



# CHANGEMAKERS CALL TO ACTION

## ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

76<sup>TH</sup> WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY (WHA), MAY 2023

As world leaders gather for the 76<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly, we, Changemakers from Ghana, Albania, The Philippines, Zambia, Uganda, Colombia, Ecuador, and Tanzania, want to share our **first-hand experience and recommendations** to the health sector on solutions to end violence against children.

This is our collective **Call to Action**:

**One in two children suffers some form of violence and it is not getting better, even though we know that violence can be prevented and has lifelong negative impact on physical and mental health.**

Violence against children including domestic violence, gender-based violence, child marriage and teenage pregnancy continue to rise, with negative consequences on the health, education and well-being of children. Lack of access to running water and sanitation facilities prevents girls from attending schools and stops their dreams of a better future. Physical abuse harms children physically, but also affects their mental health, ability to socialise, and the relationship they have with their family. Mental health is a problem that is being experienced on a daily basis. It affects everyone, but it is not given the necessary importance. Suicide is affecting children, teenagers and young people. Armed conflict and war make this situation even more serious.

**We believe that Ministries of Health, State representatives and the WHO have a vital role to play to end violence against children. We need more than commitment. We demand concrete action and bold leadership to bring real changes in our lives and keep us safe from all forms of violence.**

**Therefore, we ask leaders to:**

**Empower and engage with children and young people:**

- Being accountable to children – creating and empowering children’s parliaments, including children in high-level meetings and consulting with them on issues that concern them
- Engaging and funding youth-led campaigns and groups, ensuring that all children, including the most vulnerable are fully included
- Allow children to be given room for dialogue with partners in the health sector and among national health ministries to improve access to psychological support and to strengthen mechanisms that will promote swift recognition, reporting, and response on cases of physical abuse

## Prioritise Ending Violence against children in the health sector

- Increase investment across the health sector to prevent, detect and address violence against children
- Prioritise investment in mental health programming, including building numbers and capacity of psychologists to support children's mental health
- Ensure the health sector is empowered and equipped to reports cases of VAC
- Increase investment in strengthening spaces for participation, recreation, and sports so that they contribute to strengthening our mental health
- Increase investment and improve education and counselling on gender-based violence issues, such as teenage pregnancy, child marriage, female genital mutilation, menstrual poverty and child sexual abuse
- Strengthen the health system to support adolescents in school and out of school

## Ensure a strong link with local stakeholders

- Implementation of tailored and inclusive programmes and policy at the community level, prioritising the rights and well-being of marginalised and vulnerable groups
- Ensure that response reaches communities where girls, boys, adolescents, young people and families are living in vulnerable situations
- Implementation of comprehensive campaigns at the community levels, utilising all possible communications channels, such as social media, local radio, theatre plays, to allow awareness raising and follow up on cases and reduce them through conversations on sexual and reproductive education, emotional violence, protection and mental health

**Be the change!**

**Join the Changemakers!**

