

## **FCV Strategy Consultation Response from Save the Children**

### Summary

1. Save the Children welcomes the opportunity to respond to the World Bank's Fragility Conflict and Violence (FCV) strategy consultation. It comes at a critical moment for children and youth living in fragile and conflict affected states, with the number of children and youth living near conflict on the rise, conflict becoming increasingly protracted, violations against children during conflict increasing, displacement widespread, and resources stretched to protect children and youth and enable their recovery.
2. Our response to the consultation has been informed by an internal process seeking the views of colleagues across the Save the Children movement – including in member capitals and country offices. It reflects contributions made in face to face consultations led by the FCV team over recent weeks.
3. Overall feedback from within Save the Children welcomed the priority areas of the strategy concept note and the need to build stability, peace and justice. However, it also highlighted the lack of focus on youth and children, including the different needs of boys and girls. Fragility, violence and conflict have unique effects on children and youth, and we feel strongly that those needs demand a specialised response. We hope that there will be space for a specific sub-section of the World Bank's FCV strategy focussed on the needs of children affected by fragility, conflict and violence linked to the human capital efforts – and Save the Children stand ready to work, with partners, to inform such a sub-section.

### Unique effects on children and youth.

4. As set out in the FCV strategy concept note, 'conflict and violence impact more civilians than at any point over the last two decades'. This is especially true for children and youth. Analysis from PRIO commissioned by Save the Children shows that in 2017 420 million children were living near conflict – with 142 million living in high intensity conflict zones.<sup>1</sup> These are the highest levels since the cold war. One in four children in the Middle East, and one in five in Africa, were living near conflict.<sup>2</sup>
5. As well as a large proportion of children and youth living in proximity to conflict zones, over half of displaced people globally are children. Displaced children have unique vulnerabilities; they are at risk to physical and sexual violence and trafficking; and often do not have access to legal documentation, resulting in difficulties accessing education.<sup>3</sup> This can be a huge detriment to the future of a child, and for a society, impairing human capital.
6. Not only are more children and youth living near conflict, but they are increasingly threatened and harmed by fighting. Based on PRIO's research and Save the Children's analysis we can see the rate of grave violations against children outstripping the rate of children and youth living near conflict. Since 2010 there has been a 37% rise in the number of children living within 50km of conflict, but a 174% rise in the verified number of grave violations against children.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stop the War on Children: protecting Children in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conflict, Save the Children, 2019

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1

<sup>3</sup> Uprooted: The Growing Crisis for Refugee and Migrant Children, UNICEF, 2016

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1

7. As well as being directly targeted, children and youth often experience severe indirect effects of conflict. Conflict affects children differently than it affects adults. PRIO's research and Save the Children's analysis show that in just 10 countries, nearly 870,000 children may have died in the last five years as a result of malnutrition, disease, and a lack of healthcare.<sup>5</sup> As well as killing children, malnutrition can have life-long effects on children – and can result in irreversible physical and cognitive development issues. Roughly three quarters of the more than 150 million stunted children in the world live in conflict zones. The SDGs and human capital are contingent on our ability to respond to these threats to children and youth.
8. Further, without adequate protection, children and youth are less able to engage in activities which enable them to recover and rebuild societies, and also speak out against violations against them. It is vital that children and youth are given the opportunity to participate in such a way, for their own individual development and life opportunities; to rebuild FCV communities and states; and to ensure progress towards human capital and the SDGs.
9. In a recent Save the Children survey, children and youth said that the risks they are exposed to during conflict are one of the main barriers to them attending school, participating in their communities, and voicing their opinions. This shrinks their access to vital services, and in turn can affect their long term prospects in addition to their underivable rights.
10. Children and youth have the right to education, however it is often prevented during conflict. This is often due to direct attacks on schools; the use of schools as barracks and stores; and threats of physical and sexual violence from armed actors at or on the journey to school. As highlighted by the Global Coalition for Protecting Education from attack, between 2013 and 2017, more than 21,000 students and teachers were physically harmed in over 12,700 attacks on schools.<sup>6</sup> Over 75 million children across the world's crisis- and conflict-affected countries require urgent support to receive an education, with girls being overwhelmingly more likely to not have access to education than boys.<sup>7</sup> During a conflict, attending school can provide children and youth with access to a safe space, a sense of normality, and can protect them from risks in their environment. Moreover, children and youth having access to a safe, high-quality and consistent education is a key contributor to their future, and also to the societies' potential for long-term stability and prosperity. Progress on the SDGs and human capital are reliant on ensuring that children and youth are able to access education when displaced or living in proximity to a conflict zone, and it will be important that the FCV strategy encourages use of existing FCV funding mechanisms for refugee education, including IDA.
11. Of the 142 million children and youth in high-intensity conflict zones – a large proportion will have experienced or witnessed horrors no child should. The impact of conflict on children and youth's mental health can be both devastating and long-term. A recent Save the Children report found that over a third of Syrian children 'always or frequently' felt unsafe, distressed and alone.<sup>8</sup> Further, a 2015 survey of Syrian refugee children in Turkey found that 45% of these children and youth showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>6</sup> Education Under Attack 2018, Global Coalition to Protect Children from Attack, 2018

<sup>7</sup> Education Cannot Wait: Proposing a fund for education in emergencies, ODI, 2016

<sup>8</sup> A Better Tomorrow: Syria's Children Have Their Say, Save the Children, 2019

44% showed symptoms of depression.<sup>9</sup> Interventions which would help children and youth to recover are underfunded and under-prioritised, meaning that vast numbers are denied the support that they need and have a right to.<sup>10</sup> This can result in generations of children and youth suffering from life-long mental trauma, and effect the ability of states, economies and societies to recover, stabilise and develop. In order to achieve the SDGs, children must be able to recover from mental trauma.

12. Related, crucial services – ranging from family reunification to case management and MHPSS – are underfunded. Currently only 0.5% of humanitarian funding is allocated for child and youth protection; and less than 4% of humanitarian funding is earmarked for education. We need global leadership in increasing the amount of resources available for services which can determine youth and children’s long term opportunities and trajectory, increasing progress to the SDGs and human capital.
13. Even in the incredibly challenging context of FCV situations, it is possible to ensure the protection of children and youth, and allow them to access vital services if a flexible, sensitive and adaptive approach is taken. The SDGs and human capital are dependent on such an approach being taken, allowing the World Bank to reach every last child and youth in all situations.

#### Areas to strengthen

14. There are references within the concept note to issue areas we hope will be explored further in the full strategy – including preventing and tackling violent extremism, responding to mass and forced displacement, addressing inequality and exclusion, youth participation, and strengthening data. The World Bank group is active on some of these – for instance its own strategy on violent extremism – and where it is, we hope to see that work integrated into the FCV strategy.
15. However, Save the Children also urges the World Bank to address gaps in the current concept note. While Youth Inclusion is crucial, child participation and accountability to children and their communities is essential – both to ensure programming is high impact, and to foster inclusion, build stability, underpin development and address inequality.
16. We also hope that as part of addressing the key thematic challenge of inequality – and gender especially – the Bank engages with partners to understand the different risks to and needs of boys and girls. Conflict affects boys and girls differently – both in terms of the direct effect of fighting, such as explosive weapons, and the indirect and reverberating harm caused by a breakdown in services, displacement and the negative pressures caused by fighting. In South Sudan, children are more likely to die during childbirth than they are to complete secondary education – an FCV strategy which fails to account for differences in gender will fail to meet its aims.
17. Related, Save the Children would encourage the World Bank to incorporate a stronger rights focus into the FCV strategy. Children’s right to protection and services – including in times of conflict – should be seen as both an end in itself, and as a route to achieving the FCV

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<sup>9</sup> Invisible Wounds: The Impact of Six Years of War on the Mental Health of Syria’s Children, Save the Children, 2017

<sup>10</sup> Article 39, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

strategy's objectives. A rights framework would extend to child participation and help prioritise interventions and programming.

18. Further, as part of the World Bank's welcome and much needed increasing focus on engaging in FCV states, Save the Children believe it is extremely important that the FCV strategy prioritises localisation. If the international community is to realise the SDGs – with a focus on the most marginalised and deprived – it is essential that assistance is locally led. We believe there is a role for local organisations within the FCV strategy's focus on partnerships.
19. Finally, Save the Children warmly welcome the World Bank's prioritisation of improving data, monitoring and evidence. Related to all of the above, we currently only have glimpses into the reality of children in fragile and conflict affected states – especially the most marginalised. Data and evidence is essential to identify children being left behind by progress and to monitor their progress towards the SDGs. This is particularly true for children in conflict-affected and fragile states, where significant data gaps exist. Including children in those countries into global monitoring and accountability systems is crucial to measure meaningful global progress on these goals. We hope that if the FCV strategy increases its focus on children and youth and their rights, the rich capacity and expertise of the World Bank to carry out analysis can be leveraged to better reveal the challenges children in FCV countries face.

#### Key recommendations

20. First, Save the Children strongly recommends that the Bank includes a sub-section on children and youth within the final strategy. This section could outline the unique vulnerabilities of children and steps the World Bank will take to respond to those as part of its overall strategy. This would link directly to the existing objectives of the strategy – namely prevention, escaping the fragility trap, and mitigating the impact of FCV on the most vulnerable. This section would set out how integral it is for the protection and inclusion of children and youth is in progress to SDGs. This section could be developed by a group of relevant organisations – drawing on children and youth's own voices – through the next phase of the strategy process. Save the Children stand ready to help create, with partners, a sub-section focused on children and youths.
21. Second, and in addition to a specific focus on children and youth, Save the Children hopes that many of the other areas noted in this response – especially on gender, protection and embedding a rights based approach, can be mainstreamed throughout the FCV strategy.
22. We also encourage the World Bank to value and directly partner with INGOs and other organisations that have the policy frameworks, principles, community acceptance, access and knowhow to act sensitively which can be critical for meeting the SDGs in fragile contexts, and for not worsening a situation. As already stated, Save the Children are extremely supportive of the World Bank's future direction related to FCV, and look forward to this ongoing partnership working.