



# COUNTING PENNIES

A review of official development assistance to end violence against children







# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• **EVERY YEAR**, violence affects more than one billion children, in every country and every community. It robs them of their dignity, their rights, their potential, and, too often, their lives.

It harms each child immediately, and jeopardises their development, health, education, and their future. Violence can take many forms – physical punishment, sexual violence and exploitation, trafficking, hazardous child labour, and forced marriage, to name

a few. Violence against children costs up to US\$7 trillion a year.<sup>1</sup> If the world does not put an end to it, we risk losing the investments made in child survival, health, and education, thus eroding human and social capital and slowing economic development.

Ending violence against children is now, for the first time, a global development priority. With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world's governments have set ambitious targets to end violence by 2030, towards a world where all children—girls and boys alike—grow up free from violence and exploitation. All governments have also committed to investing in children through the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), which recognizes that “investing in children and youth is critical to achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for present and future generations.”<sup>2</sup>

To date, despite the recognition within the SDGs of the human and economic costs and the overall scale of the problem, very little is known about the nature of expenditure targeted at preventing, or responding to, violence against children. In terms of official development assistance (ODA), most donors make no systematic effort to track how much is spent on this issue. In contrast to other issues, such as gender equality and reproductive maternal newborn and child health, there are not yet internationally-agreed methods of tracking and recording expenditures related to ending violence against children.

For the first time in history, we have estimated how much was invested over the course of a year<sup>3</sup> through ODA into ending violence against children.

This report is the result of a detailed study of the ODA data available through the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

This report estimates that in 2015, US\$238 million was spent on projects that fully address violence against children - just over 0.1% of total gross ODA. A further US\$837 million - 0.5% of total gross ODA - went to projects only partially addressing violence against children.

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**The total ODA spending for 2015 was US\$174 billion. Of that, less than 0.6% was allocated to ending violence against children.** The 107 recipient countries had 1.66 billion children living in them in the reference year, yielding **an average estimate investment of less than US\$0.65 per child in a year.**

While no globally agreed benchmarks for investments in ending violence against children exist, this amount of less than US\$0.65 appears small if compared with the average net ODA of US\$53 received per capita in low-income countries (world average around US\$21).<sup>4</sup>

Eighty per cent of spending on ending violence against children was concentrated among six donors. The estimates in this report suggest that Canada is the largest single provider of ODA to end violence against children, followed by the United States of America and Sweden. Even for these donors, however, the ODA investment in ending violence against children was a relatively small part of their overall ODA investment.

The largest recipients of ODA to end violence against children tend to be poorer countries with low government resources, or middle-income countries suffering from conflict/refugee crises. Although total spending on ending violence against



children goes to countries in all regions of the world, 50% of all ODA to end violence against children goes to two geographic regions: Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Countries affected by conflict and displacement, such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, South Sudan, and Democratic Republic of Congo, where some of the most vulnerable children live, receive the bulk of these investments.

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The total ODA estimated to have been spent to address violence against children was **LESS THAN US\$1.1 BILLION**



Further assessments of the current level of domestic investments by individual countries and of the effectiveness of current ODA investments, coupled with existing estimates of the scale of violence and costing of proven solutions to end it, would help donors to better allocate resources to the areas of greatest need.

The main recommendation from this study is for individual donors to systematically track spending to end violence against children as a separate category; and for the OECD-Development Assistance Committee database to explore the inclusion of a specific marker. With donors tracking their spending on this issue, it would be possible to monitor the annual contribution of global development assistance to achieving the sustainable development targets to end violence against children.

