



ACTION PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

**The Office of the Special
Representative of the Secretary -
General on Violence Against
Children (OSRSG-VAC) - United
Nations Office on Drugs and
Crime (UNODC)**

2024



2023



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

**ACTION PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY TO
END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
November, 2023**

INTRODUCTION	2
THE ACTION PLAN	3
1. CONTEXTS OF INSECURITY	4
2. JUSTICE SYSTEMS	9
3. CYBERSPACE	15
4. CHILDREN ON THE MOVE	19
OVERVIEW OF FUNDING ALLOCATION AND SHORTFALLS	21

Why these priorities?

Research, data collection and analysis

Awareness-raising

Advocacy

Normative work

Technical assistance



The introduction sets the stage, explaining the objectives and importance of these topics, while the subsequent sections propose strategic actions to address these critical issues in relation to research, data collection and analysis; awareness-raising; advocacy; normative work; and technical assistance.



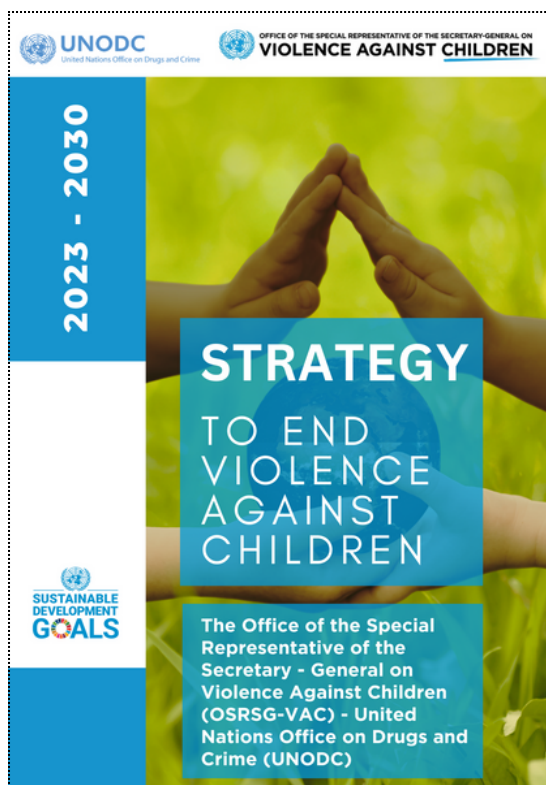
Vienna, November 2023

INTRODUCTION

The Action Plan presented here will guide the implementation of actions within the framework established by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (OSRSG-VAC) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) joint Strategy to End Violence against Children.

Violence against children occurs in every country, cutting across culture, socioeconomic status, education, income, ethnicity and race. Whether in the family, in schools, in alternative care and justice institutions or in the community, it is often socially condoned and not legally sanctioned.

Violence inflicted on children causes long-lasting physical, developmental, emotional, spiritual and mental harm that they can carry into adulthood. The lifelong adverse consequences of violence include mental and physical health conditions; disabilities; reduced health-related quality of life; lower educational attainment; lower levels of economic well-being in adulthood; and increased risk of exposure to further violence. Prolonged exposure may also render children more likely to accept violence, and to become aggressive or show aggressive behaviour themselves. The consequences of violence against children include not only significant harm to the individual child, but also high costs for families, communities, and society as a whole.



*Launched on 28 November, 2023
United Nations Office On Drugs and Crime
(UNODC) in Vienna, Austria*

THE ACTION PLAN

To address the invisible epidemic of violence against children, the OSRSG-VAC and UNODC have strengthened their partnership to pursue **three interrelated strategic objectives**:

OBJECTIVE 1 PREVENTION	OBJECTIVE 2 RESPONSE	OBJECTIVE 3 JUSTICE
Children and their environments are better protected from crime and violence.	Children who have experienced crime and violence are supported towards recovery and reintegration processes.	Children in contact with justice systems are better served and protected from crime and violence, and supported towards recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration.

This Action Plan delineates priority interventions aimed at achieving strategic objectives throughout 2023 and 2024. It outlines actions that will build onto the respective mandates, where the OSRSG-VAC will contribute to advocacy and awareness-raising efforts, including contributions to research and knowledge dissemination, and UNODC will contribute to its research, normative work, and technical assistance. The Action Plan also leverages inter-agency work through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), co-chaired by the OSRSG-VAC in 2023 and continuously coordinated by UNODC, as well as the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, led by the OSRSG-VAC.

The action plan is articulated under four specific contexts where children are exposed to higher risks of crime and violence:

- 1 CONTEXTS OF INSECURITY** including contexts of (protracted) armed conflict, organized crime, terrorism, and other forms of prevalent crime and violence which leave society fragile and increase vulnerabilities.
- 2 JUSTICE SYSTEMS** including both criminal justice systems and justice systems intended to protect and support children in which they may appear as victims or witnesses and/or alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed the penal law.
- 3 CYBERSPACE** where children can be, and often are, victims of crime, interpersonal violence, online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and can be recruited for criminal purposes.
- 4 CHILDREN ON THE MOVE** as a result of extreme poverty, conflict, organized crime or climate-related events. Interventions in this context will focus on children on the move who are victims of trafficking (and related forms of exploitation), subject to smuggling and children detained for immigration-related reasons.

1 CONTEXTS OF INSECURITY

WHY THIS PRIORITY?

In contexts where insecurity prevails, marked by organized crime, terrorism and conflict, children face heightened risks of recruitment and exploitation by organized criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups. These children can also become victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced marriage. This exposes children to dual victimization: they are victims of violence and exploitation by the groups, and may also have to endure stigma, rejection and punitive approaches after exiting the groups.

Actions under this priority area aim to increase protection of children from these threats and facilitate their access to effective rehabilitation and reintegration.

RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

1

Study on child association with organized criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups

WHY THIS ACTION?

It is crucial to enhance effective prevention and responses to serious forms of violence against children, which expose them to death, injury, prolonged abuse as well as stigmatization and exploitation. However, evidence on this phenomenon is scarce and difficult to access. UNODC is conducting research, focusing on three (3) case studies in Indonesia, Iraq and Nigeria, which provides an opportunity for children and those most affected by this phenomenon to be heard. Upon availability of extra-budgetary resources, UNODC will carry out a similar research initiative in selected countries focusing on children recruited and exploited by organised criminal groups. Building on complementary resources provided by the OSRSG-VAC, the forthcoming studies will be crucial tools for policymakers and professionals who are responsible for protecting children from recruitment; supporting their rehabilitation and reintegration after association; as well as assisting them in accessing justice mechanisms.



Financial Input

Funded
\$135,000 USD

To be funded
\$450,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
UNODC led - in co-operation with OSRSG-VAC
TIMELINE: Q1 2023 - Q4 2024

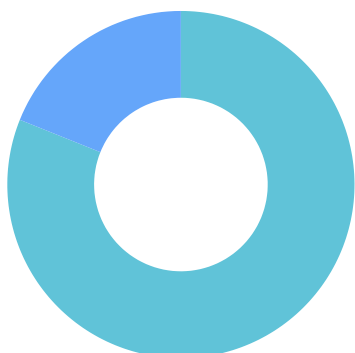
AWARENESS-RAISING

2

Awareness-raising campaign to end child recruitment and exploitation by criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups

WHY THIS ACTION?

Regardless of whether they occur in the context of armed conflict, organized crime or terrorism, child recruitment and exploitation are serious forms of violence against children. Regrettably, children who are recruited and exploited by criminal and armed groups, particularly by terrorist groups, are often regarded as “criminals”, rather than victims. Drawing upon existing evidence on child recruitment patterns, including insights from the UNODC study, this campaign aims to enhance awareness of the power imbalances that serve as root causes of child recruitment and to advocate for protective measures for children.



Financial Input

Funded
\$300,000 USD

To be funded \$70,000 USD

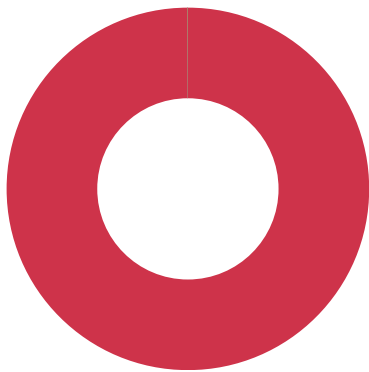
IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
Joint OSRSG-VAC - UNODC
TIMELINE: Q3 2023 - Q4 2024

3

Awareness-raising campaign on the linkages between child trafficking and children and armed conflict and the non-punishment principle

WHY THIS ACTION?

This awareness-raising campaign is dedicated to disseminating the outcome of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) research on the linkages between child trafficking and children and armed conflict (see also “children on the move” priority) and informing policy vis-à-vis the non-punishment principle (see sub-point 5 below). OSRSG-VAC, as co-chair of ICAT, and UNODC, as its Secretariat, will continue to support the development of policy guidance, including in interagency settings.



Financial Input

To be funded
\$70,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

Joint OSRSG-VAC - UNODC

TIMELINE: Q2 2023 - Q2 2024

ADVOCACY

4

Advocacy brief and actions to end violence against children in contexts of insecurity

WHY THIS ACTION?

When Member States face challenges related to national security, the impact on children can easily be underestimated or overlooked. Even when children are at the forefront of security concerns, it is often unclear what strategies and practical measures can improve their protection. This action strives to catalyze legal and policy changes that can increase safeguards for children in contexts of insecurity by, inter-alia, encouraging the appropriate criminalization of child recruitment and related forms of violence and ensuring accountability of perpetrators; fostering recognition of children’s legal status as primarily victims and integrating this principle into practice; as well as increasing support for rehabilitation and reintegration interventions through specialized strategies.



Financial Input

To be funded
\$100,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

Joint OSRSG-VAC - UNODC

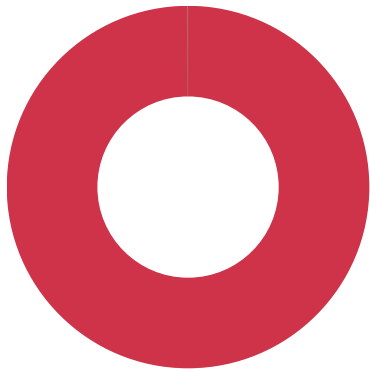
TIMELINE: Q4 2023 - Q4 2024

5

Guidance on the application of the non-punishment principle

WHY THIS ACTION?

Child victims of trafficking should never be punished for activities they were forced to commit as part of their trafficking. OSRSG-VAC, as co-chair of ICAT, and UNODC, as its Coordinator, will continue to support the development of related policy guidance, including in interagency settings. This action builds on the ICAT Issue Brief on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking in persons and is carried out in connection with the 2022 ICAT Call to Action.



Financial Input

To be funded
\$40,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

OSRSG-VAC/IOM-led (ICAT)
with UNODC's support

TIMELINE: Q1 - Q4 2024

NORMATIVE WORK

6

International standards and norms for the recognition of “primarily victims’ status” of children recruited and exploited by organized criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups

WHY THIS ACTION?

Children who are recruited and exploited by organized criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups, are often perceived and treated as security threats. Recognizing their status as victims of crimes is an essential step in shifting the approach to treat these children appropriately, facilitating their return to the communities, and providing them access to the necessary services for appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration. International law plays a crucial role in setting the minimum standards for the treatment of children, and UNODC will continue to support the development of international law and policy under the framework of the United Nations (UN) intergovernmental bodies, such as the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ).



Financial Input

Funded
\$50,000 USD

To be funded
\$230,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

UNODC led - in cooperation
with OSRSG-VAC

TIMELINE: Q1 - Q4 2024

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

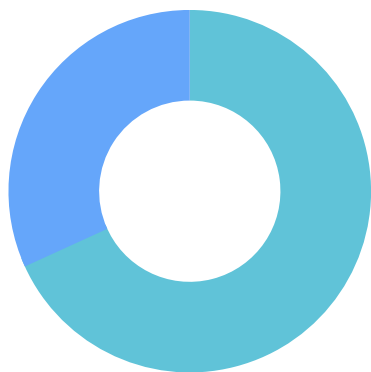


Technical assistance to prevent and respond to violence against children by organized criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups

WHY THIS ACTION?

Member States require specialized, technical and tailored support, adapted to their specific priorities and local contexts, to tackle the phenomenon of child association with organized criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups. Over the past years, relying on its inter-related mandates on child rights, justice reform, counter-terrorism and organized crime, UNODC has been responding to requests for technical assistance in this area.

UNODC provides a range of services, including conducting situation analyses, providing legal advisory services, strengthening the capacity of institutions and practitioners, and supporting measures that directly contribute to prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as justice responses in accordance with international law. These efforts are directed not only towards States but also towards non-State actors, such as communities and youth-led organizations. The OSRSG-VAC will also contribute to reinforcing UNODC-led technical assistance by integrating crucial messages on this area of work in the context of advocacy activities carried out during country visits, whenever relevant.



Financial Input

 **Funded**
\$7,500,000 USD

 **To be funded**
\$3,500,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

UNODC led - with ad-hoc support by OSRSG-VAC

TIMELINE: Q1 2023 - Q4 2024





2 JUSTICE SYSTEMS

WHY THIS PRIORITY?

Justice systems play a crucial role in preventing and responding to violence against children. However, do they have access to the necessary evidence, resources and knowledge to adapt laws, procedures, institutions and services to the needs of children? Without the necessary specialization and resources, justice systems can expose children to further victimization in situations where they may appear as victims, witnesses and/or alleged offenders.

Actions in this area aim to provide tailored technical support to the development of fair, child-sensitive and gender-responsive justice systems that are informed by international law and scientific evidence.

RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

1

Paper series for child-sensitive and gender-responsive justice systems, adapted to child neurological and psychosocial development

WHY THIS ACTION?

Scientific evidence provides compelling arguments for adapting justice systems to cater the specific needs and circumstances of children, aligning with international law. Insights into brain development during childhood, including adolescence, shed light on the need for fostering healthy and constructive development support; clarify and explain the consequences of violence on child development and behaviour; and highlight how children function differently from adults. While this knowledge is pivotal for professionals of the justice system, it is often beyond the scope of their expertise and remains inaccessible. This paper series, launched by UNODC and supported by the OSRSG-VAC, aspires to bridge this gap, providing policymakers and professionals with accessible information to practically support their work.



Financial Input

Funded
\$36,000 USD

To be funded
\$60,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

UNODC led - in co-operation with OSRSG-VAC

TIMELINE: Q4 2023 - Q4 2024

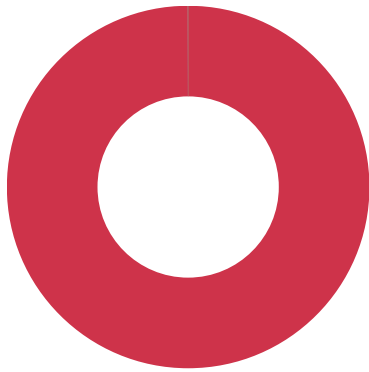
AWARENESS-RAISING

2

Awareness-raising campaign on child-justice approaches focusing on psychosocial support

WHY THIS ACTION?

Children in contact with the justice system are often perceived as dangerous, leading public opinion to overly stress a need to punish them for their actions. However, justice does not have to equate to punishment, especially in the case of children. This campaign seeks to raise awareness on existing justice strategies and measures that strive to shift the punitive paradigm by advocating for appropriate treatment aligned with international law, through restorative justice approaches. The campaign will draw insights from the findings outlined in the aforementioned paper series.



Financial Input



**To be funded
\$70,000 USD**

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
Joint OSRSG-VAC - UNODC
TIMELINE: Q1 - Q4 2024

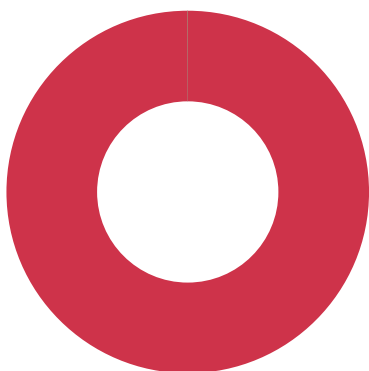
ADVOCACY



Advocacy brief for fair child-sensitive and gender-responsive e-justice processes

WHY THIS ACTION?

Electronic judicial case management can provide efficient alternatives to the lengthy paper-based traditional judicial processes. It can also open up avenues for easier access to justice institutions, contributing to the sustainable goal of justice for all. However, it may inadvertently widen the gap between central and local justice approaches, compartmentalize information storage and fail to capture the necessary procedures for child-sensitive and gender-responsive justice systems. In this transitional phase, guidance on the importance of child-sensitive and gender-responsive e-justice can provide relevant resources to policymakers and professionals from the justice system.



Financial Input



**To be funded
\$50,000 USD**

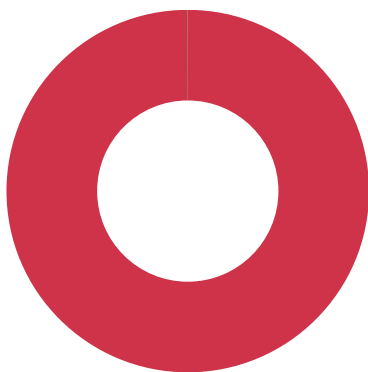
IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
Joint OSRSG-VAC - UNODC
TIMELINE: Q1 - Q3 2024

4

Guidance and awareness-raising events on child trafficking

WHY THIS ACTION?

Member States continue to require expert support to implement the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. Child trafficking has been consistently highlighted by the UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons as a significant share of the detected trafficking cases worldwide. At both the normative and operational levels, the issue was discussed in the intergovernmental United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) Working Group on Trafficking in Persons and its related Constructive Dialogue in October 2023, resulting in the adoption of recommendations by States Parties. OSRSG-VAC and UNODC will continue to cooperate to develop guidance on child trafficking and engage in related expert discussions to follow-up on the Working Group meeting and support the implementation of its recommendations.



Financial Input

To be funded
\$25,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
Joint OSRSG-VAC - UNODC
TIMELINE: Q3 - Q4 2023 - Q1 2024

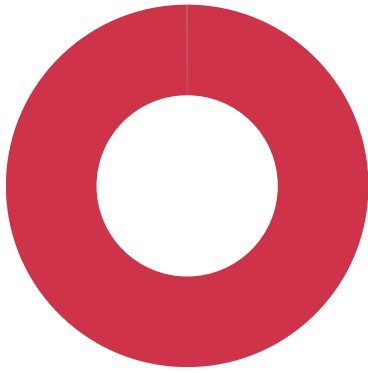
ADVOCACY

5

Advocacy strategy to ensure that deprivation of liberty is a measure of last resort and is applied for the shortest period of time

WHY THIS ACTION?

Deprivation of liberty holds the potential to expose children to violence and reduce their opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration. Unfortunately, too often, it is seen as the first and only resort to address especially the situation of children in contact with justice systems. Effective advocacy is needed to mitigate the overreliance on deprivation of liberty, and to promote alternative measures to judicial procedures (diversion) and to detention. As a follow-up to the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, and in the context of the UN Task Force on Children Deprived of Liberty, led by the OSRSG-VAC, the advocacy strategy will include the elaboration of a policy brief on deprivation of liberty for children in contact with the justice system.



Financial Input

To be funded
\$50,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
Joint OSRSG-VAC - UNODC
TIMELINE: Q1 - Q4 2024

NORMATIVE WORK

6

International standards and norms on child-sensitive and gender-responsive justice systems

WHY THIS ACTION?

International law has shaped both the meaning and content of child-sensitive and gender-responsive justice system by defining objectives of justice procedures, requiring specialization, and setting minimum standards and norms for the treatment of children throughout their contact with the justice system. Over the past years, the international community has recognized the need to promote justice through multi-stakeholder and holistic approaches viewing it as a crucial step towards preventing and responding to violence against children. UNODC has supported this change and will continue to do so through an ongoing commitment to normative work in this area.



Financial Input

Funded
\$30,000 USD

To be funded
\$50,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
UNODC led - in cooperation with OSRSG-VAC
TIMELINE: Q1 2023 - Q4 2024

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Technical assistance to strengthen child-sensitive and gender-responsive justice systems

WHY THIS ACTION?

Member States require expert support to strengthen the delivery of child-sensitive and gender-responsive justice services. Legal advisory services play a pivotal role in assisting Member States to harmonize national legislation with international standards and norms, establishing the boundaries for adopting and applying restorative justice approaches. Operational guidance is necessary for adapting and/or creating procedures and mechanisms that are conducive to fulfilling child rights, including: rules for the implementation of alternative measures to judicial proceedings (diversion), and alternatives to detention; standard operating procedures for child assessment and interviewing; and rules and regulations for child justice.

Capacity-building initiatives equip professionals who are responsible for the treatment of children with the relevant skills and knowledge. Technical assistance also directly supports initiatives for child-sensitive and gender-responsive justice practices with an emphasis on individual-based rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. The OSRSG-VAC will also contribute to reinforcing UNODC-led technical assistance by integrating key messages relevant to this area of work in the context of advocacy activities carried out during country visits, whenever relevant.



Financial Input

Funded
\$80,000 USD

To be funded
\$300,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

UNODC led - with ad-hoc support by OSRSG-VAC

TIMELINE: Q1 2023 - Q4 2024



3 CYBERSPACE

WHY THIS PRIORITY?

In cyberspace, children are less protected and more exposed to the risks of crime and violence. Protecting children in cyberspace means: confronting a borderless and less regulated space; facing the challenges of cross-border cooperation amongst child protections, law enforcement and judicial institutions and actors; using special investigation techniques to collect and analyse digital evidence; and enhancing meaningful public-private partnerships.

Actions in this area of work aim to increase specialized knowledge and tools, providing technical advice to prevent and respond to violence against children in cyberspace, promoting effective interventions, and providing a platform for better protection of children from online sexual exploitation and abuse. The implementation of this priority will be led by the UNODC Global Programme on Cybercrime in cooperation with the END VAC team working under the Global Programme on People-Centred Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Reform, emphasizing a focus on the needs and rights of children while fostering accountability of perpetrators of crimes against children.

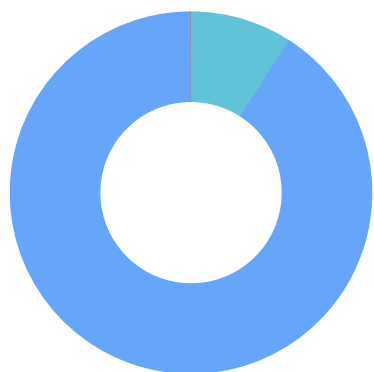
RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

1

Support and contribute to the understanding of the criminal phenomenon

WHY THIS ACTION?

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) increase the exposure of children to risks of crime and violence. Collection and analysis of evidence in this area is essential to appropriately define the problem, in terms of protecting children effectively, assessing existing risks to children; understanding the incentives of individual perpetrators and organized criminal groups, including traffickers, recognizing the growth and expansion of the criminal phenomenon; exploring the scope and nature of financial flows associated with cybercrime; identifying available tools and safe havens, as well as understanding factors that enable ICTs to increase victimization. Additionally, evidence is necessary to evaluate effectiveness and gaps in existing initiatives regarding child protection in cyberspace and criminal justice aimed at preventing and responding to crimes against children in cyberspace.



Financial Input

Funded
\$10,000 USD

To be funded
\$100,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

Joint OSRSG-VAC - UNODC

TIMELINE: Q4 2023 - Q4 2024

ADVOCACY

2

Policy and advocacy tools for informed strategies aimed to detect and remove child sexual abuse material (CSAM) from the Internet and prevent its reupload through effective public-private partnerships

WHY THIS ACTION?

Policy and advocacy tools seek to highlight a wide array of promising practices to support effective detection and removal of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) from the Internet, prevention of its reupload, as well as strategies for the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators. In partnership with civil society and other international organizations, the OSRSG-VAC and UNODC will develop an advocacy brief to guide Member States and private entities, including Internet Service Providers and communication regulators, in adopting strategies and measures in their respective areas of intervention and through cooperation.



Financial Input

Funded
\$82,000 USD

To be funded
\$120,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
UNODC led- in cooperation with OSRSG-VAC

TIMELINE: Q3 2023 - Q3 2024

NORMATIVE WORK

3

International standards and norms for increased protection of children in cyberspace

WHY THIS ACTION?

A comprehensive international normative framework is critical in guiding Member States towards the adoption of effective legal and operational strategies and measures to tackle the use of ICTs for criminal purposes harming children. Building on its extensive decades-long experience in normative development, UNODC will continue providing legal and policy advice to Member States and the private sector in advancing international standards in this area and enhancing the protection of children.



Financial Input

Funded
\$82,000 USD

To be funded
\$200,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
UNODC led- in cooperation with OSRSG-VAC

TIMELINE: Q1 2023 - Q4 2024

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

4

Technical assistance for holistic responses to prevent and respond to crime and violence against children in cyberspace

WHY THIS ACTION?

Holistic approaches are crucial to better prevent and respond to violence against children in cyberspace, including online child sexual exploitation and abuse as well as the recruitment and exploitation of children by organized criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups. UNODC's technical assistance in this area focuses, inter alia, on strengthening responses to prevent and respond to violence against children in cyberspace, addressing both cyber-enabled and cyber-dependent crime. By promoting public-private partnerships, technical assistance include prevention programmes, policy and legal advice; capacity-building (for analysts, investigators, prosecutors and judges); development of standard operating procedures, equipping dedicated units with necessary digital forensic tools; support in international and inter-agency cooperation.



Financial Input

Funded
\$860,000 USD

To be funded
\$1,500,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:
UNODC led - with ad-hoc support by OSRSG-VAC
TIMELINE: Q1 2023 - Q4 2024



4 CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

WHY THIS PRIORITY?

Children on the move face multiple vulnerabilities and may become victims of crime and violence. Actions in this area of work strive to increase and disseminate knowledge of root causes of violence against children on the move and enhance their protection, with a focus on child victims of trafficking or those who become subjected to smuggling, as well as those who are deprived of their liberty.

AWARENESS-RAISING



Awareness-raising campaign on the advocacy brief for protecting the rights of children on the move (see links to contexts of insecurity)

WHY THIS ACTION?

Expanding upon ongoing work on protecting children on the move, the promotion and dissemination of the findings will shed light on the damage caused by multidimensional crises. Crises resulting from armed conflicts, political instability, and climate change, coupled with the effects of health and economic crises, threaten children's rights, including their right to be protected from violence, abuse, and neglect.

Awareness should be raised at every stage of the child's journey when they are on the move and exposed to a heightened risk of violence, while responses need to be strengthened and intensified. The activity is not only already supported at the highest UNODC level, but its promotion is an ICAT priority.



Financial Input



To be funded
\$20,000 USD

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY:

UNODC led - in co-operation
with OSRSG VAC

TIMELINE: Q1 - Q4 2024



OVERVIEW OF FUNDING ALLOCATION AND SHORTFALLS

	CONTEXT	FUNDED	SHORTFALL
1	CONTEXTS OF INSECURITY	USD \$ 7,985,000	USD \$ 4,460,000
2	JUSTICE SYSTEMS	USD \$ 146,000	USD \$ 605,000
3	CYBERSPACE	USD \$ 1,034,000	USD \$ 1,920,000
4	CHILDREN ON THE MOVE	USD \$ 0	USD \$ 20,000
	GRAND TOTAL	USD \$ 9,165,000	USD \$ 7,005,000



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Violence Against Children**

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Vienna, November 2023



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