



**WHEN WILL
EVERY CHILD
BE SAFE?**



FREE. SAFE. EDUCATED.

SAFETY BRIEF

WHICH CHILDREN ARE NOT SAFE?

Acts of violence against children are present in all countries, cultures, and traditions, impacting the safety of around 1 billion children every year.

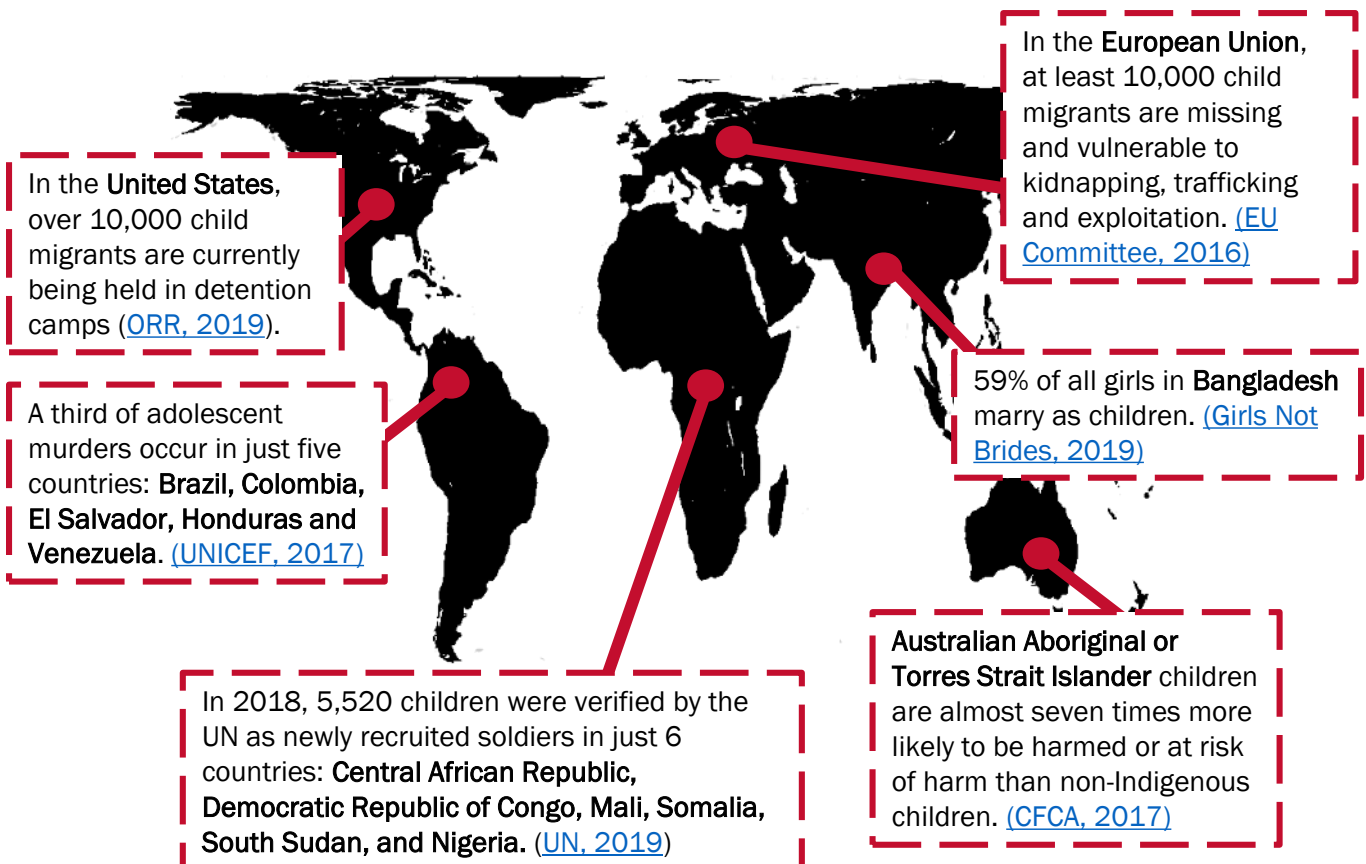
Conflict and disaster are two of the most identifiable ways in which children are put at risk. An estimated 420 million children live in conflict zones where active fighting takes place and are thus likely to have their daily life disrupted by conflict. Almost one third – 142 million – live in areas with high intensity conflicts, putting them at heightened risk of severe abuses, including sexual violence and child soldier recruitment.

Climate disaster disproportionately impacts children's safety as they are more vulnerable to the damage it causes and to the risks that come in the aftermath. Data which focuses just on children in disasters is not easily available, but in the 2000s it was estimated that 175 million children were affected by climate disaster every year.

At the same time, hundreds of millions of children suffer **violence in their day-to-day lives**, such as abuse, neglect, and exploitation, which takes place within their family, at school, in places where they labour, and in their communities. Violence of this nature often happens behind closed doors, making it rarely reported; this makes getting reliable estimates on the levels of violence children suffer very difficult.

Girls are particularly vulnerable to violence. Domestic violence, child marriage, rape, early pregnancy, female genital mutilation, prostitution, and slavery – in rich and poor countries alike – threaten girls' lives and health and can have a destructive impact forever.

Violence against schoolgirls is another widely prevalent threat. Schools should be a place of safety and learning, not violence and fear. Yet, for too many children, especially girls, they are not. They face risks on the journey to school, and even in schools themselves, where trusted adults and peers such as students, staff, and community members can be among the perpetrators. The World Health Organisation estimates that 150 million girls under 18 are sexually assaulted every year; many of these attacks occur on the way to school or at school.



WHY IS THIS AN INJUSTICE?

No-one should suffer violence and every child has the right to live and thrive in a safe and caring environment – laws exist in every country to prevent children being purposely harmed.

Every year

1 BILLION

children suffer violence

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) also states that all forms of violence violate young people's rights to life, survival, freedom, and security.

When conflict and climate disaster are doing increasing harm to children, it's also important to understand that **when governments fail to intervene, they are failing to protect the safety of children.**

WHY ARE CHILDREN UNSAFE?

Commercial exploitation, unstable societies, or traditional beliefs can all put children's safety at risk. Acts of violence then often act as a catalyst for further abuses, or perpetuate violence against children.

For children whose safety is taken away in their communities, it is often due to long-held beliefs that certain acts of violence are not, in fact, violent – they are part of 'normal' life. This includes many harmful injustices, from punishing a child by hitting them, to forcing a child into early marriage. These injustices are perpetuated due to community traditions and beliefs, or by parents who endured such injustices themselves when they were children, or by parents who are too scared to break tradition to go against their community leaders. Girls are often the victims of these beliefs and are subjected to traditional practices, like forced marriage or female genital mutilation. These are all acts of violence, regardless of tradition or belief.

As conflicts around the world become entrenched, and as climate disasters increase, it is to be expected more and more will children suffer as a result. However, conflict and climate disaster are not only more likely to occur in poorer parts of the world, they are also likely to have a longer lasting – and more disastrous – impact because these areas are often less equipped to deal with these challenges. This could range from living in less robust housing, to a lack of public infrastructure – schools, hospitals, emergency rescue services – to support children when disaster strikes. This makes children even more susceptible to violence, as any protections which may have previously existed have been taken away. If children lose their parents or guardians, they become incredibly vulnerable.

The act of being forced to work is an act of violence against a child in itself. However, children working in the worst forms of child labour, which usually happens outside of the home, are also likely to suffer and witness repeated physical and emotional abuse. Children may be forced into these situations due to poverty they and their families are suffering, or because they are living in conflict areas where they are compelled to become fighters, or because they have been trafficked from their homes under false pretences. Children fleeing conflict or disaster are particularly susceptible to the worst forms of child labour, including child marriage, as their whereabouts is rarely recorded, their and their family's needs are extreme, and they are much less likely to have the protection of any authority.

Children can also be subjected to violence due to **discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, or disability, or the prevalence of crime in their communities.**

420 MILLION
children live in conflict
zones, or almost

1 in 5

of all children
in the world.

Child marriage is legal in

117

COUNTRIES

Every year

175 MILLION

children are estimated
to be affected by
climate disaster

Sources: World Health
Organisation, Save the
Children, Girls Not Brides.

HOW CAN WE MAKE SURE EVERY CHILD IS SAFE?

Making sure every child is safe is a collective responsibility.

However, because of the many different ways in which the safety of children and young people can be put at risk, there are equally as many ways to tackle the challenge – and it is VITAL to make sure YOUR safety is not put at risk while you are doing so.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR AREA?

Although we've seen that many of the worst violations of safety occur in places of commercial exploitation or in very traditional communities, **violence towards children can happen everywhere.**

Children who have previously been victims of violence may be living in your community. Do you know of areas in which children are on the move due to conflict or climate disaster, or any young refugees who have been resettled in your community, or children who have been attacked due to some form of discrimination? These are all young people who may still be at risk of violence.

You could also think about **children who are facing some of the worst forms of violence outside of your community** – like children who are forced to work or marry early. Supporting their cause in your community raises awareness, and puts pressure on your local decision-maker to take action at the national level.

HOW YOU CAN SHOW YOUR SUPPORT AND HELP

Supporting children in your community

Raising awareness of children's safety in your community can be a powerful reminder that we all need to be vigilant and look for signs that children may need support. You can do this using simple tactics like posters, holding seminars, or taking over a school assembly, for example.

Children who have experienced violence are likely to need specialist support, and those who are still living with the threat of danger may need help from the police or other authorities. To make sure you are able to help their cause in the best way possible:

- Make sure you know what **trained, specialist services are available in your area:** ask friends, family, teachers about official services for children as well as local violence prevention projects or organisations.
- Find out about their **processes for reporting:** if you see or find out about children in danger, or who are suffering from the impact of previous violations of their safety, your FIRST action should be to report it, and then find out if you can help – do not put your own safety at risk.
- There may be local voluntary or community groups working to help children whose lives are affected by violence. Getting in touch with them will help you, your campaign group and those around you understand how best to **take action to end and prevent violations of safety.**

[Child Helpline International](#) is a network of 180 helplines worldwide that provide telephone and online support to children and young people – check to see if there is one in your country.

Supporting children facing violence outside of your community

There are many different issues with which you can show your support and solidarity – from children in the worst forms of labour, to children forced to marry, to children who are displaced due to conflict or climate disaster.

[End Violence Against Children](#) is a global partnership of nearly 300 organisations across 6 continents. There may be an organisation you can connect with locally which is already a member.

One MAJOR way you can show your support...

HOLD A RALLY FOR EVERY CHILD!

Take your activism further by joining the 100 Million campaign's Rally for Every Child, starting on 17 October. On this day, young people all over the world will be asking, loud and clear: 'WHEN WILL EVERY CHILD HAVE JUSTICE?' You can join them – go to www.100million.org to find out more.