New Expert Report Uncovers the Massive Global Burden of Childhood Violence, A Major Obstacle to Sustainable Human Development in Countries Rich and Poor

Violence in childhood is ubiquitous, but not inevitable. Nearly 3 out of 4 children worldwide experience violence, but proven strategies exist which can keep children safe.

Ending Violence in childhood is the world's largest investment opportunity to enhance children's capabilities and build peaceful societies.

September 26, 2017 (New Delhi) – Violence in childhood is a preventable but nearly universal phenomenon that affects 1.7 billion children, nearly 3 out of 4 worldwide, each year, with catastrophic but often hidden impacts on individuals, communities and societies. It affects children in every country, rich and poor, north and south.

Ending violence in childhood and freeing children from fear is the world’s single largest investment opportunity to enhance children’s capabilities and build peaceful societies. The annual financial costs of physical, sexual and psychological violence against children are estimated to range between 2 and 5 percent of global GDP, or about US $7 trillion.

Violence in childhood is also inextricably linked with violence against women. Children who witness the abuse of their mothers are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of abuse when they grow up.

These are among the key findings of the new Global Report 2017 Ending Violence in Childhood, issued today by the international learning collaborative Know Violence in Childhood: A Global Learning Initiative (or Know Violence). The report is one of the most comprehensive analyses of childhood violence ever undertaken, an almost three year long effort documenting the scale of violence experienced by millions of the world’s children. The new report highlights both the enormous scale of this global crisis, and the integrated prevention strategies that can end childhood violence, thereby unlocking opportunities for economic progress, enhanced human development, and expanded freedoms.

"From severe physical punishment to sexual abuse to homicide, childhood violence damages individuals, families and communities in both rich countries and poor, with a cost in the trillions of dollars a year," said Know Violence Global Co-Chair A.K. Shiva Kumar. "But violence in childhood is not inevitable. Political leaders must help us implement what we already know works and break the silence around this critical issue."

Childhood violence includes a broad range of experiences, from corporal punishment to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, to the effect of witnessing violence against others. Beyond the immediate physical damage it causes, exposure to violence can traumatize children, harm school performance, lead to depression and other illnesses, and increase the chances that young people will become the victims or perpetrators of violence in the future.

“Growing up free from violence is a fundamental human right, and ensuring safe childhoods is a key component of sustainable human development,” said Baroness Vivien Stern, Know Violence Global Co-Chair. “The UN Sustainable Development Goals will require all governments to strengthen their data gathering systems on violence. Know Violence has synthesized the best evidence from thousands of sources worldwide on how to make these global goals a reality.”

Over the course of Know Violence’s work, the research team uncovered significant gaps in the availability of nationally representative data on key indicators of violence against women and children.
According to Know Violence Steering Group Chair and President of the China Medical Board Dr. Lincoln Chen, “The Know Violence Learning Initiative has made a significant contribution by compiling what we know, but also identifying what we do not know.”

Dr. Chen continued, “This is particularly true with violence against boys, with data on physical violence only available for six countries, and sexual violence for only four countries. Surely we can find the will and resources to ensure that we understand the extent to which our children are impacted by violence and how to stop it.”

In an effort to better track and compare available data, the Know Violence report also presents a unique new matrix, the global Violence in Childhood (VIC) Index. This new tool enables comparisons to be made between countries and regions of the world.

The report is informed by input from 44 research papers exploring the causes and impact of, and responses to, childhood violence, that were commissioned from over one hundred authors. These papers drew on over 3,100 articles, books, and reports, including over 170 systematic reviews of evidence on preventing childhood violence. Know Violence also organized a series of regional meetings around the world in order to directly engage with researchers, practitioners, and policy makers.

While the challenges in ending violence in childhood are significant, solutions exist and the opportunities are substantial.

- Governments everywhere need to adopt prevention approaches to end violence and stop treating violence in childhood as a series of bad incidents.
- Solutions should enhance the individual capacities of parents, caregivers, and children to deal with anger and frustration, also to report violence.
- Violence-prevention must be embedded in institutions – such as schools, health, and social services facilities – so that children are in violence-free spaces as they grow up.
- Eliminating the root causes of violence – arising from power differences, inequality, and patriarchy – can support the building of more peaceful communities.

**Ending Violence in Childhood** calls for political leaders and policy-makers to advance proven programs to end violence in childhood.

- Break the silence around violence, encourage discussion of this widespread social problem, and foster movements that can bring about long-lasting change.
- Strengthen violence-prevention systems and improve knowledge and regular evidence gathering and reporting.
- Integrate violence-prevention into health, education, and social policies, and make sure violence-prevention is a core dimension of policy reform.
- Track progress towards ending violence by putting in place appropriate monitoring and tracking systems.
- Unite the movements combatting violence against women and ending violence against children, by uncovering and focusing on the links between these two pervasive threats.

**About Know Violence in Childhood**

Launched in New Delhi in November 2014, Know Violence in Childhood is an international learning initiative dedicated to informing and supporting a global movement to end violence in childhood. Know Violence has analyzed existing data, commissioned new research and synthesized knowledge on the causes and consequences of violence against children worldwide. The work highlights the impact of childhood violence on individuals, families, communities and societies, expands the research base on this global crisis, and promotes evidence-based strategies to help keep children safe.

Know Violence is comprised of a diverse, multi-sectoral group of 100 leading researchers and experts. The initiative operates under the leadership of Steering Committee President Lincoln Chen (President, China Medical Board) and of Global Co-Chairs AK Shiva Kumar (economist and policy adviser) and Vivien Stern (UK House of Lords). Partners include the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), the University of Delaware, and FXB. Know Violence supporters include an anonymous donor, American Jewish World Service, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the IKEA Foundation, the NOVO Foundation, OAK Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the UBS
Foundation and UNICEF. Associates of Know Violence include the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, Save the Children International, Together for Girls, World Childhood Foundation and Twitter.