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**Armed Violence
Prevention
and Reduction
Multi-Country
Programme in
Latin America and
the Caribbean**

**Theory of Change
Summary**

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Background and situation analysis

Armed violence is a complex multidimensional phenomenon linked **to high levels of inequality and exclusion and institutional and structural constraints, such as the governance shortcomings; hard-line (mano dura) policies; corruption, lack of participation and transparency; lack of implementation of effective security strategies, weak rule of law, high levels of impunity**^{1,2} and intergenerational reproduction of poverty. The lack of spaces for recreation and social support, easy access to firearms and illicit drugs, drug trafficking and other organized criminal activities also increase the risk of adolescents' involvement in violence and crime.

More than 15% of homicide victims globally are young males aged 15-29 from the Americas, with Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala having highest homicide rates in 201. This trend is also affecting children and youth. Globally, almost half of all homicide victims are adolescents aged 15-29, while 36,000 children under 15 were victims of homicide in 2012. Two-thirds of homicides in LAC are committed with guns³.

The effects and causes of armed **violence are gendered**, with young men and adolescents most vulnerable to it and to homicide. However, young women and girls are also victims of the widespread violence. Urban violence and the use of small arms, have a differential effect on women and men⁴, facilitating **increased violence and threats against women. Gendered analyses of gangs and gang violence has also shown that it is rooted in negative masculinities, male dominance or machismo, driving young men to express masculinities in a violent manner**⁵ and putting the lives and wellbeing of young men in jeopardy⁶. It also explains the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence and femicides.

In compliance with international conventions and treaties⁷, the AVPR programme aims to

protect children and adolescents from all forms of violence and prevent its occurrence by tackling and mitigating the impact of armed violence on children and adolescents and their involvement in criminal gangs. Through its alignment with the UNICEF's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, the programme contributes to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

PROPOSED APPROACH

The purpose of this ToC is to introduce the strategic vision and rationale for the changes expected to address the impact of armed violence on youth in the region. These strategies build on the lessons learned and evidence obtained during the implementation of the AVPR programme and are anchored to the six **cross-cutting principles** (see Table 1).

In line with the ecological model, the ToC takes into consideration the social factors such as religious or cultural belief systems, societal norms and economic or social policies, and gender inequality⁸ relying heavily on a gendered analysis of violence and the determinants and effects of violence in the life of boys, girls, and adolescent males and females (see Fig. 1). It builds on **five of the seven INSPIRE**⁹ strategies: (i) implementation and enforcement of laws; (ii) norms and values; (iii) safe environments; (iv) response and support services; and, (v) education and life-skills and engages **main programming approaches** of (i) human rights; (ii) moving from policy and legal frameworks to policy implementation, fostering of local ownership and leadership and listening and encouraging

1 Conviction rates for homicides in the Americas are the lowest in the world with 24 convictions per 100 victims compared to 43 for every 100 globally (UNODC, 2013).

2 (Karl 2003; CEPAL 2010; UNDP 2014; The World Bank 2011; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2009; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2015

3 UNODC 2013

4 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2015; Santos Pais 2013; Gratius, Santos, and Roque 2012)

5 (Rodgers and Baird 2016; Baird 2012; Zubillaga and Briceño-León 2001

6 (Barker 2009)

7 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),

8 See VAC ToC for details on the ecological model.

9 "INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children", WHO, 2016

bottom-up initiatives; (iii) promoting advocacy and dialogue; (iv) fostering coordinated and holistic approaches on AVPR; and, (v) upholding UNICEF’s commitment to gender equity, gender equality and gender-responsive policies and programming.

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

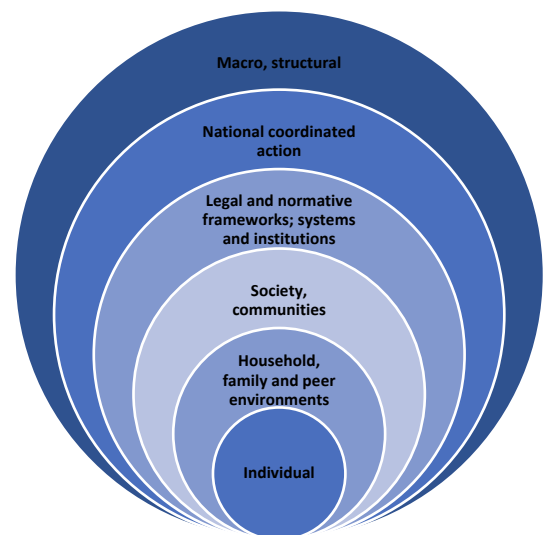
The ToC targets five areas of change at regional, national, local, community and individual levels that will jointly contribute to the overall reduction of armed violence and its impact on children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the long run, lead to a world free of violence against girls and boys, including adolescents . Each area of change encompasses the rationale for change that leads to specific outcomes and outputs through a set of high-priority strategies and taking into consideration specific assumptions:

Table 1: Cross-cutting principles	
1	Child rights perspective, as laid out in the CRC and CEDAW
	UNICEF’s commitment to the rights and needs of girls and boys living in situations of vulnerability
3	Best interests of the child, as established in the CRC
4	UNICEF’s commitment to gender equity, gender equality and gender-responsive policies and programming as cross-cutting themes
5	importance of ensuring participation of girls, boys and adolescents in programme and policy design, both to give them a voice and to improve the quality of programming and monitoring
6	A life cycle approach that recognizes how risks and needs vary by age during childhood and adolescence can help to design more effective programmes and make best use of scarce resources

(I) NATIONAL, EVIDENCE-BASED, COORDINATED MULTISECTORAL ACTION;

- If countries have coordination mechanisms in place to respond to child rights violations related to armed violence, evidence and data on armed violence against children are used and collected through established mechanisms, and states are willing to resource initiatives at national and local levels, then they are better prepared to implement sustainable multi-sectoral plans and policies on AVPR at national and local levels for continuous access and wider reach to girls, boys and adolescents.

ECOLOGICAL MODEL



Outcome	
Countries have strengthened and implemented legal and policy frameworks to protect girls and boys, including adolescents, from armed violence, in accord with international norms.	
Outputs	High-priority strategies
Countries have increased public and policymaker support for legal reform to protect boys, girls, and adolescents' right to live a life free of armed violence and its consequences, in alignment with international standards.	<p>Review laws and policies and advocacy for compliance with international norms related to armed violence and security (ex. CRC, CEDAW and the inter-American human rights system)</p> <p>Promote and spearhead participation in discussions with regional organizations: spearhead dialogue and agreements in regional organizations such as SICA and OAS, to promote political will and drive changes in legal frameworks and design and agree upon accountability mechanisms in member counties.</p>
Countries have strengthened mechanisms to monitor and reform laws and policies to address armed violence to in accord with international norms.	<p>Advocacy: to promote compliance with international human rights commitments for ending impunity and increasing due diligence.</p> <p>Development and dissemination of studies and research: to, amongst other results, ensure the monitoring of policy implementation and increase awareness of the situation of armed violence against children.</p>
Assumptions	Considerations for programme implementation
States have the political will to ensure the rights of children and transform their international commitments into policies.	National changes in legislations and legal frameworks depend on political contexts and the power relations, structures, interests and actors that make change happen at this level. There might be vested interest in keeping contentious issues, such as armed violence and crime, out of a human rights framework. To navigate this complex setting, it is vital to keep policy makers and policy entrepreneurs engaged and willing to invest in the changes needed. UNICEF has a comparative advantage in the dialogue with key actors knowing the political national and local landscape is essential to understand how to push for change and when.

(III) SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS: PREVENTION AND REPORTING MECHANISMS AND RESPONSE SERVICES ACROSS ALL SECTORS;

- If key sectors such as justice, police, health, and education have the necessary tools, including regulations, guidelines, protocols, minimum standards and plans of action to prevent and address armed violence; personnel and public officials in these sectors have the capacity to identify, address and prevent armed violence against children and SGBV, including preventing children joining gangs and engaging in criminal activities, then delivery of essential services to boys, girls, and adolescents, especially those at risk of armed violence and SGBV,

will be more efficient and effective;

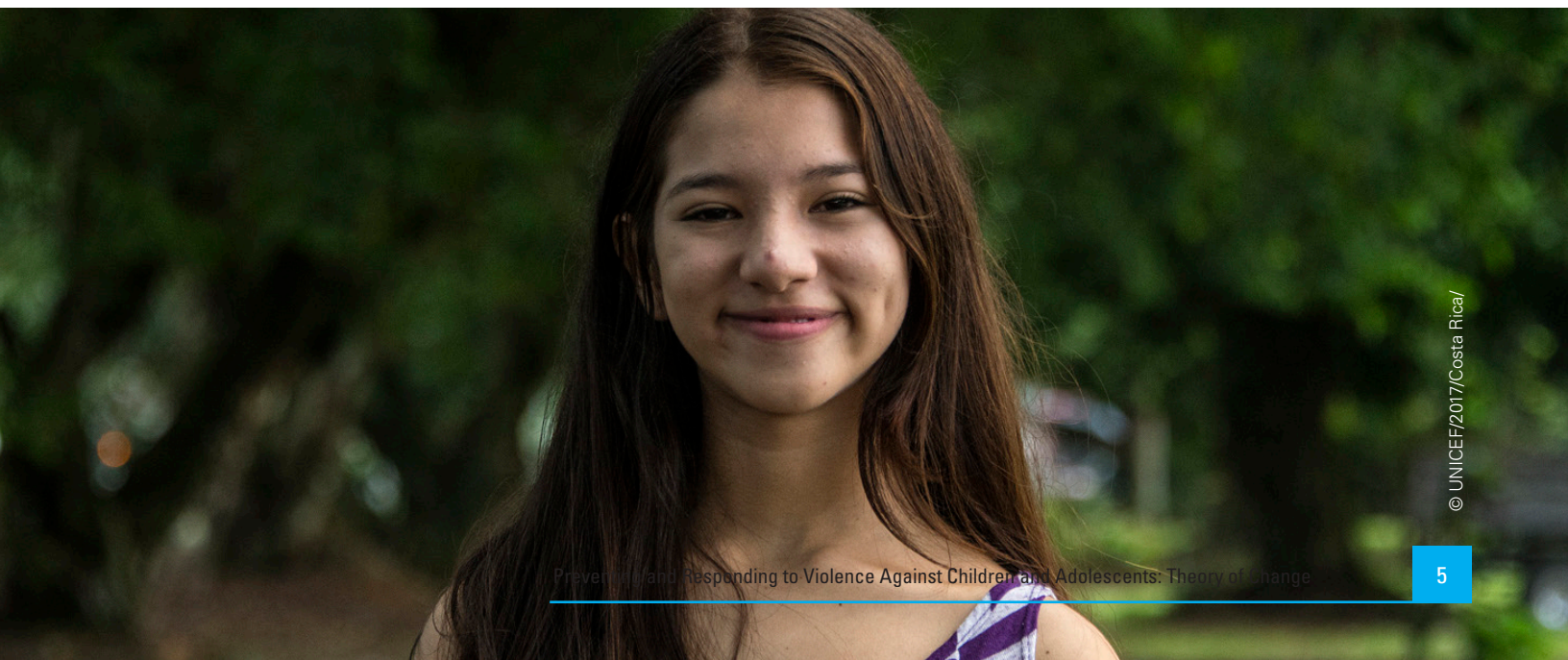
- If state, national and local officials increase their knowledge and awareness of the rights of boys, girls and adolescents, especially in their role to deliver services that are fair, efficient, high-quality and child, age and gender-sensitive, then it will facilitate the reduction of stigma, violence and victimization of children in their daily work;
- If schools and any other relevant out-of-school platforms are equipped with tools and adequate capacity to provide quality programmes relating to life-skills (including conflict resolution and non-violent gender relations) and to livelihood opportunities, then this will contribute to preventing boys and girls from engaging in armed violence and to promoting awareness of their right to live a life free of violence.

Outcome	
Systems and institutions have improved the quality, coverage, access to and multi-sectoral coordination of armed violence prevention, reporting mechanisms and response services for girls and boys, including adolescents.	
Outputs	High-priority strategies
Justice, police, health and education systems put regulations, guidelines, protocols, minimum standards and plans of action in place to prevent and address armed violence against children and adolescents.	<p>Advocacy and awareness-raising: to motivate public officials to use data in their practices, tools and programme design along with policy dialogue, roundtables, research findings and consultation mechanisms in order to increase public officials' awareness of the right of boys, girls, and adolescents to live a life free of armed violence and to reduce stigma and discrimination in the provision of services to at-risk children and young people.</p> <p>Institutional strengthening: of health, justice, police, social welfare and education sectors with the development of protocols, models of care and standards of service to collect information and data related to violence against children. Also strengthen the justice system and its justice providers by aligning protocols and practices to human rights standards by training public officials; developing protocols, models of care and standards of service delivery; and by gathering data.</p> <p>Ensure data collection and monitoring systems: to assess service provision, as well as official and non-official practices in justice, health, police and other sectors providing key services in local and national governments.</p> <p>Participation and awareness-raising: amongst communities and children, for them to provide input on the development of protocols, models of care and standards for service delivery; as well as in situation analyses, assessments, etc. In addition, promote the participation of communities and young people in accountability mechanisms for service delivery, and promote awareness of rights in communities and children, amongst others, to increase knowledge and demand for services in their communities to be protected from and prevent armed violence.</p>
State and government officials and representatives have increased awareness of the rights of boys, girls, and adolescents and reduce stigma, violence and victimization of children in their policies and work.	
Personnel and public officials in the police, justice, health and education systems have increased their capacity to identify, address and prevent armed violence and SGBV against children and adolescents, including preventing children from joining gangs and engaging in criminal activities.	
Education, and any other relevant sectors, have the capacity and tools to provide quality programmes to improve children and adolescents' life-skills (including conflict resolution and non-violent gender relations) and livelihoods, implement initiatives to prevent boys and girls from engaging in armed violence, and promote awareness of their right to live a life free of violence.	
Assumptions	Considerations for programme implementation
1. There is political will to ensure resources within local and national institutions.	In national and local governments with limited resources, competing priorities may result in some issues being left out. This does not only refer to financial allocations, but also human resources, infrastructure and staff time. To manage these constraints, political will must be translated into resource allocation by ensuring follow up on internal and formal commitments to AVPR of key institutions.
2. Local level service providers are interested in developing their capacity in data collection and the improvement of their services.	Social norms also affect the perception of local service providers, and development fatigue might decrease their interest in addressing AVPR, collecting data and improving their services. UNICEF must keep the motivation of these providers up while following up on high-level institutional commitments to AVPR that must be trickled down to local and community levels.

(IV) SOCIETY/ COMMUNITIES;

- If communities and families are aware of the rights of boys, girls, and adolescents to live a life free of violence and the negative consequences of a life with violence, this will increase their likelihood to reject any form of violence;
- If communities have the will and capacity to participate and influence policy decisions on AVPR, downstream interventions will more likely be relevant, sustainable and target equity by reaching a wider population, especially those most vulnerable and at risk.

Outcome	
Communities are more engaged in:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing boys, girls, and adolescents from joining gangs and protecting the right of all girls and boys to grow up free of armed violence. • Creating safe environments for girls, boys and adolescents, prevent boys, girls, and adolescents from joining gangs and falling victim of armed violence. 	
Outputs	High-priority strategies
<p>Communities, civil society and community-based organizations have greater awareness of children’s rights, including the right of girls and boys to grow up free of armed violence and discrimination, regardless of age, sex, disability or any other social or economic disadvantage.</p>	<p>Communication for development (C4D): to enable positive social transformation, drive positive social change and mobilize communities to prevent armed violence and protect children and adolescents from it.</p> <p>Capacity strengthening: to train community workers, parents and community-based organizations to spearhead social norms change and changes in behaviours.</p> <p>Partnerships: with agents of change, local organizations and CBOs in promoting non-violent and positive messages against armed violence.</p> <p>Participation: to prompt communities to participate in monitoring and planning of national and local armed violence prevention initiatives.</p>
Openness from communities to receiving information regarding behaviour change messages and to participating in prevention activities.	Some of the communities where UNICEF is engaged are places where violence and organized crime are part of everyday life. Stigma and discrimination against children and adolescents in this context might make communities resistant to sensitive issues such as AVPR and SGBV. UNICEF has extensive experience in engaging communities for positive change but this requires being sensitive to local contexts and ensuring adequate communications and messages that convey UNICEF’s work.



(V) BOYS, GIRLS, AND ADOLESCENTS.

- If boys, girls, and adolescents are exposed to alternative social norms that promote non-violence, peace and positive masculinities, then they will increase their resilience to and reject armed violence, gangs and criminal activities, and act as agents of change in their own communities by not engaging with maras (youth gangs) and organized crime;
- If boys, girls, and adolescents increase their awareness of rights, make use of the existing mechanisms to be heard, and participate in prevention initiatives, then they will be empowered as rights-holders and will be able to contribute to building communities without armed violence.

Outcome	
Girls, boys and adolescents are more empowered to exercise rights and agency to live free of violence and seek help when violence occurs; build healthy, gender-equitable, non-violent relationship; and take positive masculinities on board.	
Outputs	High-priority strategies
Girls, boys and adolescents have greater access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, life skills, livelihood and violence prevention programmes and are motivated to take action and the initiative to promote positive masculinities and non-violent conflict resolution, rejecting violent behaviour and gangs. • Age-appropriate information about sexuality and healthy relationships • Knowledge about rights and where to seek help in cases of armed violence. 	<p>Community mobilization: comprehensive initiatives for at-risk children and adolescents that consist behavioural change and engaging children in the prevention of violence; changing perceptions and fostering children and young people as agents of change in their communities.</p> <p>Participation: ensure that boys, girls, and adolescents feel they can provide input and make demands as rights-holders in the development of protocols, models of care and standards for service delivery; that they are being consulted for the development of plans and policies to combat and prevent armed violence; and that they can share their input on situation analyses, assessments, etc.</p> <p>Participation of children in their schools and in their communities on issues related to prevention of violence, by, for example, engaging peers who are at risk in community dialogues; in sports and leisure activities that promote positive social norms change and peer-to-peer interactions and training.</p> <p>Develop and strengthen networks of children and young people in order to further encourage their participation in prevention activities and in consultation mechanisms.</p> <p>Communication for development C4D: to enable positive social transformation, drive positive social change and prevent armed violence and protect children and adolescents from it; promote non-violent, gender-equal social norms change in children and young people.</p>
Assumptions	Considerations for programme implementation
Prevention initiatives will have enough leverage amongst children and young people to ensure they engage in the initiatives.	There are several internal factors that drive children and young people to engage with gangs or to not use the services available when they have been victims of armed violence and its consequences. The appeal of gangs in the region forces UNICEF to be attuned to the priorities and needs of children and adolescents, ensuring that initiatives, on one hand do not alienate vulnerable children and adolescents even further, and on the other hand are attractive and relevant enough to keep them engaged.



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