

Building the Investment Case

FOR ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



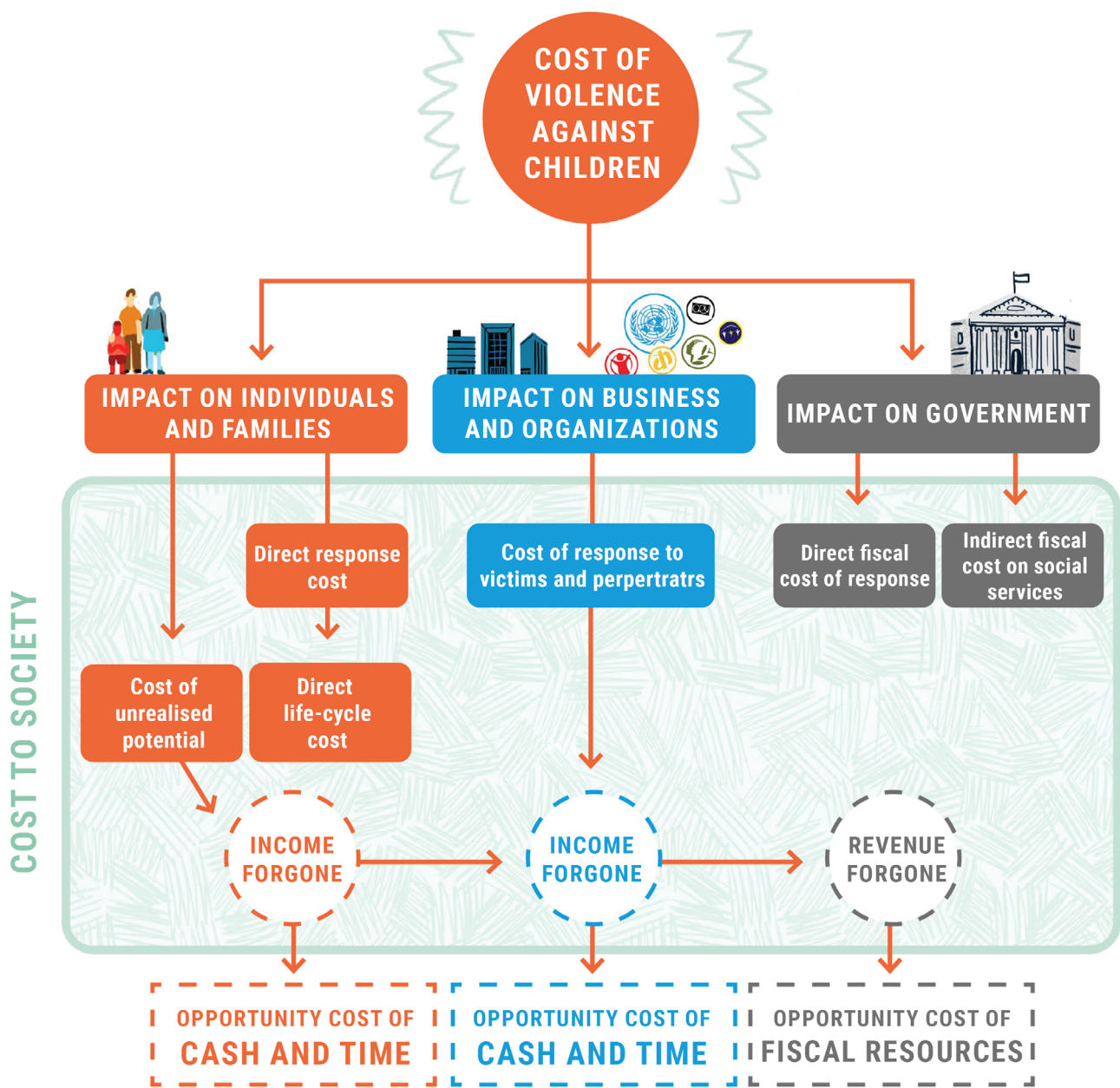
I Why build an investment case?

Children have the right to live free from violence. Ending violence is a commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Yet more than half the world's children are exposed to some form of violence every year.

The impact of this violence is devastating and long-lasting. In addition to the human cost, violence against children imposes significant economic burdens across countries, regardless of income status, region or cultural context.

The direct and indirect costs of violence arise in different ways. Child victims of violence may not reach their full education and health potential, limiting their future income and productivity. Governments incur direct costs in responding to the impact of violence on the short- and long-term health of its victims. There are substantial costs associated with the child protection and justice systems' responses in providing rehabilitation to victims and enforcing the law against perpetrators. Violence against children also has indirect, long-term costs, as it undermines investments in children's health, education and the other social sectors.

National-level estimates of the overall direct and indirect costs of violence are as high as 11 per cent of national GDP.¹ The scale of the cost becomes clear when benchmarked against, for example, total government health expenditures: the annual costs of violence against children exceed annual government expenditure on health in several countries, in some cases by up to six times.²



The social and economic costs of violence against children are staggeringly high. However, with the right investments, all violence against children can be prevented, and the associated human and economic costs averted, often at a fraction of the costs prevented. This highlights how ending violence against children makes economic sense. Spending on child protection and wellbeing should be seen as an investment.

Yet, despite this evidence, current levels of spending on the prevention and response to violence remain low. Building an investment case for ending violence against children is a powerful tool to change that.

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1 and 2. Cornerstone Economic Research. Forthcoming. "Economic Costs of Violence Against Children: A Summary of the Evidence".

I What is an investment case?

Investment cases can demonstrate the significant social and economic returns that can be achieved by strengthening investments in the delivery of high-impact social interventions.

The economic benefits of preventing violence accrue through diverse channels. Existing health, education and social protection spending will be more effective. The costs associated with the consequences of violence will be eliminated, allowing governments to use these funds more productively elsewhere. Effective prevention will raise the overall stock of human capital and lead to more productive labour market participants.

Investment cases can:

Provide an economic argument for social interventions. Governments have difficult choices to make in allocating limited resources. The multiple crises facing countries around the world are putting additional pressure on public finances, especially for countries with large debt burdens. In this context, ministries with responsibility for child protection and wellbeing face challenges in securing the resources needed to make real progress. Investment cases allow such ministries to provide clear evidence-based arguments that investment in child protection and wellbeing has a high return. Many interventions have a relatively low cost of implementation compared to the societal costs that they prevent.

Support prioritization of key interventions. In many countries, there is likely to be a gap between the estimated costs of a proposed set of interventions and the financial resources available. This gap requires prioritisation of expenditures which, in the absence of evidence, is likely to take place in an informal manner. By identifying interventions that are likely to produce the greatest returns, an investment case can ensure that those interventions are prioritised.

Identify areas of fragmentation and support cross-sectoral action. In most countries, responsibility for the delivery of programmes to prevent or respond to violence against children is distributed across multiple ministries, departments and agencies of government. This fragmentation is also reflected in the development of

separate plans and policies to address different aspects of violence against children. This fragmentation can result in a lack of coherence in efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children, and under-resourcing of potentially highly effective interventions. An investment case can help address such fragmentation, optimize the use of resources, and promote a context-specific, integrated approach that brings together the child protection, health, education, social protection, justice, finance, budget and planning sectors.

Support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Less than six years remain until the deadline for the achievement of the SDGs, and the world is not on track to keep the promise made by the 2030 Agenda to end all forms of violence against children. By promoting investments to prevent and respond to violence against children, an investment case can be seen as a key tool for a country's achievement of the SDGs.

It can feed into important processes, such as the development of national/local development plans, sectoral plans and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Investment cases for ending violence against children can also support complementarity and synergy with efforts to end violence against women.



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I How can investment cases support multistakeholder mobilization?

The entire process of developing the investment case should be seen as a series of successive, strategic advocacy opportunities. The approach should be inclusive and participatory from the start, ensuring ownership by all key stakeholders and strengthening their capacities.

It must be a priority at the highest level of government. Although ministries with responsibility for child protection and wellbeing may play a leading role, they cannot do it alone. Only by making it a government-wide priority can you ensure that all the sectors involved in guaranteeing children's protection and wellbeing are on board. It is also critically important to include ministries responsible for planning, economic development and finance. In federal countries or situations where local governments deliver social services, leaders at the state or municipal level also need to be engaged.

Consensus across the political spectrum is also important. Parliament plays a key role in this respect. The timeframes for the investment required to ensure children's protection and wellbeing are long. They go well past the horizon of electoral cycles. Building and maintaining wide political support can be a challenge but it is possible.

Civil society and faith-based organizations providing services to children and families at the local level are another key group. So too are professional associations, trade unions and the private sector. Children, families and communities must equally be included as stakeholders. National human rights institutions and independent oversight bodies can provide invaluable input. Where there is a United Nations presence in a country, it can also play an important role in providing technical, financial and other support to building the investment case to end violence against children.

I How do you ensure that investments are effective?

It's crucial to be able to show if and how investments are making a difference. Monitoring implementation and evaluating outcomes allows policymakers to demonstrate the extent to which investments are indeed achieving their desired outcomes and goals.

The monitoring and evaluation framework needs to include realistic indicators and anticipate challenges with data gathering. Some of the desired outcomes will not be seen for decades. But it is politically and practically important to identify reasonable short- and medium-term indicators that can show progress. Appropriate data disaggregation is also needed to capture any geographical disparities or differences in outcomes for different groups of children.

Ending violence against children makes economic sense.

Monitoring of implementation can be conducted using budget and expenditure data, administrative data and dedicated service surveys, while evaluation of impacts requires the collection of data through existing household surveys, local-level surveys or dedicated panel surveys with beneficiaries.

Transparent budgeting and tracking of expenditure are also essential, not least to support coordination and accountability in the delivery of services, as well as effective budget execution.

Where are we now?

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General has worked closely with States and other key stakeholders to strengthen investment in integrated services to end violence against children.

States are increasingly examining the economic dimensions of this question and have requested further support in assessing the economic costs of violence against children and return on investing in violence prevention.

To respond to this, the Special Representative has facilitated the sharing of experiences and expertise, including through the convening of ministerial-level dialogues. The Office of the Special Representative is also developing a toolkit for assessing the economic costs of violence and the returns on investment in violence prevention.

The toolkit aims to assist States – including Pathfinding countries to end violence against children³ – to build a robust investment case and further accelerate action to end violence against children, leaving no child behind.

3. <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/content/pathfinding-countries>



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