

Violence against children pervasive in homes, schools and communities – UNICEF

1 November 2017 – About 300 million, or three-quarters, of the world's two- to four-year-old children experience either psychological aggression or physical punishment, or both, by their caregivers at home, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said in a report published Tuesday.

"The harm inflicted on children around the world does [tremendous damage](#)," said UNICEF Chief of Child Protection Cornelius Williams in a press release on the report, titled [A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents](#).

"Babies slapped in the face; girls and boys forced into sexual acts; adolescents murdered in their communities – violence against children knows no boundaries," he added.

The report uses the latest data to show that children experience violence across all stages of childhood and in all settings.

About 60 per cent of one-year-olds in 30 countries with available data are regularly subjected to violent discipline. Nearly a quarter of one-year-olds are physically shaken as punishment and nearly one in 10 are hit or slapped on the face, head or ears.

Worldwide, 176 million, or one in four, children under age five are living with a mother who is a victim of intimate partner violence.

The report also finds that around 15 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts in their lifetime. Only one per cent of adolescent girls who had experienced sexual violence said they reached out for professional help.

VIDEO: Recognize it. Report it. UNICEF calls for everyone to stand up and speak out to end violence against children. Credit: UNICEF

In the 28 countries with data, 90 per cent of adolescent girls who had experienced forced sex, on average, said the perpetrator of the first incident was known to them.

Data from six countries reveals friends, classmates and partners were among the most frequently cited perpetrators of sexual violence against adolescent boys.

Globally, every seven minutes, an adolescent is killed by an act of violence. In the United States, adolescent boys from African American or black non-

Hispanic populations are almost 19 times more likely to be murdered than non-Hispanic white adolescent boys.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region where adolescent homicide rates have increased; nearly half of all homicides among adolescents globally occurred in this region in 2015.

The report also says that half the population of school-age children – 732 million – live in countries where corporal punishment at school is not fully prohibited. Three-quarters of documented school shootings that have taken place over the past 25 years in non-conflict countries occurred in the United States.

To end violence against children, UNICEF is calling for governments to take urgent action and support such measures as adopting well-coordinated national action plans; changing adult behaviours; limiting access to firearms and other weapons; educating children, parents, teachers, and community members to recognize violence in all its many forms and report it safely; and collecting better disaggregated data to track progress through robust monitoring and evaluation.

[UN envoy welcomes full return of Gaza border crossings to Palestinian Authority](#)

1 November 2017 – The United Nations envoy for the Middle East peace process on Wednesday welcomed the full return of the Gaza crossings to the control of the Palestinian Authority.

“This is a [landmark development](#) in the implementation of the intra-Palestinian agreement, signed in Cairo on 12 October,” said UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, in a statement.

“The positive momentum should be maintained and the Palestinian government must be fully empowered to function in Gaza,” he added.

According to media reports, the 12 October agreement between the Fatah and Hamas factions allows the Palestinian government to resume its responsibilities in Gaza. Under the agreement, the Palestinian Authority should take control of the crossings of the Gaza Strip by 1 November.

A statement released by Egypt, which facilitated the accord, said the Palestinian government should assume its full responsibilities to manage the enclave by 1 December.

The July 2016 report of the Middle East Quartet – comprising the UN, Russia, the United States and the European Union – identified the lack of Palestinian unity as one of the main obstacles to achieving a two-state solution, which is to establish a viable, sovereign Palestinian state that lives in peace and security with Israel.

“The return of the crossings should facilitate the lifting of the closures, while addressing Israel’s legitimate security concerns, and unlock increased international support for Gaza’s reconstruction, growth, stability and prosperity,” Mr. Mladenov said.

He reminded all factions in Gaza of the importance of maintaining security and ending militant activities that undermine peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis alike. Mr. Mladenov said the UN will continue to work with the Palestinian leadership, Egypt and the region to support this process, which is critical for reaching a negotiated two-state solution and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Women are not helpless, they will work hard and achieve their goals, UN forum told

1 November 2017 – Despite overwhelming challenges women face at the workplace, “they are not helpless, they will follow their dreams, work to the hardest and achieve their business goals, was a core message on day two of a United Nations forum on sustainable development.

“This is a chance for everyone around the world – policy makers, investors, those in technology – to realize that women are not waiting for handouts, they are looking for opportunities. An opportunity is not a handout,” Adot Killmeyer-Oleche, the Chief of UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Institute for Capacity Development, told *UN News*.

“This is an important message for all of us – the UN, development activists and practitioners, and change agents,” she added.

At a plenary panel discussion on the theme of [Women in industry](#) policy makers, business persons, officials from financial institutions and UN agencies, and women and young entrepreneurs came together to discuss the challenges confronting women entrepreneurs and how to overcome them.

Women entrepreneurs often find themselves at the end of the value chain, not just in terms of employment, but also when it comes to access to knowledge, technology and the basic resources – particularly finance – to do business.

Adding to these barriers, women face very high level of stigma – a universal problem – with their projects and ideas not given the same level of attention or simply ignored because of the fact it came from a woman.

Women have challenges at all levels – traditionally they have had challenges getting education and training [...] or made to enter trades ‘more associated’ with their gender, explained Killmeyer-Oleche, also a panellist at the session.

This discrimination is also evident in the lack of equal pay for equal work in many sectors around the globe.

One of the key ways to address these challenges, the panel discussed, is reforming laws and policies, integrating the gender dimensions. Another area of focus is training and education to ensure that young women and men, are imparted with the necessary skills to become entrepreneurs and are able to carefully analyse risks.

Using technology and innovative solutions, such as crowd-sourcing or community financing can help overcome some challenges, in particular those relating to accessing finance, said many participants.

But, above all, mind-sets across the world have to be changed, they stressed, noting that changed mind-sets will automatically improve the situation in other sectors.

Attitudes change, but not overnight [...] it is simply not acceptable to discriminate against women, said Ina Cronje, Chairperson of the Board of Trade and Investment, KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), a panel participant.

The session also saw the designation of Azza Fahmy, a prominent business woman and the Chairwoman and Creative Director of Jewellery of Egypt, as the UNIDO International Creative Woman Entrepreneur.

The panel discussion on women in industry was a key event held on the second day of the World Entrepreneurs Investment Forum, organized by UNIDO in partnership with the Government of Bahrain.

Other key events today include a plenary session on global impact investing; a side-event on the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development implementation in Bahrain, jointly organized by UNDP, [UNIDO ITPO-Bahrain](#) and UN Global Compact; and partnership events for entrepreneurs.

UN News is in Manama, Bahrain, covering the Forum and its associated events. Follow [@UN_News_Centre](#) and [@UNNewsArabic](#) for up to date news and highlights from WEIF 2017.

FEATURE: As Afghan war grinds on, a marginalized young generation raises its voice

31 October 2017 – It is “show time” on *Asia Television* in Western Afghanistan, as talk show guest Somaia Ramish replies to a pointed question about war and peace.

“Fortunately, women haven’t had a major role in the conflict or the destruction of Afghanistan, which strengthens our voices at the peace table,” said the provincial councilwoman, 30, adding: “Unfortunately, these days, violent extremism has a bigger advertising budget than does the promotion of peace.”

Confronting the horrors of a war they hope to end one day, young Afghans are making themselves heard through traditional media and on the Internet. These Afghans, many educated and non-traditional, are countering messages from militant groups which seek to play upon ethnic and religious differences to encourage violence.

The young Afghan voices belong to students, young politicians, and also journalists. In the case of *Asia Television*, support from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) helps sustain a regular peace dialogue, which runs alongside a slate of soap operas and other entertainment shows. The support is part of a nationwide UN effort to invest in peace, and the show’s producers say it sends a strong message and helps drive grassroots conflict resolution.

Young Afghans remain highly susceptible to war propaganda, which comes in the form of street whispers and threats over social media. At the same time, it is a challenge for the central Government to win the respect of young Afghans, especially in distant provinces.

“Without security, we can’t have peace,” says Arash Majedi, 23, who serves lamb and chicken kabobs in a strobe-lit shisha café, which plays a steady beat of Iranian rap music. “It is the responsibility of the Government to stop someone from blowing us up.”



Arash Majedi, seen here at a shisha café in Herat, wants the Government to make Afghanistan a safer place to live. Photo: Fraidoon Poya

Set on the western edge of Afghanistan, surrounded by pockets of war and bordering Iran, Herat is a 5,000-year-old centre of Asian culture caught between a tide of extremism and popular, albeit ancient, traditions of cultivating flower gardens and reciting poetry with friends and relatives.

“Insurgents are active in almost all the districts around us,” said Said Sayedi, 28, who heads a conflict resolution centre in Herat, which has struggled for funding in recent years. “In some cases, foreign powers are trying to dominate more moderate insurgent groups to keep other militants in check.”

“We try to encourage independent thinking and help the young choose non-violence,” he said. “This needs to be elaborated in order that they can break free.” Sayedi concedes that there are many “no-go zones” around Herat where conflict resolution experts cannot enter. “We would need an escort to go south to Shindand district. There are lots of kids – 15 and 16 years old – who are being recruited there by rival factions.”

Unfortunately, these days, violent extremism has a bigger advertising budget than does the promotion of peace. Somaia Ramish

UN officials said local peace initiatives remain in dire need of more outside help to sustain their work. “Afghan youth are actually reaching out to the UN and conveying to us their wish that the UN [and others] can play a new role in regional peace negotiations,” said Najibullah Rezaee, a UN political affairs officer.

Even as the battle for the hearts of young Afghans intensifies, new voices are speaking up. “Despite the challenges and marginalization young Afghans face, they still are carrying out a new and dynamic role in support of peace,” said Fraidoon Poya, a public affairs officer with UNAMA in Herat.

Behind the iron gates of Herat University, built to a modern and spacious design after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Arman Qaderi, 23, a senior in the law faculty, organizes classes and edits texts on peace. His Peace Club has produced, with the help of Professor Nasir Rahimi, a systematic approach to changing minds and behaviour.

“The most important thing we can do is help to motivate people who already feel the urge for peace,” said Qaderi. A colleague Fardina Salehi, 28, works as a financial secretary and also as an instructor in peacemaking. “Here in Afghanistan, we experience more war than we do peace,” said Salehi. “I’ve learned that peace starts in the family and moves to society. Our approach is totally different than any of the other classes taught here at Herat University. We approach learning through discussion, participation and brainstorming.”



Herat University Peace Club, anchored by Arman Qaderi (left) and Professor Nasir Rahimi (second on left) and Fardina Salehi (4th from left.) Photo: Fraidoon Poya

“Due to ongoing conflict, we are all in violence with each other – even within our own families,” said Salehi. “When I watch violence on TV, my mind

is further disturbed. We all have to seek ways to calm our minds.”

Professor Rahimi said he has seen a change sweeping across the campus in Herat. In a walk with students down to a newly-inaugurated Park for Peace, he reflects on some changes he’s seen in recent years. He says peace is not an easy path, but one with a growing following.

Recently, 20 students from the Sharia Law faculty took a two-week journey to India to walk in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi, who spearheaded India’s independence movement based on non-violent resistance. The tour included visits to Gandhi’s home and to his ashram. When violence engulfed Herat on a recent week, these same students helped to organize a city-wide blood drive to support victims of sectarian violence.

“When we began our peace initiative, a lot of students doubted the approach: They said, ‘You can’t possibly bring peace after so much failure and war,’” said Professor Rahimi. “Students openly wonder – after decades of war – how talking about peace is going to make a difference. After they overcome initial doubts, however, they come to me and ask how they can move towards a deeper understanding of peace.”

UNAMA has a mandate to support the Government of Afghanistan and its citizens in a shared goal of becoming a stable, open, and peaceful nation. This feature piece is meant to tell a human interest story related to how Afghanistan and the UN are working together to overcome the many challenges to achieving this goal.

[UN Security Council urges more protections for children in conflicts](#)

31 October 2017 – Deeply concerned about the abuse of children in war zones, the United Security Council today met in a debate in New York which included [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and his special envoy on the issue. The Council urged countries and non-State actors to allow children access to education and

The Council said that it is gravely concerned by the scale and severity of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law committed against children in some countries, including terrorism, mass abductions, and sexual slavery, which can cause displacement and affect access to education and healthcare services.

Through a statement agreed by all 15 of its members, the Council also noted that children’s international human rights continue to be violated with impunity in some countries, and stressed that the best interests of children, as well as their needs and vulnerabilities, be considered when

making any decisions related to children in war zones.

Welcoming the Secretary-General's enhanced engagement with parties on the issue, the Council reiterated that protection of children should be an important aspect of a comprehensive strategy to resolve conflict and sustain peace.

Addressing the Council's day-long debate, the Secretary-General said children around the world are suffering enormously and unacceptably, resulting in global shame.

If we leave the next generation traumatized, seething with grievances, we betray those we serve and we betray ourselves, he [said](#) in the open debate of the Council.

He pointed to his [latest report](#) on the issue, which included a record high number of child casualties in Afghanistan, a doubling of verified cases of recruitment and use of children in Syria and Somalia, and widespread sexual violence against children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and other countries.

However, the report, which was presented to the Council earlier this month, also notes better protections, including the release of children held in Somali prisons, and substantive measures taken by the coalition in Yemen led by Saudi Arabia.

We need to strengthen our engagement with regional and sub-regional actors, Mr. Guterres said, stressing the need for additional legal and political commitments to protect children, and urging Member States to provide resources to support these initiatives.

He also appealed to all parties to the conflicts to work with the UN, to ensure protection for the most precious resource of your countries: your children.

Among the dozens of other speakers who addressed the Council today was the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba.

She said [children are used](#) as fuel of war, and called for international action to address the use of children as expendable commodities by warring parties.

Echoing the Secretary-General's call for resources, the Special Representative appealed for adequate funds to implement and sustain reintegration, reinsertion and reskilling programmes to support children conscripted into armies. She also reiterated that such children, including girls, are primarily victims.

Violations of child protection provisions must be investigated and violators held to account, she said: Accountability must be prioritized to break cycles of violence and prevention efforts.