

# A Safer World for Children with Sustainable Development Goals

A tool and resource for children

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

**VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**



## The Special Representative and the Team



**United Nations**

The 'United Nations' or the UN, is an organization of almost all the countries in the world, created to promote development, peace and security, and human rights.

UN is a place where Member States (countries that are members of the UN) discuss common challenges and find solutions TOGETHER, for all humanity, including CHILDREN. The head of the UN is called the 'Secretary-General'. The UN Secretary-General selects people to work with him on specific issues.



The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (or SRSR-VAC), Najat Maalla M'jid is one of them.

Najat and her team help countries end all forms of **violence against children**, in all settings, everywhere, always putting children first!

# What is violence Against children?

**Violence against children is never acceptable and must be stopped.**



It is when someone uses force or power against children to harm their body and emotions. Violence is never acceptable, and it is never the child's fault. As a child, you have the **RIGHT TO SAFETY AND WELLBEING**. This is true for all children, no matter your age, gender, culture, religion, education level, or where you live or are from.

When children are victims of violence – something that should never happen – it causes pain in their body and mind, but that's not all. It can also have negative effects like depression and suicidal thoughts that can last for a long time, even into adulthood.

**No violence is acceptable, and all violence can be prevented!**



## So, what can we do together to end violence against children?

We all have a role to play, governments, lawmakers, schools, adults, parents, children, the entire community!



**What is the one thing the world can do together to solve this?**

### These are also forms and situations of violence against children

- Violence online
- Cyberbullying
- Child marriage
- Displacement
- Bullying
- Female genital mutilation
- Child trafficking
- Domestic violence (like violence in the home)
- Child labour
- Children in street situations
- Joining gangs and armed groups.
- Child pregnancy
- Corporal punishment
- Children deprived of liberty

# HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE SDGs?

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In **2015**, the world came together to write a list of goals to make the world a better place for everyone. They also agreed to work together to achieve these by the year 2030. These are called the **Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs)** and there are 17 of them.

<b>1</b> NO POVERTY 	<b>2</b> ZERO HUNGER 	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING 	<b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION 	<b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY 
<b>6</b> CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	<b>7</b> AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	<b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	<b>9</b> INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	<b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES 
<b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	<b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 	<b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION 	<b>14</b> LIFE BELOW WATER 	<b>15</b> LIFE ON LAND 
<b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 				<b>17</b> PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 

Each goal has a different theme. These goals are about ...ending poverty and hunger, providing good health care and education, tackling climate change, having access to clean water....and **ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN** is part of them!

### HOW DID THEY COME UP WITH THESE GOALS?

When the government leaders were deciding on the Goals, they shared ideas about what a 'better world' would look like for children. **In a better world, they agreed that all children would be safe and free from violence, healthy, educated, and their rights respected.** The leaders also thought that in a better world, all children and young people participate in the society as agents of change! That's how they agreed on the **17 Goals**.

Girls

Children living in the streets or in street situations

Displaced, refugee and migrant children, and other children on the move

**LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND**

SDGs are for **EVERYONE**, including **all children**. The most disadvantaged and those living in vulnerable situations need to be cared for.

Children living in poverty

Children from gender and sexual minorities

Children living in institutions without parental or family care

Children with disabilities

Indigenous and other minority children

# SDGS DIRECTLY MENTIONS SOME FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



**ENDING ALL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN** is included in **GOAL 16**, which is about a peaceful and just society.



**Ensuring safe and orderly migration** for all, including children, is a part of **SDG 10**.



**Ending all violence against girls** is included in **GOAL 5**, which is about equality and empowering women. It is also about ending harmful traditional and cultural practices such as **child marriage** and **female genital mutilation**.



**Ending corporal punishment, bullying and other violence in schools** is included in **GOAL 4**, which is about everyone having a chance to receive education in a safe place.



**Ending child labour** is included in **GOAL 8**, which is about decent work.

**To achieve a better, healthier, and safer world for everyone, we need to achieve ALL SDGs**



Maybe you have heard about stories of violence against children from friends and other children around you. It is never okay to use violence against children, or against anyone. And it is never the child's fault.

If you know someone who is experiencing violence, please speak to an adult or a friend you trust and ask for help. And if you don't know who to talk to, we recommend you visit this website and find a helpline in your country.



**Child Helpline International**

# SDGs Go!

Imagine SDGs working together like a team of players on a board game. The objective of the game is to reach a better, healthier, and **safer** world for **EVERYONE**, including children.

When we say **safer**, it means that all children are living without fear of violence (some forms of violence are listed in the previous pages).



Look for the magnifying glass in the following pages to see how the board game is connected.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

All players, including governments, lawmakers, schools, parents, relatives, and children are encouraged to play together!

## HOW TO WIN:

The aim of the game is to overcome the monsters in each zone to reach the finish line.

In this game, the **SDGs team** will travel through different **zones** like:

- A. Fighting Poverty.
- B. Access to Services.
- C. Safe and Healthy Living Environment.
- D. Peaceful and Just Society.
- E. Participation.

While traveling through these zones, the SDGs team will show how these topics are related to keeping children safe from violence.

At the end of the game, the SDGs team will **reach the Better, Healthier, and Safer World for Everyone!**

There are many monsters along the way that brings violence to children. SDGs Team work together to kick them off the road.



**Working to end violence will also help achieve the SDGs!**



Let's look at how each zone is related to violence against children and what can be done to end it!

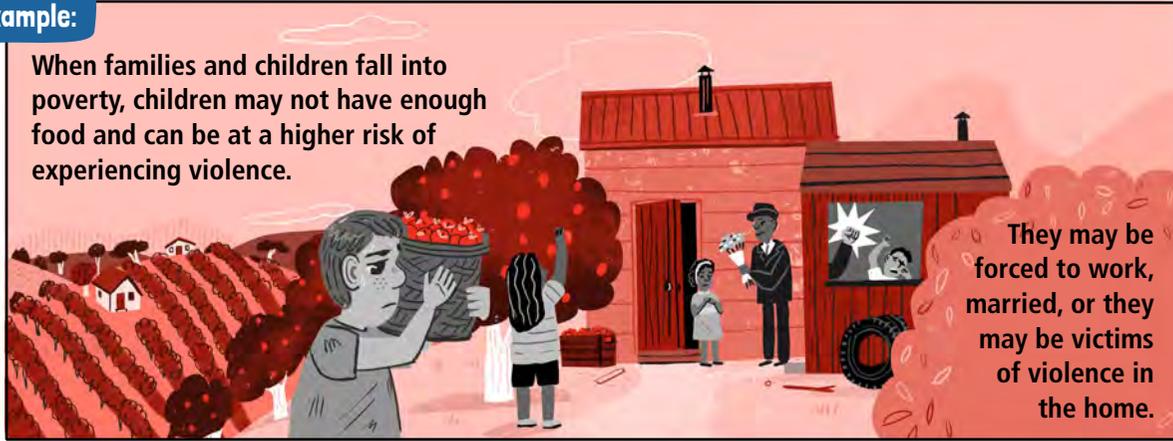


## REDUCING POVERTY reduces violence against children



For example:

When families and children fall into poverty, children may not have enough food and can be at a higher risk of experiencing violence.



For example:

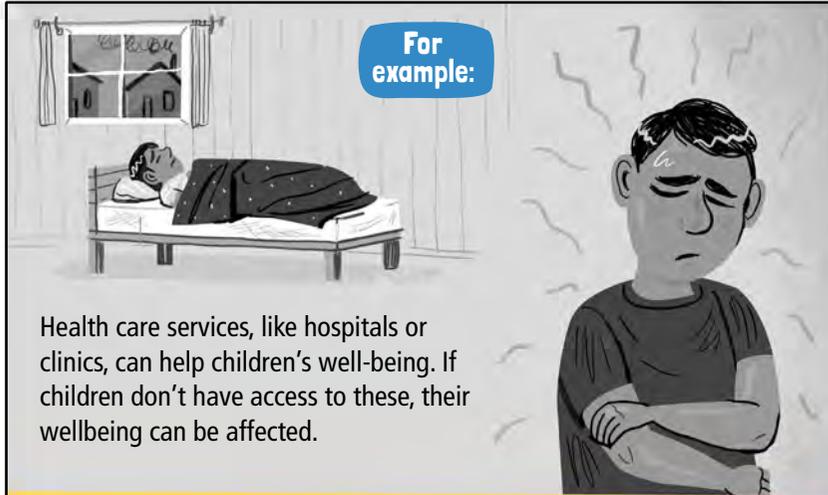


We need to work toward greater equality and end poverty

# Ensuring ACCESS TO SERVICES like education, health and justice protects children from violence

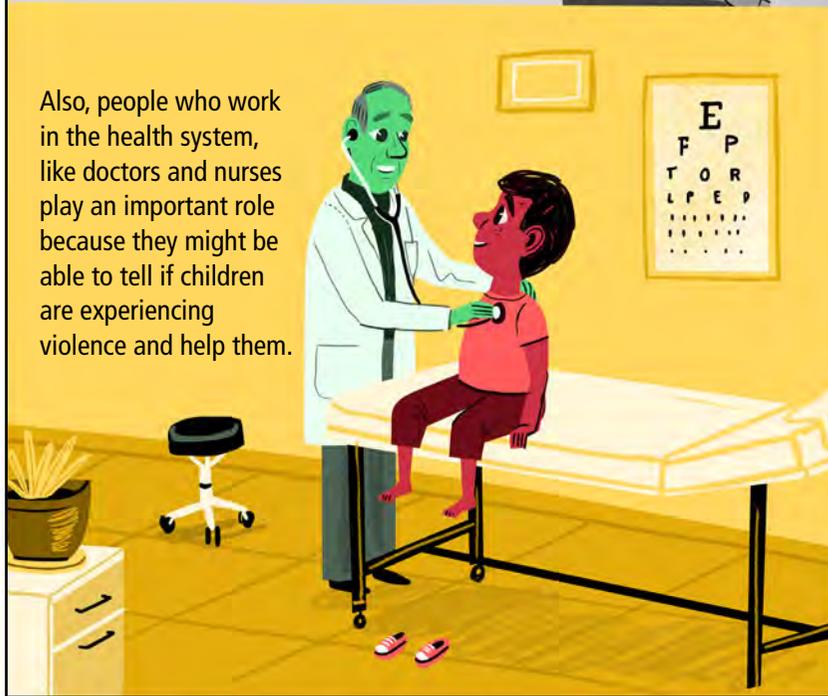


## HEALTH



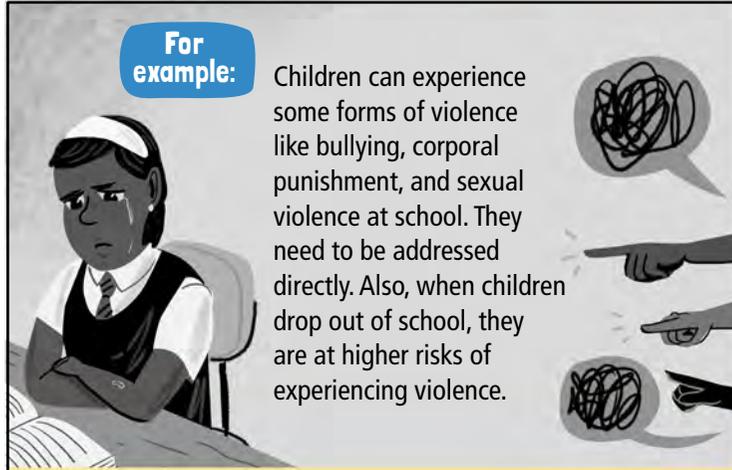
For example:

Health care services, like hospitals or clinics, can help children's well-being. If children don't have access to these, their wellbeing can be affected.



Also, people who work in the health system, like doctors and nurses play an important role because they might be able to tell if children are experiencing violence and help them.

## EDUCATION



For example:

Children can experience some forms of violence like bullying, corporal punishment, and sexual violence at school. They need to be addressed directly. Also, when children drop out of school, they are at higher risks of experiencing violence.



At the same time, schools can also help detecting violence happening in the home or community. Some adults, like teachers, are trained to notice signs of violence.



## LEARNING IN CHILDREN'S EARLY YEARS

Harmful stress and violence in early years can have negative effects on the development of the brain of children. Later in life, these can have negative effects on the person, like having low earnings and push them into poverty, and continue the cycle of violence in relationships.



# Ensuring ACCESS TO SERVICES like education, health and justice protects children from violence



## JUSTICE

**For example:**

When a child is a victim of violence, the government has to make sure the person (or persons) responsible is held accountable – this is a part of access to justice. The Justice system needs to be easy to understand and accessible for children.



When children break the law, their rights need to be respected throughout the process. Detention should be the last resort.

**For example:**

Children who break the law should not be sent to jail with adults.



## BIRTH REGISTRATION AND LEGAL IDENTITY

**For example:**

When a baby is born, it needs to be reported to government offices so she/ he can be registered. This is called birth registration. Being registered at birth gives the baby a legal identity. If this did not happen at birth, then there should be a way that children can be registered at any age.



Having a legal identity helps a child prove their age (remember, when you are a child, you should be treated with special care and attention).



Legal identity helps children to access services children need for their well-being like education and health care. These services also help address violence.



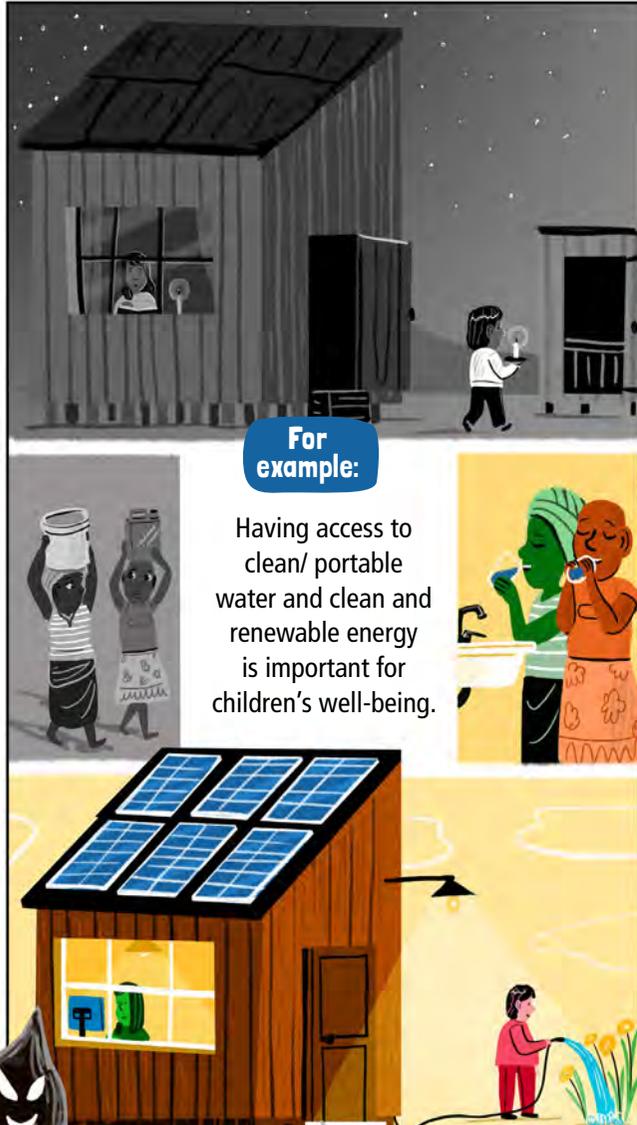
**We need to make sure all children have a legal identity and access to services.**



# Safe and healthy LIVING ENVIRONMENT including digital environment contribute to children's wellbeing



## CLEAN LIVING ENVIRONMENT WITH ACCESS TO WATER AND ENERGY



**For example:**

Having access to clean/ portable water and clean and renewable energy is important for children's well-being.

**ALL children need a safe, clean, and connected living place for their well-being!**

## ACCESS TO DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT



Access to the Internet, information and technology help children's learning. It also gives children tools to participate in communities and decision making processes that matter to them.

At the same time, the online world has risks to children. They might be taken advantage of and experience abuse and bullying, which harms their health (including mental health), education and development.

## CLIMATE CRISIS

**For example:**

The climate crisis increases poverty, migration and displacement. These make children more at risk of violence.

[Read more in our booklet on this topic](#)

**How does the climate crisis harm children?  
What is the connection to violence?**



When the climate crisis is combined with other challenges (like poverty, lack of food, war and armed conflict, and social inequalities), **it can increase or worsen violence against children**

**All countries need to work together to help with the climate crisis because it also helps to reduce the risks of violence against children.**

# Peaceful, inclusive and just society keeps children safe



## GOOD GOVERNMENT

**For example:**

Good government works in an honest and fair way to care for ALL its people. Corruption is an opposite of honest and ideal government.



## SAFE COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING SCHOOLS AND HOMES

**For example:**

Safe homes do not have domestic violence

Safe schools do not have corporal punishment

## SAFE AND ORDERLY MIGRATION

Forced migration (or displacement) is when people are forced to move out of their home, town, and city, and sometimes out of their country.

Children who are displaced are at risk of different forms of violence and danger in every stage of their journey. For example, children can be victims of physical and sexual violence, trafficking and recruitment to armed groups.

## GENDER EQUALITY

Inequality is the opposite of equality. Inequality and discrimination among genders is when a group of people are treated unfairly because of their gender.

Inequality increases the risk of violence, putting girls and women especially at risk.

Because some social and cultural practices can allow violence (like child marriage and female genital mutilation) and unequal treatments toward women and girls, less girls receive education, which limits their choices and opportunities in life.



## PEACE

In situations of war and armed conflict, children are more likely to witness violence, be killed or injured, recruited to armed groups, abducted, and experience sexual violence.



**We need peaceful, inclusive, and just society so all children are safe!**



# Children's meaningful PARTICIPATION

Children are important agents of change and need to be a part of **decision-making processes**.



**For example:**

When children do not have access to information and their voices are not heard, they are not included, and their rights are not respected.

**All children have the right to be heard, no matter where they are from, where they live, how they look, and what religion they have.**

**Meaningful participation...**

- ...is empowering to a child who is participating and to the group and the entire generation.
- ...brings positive effects on children, like building their self-confidence and better understanding of their rights.
- ...helps build a safe environment to speak up about the injustices suffered by themselves and their peers.
- ...includes having a say in what matters to them and being heard by governments and decision makers
- ...helps prevent, address, and respond to violence against children.

For children to participate and take action, they also need to have access to information



# Children are taking ACTIONS WORLDWIDE

## Helping to achieve the SDGs

Start your own action and tell us about it on [our website](#)

We are taking actions through community and civic engagements and social media activities to protect ourselves and our peers

In **Afghanistan**, girls are demanding their right to education. The government has placed strict bans on girls' education, but that has not stopped them from seeking out and continuing their education. Young girls are helping women in their community create underground schools and they are informing their peers. They take precautions to protect and support each other and their human right to education.

In **Kenya**, a group of girls created an app to combat female genital mutilation (FGM). This empowering app assists girls affected by FGM by connecting them to medical and legal aid. It includes a panic button where local authorities can be immediately informed if a girl is forced to undergo FGM. The app promotes discussion, raises awareness, and aids girls affected by FGM.

Future Coalition, in the **United States**, is an organization founded by youth activists to support their peers. Their goal is to provide youth with tools, resources, support, and accessibility to achieve their goals in impacting their communities. The Youth Direct Action Fund supports protecting the planet and future generations. The fund is administered by a youth committee and has successfully granted over one million dollars to aid youth activists in the Climate Strike.

In **Brazil**, an 11-year-old boy experienced too many natural disasters in his life including mudslides, an oil spill, and forest fires. To combat these disasters, he began planting trees in Southern Brazil. He is an ambassador of the organization, Plant-for-the-Planet, which is led by children to plant trees around the world.

In **Tanzania**, a group of teenage girls created a campaign for clean water in their village. The only source of water in their community was a river located 7km away. After worldwide attention, their campaign was answered. They were able to meet with the Prime Minister of Tanzania to demand clean water and other essential services. Soon after, a clean water pipe was installed near the school. So children don't have to travel far to fetch water for their homes any more!

In **Poland**, a 15-year-old Ukrainian girl fled her country as a refugee due to the war. After receiving aid from Polish volunteers, she was inspired to volunteer and aid other children in similar situations as they flee Ukraine and enter Poland. She has helped hundreds of displaced people find food, shelter, and safety.

In **India**, a 17-year-old girl was trained by the Girls Advocacy Alliance to combat child marriage. After using her voice to end her own, she was able to arrange peaceful protests, educate girls and women on their rights, and speak with parents on the importance of girls' education and the harmful effects of child labor and child marriage.

**CONGRATULATIONS!!  
You reached the  
finish line!**

**In a better, healthier and safer world  
ALL CHILDREN will have...**







OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

# **VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

Check  
out other  
child-friendly  
reports and  
resources  
[here](#)

Let's  
continue the  
conversation

 [violenceagainstchildren.un.org](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org)

 [un\\_violenceagainstchildren](https://www.instagram.com/un_violenceagainstchildren)

 [srsg-vac@un.org](mailto:srsg-vac@un.org)

 [UNviolenceagainstchildren](https://www.facebook.com/UNviolenceagainstchildren)

 [@UN\\_EndViolence](https://twitter.com/UN_EndViolence)

Illustrations by [@oyemathias](#)