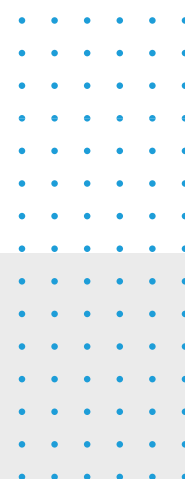




Leaving violence against children behind

**Key achievements 2021
and the way forward**



Action to end VAC cannot wait,

because the pandemic has magnified it.

Action to end VAC cannot wait,

because the pandemic has undermined the progress made to EVAC.

Action to end VAC cannot wait,

because the pandemic has impacted children's mental health.

Action to end VAC cannot wait,

because the pandemic has exacerbated inequalities.

Setting the scene

Before the pandemic violence was affecting children in every community across the globe. The pandemic have increased violence against children at home, in the community and online, as well as gender-based violence. The pandemic socio-economic impact is increasing the risks of VAC.

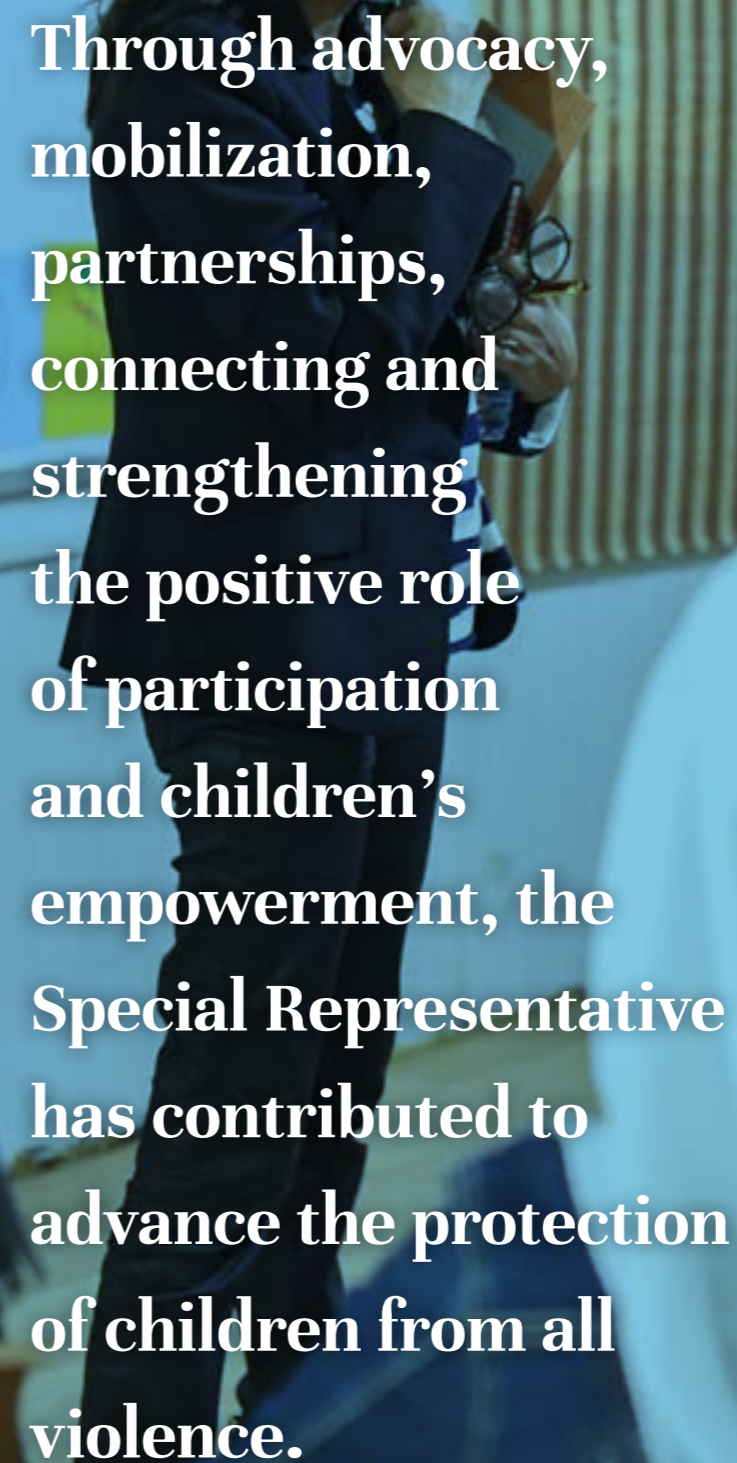
Children often experience more than one form of violence. Evidence from surveys shows that one third of respondents experienced multiple forms of violence.

Children are most likely to be abused by someone they know. Three hundred million young children are estimated to experience physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by their caregivers on a regular basis globally.

Violence against children is a universal and global issue. An estimated 1 billion children – half of all the children in the world – are victims of violence every year.

All violence against children can be prevented. There is ample evidence that the prevalence of violence against children can be decreased by well-designed programmes, even in resource-poor settings

Our role



Through advocacy, mobilization, partnerships, connecting and strengthening the positive role of participation and children's empowerment, the Special Representative has contributed to advance the protection of children from all violence.

In 2021 the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children consolidated her position as the leading global, independent advocate for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. Since her appointment, children across regions experienced unprecedented restrictions – with lockdowns, school closures and incidents of domestic violence increasing and child labor rising for the first time in five years.



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), Groups of Friends, regional groups in New York and Geneva, 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.



SRSG's annual review of the involvement of children in the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews showed a total of 54 Member States consulting and involving children in the VNR process.



Through her role as chair of the UN task force on deprivation 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 has 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 has 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 has promoted and supported children's involvement in decision-making processes, including the development of new constitutions in Chile and Chad. In addition, she has 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.

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



In 2021, the Special Representative has shared experiences with over 700 delegates from 40 countries on how to effectively tackle bullying and cyber-bullying at the World Anti-Bullying Forum; reminded over 1500 stakeholders, at the African Girls Summit that a resilient, safe, healthy, inclusive, just, and equitable Africa for all children and young people cannot be achieved without children.

all regions, who shared experiences and recommendations on how best support peers' mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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.



The role of children as agents of change



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 or peer support networks.

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



Progress across regions

Through engagement at country level the SRSG secured commitments at the highest political level.

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



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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

11. Mongolia

An increase in spending on child protection from 0.12 to 0.264 % 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.

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.

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.

 In-person country missions conducted by the Special Representative.

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.

A reallocation of just **0.1%** of total Nigerian government expenditure to child protection would see total child protection expenditure increase by **63%**.



Enhanced collaboration with regional organizations

African partners to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063 of the African Union and Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children to end violence against children.

The European Union adoption of the European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child in March 2021, which includes combating violence against children as one of its six thematic

priorities. Also cooperated with AntiTrafficking Coordinator of the European Union and the African Union for joint advocacy focused on ending child trafficking within the European Union's member states.

Latin American and Caribbean regional observatory gathered and analyzed official data from 13 countries on early pregnancy, child, early and forced marriages and unions, and gender-based violence. It highlights the efforts made by States to improve

knowledge about and evidence for strengthening the protection of girls from harmful practices.

Programs to educate adolescent girls on early child marriage and sexual and reproductive health and rights generate a combined return on investment of approximately **\$17** for every dollar invested.





The Special Representative continues to lead the United Nations task force to study children deprived of liberty and works with other partners to end migration-related detention and promote alternatives. Under her leadership, the task force prioritized child immigration detention in 2021.

In October 2021, in collaboration with Colombia, Morocco, Portugal, Thailand and Turkey, the task force organized a high-level side event at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly to accelerate action on child immigration and detention and to mobilize the Member States in readiness for the 2022 International Migration Review Forum.

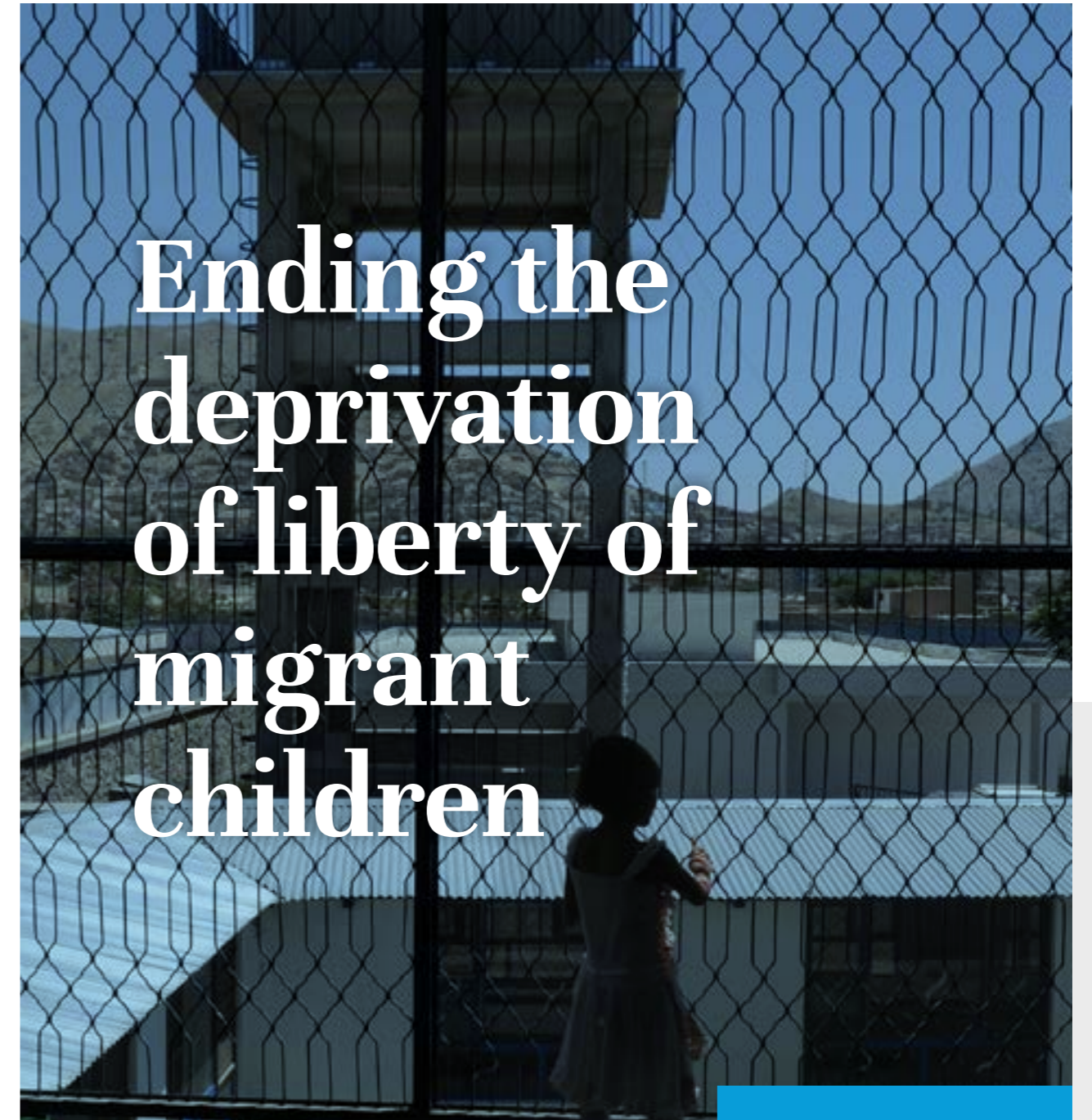
In more than **60** countries, initiatives have been implemented to promote ending detention of children for migration related reasons.



Countries across regions are adopting legislation and policies prohibiting the detention of migrant children. They are creating inclusive, child- and gender-sensitive migration policies to integrate migrant children into national child protection systems, including guardianship and foster care, and facilitate children's access to documentation, including temporary visas and residence.

The Special Representative emphasizes that the most successful policies integrate a social, rights-based approach involving migrant children themselves.

Ending child marriage could lead to welfare benefits globally of **\$566 billion** by the year 2030.



Ending the deprivation of liberty of migrant children

More than **45,000** children were released from detention during the COVID-19 pandemic in at least 84 countries.



The way forward

Preventing violence through investment in proven, evidence-based programmes will bring a large dividend by saving these associated costs.



Investment in integrated preventive services should be viewed as a kind of “vaccine” against the pandemic of violence against children. Prioritize investments in integrated systems including child-sensitive social protection and childcare services, parenting support, access to safe learning, healthcare, mental health, as well as justice of social services for children.



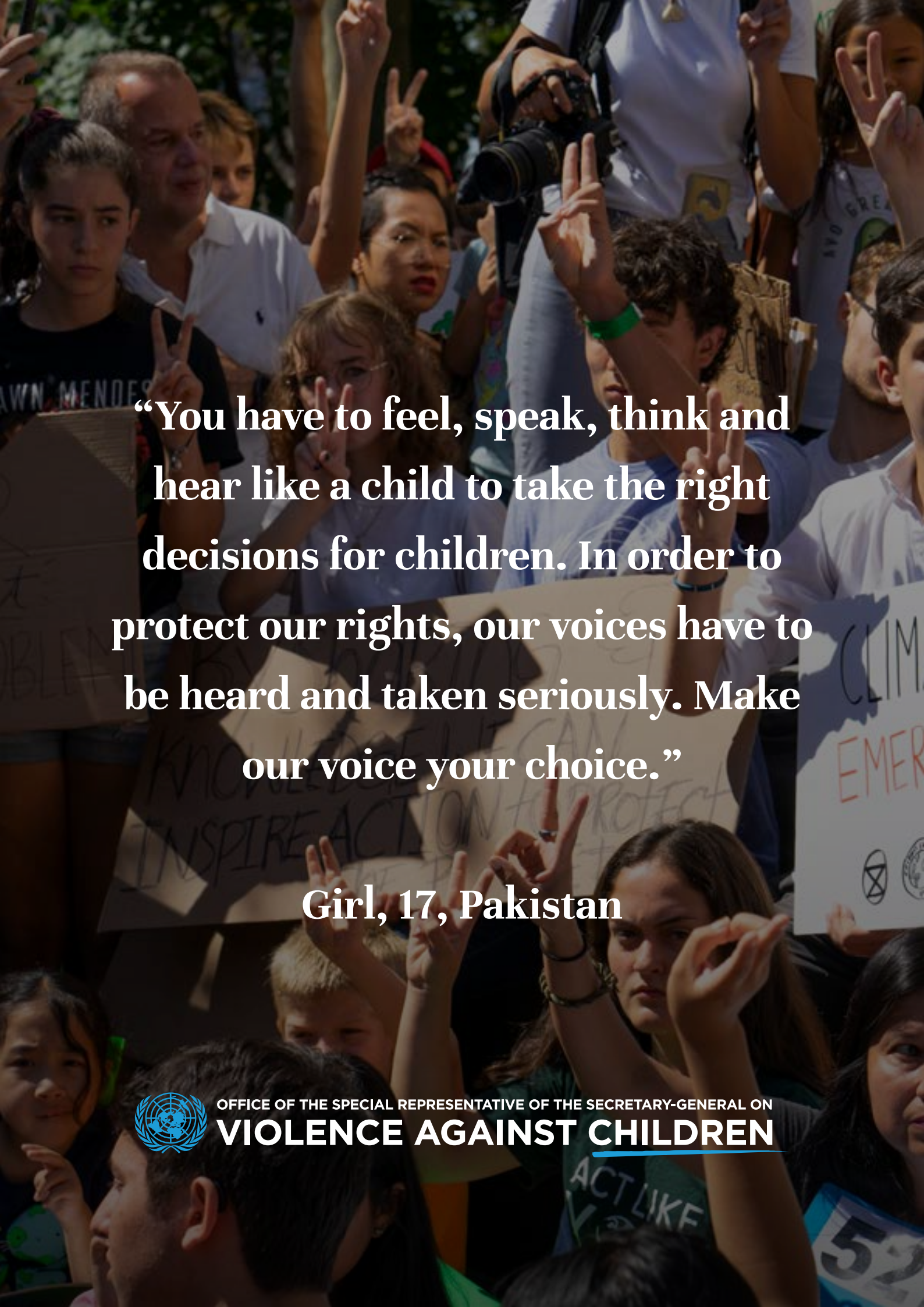
Children and young people who are already active worldwide, need to be more involved and be part of the solution. Building back better during the pandemic and beyond must be seen as an opportunity that cannot be missed in order to prevent and to end violence against children in all settings.



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. This requires 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.



**Action to end VAC is urgent,
because colossal challenges remain.**



“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



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