

# United Nations Declares November 18 as World Day Aimed at Ending Child Sexual Exploitation and Violence, Bringing Hope and Healing to Survivors

Yesterday, **the United Nations declared November 18 as the World Day for the Prevention of, and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence.** The resolution, which was sponsored by Sierra Leone and Nigeria and co-sponsored by more than 120 countries, was adopted by consensus and a bang of the gavel by the assembly's acting president, which was greeted with loud applause. Following the action, H.E., Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, Permanent Observer of the Holy See United Nations, New York addressed the Assembly expressing appreciation for the UN's action, and the full support of the Vatican State for the newly adopted World Day.

**Over 50 individuals including leaders of prominent child welfare and advocacy organizations, and survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA), including several who experienced abuse by clergy,** joined H.E. Fatima Maada Bio, the First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone, a survivor of child marriage, as she addressed the General Assembly urging action. "Child sexual abuse is a global public health crisis. We must acknowledge this problem, and take every necessary action to protect our children, especially our girls, from this tragic human condition." Her eloquent, impassioned speech was greeted with a round of applause, and cheers from survivors in the gallery.

"Child sexual abuse is one of the greatest violations to human dignity, one can suffer," said H.E. Ambassador Alhaji Fanday Turay. "The World Day for the Prevention of, and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence is a critical step in bringing institutional recognition to this horrific childhood trauma. Too many victims of child sexual abuse are suffering in shame and silence. Many live anguished lives. By adopting this Resolution, we can provide a platform for all nations and civil society to mobilize and take actions to protect children from this tragedy."

The World Health Organization reports that millions of children experience child sexual violence each year. The Resolution facilitated by Sierra Leone and Nigeria aims to bring global visibility to the problem of child sexual abuse and promote the right for every child to grow up free from all forms of sexual abuse, both on-line and off-line. "The toll child sexual abuse takes goes deep. It harms the victim, and their loved ones, and it has grave consequences to the health and wellbeing of our nations costing billions each year in increased health care costs and lost GDP," said H.E. Bio.

"We promoted the World Day to increase awareness of the actions all governments can take to prevent abuse and bring healing to survivors," said Dr. Jennifer Wortham, a researcher at Harvard who founded the Global Collaborative, the survivor led network that led the international advocacy campaign to launch the world day. Wortham's brothers are clergy abuse survivors, and Wortham shared that they have struggled with the effects of their abuse for their entire lives. "The World Day will help my brothers and all survivors of child sexual violence to know that the world cares about them, that they matter, that what they experienced was unjust, and that healing is possible," said Wortham.

In 2020, Wortham met Michael Hoffman, former President of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois and clergy abuse survivor working with the Chicago Archdiocese to develop programs for prevention and healing. They contacted Dr. Melissa Merrick, President and CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America, to ask for support for the world day, and she agreed. “Greater awareness of child sexual abuse, alongside strong policies and programs are part of a successful public health approach to prevent child sexual abuse before it can occur,” said Dr. Merrick. “Prevent Child Abuse America is proud and humbled to serve as the Founding Partner of the Global Collaborative and to help bring prevention, awareness, and healing to our collective hearts and minds.”

Wortham credits much of the success of the Global Collaborative to Harvard’s Human Flourishing Program, where she serves as a research associate. In April 2021, Dr. Tyler VanderWeele, Director of HFH, sponsored an international symposium in collaboration with The Catholic University of America to foster faith and flourishing for victims of child sexual abuse. “The prevalence of CSA, the serious consequences to victim’s health and emotional wellbeing, and the fact that it is preventable has placed CSA among the 24 risk factors identified by the WHO as substantively contributing to the global burden of disease,” said VanderWeele. “We were deeply concerned with these findings, and we believed urgent action was needed,” said VanderWeele.

During the symposium, members of the Global Collaborative sent an open letter to world leaders requesting the establishment of a world day. “A few days later I received a call from Pellagia Gambiza, the Executive Director of Shine On Sierra Leone with a request for a bilateral meeting with the First Lady of Sierra Leone,” said Wortham. The First Lady said, “I believe in what you are doing, and I’m going to help you.” She stood by her word and here we are today. We are all so grateful for what she has done, and for what Harvard and The Catholic University of America has done to help advance this issue onto the world stage,” said Wortham.

Following the Symposium, The Global Collaborative and the World Childhood Foundation, USA sponsored an official side-event at the UN High-level political Forum. “During the side-event, we learned of the Europe Day for the Protection of Children Against Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. We knew we needed the support of Europe to make the world day happen and this was the best possible outcome for all, so we adopted their day, and launched a global campaign to advocate for a unified approach,” said Wortham.

In 2015, the Council declared the 18 November as the Europe Day for the Protection of Children Against Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The Council of Europe [Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#), also known as “the Lanzarote Convention,” requires criminalization of all kinds of sexual offences against children. It sets out that states in Europe and beyond shall adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute perpetrators.

“UN World Days have been established to shed light on countless topics, yet for too long survivors of child sexual abuse, exploitation, and violence remained in the shadows—until now. This day is a historic step forward and will catalyze meaningful progress for years to come,” said Haley McNamara, Vice President of the National Center on Sexual Exploitation and Director of its international division.

“This is a monumental day for our movement, there is no issue more critical than the protection of children from child predation and exploitation, and the World Day” said Lynn Shaw, Founder of Lynn’s

Warriors. Members of the Global Collaborative believe child sexual abuse is a multi-factorial problem that requires a multi-factor approach. “At EndCAN, we believe that uniting voices, working collectively, and standing together not only supports those impacted by abuse, but creates a community of those who stand to end abuse,” said Lori Poland, President, EndCAN.

“Darkness to Light and the Keep Kids Safe Movement are honored to witness this historic moment for the protection of children worldwide and remain dedicated to leading the United States towards comprehensive federal legislation for prevention, healing, and justice,” said Katelyn Brewer, President, and CEO of Darkness to Light and Chair of the Keep Kids Safe Movement.

Professor Marci Hamilton, Founder and CEO of ChildUSA, a leading policy thinktank, believes a key lever for addressing the crisis is to eliminate or extend existing statutes of limitations that currently prevent many victims from seeking justice. “We joined the Global Collaborative because we believe a world day will help accelerate adoption of policies government leaders can implement to protect children and bring justice to individuals who experienced these crimes,” said Hamilton.

“Tragically, children experience many forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse. It happens in every country, and in the places, children should be most protected – their homes, schools and online,” said Cornelius Williams, Director of Child Protection at UNICEF. “UNICEF is committed to work with Governments to strengthen accountability, prevention and healing for child sexual abuse and exploitation. We would welcome the commemoration of a "World Day for the Prevention of, and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence" as a significant opportunity to accelerate these efforts.”

“The WeProtect Global Alliance welcomes the adoption of the resolution at the 77th UN General Assembly, establishing the World Day for the Prevention of, and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence. This resolution sends an important signal that child sexual exploitation and abuse is now firmly on the global agenda and underlines the need for coordinated global responses to support the prevention of and healing from child sexual abuse, both online and offline. We thank Jennifer Wortham and the Global Collaborative and the governments of Sierra Leone and Nigeria for their tireless work,” said Iain Drennan, Executive Director, WeProtect Global Alliance.

“Finally, the world has spoken, and this is a victory for us all,” said Mark Williams, clergy abuse survivor, and advisor to the Archdiocese of Newark. “This day has been extraordinary, I am filled with awe, and peace.”

**Sexual Exploitation & Abuse: General Assembly Media Stakeout dated November 7, 2022,  
at [UN Media Site](#)**

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### **About the Global Collaborative**

The Global Collaborative is an all-volunteer, survivor-led network of child advocacy organizations, academic institutions, survivor networks, NGOs, and faith actors mobilizing to bring an end to child sexual exploitation and abuse. Our mission is to support governments, and institutions in their efforts to protect children from CSEA and promote healing for survivors of childhood trauma.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.globalcollaborative.org/>

Latest updates: [@Nov18WorldDay](#)

**The following organizations are co-founders and Partners of the Global Collaborative World Day**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Breeze of Hope Foundation</li> <li>• American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children</li> <li>• Arigatou International</li> <li>• Army of Survivors</li> <li>• Australia eSafety Commission</li> <li>• Awake</li> <li>• Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs</li> <li>• Bellweather International</li> <li>• Candle in a Dark Room</li> <li>• Child Abuse Council</li> <li>• Christian Cultural Center</li> <li>• Darkness to Light</li> <li>• Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children</li> <li>• General Federation of Women's Clubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End FGM/C U.S./Network</li> <li>• Enough Abuse Campaign</li> <li>• Human Flourishing Program, Harvard University</li> <li>• Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities</li> <li>• International Board of Rabbi's</li> <li>• ISPCAN</li> <li>• Keep Kids Safe Coalition</li> <li>• International Centre on Sexual Exploitation</li> <li>• Islamic Relief</li> <li>• Lynns Warrior's</li> <li>• Male Survivors</li> <li>• Maria Goretti Network</li> <li>• Monique Burr Foundation</li> <li>• National Center on Sexual Exploitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New York Board of Rabbi's PACE</li> <li>• Prevent Child Abuse America</li> <li>• RHAMA</li> <li>• Roads of Success</li> <li>• Sacred Spaces</li> <li>• Shine on Sierra Leone</li> <li>• Survivor Network for Those Abused by Priests</li> <li>• The Catholic Project</li> <li>• The New York Foundling</li> <li>• Their Story is our Story</li> <li>• WeProtect Global Alliance</li> <li>• World Childhood Foundation, USA</li> <li>• World Council of Churches</li> <li>• World Vision</li> <li>• YMCA USA</li> </ul>
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