



## **Side-event on A World without Violence against Children**

Co-hosted by the Government of Canada and the Government of Paraguay

ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children,  
SOS Children's Villages International, UNICEF and World Vision International.

New York City, NY – February 5, 2014

Every child has the right to live and thrive in a safe and caring family environment, free from all forms of violence. Nevertheless, for millions of children, abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence takes place on a daily basis –at home, at school, in care institutions, at work and in the community. The consequences can be lifelong and trans-generational, and in worst cases, can lead to the child's death. Violence can also result in economic disadvantages from lost productivity, disability and a reduced quality of life. Violence has far-reaching costs for society, slowing economic development and eroding nations' human and social capital.

In the frame of the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the inter-governmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the Government of Canada and the Government of Paraguay co-hosted a side-event on A World without Violence against Children, as an important opportunity to bring the prevention and response violence against children to the debate around the next generation of development goals, and ensure focus, investment, commitment and results for children in every country –because nowhere in the world are they free from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

The event took place on 5 February 2014, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was co-organized with six child-focused agencies that have come together to advocate for [children's issues in the post-2015 development agenda](#): eradicating all forms of extreme poverty; tackling inequalities; stopping all forms of violence against children; and ensuring locally-led and transparent mechanisms for monitoring progress and ensuring accountability. These organizations are: ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International, UNICEF and World Vision International. The event was also endorsed by the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Violence against Children, the African Child Policy Forum, Child Protection in Crisis, ECPAT, Family for Every Child, the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, REDLAMYC, and Terre des Hommes International Federation.



Ambassador Dos Santos, from Paraguay, and Ambassador Rishchynski, from Canada, deliver their opening remarks.

The event was co-chaired by H. E. Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, and H. E. Mr. José Antonio Dos Santos, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations.

Opening the meeting on behalf of the six child-focused agencies, Mr. Jim Emerson, Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance, welcomed and thanked the Government co-hosts, the participating children and the speakers. He highlighted the [pervasive presence of violence against children](#), and the importance of the post-2015 development agenda addressing this issue.

“But it’s not just our organizations saying this. Most importantly, this is a call from children all over the world. [Children are asking](#) for an end to physical and humiliating punishment; sexual violence and abuse; harmful child work and child marriage; trafficking and other harmful practices.”

In his remarks, Ambassador Rishchynski highlighted his Government’s commitment and leadership on the issue of violence against children –for example, through its Children and Youth Strategy and its support for the UN No Lost Generation Strategy–, as well as its continued support for the post-2015 dialogue to touch on this issue at the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, among other venues. He further noted the landmark resolutions that were passed, with Canada’s leadership and with strong support from Member States, on child, early and forced marriage at the last General Assembly. “Countries should seriously consider the integration of child protection targets and indicators into the post-2015 development framework,” he said. “Unless we bring child protection issues to the forefront of our development challenges we will simply not be able to make progress on them.”

In turn, Ambassador Dos Santos highlighted the commitment of the Government of Paraguay in the search for a world without violence against children, and recounted how advocacy efforts resulted in the President of Paraguay signing on to a series of commitments to address different children’s issues, including violence and exploitation. “It is not a problem of developing countries,” he remarked. “It is a worldwide concern.”

Megan and Migena, two young girls who participated in post-2015 consultations in Albania and Uruguay, organized by SOS Children’s Villages International, also joined the meeting via Skype.

After referring to the importance of children’s engagement in the post-2015 process, Migena highlighted the need for the next generation of development goals to address the different forms of violence, exploitation and abuse against children. She pointed out the need to take measures for the protection of children from violence, including more awareness-raising about this issue, and more periodical control on the part of state agencies in the areas where violence occurs. Migena also asked for Governments to invest more in children and young people, in

terms of budgetary allocations and general efforts. “Children are going to rule the world in the future,” she said and added that adults should enhance efforts to realize children’s well-being so that they can fully develop to their potential and contribute to the betterment of their societies.

Difficulties with Skype did not allow for Megan to deliver her message, which was later sent out as a video. In her message, Megan relayed the results from consultations in Uruguay, conducted by different organizations. In these consultations, Megan explained, children expressed that the biggest problem for them is violence in its different forms, including bullying, discrimination, domestic violence from men to women and from adults to children, exploitation, and poverty. They also identified that these problems get worse when alcoholism and untreated mental problems occur. “Discrimination happens for how you look, the color of your skin, your religion, gender and sexual orientation.”

An interactive panel, moderated by Al Jazeera journalist Ms. Femi Oke, then addressed the audience of over 80 people, which included which included representatives from Member States, UN entities and civil society.

Ms. Susan Bissell, Chief of the Child Protection Section at UNICEF Headquarters, highlighted the

importance of communicating that violence against children is preventable and that there are solutions to the problem, with several examples of successful programs throughout the world. Ms. Bissell further called attention to the importance of gathering data, creating baselines and monitoring progress throughout time. Ms. Bissell added that the issue of child mortality needs to be put in a broader context that takes into



Jim Emerson, Werner Obermeyer, Susan Bissell and Marta Santos Pais talk about a world without violence against children.

account violence against children, as well as the whole life cycle of children –from 0 to 18. For example, gains in under-5 mortality rates can easily be offset by homicide rates for those aged 14 to 18.

Ms. Marta Santos Pais, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Violence against Children, remarked that while figures are already overwhelming, they are just the tip of the iceberg –as most children use the word ‘fear’ to define their lives. “I bring the sense of frustration that so many young people convey to me when I travel, but at the same time a sense of hope,” she said. Ms. Santos Pais also highlighted the results from the [Global Survey on Violence against Children](#), and called upon the need to galvanize support from the different countries.

Mr. Werner Obermeyer, Representative in New York and to the United Nations of the World Health Organization (WHO), began by calling attention to the links between violence against children and other types of violence, all of which lead to risk factors and risk-taking attitudes

that have a profound effect on people's health. He further noted that, in relation to the post-2015 development agenda, the key is to demonstrate that this is a developmental imperative in addition to a moral imperative. "This is an investment that will pay back repeatedly," he stated.



Diah Saminarsih delivers her closing remarks.

Finally, Mr. Emerson highlighted the importance of this issue for development, and remarked that violence against children has a series of economic implications that transcend the direct costs of responding to it. Evidence shows that it is much more cost effective to prevent that to respond to violence.

Further, Ms. Santos Pais read a [statement of support from the Committee on the Rights of the Child](#), urging Governments "to make the protection of children from all forms of violence a high priority goal on the post-2015 agenda, as an issue of utmost international as well as national importance."

The panelists then answered questions from the audience in New York and online, who engaged in the event via Twitter using the hashtag #endviolence.

In her closing remarks, Ms. Diah Saminarsih, from the Office of the President of Indonesia's Special Envoy on Millennium Development Goals, reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to women, youth and children's protection, and to the inclusion of children's protection from violence as a global priority. "Let us proceed for development without violence," she concluded.

The video recording of the event can be found [here](#).