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Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

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Vienna NGO Committee on the Family
MAG. WOLFGANG ENGELMAIER
KOLPING AUSTRIA
PAULANERGASSE 11
A-1040 VIENNA
AUSTRIA
FAX: 00 43 1 587 99 00
EMAIL: CONTACT@VIENNAFAMILYCOMMITTEE.ORG

Dear Readers,

Issue 123 focuses on the plight of children, as expressed in two included texts; one is from UNICEF, which deals with violence prevention, and the other is a Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms.

This issue also includes two texts from member organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family; Make Mothers Matter (MMM) which highlights gender equality and women's rights in parenting, and the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) which reviews parenting over the last decade. Finally, one can find a list of upcoming events regarding families, children and more.

Sincerely,

Julia Birner B.A.

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VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY

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FULL COMMITTEE MEETING

UNITED NATIONSVIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

MONDAY NOVEMBER 7th 2022

(CONFERENCE ROOM TO BE ANNOUNCED)

INTERNATIONAL FORUM
13.00 – 15.00
[Including Discussion with Presenter & Participants]

‘Two Steps Forward, two steps back. Challenges in Gender EqualityResearch, and their Policy Implications.’

Prof. Vanessa Gash
University of London

Bio: Vanessa Gash is an empirical and interdisciplinary social scientist based at the School of Policy and Global Affairs at City, University London and has specialised in comparative labour market research of precarious employment and has expertise in both panel and cross-national data structures. Her work focuses on gendered differences in employment and precarious contracts and has recently published a series of reports for the UK Government on the Gender Pay Gap.

Office of the Chairperson:
Wolfgang Engelmaier M.A.
Kolping Austria
Paulanergasse 11
A-1040 Vienna
Fax: 00 43 1 587 99 00
Email: contact@viennafamilycommittee.org

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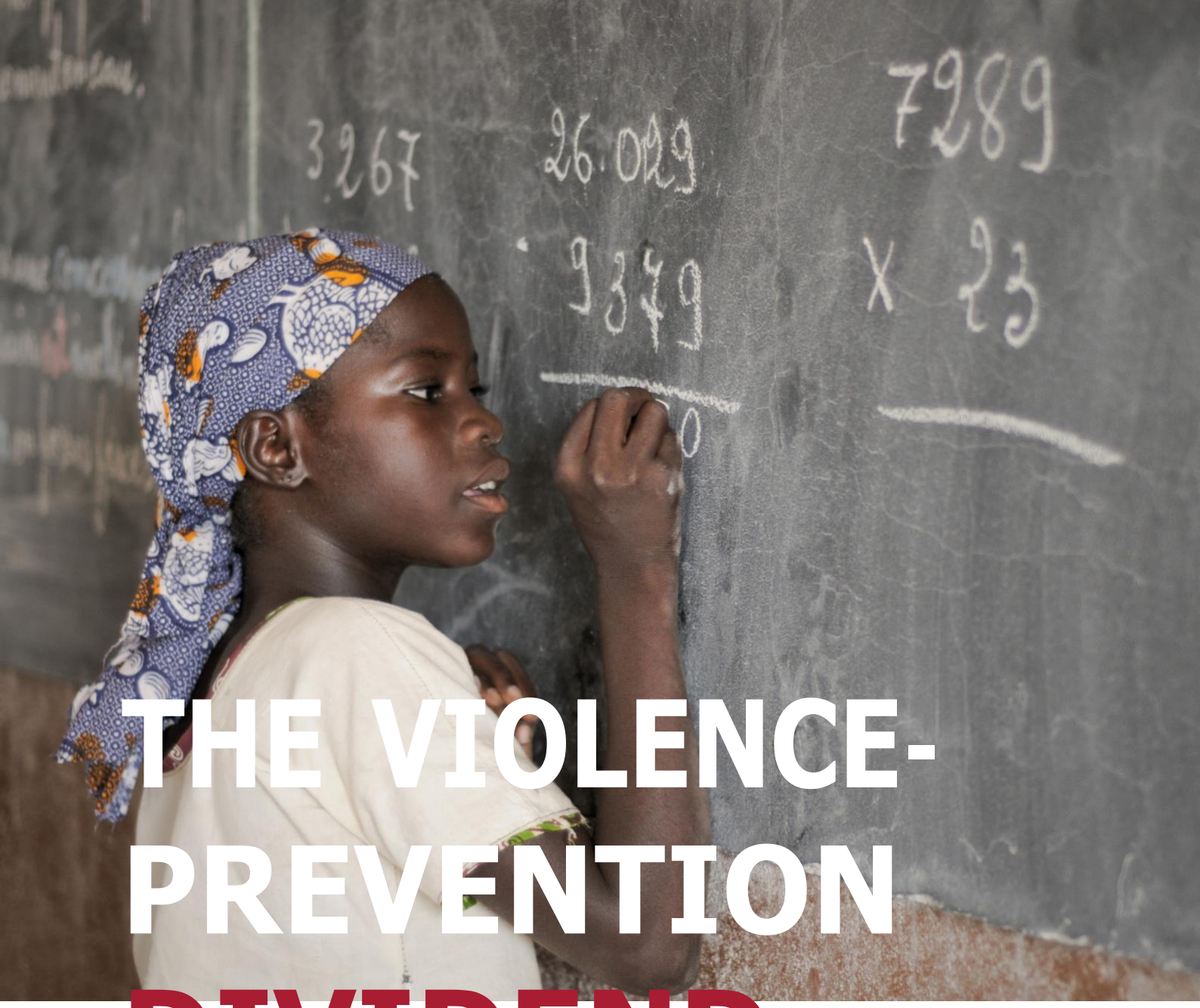
Email: contact@viennafamilycommittee.org

Vanessa has a DPhil from Oxford University, and has held appointments at the University of Manchester, in both the Departments of Sociology and Social Statistics and at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. Vanessa began her career working in public sector research at the Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin and currently holds Research Affiliate status there.

Talk Outline: Dr Gash will examine three interrelated areas of her work on the theme of gender equality, with special reference made to the impact of her findings for families. The first strand concerns how rigid the male breadwinner norm is within families, and the implications of this for gender equalisation policies. The second strand examines how widening income inequalities between groups is making it more difficult to achieve consensus on how best to achieve a reduction in the gender pay gap. Here the assumption has always been that men occupied a privileged position that women did not hold. This remains true at many points of the income distribution but not amongst the working-poor of whom there are increasingly large proportions. The third strand concerns an increasingly pressing issue in academic research relating to the culture wars and academic freedom.

Office of the Chairperson:
Wolfgang Engelmaier M.A.
Kolping Austria
Paulanergasse 11
A-1040 Vienna
Fax: 00 43 1 587 99 00
Email: contact@viennafamilycommittee.org



THE VIOLENCE-PREVENTION DIVIDEND

Why Preventing Violence Against Children Makes Economic Sense

ChildFund Alliance

PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Save the Children

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

unicef

World Vision

The Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines theright of all children to live free from violence.[1] Whilst everyone can agree that violence against children is profoundly wrong, unacceptable and must end, few are aware that it also creates huge financial costs for its victims, families and economies.

Beyond its direct impact, violence can have long term economic and social costs. Violence against children undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of all government investments in services for children, including antenatal care, nutrition and parenting programmes, early childhood development, social protection and education. The pervasive effects of violence against children hamper both individual andsocial development and hold back future national economic growth.

Ending violence against children offers the potential to generate large social and economic dividends. It would remove a critical barrier to children achieving their full developmental potential and could save costs to societies that have been estimated to be up to 5% of national GDP (see table 1).

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Governments which direct resources towards endingviolence against children are also upholding children'srights to survival, development and protection; they are also meeting their obligation to care and protect children to "the maximum extent of their available resources."[2] Such investments are also essential in adhering to their pledge to create a world "free from fear and violence" made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This paper gives an overview of the economic case for investing in the prevention of violence against children. It is intended to alert policymakers to the substantial economic and social costs of violence against children and the potential dividend that would accrue from investment in violence prevention. The paper outlines where governments can strengthen and improve engagement in violence prevention in light of post COVID-19 recovery planning and beyond.[i]

The investment case supports a Call to Action for governments and development partners to increase the resources currently allocated for the prevention ofviolence against children and to use resources even more effectively.

The Economic Costs of Violence Against Children

In addition to lifelong pain and trauma, violence against children infiicts a huge financial toll on both victims and societies. Violence's economic burden on society is the sum of all the costs incurred by its child victims, their families, businesses and governments. A seminal study suggests these costs could be as high as 8% of global GDP.[3] National studies from a range of countries have estimated that violence against childrenhas economic costs of up to 5% of GDP. While more research is needed, including on the additional impactof COVID-19, this equates to trillions of US dollars wasted each year (*see table 1*).

[i] This paper summarises the findings of a longer report commissioned by a consortium of child focused agencies (the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, UNICEF, World Vision International, ChildFund Alliance, Plan International and Save the Children International) from Cornerstone Economic Research.

Key Facts about Violence Against Children

Key fact 1: Violence against children is a universal and global issue.

Data from population-based surveys are improving our understanding of the prevalence and nature of violence against children.[4] An estimated one billion children – half of all the children in the world – are victims of violence every year.[5] More children are victims of violence than we know of because so much violence goes unreported. The evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence against children reveals a grim picture: violence has increased while becoming less visible.[6]

Key fact 2: Violence against children is a continuum.

Violence against children takes many forms, including harsh discipline, child labour, torture, trafficking, bullying, harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, and deprivation of liberty. Evidence from surveys shows that one-third of respondents experienced multiple forms of violence.[7] Bullying and cyberbullying, which may torment a child at home, school, online and in the community, shows how violence affects children on a continuum of suffering.[8]

Key fact 3: Violence against children has multiple risk factors.

Violence has a strong gender dimension and disproporionately affects marginalised children, such as those with disabilities, those from minorities, those experiencing poverty and those who are homeless.

Key fact 4: All violence against children can be prevented.

There is ample evidence that the prevalence of violence against children can be decreased by well-designed, evidence-based programmes, even in resource-poor settings, creating the foundations for its eventual elimination.[9]

Key fact 5: Sexual violence against children is widespread, and its scale and complexity has increased with digital technology.

An estimated 120 million girls (or 1 in 10) under the age of 20 have suffered some form of forced sexual contact at some point in their lives.[10] In 2020, more than 153,000 websites were reported as containing images of child sexual abuse, an increase of 16% on the year before.[11]

The COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing humanitarian crises have exacerbated violence in allits awful dimensions: it is a global scourge that we must do all in our power to stop.

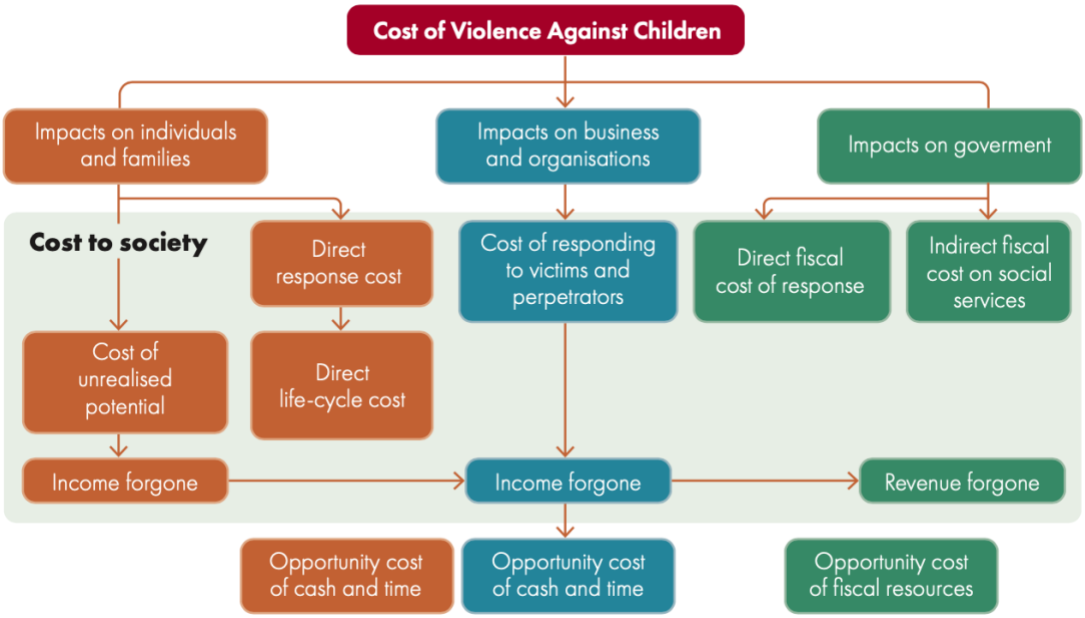
TABLE 1. Estimates of the economic cost of violence against children

Country	Year	Estimated cost of violence against children (US$ millions)		Estimated %of GDP
		Minimum	Maximum	
Nigeria[12]	2014	8,900		1.88
Vanuatu[13]	2012	3.7	4.59	0.5-0.75
Turkey[14]	2012	6,403	61,526	1-7
Australia[15]	2016/17	25,423		2
South Africa[16]	2015	15,810		5
United States[17]	2008	124,000	585,000	1
Germany[18]	2008	16,323	43,823	0.45-1.20
Cambodia[19]	2013	168		1.10
China[20]	2010	50,000		0.84
East Asia and Pacific region[21]	2012	194,000	206,000	1.88-1.99
Global[22]	2013	1,953,000	7,116,000	8

Note: the year column refers to the year the data is from and not the year in which the study was published. All estimates not in USD were converted using theWorld Bank (2021a) for the year in which the data is from.[23] When the % of GDP was not available in the study, it was calculated using World Bank (2021b).[24]

The direct and indirect costs of violence against children can be both short-term and extend over the lifetime of affected individuals. The range of costs of violence to individuals, families and governments is summarised in thefigure 1.

FIGURE 1. The different pathways by which violence against children costs individuals and families, businesses and organisations, and government



Violence against children can impair all aspects of their physical, intellectual, language, emotional and social development - with long term consequencesfor children's health, education and socialisation.
These damaging individual outcomes also generate large economic costs for society. Child victims of violence may not reach their full education and health potential, limiting their future income and productivity. Children and their families often bearthe direct costs of treating or responding to the impact of violence.

Violence impacts businesses and organisations both directly and indirectly, through loss of opportunity. For example, violence in childhood can constrain the potential productivity of a workforce; employees who were victims of violence in childhood may haveenduring physical and mental health issues that affect the economic contribution they can make as adults; absence from the workforce increase when adults must provide care to child victim.

Governments incur direct costs in responding to the impact of violence on the short- and long-term health of its victims, as well as the costs associated with the child protection and justice systems' responses in providing rehabilitation to victims and enforcing the law against perpetrators.
Violence against children also has indirect, long-term costs, as it undermines investments in children's health, education and the other social sectors. Through combination of these impacts, violence can also affect the potential earnings of individuals and businesses, resulting in lower tax revenue for governments.

The pain, suffering and trauma of victims, their diminished physical and mental health, and the impact on their social interactions and relationships is difficult to quantify in economic terms and is seldom included in research studies. Therefore, current estimates of the economic cost of the impacts of violence against children provide only a partial picture and are expected to understate the true scale.

Investment for a Violence-Prevention Dividend

Investment in proven, evidence-based violence prevention programmes can avert the economic costs of violence as well as remove a critical barrier to children achieving their health, educational and economic development potential. Economic benefitsaccrue through multiple mechanisms, among them:

- All children will reach their full potential, expanding the supply of productive labour market participants to the economy, boosting per capita incomes and increasing domestic demand.
- As children's development will not be hindered by the impact of violence, existing health, education and social protection spending will be more effective. The exposure to toxic stress inhibits optimal brain development and leads to poorer child outcomes, including school performance; eliminating violence against children will raisethe overall stock of human capital.
- The costs associated with the consequencesof violence against children on the health, education, child protection and criminal justice systems will be eliminated, allowing governments to use these funds more productively elsewhere.
- The vicious cycle of violence and its links topoverty will be broken, allowing children and their communities to have significantly improved economic trajectories.

Many proven violence prevention interventions have a relatively low cost, making the case for investment even stronger. Multiple research studies have shown that violence prevention programmes have positive returns on investment and offer benefits that exceed their costs (*see table 2*).

TABLE 2. **Returns on investment of programmes to prevent violence against children**

Study	Country	Type	Programme	Outcome
Lakhotia, 2019[25]	New Zealand	Parenting programme	Incredible Years Parenting Programme	$3.75 ROI
Lee et al, 2012[26]	USA	Parenting programme	SafeCare	$14.65 ROI
Nystrand et al, 2020[27]	Sweden	Parenting programme	Comet	BCR 6.84-7.17
Nystrand et al, 2020	Sweden	Parenting programme	Connect	BCR 10.29-10.93
Nystrand et al, 2020	Sweden	Parenting programme	Incredible Years Parenting Programme	BCR 5.81–6.11
Nystrand et al, 2020	Sweden	Parenting programme	COPE	BCR 5.46–16.13
Kaytaz, 2005[28]	Turkey	Parenting programme	Mother Child Education Program	BCR 5.91-8.14
Lopez Garcia, 2021[29]	Kenya	Parenting programme	Msingi Bora Parenting Intervention	BCR 10.6 -15.5
Rasmussen et al, 2021[30]	India	Preventing childmarriage	Life Skills Education and Youth Information Centres programmes	BCR 21
Hawkins et al, 2011[31]	USA	Preventing adolescent problem behaviour	Communities that Care	$5.30 ROI
Huitsing et al, 2020[32]	Netherlands	Prevent bullying atschool	KiVa	€4.04-€6.72 ROI
Le et al, 2021[33]	Australia	Prevent bullying atschool	Friendly School Programme	AUS$1.56-AUS$2.22 ROI
Bonin et al, 2011[34]	UK	Prevent bullying atschool	School-based anti-bullying intervention	£14.35 ROI
Ministry of Social Affairs, 2020[35]	Iceland	Integrated child welfare	New legislation to integratechild welfare	9.6% ROI
Ariss et al, 2017[36]	UK	Preventing domestic violence	Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme	£2.05 ROI

BCR – Benefit Cost Ratio; ROI – Return on Investment

Evidence shows that investment in violence prevention and child protection by most governments is currently low and insufficient. A WHO survey of 155 countries found that while 80% had at least one national action plan to prevent violence against children, fewer than one in four (<25%) had fully funded their plans.[37] This tells us more work is needed to adequately resource plans and strategies in government budgets. Given thehigh return on investment of many such initiatives, this isa great opportunity being missed.

Realising the violence prevention dividend requires awhole-of-government effort that goes well-beyond social sector ministries. Ministries responsible for planning, economic development and finance
also need to be fully engaged; all government sectors should understand violence prevention as a mechanism for reducing poverty, fostering economic growth and enhancing social development. The focus should be on embedding the prevention of violence into all child-facing services and making sure existing social spending is deployed efficiently and effectively in ways that prevent violence. The systems that respond to and prevent violence against children must be strengthened; even modest increasesin government spending on these services can make a substantial difference. This could be as simple as enhancing programmes that contribute to reducing violence against children while also having multiple other concurrent benefits, such as those focused on social protection (e.g. child grants, income support and employment creation) and early childhood development.[38]

The Direct Impact of Violence Against Children

Every act of violence is a tragedy for the child. Violence infiicts pain: it causes injury, brain damage and death. Violence leaves a child victim struggling with upsetting emotions, memories and anxiety that won't go away. It impairs their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development with damaging long-term consequences. Sexual violence often exposes children to sexually transmitted infections, and girls to unwanted pregnancies. The rape of small children leads to injuries that can result in death.

Violence in childhood often leads to poor self-image, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, self-harm and suicide. Prolonged exposure to violence or violent situations can lead to "toxic stress", which has detrimental effects on learning, behaviour and health throughout a person's lifetime.

Gender-based violence has wide ranging impact on the sexual and reproduction health, mental health, em-powerment and education of its victims. It may result in obstetric fistula and early and unwanted pregnancies that put the young mother and her child at further risk of violence and discrimination.

Violence recreates itself through a vicious cycle. Violence experienced as a child may carry over into the adult lives of men who think it's the way to solve problems, or parents who abuse their own children.

The intersections between violence against children and violence against women in terms of common causes, consequences and solutions is well-documented. Ending violence against children will also help in addressing gender-based violence and breaking intergenerational cycles of violence.[39]

Call to Action

There is a compelling economic case for increasingand improving investment in the prevention and response to violence against children.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the expediting of vaccine developments have shown the cost-effectiveness of prevention over response when dealing with a public health crisis. This knowledge should also be applied towards ending violence against children: essentially a "vaccine" to prevent it.Fortunately, cost-effective preventative and responseinterventions already exist.

Preventing and responding to violence against childrenshould be an integral part of every government's economic growth and development strategy and a cornerstone of their plan to implement the 2030Agenda for Sustainable Development. Action is needed now more than ever.

Governments should:

- Recognise the high returns from investment in child protection and violence prevention services and the long-term cost savings.
- Incorporate preventing violence against children and other vulnerable groups into national economic growth and developmentstrategies, as an integral part of investing in human capital. They should also prioritise and protect such investments within post-COVID-19 national recovery plans and beyond
- Increase investment in integrated, evidence-based approaches for the prevention of violence across all services for children and leverage opportunities for concurrentbenefits[40]
- Track spending on child protection and violence prevention in the national budgetand accounting system across all relevant ministries to improve accountability, monitoring and reporting
- Strengthen mechanisms for inter-ministerial,national and sub-national government coordination of all agencies with a role in child protection and violence prevention
- Develop indicators and data collection systems to assess the effectiveness of investments in child protection and violenceprevention.

Development partners should:

- Invest in generating and promoting evidence on the economic returns from investments in violence prevention and child protection to inform government policy, planning and budgeting
- Support global research, analysis and dissemination of evidence on the economic returns of investments in preventing violence against children, including the development of standardised approaches to estimating itscosts and returns on investment
- Finance capacity building on making the economic case for investing in violence prevention and child protection for government financial decision-makers, including parliamentarians and all relevantline-ministries
- Develop and promote the use of existing standardized indicators, including the OECDpolicy-markers on the SDGs, to monitor and report on development partners' allocations to child protection and violence prevention[41].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1 See article 19 Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, and General comment No. 13, on the right of the child to freedom from all formsof violence

2 See articles 3 and 4, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, and General comment No. 19 on public budgeting for the realisation ofchildren's rights

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United Nations A/HRC/49/41

General Assembly

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Human Rights Council
Forty-ninth session
28 February–1 April 2022
Agenda items 2 and 3
Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use offirearms by children and youth

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

In the present report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights highlights how the availability of firearms in society influences their acquisition, possession and use by children and youth. The High Commissioner details the profound impacts that the use of firearms has on the enjoyment of human rights and calls for comprehensive measures to reduce the harm caused by firearms. She recommends reducing the availability of firearms in society and implementing measures designed to prevent and address the underlying causes of firearms-related deaths and injuries.

* The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 45/13, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on the human rights impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth, with a view to contributing to the strengthening or the development of comprehensive public policies based on socioeconomic interventions and services that address the factors driving firearms-related violence.

2. To prepare the report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) sought inputs from States, [1] national human rights institutions, United Nations entities, [2] international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations.[3] It also drew on a diverse range of public sources, including international and regional instruments, the practice of United Nations human rights mechanisms and reports of regional and humanitarian organizations, civil society, scholars and practitioners.[4]

3. The present report builds on previous reports submitted in response to Human Rights Council resolutions 29/10 and 38/10. Those reports addressed human rights and the regulation of civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms, and the impact of civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, respectively.[5]

4. The present report examines the acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth.[6] It focuses on violent crimes, accidental firearms injuries and suicides and details impacts that such use has on the enjoyment of human rights. It also considers direct and indirect impacts, as well as the impact on particular groups. The report goes on to examine types of comprehensive public policy measures that can be adopted to tackle the factors driving firearms-related deaths and injuries. It considers three types of measures: reducing the availability of firearms; preventing firearms-related deaths and injuries; and addressing the underlying causes of firearms-related deaths and injuries. The report concludes with a number of recommendations.

II. Acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children andyouth

A. Acquisition and possession of firearms

5. As highlighted in previous reports, the vast majority of firearms in the world are held by civilians; by the end of 2017, there were more than 850 million civilian-held firearms.[7] Estimates in rates of firearms possession vary between countries, from 120.5 firearms per 100 residents in the United States of America, to less than 1 for every 100 residents in Japan.

[1] Submissions were received from Algeria, Colombia, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon,Libya, Mauritius, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

[2] One submission was received, from the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

[3] Submissions were received from the University of Minnesota Human Rights Program, the Universityof Dayton Human Rights Center and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

[4] It must be noted, however, that there is a dearth of information on the acquisition, possession and useof firearms, including by children and youth, in many parts of the world.

[5] A/HRC/32/21 and A/HRC/42/21.

[6] In the present report, the term "children" is used in accordance with the definition given in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In art. 1 of the Convention, the term "child" is defined as "every human being below the age of eighteen years". The term "youth" is used in accordance with the definition provided by the Security Council in its resolution 2250 (2015). In the preamble of thatresolution, the term "youth" is defined as "persons of the age of 18–29 years old".

[7] A/HRC/42/21, para. 5.

Due to a higher rate of manufacturing of firearms than that of destruction or disposal of firearms, the global number of firearms is rising.[8]

6. Reliable global data on the acquisition and possession of firearms disaggregated by age group are scarce. That is consistent with findings in previous reports, which note that in 2017, only 12 per cent of firearms held by civilians globally were reported as registered.[9] It is known, however, that there is a link between the availability of firearms generally in society and the use of firearms, including by children and youth.[10]

7. The extent to which children and youth can lawfully acquire or come into possession of firearms depends on the applicable regulations in the relevant domestic legal system. In their submissions, States reported on their respective regulations under domestic law, confirming that there is no uniform practice with respect to age requirements for the lawful acquisition of firearms in domestic law. Jordan and Qatar reported a minimum age of 21 for the acquisition of firearms, while Kyrgyzstan reported the minimum age to be 20. Algeria, Colombia, Libya and Mauritius reported a minimum age of 18 for the acquisition and possession of firearms. Italy reported a minimum age of 18 for the acquisition of firearms, with the possibility of trapshooting from the age of 14, subject to certain requirements. Ireland reported the minimum age for acquiring a firearms licence to be 16 years, but a training certificate allowing for possession for the purpose of target shooting and hunting can be obtained from the age of 14. Some States have different age requirements depending on the type of firearm in question.

8. Domestic systems therefore generally contain stricter regulation of the acquisition of firearms by children than by adults, some prohibiting acquisition by children altogether. With certain exceptions, youth will generally be subjected to the same rules as those applicable to the general adult population. There is greater variety in practice with respect to the possessionof firearms. In general, the minimum age for the lawful possession of firearms and for the handling of firearms is often lower than the age requirements for the acquisition of firearms. The possession or handling of firearms in such circumstances, however, is tied to requirements such as parental permission, a licence and/or supervision.[11]

9. Children and youth can also come into possession of firearms that are available in the home,[12] which have been lawfully or unlawfully acquired by a relative. That is the case, for example, where the firearm is stored in a manner which makes it accessible for the child or youth. Studies in the United States have, for example, revealed that most so-called school shooters obtain their guns from relatives or friends rather than purchasing them legally or illegally.[13]

10. Children and youth can also acquire or come into possession of firearms in a manner that is contrary to applicable domestic law. In its submission, Colombia highlighted some ofthe ways that youth may come into possession of firearms, such as through their social networks or criminal gangs. It has been reported that in 2020, ten times more perpetrators of firearms incidents in South-East Europe were in illegal possession of firearms than in legal possession of firearms.[14] Similarly, a study examining United States Department of Justice data on youth inmates found that youth tend to utilize the illicit market to acquire firearms. Roughly half of incarcerated youth who had used a firearm when committing a crime had

[8] Aaron Karp, "Estimating global civilian-held firearms numbers", Briefing Paper (Geneva, SmallArms Survey, 2018).
[9] A/HRC/42/21, para. 6.
[10] For example, A/HRC/32/21, para. 51, and A/HRC/42/21, para. 60.
[11] Another example is Directive (EU) 2021/555 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24March 2021 on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons (codification), art. 6 (1) (a).
[12] Submissions from Colombia and University of Dayton Human Rights Center.
[13] Submission from University of Minnesota Human Rights Program.
[14] South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons,"Perpetrators of firearm incidents in South East Europe in 2020", In Focus – Armed Violence Monitor, No. 4 (2021), p. 16.

obtained their firearm through the illicit market, while approximately one third had used a gun from their home.[15]

11. Understanding how firearms enter the so-called illicit market is therefore crucial to understanding how children and youth acquire or come to possess them.[16] Most firearms are legally manufactured and enter the illicit market through an initial diversion, a process which was the subject of a previous report. [17] They can be diverted from holdings by law enforcement or the military, such as through corruption, theft or otherwise inadequate stockpile management.[18] They can also be diverted from licensed dealers through straw purchases, theft or illegal sales, or from legal owners through unlawful transfers.[19] Once diverted, the firearms will form part of the illicit market and be subject to subsequent illicit sales or transfers.[20]

12. In Latin America and the Caribbean, a substantial percentage of available firearms were manufactured elsewhere, mainly in the United States, and entered the country legally, while others were trafficked illegally into the region.[21] Other sources include stockpiles after armed conflicts, which were reportedly diverted through theft and corruption.[22] A study conducted among States members of the Southern African Development Community details the variety of ways in which firearms have come into the possession of criminal youth gangsin South Africa. Before 2004, such gangs reportedly had limited access to firearms, originating mainly from theft. Since 2004, the drug trade has enabled gangs to illegally procure more firearms and ammunition, facilitated by corruption.[23]

B. Use of firearms

13. While the possession and use of firearms by children and youth may be lawful in certain contexts, there is a risk that firearms may cause harm even in benign uses, such as sports shooting, target practice and hunting. The present report focuses on: (a) the intentional use of firearms in the commission of violent crimes; (b) the discharge of firearms accidentally causing injury or death; and (c) the use of firearms in suicides.

14. Firearms are used by adolescent children and youth in the commission of violent crimes, including for profit, such as in robberies, and in intimate partner violence and sexual and gender-based crimes. Estimates indicate that between 38 and over 50 per cent of all homicides are committed using firearms, [24] approximately 90 per cent of which are perpetrated by men.[25] In 2016, approximately 40 per cent of those reportedly responsible for homicides were 29 years old or younger.[26] In 2017, firearm homicides in the Americas alone accounted for roughly a quarter of all homicides worldwide, while homicides in Africa

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15 Daniel W. Webster, John Speed Meyers and Shani Buggs, "Youth acquisition and carrying of firearms in the United States: patterns, consequences, and strategies for prevention", Center for Gun Policy and Research, Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg Schoolof Public Health (2014); and submission from University of Dayton Human Rights Center.

16 A/HRC/42/21, para. 57.

17 A/HRC/44/29.

18 Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, *How to Silence the Guns? Southern Africa's illegal firearms markets* (Geneva, Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2021), pp. 27–28.

19 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020*,pp. 37–38.

20 In its contribution, Lebanon emphasized the lucrative nature of illicit transfers.

21 UNODC, *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020.*

22 UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in Central America and the Caribbean: A ThreatAssessment* (2012).

23 Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, *How to Silence the Guns?*, pp. 41–42. For other examples, seeA/HRC/42/21, paras. 58–59.

24 UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide: Understanding homicide – typologies, demographic factors, mechanisms and contributors* (2019), p. 77, and Gergely Hideg and Anna Alvazzi del Frate, "Still notthere: global violent deaths scenarios, 2019-30", Briefing Paper (Geneva, Small Arms Survey, 2021).

25 UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide: Homicide trends, patterns and criminal justice response* (2019),p. 71.

26 Ibid., p. 72.

perpetrated using firearms constituted approximately one seventh of the global total.[27] The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had consequences for the rate of firearmsviolence in many countries.[28] In South Africa, firearms violence decreased during lockdown periods, only to spike once measures were lifted.[29]

15. The high level of homicides in the Americas has largely been attributed to the prevalence of violent gangs and organized crime. Such gangs are often predominantly, but not exclusively, composed of adolescent children and youth.[30] However, gangs that constitute or are affiliated with organized criminal groups and that exercise extreme brutality are often controlled by adults.[31] Firearms are the most significant method used in homicides by such gangs[32] and are also used to facilitate the perpetration of a wide variety of other crimes.[33] There are many reasons why children and youth join such gangs. Importantly, they may offer community protection, opportunities for socialization and a sense of identity and community engagement for children and youth suffering marginalization and social exclusion.[34]

16. Firearms are also used in the commission of gender-based violence. One study found that access to a firearm made intimate partner violence five times more likely to lead to homicide.[35] On average, however, research has shown that perpetrators of intimate partner homicides tend to be older than for other types of homicide. It is important to recall that homicide in those circumstances is often the culmination of long-term exposure to non-lethal violence and abuse.[36]

17. In many States, children and youth bringing firearms to school is a significant problem.[37] Risks include injury or death due to accidental discharge or use as a means to perpetrate violence, including intimate partner violence, to deal with disputes or community violence more generally.[38] Recent decades have also witnessed particularly deadly mass school shootings, often facilitated by inadequate gun control. Since the Columbine mass killing in 1999, the United States, for instance, has seen multiple tragic incidents, such as the Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook and Parkland incidents in 2007, 2012 and 2018 respectively. Such tragedies also take place elsewhere, even in States with stronger gun control, albeit with less frequency. Some examples include the École Polytechnique killings in Montreal, Canada, in 1989; the school shootings in Erfurt and Winnenden, Germany, in 2002 and 2009respectively; the Jokela and Kauhajoki school shootings in Finland in 2007 and 2008 respectively; the Rio de Janeiro and the Suzano, Sao Paolo, school shootings in 2011 and 2019 respectively; the mass shooting at the Kerch Polytechnic College in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, temporarily occupied by the Russian

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27 UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide: Understanding homicide*, p. 78.

28 Paddy Ssentongo and others, "Gun violence incidence during the COVID-19 pandemic is higher thanbefore the pandemic in the United States", *Scientific Reports*, vol. 11 (October 2021), and "Mais armas com civis aumentam homicídios mesmo na pandemia; veja mapa da violência", *Correio Braziliense*, 16 July 2021.

29 P.H. Navsaria and others, "The effect of lockdown on intentional and nonintentional injury during theCOVID-19 pandemic in Cape Town, South Africa: a preliminary report", *South African Medical Journal*, vol. 111, No. 2 (December 2021).

30 In the United States in 2011, for example, it was estimated that a third of gang members were children. See U.S. National Gang Center, "National Youth Gang Survey Analysis: Demographics".

31 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *Violence, Children and Organized Crime* (2015),para. 65.

32 UNODC, *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020*, p. 13.

33 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Regional Human Development Report 2021.Trapped: High Inequality and Low Growth in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2021), p. 189.

34 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *Violence, Children and Organized Crime*, para. 63.

35 Everytown Research & Policy, "Guns and violence against women: America's uniquely lethalintimate partner violence problem" (2019), p. 10.

36 UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls* (2019), pp. 37 and 40.

37 United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and theCaribbean, *Firearms in Latin American and Caribbean Schools: Approaches, challenges and responses* (2019), p. 14.

38 Ibid., p. 13. In the United States, for example, there were reportedly 288 school shootings between2009 and 2018. See submission from University of Minnesota Human Rights Program.

Federation, in 2018; and the Kazan school and the Perm State University shootings in the Russian Federation in 2021.

18. There are also situations where a firearm is discharged accidentally and the consequent injury or death is accidental. That particularly affects children living in homes where firearms are stored unsafely. Accidents also occur when children play with firearms, causing self-harm, injury or death of a sibling, friend or other persons nearby. Available data from the United States suggest that that phenomenon predominately affects children aged between 14 and 17 years and 5 years and below.[39]

III. Impact on human rights

19. As noted in a previous report on the matter, the use of firearms profoundly impacts the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, going beyond the direct and immediate impact on the victim.[40] It has long-term consequences for those who are directly affected and broader societal impacts, disproportionately affecting certain groups in society.

A. Direct and immediate impact

20. The use of firearms, including by children and youth, has a direct and immediate impact on the rights to life and to security of person. The right to life entails the right of every person to be free from acts and omissions that are intended or may be expected to cause their unnatural or premature death, as well as to enjoy a life with dignity.[41] The right to security of person protects individuals from intentional infliction of bodily or mental injury.[42]

21. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that each year, 200,000 children and youth aged between 10 and 29 years are victims of homicides, making it the fourth leading cause of death for people in that age group. WHO notes that firearm attacks more often result in fatal injuries than other types of assault.[43] The extent to which firearms are used in the commission of homicides varies greatly by region. In the Americas, it is between over 50 per cent to over 60 per cent, while it is between approximately 30 to 40 per cent in most other regions.[44]

22. There are no reliable global data on injuries and deaths resulting from the accidental discharge of firearms by children. Studies conducted in one country show increased incidence of firearm injuries caused by children in the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the six months prior to the pandemic, which correlated with a rise in firearm acquisitions during the pandemic.[45]

23. As noted by WHO, for every young person killed by violence, more sustain injuries requiring hospital treatment.[46] Research into non-fatal violent injuries has suggested that for every youth homicide, as many as 20 to 40 individuals suffer injuries requiring hospital treatment.[47] Despite a higher mortality rate for firearms injuries, some studies indicate that

[39] Everytown Research & Policy, “Preventable tragedies: findings from the #NotAnAccident Index”, 30August 2021.
[40] A/HRC/42/21.
[41] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 3.
[42] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 35 (2014), para. 9.
[43] WHO, “Youth violence”, Fact sheet, 8 June 2020.
[44] Gergely Hideg and Anna Alvazzi del Frate, “Still not there”, p. 9.
[45] Possible contributing factors are the increased rate of homeschooling and a decrease in the availabilityof firearms safety training. See Johanna S. Cohen and others, “Firearms injuries involving young children in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic”, *Paediatrics*, vol. 148, No. 1 (July 2001), pp. 4–6.
[46] WHO, “Youth violence”.
[47] Hugh Richard Waters and others, “The costs of interpersonal violence – an international review”, in*Social and Economic Costs of Violence: Workshop Summary*, Deepali M. Patel and others, eds. (Washington, D.C., National Academies Press, 2011), p. 44.

more people survive from firearms injuries than those who die from them,[48] although survival rates depend on a variety of factors, including access to quality emergency health care. Survivors of firearms injuries sustain long-term effects affecting their enjoyment of human rights.

24. According to WHO, suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for children and youth between 15 and 19 years old.[49] Globally, the use of firearms is among the three most common means used to commit suicide. In 2019, suicides were the second leading cause of death in youth and children from the age of 10 in the United States.[50] Among the general population in the country, firearms were used in over half of all suicides[51] and an average of three children reportedly committed suicide every day using firearms in 2019.[52] The use of firearms in suicides produces the highest mortality rates compared to other uses of firearms, such as in the commission of violent crimes.[53]

B. Direct and long-term impact

25. The use of firearms also has profound long-term impacts. The effects may expose individuals to further vulnerabilities and human rights concerns relating to their access to economic, social and cultural rights.

26. Where firearms injuries do not result in death, they are likely to have long-term consequences on the victim's health and well-being. The use of firearms has serious mental health consequences, including causing anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress symptoms.[54] It also entails increased risks of interpersonal violence and self-harm.[55] A major predictor of suicide is previous serious injury.[56] Studies confirm that sustaining firearms injury also entails increased risk of substance abuse.[57] The exposure of children to firearms violence can have severe and lifelong consequences, including the impairment of brain development and the development of their endocrine, circulatory, musculoskeletal, reproductive, respiratory and immune systems.[58]

27. Firearms injuries are also likely to have long-term consequences on education and employment. The exposure of children to violence impacts their educational outcomes, resulting in poorer performance and a decreased likelihood of graduating.[59] Studies have shown that exposure to firearms violence also has employment consequences, resulting in an increased likelihood of long-term unemployment.[60]

[48] Elinore J. Kaufman and others, "Epidemiologic trends in fatal and nonfatal firearm injuries in the US,2009–2017", *JAMA Internal Medicine,* vol. 181, No. 2 (February 2021).

[49] WHO, "Suicide", Fact sheet, 17 June 2021.

[50] Suicide Prevention Resource Center, "Suicide by age" (accessed on 14 January 2022).

[51] Suicide Prevention Resource Center, "Means of suicide" (accessed on 14 January 2022).

[52] Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence and Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, "A public health crisisdecades in the making: a review of 2019 CDC gun mortality data" (2021), p. 5.

[53] Elinore J. Kaufman and others, "Epidemiologic trends in fatal and nonfatal firearm injuries in the US,2009–2017".

[54] WHO, *Global status report on preventing violence against children* (Geneva, 2020), p. 17. See alsoMegan Ranney and others, "What are the long-term consequences of youth exposure to firearm injury, and how do we prevent them? A scoping review", *Journal of Behavioral Medicine,* vol. 42, No. 4 (August 2019); and submission from University of Dayton Human Rights Center.

[55] WHO, *Global status report on preventing violence against children*, p. 17.

[56] Susan C. Campisi and others, "Suicidal behaviours among adolescents from 90 countries: a pooled analysis of the global school-based student health survey", *BMC Public Health*, vol. 20 (2020), p. 6.

[57] Michael A. Vella and others, "Long-term functional, psychological, emotional, and social outcomesin survivors of firearm injuries", *JAMA Surgery*, vol. 155, No. 1 (January 2020).

[58] WHO, *Global status report on preventing violence against children*, p. 17.

[59] Ibid., pp. 17–18.

[60] Michael A. Vella and others, "Long-term functional, psychological, emotional, and social outcomes in survivors of firearm injuries"; and Sheharyar Raza, Deva Thiruchelvam and Donald A. Redelmeier,"Death and long-term disability after gun injury: a cohort analysis", *CMAJ Open*, vol. 8, No. 3 (July 2020).

28. The direct and long-term consequences do not only affect the victim. Exposure to firearms violence has impacts also on the rights and well-being of the family and those closeto the victim, and for others living in environments where the violence takes place. Researchhas found, for example, that exposure to fatal school shootings increased the use of antidepressants by youth by over 20 per cent. [61] Classroom violence can lead to lower academic performance and school absenteeism.[62] Gang violence in El Salvador and Honduras has led to higher dropout rates[63] and in Haiti, gangs increasingly extort schoolteachers and other staff with threats and use of gun violence, possibly contributing to an increase in dropout rates.[64]

29. The direct long-term effects of firearms injuries may have an impact on a wide range of rights, including the rights to an adequate standard of living,[65] the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,[66] the right to education[67] and the right to work,[68] which could lead to distinct human rights violations.

C. Indirect impact

30. The use of firearms by children and youth also contributes to the widespread indirect impacts of violence on the enjoyment of human rights in society. Researchers and policymakers have long attempted to quantify the costs of violence. [69] Beyond the costs associated with the immediate and long-term direct impacts on the victim, high rates of violence in society place burdens on public institutions, such as the criminal justice system, the health-care system and social services. High rates of violence can also reduce and distortinvestment, affect productivity and lead to the depletion of natural resources and human- made products used in the production of goods and services.[70] As previously highlighted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the use of firearms by private actors can also be used to facilitate the commission of human rights abuse,[71] affecting the enjoyment of rights such as the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and of peaceful assembly. The use of firearms by private actors to prevent individuals from exercising their rights or to punish them for doing so has a chilling effect on the exercise of those rights.

D. Impact on particular groups

31. The use of firearms by children and youth has been shown to have a disproportionate impact on particular groups, affecting communities on the basis of their socioeconomic status. [72] Overwhelmingly, individuals and communities that face obstacles in accessing economic and social rights or in enjoying political participation and representation are at

[61] Maya Rossin-Slater and others, "Local exposure to school shootings and youth antidepressant use", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, vol. 117, No. 38(September 2020), p. 23486.

[62] United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, *Firearms in Latin American and Caribbean Schools: Approaches, challenges andresponses* (2019), p. 13.

[63] Norwegian Refugee Council, "Violence has pushed thousands of children in Honduras and El Salvador out of school", 16 May 2019.

[64] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Increasing number of schools in Haiti targeted bygangs", 2 November 2021.

[65] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 11. In the case of children, seeConvention on the Rights of the Child, art. 27.

[66] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 12. In the case of children, see Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 24.

[67] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 13. In the case of children, seeConvention on the Rights of the Child, art. 28.

[68] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 6.

[69] Geneva Declaration Secretariat, *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2015), chap. 5.

[70] UNDP, *Regional Human Development Report 2021*, p. 184.

[71] A/HRC/42/21, paras. 8–40.

[72] Ibid., para. 55.

greater risk of becoming victims of most forms of violence.[73] Race and ethnicity are often important factors. In many countries, ethnic minorities such as persons of African descent face higher rates of gun violence than the rest of the population.[74]

32. The use of firearms also has a significant gender dimension. Men and male youth aged between 15 and 29 years are at the highest risk of homicide globally. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has estimated that that is largely due to the situation in the Americas, where injuries from firearms are the most frequent cause of death. [75] Research has shown, for example, that in Brazil in 2017, the rate of firearm deaths of 20 to 24-year-old males was 20 times higher than for females in the same category and that more than half of all victims of firearms deaths in the country were males aged 15 to 29.[76] Between2010 and 2014, 79 per cent of all victims of suicide deaths in the Americas were males.[77] Globally, males are at higher risk of unintentional death while playing with firearms at a young age, of being involved in homicide involving firearms during adolescence and youth,and of a greater use of firearms as a means to commit suicide throughout adulthood.[78]

33. Certain forms of firearms-related violence have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. As noted previously, intimate partner violence perpetrated with firearms overwhelmingly impacts women and girls.[79] Women and girls are also disproportionately affected by other forms of gender-based violence, such as dowry-related and so-called honour killings, and homicides of and attacks against women in prostitution. The impact on women and girls often intersects with other factors, such as indigenous and minority status.[80]

34. Certain forms of firearms use also disproportionately affect other vulnerable populations, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons.[81] They are disproportionately exposed to attacks on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.[82] The risk of suicide is also high in that group. In the United States, research indicates that gay and bisexual children and youth are at particular risk of suicide before the age of 25 and lesbian, gay and bisexual children and youth are more than twice as likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers.[83] The results of a national survey on the mental health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer youth conducted in the United States in 2020 showed a correlation between the high level of discrimination and verbal and physical violence faced by individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and suicide attempts.[84] Some 48 per cent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer children aged between 13 and 17 years old had considered suicide, and 44 per cent of them had attempted it.[85] While there is a dearth of reliable disaggregated data on the use of firearms in

[73] UNDP, *Regional Human Development Report 2021*, p. 209.

[74] Meghan Werbick and others, "Firearm violence: a neglected 'global health' issue", *Globalization andHealth*, vol. 17 (2021); and UNDP, *Regional Human Development Report 2021*, pp. 205 and 208.

[75] UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019: Executive summary* (2019), p. 23.

[76] Deborah Carvalho Malta and others, "Association between firearms and mortality in Brazil, 1990 to 2017: a global burden of disease Brazil study", *Population Health Metrics*, vol. 18, No. 1 (September2020), p. 4.

[77] Pan American Health Organization, *Suicide Mortality in the Americas: Regional Report 2010–2014* (Washington, D.C., 2021), p. 8.

[78] Mohsen Naghavi and others, "Global mortality from firearms, 1990–2016", *JAMA*, vol. 320, No. 8(August 2018).

[79] A/HRC/42/21, para. 36. See also CEDAW/C/SRB/CO/4, para. 23.

[80] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 35(2017), para. 12.

[81] Adam P. Romero, Ari M. Shaw and Kerith J. Conron, *Gun Violence Against Sexual and Gender Minorities in the United States: A Review of Research Findings and Needs* (Los Angeles, California,The Williams Institute, 2019).

[82] A/HRC/38/43, para. 26.

[83] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Suicide and violence prevention among gay andbisexual men" (accessed 14 January 2022).

[84] The Trevor Project, "National survey on LGBTQ youth mental health 2020". Available at https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey- Results-2020.pdf, p. 7.

[85] Ibid., p. 2.

suicide by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, access to firearms generally produces a higher risk that suicide attempts will be fatal.[86]

IV. Regulatory and policy measures

A. Human rights-based approach

35. In its resolution 45/13, the Human Rights Council called for the present report to contribute to the strengthening or the development of comprehensive public policies that address the factors driving firearms-related violence. Any such comprehensive policy measures must be guided by the obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. Those obligations are both negative and positive in nature. States must refrain from violating human rights and take positive steps to prevent and protect individuals against human rights abuse by private persons and other entities, as explained in the following paragraph. [87] Any measures taken and their implementation must, in and of themselves, be compatible with the State's obligations under international human rights law.[88]

36. In its general comment No. 36 (2018), the Human Rights Committee affirmed that the duty to protect life entails different sets of obligations. First, States are under a due diligence obligation to take reasonable, positive measures that do not impose disproportionate burdenson them in response to reasonably foreseeable threats to life originating from private persons and entities (para. 21). That general duty to protect entails taking special measures of protection towards persons in vulnerable situations whose lives have been placed at particular risk because of specific threats or pre-existing patterns of violence (para. 23). Second, States should take appropriate measures to address the general conditions in society that may give rise to direct threats to life or prevent individuals from enjoying their right to life with dignity. Among such general conditions in society, the Committee highlighted high levels of criminal and gun violence (para. 26). With regard to suicides, the Committee affirmed that, while acknowledging the central importance to human dignity of personal autonomy, States should take adequate measures to prevent suicides, especially among individuals in particularly vulnerable situations (para. 9).

37. States must adopt legislative, judicial, administrative, educative and other appropriate measures in order to fulfil their legal obligations.[89] States should therefore make use of all available tools to comply with their human rights obligations. In their implementation of those obligations, States must also take into account the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights.[90] As such, they must be guided, too, by their obligations under all applicable human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Importantly also, they must be guided by the general obligation to respect the minimum core obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to take steps, to the maximum of their available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of those rights (art. 2).

B. Reducing the availability of firearms

38. Access to firearms is a necessary condition for firearms injuries and deaths to occur. The Human Rights Committee has stated that States must protect their populations against the risks posed by excessive availability of firearms [91] and that they should reduce the

[86] Romero and others, *Gun Violence Against Sexual and Gender Minorities in the United States*, pp. 31and 34–35.
[87] See, in particular, Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 31 (2004), paras. 6 and 8.
[88] Ibid., para. 6.
[89] Ibid., para. 7.
[90] Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.
[91] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 35 (2014), para. 9.

proliferation of potentially lethal weapons to unauthorized individuals.[92] Overall, the link between firearms, violence and mortality is well established. [93] So too is the potential effectiveness that measures to reduce the availability of firearms in society can have. A studyin Brazil, for example, found that the federation units with the highest number of voluntary firearms returns from 2005 to 2017, under a scheme introduced through the so-called disarmament law,[94] correlated with a decrease in firearms deaths in those units, including the firearm death rates of women, children and the elderly.[95]

39. The duty to reduce the risks posed by excessive availability of firearms goes beyond the risks concerning interpersonal violence. As noted by WHO, States should limit access tothe means of suicide, including firearms, given the effectiveness of such measures in reducing suicides.[96] Research has shown that many suicide attempts are impulsive, with a short lapse of time between the decision and the attempt.[97] In those situations, access to a firearm can mean the difference between death and survival. A study in Switzerland found that reducing the number of army firearms available in the home by reducing the number of men betweenthe ages of 18 and 43 in the Army resulted in a drop in the suicide rate for that age group.[98] Suicide prevention by restriction of means was thus suggested to be particularly promising in the case of firearms.[99]

40. States should thus take steps to reduce the number of civilian-held legal and illegal firearms.[100] That entails, first, taking measures to reduce the proliferation of illegal firearms, which, as has been shown in the present report, are acquired also by children and youth. States must take effective measures to prevent the diversion of firearms and ammunition, such as through stockpile management and corruption prevention.[101] They must also take measures to prevent diversion occurring between private actors. That includes diversions taking place within the State's territory, but which are likely to cause a direct and reasonably foreseeable impact on the right to life of individuals outside that territory.[102] They should consider modelling requirements to manufacturers and dealers based on the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which include the obligation to avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts, preventing or mitigating human rights abuse, and the obligation to conduct human rights due diligence (principles 11, 13 and 17). With respect to illegal firearms that are already available in society, States should take effective law enforcement action, in full respect of their international human rights obligations,[103] and

[92] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 21. The Committee on theElimination of Discrimination against Women has, for example, noted a correlation in the proliferation and the use of firearms and femicide (CEDAW/C/HND/CO/7-8, para. 22).

[93] A/HRC/42/21, paras. 60–61.

[94] Law No. 10,826 of 2003. See also CRC/C/OPAC/BRA/CO/1, para. 26.

[95] Deborah Carvalho Malta and others, "Association between firearms and mortality in Brazil, 1990 to2017", pp. 5–7.

[96] WHO, "Suicide"; WHO, "Guns, knives and pesticides: reducing access to lethal means" (2009), p. 3.

[97] Romero and others, *Gun Violence Against Sexual and Gender Minorities in the United States*, p. 25.

[98] Nina Thoeni and others, "Suicide by firearm in Switzerland: who uses the army weapon? Results from the national survey between 2000 and 2010", *Swiss Medical Weekly*, vol. 148 (September 2018),pp. 1–2 and 4–6.

[99] Ibid., p. 2. Reducing the availability of firearms in the home was also recommended as a suicide prevention measure by the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/CHE/CO/2-3,para. 19).

[100] The Human Rights Committee has recommended reducing the number of firearms in circulation (CCPR/C/HND/CO/2, para. 21). Recommendations to combat the illicit transfer of firearms, regulatethe acquisition and possession of firearms and reduce the number of illegally held firearms were included in the third cycle of the universal periodic review (A/HRC/42/5, para. 119.123; A/HRC/43/4, para. 148.135; A/HRC/43/11, para. 146.86; A/HRC/46/15, paras. 26.162, 26.212 and 26.214; and A/HRC/46/18, para. 107.58).

[101] For previous reports addressing the issue, see A/HRC/42/21 and A/HRC/44/29.

[102] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 22.

[103] For example, CRC/C/OPAC/BRA/CO/1, para. 27; CRC/C/OPAC/VEN/CO/1, para. 29; andCRC/C/OPAC/GIN/CO/1, para. 26.

implement measures to reduce the availability of illegal firearms, such as through voluntary returns or buy-back schemes.[104]

41. States should also limit the lawful acquisition and possession of firearms by children and youth. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has, for example, recommended prohibiting the acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children. [105] Research has shown that establishing or increasing minimum age requirements might contribute to reducing suicide rates.[106] Nevertheless, as highlighted previously, such regulatory measures must go hand in hand with other measures, such as effective background checks and safe storage requirements, as well as training and education.[107]

C. Preventing firearms-related deaths and injuries

42. Reducing the availability of firearms must be accompanied by other measures designed to prevent firearms-related deaths and injuries. States must take measures to protect people from violence, such as through effective law enforcement, by investigating potential unlawful use of firearms and holding perpetrators accountable. However, high levels of firearms violence are sometimes met with laws providing for excessive police powers, amendments providing for harsh sentencing and practices involving undue use of pretrial detention.[108]

43. Such measures raise general concerns about their compatibility with international human rights law, particularly with regard to children and youth. Rather than a deterrent criminal justice system, the Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for a rehabilitative one that takes into account the aim of reintegrating the child into society.[109] Deprivation of liberty of a child should be used only as a measure of last resort for the shortest appropriate period of time.[110] For the duration of the deprivation of liberty, children must be treated with humanity and dignity, taking into account the needs of persons of their age.[111] As highlighted in the 2019 global study on children deprived of liberty, however, the conditions of detention of children in most States do not meet those standards. [112] It is therefore particularly concerning that in many cases, child offenders are not provided with alternatives to imprisonment.[113]

44. Although necessary, the criminal justice approach alone is therefore insufficient to effectively address firearms-related deaths and injuries. Emphasis should be placed on other measures of prevention. Importantly, and as noted in the previous report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, such measures should include individual and community-based interventions that are directed and tailored to the particular needs of children and youth.[114] Those measures should ensure the effective participation of children and youth, which is critical to ensuring their effectiveness.[115] Particularly with regard to children trapped in violence, interventions must seek to promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of the child.[116]

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104 WHO, “Guns, knives and pesticides”, p. 7.

105 CRC/C/AUS/CO/5-6, para. 51; CRC/C/OPAC/GIN/CO/1 para. 26; and CRC/C/OPAC/MWI/CO/1,para. 21.

106 Rand Corporation, “The effects of minimum age requirements” (22 April 2020).

107 A/HRC/42/21, para. 63. See also CERD/C/USA/CO/7-9, para. 16.

108 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *Violence, Children and Organized Crime*, para. 81.

109 Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 40 (1).

110 Ibid., art. 37 (b).

111 Ibid., art. 37 (c). See also Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 24, paras. 76–78.

112 A/74/136, para. 96 (g).

113 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *Violence, Children and Organized Crime*, para. 90.

114 A/HRC/42/21, para. 63.

115 Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 12; and the guidelines for States on the effectiveimplementation of the right to participate in public affairs.

116 Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 39.

45. Mental health should figure as a central component of prevention, given its impact on death and injuries among children and youth. In particular, States must combat bullying and harassment of children and youth. Research conducted between 2003 and 2017 among younger adolescents in 90 countries showed that, while there are a number of other factors, being bullied, having no close friends or having had a prior serious injury were significant indicators for suicide ideation.[117] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex children and youth are exposed to bullying and physical and verbal abuse, with serious consequences for their well-being.[118] Mental health considerations should be at the centre also when tailoring measures addressing the perpetrators of firearms violence. Research shows that over 50 per cent of school shooters in the United States showed signs of mental health concerns before the shooting, suggesting that mental health interventions may help reduce school shootings.[119] Mental health concerns are also prevalent with respect to children and youth trapped in gang violence, with research suggesting that such individuals display higher rates of psychiatric morbidity than the rest of the population.[120]

D. Addressing the underlying causes of firearms-related deaths andinjuries

46. In addition to access to firearms, there is overwhelming evidence of several underlying factors which increase the risk of firearms-related deaths and injuries. Most of them relate to different forms of inequality and the unequal distribution of different forms of wealth and opportunity.[121] In its regional study on Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Development Programme found a positive, significant and robust relationship between inequality and violence.[122] That link does not exist only in one region. The surge of youth firearms violence in Sweden has, for example, been attributed to failing schools, feelings of exclusion, unemployment and a lack of adult role models.[123] The challenge of inequality intersects with structural discrimination, such as on the basis of race or ethnicity. Research has shown how structural racism can be a mediating pathway to firearms violence.[124] That accentuates the urgency of ensuring equal access to economic, social and cultural rights and of working towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. States must invest in sustainable, cross-cutting programmes that reduce inequalities and end discrimination in education, employment, health care and housing.[125]

47. Firearms-related deaths and injuries are overwhelmingly caused by boys and men. That includes in the commission of criminal offences, such as gender-based violence, as wellas suicides and unintentional injuries. As highlighted in the submissions received and in previous reports, States must address conceptions of masculinity in society that contribute to firearms deaths and injuries.[126] The impetus to do so is clearly expressed in the obligation for

117 Susan C. Campisi and others, "Suicidal behaviours among adolescents from 90 countries", p. 6.

118 A/HRC/38/43, para. 28.

119 Statista Research Department, "Number of mass shootings in the United States between 1982 and February 2021, by shooter's race or ethnicity", 1 December 2021.

120 Alistair Macfarlane, "Gangs and adolescent mental health: a narrative review", *Journal of Child &Adolescent Trauma*, vol. 12, No. 3 (September 2019).

121 A/HRC/42/21, para. 55.

122 UNDP, *Regional Human Development Report 2021*, p. 205.

123 The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, "Gun homicide in Sweden and other European countries: a comparative study of levels, trends and homicide by other means" (2021); and Lisa Kim, "Sweden's brutal gang problem: here's what officials blame it on", Forbes, 22 October 2021.

124 Michael Poulson and others, "Historic redlining, structural racism, and firearm violence: a structural equation modeling approach", *The Lancet Regional Health – Americas*, vol. 3 (November 2021), pp.7–8.

125 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, art. 2, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, general recommendation No. 32 (2009), paras. 28–35, and A/HRC/47/53, para. 39.

126 Submissions by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the University of Minnesota Human Rights Program. See also, e.g., Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 35 (2017), para. 19,

States to take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.[127] States should therefore demonstrate a clear and consistent political commitment against harmful conceptions of masculinity, expressed through public messaging, educational programmes, awareness-raising and other suitable measures.[128]

V. Conclusions and recommendations

48. The effects of firearms on the enjoyment of human rights are devastating. Their civilian use is the leading cause of homicide and suicide globally. Children and youth, the world's future generations, are the hardest hit. States have a responsibility to act to protect their populations, particularly their children and youth, from the human rights impacts caused by the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms.

49. In so doing, they must adopt comprehensive and evidence-based policies. There is a need to collect and publish disaggregated data on the acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth, and to invest in understanding the underlying drivers of firearms use impacting the enjoyment of human rights.

50. The availability of firearms in society is a precondition for the acquisition and possession of firearms by children and youth. It is also a necessary condition for firearms injury and mortality to occur. States must therefore take measures to reduce the number of firearms held by civilians by preventing the proliferation of illegal firearms, including by taking positive measures to prevent the diversion of firearms from private actors.[129] To that end, States should consider adopting requirements for manufacturers and dealers of firearms consistent with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and ensure effective enforcement action. States should also consider adopting stricter requirements for the legal acquisition and possession of firearms.[130] To that end, States should consider prohibiting the acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children.

51. States should also take comprehensive and tailored steps to prevent firearms-related deaths and injuries caused by children and youth. In addition to criminal justice, States should invest in and support community-based interventions aimed at violence prevention and the rehabilitation of children and youth trapped in environments of violence. Given the prevalence of mental health concerns in all major trends of firearms injuries and deaths, mental health should be centre stage in strategies to prevent further injuries and death. In particular, States should redouble their efforts to combat bullying, given its prominent impact on the mental health of children and youth.

52. In order for reduction in firearms-related deaths and injuries to be lasting, States must take measures to address their underlying causes. In that respect, the enjoyment of the rights to life and personal safety are indivisible from the enjoyment of economic and social rights. Accordingly, States should take steps to reduce inequality in societies, including ending patterns of structural discrimination, in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law.

A/HRC/44/29, paras. 18 and 41, and Mohsen Naghavi and others, "Global mortality from firearms,1990–2016", p. 809.

127 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 5 (a).

128 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 3(1987) and E/CN.4/2002/83, para. 108.

129 See recommendations in A/HRC/44/29.

130 See recommendations in A/HRC/42/21.

53. In raw numbers, firearms deaths are overwhelmingly caused by and inflicted upon men. That trend is tied to a stereotyped and inherently harmful notion of masculinity which also contributes to gender-based violence and abuse. States should therefore demonstrate clear and consistent political commitment to alter the social and cultural patterns of conduct of boys and men that contribute to that trend.

A Decade for Parents

Global Day of Parents: Family Support and Parenting

1 June 2022

iffdpapers 120

A decade ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to proclaim the Annual Observance of the Global Day of Parents. Since then, June 1st has marked the celebration to honor parents throughout the world and foster support for their role as caregivers and secure the best layer of protection for children and youth. After the pandemic, it is important to highlight the role of parents to protect their children and promote the best outcome for their families.[1]

In this regard, UNICEF Inoccenti contributed with a report that examines and analyses policies and provisions for family support and parenting support. The goals of the research are to identify relevant global trends and develop an analytical framework that can be used for future research and policy analysis. For these purposes, new evidence was gathered and existing evidence systematized and analyzed.

The report is based on general literature searches and evidence gathered from 33 UNICEF national offices, located in different parts of the world, and detailed case studies of nine countries. The focus was on the features and characteristics of interventions, the underlying rationales and

The United Nations's Convention on the Rights of the Child is clear: Parents, legal or customary guardians have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. But so do governments, non-governmental actors and community-based organizations.

According to article 181 of the Covention, states must "render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children."

Extracts from 'Family and Parenting Support Policy and Provision in a Global Context' *Available at https://www.unicef-irc.org/ publications/pdf/01%20family_support_layout _web.pdf*

International Organizations Department of the International Federation for Family Development.

philosophical orientations, and the factors that are driving developments.

Policies and provisions for family support and parenting support are relatively under-researched, especially in a global setting, so there is an information gap. But there is also what might be thought of as a knowledge gap, as there is no analytical framework taking an integrated and global approach to both family support and parenting support. Aimed at providing such a framework, this report examines the main approaches being adopted in different locations in the name of supporting families and parents. It identifies the different modalities of policy and provision and links them to the underlying rationales and the contextual and other factors and considerations driving developments.

The goals of this report are aligned with the broader research priorities of the UNICEF Office of Research, centred on building evidence in this rapidly expanding eld. More concretely, this study aims to research and identify global trends in policy and provision of family support and parenting support and to provide an analytical framework that can be used for future research and policy analysis.

Family is a contested concept, with different cultural traditions and understandings of family prevailing within and across countries. This makes for complexity and variation. In this report, the variation and sensitivity around family are acknowledged from the outset. Policy and debate in this area are not purely technical matters but are interwoven with ideologies, values and culture in fundamental ways, and the provisions that are put in place these.

The research undertaken centred on a scoping of policy and provision across a range of world regions. New evidence was gathered and existing evidence systematized and analysed to identify common trends and gaps in policy and practice. The evidence was analysed through four main lenses or research questions:

- What are the forms and modalities of relevant policies and where are family support and parenting support located in national policy portfolios and provisions?
- What are the theoretical underpinnings and guiding rationales of family support and parenting support?
- What are the key features of the policy background and the main actors involved?
- What are the most outstanding gaps in research, knowledge and information?

Family Support and Parenting

Concerns about the conditions and practices of child-rearing, and factors relating to children's well-being and development, are leading to a growth of measures oriented to family support and parenting support. In some cases this involves the introduction of new policies and provisions; in others, it involves a re-orientation or reframing of existing policies.

Family support and parenting support vary widely in practice. In some regions of the world, for example in South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, systematic, government-led support initiatives are rare. Regions where support seems to be developing strongly include Europe, the Central and Eastern European and Commonwealth of Independent States regions, Latin America and a few countries in Africa and Asia. Countries vary in the emphasis they give to one form of support over another.

The evidence suggests that, where it exists, family support is being developed in two main forms, through services – especially social, health and psychological services to families; and the establishment or re-orientation of economic support to families, especially cash payments.

Parenting support, on the other hand, is primarily focused on imparting information, education, skills and support to parents in the form of health-related interventions for parents and young children, and educational support on child development and child-rearing for parents. While parenting support is much broader than educational parenting programs, the latter play an important role and are one of the main ways in which parenting support is being developed within and across countries.

One of the key issues at the forefront of this research is the relationship between family support and parenting support. The results suggest that they are best regarded as related but distinct. Both have at their core a focus on the rearing of children, seeking to support or alter the conditions under which children are reared. Furthermore, they focus on this in a familial context (although neither is confined

parents and parental engagement and practices. It is therefore not necessarily oriented to the unit of the family or wider familial considerations. Family support is broader; concerned with the family as a social unit and its ecological balance – the relationships and resource flow between members as well as how well the family is embedded within supportive networks. Hence, family support is oriented to family stability and general family functioning as against the more parent-centered objectives of parenting support.

Some of the key observations coming out of the research are related to the fact that family support and parenting support are providing a focus for innovation and policy development within and across countries. Policies are driven by many rationales and aims: most typically they combine a mix of objectives relating to children, parents and family. In relation to children, there are four main rationales: furthering children's rights, ameliorating child-related risks, enabling positive early childhood development, and addressing antisocial and aggressive behavior, especially on the part of adolescents. In relation to parents, rationales driving policy and provision of services include improving parental competence and increasing parental engagement with the development of their children. Among the family-related rationales are improving family functioning and child-rearing, preventing child–family separation, alleviating poverty, facilitating adjustment to demographic developments, and supporting the family as an institution and way of life.

The provisions can be universal and targeted, although targeted interventions, for example for parents of young children and/or families experiencing difficulties, are predominant. This focus on young children and their parents works to the relative neglect of older children and adolescents, an issue that emerged from the case studies as being of pressing concern and one of the key recommendations.

Conditional and non-conditional cash payments to families for children are playing a significant role in generalizing family support and parenting support. The evidence suggests that both types of cash payments to families are bringing about a change in behavior, especially in regard to child-rearing. While mothers or female caregivers are the main targets and recipients of both family support and parenting support, including cash transfers, this can lead to the 'feminization' of programs, which insufficiently target fathers or other male members of the household and reinforce traditional gender roles.

While family support and parenting support are being introduced in very different settings, they take account of context to varying degrees and in varying ways. Challenges have been noted in the transferability of existing pre-packaged parenting programs because insufficient attention is paid to the context. The research has identified the following key contextual factors that have a major impact on the nature and progress of family support and parenting support: cultural and social factors, economic factors, and the institutional and political background (especially legislation, policy systems and the history of policy and public administration in relation to child protection, child welfare and family well-being, among other domains).

Key actors that stood out across contexts as playing a leading role in the introduction and running of family support and parenting support are state and other political actors, intergovernmental organizations and various community-level actors (including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions and volunteers). Parents and children or young people are also important actors, although in most settings their capacity for influence and voice is modest and under-developed in policy and provision. Professional groups or individuals, market-based actors and employers are among other potential or actual actors associated with the growth and implementation of family support and parenting support.

The research also looked briefly at gaps in information and evidence. Here the dearth of information and knowledge on outcomes is very striking. Most information comes from parenting programs – standardized programs typically delivered in packages of sessions to parents – in a high-income setting. Other prevailing information gaps include evidence about: what provisions are in place; how they are being implemented; the conditions necessary for sustainability or successful delivery; the interaction between formal and informal support and their mutual consequences; the connections between measures oriented to the behavior of family and parenting and more structural support – such as anti-poverty and anti- inequality measures, as well as human rights and other measures to address discrimination and stigma; how to change the

The Universe of Possible Outcomes of Family Support and Parenting Support

TARGET	SHORT TERM	LONG TERM
Child-focused	Emotional and behavioural development Involvement in education and health monitoring Reduced risk of maltreatment; increased safety Greater participation in decisions that affect children	Reduced rates of child poverty. Reduced rates of mortality, stunting and wasting Higher immunization rates, breastfeeding, child safety Reduced risk of anti-social behaviour among children and adolescents
Parent-focused	Improved skill levels Improved attitudes and feelings, coping and con dence Improved knowledge and understanding of child development Improved knowledge of resources and support services available Engagement in social networks and community	Improved emotional and mental health (stress, well-being) Increased involvement of fathers Continuous involvement in the child's life (when in the child's best interest)
Parent-child-focused	Parent—child relationship. Attachment, bonding. Communication.	Increase in the use of positive discipline. Reduced rates of children's exposure to violence in the home.
Family relations Family condition and family functioning	Strengthened relationships. Less social isolation Increased care role and support by other family members.	Reduced poverty. Reduced rates of family conflict. Reduced rates of family breakdown. Reduced rates of child placement in alternative care.
Community Capacity building	Development and operation of policy, programme or intervention adjusted to national conditions. Use of volunteers. Making available materials. Training and capacity building of staff and volunteers.	Building up a portfolio of policies or interventions. Building up a trained sectoral workforce or resource pool (including volunteers). Change in local or national values and practices. Reduced rates of children's exposure to violence in the community and/or locality.

[1] undocs.org/A/RES/56/138.

[2] undocs.org/A/RES/66/292.

Make Mothers Matter

August 2022

MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE

MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS

#SharingTheCare – between men and women, but also across society: key to progress on women's rights, but also on the realisation of the 2030 development agenda

The COVID-19 crisis has shown what really matters to people as well as the critical importance of care work,whether paid or unpaid. It also put the spotlight on the people carrying out this essential work, i.e. mainly women, and, in particular, mothers in their homes.

Increased unpaid domestic, care and education responsibilities under lockdowns also made balancing paidand unpaid work particularly challenging, forcing many mothers out of the workforce. Research has shownthat in many countries, women were more likely than men to lose their paid work, with those from marginalised groups being particularly affected.[1] The pandemic has exacerbated the economic injustice resulting from the inequitable distribution of care responsibilities – in particular for mothers.

The COVID-19 crisis provides a unique opportunity to redress this injustice and redistribute this essential and necessary work more fairly, first within families, between men and women, but also between families and the rest of society, ensuring that the solutions are structural and not just individual: unpaid care work is essential work, which benefits everyone and sustains the economy; it is therefore a collective responsibility, and everyone, every stakeholder, including the private sector and governments, should take its share.

Sharing the care within families

Gender equality begins at home: if men and women, fathers and mothers, share the domestic and care work more equitably, women can become more financially independent, as they have more time to participate in the labour force or engage in income-generating activities. In turn, this improves their self-confidence and respect from people around them.

Sharing the care within the family not only benefits women/mothers, but also children and men. According to the global fatherhood campaign MenCare, sharing unpaid family care work equally with men and engaging them as involved fathers can lead to improved maternal and child health, stronger and more equitable partner relations, a reduction in violence against women and children, and lifelong benefits for daughters and sons. Research shows that it also strongly benefits men: it makes them better fathers, improves their intimate relationships, and enhances their quality of life. As Oxfam emphasises: "Unequal responsibility for unpaid care work is both a missed opportunity for men and boys and a major obstacle on the path to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls."

Last but not least, when men and boys are more involved in care work, they also see its value and its importance, and this new perspective can spread in communities and society.[2]

[1] Heilman, B., Castro Bernardini, M. R., & Pfeifer, K. (2020). *Caring under COVID-19: How the pandemic is – and is not – changing unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities in the United States*. Oxfam, Promundo-US, & MenCare. https://promundoglobal.org/resources/caring-under-covid-19-how-the-pandemic-is-and-is-not-changing-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-responsibilities-in-the-united-states/

[2] See Promundo's State of the World's Fathers reports series: https://promundoglobal.org/programs/state-of-the-worlds-fathers/

August 2022

Make Mothers Matter

MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE

MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS

But to initiate such virtuous circle:

- unpaid family care work must be recognised as work, valuable and indispensable work, that also developsuseful skills and contributes to employability;
- gender stereotypes must also be dismantled, in particular the assumption that care is a woman's job and responsibility. Society as a whole must be made aware of these stereotypes.[3] Mothers, and fathers too, must be sensitised and educated to avoid reproducing these same stereotypes for their daughters and sons.

Redistributing unpaid care work – and its costs – outside the family across society

Unpaid domestic and care work benefits everyone and sustains the economy. It must therefore be a collectiveresponsibility with everyone doing their share, and its costs be redistributed more evenly across all elements of society.

Governments at every level are key stakeholders when it comes to "sharing the care". They can do so by providing:

- high-quality accessible and affordable care and education services (in particular for young children, butalso for other dependents) to redistribute the work of caring;
- affordable and accessible basic public infrastructure and services (water and sanitation, energy/electricity, health, education, transportation, ICTs…) to replace/reduce provisioning by women's unpaid work;
- adequate social protection, including financial support to unpaid caregivers;
- financial support to CSOs supporting, educating and empowering parents.

Supporting the essential work of caring should be at the top of the agenda and a cross-sectorial policy.

For employers, "sharing the care" means embracing a more holistic approach to work, where both paid and unpaid care work are combined and can nurture each other. This means supporting workers with caregiving responsibilities, mothers, in particular, through family-friendly policies and services. It is a long-term investment with returns. Recognising and further developing the skills involved in care work benefits both employers and employees.[4]

Lastly, communities can also greatly contribute to "sharing the care" by fostering contacts and mutual support between community members, including between generations.

As Make Mothers Matter sees it, addressing the inequitable distribution of unpaid care work by "sharingthe care" is key in order to advance women's rights and gender equality, but also to bring about some of the systemic changes which are so necessary to ensure a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to achieve the 2030 development agenda.

This was the rationale behind some of MMM's advocacy actions these past few months:

- MMM's oral statement in the recurrent discussion on employment, which took place during the 2022 International Labour Conference, called on the ILO and its constituencies to take a human-centred approach to employment and recognise that unpaid care work must be a collective responsibility, and

[3] Legislation can help – e.g. in the UK, a 2019 Law bans "harmful gender stereotypes" in advertising.
[4] See for example: https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashoka/2021/05/09/caring-is-our-super-power-lets-lead-with-it/

that this essential work – and its costs – must be redistributed more evenly across society, with bothgovernments and the private sector assuming their share.

- In MMM's written statement to the 2022 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), we revisit Target 5.4 of the SDGs, which focuses on recognising and redistributing unpaid care work. In spite of its limitations, we call for greater attention to this particular target, which is not only vital for progress on gender equality, but also intersects with many other SDGs, making it key for the realisation of the whole 2030 development agenda.

- #SharingTheCare was the topic of MMM's 2022 HLPF virtual side event, "In this together: Share the Care, Transform Tomorrow", which brought together expert speakers to discuss why sharing the care at every level – family, community, governments and private sector – is vital for gender equality and the wellbeing of all, and to provide concrete examples on how this can be achieved.

#SharingTheCare is key to initiating the systemic changes we all need to address the multiple crises we are facing. It is high time that we prioritise care and wellbeing, the essential needs of people and our planet, and that we move to wellbeing economies and a more caring world.

MMM contributes to EU Care Strategy

In these unprecedented times when Europe is navigating a global pandemic, when political tensions are boiling over, threatening to destabilise the global order, it is vital to reflect on the people who hold the fabric of society together. The pandemic has shone a light on front-line workers, who continue to save lives every day even if it means risking their own. Many of these workers are mothers, but for them, care work does not end at the hospital or nursing home.

Behind the scenes, in millions of homes around the world, mothers have another crucial role: they work everyday to ensure their families and children are fed, nurtured, educated and healthy. This work, also known as unpaid family care work, keeps families, communities and businesses running. This is a process that has been going on for decades, with mothers shouldering the greater share of care. It is time for change. It is time for this invisible and inequitable care work to be recognised and shared.

Unpaid family care work is indispensable. Yet it is neither recognised nor valued and generates poverty and discrimination. Given that the responsibility for doing unpaid care work falls disproportionately on women and girls, this is particularly damaging to them. Globally, women do three times more unpaid care work than men, and up to over five times more in poor, rural areas. This trend is likely to increase as women are expected to do the lion's share of care for an ageing global population.

The United Nations, Oxfam and others point to the multiple challenges that women face given their inequitable unpaid yet indispensable care workloads. These include chronic time deficits that exacerbate women's time poverty, in turn limiting their ability to participate in economic, political and social activities, including opportunities for education, employment and entrepreneurship.

At the European Union Delegation, Make Mothers Matter works to influence policies and legislation to support mothers by furthering visibility and recognition of their unpaid care work and redressing the inequalities they face as a result.

August 2022

Make Mothers Matter

MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS

Last year, the European Commission announced its new plan to develop a European Care Strategy, which is expected to strengthen long-term care and early childhood education and care. The Strategy aims to further help reinforce gender equality and social fairness. When it comes to care-related policies, the EU has the power to guide and influence how countries shape their policies and can suggest a line of action to set higher standards and encourage countries to raise their ambitions.

In order to aid the Strategy's development, MMM contributed to the EC Call for Evidence on the European Care Strategy. It also contributed to Joint Responses together with other civil society organisations: the Social Platform, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children, and, with a group of NGOs, on the topic of migrant care providers and service users. Furthermore, MMM drafted a policy paper tabling numerous recommendations on care to policy makers.

Make Mothers Matter covers a variety of topics such as maternal health, gender equality, work-life balance, and pensions, as mothers are key care providers, and it is crucial to recognise the invaluable contribution theymake to society.

In addition to the recognition of mothers' unpaid work, MMM believes that this work should also be reduced through supportive childcare policies and services that are respectful of families' choices and children's development.

Unpaid care work should also be further redistributed to close the gender care, employment and pension gaps. It is essential that fathers are able – culturally, financially and time-wise – to take an active role in the upbringing of their children. Other actors such as grandparents also play an important role in the education of grandchildren and support to their parents. In several EU Member States, systems of care credits towards pensions of parents and grandparents have been emerging. MMM continues to encourage such initiatives in the hope that the European Care Strategy will include such innovative practices in an intergenerational approach.

The private sector also has a major part to play. Recognising, valuing, and supporting unpaid care work could benefit both employees and employers. For employees, this improves their work-life balance and wellbeing, while for employers, benefits include talent acquisition and retention, productivity and employee engagement. Such initiatives are part of a circular approach to parents' careers in which competences between family and work life are transversal.

MMM strongly hopes that the new EU Care Strategy will recognise the crucial role mothers play when itcomes to care, and puts forward a set of transformative policies redressing the economic and social inequalities they face in regard to unpaid family care work.

See MMM's contribution.

An integrated approach to childcare services from a children's rights perspective

The European Commission's announced new plan to develop a European Care Strategy is expected to strengthen long-term care as well as well as early childhood education and care, as envisaged under the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The strategy aims to further help strengthen gender equality and social fairness. The initiative will propose two **Council recommendations**, one on **childcare (revision of the Barcelona targets)** and one on **long-term**

care. The goal of the Barcelona targets' revision is to increase women's participation in the labour market, which will contribute to reaching the EU's employment target. At Make Mothers Matter, we believe that **achieving the Barcelona targets is fundamental in order to allow women to better reconcile work and family life, and to reduce the gender gaps in employment, income, and pension.**

To aid the development of the Strategy, MMM contributed to the EC Call for evidence as well as a Joint Response together with its partners of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children.

MMM has built upon the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to formulate recommendations that are centred on children's rights. **Since children's rights and parents' rights are interconnected**, these recommendations serve to bring about equality for mothers by reinforcing the rights of children and families.

To act in the best interest of the child, accessible, affordable, quality, non-segregated and inclusive early childhood education and care (ECEC) needs to be provided. We recommend, **"family-centred" solutions (such as "Leihomas" or "borrow a grandmother", and childminders), as they allow parents to choose from a variety of options based on their needs.**

Such solutions also help **to redistribute unpaid family care work between men and women and between families and society**. MMM puts forward the Finnish ECEC model as a policy inspiration for states, because this system gives parents a choice between outsourced or in-family care without fear of economic or professional consequences.

MMM also calls upon the private sector to uphold their social responsibility to support parents. Companies should recognise the skills acquired by parents while providing informal care. Furthermore, policies that encourage and enable fathers to take parental leave, implementing work-life balance policies and flexible working options for parents, and the recognition of skills acquired by parents while performing care activities can help make companies more parent-and child-friendly.

These recommendations for the Barcelona targets would make the workplace a more flexible and empowering place for parents. They would also help make childcare more accessible to families from all backgrounds.

Here, you can access both MMM's full response and the Joint Response of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children.

MMM connects gender pension gap and mothers' ability to receive long-term care in old age

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to strengthen the European care economy. The goal of the European Commission's proposed **European Care Strategy of** is to ensure that carers and people in need of care are supported and empowered, and to better implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. Make Mothers Matter contributed to the EC Call for evidence on **"access to affordable and high-quality long-term care"** to aid the development of the Strategy. Improving the provision of **long-term care** is a key goal of the Strategy, and the affordability of long-term care for women is a major concern for MMM.

Given gender pension gaps and women's longer life expectancy compared to men's, affordability of long-term care is an especially urgent issue for women. A major contributor to the gender pension gap is the fact that women are more likely than men to leave the workforce or work part-time in order to care for family members. Re-valuing part-time work and ensuring access to minimum pension for both parents would help to

close this gap. The availability and affordability of retirement saving plans should also be increased in sectors predominantly employing women. These plans should include automatic enrolment and provide financial incentives for women to join.

MMM advocates for a "care credit" system for both men and women which would ensure that parents who take time away from work to care for children can still collect pension credits during that time. France, Germany and the UK already have such systems in place.

Such a structure could even be expanded beyond the family sphere to include anyone who takes justified timeoff to care for friends or neighbours. This would incentivise carers while reducing costs to the state, since in- home care is typically cheaper than state care. It also gives the care recipient an easier option for receiving care in their own home.

Furthermore, given the high rates of divorce and the number of unmarried couples in the EU, Member States' systems for survivor's pensions should also be reformed to prevent social exclusion of older women and better respond to evolving social trends.

MMM also advocates for innovative intergenerational co-housing initiatives, which allow costs to be shared between all people sharing a home. In such housing situations, older generations can support young parents and vice-versa. This also decreases loneliness in older people and strengthens social bonds within communities.

The EU needs to develop a more holistic definition of work, where paid and unpaid care work are both recognised. Unpaid care work is essential work, and its providers should have access to social rights. With these recommendations, MMM strives to help the EU Commission to bring about social systems in Member States where carers and those in need of care are empowered and supported.

Here, you can access MMM's response.

About Make Mothers Matter – MMM

Make Mothers Matter believes in the power of mothers to make the world a better place, advocating for their recognition and support as changemakers.

Created in 1947, MMM is an international NGO with no political or religious affiliations, transparently voicing the concerns of mothers at the highest level: the European Union, UNESCO and the United Nations (general consultative status).

Compiled by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, with input from Valérie Bichelmeier, Vice-President and Head of MMM UN Delegation, and Johanna Schima, Vice-President and Head of MMM European Delegation.

Upcoming Events

All Upcoming Events will be possible to attend digitally.

September

- **September 15. - 16.; Amsterdam, Netherlands: 16. International Conference on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies**
  https://waset.org/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-and-queer-studies-conference-in-september-2022-in-amsterdam
- **September 15.-16.; Amsterdam, Netherlands: 16. International Conference on Obesity in Children**
  https://waset.org/obesity-in-children-conference-in-september-2022-in-amsterdam

October

- **October 06.-07.; Dubrovnik, Croatia: 16. International Conference on Air Pollution and Children's Health**
  https://waset.org/air-pollution-and-childrens-health-conference-in-october-2022-in-dubrovnik
- **October 27. – 28.; Paris, France: 16. International Conference on The Role of Families in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism**
  https://waset.org/the-role-of-families-in-preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-conference-in-october-2022-in-paris

November

- **November 18. -19.; London, United Kingdom: 16. International Conference on Sports and Children**
  https://waset.org/sports-and-children-conference-in-november-2022-in-london
- **November 29. – 30.; Bankok, Thailand: International Conference on Diabetes in Children**
  https://waset.org/diabetes-in-children-conference-in-november-2022-in-bangkok

December

- **December 02. - 03.; Tokyo, Japan: 16. International Conference on Cognitive Development in Children**
  https://waset.org/cognitive-development-in-children-conference-in-december-2022-in-tokyo
- **December 09. - 10.; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: 16. International Conference on Family Law and Children's Rights**
  https://waset.org/family-law-and-childrens-rights-conference-in-december-2022-in-kuala-lumpur
- **December 15. – 16.; Barcelona, Spain: 16. International Conference on Therapeutic Foods for Children**
  https://waset.org/therapeutic-foods-for-children-conference-in-december-2022-in-barcelona

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Office of the Chairperson:

MAG. WOLFGANG ENGELMAIER
PAULANERGASSE 11
A-1040 VIENNA
AUSTRIA
EMAIL: CONTACT@VIENNAFAMILYCOMMITTEE.ORG

Web: http//www.viennafamilycommittee.org

Editorial Committee:
Wolfgang Engelmaier – Chairperson
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