

UNICEF Indonesia Representative Gunilla Olsson

Ending Violence, Sustaining Peace

Bali Nusa Dua Convention Centre (BNDCC), Bali, 6 September 2017

- Your Excellency Made Mangku Pastika, Governor of Bali
- Your Excellency Setya Novanto, Speaker of the House of the Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia
- Your Excellency Fahri Hamzah, Vice Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives
- Your Excellency Dr. Nurhayati Ali Assegaf, President of IPU International Humanitarian Law and Chairperson of Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this esteemed audience on a topic so close to my heart. Protecting children from violence and promoting a common vision for peaceful societies is at the very core of what UNICEF stands for. We are immensely proud to support the Government of Indonesia in its efforts to give each and every child a better chance to survive, thrive and grow up free from fear and violence.

Some weeks ago, His Excellency (Bapak Menteri) Minister Bambang Brodjonegoro presented Indonesia's Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the High Level Political Forum in New York. Here, he also launched Indonesia's "**SDG Baseline Report on Children in Indonesia**"; *a landmark report for Indonesia and globally.*

Indonesia is the first country in the world to publish such a report. It sets the scene for Indonesia's 85 million children – who make up one third of the total population living in this country – and establishes a starting point for tracking action on the SDGs that are the most important for children.

And what is crucially important for children in Indonesia, like other countries, is to end all forms of childhood violence everywhere. We know from our conversations with children across the country – echoing the concerns from children around the world - that one of their most pressing concerns is to stop the violence they and their peers experience: at school, at home and in their communities.

Their voices have been heard: the SDGs call for unprecedented action by governments to eliminate violence as a global development priority. To do so is to make the invisible visible: to highlight the scale of the problem and prioritize prevention action in national plans and budgets.

Why must we make ending violence a priority?

Violence against children is a public health, human rights and social problem with devastating and costly consequences. Its destructive effects harm children in every country impacting families, communities, nations and across generations.

At last count, more than a billion children in 96 countries had experienced some form of violence in the past year. This figure is an underestimate. Too many children are invisible from national surveys and studies; too ashamed or too afraid to report the crimes committed against them.

Economically, anywhere between 1 and 3% of GDP is lost to violence, because of the costs to health systems, education and lost productivity for children affected. UNICEF studies show that in the East Asia and Pacific region, this amounts to more than 200 billion US dollars a year.

Children are acutely aware of these costs from an early age.

Typically, children will experience violent discipline in the first 24 months of life at a time when the brain is developing. Toxic stress linked to fear and anxiety in the early years can alter the brain's architecture. Damage can manifest in adolescence through problems in executive function and self - regulation. Violent discipline, verbal abuse, bullying and neglect may cause visible abnormalities in brain development as well as reductions in learning and behavioral, social and emotional functioning.

Violence in the later years can result in school dropout, mental health problems, increased risk of depression and suicide as well as risky behaviors. Children who are victims and witnesses of violence at home are more likely to become victims and perpetrators of violence as adults.

What the science tells us is that child violence contributes to a depreciation in children's cognitive capital, poorer mental and physical health and educational outcomes and overall decreased life chances. In turn, these affect a country's ability to build a cohesive, inclusive and peaceful society.

This is why it is useful to repeat the simple yet powerful words of Minister Bambang, who told the audience of world leaders in New York:

"SDGs are our vision - a world without poverty and violence, societies that are inclusive and cohesive, and economic development that is sustainable.
... And, he added.....Our policies start with the poorest and most vulnerable children."

The newly issued Presidential Decree on the implementation of the SDGs, clearly outlines the roles of ministries and institutions during the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the government effort, and acts as a reference for other related parties.

Already, Indonesia included targets to prevent child violence in its Medium Term Strategic Plan 2015-2019 aligned to the SDG targets: providing services to support child victims, strengthening protective legislation and improving birth registration are key priorities of this Government. And, to measure progress against SDG Target 16.2 the Government will initiate a national survey on all forms of child violence in 2018.

UNICEF joins hands with the Government of Indonesia and its partners – especially you in your respective roles in Parliament – to achieve these targets. The SDGs demand that countries: "...end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children". It is a commitment to the rights of every child, everywhere. A commitment to protection and a commitment to act on, from the national to the subnational level, for Members of Parliament, Governors, Mayors and Village Heads alike.

Who would disagree that "ending the abuse of children" is right in principle?

And, who would disagree that such a fine principle demands concrete, practical action?

The foundation of a strong and resilient country and a peaceful and prosperous one - is its people.

When millions of children are affected by violence, it affects not only them, but all of us, because such a burden impedes progress for all, and undermines all other

national objectives.

When we fail to stop violence a boy experiences at the hand of his parents...when we fail to educate a girl or protect her from abuse and exploitation... we condemn today's children to intergenerational cycles of poverty and inequality — with profound social and political as well as economic consequences.

Violence undermines children's potential to become healthy contributing adult citizens. It affects each and every victim directly, and it plants the seeds of social instability.

Violence is often regarded as an individual problem, but it is in fact, a societal problem, driven by economic and social inequities and poor education standards. It is fueled by social norms that condone violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts, sanction adult domination over children and encourage discrimination. It is enabled by systems that lack adequate policies and legislation, effective governance and a strong rule of law to prevent violence, investigate and prosecute perpetrators, and provide follow-up services and treatment for victims. It is also largely undocumented.

Yet we know that children are victims of violence every day, everywhere.

Changes in policies, changes in the law, but also changes in attitudes are all needed: Indeed, too many girls and boys worldwide think a husband is sometimes justified in hitting or beating his wife?

Gender-sensitive approaches are needed to reduce the risks of violence and address specific needs. Gender discrimination is not only a cause of many forms of violence against girls, but also contributes to the broad neglect and acceptance of violence against girls as a social norm. Perpetrators are often not held to account and girls are discouraged from speaking out and seeking care, support and protection.

But we can change this. The power to effect changes for children is in our hands.

Concretely, our collective responsibility is to support parents, caregivers and families, for example on the use of positive disciplining methods. This reduces the risk of violence within the home.

We can give children the skills to cope and manage risks and challenges without the use of violence and to seek appropriate support when violence does occur.

We can change attitudes and social norms that encourage violence and discrimination.

We can promote support services for children, encourage them to seek professional support and report incidents of violence.

We can implement laws and policies that protect children and thus send a strong message to society that violence is unacceptable and will be punished.

And we can carry out more data collection and research that shines a light on the scale of the problem, what drives it and what works to prevent it.

To achieve the SDGs, end violence and sustain peace, we need to invest in children upfront.

Governments, parliaments governors and other elected officials have a responsibility to reduce injustices and inequalities in their own societies. When they fail to do so — when growing numbers of their citizens lose hope in a better future for their children — they turn more easily to the politics of anger and division. They turn to a denial of the rights for others that they see denied for themselves in their daily lives.

As governments grapple with difficult decisions about where to invest already stretched resources, we must take every opportunity to demonstrate how investments in equity, in the rights of every child, ultimately lift us all — through stronger economies, more stable societies, and even a more cohesive and peaceful

future.

The SDGs calls for a world which invests in children and in which every child grows up free from want, from fear and from violence. This is an ambitious goal and we must act with a deep sense of urgency.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the House of Representatives and the World Parliamentary Forum for convening today's event. The Inter Parliamentary Union is a long-standing partner of UNICEF across the world, in the quest to establish a culture of child protection through legislation, budgetary allocations, and legal norms, helping Governments and other partners to leave no child behind. Parliamentarians have the possibility - and indeed responsibility - to ensure sustainability, stability and funding in the long term.

I congratulate Members of Parliament for their commitment to sustainable development and to the implementation of child rights. And once again, I congratulate the Indonesian Government for leading the way on the SDGs, for showing the world what can be achieved, despite numerous obstacles.

Dear Excellency Fahri Hamzah, dear participants:

The evidence is compelling — and the need is clear.

By changing people's lives for the better — by achieving real results and real progress for the most vulnerable, especially children - by protecting them from abuse and violence – by aiming to build and strengthen stable, cohesive societies — we can demonstrate that the world envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goals is not a distant hope, but a necessary reality.

Thank you for your time.