multistakeholder partnerships, linking global, regional, national and local levels, involving all actors, including national and local governments, CSOs and faith-based organizations, religious leaders, the private sector, the United Nations system, financial institutions.



*“You have to feel, speak, think and hear like a child to take the right decisions for children. In order to protect our rights, our voices have to be heard and taken seriously. Make our voice your choice.”*

**Girl, 17, Pakistan**



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