



Ending violence against children in ASEAN Member States

Mid-term review of priority areas under the ASEAN Regional
Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children
2016-2025



one vision
one identity
one community



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July 2019



Suggested citation: ASEAN Secretariat, *Ending violence against children in ASEAN Member States: Mid-term review of priority areas under the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children 2016-2025*, ASEAN, 2019.

Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

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Design and layout: Scand-Media Corporation Ltd.

The development of this report was led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children in collaboration with ASEAN Member State ministries responsible for social welfare and/or children. Contributions were made by the Regional Interagency Child Protection Working Group, the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, and by UNICEF Country Office Child Protection teams across the region. Support to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children to facilitate the national consultations and collate the findings was provided by Victor Karunan/Dundex.

The preparation and printing of the report was made possible through the generous support of UNICEF.

For inquiries, contact:

The ASEAN Secretariat
Public Outreach and Civil Society Division
70A Jalan Sisingamangaraja
Jakarta 12110
Indonesia
Phone: (62 21) 724-3372, 726-2991
Fax: (62 21) 739-8234, 724-3504
E-mail: public@asean.org

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General information on ASEAN appears online at the ASEAN website: www.asean.org.

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	6
PREFACE	7
FOREWORD	8
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
INTRODUCTION	13
Background	13
Objectives	14
Methodology	14
MAIN FINDINGS	18
ACTION 1: Prevention	18
1. Non-violent approach to nurture, care and development of children in all settings	18
2. Awareness raising and behaviour change communication on all forms of violence against children	20
3. Deinstitutionalization of children and strengthening alternative family care services	23
4. Preventing violence against children in cyberspace	26
ACTION 2: Protection, response and support services	32
5. Child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanism	32
6. Protection and support services for children affected by violence	34
ACTION 3: Legal framework, prosecution and justice system	36
7. Laws in full conformity with applicable international human rights standards	36
8. Diversion and alternative measures	39
ACTION 4: Capacity building	42
9. Advocacy materials to generate awareness and support for ending violence against children	42
ACTION 5: Research and data collection	45
10. National systems for data collection, analysis and sharing	45
ACTION 6: Management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation	50
11. National plans of action to eliminate all forms of violence against children	50
12. Coordination mechanism for disasters and conflict situations	53
CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD	55

ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ICT	Information and communication technologies
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

PREFACE

In recognition of the need for States to work together at the regional level, the 10 ASEAN Heads of States signed a Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Children in 2013 and adopted the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children in 2016.

The objectives of the Regional Plan of Action are for: 1) ASEAN to institutionalize policies and to sustain support to end violence against children across pillars and sectors; and 2) ASEAN Member States to have effective prevention and protection services supported by a national legal framework and institutional mechanisms to end violence against children.

The Regional Plan of Action serves as the 10-year roadmap for the 10 ASEAN Member States to protect children from violence and respond to the needs of children across eight action areas: prevention; protection, response and support services; legal framework, prosecution and justice system; capacity building; research and data collection; management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation; partnerships and collaboration; and review and communication. The Regional Plan of Action aims to contribute towards the realization of the ASEAN Vision 2025 and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Five goals and 11 targets address violence, abuse and exploitation. Most notably, target 16.2 aims to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children and target 5.3 calls for an end to violence against women and girls.

In order to take forward the priority areas of the Regional Plan of Action, a baseline study was conducted in 2016 which provides a robust analysis of existing initiatives underway by ASEAN Member States and partners so as to leverage existing resources, incorporate learning and good practices, and track progress. Following the baseline study, the ASEAN Commission on Women and Children together with the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development undertook this mid-term review in time for the High-Level Political Forum in 2019 so that ASEAN and its 10 Member States can report on their progress under relevant targets of the SDGs. Through this mid-term review, ASEAN Member States have an opportunity to share their learnings with the rest of the world and to further develop strategies and mechanisms for ending violence against children in the region.

Thailand is particularly proud of leading the development of the Regional Plan of Action. With the support of all Member States, we hope that each of the actions contained within it will be put in practice to improve the lives of children in ASEAN.



Wanchai Roujanavong

Chair, ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
Representative of Thailand to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children

FOREWORD

As United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, I was honoured to be closely associated with the development of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children 2016-2025 and, since its adoption, with its process of implementation. The Regional Plan of Action illustrates well the unique potential of regional organizations to act as catalysts of progress and cross-fertilization of positive experiences. The Regional Plan of Action reflects the determination of ASEAN Member States to pursue steady efforts to safeguard the protection of children from any form of neglect, maltreatment, abuse and exploitation. With a wide-ranging scope, it promotes the institutionalization of public policies and the consolidation of effective prevention and protection services to tackle and eliminate violence against children in all settings across the 10 ASEAN Member States.

The Regional Plan of Action includes a monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure accountability and assess progress and impact of implementation measures adopted by ASEAN Member States. As part of this process, the mid-term review has provided a valuable occasion to review progress in its implementation and support the efforts of ASEAN Member States to keep on track to achieve the goals set out in the Regional Plan of Action, alongside Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.2. The review was critical to promote continued and accelerated action towards the elimination of violence against children and identify priority actions for further national implementation.

And indeed, incremental progress is being made. For example, five ASEAN Member States now have national plans of action on violence against children. Five countries have parenting support programmes which include violence reduction modules, and six have introduced strategic approaches to tackle violence in schools. Moreover, five Member States have adopted or are in the process of developing national strategies to protect children from violence online. Eight countries have strengthened their data systems on child protection and on violence against children. And all Member States have conducted information and awareness raising campaigns on ending violence against children. The prevention of deprivation of liberty and the promotion of a child sensitive justice system are other important areas covered by the Regional Plan of Action where national developments are gaining ground, including through capacity building initiatives on restorative justice.

Progress made to date provides powerful motivation to redouble efforts to tackle violence against children in the region and beyond. Indeed, the mid-term review of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action provides valuable lessons and sound evidence for ASEAN Member States to fast-track national progress in children's protection from violence. And it gains a critical relevance at the global level, being a crucial reference for the commemoration of the 30th anniversary and further implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in force in all ASEAN Member States; and providing an insightful contribution to the process of review of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, including SDG target 16.2, which will be held later this year under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly.

Violence against children must be addressed with a deep sense of urgency and this report provides a critical reference to move ahead faster and further in our shared goal of building a world free from fear and violence.



Marta Santos-Pais

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children

FOREWORD

Every country in the region has committed to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, three out of four children experience violent discipline in their home and no country in ASEAN has banned corporal punishment in all settings. An estimated 12 to 32 per cent of boys and girls in the region report witnessing violence at the hands of their parents. And as internet penetration rapidly grows, the online risks of violence affect increasing numbers of children.

Against this backdrop, as well as the ASEAN Vision 2025, ASEAN Member States gave hope to children by adopting the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Children in 2013, followed by the Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children in 2016. The Regional Plan of Action was a landmark document for the region, charting the way for ASEAN Member States to end all forms of violence against children. It was also the first, and remains the only, regional plan of action to end violence against children, serving as a model for other regional bodies.

As well as setting out priority actions to more effectively prevent and respond to physical, sexual and emotional violence, the Regional Plan of Action addresses sensitive issues such as raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 years, providing programmes of care and protection including reproductive health services for teenage parents and their children and repealing legislation that condones, allows, or leads to harmful practices against children. It also calls on Member States to review and strengthen protective policies and measures for stateless, migrant and asylum-seeking children who are victims of violence, and to develop diversion and alternative measures to detention for children in conflict with the law.

I commend ASEAN not only for adopting the Regional Plan of Action, but also for monitoring and promoting its implementation through the baseline study in 2016 and through this mid-term review in 2019, keeping the issue firmly on the ASEAN agenda. The mid-term review demonstrates that progress is being made in the region and highlights the continued commitment of ASEAN Member States to addressing violence against children. The review also highlights areas of limited progress and gaps that require immediate action, especially in light of Target 16.2 of the SDGs, which committed States to eliminate all forms of violence against children by 2030.

The region is home to one quarter of the world's children. Progress in protecting children from violence in this region will contribute significantly to the achievement of the SDGs overall. Therefore, accelerating implementation of the Regional Plan of Action will drive forward global progress towards SDG Target 16.2.

ASEAN Member States have recognized that violence is not an inevitable part of a child's life. Violence is preventable. And while ending violence against children is a significant challenge, the region has huge potential to do so. It has made impressive progress to ensure children survive their early years, significantly reducing child mortality and child poverty and increasing access to safe water. UNICEF urges this same investment in and attention to implementing the Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children to ensure that children can thrive free from violence.



Karin Hulshof

Regional Director, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence against children is widely prevalent in all societies and takes place in multiple settings by a wide range of perpetrators. In the East Asia and Pacific region, three in every four children experience violent discipline at the hands of parents and other caregivers. An estimated 11-22 per cent of girls and 3-16.5 per cent of boys experience sexual violence, and between 18-41.6 per cent of children experience emotional violence.¹

In order to address these concerns, ASEAN adopted a Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Children in 2013. This was followed two years later by the adoption of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children, 2016-2025, providing a comprehensive roadmap to implement the Declaration.

Between December 2018 and June 2019, a mid-term review of the Regional Plan of Action was conducted by the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, in collaboration with the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development, with support from UNICEF. The mid-term review assesses the progress and impact of implementation measures adopted by ASEAN Member States since a baseline study of the Regional Plan of Action's priority areas² (hereafter the Baseline Study) was conducted in 2016. The review also serves to share best practices and lessons learned to assist Member States to implement the Regional Plan of Action, identifies obstacles and constraints and suggests actions that will help to accelerate progress in its implementation. This report provides an overview of progress made in 12 areas that were identified as priorities for the first five years of the Regional Plan of Action.

The mid-term review has highlighted the commitment of ASEAN Member States to address violence against children and the ensuing progress that has been made across the priority areas of the Regional Plan of Action in its first few years of implementation (see Table 1). Notable progress includes:

- Significant efforts in all Member States to introduce legal reforms that improve the protective environment for children, ranging from amendments to existing laws to clarify definitions and remove ambiguities to enactment of new regulations to better protect children from various forms of violence.
- Continued efforts in all Member States to develop the legislative and policy framework and/or put in place mechanisms for alternative measures to judicial proceedings and detention, such as diversion and restorative justice.
- Increasing efforts in Member States to address the number of children in institutions, with six countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam) advancing their frameworks and procedures for alternative family-based care and three countries (Malaysia, Myanmar and the Philippines) implementing programmes to expand family-based care arrangements.
- Five Member States have introduced parenting support interventions to reduce violent discipline and six have implemented programmes to address violence against children in schools.
- Seven Member States have introduced or strengthened coordination mechanisms to respond to violence against children in emergency situations and all Member States have implemented

1 UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, *Measuring and monitoring child protection systems: Proposed core indicators for the East Asia and Pacific Region*, Strengthening Child Protection Series No. 1, UNICEF, Bangkok, 2012.

2 ASEAN Secretariat, *Ending violence against children in ASEAN Member States: Baseline study of priority areas under the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children: A snapshot as of 2016*, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 2017.

programmes to raise awareness about violence against children and lay the groundwork for changing harmful behaviours.

In addition, there have been promising developments in new areas such as protection of children from violence online. For example, four countries (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand) have dedicated national strategies or programmes to address violence against children online, while in Indonesia a national road map on child online protection is under development. Education programmes on online safety are also being implemented in eight Member States and six Member States have scaled up industry engagement to prevent violence against children online.

Continued efforts are required in each of these areas to sustain the current levels of progress. In addition, there are key areas that require more focused attention across Member States in order to accelerate implementation and meet the targets of the Regional Plan of Action. These include:

- Increasing **data collection** efforts, particularly in the area of sexual violence against children, so that prevalence of violence against children can be understood and the impact of efforts to tackle violence can be tracked.
- Implementing **research initiatives** to better understand the drivers of violence in each national context.
- Ensuring that **national plans of action** on violence against children are effectively implemented at all levels by strengthening **inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms** and including a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to measure progress and impact, as well as clear guidance for implementation and reporting.
- Advancing **law reform** efforts to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings to ensure that children are legally protected from all forms of violent discipline and other cruel and degrading punishment, in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Increasing **budgetary allocations** to ensure that policies and laws to protect children from violence can be effectively implemented at all levels.
- Strengthening the **capacity of all those who work with and for children**. Accelerated action is required to effectively plan for, develop and sustain the social service workforce, including through its professionalisation and the creation of adequate social work positions and supervisory mechanisms in sub-national structures to deliver the child protection system.
- Enhancing **child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms** and strengthening intersectoral case management systems so that children are able to report violence, access support and seek redress. It is important that the effectiveness of such mechanisms are regularly evaluated to ensure they function effectively, reach the most vulnerable children and families, and have appropriate referral mechanisms in place to safely and confidentially connect children and their families with the necessary support services to ensure their safety and help them to recover.
- Establishing or strengthening **national child protection information management systems** to effectively record and manage data related to protection cases. It is important that administrative data systems capturing data on violence against children in different settings are integrated into a harmonized system with common definitions and indicators. This requires a centralised coordination body to oversee the system and ensure effective coordination between the different stakeholders.

ASEAN Member States are encouraged to build on their efforts to date, as well as to accelerate action to implement the full range of actions envisaged by the Regional Plan of Action in order to fulfil global, regional and national commitments made to eliminate violence against children. It is hoped that the mid-term review process and the recommendations in this report provide the impetus and framework for action and investment to realise the right of every child to grow up without the fear of violence.

Table 1. Summary of baseline³ and mid-term review status for priority areas under the Regional Plan of Action, by country

Indicators	Brunei		Cambodia		Indonesia		Lao PDR		Malaysia		Myanmar		Philippines		Singapore		Thailand		Viet Nam	
	BL	MTR	BL	MTR	BL	MTR	BL	MTR	BL	MTR	BL	MTR	BL	MTR	BL	MTR	BL	MTR	BL	MTR
1b. ASEAN Guidelines on Nurturing Care contextualized	—	●	—	●	—	●	○	●	●	●	—	●	—	●	—	—	●	●	●	●
2. Systematic behaviour change campaign/s on all forms of violence against children conducted	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
3. Legislative/policy framework for alternative family care services developed and implemented	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
4. Preventive measures against violence against children in cyberspace developed and implemented	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
5. Child and gender sensitive reporting and complaint mechanism provided for children and/or their representatives to file their violence against children grievances	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
6. Protection and support services provided for children affected by violence	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
7. A legislative review undertaken on violence against children vis-à-vis applicable international human rights standards	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
8. Diversion programmes and/or other alternative measures to judicial proceedings and detention implemented	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
9. Advocacy materials for various audiences developed and disseminated to generate awareness and support for ending violence against children	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
10.a. Survey data used in national policy documents on violence against children	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●
10.b. Reliable and consistent national system for consolidation of data on violence against children	○	○	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●
10.c. Data on violence against children disaggregated such as by age, ethnicity, gender and disability status	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. National coordinating framework or national plans of action with a coordinating mechanism for implementation on ending violence against children developed/strengthened with participation of all relevant stakeholders including children at all stages of the process	○	○	●	●	● ^a	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. Violence against children included in emergency-response programming	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	○ ^a	○	—	●	●	●	—	—	—	—	○	○

^a Errors in the baseline report have been adjusted.

Key: — Information not available ○ Not yet started ● Partly/under development ● Implementation underway ● Completed^d ● BL – Baseline ● MTR – Mid-term review

3 ASEAN Secretariat, *Ending violence against children in ASEAN Member States. Baseline study of priority areas under the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children: A snapshot as of 2016*, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 2017.

4 In the baseline, 'completed' and 'implementation underway' were grouped together as one. To allow for better visibility of progress made since the Baseline Study, these two categories have been separated in the mid-term review.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children 2016-2025 was adopted in November 2015 to support implementation of the 2013 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children in ASEAN. It aims to institutionalize policies and support to end violence against children across sectors and ensure that effective prevention and protection services supported by national legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms are in place to address violence against children in the 10 ASEAN Member States⁵.

The Regional Plan of Action consists of 69 actions at national and/or regional level across eight key areas⁶, which are considered necessary to end violence against children. To assist Member States with implementation, the Regional Plan of Action identified 13 actions as priority areas for the first five years. These focus on:

1. The ASEAN Guidelines on a Non-Violent Approach to Nurture, Care and Development of Children;
2. Awareness raising campaigns on all forms of violence against children;
3. Alternative family care services;
4. Preventive measures against violence in cyberspace;
5. Child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms;
6. Protection and support services for children affected by violence;
7. Legislative reviews on violence against children;
8. Diversion programmes and other alternative measures to judicial proceedings and detention;
9. Advocacy materials to generate awareness on violence against children;
10. National data systems on violence against children;
11. National plans of action on all forms of violence against children;
12. Coordination mechanisms for preventing and responding to violence against children in disasters and conflict situations;
13. Technical assistance from United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

The Regional Plan of Action stipulated that a mid-term review⁷ should be undertaken to track progress in implementation and identify gaps and emerging issues. The findings will enable ASEAN Member States to take stock of their progress and to make necessary adjustments to support achievement of actions within the Regional Plan of Action at national level.

5 Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

6 Prevention; protection, response and support services; legal framework, prosecution and justice system; capacity building; research and data collection; management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation; partnerships and collaboration; and regional review and communication.

7 Given that the High-Level Political Forum and the review of SDG 16 will take place in 2019, it was decided that the mid-term review would be undertaken a year early to feed into these processes.

The findings will also be useful for Member States as they report on their progress under relevant targets of the SDGs, including at the 7th United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019. Under the theme *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*, this meeting will review progress on SDG Goal 16, including Target 16.2 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

Objectives

The overall aim of the mid-term review was to analyse the status of implementation of the Regional Plan of Action in the 10 ASEAN Member States. Specifically, the objectives were:

- To measure progress in implementation of the Regional Plan of Action against the priority areas identified for the first five years;
- To share best practices and lessons learnt to assist Member States to implement the Regional Plan of Action; and
- To identify obstacles and constraints encountered and the actions needed to accelerate progress in implementation of the Regional Plan of Action.

Given that the Regional Plan of Action represents an official commitment of the Governments of ASEAN Member States to end violence against children, the review is limited to those initiatives that are led, delivered or carried out in partnership with ASEAN Member States. However, it is acknowledged that civil society, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious groups, the private sector and the United Nations, as well as the media, have played key roles in supporting national and sub-national Governments to prevent and respond to violence against children, as well as tackling violence through their own programmes.

Methodology

The mid-term review was primarily based on a desk review of relevant documents and national consultations with key stakeholders. The desk review involved examination of existing studies, reports and legal and policy documents since 2016, both for the region and for each ASEAN Member State. This included reports relating to Universal Periodic Reviews, United Nations Treaty Bodies, in particular the Committee on the Rights of the Child, SDG Voluntary National Reviews, ASEAN, individual Member States, international and regional organizations, and international, regional and local non-governmental organizations. This review informed the design of the national consultations.

One-day national consultations were held in nine ASEAN Member States⁸ between February and April 2019. Key stakeholders included government representatives, law enforcement agencies, local NGOs and civil society representatives, children and young people, academics and experts, United Nations agencies and international organizations, as well as representatives from the private sector. During this consultation, participants reviewed progress of the Regional Plan of Action against the status in the Baseline Study, and provided inputs on lessons learnt, challenges, gaps and future plans.

This summary report focuses on the progress made in 12 priority areas of the Regional Plan of Action against the indicators set in the Baseline Study (see Table 2) and the status of progress at that point. Priority action 13 on technical assistance was not included in this review. Progress against additional actions of the Regional Plan of Action that has been made by ASEAN Member States is captured in the full report and country profiles⁹.

⁸ Singapore carried out a desk review only.

⁹ Publication is forthcoming November 2019 for the 35th Summit of the ASEAN Heads of State.

Table 2: Summary of the Regional Plan of Action’s priority actions and respective indicators for the baseline study

Priority actions of the Regional Plan of Action	Regional Plan of Action indicators	Baseline study indicators
<p>1. Develop ASEAN Guidelines on the non-violent approach to nurture, care, and development of children in all settings (e.g. home, school, community, juvenile justice centre, alternative care institutions).</p>	<p>ASEAN guidelines for non-violent child nurturing developed.</p>	<p>1.a ASEAN Guidelines for non-violent child nurturing developed.</p> <p>1.b Number of ASEAN Member States that contextualize the ASEAN Guidelines for application and implementation at national and local levels, and provide free and easy-to-access information to parents, caregivers, and communities to improve their skills and understanding.</p>
<p>2. Raise awareness among all sectors of society on the harmful effects of all forms of violence against children through formal and informal education (e.g. traditional and social media) to promote change in attitudes, behaviours and practices).</p>	<p>Number of ASEAN Member States conducting awareness raising campaigns on all forms of violence against children.</p>	<p>2. Number of ASEAN Member States conducting systematic behaviour change campaign/s on all forms of violence against children (e.g. through mass media and community participation) disaggregated by setting if relevant.</p>
<p>3. Promote the deinstitutionalization of children especially those aged three years and under to reduce violence by strengthening the implementation of alternative family care services (e.g. adoption, foster and kinship care, and legal guardianship).</p>	<p>Number of ASEAN Member States with alternative family care services.</p>	<p>3. Number of ASEAN Member States which have developed and are implementing legislative and/or policy framework for alternative family care services (i.e. adoption, kinship care, foster care, legal guardianship, other forms).</p>
<p>4. Develop preventive measures against violence in cyberspace (e.g. bullying and sexual exploitation) and ensure that these measures are extended to all settings including homes, schools, communities, and the business sector.</p>	<p>Number of ASEAN Member States which have developed preventive measures against violence in cyberspace.</p>	<p>4. Number of ASEAN Member States which have developed and are implementing preventive measures against violence against children in cyberspace (i.e. national policy/strategy, education programmes, industry engagement).</p>
<p>5. Create and/or strengthen a child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanism for children and/or their representatives to file their violence against children grievances and enable such a mechanism to facilitate effective and timely remedies.</p>	<p>Number of ASEAN Member States providing such services and number of services available by type and by setting.</p>	<p>5. Number of ASEAN Member States providing child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms for children and/or their representatives to file their violence against children grievances (by type and by setting).</p>

Priority actions of the Regional Plan of Action	Regional Plan of Action indicators	Baseline study indicators
6. Improve protection and support services for children affected by violence including physical and psychosocial rehabilitation, counselling services in schools and communities, appointment of guardian(s), legal assistance, shelter/housing, provision of life skills development, peer to peer and family support.	Number of ASEAN Member States providing protective services, number of services by type of violence and by setting.	6. Number of ASEAN Member States providing protective and support services for children affected by violence (by type of violence and setting if relevant).
7. Undertake a legislative review to ensure that legislation relevant to children’s protection from violence, is in full conformity with applicable international human rights standards, including but not limited to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional Protocols.	Number of ASEAN Member States that undertake a legislative review on violence against children vis-à-vis applicable international human rights standards.	7. Number of ASEAN Member States that undertake a legislative review on violence against children vis-à-vis applicable international human rights standards.
8. Reduce the recourse to judicial proceedings and deprivation of liberty through diversion and other alternative measures, and in addition, protect children from all forms of violence through development of laws, policies, capacities and quality alternatives to judicial proceedings and deprivation of liberty.	Number of ASEAN Member States which implement diversion programmes and/or other alternative measures to judicial proceedings and detention.	8. Number of ASEAN Member States which have developed and are implementing a legislative and/or policy framework for diversion programmes and/or other alternative measures to judicial proceedings and detention.
9. Develop advocacy materials for various audiences (e.g. parliamentarians, helpline personnel, emergency responders, humanitarian actors, community leaders, leaders of faith-based organizations, people in business, relevant public employees, prosecutors, law enforcers, and media staff and civil society organizations) to generate awareness and support ending violence against children.	Number of advocacy materials developed.	9. Number of ASEAN Member States that develop and disseminate advocacy materials for various audiences to generate awareness and support to end violence against children (by content and medium, i.e. handbook, online training, etc.).

Priority actions of the Regional Plan of Action	Regional Plan of Action indicators	Baseline study indicators
<p>10. Develop and strengthen national systems for disaggregated data collection, analysis, sharing and dissemination on violence against children using international indicators and research protocols including survey and administrative data, to be used for policy formulation, planning and programme development on ending violence against children. Ensure that the data is regularly updated and analysed.</p>	<p>Number of countries with disaggregated data on violence against children.</p>	<p>10.a Number of ASEAN Member States using survey data in national policy documents on violence against children.</p> <p>10.b Number of ASEAN Member States with a reliable and consistent national system for consolidation of data on violence against children.</p> <p>10.c Number of ASEAN Member States with data on violence against children disaggregated, such as by age, ethnicity, gender and disability status.</p>
<p>11. Develop and/or strengthen national plans of action to eliminate all forms of violence against children with participation of all relevant stakeholders, including children, at all stages of the process and ensure a coordinating mechanism for its implementation.</p>	<p>Number of ASEAN Member States with national plans of action on ending violence against children developed/strengthened with participation of all relevant stakeholders including children at all stages of the process with a coordinating mechanism for implementation.</p>	<p>11. Number of ASEAN Member States with a national coordinating framework or national plans of action with a coordinating mechanism for implementation on ending violence against children developed/strengthened with participation of all relevant stakeholders including children at all stages of the process.</p>
<p>12. Create or incorporate a coordination mechanism into existing structures to prevent and respond to violence against children in disasters and conflict situations.</p>	<p>Number of ASEAN Member States with coordination mechanisms at national and local levels that prevent and respond to violence against children in disasters and conflict situations.</p>	<p>12. Number of ASEAN Member States that include violence against children in emergency-response programming.</p>

Moving forward, it is recommended that an additional set of concrete indicators are developed to address the outstanding actions over the remaining five-year period of the Regional Plan of Action. This will support ASEAN Member States to assess progress against the full set of actions within the Regional Plan of Action.

MAIN FINDINGS

ACTION 1: Prevention

1. Non-violent approach to nurture, care and development of children in all settings

Action: Develop ASEAN Guidelines on the non-violent approach to nurture, care, and development of children in all settings (e.g. homes, schools, communities, juvenile justice centres, alternative care institutions).

Indicator 1a: ASEAN Guidelines for non-violent child nurturing developed.

Baseline 2016: Achieved.

Indicator 1.b:¹⁰ Number of ASEAN Member States that contextualise the ASEAN Guidelines for application and implementation at national and local levels, and provide free and easy-to-access information to parents, caregivers and communities to improve their skills and understanding.

Baseline 2016: 1 (implementation underway); 2 (partly/under development); 1 (not yet started); 6 (information not available)

Mid-term review 2019: 2 (implementation underway); 7 (partly/under development); 1 (information not available)

The ASEAN Guidelines for a Non-Violent Approach to Nurture, Care and Development of Children in All Settings¹¹ (hereafter referred to as the ASEAN Guidelines) were adopted by the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children in 2016. They aim to serve as guidance to all those who nurture and care for children to enable them to attain their full potential and wellbeing and work towards the elimination of violence against children. The ASEAN Guidelines were developed for use by Member States, with a recommendation that they adopt or adapt the Guidelines at the national and local levels in accordance with national and local contexts and circumstances.

The Baseline Study reported that only two countries – **Thailand** and **Viet Nam** – had contextualized the ASEAN Guidelines into the national context. In **Thailand**, a Thai version of the Guidelines was approved by the Cabinet in late 2016. In **Viet Nam**, the Guidelines were adopted by the Ministry of Education and Training in the development and implementation of its Five-Year Plan on Child Protection in Schools (2016-2020). Viet Nam's Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs also used the Guidelines to inform the development of the National Programme on Child Protection (2016-2020). Implementation of the Guidelines at national level is now underway in both countries.

As of June 2019, nine ASEAN Member States are using the Guidelines for application and implementation at national and local levels, with a focus on home and school settings. **Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines,**

¹⁰ Action 1(b) in the Regional Plan of Action states: "Contextualize the ASEAN Guideline (as it appears in No. 1) for suitable application and implementation in respective ASEAN Member States and provide free and easy access to information and support to parents, caregivers, and communities to improve their skills and understanding on positive discipline, ensure non-violent interactive communication and relationship with children, child nurture, child care, and promote an enabling environment for effective child development and learning." Although not a priority action, the baseline survey also sought to measure progress in this area given that Action 1(a) (development of the Guideline) had already been achieved.

¹¹ ASEAN Secretariat, *The ASEAN Guidelines for a Non-Violent Approach to Nurture, Care and Development of Children in All Settings*, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 2016.

Thailand and **Viet Nam** have introduced parenting support programmes that specifically include violence reduction modules, while **Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar** and **Viet Nam** have adopted strategic approaches that tackle violence in schools, including positive discipline in the classroom.

For example, **Cambodia** has developed a Positive Parenting Strategy 2017-2021 based on the ASEAN Guidelines and has rolled out a parenting toolkit in 10 provinces. A Positive Discipline in School Training Toolkit was also approved by the Ministry of Education and rolled out from 2017. By the end of December 2018, teachers and school principals had been reached with evidence-based teachers training on positive discipline and effective classroom management in a total of 804 primary schools, benefitting approximately 241,200 girls and boys. In **Lao PDR**, the Lao Women's Union began to develop an integrated parenting package in 2018 to support a broader strategy to improve early childhood outcomes for Lao children. The package includes key child protection messages, including promotion of positive discipline, promotion of birth registration and the importance of raising children in families, preventing child marriage and ensuring children stay in school. In **Malaysia** the National Population and Family Development Board, in collaboration with the University of Putra Malaysia and UNICEF, has strengthened its parenting support interventions (Parenting for Lifelong Health) by reviewing and updating existing parenting modules and their delivery mechanisms. Initial results from piloting the new materials among parents has shown an increase in parental understanding of the importance of reducing all forms of violence against children and implementation of positive forms of discipline. In **Myanmar**, a national Positive Discipline Taskforce was formed in May 2018 to develop and adapt positive discipline approaches and methods. This guidance will mainly be used for parents and caregivers but will eventually be available for use by teachers in schools. Led by the Department of Social Welfare, with technical support from Save the Children, World Vision, UNICEF and other agencies, positive discipline community awareness trainings for caregivers, including monastic institutions, were conducted in Pakuku, Magwe, Kayah and emergency areas, including Rakhine State and Northern Shan State. A Positive Discipline Manual is also being developed for use by parents and caregivers, which will later be utilized by teachers in schools as well. In the **Philippines**, the Department of Social Welfare and Development is currently adapting and testing the Parenting for Lifelong Health programme to promote a non-violent approach to child discipline. This initiative aims to build capacity in using evidenced-based approaches to engage parents to reduce the risk of violence against children and improve child wellbeing. **Thailand** has focused on developing a parenting curriculum on positive discipline for raising awareness of parents at provincial level (see Box 1). **Viet Nam** developed a parenting education programme with a core component on positive parenting. The programme is currently being piloted and will be replicated upon success by 2020.

The progress under this priority action reflects increased recognition among policymakers in ASEAN Member States that parenting support interventions are critical to reducing violence, and that stable and more secure families can play a vital role in improving child development outcomes, in turn bolstering social development and contributing to economic growth. However, ASEAN Member States need to accelerate plans and strategies on positive discipline and further contextualise the ASEAN Guidelines for use in all settings, including juvenile justice centres and alternative care institutions. Likewise, further steps are required by all Member States to more effectively target vulnerable parents and families, including those with children with disabilities, to provide parenting support throughout a child's life cycle, especially for parents and families of adolescents; to ensure that user-friendly information and training materials in local languages are made available to inform and support them to adopt positive parenting practices; and to tackle social norms which tolerate or support physical discipline. While there is evidence from national surveys that caregiver attitudes towards violent discipline of children are gradually improving in some countries, such as **Lao PDR**¹², continued efforts are required by all Member States to address the social norms that perpetuate violence.

12 Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017: Survey findings report*, Lao Statistics Bureau and UNICEF, Vientiane, 2018.

It is also important to consider how promising initiatives can be effectively scaled up nationwide, while retaining quality and impact. In addition, robust evaluations of positive parenting programmes are essential to ensure they reduce the risk of child maltreatment and increase the abandonment of harsh parenting practices.

Box 1. THAILAND: Piloting a parenting programme for young children

In Thailand, the Ministry of Public Health is collaborating with the University of Oxford and UNICEF to adapt, test and pilot a parenting programme for young children aged 2 to 9 among low-income families. The programme, called Parenting for Lifelong Health, aims to reduce the risk of violence against children (physical and emotional violence and child neglect) in early childhood, improve positive parenting behaviour and reduce parental stress while improving social support. It was originally developed based on parenting programmes that have been tested in the UK, US, Australia, the Netherlands and Hong Kong. In order to determine cultural appropriateness, effectiveness in the Thai context and potential for scaling-up the intervention, a feasibility study and randomized controlled trial is being implemented in a selected province in North Eastern Thailand. This includes testing of the programme in hospital settings and building the knowledge and skills of public health practitioners to deliver high quality parenting education and support. Thailand was the second country in Asia (after the Philippines) and the first country in the Greater Mekong sub-region to pilot and test a Parenting for Lifelong Health programme.

2. Awareness raising and behaviour change communication on all forms of violence against children

Action: Raise awareness among all sectors of society on the harmful effects of all forms of violence against children through formal and informal education (e.g. traditional and social media) to promote change in attitudes, behaviours and practices.

Indicator 2:¹³ Number of ASEAN Member States conducting systematic behaviour change campaign/s on all forms of violence against children (e.g. through mass media and community participation) disaggregated by setting if relevant.

Baseline 2016: 9 (partly/under development); 1 (information not available)

Mid-term review 2019: 1 (implementation underway); 9 (partly/under development)

Raising awareness about violence against children is an important step towards modifying attitudes, behaviours and policies that are supportive of violent behaviour. Heightened public awareness can lead to increased dialogue, supporting the transformation of attitudes and bringing about changes in behaviour and beliefs in the long-term. Behaviour change campaigns that challenge negative cultural and social norms can therefore help to reduce and prevent violent behaviour and encourage reporting of violence if it occurs.

While all ASEAN Member States are engaged in awareness raising on violence against children, **Cambodia** is the only Member State which has adopted and is implementing a national communication strategy to end violence against children¹⁴, reflecting a more systematic approach to changing behaviour. However, all other Member States are implementing behaviour change campaigns to raise awareness about different forms of violence against children and to challenge harmful attitudes and norms that perpetuate it. For example,

¹³ The indicator for priority action 2 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: "Number of ASEAN Member States conducting awareness raising campaigns on all forms of violence against children." The indicator for the purposes of the baseline captured the intent of the action, which is to promote behaviour change. It also provided more specificity on the types of campaigns to be counted, i.e. an ad-hoc, one-off event would not be captured.

¹⁴ Ministry of Women's Affairs, Cambodia *PROTECT: A Communication Strategy to End Violence against Children and Unnecessary Family Separation in Cambodia 2017-2022*, 2017.

in [Indonesia](#), the Government has been implementing a student-led social norms change programme with district governments since 2016 in South Sulawesi and Central Java called Roots Indonesia to address peer violence, including bullying. The city of Semarang, Central Java and the provinces of South Sulawesi have committed to replicating the programme in schools. The provincial government in Central Java has already trained 130 facilitators in 34 cities and districts, while the city government of Semarang committed a budget to scale up the programme to 100 schools by 2019. So far, over 10,000 students have been reached through government-led replication. The national Government has also committed to scaling up the programme in seven provinces. In [Lao PDR](#), the National Plan of Action on Mothers and Children (2016-2020) includes a specific programme on awareness-raising and public events in relation to children's rights. On World Children's Day in 2018, more than 3,000 children, families and high-level officials gathered in Vientiane to talk about children's rights. Among the issues that children raised as being of concern to them were violence against children in homes and in schools. In [Malaysia](#), the Department of Social Welfare has continued to implement the Save and Protect: Wise Kid Campaign in schools, which raises awareness about safety and protection, including in the online world. The awareness programme has reached 250 schools benefitting around 65,000 children. In the [Philippines](#), as part of the national Plan of Action to End Violence against Children (2018), provincial-level campaigns have been carried out to raise awareness about the harmful effects of violence against children and to influence long-term behavioural change. In [Viet Nam](#), positive parenting messages, especially on the role of fathers in caring for their children, were delivered in 2018 through various campaigns such as Baby Talk and Father's Day. Furthermore, an End Violence against Children Campaign, focusing on violence in schools, helped to generate awareness of the scale of violence against children and highlight positive approaches to child discipline. On World Children's Day in 2018, this campaign reached over 800,000 people. Also, in [Cambodia](#), 100,000 children, adolescents and youths were reached with core messages to prevent violence, especially sexual abuse, as part of the 16-Day Campaign against Violence against Women and Children. An additional 28,927 people (mostly adolescents and youths) were reached through the Youth Online TV on Facebook with messages to prevent violence against children.

Box 2. MALAYSIA: Campaigning to end violence in schools

In 2017, a Malaysian student was bullied and beaten and eventually died. In response, multiple stakeholders from the Government, ITU, civil society organizations, NGOs and UNICEF worked together to develop a StandTogether campaign to end violence in schools. The campaign's vision is to end violence against children through promoting restorative practices, and kindness as an effective tool to educate, empower and engage young people to end violence in any form.

In 2018, the StandTogether campaign reached 940 teachers, 750 schools and around 5.7 million video views. The second phase of the campaign is currently underway and has already reached over 10,000 people (including more than 2,000 teachers and 4,100 students) and received more than 6 million views on Facebook. As part of the campaign, a Kindness Tour is underway with workshops taking place across Malaysia. There are plans to test these workshops with marginalized communities as part of the campaign's extension plan.

Box 3. CAMBODIA: Mobilising faith-leaders to promote positive social norms to combat violence against children

The Ministry of Cults and Religion has partnered with World Vision International and Buddhist monks in Cambodia to help address the high levels of violence against children and address prevailing social norms that are harmful to children. Together, they have formed a cross-faith Technical Working Group to review sessions and suggest appropriate contextualization of World Vision International's global project model, called Channels of Hope for Child Protection, applicable for target Buddhist communities. Channels of Hope for Child Protection equips faith leaders with information and technical content on child protection and links their understanding of these with the religious teachings, scriptures and faith principles. The child protection materials are contextualized to suit local needs, enabling the Buddhist faith leaders to engage followers and practice the curriculum within their own faith communities.

Supported by the Ministry of Cults and Religion and World Vision, the first workshop was conducted in 2017 with 32 Buddhist monks of two denominations. They learned about key concepts and themes on child protection and linked them with Buddhist teachings and principles. The monks actively debated and discussed how their faith communities could tackle violence against children. At the end of the workshop, 12 monks volunteered to form a Technical Working Group with five key World Vision staff. This group meets on a regular basis to contextualize activities and learning points that Buddhist communities can use for teaching purposes. The Technical Working Group is also finalizing a local manual in the Khmer language for easy use and access to relevant child protection information. So far, 129 faith leaders in Cambodia have been trained on the Channels of Hope for Child Protection approach. More than 95 per cent of them reported increased knowledge on child protection after participation in workshops and 85 per cent reported increased motivation to act on behalf of the most vulnerable children.

While interventions that attempt to raise awareness about violence and alter cultural and social norms to prevent it are widespread in ASEAN Member States, interventions tend to be ad-hoc and campaign based, limited in reach and targeted only at specific groups, such as school children, young people or parents. It is important for Member States to consider broadening and scaling-up behaviour change strategies, for example by integrating prevention messages on violence against children and gender equality into the school curriculum and promoting the use of non-violent teaching and learning methods into teacher training. There is also a need to ensure that more focused interventions in schools and communities are supported by comprehensive mass media awareness-raising campaigns. Given that changing behaviour takes time, dedicated resources are required to sustain these interventions over the long-term.

A fundamental challenge faced by nearly all Member States in addressing social norms and harmful cultural practices is how to deliver effective messages that change – and sustain these changes – in the mindsets and behaviours of caregivers and communities to increase the use of non-violent discipline. This is especially challenging in contexts of complex cultural, language and ethnic diversity. Therefore, when designing strategies and materials, it is important to consider local languages/dialects, localised contexts, key influencers and using the most effective formats and platforms that are also scalable in terms of cost and quality. Furthermore, there are few examples in the region of behaviour change initiatives being thoroughly evaluated, making it difficult to assess their effectiveness. Rigorous evaluations of behaviour change interventions are critical to gain a better understanding of what works most effectively in a given context and where future investments should be prioritized.

3. Deinstitutionalization of children and strengthening alternative family care services

Action: Promote the deinstitutionalization of children especially those aged three years and under to reduce violence by strengthening the implementation of alternative family care services (e.g. adoption¹⁵, foster and kinship care, and legal guardianship).

Indicator 3:¹⁶ Number of ASEAN Member States which have developed and are implementing legislative and/or policy frameworks for alternative family care services (i.e. adoption, kinship care, foster care, legal guardianship, other forms).

Baseline 2016: 10 (partly/under development)

Mid-term review 2019: 2 (implementation underway); 8 (partly/under development)

There is wide recognition of the adverse impacts of institutionalization on developmental outcomes and children's wellbeing. The impacts range from impaired social and interpersonal development, including difficulties with forming secure attachments to caregivers, to delayed cognitive and language development. Such children are also at heightened risk for psychopathology and exposure to abuse.¹⁷ Wherever possible, support should be provided to ensure children can remain with their families, and, in situations where children cannot remain with their parents/families, alternative family-based care is available.

The main reasons for children entering alternative care differ across countries. In high income countries, most children in care are placed in institutions as a result of state interventions due to child protection concerns about abuse and neglect. In low and middle-income countries, the drivers are more diverse. Many children are relinquished into care by their parents due to social factors such as poverty, parental migration, death of a parent or disability. The way in which alternative care is provided also differs. In high income countries the majority of children are placed in foster care, predominantly with carers outside of their kinship group and who have no pre-existing connection with the child. In low and middle-income countries, however, a larger number of children are placed in institutions, such as orphanages, boarding schools and temples.¹⁸

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has continued to express concern in its Concluding Observations to State Party Reports of ASEAN Member States about the increasing number of institutionalized children and has called for countries to adopt strategies towards deinstitutionalization and exploring alternative care with families and communities.

15 The action includes 'adoption' but according to the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, alternative care includes formal and informal care of children without parental care and once adopted, children would be said to be in parental care. Notwithstanding, 'adoption' has been included given many countries in the region are still in the process of regulating/formalizing these processes.

16 The indicator for priority action 3 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: "*Number of ASEAN Member States with alternative family care services*". Given many countries are still in the stage of developing law and policy, the indicator for the purposes of the baseline also captured this stage so that progress can be tracked.

17 Petrowski, N., Cappa, C. and Gross, P., 'Estimating the number of children in formal alternative care: Challenges and results', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Vol. 70, August 2017, pp. 388-398.

18 Rogers, J., Karunan, V. and Kanthamenee L., 'It's time to move forward: Practitioner and policy actor perceptions of alternative care for children in Thailand', University of Bath – UK, Thammasat University – Bangkok and Mahidol University – Bangkok, 2018 (unpublished).

The Baseline Study recorded that all 10 ASEAN Member States had at least partly developed a framework for alternative family care services. While the placement of children in institutions continues to be a concern, there have also been increasing efforts in Member States to start reversing this trend. **Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand** and **Viet Nam** have all strengthened their frameworks and procedures for alternative family-based care, while **Malaysia, Myanmar** and the **Philippines** are implementing programmes to expand family-based arrangements.

In **Cambodia**, the Government continued implementation of the Action Plan for Improving Child Care, which was approved in October 2016. As a result, since 2015 the number of residential care institutions in Cambodia has decreased by 35 per cent and the number of children reported to be living in residential care has decreased by approximately 54 per cent. Cambodia has also introduced a more rigorous digital system to inspect children living in residential care facilities and to monitor children undergoing reintegration. In **Indonesia**, the Government adopted the Regulation on Child Care in 2017, which shifts policy away from institutional care of children to promotion of family-based care. The regulation states that childcare within a family setting shall be the main priority, and that childcare by a social institution shall be the last option. The regulation imposes a ban on corporal punishment, which is the first time that a complete ban on corporal punishment has been enacted in child-care settings. **Malaysia** is planning to pilot a family-based care initiative in the state of Negri Sembilan later in 2019. The Department of Social Welfare has developed the relevant standard operating procedures and training modules, with training of stakeholders scheduled for June 2019. In **Myanmar**, the first-ever National Foster Care Guidelines were developed and finalized in 2018 and are awaiting final endorsement. In the last five years, the Government has also been piloting formal foster care models in selected townships in Mandalay and Yangon Region, along with the adoption of the Guidelines on Foster Care, such as foster care, adoption and group homes, among others. The first ever Minimum Standards of Care and Protection of children in all residential facilities and the National Guidelines on Registration and Support of Voluntary Organizations were adopted in 2017. The **Philippines** has developed and is implementing alternative family care arrangements. In **Thailand**, the Government has expanded its Child Safeguarding Policy to cover all 29 government residential care institutions and is implementing tracking tools for children in alternative care. In **Viet Nam**, the Government has developed a new Decree (Decree No. 24/2019) to guide implementation of child adoption and has promulgated legal provisions to strengthen the family-based alternative care system through cash transfers and administrative registration procedures.

In addition to strengthening the legislative and policy framework, public education is also necessary to change societal attitudes towards childcare and institutionalization. This is essential to inform families about the harmful effects of institutionalization, as well as the non-institutional solutions for the care of their children. Creating a system of alternative care also requires sufficient numbers of families and caregivers who are willing to be foster parents and guardians and sufficient numbers of trained social workers who can provide training and support to foster carers. Awareness raising and attitude change is also needed to recruit caregivers.

Cambodia has been implementing a behaviour change campaign since 2014 to raise awareness among the general population and vulnerable communities about the importance of family-based care for children. The campaign, called 'Keeping Families Together', is implemented through a tripartite partnership between the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, UNICEF and NGOs – led by Friends International. The campaign is estimated to have reached more than 2.2 million people through media coverage, radio spots and trainings of key influencers in poor communities. Two complementary campaigns – 'Don't Create More Orphans' and 'Children Are not Tourist Attractions' – are estimated to have informed 1.5 million people (tourists, international and national donors and stakeholders) about the harmful effects of institutionalization and the need to fund family-based programmes.

Box 4. CAMBODIA: Capacity Development Plan for Family Support, Foster Care and Adoption

In 2018, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation launched the Capacity Development Plan for Family Support, Foster Care and Adoption. The Plan consists of short-, medium- and long-term actions to effectively and efficiently implement foster care, adoption and family support in the country. The Plan was developed based on the findings of an independent assessment commissioned by the Ministry. It was jointly carried out by the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law and the international NGO International Social Service.

The Capacity Development Plan identifies two major remaining challenges that need to be addressed before Cambodia resumes inter-country adoption. Firstly, inter-country adoption should be properly integrated into the domestic child protection system, with domestic family-based care solutions prioritized. Secondly, the existing legal framework must be adequately implemented by ensuring that all authorities taking part in the adoption procedure have the necessary powers, resources, knowledge, and experience concerning child protection and adoption. The Plan represents a significant step forward in Cambodia's ongoing childcare reform. It will be used to inform a national framework of fostering and adoption and to improve the processes for inter-country adoption. As a key priority for its implementation, national guideline procedures are being developed and are expected to be implemented in 2019.

Children in institutional care are particularly vulnerable to violence, especially children with disabilities. Standards of registration, care and inspection are required alongside more effective enforcement and monitoring of policies and procedures in institutional settings at both national and sub-national levels to ensure children are effectively cared for and protected from violence. One area of concern raised during national consultations in a number of ASEAN Member States is violence against children in religious institutions. While data is largely unavailable, there are increasing reports¹⁹ in many Member States about violence perpetrated against young boys and girls in these settings, including in some religious boarding schools and orphanages. Despite the sensitivity of this issue and the recognition that religious groups are often attempting to plug a gap in the provision of care, more research is needed to establish the scale and nature of violence within religious institutions. At the same time, it is important that all institutions caring for children are registered, that they are governed by national care standards, and that statutory inspection systems are in place to monitor standards of care for children and to enforce national child protection policies and procedures.

Prevention of child abandonment and placement of children in institutions requires support for disadvantaged and at-risk families, including families of children with disabilities, through a range of measures, including a strong social protection system, psychosocial support and investment in early childhood initiatives. Robust gatekeeping mechanisms, complemented by family- and community-based alternatives, are also critical to reducing unnecessary institutionalization. Clear strategies for deinstitutionalizing children already in care and the identification and establishment of the types and scale of care options required to meet child vulnerabilities in the country should be put in place. It is critical this is pursued within a wider process to strengthen the child protection system and the social service workforce to ensure that children at risk of abandonment, violence or removal from their home, children who are reintegrated from institutional care and children placed in alternative care settings (as well as their caregivers) can be effectively supported by trained social workers. Advocacy is also needed where ministries and government agencies tend to use a more "institutional mind-set" to addressing the needs of child victims of violence, especially at sub-national levels, and encourage them to explore more ways to collaborate with local government agencies, community groups, religious groups, and NGOs/civil society to enable children to be supported in their communities wherever possible.

¹⁹ This was highlighted as a concern in several national consultations that were conducted as part of this mid-term review process.

Finally, increased advocacy using evidence-based research is essential to challenge current practices and policy myths about the costs of family-based care and small-scale residential institutions and acknowledge the reality of the costly economic choice of maintaining and running large scale institutions, as well as the detrimental impact of institutional care on children.

4. Preventing violence against children in cyberspace

Action: Develop preventive measures against violence in cyberspace (e.g. bullying and sexual exploitation) and ensure that these measures are extended to all settings including homes, schools, communities, and the business sector.

Indicator 4:²⁰ Number of ASEAN Member States which have developed and are implementing preventive measures against violence against children in cyberspace (i.e. national policy/strategy, education programmes, industry engagement).

Baseline 2016: 1 (implementation underway); 8 (partly/under development); 1 (not yet started)

Mid-term review 2019: 3 (implementation underway); 7 (partly/under development)

Children in ASEAN Member States are active users of the Internet. Recent data shows that 44 million Internet users in the Philippines are children under the age of 17. In Indonesia, 60 per cent of children are accessing the Internet through mobile devices. Internet use among children in Cambodia is also growing, with almost 1 in 20 children under 15 estimated to be online.²¹ While the Internet provides significant opportunities for children to access information and entertainment and to learn, communicate and engage with others, the online environment also poses unique threats to their safety and wellbeing, including sexual abuse and exploitation, bullying, and infringements of privacy. This has become even more pronounced with the widespread presence of mobile devices, making online access for children less supervised and often blurring the boundaries between a child's online and offline worlds.

The need to keep children safe online has received increasing attention by ASEAN Member States in the past few years. At the ASEAN regional level important advancements have been made in this regard. In February 2018, the ASEAN Regional Dialogue on Child Online Sexual Exploitation was held in Jakarta, resulting in a commitment to work across ASEAN sectoral bodies to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse and exploitation online. Significant progress has been made on two recommendations that came out of this conference, namely producing a set of minimum legal standards for the region on child sexual abuse and exploitation online and an ASEAN Declaration on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Online. In 2018, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly met in Indonesia to work on strengthening legal frameworks to prevent child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism and online through the development of a set of minimum legal standards to protect children. Meanwhile, the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children began the process of drafting an ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Children from all Forms of Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the ASEAN, which is due to be finalized in 2019. In addition, the ASEAN Heads of State adopted the ASEAN Leaders Statement on Cyber-Security Cooperation at the 32nd ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 2018. This Statement reaffirmed that international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, also applies to the information and communications technology (ICT) environment. A Child Online Protection Strategy Framework is also being developed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and ASEAN in line with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Information and Communications Technology Masterplan 2020. This strategy aims

²⁰ The indicator for priority action 4 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: "Number of ASEAN Member States which developed preventative measures against violence in cyberspace". The indicator for the purposes of the baseline sought to provide clarity on the types of preventive measures which should be tracked.

²¹ UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific, 'Keeping children safe online in East Asia and the Pacific', Bangkok, 2019.

to harmonise legislative frameworks on online child protection, promote multi-stakeholder collaboration, and develop a comprehensive capacity building programme for different stakeholders.²²

Progress at the national level has kept pace with regional developments. As of June 2019, all Member States were developing or implementing one or more preventive measures to protect children against violence online. While this is only a small increase to the nine countries at baseline (the exception was Myanmar), most preventive measures are now in a more advanced stage of development or implementation.

The Baseline Study focused on three components to measure progress in relation to preventing violence against children in cyberspace: 1) National policy or strategy relating to children's online protection; 2) education programmes on digital citizenship and online safety, including programmes for parents and carers, teachers, practitioners and faith representatives; and 3) industry involvement to remove and block online child abuse content in accordance with relevant statutory provisions as well as efforts to innovate and contribute to community efforts to prevent violence in cyberspace. These components were drawn from the WeProtect Model National Response to Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,²³ which helps countries to establish and develop coordinated national responses to online child sexual exploitation. To date, five ASEAN Member States (**Cambodia**, **Indonesia**, the **Philippines**, **Thailand** and **Viet Nam**) are members of the WeProtect Global Alliance and have committed to develop or strengthen their national response with reference to the Model National Response.

With regard to *national policies or strategies*, four countries (**Brunei Darussalam**, **Malaysia**, **Thailand** and **Viet Nam**) were reported as having or undertaking dedicated national strategies or programmes to address violence against children online at the time of the Baseline Study. Since then, plans for a National Programme on Child Online Protection in **Viet Nam** were discontinued and child online protection was instead integrated into the National Programme on Child Protection. Since the Baseline Study, one other ASEAN country (the **Philippines**) has adopted a national plan to address online violence, while in **Indonesia** a national road map on child online protection is under development - the Ministry of Communication and Informatics began to draft a national Child Protection Online Roadmap in 2017, designed to guide stakeholders (government and law enforcement agencies, civil society groups, industries, community members including parents and children) to actively promote access to a safe Internet and develop an online child protection system for children and adolescents. In the **Philippines**, the Government approved a National Response Plan to Address Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in 2016, led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography, composed of governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Plan was designed to support the Government's response to the increasing risks/threats of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children and details the key result areas, core strategies and planned outcome that will guide child online protection work within a three-year planning horizon. Two other countries (**Cambodia** and **Lao PDR**) have explicitly included child online violence in broader national plans addressing violence against children.

22 Singh, R., 'Mapping online child safety in Asia and the Pacific', *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, September 2018, pp. 651–664.

23 See: <http://www.weprotect.org>. Refer also to: UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Child protection in the digital age: National responses to online child sexual abuse and exploitation in ASEAN Member States*, Bangkok, 2016, which uses the framework of the WeProtect Model National Response to map ASEAN Member States' efforts to address online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Table 3. Country-by-country summary of national strategies or plans to address violence against children online, as of June 2019

Member State	National strategy or policy
Brunei Darussalam	Child Online Protection National Strategy Framework, set up in March 2013.
Cambodia	Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017-2021), which sets out measures to prevent violence online.
Indonesia	National Child Protection Online Roadmap, under development.
Lao PDR	National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020, which includes the prevention of online abuse and sexual exploitation.
Malaysia	Plan of Action on Child Online Protection, approved in February 2015.
Myanmar	--
Philippines	National Response Plan to Address Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2016-2020).
Singapore	--
Thailand	National Strategy on the Promotion and Protection of Children and Youth using Online Media (2017-2021).
Viet Nam	--

Overall, there is a limited number of educational initiatives specifically targeting child sexual abuse and exploitation in the ASEAN region²⁴. *Education programmes* on online safety are being implemented in at least eight ASEAN Member States – **Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam** – an increase from six countries in the Baseline Study. In **Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, Malaysia** and the **Philippines**, the issue of online safety has been successfully integrated into the school curriculum. In the **Philippines** and **Singapore**, for example, governments have developed cyber-wellness modules for use with students in schools. In November 2018, the Philippine Department of Education launched its #BeCyberSafe project, which includes awareness raising on online sexual abuse and exploitation. In addition, in 2017 the Government of the Philippines organised the first-ever Child Online Protection Summit. In **Cambodia**, the Government is considering the inclusion of online safety into the core curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools. Awareness raising campaigns in schools on online safety have been carried out in the **Philippines** and **Malaysia**, although without an explicit focus on sexual abuse, and with more attention to ‘stranger danger’ than intrafamilial abuse. However, the key messages used promote protective factors for child sexual abuse and exploitation such as encouraging people never to share personal details. Also in **Malaysia**, one campaign uses body safety education as a platform to engage young people and parents and equip them with the skills to protect themselves from sexual exploitation and abuse. Educational initiatives in **Thailand** and **Viet Nam** have parents and caregivers as their primary focus, and aim to equip parents with the information, skills and resources to discuss sensitive child sexual abuse and exploitation-related issues with their children. **Viet Nam** also implemented a nationwide awareness-raising campaign for children and parents on online risks and internet safety in 2018.

²⁴ UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Review of national educational strategies to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation in East Asia and the Pacific* (forthcoming July 2019).

In **Malaysia**, the Government held a forum during parenting month in June 2019, led by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission and UNICEF, to discuss parenting in the digital age. The Government's National Population and Family Development Board has been working to strengthen a number of parenting modules to guide parenting support interventions and the development of a new module on parenting in the digital age. Similarly, in the **Philippines**, the Council on the Welfare of Children and the Department of Information and Communications Technology organized the Digital Parenting Conference on in November 2018, as part of the Government's celebration of National Children's Month.

National awareness raising campaigns aimed at preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation have been carried out outside of the education sector in **Cambodia, Viet Nam, Lao PDR** and **Thailand**, as part of the Child Safe Movement which targets at-risk children who are typically out of school, the wider community and business operators.

Since the end of 2016, at least six ASEAN Member States have scaled up *industry engagement* to prevent violence against children online. National workshops were conducted with the support of UNICEF in **Indonesia, Viet Nam, Malaysia**, and **Cambodia**, bringing together government and the ICT industry to discuss the balance between government internet regulation and industry self-regulation for child online protection. For example, in **Indonesia**, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection and the Ministry of Informatics and Telecommunications held a consultation with Government and the private sector on child protection online. Inputs gathered from representatives of the ICT business sector during the consultation are guiding development of a policy brief that will inform further updates to the national Child Protection Online Roadmap. The Ministry of Communication and Informatics is also currently developing a policy framework for cooperation with the private sector. In **Myanmar**, a workshop on child online protection led by the ITU was organised in 2018, which paved the way for development of Myanmar's national roadmap on child online protection. In the **Philippines**, the telecommunications company PLDT-SMART has teamed up with UNICEF to roll out a multi-platform campaign on child online safety. Plans are also underway to use the Children's Rights and Business Principles²⁵ with Internet providers, with the aim of developing a relevant 'code of conduct' to guide Internet service providers on child online protection. In **Viet Nam**, a Network for Child Online Protection was set up in 2018 by the Department of Children's Affairs, under the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, in collaboration with Child Helpline #111 and with financial support from Microsoft Viet Nam.

There are several other notable developments that have taken place in ASEAN Member States in relation to online protection since the Baseline Study in 2016. In **Thailand**, following adoption of the National Strategy on Promotion and Protection of Children and Youth in Using Online Media (2017-2021), the Thai Cabinet approved the establishment of the Child Online Protection Action Thailand Centre in December 2017 to act as a coordinating body to work on prevention and protection of children and youth from online threats. The Centre has recommended revision of related laws on protecting children online, advocated for the suppression of online gambling, and produced information materials to raise awareness about protecting children online. In **Malaysia**, the Government's Communications and Multimedia Commission held a research symposium on digital citizenship and protecting children online in 2018. In the **Philippines**, the Government developed a Child Safeguarding Policy towards implementation of the Free Internet Access Act. The Manila Dialogue, a coordination platform for Government, embassies, international organizations and NGOs on human trafficking, including online sexual exploitation of children, has also continued conversations to achieve holistic and multidisciplinary cooperation in the fight against human trafficking in the Philippines. The 4th Manila International Dialogue on Human Trafficking was conducted on 6 December 2018. In **Viet Nam**, the Cyber Security Law took effect from January 2019, with a specific article (Article 29) about the protection of children in cyberspace. In 2018, the first-ever Tele-Conference on Child Protection, chaired by the Prime Minister and Vice-Prime Minister in charge, took place with the participation of over 18,000 delegates. The conclusions from this important meeting are being implemented at all levels by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs under the National Programme on Child Protection.

25 UNICEF, Global Compact and Save the Children, *Children's rights and business principles*, 2013. See: <http://childrenandbusiness.org/>

Box 5. THE PHILIPPINES: National response to online child sexual exploitation and abuse

More than half of Filipino youths regularly use the Internet and own devices with Internet accessibility. The expansion of access and convenience of information and communication technology provides important information and learning opportunities for children, but also poses a potential protection risk for children, including online sexual exploitation and abuse.

According to the Philippines' National Bureau of Investigation and police attachés of foreign embassies in Manila, the country ranks among the top 10 countries with the highest levels of online sexual exploitation of children. An alarming 80 per cent of reports received by the Department of Justice's Office of Cybercrimes are on online sexual exploitation of children. To address this problem, the Government of the Philippines developed a National Response Plan to Prevent and Address Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children (2017-2020).

The Response Plan is designed to support the Government's response to the increasingly prevalent issue of child online sexual exploitation and abuse and aims to implement several child protection laws, including the Anti-Child Pornography Act, the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, the Special Protection of Children against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act, and the Cybercrime Prevention Act. It details the key result areas, core programmes and planned outcomes that will guide child online protection work within a three-year planning period from 2017 to 2020. The key result areas focus on advocacy and prevention; protection, recovery and reintegration; law enforcement and prosecution; research, monitoring and management information systems; and networking and partnerships. The Response Plan was developed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Philippine Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography, and the Department of Justice, with support from the Asia Foundation and UNICEF.

The diverse membership of the Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography provided opportunities to influence the development of further legislation to protect children online. For example, having the government champion for the Free Internet in Public Places Act as a member of the Council led to the inclusion of child safeguarding policies in the legislation. It also led to increased evidence generation as members of the Council joined Research Advisory Boards and Programme Management Committees for at least two national studies specified within the Response Plan, namely the Philippine Kids Online Survey (2019) and the National Study on Child Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2019).

In order to accelerate progress in ASEAN Member States, Governments must invest in strengthening law enforcement through training and improvements in investigatory techniques, as well as the treatment of child victims of online crime. In addition, more proactive measures need to be taken to inform parents, teachers and other professionals working with and for children – and children and young people themselves – about the opportunities and risks of the online world, and the need to have in place safe and child-friendly counselling, complaints and reporting mechanisms to prevent and respond to incidents of violence against children online. Protecting children from sexual exploitation online requires a multi-sectoral approach, which is set out in the WePROTECT Model National Response Framework.²⁶ It is also important to address the divide between the understanding and use of digital technologies by children and adults. This makes it even more important to regularly consult with children and young people as technologies rapidly evolve to understand their experiences, and to formulate policies that take their opinions into account. Based on the Children's Rights and Business Principles²⁷, and the Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection²⁸, advocacy and engagement is needed with social media platforms, gaming companies and websites to

26 See: WePROTECT Global Alliance, *Preventing and tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse – A model national response*, 2016.

27 UNICEF, Global Compact and Save the Children, *Children's rights and business principles*, 2013. See: <http://childrenandbusiness.org/>

28 International Telecommunication Union and UNICEF, *Guidelines for industry on child online protection*, 2015. See: https://www.unicef.org/csr/files/COP_Guidelines_English.pdf

ensure they are held responsible for removing the worst forms of content that are harmful to children, especially content that encourages suicide, extreme violence and sexual exploitation.

It must also be noted that online violence does not happen in isolation from offline violence. There is an inextricable link – tackling online violence requires robust offline measures to prevent and effectively respond to violence, and to ensure that children impacted by online violence can access offline support to be protected and to recover.

Most recently, in 2019 the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children commissioned²⁹ the Disrupting Harm study, which will work with governments in **Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand** and **Viet Nam** to carry out national situational analyses regarding child online sexual exploitation and abuse. The study will use a combination of survey data collected from children and parents, focus group discussions with young people and service providers, a desk review of law and policy, and crime data gathered from national law enforcement departments. The study is expected to be completed at the end of 2020 for publication by April 2021.

29 ECPAT International, UNICEF Innocenti and INTERPOL were commissioned to undertake the study.

ACTION 2: Protection, response and support services

5. Child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanism

Action: Create and/or strengthen a child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanism for children and/or their representatives to file their grievances on violence against children and enable such a mechanism to facilitate effective and timely remedies.

Indicator 5:³⁰ Number of ASEAN Member States providing child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms for children and/or their representatives to file their grievances on violence against children (by type and setting).

Baseline 2016: 10 (partly/under development)

Mid-term review 2019: 2 (implementation underway); 8 (partly/under development)

Safe and child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms are essential for children to be able to report abuse, ask for support and advice, and seek effective remedies to address violations of their rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended that all State Parties “*develop safe, well-publicized, confidential and accessible support mechanisms for children, their representatives and others to report violence against children, including through the use of 24-hour toll-free hotlines and other ICTs*”.³¹

As of June 2019, all 10 ASEAN Member States have one or more reporting and complaint mechanisms for children and/or their representatives to report incidences of violence against children. Not all of them, however, are specifically designed for children and their effectiveness and reach is variable. Since the Baseline Study in 2016, three countries, in particular, have seen advancements under this priority area. In **Cambodia**, hotline services are increasing, including at provincial level where they are mostly managed by the Police and NGOs. In **Myanmar**, the Department of Social Welfare opened a 24-hour national Helpline at the end of 2016 with the objective of disseminating social service information. In **Viet Nam** a new free National Child Protection Hotline #111 was launched in 2017 by the National Committee for Children, under the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, to replace the former children and consultation hotline. The new hotline receives information, complaints and requests for support and advice related to child abuse and violence from organizations, agencies, educational institutions, families and individuals. The Ministry has also recently developed an App for reporting and receiving complaints online. In addition, the Government has established a case management system, along with the development of networks of village volunteers and commune part-time social workers. The networks have created new mechanisms to receive reports and complaints of violent incidents from children and families.

30 The indicator for priority action 5 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: “*Number of ASEAN Member States providing such services and number of services available by type and by setting*”. The indicator for the purposes of the baseline added the wording from the action so that the indicator can be read and understood in isolation.

31 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 13: The Right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence*, CRC/C/GC/13, 18 August 2011.

While significant efforts have been made in ASEAN Member States to create and improve child and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms to address violence against children, continued investment is needed to address fragmentation of mechanisms, and to ensure that reporting mechanisms developed are tailored for children and sufficient to secure children's protection from violence. It is important to ensure these reporting mechanisms are integrated as a core component of a robust national child protection system to enable children to access protection and support services. To accelerate progress in securing children's protection from violence, it is important for the effectiveness of reporting and complaint mechanisms to be regularly evaluated by ASEAN Member States to ensure they function effectively, reach the most vulnerable children and families, and have appropriate referral mechanisms in place to safely and confidentially connect children and their families with the necessary support services. Feedback from children and young people is critical to ensuring such mechanisms are effective, safe and sensitive to children's needs. Investments are also needed to ensure that reporting and complaint mechanisms are well-publicized and made accessible to all children without discrimination of any kind.

One area where there has been limited progress since the Baseline Study is regarding external independent bodies, such as National Human Rights Institutions and Ombudspersons, which play a vital role in the promotion and protection of children's freedom from violence, including through receiving complaints.³² **Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand** remain the only countries in ASEAN to have National Human Rights Institutions, though the extent to which they have adequate funding and technical and human resources varies. Furthermore, **Indonesia** remains one of the only institutions in ASEAN to have a specific human rights body for child rights, the Commission for the Protection of Children, which is an independent child rights monitoring and reporting body, led by an independent Commissioner. **Malaysia** has also formally announced its commitment to appoint a Children's Commissioner in 2019. In addition, **Thailand** remains the only ASEAN Member State to have ratified the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure. As part of meeting its obligations under the Optional Protocol, the Department of Children and Youth and the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand joined efforts in awareness raising and looking into existing complaints mechanisms. ASEAN Member States are highly encouraged to strengthen existing institutions or to establish new ones in countries where such mechanisms are currently lacking.

Box 6. Myanmar: Victim-sensitive trafficking identification and investigation

The Government of Myanmar, in partnership with World Vision, has been working to improve child and gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms, particularly in relation to trafficking. The Myanmar Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force has developed communication materials designed to raise awareness about trafficking and how to report cases. Recognising the particular vulnerability of the ethnic Mon people, these materials have been produced in both Myanmar and Mon languages and distributed in six high-risk Townships in Mawlamyine, which borders Mae Sot – a known entry point used by traffickers into Thailand. The Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force has also led trainings, with support from World Vision, on victim-centred investigations of trafficking cases. To date, 40 provincial police officers from Mawlamyine have been orientated on victim-sensitive identification and investigation techniques, such as child-friendly interviewing.

³² Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children, *Safe and child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms to address violence against children*, Joint report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, 2012.

6. Protection and support services for children affected by violence

Action: Improve protective and supportive services for children affected by violence including physical and psychosocial rehabilitation, counselling services in schools and in communities, appointment of guardian(s), legal assistance, shelter/housing, provision of life skills development, peer to peer and family support.

Indicator 6:³³ Number of ASEAN Member States providing protective and supportive services for children affected by violence (by type of violence and setting if relevant).

Baseline 2016: 10 (partly/under development)

Mid-term review 2019: 10 (partly/under development)

Violence against children can lead to a range of health and social outcomes costly to both individuals and society. Minimizing these consequences requires a variety of treatment and support services at all levels. The United Nations Study on Violence against Children (2006) highlighted that States should provide *“accessible, child-sensitive and universal health and social services, including pre-hospital and emergency care, legal assistance to children and, where appropriate, their families when violence is detected or disclosed”*.

All ASEAN Member States have a national agency that is responsible for providing protection and support services to children affected by violence at the national level and delegating authority to sub-national government agencies. Protection and support services for children affected by violence have been established to varying degrees in all Member States. Such services include, among others, counselling services, physical and psycho-social rehabilitation, medical services, legal assistance, shelter, provision of life skills development, and peer-to-peer and family support. However, in nearly all Member States there is a lack of financial and human resources to support the range of services needed to address violence against children in all settings and at all levels. Many countries also need to professionalise the social service workforce and staff providing these services, especially at sub-national and local levels to enhance quality.

In the last few years, the focus has shifted towards strengthening protection and support services at the sub-national and local levels where access to services has traditionally been more limited. As a result, community-based child protection mechanisms and support services are operational or under development in all ASEAN Member States.

The range of protection and support services available for children affected by violence and the modalities under which they are delivered vary across Member States. For example, in **Cambodia**, a variety of child protection services were delivered in 2018 through a Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, reaching more than 7,500 vulnerable children. **Indonesia** strengthened implementation of its integrated child welfare services model (PKSAI) in five districts in 2018 and has scaled up the model to 111 other districts and cities across Indonesia. In **Lao PDR**, Child Protection Networks have been established in more than 1,000 villages in the last three years and members trained on basic information on child protection and how to prevent and respond to child abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare plans to establish this network in every village of Lao PDR in an effort to bring child protection services closer to communities. In **Malaysia**, the Child Protection Teams and the Child Welfare Teams serve as a support

33 The indicator for priority action 6 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: *“Number of ASEAN Member States providing protective services, number of services by type of violence against children and by setting”*. The indicator for the purposes of the baseline included ‘supportive services’ to better reflect the action. It is acknowledged that in some cases services may be both protective and supportive. Given many children face multiple forms of violence, rather than just one, disaggregation by type of violence is optional. Disaggregation by setting is also optional given such specialised services may not be available. Ideally, the indicator would seek to measure ‘effective’ support to children exposed to violence.

system for child protection services and coordinate service provision for children and families. Malaysia has also established one of the most sophisticated systems for emergency response for child victims, under which child victims have access to medical care, psycho-social support, legal advice and child-sensitive investigative procedures. In **Thailand**, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is working to strengthen the child protection system at the sub-district level in 21 provinces to build capacity of staff in local administrative organizations to increase skills and knowledge on child protection, including coordination with local-level multi-disciplinary teams and referral to district- and provincial-level services. In 2018, **Viet Nam** enhanced the capacity of members of the local child protection committees and improved child protection services at commune level to enable increased access of children and families to case management, family-based alternative care counselling, emergency support and other protection and support services. Measures were also taken to train local child protection staff and collaborators in basic social work skills and child protection issues. The Legal Aid Law, adopted in 2017, also provides major expansion of legal aid to all children under 16, child offenders aged 16 to 18 years and child victims aged 16 to 18 years in financial difficulty.

Despite a diversity of contexts and different stages of development of the child protection system in ASEAN Member States, there are several common challenges faced in the provision of protection and support services for children affected by violence. These include: limited financial and human resources to support the range of services needed to address violence against children in all settings and at all levels; the urgent need to professionalise the social service workforce, especially at sub-national levels; the need for better coordination across government agencies, NGOs and service providers to enhance the specialised services needed for child victims of violence; and streamlining the application of laws and procedures for child victims of violence to enhance more effective implementation, monitoring and accountability at all levels.

Box 7. INDONESIA: Scaling up an integrated child welfare services model

Indonesia has been implementing an integrated child welfare services model (PKSAI) in five districts. This included development of a vulnerability data system to identify and support high-risk children and develop prevention strategies for children at medium risk, with more than 1.3 million children identified for prevention and support services. In 2018, approximately 1,928 vulnerable children (511 girls and 1,417 boys) in the five pilot districts received services. The Ministry of Social Affairs initiated the roll out of the model, supported by UNICEF, to 111 other districts and cities across Indonesia in 2018. The Ministry also drafted a regulation for the PKSAI to become a national programme requiring its establishment at sub-national level in line with decentralization that outlines the role of districts/cities in community service delivery. The model has been costed to influence government planning and budgeting for the 2019-2020 budget cycles, to support its scale up. A formative evaluation has been completed and captures the extent of changes in service structure and delivery, demand for services, quality of implementation, differences in the lives of children being served, scalability and sustainability. The results are informing the scale-up strategy.

ACTION 3: Legal framework, prosecution and justice system

7. Laws in full conformity with applicable international human rights standards

Action: Undertake a legislative review to ensure that legislation relevant to children's protection from violence, is in full conformity with applicable international human rights standards, including but not limited to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

Indicator 7: Number of ASEAN Member States that undertake a legislative review on violence against children vis-à-vis applicable international human rights standards.

Baseline 2016: 1 (partly/under development); 9 (not yet started)

Mid-term review 2019: 2 (implementation underway); 8 (not yet started)

Robust and effective legislation that protects children is essential to ending violence against children. It should provide a clear prohibition of all forms of violence in all settings, and an overarching framework for prevention, protection, response and support for child victims, child witnesses and children in conflict with the law. It should also provide clear pathways for fair and transparent justice for all children (i.e. a robust framework for the child protection system). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child calls on States Parties to review all domestic legislation and related administrative guidance relevant to violence against children (including customary, traditional and religious laws) and ensure prohibition of all forms of violence against children in all settings, with no exception.

As of June 2019, only two ASEAN Member States (**Viet Nam** and **Thailand**) have undertaken a specific legislative review on violence against children to assess the extent to which national legislation aligns with international human rights standards. **Viet Nam** conducted a review of national legislation on violence against children in December 2016 (this was reported in the Baseline Study), which informed development of the new Child Law. The Law came into force in June 2017 and contained specific provisions on child protection and sexual abuse prevention. The Government is continuing to review specific legislation, especially concerning sexual abuse. In October 2017, **Thailand** also initiated a comprehensive review of laws and policies on children and child protection to ensure legislation relevant to children's protection from violence is in full conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This review is expected to be completed in 2019.

Other ASEAN Member States have drawn on the regional review of national legislation on violence against children,³⁴ to guide their law reform efforts to increase children's protection from violence. This study provided an analysis of laws in each Member State to identify gaps or weaknesses in protection afforded to children against all forms of violence and made recommendations for law reform specific to each Member State for the different settings in which violence may occur.

34 UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Legal protection from violence: Analysis of domestic laws related to violence against children in ASEAN Member States*, Strengthening Child Protection Systems #5, UNICEF, Bangkok, 2015.

Although most Member States have not undertaken a comprehensive review of legislation, significant laws and legal provisions have been adopted to enhance protection of children from violence. Examples of important legislative developments in ASEAN Member States since the Baseline Study was conducted in 2016 are as follows: **Brunei Darussalam** is currently drafting a new Plan of Action on the Wellbeing of Children 2019-2023, which aims to harmonize the various national laws related to children and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of social services for children. In addition, the Penal Code was amended in 2017 to include sexual offences committed against women and girls below the age of 14 years as statutory rape. In **Cambodia**, the Ministry of Women's Affairs is currently reviewing a number of articles in the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims. In particular, there are plans to amend Article 8 to make domestic violence against children illegal. In **Indonesia**, a Government Regulation on the Implementation of Restitution of Children who Fall Victim to a Crime was enacted in 2017, providing clear procedures for provision of compensation to child victims of violence, sexual crimes, exploitation and trafficking, among others. An Amendment to the 2002 Law on Child Protection was also made in 2017 through a regulation that addresses punishment of perpetrators of sexual violence against children. However, this amendment also includes a controversial penalty of chemical castration. A draft Law on Anti Sexual Violence has also been submitted to Parliament for deliberation, which will expand the definition of sexual violence. In **Lao PDR**, under the revised Penal Code 2017, the minimum age of criminal responsibility has been raised to 15 years. In **Malaysia**, the Sexual Offences against Children Act (Act 792) was enacted in 2017 to comprehensively address all aspects of physical, non-physical and online-related sexual crimes against children, including removing the need for corroboration of evidence of child victims within its legal framework. The Government is also currently looking into raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 years in all existing written legislation and practices among the various ethnic groups. In preparation, the Government presented the notion in 2018 to the Council of Rulers and the Chief Minister's Meeting chaired by the Prime Minister. The Department of Syariah Judiciary Malaysia has also taken a proactive measure by establishing a Standard Operating Procedure for Syariah Courts to refer to before approving an underage marriage application. In **Myanmar**, a draft of the revised 1993 Child Law is currently under review and pending approval by Parliament. In addition, the Child Rights Bill is expected to include more precise definitions on all forms of violence and specific chapters on violence against children, adoption, alternative care (including the introduction of foster care) and diversion in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Myanmar is also drafting a Violence Against Women Law and currently revising the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law. In the **Philippines**, the Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act was signed by the President in January 2019. However, a major setback during the past year is the President's veto of the Positive Discipline or Anti-Corporal Punishment Act despite both the Senate and House of Representatives earlier approving it. The Philippine Senate is also presently conducting hearings on the amendments to the bill to lower the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years. **Singapore** has also strengthened legislation, systems and policies to improve protection for all children. Three key national policies that were amended during recent years include the Penal Code to enhance protection for children from physical and sexual abuse, and the Women's Charter and the Administration of Muslim Law Act to better support children from divorced families. In **Thailand**, the Government is currently reviewing the minimum age of criminal responsibility under Thai law and proposing an amendment to the Criminal Code to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 years. In **Viet Nam**, the Government enacted a revised Criminal Code in 2018 which strengthens child protection by criminalizing a broader array of conduct and behaviour related to sexual exploitation of children and introducing more severe penalties for child marriage and trafficking.

Box 8. VIET NAM: Law reform to build a comprehensive legal framework for child protection

Until recently, the child protection system in Viet Nam was still in its infancy. Child protection legal provisions, policies and programmes had been formulated in a fragmented manner and child protection concerns were largely seen as a private matter. Care and protection services were mainly provided by volunteers and social welfare officers. The Government's legal reform in recent years sought to build a comprehensive legal framework to strengthen the child protection system through a multi-sectoral approach. It began with a comprehensive review of the national child protection legal framework and the establishment of an intersectoral committee to draft a new child protection law. The approved law – the Child Law – came into effect in 2017. It incorporates child protection principles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as child justice principles for promoting a specialised approach for handling children in civil, criminal and administrative proceedings. It contains dedicated chapters on child protection system building, alternative care, justice for children and child participation. Importantly, the Law extends Government responsibility to child protection for all children and not just those in special circumstances as under the previous law. The Law also establishes a National Committee on Children, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Ministers of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Health and Education and Training, with members from all relevant ministries, judicial institutions and NGOs.

All ASEAN Member States are encouraged to undertake a legislative review to understand existing gaps and determine the most pressing areas for law reform. Where a full legislative review is not possible, Member States are encouraged to refer to the regional analysis of domestic laws related to violence against children in ASEAN Member States³⁵ to guide the law reform agenda. To ensure that law reform initiatives are effective, it is important that law reform is supported by a clear plan of implementation, cost estimates and allocation of resources, awareness-raising campaigns, and capacity development for professionals and institutions working for and with children to support effective law enforcement.

Priority issues for national law reform efforts include: a) clarifying and synchronizing the age ranges of children in various laws and policies to avoid overlap and contradiction; (b) enacting legislation and procedures to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings; (c) aligning national laws and customary laws to ensure they comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other regional and international standards and benchmarks; and d) addressing contradictions in dual legal systems to ensure that all children under the age of 18 years are protected from all forms of violence.

Given the specific vulnerabilities of children in conflict with the law, it is also recommended that all ASEAN Member States adopt a specific juvenile justice law or include dedicated sections relating to the due process guarantees, rights and protection of under-18s in conflict with the law in broader justice legislation and ensure that the minimum age of criminal responsibility is compatible with international standards.

35 UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Legal protection from violence: Analysis of domestic laws related to violence against children in ASEAN Member States*, Strengthening Child Protection Systems #5, UNICEF, Bangkok, 2015.

8. Diversion and alternative measures

Action: Reduce the recourse to judicial proceedings and deprivation of liberty through diversion and other alternative measures, and in addition, protect children from all forms of violence through development of laws, policies, capacities and quality alternatives to judicial proceedings and deprivation of liberty.

Indicator 8:³⁶ Number of ASEAN Member States which have developed and are implementing legislative and/or policy frameworks for diversion programmes and/or other alternative measures to judicial proceedings and detention.

Baseline 2016: 10 (partly/under development)

Mid-term review 2019: 1 (completed); 4 (implementation underway); 5 (partly/under development)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges States to ensure that deprivation of liberty is only used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period. Detention of children is seen as detrimental to their wellbeing, as well as having limited rehabilitative value. Under 18s are also at heightened risk of physical and sexual violence while in detention. States are called upon to ensure there are a range of non-custodial measures in place to reduce the use of pre- and post-detention and promote the reintegration of children. Places of detention that do hold children must be governed by rigorous standards, including the separation of children from adults to mitigate against risks of violence, as well as systems of monitoring and inspection. States are also called upon to reduce recourse to judicial proceedings by putting in place diversionary measures.

All ASEAN Member States have continued efforts to develop the legislative and policy framework and/or to put in place mechanisms for alternative measures to judicial proceedings and detention, such as diversion and restorative justice. For example, in **Cambodia**, diversion and other alternatives to detention are stipulated by law. However, these measures are rarely implemented in practice. To increase the use of diversion and other alternatives, the Government is currently developing diversion guidelines to comply with the Law on Juvenile Justice whereby children from 14 to 17 years of age who commit petty offences and misdemeanours will be considered for diversion. In **Indonesia**, diversion is widely used and has doubled since 2014. In **Lao PDR**, the Government has been piloting a community-based diversion programme since 2017 for children in conflict with the law as alternatives to the formal court procedure (see Box 9). In 2018, this pilot was scaled up in two provinces and Vientiane Capital. In **Malaysia**, an Inter-agency Technical Committee for a pilot on diversion has been established and it is expected that the diversion programme will be implemented from August 2019. In **Myanmar**, the revision of the Child Law into a new Child Rights Bill in 2018 includes a specific chapter on diversion in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Amendments include incorporating the principle of detention as a last resort, alternatives to post-trial detention, probation and a stronger imperative for legal aid. In the **Philippines**, the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council, in partnership with the Supreme Court, formulated an outcome-based education curriculum in 2018 to increase the capacity of family court judges and personnel in utilizing diversion and alternatives to detention, developed manuals for handling cases of children in conflict with the law, and developed a Diversion Toolkit for local juvenile justice practitioners. In **Thailand**, the Department for Juvenile Observation and Protection launched a programme in June 2017 to strengthen pre-trial alternatives to detention. The application of pre-trial alternatives to detention increased from 1,468 cases in 2017 to 2,765 cases in 2018. In **Viet Nam**, a Government Decree on Diversion was approved, and a child-friendly justice court was established as a pilot in Ho Chi Minh City and Dong Thap provinces in 2018.

36 The indicator for priority action 8 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: "Number of ASEAN Member States which implement diversion programmes and/or other alternative measures to judicial proceedings and detention". Given many countries are still in the stage of developing law and policy, the indicator for the purposes of the baseline also captured this stage so that progress can be tracked.

The revised Criminal Code 2018 also introduced new diversion measures, broadened alternatives to detention, limited criminal records for juvenile offenders to facilitate better integration and introduced parole as a new mechanism for early release.

In order to support national efforts and to harmonize practices with international juvenile justice standards, several regional initiatives were undertaken since the Baseline Study. In 2018, ASEAN convened a Regional Conference on Restorative Justice which included a consultation on the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of their Liberty, which led to all Member States providing inputs to the report. For several years, ASEAN has partnered with the Asia Pacific Council on Juvenile Justice and UNICEF to conduct north-south learning in the region on restorative justice. Furthermore, in 2017 the publication *Diversion not Detention: A study on diversion and other alternative measures for children in conflict with the law in East Asia and the Pacific*³⁷ was launched. The study assessed promising and good practices as well as enablers and barriers for using diversion and other alternative measures for girls and boys in conflict with the law in line with international standards on juvenile justice.

Despite this progress, there are several areas where ASEAN Member States can enhance their efforts towards more effective implementation of diversion and other alternative measures for children in conflict with the law.³⁸ To strengthen legislation, it is recommended that diversion from formal judicial proceedings and alternative measures to detention are regulated through a separate national law on juvenile justice or special chapters of the general criminal and procedural law. Such a law should incorporate diversion as a measure of first resort (at the police level). It should also include details about the kinds of offences and cases in which diversion and alternative measures may be used and at which stages of the juvenile justice process.

The establishment of a specialism/specialised units within the police and prosecution and specialised judges and/or courts to handle cases involving children in conflict with the law can greatly enhance efforts to ensure that diversion and other alternative measures are implemented in practice. At the same time, professionals working in the juvenile justice sector require specialized training in dealing with children in conflict with the law. Mechanisms should also be put in place to facilitate coordination and collaboration between the juvenile justice sector and social welfare sector to ensure an interdisciplinary approach in cases of children who are subject to diversionary and non-custodial measures. In this regard, staff from the social welfare sector should also receive specialized training in working with the police, prosecutors and the courts to support children.

It is also important that ASEAN Member States seek agreement on terminology and definitions used regarding diversion, alternatives to pre- and post-trial detention and non-custodial measures and systematically collect data on alternative measures – an area where data in the region is currently lacking.

37 UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Diversion not detention: A study on diversion and other alternative measures for children in conflict with the law in East Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok, 2017.

38 The forthcoming recommendations are adapted from: UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Diversion not detention: A study on diversion and other alternative measures for children in conflict with the law in East Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok, 2017.

Box 9. LAO PDR: Piloting a community-based diversion model

The Ministry of Justice has been implementing pilot community-based diversion options for children in conflict with the law as alternatives to deprivation of liberty since 2017, with the support of UNICEF. The pilot was established in two villages in Vientiane Capital and two villages in Savannakhet province. In 2018, the programme was scaled up to 10 villages in Xiengkhouang and 10 villages in Savannakhet province.

Standard operating procedures were developed and tested, and to date trainings were conducted for 176 village authorities and police officials from target villages and districts, and members of Village Mediation Units in target villages to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to supervise community-based diversion programmes in line with international standards and best practice on justice for children. Forms for collecting data on vulnerable children were developed and integrated into the community-based diversion trainings. Case files were also established to monitor cases and gather information and trends on children in conflict with the law. The project strengthens the capacity of local authorities and community members on how to apply the objects, principles and process of community-based diversion through the development of training models, delivering training and follow up visits/monitoring by the central/provincial and district levels. The data and information collected also help the village authorities to identify vulnerable children, including children at risk, and children in conflict with the law and intervene at an early stage to prevent at-risk children from committing an offence.

To date, 57 children who committed minor offences in the target villages have been diverted from the formal justice system. The types of community-based diversion programmes provided to these children include victim offender mediation, re-education, damage reparation/compensation and a mentorship programme. The pilot is helping to reduce the use of protective custody and ensure that deprivation of liberty is only used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time. Special attention has been given to the family circumstances of the child in order to address the root causes of the offending behaviour or situations that put children at risk.

ACTION 4: Capacity building

9. Advocacy materials to generate awareness and support for ending violence against children

Action: Develop advocacy materials for various audiences (e.g. parliamentarians, helpline personnel, emergency responders, humanitarian actors, community leaders, leaders of faith-based organizations, people in business, relevant public employees, prosecutors, law enforcers and media staff and civil society organizations) to generate awareness and support for ending violence against children.

Indicator 9:³⁹ Number and type of advocacy materials developed by each ASEAN Member State for various audiences to generate awareness and support for ending violence against children.

Baseline 2016: 1 (implementation underway); 4 (partly/under development); 2 (not yet started); 3 (information not available)

Mid-term review 2019: 7 (implementation underway); 2 (partly/under development); 1 (information not available)

One of the core recommendations of the 2006 United Nations Study on Violence against Children was to enhance the capacity of all those who work with and for children. Preventing and responding to all forms of violence requires an effective workforce of professionals and non-professionals that work across sectors and at different levels as part of the child protection system. An important step towards building capacity is to generate awareness of and understanding about violence against children and its consequences for children, families and society. This paves the way for changing attitudes, traditions, customs and practices that condone and promote violence and encourages support to address the issue.

The Baseline Study recorded that five ASEAN Member States (**Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand** and **Viet Nam**) had developed, or were in the process of developing, advocacy materials for various audiences to generate awareness and support to end violence against children. Since then, four additional Member States (**Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines** and **Singapore**) have developed, or are developing, advocacy materials to raise awareness about violence against children. In **Myanmar**, the Myanmar Police Force and NGOs received trainings to design communication and public information materials aimed at preventing the trafficking of women and girls. The Department of Rehabilitation also supported the development of a mine risk education application for mobile devices to reach remote communities affected by landmines. **Indonesia, Thailand** and **Viet Nam** have also developed additional advocacy materials for different audiences since the Baseline Study in 2016. In **Indonesia**, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection has developed advocacy materials as part of the Three Ends campaign on ending violence against women and children through community-based initiatives. In **Thailand**, the Government, with support from the Thailand Association of Social Workers and UNICEF, launched a child protection online e-learning programme in 2017 to build further capacity in child protection. The Ministry of Justice is also in the process of developing advocacy materials to promote elimination of violence in juvenile justice institutions. In **Viet Nam**, the Government has mobilized the mass media and press agencies to broadcast and publish programmes and articles on child protection and organize communication talks to influence public opinion.

39 The indicator for priority action 9 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: "Number of advocacy materials developed". The indicator for the purposes of the baseline measures the number of ASEAN Member States that have developed and disseminated advocacy materials, in order to focus in on the type (and quality) of the materials and emphasise the importance of a dissemination strategy for the materials, as well as to align with the other indicators which all measure the "Number of ASEAN Member States...".

In the last few years, all ASEAN Member States have also invested heavily in capacity development programmes and initiatives at various levels in collaboration with United Nations agencies, international and national NGOs and civil society and community groups. The capacity building initiatives have largely focused on trainings for social workers, health workers and teachers and other education staff, and law enforcement agencies, as well as parents, children and young people.

For example, **Brunei Darussalam** has conducted in-house trainings for welfare home staff, counsellors and social workers organized by the Civil Service Institute, in collaboration with government agencies and NGOs. In **Cambodia**, a Handbook for Commune Committees for Women and Children for improving childcare and the safe return of children in residential care to their families was adopted in 2018 by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation and the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Health adopted, and is subsequently implementing, the Clinical Handbook for Health Care for Children Subjected to Sexual Abuse and Violence to provide capacity building to health practitioners as part of the health system response to violence against children. In addition, a Social Service Implementation Manual for Commune Committees for Women and Children, which includes child protection, was adopted by the Ministry of Interior in 2018. The Ministry of Culture and Religion has also conducted training programmes for Buddhist monks on preventing and responding to violence against children in five provinces. In **Indonesia**, the Ministry of Education has rolled out a curriculum on positive discipline as part of the Early Grade Literacy programme in Papua Province, and the curricula is currently being adapted for implementation in other school settings including junior high. **Lao PDR** has focused attention on improving the capacity of the social welfare workforce (para-social workers and village-based child protection volunteers) and professionalising the workforce by organizing a four-week para-professional social work training course. In **Malaysia**, a number of government agencies have conducted capacity development programmes. For example, the Ministry of Health has undertaken a series of trainings of health staff at primary care level on child abuse, the Ministry of Education has conducted 17 weeks of trainings for girls in 2017-2018 called "Goal Girls Programme" on child rights and violence against children, and the Federation of Reproductive Health Associations of Malaysia has conducted trainings for children and young people on sexual and reproductive rights. In **Myanmar**, over 36 district court judges and 392 township police officers have been trained since 2017 to respond to sexual abuse, and case managers all over the country have been trained as part of the national case management system. Over 188 Department of Social Welfare case managers were professionally trained and were deployed at 45 townships and four districts across the country to serve as front line child protection actors as well as communicators for the public. Over 208 medical social workers have been trained in case management and are supporting the Department of Social Welfare case managers when child protection cases are identified in hospital settings. The **Philippines** has taken major steps to strengthen capacity at barangay and local levels – including the Local Child Protection Councils – to mainstream child protection in local development plans. Advocacy sessions have been held with local councils to access funds for child protection programmes and activities at the local levels. The Philippines is also developing a Five-Year Strategic Framework on Strengthening the Social Welfare Workforce 2019-2023. **Singapore** organized training workshops in 2017 on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in collaboration with other ASEAN Member States. In **Thailand**, a training of trainer curriculum and modules have been developed by the Department of Children and Youth for shelter staff in 76 provinces to strengthen capacity of sub-district administration organization and volunteer networks for child protection case detection and referral. Training had already been delivered to 385 sub-districts by the end of 2018. In addition, the Office of the Attorney-General developed a Reference Manual on child protection and trained over 40 public prosecutors in 2017. In **Viet Nam**, capacity building programmes have also been conducted for professionals – civil servants, officials and collaborators of children's programmes and volunteers. The Viet Nam Women's Union in cooperation with the Viet Nam Youth Union and the education sector has conducted capacity building programmes on child protection and communication skills focused on children and young people in schools and local communities.

As part of efforts to develop awareness and support for ending violence against children among stakeholders, it is critical that attention is paid to the importance of strengthening the social service workforce and allied workforce to effectively address all forms of violence against children. In all ASEAN

Member States, some progress has been made in strengthening the capacity of the child protection workforce. However, accelerated action is needed to effectively plan for, develop and sustain the workforce, including through its professionalisation and the creation of adequate social work positions and supervisory mechanisms in sub-national structures to deliver the child protection system. The findings and recommendations of a multi-country mapping and assessment of the social service workforce to prevent and respond to violence against children in the East Asia and Pacific region (forthcoming), carried out by the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance in collaboration with national Governments and UNICEF, will provide important guidance on current gaps and priority approaches to strengthen the social service workforce nationally.

Box 10. SINGAPORE: Intensifying public education on child abuse and strengthening channels for victim assistance

Since 2008, Singapore's Ministry of Social and Family Development has provided funding to community partners to develop public education initiatives on family violence. In 2011, campaigns were implemented to encourage the community and bystanders to report suspected child abuse, such as the 'Tell Someone' initiative. In 2015, training was provided to community partners on family violence prevention via 'The A.C.T. Community Ambassador Programme'. In 2016, the Ministry of Social and Family Development also launched the three-year campaign 'Break the Silence | Against Family Violence' to encourage bystander intervention in family violence situations. The Ministry engaged community and corporate partners to equip and educate the public to help victims of family violence. To reach a larger audience, the Ministry also developed videos on preventing family violence and disseminated them via mass and social media platforms. The #breakthesilenceSG effort was also initiated to gather stories on social media of how everyday Singaporeans stepped in to prevent, interrupt and report suspected family violence.

Voluntary welfare organizations in Singapore have also engaged in public education campaigns against child abuse. The Singapore Children's Society began a sexual abuse prevention programme in primary schools in 2000. In 2011, this programme, called 'KidzLive: I Can Protect Myself', went further upstream to empower preschool children to recognise and report inappropriate touching. Singapore Children's Society also started a course in 2017 to train preschool educators to handle suspected child sexual abuse and to implement the KidzLive programme.

Box 11. INDONESIA: Strengthening capacity to deliver child protection prevention and response services

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection and the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with Save the Children, have worked consistently to strengthen prevention and response mechanisms as part of a broader strategy to build an effective child protection system. Capacity building on parenting without violence has been a key feature of training for government officials and service providers who operate at integrated service centres and family learning centres established by the Government of Indonesia in several provinces. The results and good practices from the training have become models for replication as part of a policy framework aimed to be rolled out in all provinces, with government budget allocations.

Collaboration between the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Save the Children also takes place in the area of case management under a knowledge strengthening path, which emphasizes the provision of supervision and psychosocial support, as well as the promotion of family-based care arrangements when handling cases of violence against children. Save the Children has recently introduced e-learning platforms on case management for social workers, endorsed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is being utilized in 32 provinces.

ACTION 5: Research and data collection

10. National systems for data collection, analysis and sharing

Action: Develop and strengthen a national system for disaggregated data collection, analysis, sharing and dissemination on violence against children using international indicators and research protocols, including survey and administrative data, to be used for policy formulation, planning and programme development on ending violence against children. Ensure that the data is regularly updated and analysed.

Indicator 10.a:⁴⁰ Number of ASEAN Member States using survey data in national policy documents on violence against children.

Baseline 2016: 2 (under implementation); 4 (partly); 4 (not yet started)

Mid-term review 2019: 8 (under implementation); 2 (not yet started)

Indicator 10.b: Number of ASEAN Member States with a reliable and consistent national system for consolidation of data on violence against children.

Baseline 2016: 6 (partly/under development); 4 (not yet started)

Mid-term review 2019: 1 (implementation underway); 7 (partly/under development); 2 (not yet started)

Indicator 10.c: Number of ASEAN Member States with data on violence against children disaggregated such as by age, ethnicity, gender and disability status.

Baseline 2016: 4 (partly); 6 (not yet started)

Mid-term review 2019: 10 (partly)

Reliable data and research on the scale and nature of violence against children, the causes and consequences of violence, and the risk and protective factors that influence violence, are essential to increase the knowledge base on violence against children and to inform the development of a comprehensive child protection system to address it. This includes development of evidence-based policies, programmes and interventions to address violence, allocation of adequate resources to its prevention, and making sure that interventions target those most at risk. This requires a coordinated data collection and monitoring system that draws on multiple types of data – administrative data, survey data and information from qualitative research. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has urged ASEAN Member States to establish a comprehensive national data system, which includes disaggregated data and core indicators based on international standards, for more effective monitoring and evaluation of child protection systems, programmes and activities conducted at all levels and to assess impact, lessons learnt and inform future plans.

⁴⁰ The indicator for priority action 10 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: “Number of countries with disaggregated data on violence against children”. The indicators for the purposes of the baseline sought to capture all aspects of the action and were adapted from Domain 4 (Statistics and information) in UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, *Measuring and monitoring child protection systems: Proposed regional core indicators for East Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok, 2012, pp. 45–48.

Among ASEAN Member States, there has been a significant investment in research and data collection on violence against children in the past few years, making an important contribution to the regional knowledge base. As a result, the availability of comparable data on certain forms of violence against children, including violent discipline and bullying, has increased, mainly through the inclusion of violence-related questions in international survey programmes, such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys and Global School-based Student Health Surveys (see Table 4). For example, in **Lao PDR** the findings of the second Lao Social Indicator Survey were released in June 2018, with national prevalence data on violent discipline and attitudes towards physical punishment. **Myanmar** and **Thailand** also released their latest Demographic and Health Survey reports in 2017, providing data on violent discipline and, in the case of Thailand, attitudes towards violent discipline as well.

Table 4. Comparable^a survey data on violence against children by country, as of June 2019

Member State	Physical violence and bullying	Violent discipline	Attitudes towards physical punishment	Attitudes towards wife-beating	Sexual abuse
Brunei Darussalam	✓	-	-	-	-
Cambodia	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Indonesia	✓	-	-	✓	-
Lao PDR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Malaysia	✓	✓	-	-	-
Myanmar	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Philippines	✓	-	-	✓	-
Singapore	-	-	-	-	-
Thailand	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Viet Nam	✓	✓	✓	✓	-

^a This table only includes survey data that is comparable across countries i.e. they use the same (or similar) indicators, definitions and methodologies. It is recognized that a number of countries, such as Singapore do have administrative data on violence against children, including sexual violence.

Two ASEAN Member States (**Indonesia** and **Lao PDR**) have also released data from stand-alone national violence against children surveys. In **Indonesia**, a national survey on children’s experiences of violence⁴¹ was undertaken by the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection in 2018 and its findings launched in early 2019. The survey provides disaggregated data (by age and sex) on the prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual violence against children, help seeking knowledge and behaviour, and perpetrators of child violence. In **Lao PDR**, the full report of the national Violence against Children Survey⁴² was released in 2018, with data on physical, emotional and sexual violence, help-seeking behaviours, attitudes towards violence and health outcomes. In addition, the **Philippines** participated in the Global Kids Online Survey⁴³ and conducted a national study on online sexual exploitation of children, producing rich data in relation to children’s use of the Internet and the related risks and opportunities. This was accompanied by community research on social norms and child online protection. In **Malaysia**, the Government conducted the National Health and Morbidity Survey⁴⁴ in 2017, which included prevalence data on violent discipline. In **Myanmar**, secondary analysis of population-based survey data on the situation of violence against children in schools and operational research on social norms underpinning violence affecting adolescents has been

41 Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection, *Indonesian violence against children survey*, 2019.

42 National Commission for Mothers and Children, Lao Statistics Bureau and UNICEF Lao PDR, *National violence against children survey in Lao PDR. Full report*, Lao PDR: National Commission for Mothers and Children, 2016.

43 Tan, M., Estacio, L., and Ylade, M., *Global Kids Online in the Philippines. Country report*, Manila: University of the Philippines Manila, 2016. Available from: www.globalkidsonline/philippines

44 Institute for Public Health, *National health and morbidity survey 2017*, Ministry of Health Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 2018.

undertaken.⁴⁵ In **Cambodia**, the National Institute of Statistics conducted a study on the prevalence of physical and emotional violence against children in five provinces in 2017.

Governments have been increasingly using violence data from recent and former surveys in national policy documents on violence against children and child protection, as well as to inform planning and to design intervention strategies. For example, in **Myanmar** data on violence from national household surveys and secondary analysis of data from those household surveys has been used to inform development of the national child protection policy. In the **Philippines**, the National Baseline Study on Violence against Children contributed to the finalisation of the Philippine Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children in 2017. The study emphasized the need to gather gender-disaggregated data to assess the different risks of sexual abuse faced by boys and girls, and to help inform gender-sensitive advocacy, prevention and response strategies, and the provision of appropriate services to victims. The study also showed a high incidence of violence in the home and revealed the serious risk of children's exposure to online abuse, with nearly half of children experiencing sexual violence or cyberbullying. In **Lao PDR**, data from the Lao Social Indicator Survey 2017 were used for the mid-term review of the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the SDGs Localisation Framework and Voluntary National Review, and the review of several sectoral plans and strategies. The data will also inform preparations for the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan and reporting on the status of least developed country graduation. In **Thailand**, data from the 2016 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey was used for national reporting on the SDGs. As of June 2019, this brings the number of ASEAN Member States using survey data in national policy documents on violence against children to eight – **Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand** and **Viet Nam**.

Progress has also been made in enhancing data and information systems on violence against children and child protection more broadly. At least six Member States have established or strengthened child protection data management systems over the past few years – **Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand** and **Viet Nam**. For example, in **Cambodia** the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation has been working since 2016 to build a child protection information management system. A mapping of key child protection related information was conducted in June 2018, a national Child Protection Monitoring Framework including core child protection indicators has been developed, and operational data systems on alternative care have been strengthened. This includes a digital inspection database/application to monitor residential care institutions and a web-based tracking database, which is being used at sub-national level for all children undergoing reintegration from residential care institutions. In **Indonesia**, the Government has begun rolling out *Primer* (a child protection information management system) as the child protection case management system (see Box 12). In **Malaysia**, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development launched the National Information System for Social Issues in 2017, which functions as the main database on information on social problems and issues in the country. The Screening of Sexual Offenders System in the Child Registry was also officially launched in May 2019. The purpose is for industries that deal with children to screen their prospective or current employees for any conviction of sexual offences against children. The system aims to provide protection to children and avoid recurrence of child sexual abuse. In **Myanmar**, as part of the newly established case management system, a case management information management system was put in place and hosted by the Department of Social Welfare. This system disaggregates data by age, gender, township, type of violence and profile of the client. In **Thailand**, the most comprehensive data on violence against children comes from the database of the hospital-based One Stop Crisis Centres. Data can be disaggregated by age and gender, but there remains a need for enhancing the quality of data, especially in relation to local and sub-national data and information. The Ministry of Public Health is also introducing *Primer* to enhance capacity on cross-agency case management. In addition, the Ministry of Public Health initiated the development of a database on reproductive health that includes information on adolescent pregnancy and abortion to understand and address the gender issues underpinning teen pregnancy rates in the country. In **Viet Nam**, the Ministry of

45 Fry, D., 'Adolescent intimate partner violence and help-seeking behaviours in Myanmar', Yangon: UNICEF, 2019; Fry, D., 'School violence and bullying in Myanmar', Yangon: UNICEF, 2019.

Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs has established an electronic system to collect data on children in special circumstances from community to central level. While useful information is being collected at various levels, most of the data on sexual abuse and violence still relies on police records and is not always comprehensive and disaggregated. Further improvement to the quality and accuracy of data are underway. A database on violence against children is also being developed in [Lao PDR](#) to support monitoring and reporting on violence against children.

Based on the increase in both survey and administrative data, disaggregated data on violence against children is now available, to some extent, in all countries. In some countries only prevalence or administrative data is available, while in others both types of data are available. The types of violence and the levels of disaggregation vary by country, however most data is disaggregated by age and gender at a minimum. Only few countries have data disaggregated by ethnicity – mostly from national surveys conducted as part of international survey programmes. There is no evidence of disaggregation of violence against children data by disability status in any of the ASEAN Member States.

While data on violence against children has been steadily increasing, overall data availability for indicators on violence against children remains limited and highlights the significant constraint to production of regular data in this area, especially for sexual violence in childhood. To help address these data gaps, ASEAN Member States are highly encouraged to ensure that the full set of child protection modules are included in upcoming Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and Demographic and Health Surveys. This would greatly enhance child protection data in the ASEAN region that can feed into monitoring of results, both at national and global levels.

There are several areas where further research in ASEAN Member States is warranted. Firstly, on the drivers of violence, including values, customs, practices and social norms in families and local communities that promote and justify the social acceptance of violence against children in all settings. This will help to build the knowledge base and the evidence needed to address these harmful practices and craft the most relevant messages, public policies and interventions to address the issue at the local level. Secondly, on the factors that may protect against child violence victimization. Identifying and understanding how individual and community protective factors associated with violence operate at the country level is potentially as important to preventing violence against children as identifying and understanding its risk factors. More in-depth research is also needed on the potential barriers influencing access to and utilization of violence-related services among boys and girls, the social and economic costs of inaction, and violence against specific groups of children, such as children living in institutions, children in detention and children with disabilities, who are not captured in regular national surveys.

While surveys can be an important and reliable source of data on the prevalence of various forms of violence against children, a complete understanding of violence against children requires many types of data, including routine administrative data. ASEAN Member States are therefore encouraged to establish or strengthen child protection information management systems to effectively record and manage data related to protection cases. Many administrative data systems capturing data on violence against children exist in ASEAN Member States across different settings (e.g. in hospitals, schools, health centres, police stations and courts), but they need to be integrated into a harmonized/interoperable system with common definitions and indicators. This requires a centralised coordination body to oversee the system and ensure effective coordination between the different stakeholders involved.

Box 12. INDONESIA: Turning data into action for vulnerable children

In May 2019, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched Primero – a child protection information management system that has been adapted to the Indonesian context. Centrally hosted by the Ministry, Primero is expected to improve the delivery of child welfare and protection services. Simultaneously, it will strengthen the information management system for child protection, which is crucial to generate information for policy development, including budget allocation. Initially, 67 defined users logged-in during the launch, including social workers and case managers from five districts and cities where the Integrated Child Welfare Service Centres (PKSAI) are currently being piloted, as well as executives at national and provincial level. The number of users will be gradually expanded to 111 districts and cities across Indonesia where the Integrated Child Welfare Services model is currently being replicated.

Prior to the launch of Primero for case management, the Ministry of Social Affairs used Primero to support family training and reunification of separated and unaccompanied children in the aftermath of the earthquake, tsunami and liquefaction in September 2018 in Central Sulawesi.

Primero is an open source software platform that helps social services, humanitarian and development workers manage protection-related data, with tools that facilitate case management, incident monitoring and family tracing and reunification. Primero was developed by UNICEF and third-party software companies, in close collaboration with partners from UNHCR, UNFPA, the International Red Cross, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Save the Children, International Medical Corps and others. For more information see: <https://www.primero.org/>

ACTION 6: Management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation

11. National plans of action to eliminate all forms of violence against children

Action: Develop and/or strengthen national plans of action to eliminate all forms of violence against children with participation of all relevant stakeholders, including children, at all stages of the process and ensure a coordinating mechanism for its implementation.

Indicator 11:⁴⁶ Number of ASEAN Member States with a national coordinating framework or national plans of action with a coordinating mechanism for implementation on ending violence against children developed/strengthened with participation of all relevant stakeholders including children at all stages of the process.

Baseline 2016: 1 (implementation underway); 4 (partly/under development); 5 (not yet started)

Mid-term review 2019: 2 (implementation underway); 5 (partly/under development); 3 (not yet started)

The United Nations Study on Violence against Children (2006) recommended that States develop a multifaceted and systematic framework to respond to violence against children that is integrated into national planning processes. Specifically, it recommended the formulation of a national strategy, policy or plan of action with realistic and time-bound targets, coordinated by an agency with the capacity to involve multiple sectors in a broad-based implementation strategy.⁴⁷ In its General Comment on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence⁴⁸, the Committee on the Rights of the Child acknowledged that where national plans of action do not exist, a coordinating framework on violence against children could be adopted for all measures to protect children from violence. Such a framework should be fully costed and financed, including human and technical resources.

To date, five ASEAN Member States (**Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Thailand**) have specific national plans of action or strategies in place to address violence against children, with three of them (**Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines**) adopted since the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action in 2016. In **Cambodia**, the Government finalized the country's first national Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017-2021) in 2017, led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The Action Plan was developed in a participatory manner, with representatives from 13 key government ministries and agencies, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies and young people. The inclusive and collaborative development process was designed to promote commitment and collaboration across sectors – health, social welfare, education, justice – and at all levels (national, provincial, district and local levels). Since 2016, **Indonesia** has been implementing the National Strategy for the Elimination of Violence against Children (2016-2019), which provides the framework for action on ending violence against children. However, implementation remains a challenge, particularly at the sub-national level. Further strengthening

46 The indicator for priority action 11 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: "Number of ASEAN Member States with national plans of action on ending violence against children developed/strengthened with participation of all relevant stakeholders including children at all stages of the process with a coordinating mechanism for implementation". Taking note of the guidance of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 2011 *General comment No. 13: The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence*, the indicator for the purposes of the baseline included the option for a coordinating framework on violence against children, which can be used in place of national plans of action where these do not yet exist or where they are proving unwieldy.

47 United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children*, A/61/299, 29 August 2006: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/491/05/PDF/N0649105.pdf?OpenElement>

48 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General comment No. 13: The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence*, CRC/C/GC/13, 18 April 2011.

of inter-ministerial coordination is required to support implementation and monitoring of the strategy. A Road Map for the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Elimination of Violence against Children has been drafted but is not yet finalized. In the [Philippines](#), the Government adopted the Philippine Plan of Action to End Violence against Children 2017-2022 in 2017 in response to the findings of the National Baseline Study on Violence against Children, which was conducted in 2015. Consultations were held across sectors, involving Government, United Nations agencies, civil society, children and parents. Other Member States have general national plans on children and/or child protection with specific components related to addressing the elimination of violence against children.

In [Myanmar](#), the Government is currently in the process of developing a national child protection policy with a costed implementation plan, which includes both a coordination framework and a monitoring and evaluation system. Likewise, in [Viet Nam](#), development of the National Plan on Ending Violence against Children is underway by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and relevant line ministries.

Table 5. Country-by-country status of national plans of action or national coordination frameworks to address violence against children, as of June 2019

Member State	National strategy or coordination framework	Stakeholder participation	Coordinating framework
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-
Cambodia	Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017-2021)	Multiple stakeholders including young people	Yes
Indonesia	National Strategy for the Elimination of Violence against Children (2016-2019); A Road Map for the Implementation of the National Strategy to Eliminate Violence against Children drafted	Multiple stakeholders including children	No
Lao PDR	National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020	Multiple stakeholders but no child participation	Partly
Malaysia	-	-	-
Myanmar	National child protection policy with a coordination framework underway	-	-
Philippines	Philippine Plan of Action to End Violence against Children 2017-2022	Multiple stakeholders including children and parents	Yes
Singapore	-	-	-
Thailand	Policies and Strategies for the Prevention and Responses to Violence against Children and Youth (2015-2021)	Multiple stakeholders but no child participation	Partly
Viet Nam	National Action Plan on Ending Violence against Children under development	-	-

In ASEAN Member States, national plans of action on violence against children, and child protection more broadly, are generally comprehensive and relevant for local and national contexts. However, to ensure that plans of action are effectively implemented at all levels, they must include a robust monitoring and evaluation framework with core indicators to measure progress and impact at all levels, and clear guidance for implementation and reporting. Such guidance should include the identification of adequate human and financial resources to support implementation of the plan at all levels. It should also include a coordination structure and mechanisms at national and sub-national levels with clear roles and responsibilities to ensure ownership and accountabilities. ASEAN Member States should also consider more active coordination and engagement with ministries of planning and finance to advocate for increased investment for child protection and ending violence against children.

Box 13. LAO PDR: A multi-sectoral response to the national Violence against Children Survey

In follow up to the recommendations of the national Violence against Children Survey in Lao PDR, the Government developed a multi-sectoral response⁴⁹ to violence against children containing a set of priority actions for implementation. In line with the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children 2014-2020, the priority actions cover three main areas that together provide an overarching framework for ending violence against children:

1. *Enhancing the enabling environment* by implementing and enforcing laws and policies that protect children from violence, establishing systematic national data collection and research, strengthening the capacity of all those who work with and for children, and enhancing management and coordination in child protection.
2. *Preventing violence against children* by changing attitudes and behaviours and promoting respect and non-violence, supporting parents, caregivers and families, and empowering children to protect themselves.
3. *Responding to violence against children* by providing timely referral and access to appropriate support services, and bringing perpetrators to justice and preventing reoffending.

The priority actions underwent broad consultation across sectors and were endorsed by key government stakeholders in 2018. The actions outlined in the plan support implementation of the National Plan of Action, as well as other national strategies, policies and legal instruments, specifically the Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Violence against Children. The actions also support Lao PDR to deliver on international commitments to uphold the right of each child in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to reach the violence-related goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

49 National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children, *Ending violence against children in Lao PDR. A multi-sectoral response to the national Violence against Children Survey: Priority actions*, 2018.

12. Coordination mechanism for disasters and conflict situations

Action: Create or incorporate a coordination mechanism into existing structures to prevent and respond to violence against children in disasters and conflict situations.

Indicator 12:⁵⁰ Number of ASEAN Member States that include violence against children in emergency-response programming.

Baseline 2016: 5 (partly/under development); 1 (not yet started); 4 (information not available)

Mid-term review 2019: 4 (implementation underway); 3 (under development); 1 (not yet started); 2 (information not available)

Children in emergencies are extremely vulnerable to violence. A consequence of social and armed conflicts, natural disasters and other complex and chronic emergencies is that social systems collapse, children become separated from their caregivers and caregiving and safe environments are damaged or even destroyed.⁵¹

As of June 2019, seven ASEAN Member States (**Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand** and **Viet Nam**) have established a coordination mechanism or taken specific measures to address violence against children in natural disasters and/or conflict situations. This is an increase of two compared to the five countries reported in the Baseline Study. These are among the countries that are most prone to emergency situations in the region. In **Cambodia**, for example, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation has developed the Child Protection in Emergency Contingency Plan, which is updated every two years. In **Indonesia**, the Ministry of Social Affairs has continued its leadership of the National Cluster on Protection and Displacement, including a sub-cluster on child protection, which is the mechanism for coordinating response during emergencies. In 2018, the Ministry and the Provincial Department of Social Affairs led the child protection sub-cluster in response to the emergencies in Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara and Central Sulawesi, with UNICEF support. Emergency response included the deployment of 60 social workers in Central Sulawesi, providing psychosocial support for a cumulative 25,365 children who took part in regular structured psychosocial support activities in 25 child friendly spaces and schools. In addition, 47 separated and/or unaccompanied children (17 girls and 30 boys) were reunited with their families, and 118 tracing requests were initiated using the online tool Primero. Around 1,557 children living in 62 institutions were also identified and 9,825 non-food item kits were distributed to vulnerable children living in 48 camps for internally displaced persons in the most remote areas, to children living in childcare institutions, and to children reunified with their families. Birth registration support also reached 12,793 children. In **Lao PDR**, the child protection emergency response is coordinated by the Protection Cluster within the National Disaster Prevention and Control Committee. The Cluster is supported by INGO partners such as Save the Children and Child Fund and UNICEF, as in the case of the July 2018 emergency in Attapeu province. In **Myanmar**, the Department of Social Welfare works in close coordination with national and international agencies to address child protection in situations of emergency preparedness and natural disasters. In relation to violence against children in conflict situations, psychosocial support teams carry out psychosocial support to internally displaced people at camps and support the establishment of child-friendly spaces. In the **Philippines**, protection of children from violence falls under the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act 2016.

⁵⁰ The indicator for priority action 12 in the Regional Plan of Action reads: "Number of ASEAN Member States with coordination mechanisms at national and local levels that prevent and respond to violence against children in disasters and conflict situations". Action 11 above already captures national coordination mechanisms for violence against children. These pre-existing mechanisms will support and/or lead violence prevention and response during disasters and conflict situations. As such, for the purposes of the baseline, this indicator measured whether violence against children is included in emergency response programming.

⁵¹ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General comment No. 13: The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence*, CRC/C/GC/13, 18 April 2011.

In January 2019, the President of the Philippines also signed the Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Law (Republic Act 11188), declaring the policy of the State to provide special protection to children in situations of armed conflict (see Box 12). In **Thailand**, the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre coordinates the Government's response in the sub-region has developed a new partnership on child protection. In 2019, the Centre established a new coordination centre for women and children and has been collaborating with the Department of Children and Youth to organize workshops on planning and operations with government child protection personnel, security personnel and local NGOs. In **Viet Nam**, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs has developed a training manual on Child Protection in Emergencies/ Natural Disasters and conducted training for selected provinces. The Ministry also issued national guidelines on data collection on children affected by natural disasters. Temporary care and support for children affected by disasters are integrated into the national policy on cash transfer programme.

While some ASEAN Member States have been proactive in integrating child protection safeguards into national disaster risk reduction policies and strategies, given the vulnerability of many Member States to natural disasters and the impact of climate change, more preparatory work in coordination with all relevant actors needs to be done to ensure that countries are emergency-ready. This includes ensuring that children and young people receive the necessary protection and services in a context of generalized violence in the community and that measures are taken to establish local, national and cross-border agreements and provisions to guarantee their protection in difficult circumstances and to safeguard their wellbeing.

Box 14. THE PHILIPPINES: Strengthening legislation to protect children during emergencies

Child protection humanitarian response has been institutionalized in the Philippines with the enactment of the 2016 Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act (Republic Act 10821). This law also strengthens the mandate of the National Child Protection Working Group, which oversees humanitarian response through the cluster co-chairs, the Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF. As of December 2019, the Working Group has organised presence in all 17 regions in the Philippines, through the Regional Child Protection Working Group under the Regional Sub-Committees for the Welfare of Children. Republic Act 10821 also mandates the Department of Social Welfare and Development to establish a comprehensive emergency programme to enhance the provision of life-saving humanitarian and protection assistance to vulnerable children in emergencies particularly separated children, children with disabilities, and children in shelters.

In January 2019, the President of the Philippines also signed the Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Law (Republic Act 11188), declaring the policy of the State to provide special protection to children in situations of armed conflict. This first-ever comprehensive national law on children in situations of armed conflict is further proof of the Government's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The consultation process in developing the law included youth consultations in social media format, to ensure that the legislation reflects the views of children affected by armed conflict. The law has an expanded definition of schools and hospitals/health facilities to provide wider protection for these civilian facilities and serve as a stronger deterrent for attacks on these structures, and places of worship. It also upholds the rights of children to be treated as victims.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

The mid-term review has highlighted the commitment of ASEAN Member States to tackle violence against children and the ensuing progress that has been made across the Regional Plan of Action's priority areas in its first few years of implementation. Member States are encouraged to build on their efforts to date, as well as to accelerate action to implement the full range of actions envisaged by the Regional Plan of Action in order to fulfil global, regional and national commitments made to eliminate violence against children, and to bring about real change in the lives of children. It is hoped that the mid-term review process and the recommendations in this report provide the impetus and framework for accelerated action and investment.

Key drivers to accelerate progress in ASEAN Member States include:

- strengthened data management and increased data collection efforts, particularly in the area of sexual violence against children;
- greater understanding of the drivers of violence in each national context;
- strengthened multisectoral coordination mechanisms both at national and sub-national levels, especially in relation to implementation of national plans of action;
- advanced law reform efforts to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings to ensure that children are legally protected from all forms of violent discipline;
- increased fiscal space for child protection;
- increased investment in capacity development and professionalization of the child protection/social service workforce;
- enhanced child- and gender-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms;
- a range of accessible, quality response services for children and families;
- enhanced enforcement and accountability mechanisms;
- the development of robust monitoring and evaluation systems; and
- the creation of strategic public and private partnerships.

In addition, in all ASEAN Member States, frameworks for **child protection systems** are in place to at least some degree. These systems are critical to effective prevention and response at national and sub-national levels and need to be enhanced to work better and more efficiently at all levels.

ASEAN Member States are also encouraged to shift from a focus on reactive and responsive system to a more **proactive prevention approach** to address the root causes, drivers and contributing factors that perpetuate and rationalize violence against children. In this regard, ASEAN Member States would benefit from a more long-term approach and strategy to address violence against children that would target changing the "mind-sets" of adults and tackling entrenched social norms and practices that are harmful to children. An excellent example of such a "prevention strategy" is the *ASEAN Guidelines on a Non-Violent Approach to Nurture, Care and Development of Children in all Settings*, which was adopted by ASEAN in 2016 and is being adapted in many local and national contexts among Member States. As the United

Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative on Violence against Children noted: *"It is high time to genuinely address the root causes of violence and promote a culture of respect for children's rights and of zero tolerance of violence. It is high time to mobilize and ignite the passion of all those who can actively engage in the creation of circles of non-violence in children's homes, schools and communities."*⁵²

It would be invaluable to identify the priorities for the second five years of the implementation period for the Regional Plan of Action, based on the findings of the mid-term review, in order to focus attention and collectively advance key areas of the Plan.

It is important to note that the cost of inaction in addressing violence against children in ASEAN Member States is high. It is a drain on a nation's social capital and detrimental to the development of human and cognitive capital and sustainable development for all countries. Child maltreatment is costing countries in the East Asia and Pacific region around US\$ 209 billion per year, equivalent to 2 per cent of the region's Gross Domestic Product.⁵³ Therefore, investments by ASEAN Member States in addressing violence against children today will bring positive returns in the future by reducing public expenditure on reactive response services, improving the health and wellbeing of children, improving educational, early childhood development and health outcomes and reducing juvenile crime and inter-generational violence.⁵⁴

Reducing violence against children is not only doable, but also strategic and within the reach of all ASEAN Member States. Key to achieving this is **enhanced and sustained political will** to place the elimination of violence against children at the centre of all national policies and programmes related to public health, child development, education, social welfare and justice, and progressively accelerate efforts towards fulfilling commitments made by ASEAN Member States in the Regional Plan of Action.

52 Santos Pais, M., 'Introduction' in *Violence against children – Making human rights real*, edited by Gertrud Lenzer, New York, 2018, p. 4.

53 UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Estimating the economic burden of violence against children in East Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok, 2015.

54 Fry, D, 'Preventing violence against children and how this contributes to building stronger economies', Thematic research paper for the 3rd High-Level Meeting on Cooperation for Child Rights in the Asia Pacific Region, 7–9 November 2016, Kuala Lumpur, 2016, p. 3.

