



BASELINE STUDY

**CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS
OF CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES EXISTING
AT COMMUNITY LEVEL IN RWANDA**

FINAL REPORT



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Our gratitude goes to Save the Children Sweden, Eastern and Central Africa Regional Office, who commissioned the multi-country study on 'Children's Perceptions of Child Protection Measures Existing at Community Level', and the Lead Consultant for their technical guidance and support.

The consultants,
Enrico Rampazzo and Alfred Twahirwa

Executive Summary

This participatory baseline is part of a multi-country study commissioned by Save the Children targeting selected areas of Rwanda, Ethiopia and North-Sudan. The purpose of the multi-country study is to address the UN Study on Violence Against Children's recommendations and assess the role of communities in ensuring that children are protected from violence and abuse at all levels.

The Rwanda study was conducted from March 29th to April 30th 2010 in 6 Sectors (Rubaya, Byumba, Mutete, Mageragere, Nyamirambo, Kacyiru) in 3 Districts of Rwanda (Gicumbi, Nyugenge and Gasabo) ensuring that a good representation of urban/semi-urban and rural areas was included. A total of 127 children participated in the study representing a broad range of backgrounds in terms of gender (58 females and 69 males), age (children from 5 to 18 years old), school-going and out of school, 7 children with disabilities, 8 children head of households and 20 children from an historically marginalized group in Rwanda.

The objective of the study was to assess the strengths and gaps in existing child protection systems at community level based on the views of children in selected areas of Rwanda with 3 major key themes to be explored: 1) Extent & perception of protection issues; civil society and legislation that protects children; 2) Extent and perception of children's participation; 3) Extent and impact of discrimination against children.

It is to be noted that due to the limited sample of children and geographical locations targeted, the findings of the study cannot be generalized and exemplificative of the whole country.

The most common child protection issues reported by targeted children are the following: corporal punishment including verbal abuse, followed by child labour, economic violence, sexual violence and, last but not least, denial of the right to play.

Nearly 50% of targeted children reported **corporal punishment** as the most common abuse they face, with girls below 12 who live in rural areas being the most affected. Most of the times corporal and humiliating punishment is also accompanied by insulting. According to children, parents, care-givers (step-parents, foster-parents, grandparents) and teachers, are the major perpetrators of corporal punishment, often used as a mean to educate and discipline children, and sometimes used for no specific reason. The majority of children (48%) highlighted that children should refer this abuse to the local leader and the police so that they can sensitize and/or punish the perpetrators. Despite the fact that most of the children named the persons they would refer to when they face this type of abuse, they did not admit whether they had actually found themselves in the situation of reporting the case and therefore they could not assess whether the support they received was of good quality.

The second most common child protection issue reported by 40% of targeted children is **child labour**. Children are often exposed to forced labour, especially boys above 12 living in rural areas. In this case as well, the majority of targeted children (60%) reported the local leader as the focal person whom they can refer to, he/she can overcome the problem peacefully or punishing the perpetrators. Child-focus Organizations and child-led groups are also reported as structures to refer and receive support from, especially from those children who are actively involved in the children groups. According to the targeted children, child-led groups have the capacity to mediate between the parties with sensitization activities and, if necessary, by addressing the case to the local leader.

The third child protection issue reported by 31% of targeted children is **economic violence, meaning the lack of access to basic services such as school, medical care, shelter, clothing and food**. Boys above 12 living in rural areas seems to be more affected by this child protection issue and they reported that the reason of these abuses could be due to poverty but sometimes also to denial. Parents and foster-parents are the persons most identified by children as perpetrators of this child protection issue. Local leaders and Civil Society Organizations are seen to be the main structures whom to refer and ask for direct support, although most of the children reported that they have not been targeted by such organizations so far. According to children, local leaders instead, can play a role in order to sensitize their parents to fulfil their obligations towards their children.

The fourth protection issue most reported by targeted children, especially girls above 12 living in urban area, is **sexual violence**. Nearly 20% of children reported the issue of sexual violence as one of the most common abuses that they face in their communities. The most reported perpetrators are sugar daddies and sugar mummies¹ and also in this case the majority of children (73%) would refer to local leaders and/or police in order to punish the perpetrators and prevent the abuse from happening again. In this case as well, targeted children have not reported details about procedures they have to follow when referring the case to local leader or police. Children would also refer these cases to their parents, in particular mothers (unless parents themselves are the perpetrators), who can facilitate the reporting process to formal structures. Few children, in particular girls above 12 living in urban area, also reported the health centre and medical doctors as structures to be referred to when a child has experienced such abuse. Health care support is considered important to prevent the potential health consequences children could face when they have been exposed to a sexual violence.

A fifth child protection issue, raised by 8% of children, in particular boys above 12 living in urban area, is the **denial of their right to play** with their friends.

45% of targeted children reported that they do not know any **law/policies in place to protect children from violence** in Rwanda; some of them reported that they believe some polices exist in the country, although they are not aware. 40% of children instead, reported that they are aware of some laws/policies in place, despite the fact that they were not able to report the name and the details of the laws. Most of targeted children reported they would like to be part in the development of laws and play a role in administration structures that protect children in Rwanda and they shared some ideas on how to reinforce existing laws/policies and develop new ones.

Most of targeted children (56%) reported knowledge of a **child-led group in their community**. In general, children above 12 years, excluding the children belonging to the historically marginalized group, are the ones more knowledgeable of the existence of child-led groups in their community.

53% of targeted children reported that they have participated, at least once in their life, in a **community or national events and/or consultations on child protection**. In particular, the event most reported by children was the day of African Child. In this case as well, only few of the children belonging to the historically marginalized group reported their participation in an event or consultation on child protection.

The majority of children (80%) from all targeted areas reported the **knowledge of civil society organizations** working on child protection in their areas and although they are not aware about the child protection issues that the organizations cover, they have a broad idea on the types of interventions these organizations are implementing in their communities. In general, the oldest groups are slightly more informed than the youngest groups on this regard.

The majority of the children (95%), when asked to assess the impact of **discrimination** against children in their communities, reported that there are specific groups of children who suffer discrimination more than others. In particular, children head of households reported they feel discriminated due to their life condition and excluded from any type of support. Children with disabilities and very poor children are also among the most excluded.

The study concludes with some highlights from **children's recommendations** on how to improve prevention and protection structures and mechanisms in their communities and **possible interventions** that Child-focus Civil Society Organizations, UN agencies, donors and Governmental officials can implement upon children's recommendations by expanding existing programmes and initiating new ones in order to address children's concerns and make their communities a safer place.

¹ A wealthy, usually older man or woman who gives gifts to someone much younger in return for companionship or sexual favours. The 'sugar' in this term alludes to the sweetening role of the gifts, and daddy/mummy to the age difference between the pair.

Background of Child Protection in Rwanda

The war and genocide of 1994 had a dramatic impact on the fabric of the society in Rwanda. More than a million people, including babies and children, were killed, infrastructure was destroyed, poverty increased and development indicators deteriorated.

Due largely to the energy and commitment of its Government and People, Rwanda has made a remarkable recovery during the past 16 years but the challenges are still daunting with the country ranking 167th out of 182 countries on the human development index (Human Development Report 2009) and with 57% of the population living on less than 250 FRw (approx 0.5 \$) per day.

The total population of Rwanda is estimated at 9,720,694². The rate of urbanization currently stands as 18.7% representing 1,747,403 of the population. The urban demographic mass is concentrated in the City of Kigali which sheltered approximately 800,000 inhabitants in 2008³. In 2009 Kigali city counted a population of 965,398 inhabitants living in an area of 730 km².

Children and young people below 25 make up 65% of the population of Rwanda and children less than 15 years old represent nearly the 50%⁴. The loss of social capital during the '94 Genocide is believed to have increased abuses towards them as protection mechanisms within communities weakened. Almost three in ten Rwandan children under 18 years of age are considered to be orphans or vulnerable children (OVCs⁵), the proportion is highest in the city of Kigali (35%).

At the time of the General Census carried out in August 2002, there were officially 15,052 households headed by children, comprising more than 100,000 children⁶. According to the Government of Rwanda's National Plan of Action on Child Labour of 2005 approximately 175,000 children were involved in harmful or hazardous child labour e.g. in tea plantations, stone mining/crushing, smuggling, domestic work, agricultural work. A study conducted by Save the Children in 2004 revealed that around 7000 children were living and/or working in the street.

According to the US State TIP Report 2009⁷, Rwanda is a source country for some women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labour and sexual exploitation. Children living in child-headed households, working children and children living or working in the street are not the only children experiencing abuse and neglect in Rwanda.

Other protection issues include high rates of gender-based violence, defilement⁸, rape, physical, verbal and psychological abuse and neglect. Violence against children is practiced in homes and communities, including schools. Even if more quantitative data about the different forms of violence against children is missing, according to the National Police Annual Report of 2007⁹, out of 2935 reported cases of sexual violence against women, 2421 are those that relate to minors, with very few taken to court.

The Government of Rwanda has devoted strong commitment to the protection of women and children, evidenced by the strengthening of the legal and policy framework. Ending gender-based violence and violence against children became part of the Constitutional provisions of 2003 for equality of rights for all Rwandans and non-Rwandans without discrimination of any form, including discrimination based on gender and age.

The Government of Rwanda ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) without reservation in 1991 and submitted its initial report in 1992 (which never was considered due to the Genocide of 1994) and two combined reports (first and second periodic reports) in 2002 which were examined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2004. A combined third and fourth periodic report is being prepared by the Government of Rwanda to cover the period from 2002 to the date of submission. Rwanda has also ratified the Optional Protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in 2002 and 2003 but has not yet submitted any report on the Protocols.

² World Bank, World Development Indicators 2008

³ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Infrastructure 'National Urban Housing Policy for Rwanda' 2008

⁴ Demographic Health Survey, 2005

⁵ Demographic Health Survey, 2005

⁶ General Census, 2002

⁷ US Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report (2009)

⁸ Sex with a minor i.e. a child under 18 years (with or without consent)

⁹ National Police Annual Report

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) was ratified in 2001 and the Government of Rwanda has so far submitted one report in 2006. Rwanda has ratified the Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with disability ratification in 2008 and the initial report is due in 2010.

In 2003, the Ministry in charge of Family affairs and Gender (MIGEPROF) was created with the mandate to ensure coordination in the promotion and protection of children's rights with other Ministries, International Organisations and Non-Governmental ones, to put in place and coordinate the implementation of policies and programs and to ensure protection of rights for all children, including the most vulnerable¹⁰. A child rights perspective has shaped the formulation of key policies including the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (2003) which establishes objectives and proposes strategies to address issues regarding orphans and other vulnerable children, the National Plan of Action (2006-2011) which guides the implementation of the National Policy on OVCs, laws number 27/2001 on the prohibition of violence against children and number 22/1999 on property and inheritance.

In 2009 several child-focused policies and guidelines have been adopted: a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of the OVC Strategic Plan that provides a frame to monitor how interventions aimed at OVCs have an impact on the fulfillment of children's rights and their well being; the guidelines on the Setting-up of Community-based Committees to fight Gender-Based Violence and protect Children's Rights, the International Adoption Regulations; the Guidelines on the minimum package for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children which provide standards for the improvement of the quality of services in favour of OVCs and a National Gender Policy which provides guidance on how to integrate gender issues on sectoral programmes and policies. Rwanda is also contemplating the adoption of a National Integrated Children Policy and a Children's Act.

Despite the generally positive legal framework and policy context, more needs to be done to prevent, respond and follow up cases of abuse and violence against children and provide the necessary support to violence survivors¹¹. MIGEPROF lacks the resources (financial and human) to build the capacity of service providers in providing quality

services to children through referral pathways and case management in order to ensure that all vulnerable children access protection services they would be entitled to. Pilot programmes such as the Children Forums, Nkundabana (Mentors for child-headed households), Child Protection and Gender Based Violence Committees, proven to be effective in addressing child rights and protection issues and included in governmental policies and guidelines, have not yet been scaled-up nationally due to financial constraints.

While some steps have been taken to protect children in Rwanda, the key challenges that arise are: (1) the gap between the official legal protection framework and reality on the ground (2) limited access to comprehensive services for survivors of violence (3) poor coordination between the different sectors involved in prevention, care and rehabilitation¹².

¹⁰ website: www.migeprof.gov.rw

¹¹ Taken from Migeprof Guidelines on GBV/CPC Committees, July 2009

¹² Rwanda SGBV Desk Review, Delphine Pinault, Health & OVC Advisor, CARE International in Rwanda

Rationale and Objective of the Baseline Study

In February 2003, Professor Paulo Pinheiro was appointed by the then United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, as an independent expert to lead and conduct an in-depth study on violence against children, which was presented to the UN General Assembly in October 2006¹³. Save the Children was a key player during the Study process; the organizations produced countless reports and tools, and carried out dozens of workshops with children, staff and stakeholders to raise awareness and disseminate the Study's findings all over the world. The goal of the study was to promote the development of strategies by UN member states aiming at effectively preventing and combating all forms of violence against children. In one of its overarching recommendations, the study report provides that all states develop a multi-faceted and systematic framework to respond to violence against children which is integrated into national planning processes.

In an effort towards achieving this recommendation, Save the Children Sweden's regional office for Eastern and Central Africa took the initiative to hold a regional workshop in early 2009 to explore concepts, methods and strategies around the promotion of National Child Protection Systems. One of the outcomes of the workshop outlined the need to learn more about existing child protection structures and mechanisms within the region, in particular the role of communities as being critical in ensuring children are protected from violence and abuse at all levels.

With this baseline study Save the Children intends to assess the strengths and gaps in existing child protection systems at community level based on the views of children in targeted areas of Rwanda, Ethiopia and North-Sudan and identify answers to some of these questions: what are the most common abuses/violence that children face in their communities and who are the major perpetrators?

Whom do children refer in case of abuse and what type of support do they receive? What are the places in their communities where they feel safe and protected and what are the places where they feel unsafe? Do children know about any child-led groups or child protection organizations existing in their community? Have children participated in community/national events/consultation or research on child protection issues? Which children are discriminated against or excluded by other people in your community? Have the policies reached the children living in the most remote communities?

¹³ The full report and related documents can be found at <http://www.violencestudy.org/>

The objective of the research is to **assess the strengths and gaps in existing child protection systems at community level based on the views of children** with 3 major key themes to be explored:

Theme 1 - Extent & perception of child protection issues; civil society and legislations that protect children: to assess the major protection abuse/violence that children perceive and face in their communities and who/which organizations can provide support to children who experience those types of abuses. This theme will also assess whether specific groups (boys, girls, children with disabilities, children belonging to marginalized groups etc.) are more vulnerable to abuse and the knowledge of children of any laws/policies in place to protect them from violence.

Theme 2 - Extent and perception of children's participation: to assess children's knowledge of child-led groups in their community, children's participation in community/national events, consultations on child protection and the extent of children's knowledge of civil society organisations who work on child protection issues within their community.

Theme 3 - Extent and impact of discrimination against children: to assess which children are discriminated against or excluded by other people in the community and what type of support is available in the community for children in the situation of exclusion.

Geographical areas targeted

The assessment targeted 6 Sectors (Rubaya, Byumba, Mutete, Mageragere, Nyamirambo, Kacyiru) in 3 Districts of Rwanda (Gicumbi, Nyarugenge and Gasabo) ensuring that a good representation of urban/semi-urban and rural areas was included. Furthermore, the assessment targeted both Save the Children operational areas (Gicumbi District), areas where Save the Children partners are operational (AEJT, in Nyarugenge District) and areas where Save the Children is not present (Gasabo District). In Gicumbi and Nyarugenge district the study was implemented in the 2 poorest sectors (as ranked by the National Social Protection Programme Vision 2020 Umurenge¹⁴) respectively, Rubaya and Mageragere. Locations with and without Save the Children or its partners' presence have been targeted.

Gicumbi District (Byumba, Rubaya and Mutete Sector)¹⁵

Gicumbi District is in prevalence a rural area, with the exception of the semi-urban city of Byumba. The total population of the 21 Sectors of Gicumbi District is estimated at 362.331 inhabitants (165 985 female and 151 804 male), the population of Byumba Sector is estimated at 30.442 (15.925 female and 14.517 male), the population of Rubaya is estimated at 9.672 (5.185 female and 4.487 male). No disaggregated data of children population is available for Byumba and Rubaya. The population of Mutete sector is estimated at 21.594, child population estimated at 10.961. In terms of health services, in the whole District of Gicumbi, the ratio is 1 medical doctor and 15.4 paramedics for 100.000 persons and only 38,6 % of pregnant mothers refer to a health clinic for delivery. The average percentage of primary school drop-out in the 21 sectors of Gicumbi District is 0,9 %, having consequences on the protection of children and leaving them more prone to abuse and exploitation. Save the Children has been operational in Gicumbi District since 2006 and has since then established Community-based Child Protection Networks in all 21 Sectors of the District: Nkundabana (mentors for child-headed households), Children's Corners (Child-friendly spaces organized by community volunteers), Child Protection Committees (child advocates in the communities) and Children's Forums (child-led groups). The Committees work on a voluntary basis and the membership includes well respected individuals (men and women, boys and girls) such as village leaders, teachers, representatives of local authorities, women's associations, youth leaders and representatives of children. Their roles and responsibilities are: identifying vulnerable children and children survivors of abuse and violence, linking them to referral services and providing follow up and mobilizing community efforts to protect children from sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. In 2009, Save the Children Child Protection Programme in Gicumbi District

¹⁴ Poorest sectors ranked by VUP, Vision Umurenge Programme 2020

¹⁵ Data from 'Plan de Développement du District de Gicumbi', 2008-2012

reached directly 18,658 children and 9,050 adults and indirectly 23,001 children and 20,400 (parents, community-members, teachers and child protection networks members). One of the biggest indicators of the success of the establishment of Community-based Child Protection Networks in Gicumbi District has been *the incorporation of the concept of Community-based Protection structures as part of the establishment of a Child Protection System into MIGEPROF's National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)*¹⁶ and the development of Guidelines of Committees for Child Protection and Against GBV.

Nyarugenge District (Mageragere and Nyamirambo Sectors)¹⁷

Nyarugenge District is one of the Districts including the city of Kigali and is composed for 82% of urban areas and 28% of rural area. The total population of the 10 Sectors of Nyarugenge District is estimated at 266.734 inhabitants (no disaggregating data available). The population of Mageragere is estimated at 15.766 inhabitants, the population of Nyamirambo at 28.641 inhabitants. Nyarugenge District has registered 55.250 social cases (23% of the total population) from all categories: widows, persons with disabilities, orphans, genocide survivors, child-headed households and other forms of vulnerability. Persons with disabilities represent 4% of the total District population. Data on children living in the street and child-headed households is not available but the district recognizes that big numbers of children fall under these categories and are therefore exposed to abuses and other forms of exploitation¹⁸.

The child-led Organization AEJT - Association des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs (Association of working children and youth), partner of Save the Children, is operational in Mageragere and Nyamirambo sectors. AEJT is a child-led organisation that works to prevent children from exploitation and abuse. They sensitize children on their right to education, health, freedom of expression and dignity in work. AEJT has been established in Rwanda in 2001 and it is part of the African Movement of Working Children based in Dakar, Senegal. The Rwandan Movement is composed of one National Coordination Office based in Kigali and local associations and grassroots groups in 5 districts of Kigaly city, south and western Provinces of Rwanda. AEJT members organize recreational activities (football tournaments, sports, songs and drama) and use these opportunities to sensitize children on child rights and protection issues. AEJT members also conduct home visits to sensitize the parents of the children about children's rights and child protection.

Gasabo District (Kacyiru Sector)¹⁹

Gasabo District is one of the Districts including the city of Kigali with a total population of 410.485. 90% of Gasabo District is rural area with 66% of the total population of the District.

Kacyiru is among the four biggest Sectors of Gasabo District with a population of 36,176 inhabitants (17,900 male and 18,276 female). The number of children under 18 is not available.

Neither Save the Children nor its partners are operational in Gasabo District.

¹⁶ National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006-2011, MIGEPROF

¹⁷ Data from 'Plan de Developpement du District de Nyarugenge', 2008-2012

¹⁸ idem

¹⁹ Data from 'Plan de Development du District de Gasabo', 2007

Target Groups

A total of 127 children participated in the study representing a broad range of backgrounds in terms of gender (58 girls and 69 boys), age (children from 5 to 18 years old), school-going and out of school, 7 children with disabilities, 8 children head of households and 20 children from an historically marginalized group in Rwanda (0.5 % of total population, around 33,000)²⁰. Of these 20 children, some of those above 12 resulted dropped out of school and 3 boys out of 6 are constantly caught by the police and detained in detention centres for minors (Kabuga and Gikondo).

Table 1. Disaggregation of targeted children

	Girls	Boys	Total
Total no. children/all sites	58	69	127
<12years	29	31	60
>12 years	29	38	67
Urban area	21	24	45
Semi-urban area	10	11	21
Rural area	27	34	61
Children with disabilities	2	5	7

Table 2. Geographical locations and targeted group of children

Geographical location	Location specifications	Target group of children
Rubaya Sector Gicumbi District	-Rural area -Save the Children presence - Poorest sector in the district	In school children and children with disabilities
Byumba Sector Gicumbi District	-Semi-urban -Save the Children presence	In school children and children with disabilities
Mutete Sector Gicumbi District	-Rural area -Save the Children presence	Child headed households
Nyamirambo Sector Nyarugenge District, Kigali	-Urban area, Kigali city -Presence of Save the Children partners	In school children from poor area of Kigali city
Mageragere Sector Nyarugenge District, Kigali	-Rural area -Presence of Save the Children partners - Poorest sector in the district	In and out school children and children with disabilities
Kacyiru Sector Gasabo District, Kigali	- Urban area, Kigali city -Presence of Save the Children partners	In and out of school children from an historically marginalized community of Rwanda

Methodology Overview

A variety of data collection methods like participatory group sessions with child-friendly tools (protection flower, smiley tools, participation tree etc.), semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used with targeted children. This ensured a child participatory approach and facilitated discussions on sensitive issues that children could have been reluctant to address with strangers. Save the Children Child Participation guidelines and standards (Evaluation Guidance, Save the Children UK, December 2008; Practice Standards in Child Participation, Save the Children Alliance, 2005; so you want to consult with children? Save the Children Alliance, 2003 and Research for Development, a practical guide, Save the Children 2003) were consulted and used throughout the research. An essential part of the consultation process was the creation of a child-friendly environment and the building of trust between children and facilitators.

A total of 112 children (59 males and 53 females) participated to the group sessions, 19 children (9 males and 10 females) were targeted for the semi structure interviews and 35 children (20 males and 15 females) filled in questionnaires.

²⁰ Statistics from the Communautés des Autochtones Rwandais, CAURWA's, National Socio-Economic Survey, 2004

Methodology used for Theme 1: Extent & Perception of Child Protection Issue

A variety of data collection methods like participatory group sessions with child-friendly tools (protection flower, smiley tools, participation tree etc.), semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used with targeted children. This ensured a child participatory approach and facilitated discussions on sensitive issues that children could have been reluctant to address with strangers. Save the Children Child Participation guidelines and standards were consulted and used throughout the research.

‘Types of child protection abuses faced by children, who are the main perpetrators of those abuses’

The **Sad Smiley Tool**, enabled children to identify major protection abuse/violence that they face, who are the main perpetrators and whether specific groups (boys, girls, children with disabilities, children belonging to marginalized groups etc.) are more vulnerable to these



types of abuses.

Key Steps

- * Draw a sad smiley face on a flip chart and hang it on the wall;
- * Give a group of children some post-it cards (different colours for different genders). Ask them to individually write on the post-it cards the most common abuses that children face in their community and who are the main perpetrators of that abuse (one post-it-one abuse and the perpetrators of that abuse);
- * Read their inputs and discuss with them the types of abuses identified and explore whether specific groups (boys, girls, children with disabilities, children belonging to marginalized groups) are most vulnerable to these types of abuses.

‘Extent to which children know whether laws and policies that prohibit violence against children are in place’

Through semi structured interviews the following questions were explored:

1. Do children know of any laws/policies that are in place to protect them from violence?
2. How have children been consulted on the development of laws or policies to protect them from violence?
3. How would children like to be consulted on the development of laws or policies to protect them?

**

‘Persons and structures whom children refer to when they face abuses; children’s suggestions on how to prevent/address abuse’



abuses and suggesting ways to prevent/address the abuse.

The **Protection Flower** helped children identifying the people / organizations / groups in the community whom children trust and who support children who may face

Key Steps

- * Draw in flip-chart the centre of a flower and insert the post-it of the types of abuse/violence that children had identified in the sad smiley tool exercise
- * Draw petals around the centre of the flower and ask children to identify the people and/or institution that children trust and could ask support to, and what type of support he/she could receive.
- * Draw birds that stand around the flower and ask children to identify how that abuse can be prevented/addressed

Methodology used for Theme 2: Extent and Perception of Children's Participation



The **Participation Tree** was used to acquire data on extent and perception of children's participation and their knowledge of child-led groups and child-focus civil society organizations

Key Steps

- * Draw in a flip-chart a tree with roots, trunk and leaves.
- * The roots collect inputs from children on whether they know about any child-led groups in their community
- * The trunk represents children's participation in community or national events and consultations or research on child protection;
- * The leaves represent children's knowledge of civil society organisations that work on child protection issues within their community.

During the exercise the following questions were explored:

- Do children know about any child-led groups in their community? Type of child-led group & where is it based? Type of activities undertaken by the group – focus on child protection issues.
- Have children ever participated in community or national events and consultations or research on child protection? What was the event/ consultation/ research about?
- Do children know civil society organisations who work on child protection issues within their communities? What do these organisations do? Which child protection issues do these organisations cover?

Methodology used for Theme 3: Extent and impact of discrimination against children

The following questions were explored with children through semi-structured interviews:

- ❖ Which children are discriminated against or excluded by other people in the community?
- ❖ Why are these children excluded?
- ❖ How does the community treat them?
- ❖ What type of support is available in your community for them?
- ❖ Do you sometimes feel excluded?

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations and Save the Children guidelines and standards guided the research process, from research design and participant selection to interactions with children, data analysis and reporting. Each activity began with an explicit explanation of the aim of the research, gathering permission from children to use the information gathered, including pictures, and information that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could decline to participate or withdraw at any stage of the process.

The collection of written parental consent has been challenging due to the following factors: care-givers inaccessibility due to remote location of the households, children head of households do not have care-givers and, finally, time limitation in reaching all households of children targeted in the research.

To overcome this issue, written permission has been gathered from schoolmasters when discussions were held at schools and verbal consent was gathered from community leaders when discussions were held in communities. It is important to note that a part from the two facilitators, no adult attended the sessions, to ensure that children could freely express their concerns and share their opinions.

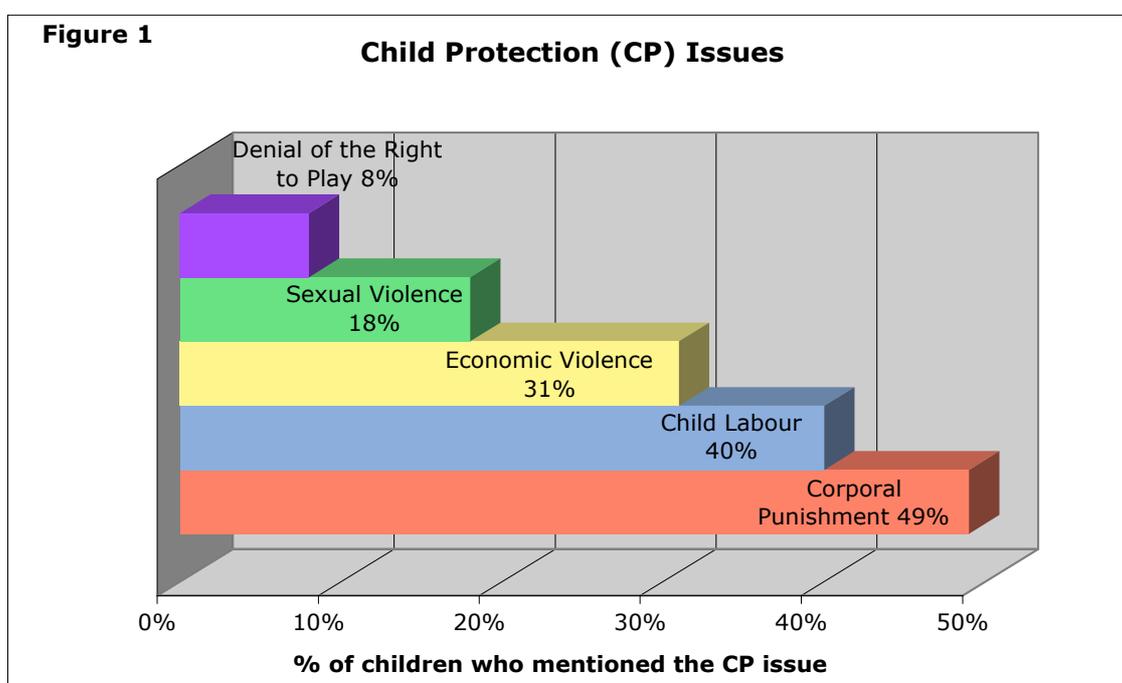
Particular care was taken to develop trust with children and this was achieved also through the use of ice-breakers and traditional songs. Prior to each activity, children received information on what the activity addressed, what purpose it served, and how the information gathered during the activity would be used.

Findings Theme 1: Extent & Perception of Child Protection Issues

Each individual child targeted in the research reported more than one child protection issue that children face in its families, schools and communities. Below, an analysis of the major findings is presented, summarized by child protection issue, main perpetrator and persons/organizations the children would refer to if they decide to report the abuse or seek any type of support.

Information on the extent of knowledge of children of laws or policies that protect children from abuse in Rwanda has also been collected and findings have been summarized below.

Overall, targeted children have identified 5 major child protection issues in their communities: corporal punishment has been the most reported, followed by child labour, economic violence, sexual violence and, last but not least, denial of the right to play. Emotional violence per se was not specifically mentioned by children. However, from their quotes, it is clear that every type of violence they identified has psychosocial and emotional consequences in their lives.



Corporal punishment

Half of the targeted children (nearly 50%) reported **corporal punishment**, as the most common abuse they face. It is to be noted that the children most affected by this type of abuse are girls below 12 who live in rural areas. For instance, in Rubaya, 90% of the targeted girls below 12 reported corporal punishment as the most common violence that affects them and their peers in their community.

Overall, children reported that corporal punishment is perpetrated primarily by parents and secondary by teachers.

According to children, parents and care-givers (step-parents, foster-parents, grandparents), and sometimes neighbours, use corporal punishment as a mean to discipline and punish them for their mistakes and sometimes for no specific reason. Most of the times corporal punishment is also accompanied by insulting.

'They beat me without any reason and I spend the night without eating'.

Boy, below 12, semi-urban area

'Often, parents send their children to take water at the well. The jerry can is very heavy and children delay to arrive at home; so parents beat them as a punishment because they are late'.

Boy, 12 years old, semi-urban area

'My grandmother does not like me, she beats me and she insults me'.

Girl, below 12, semi-urban area

'My mother beats me'. *Girl with disability, 7 years old, rural area*

Teachers, instead, seem to be using corporal violence to teach discipline and to punish those children whose parents have not paid the school fees.

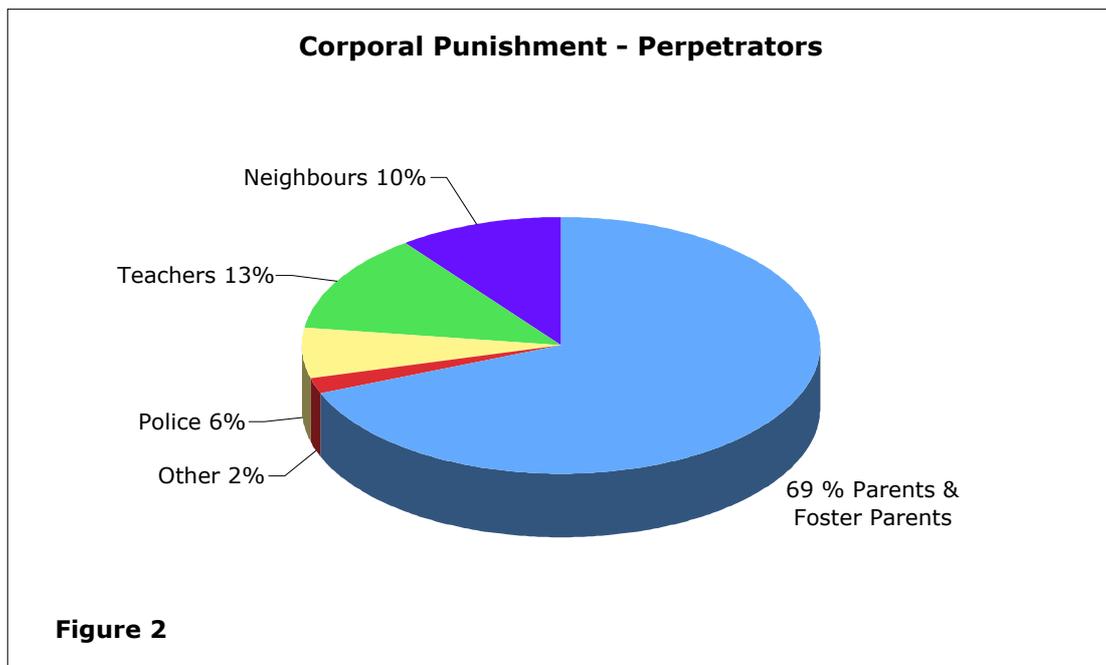
'Teachers often beat us when we make noise in class'. *Girl, 12 years old, semi-urban area*

'Teachers beat us because we have not paid the school fees'. *Boy, below 12, urban area*

Some of the children from the historically marginalized group who have been in contact with the law have highlighted that police also perpetrates corporal punishment.

'Children living in this area are often in contact with the law and many of them are in prison, where policemen beat them'.

Girl, above 12, urban area



The majority of children (48%) who have reported corporal punishment, as an abuse perpetrated against children, highlighted that children should refer this to the local leader to ask for support and that he/she should sensitize the perpetrators and mitigate the conflict. The children also name police as the institution that can punish perpetrators.

'When parents beat children you can refer the abuse to the local leaders who can talk to their parents and provide support to the child'.

Boy, 12 years old, semi-urban area

'Police comes and beats the perpetrator even if she is my mother'. *Boy, 11 years old, rural area*

Despite the fact that most of the children know the reporting mechanism they should use when they face this type of abuse, it remains unclear whether they actually do use it. During semi-structured interviews it was clear that few of them in reality do refer this type of abuse to the leaders or the police, especially if it is perpetrated by school teachers who seem to have more authority in perpetrating this abuse.

'The majority of times they beat me, I cry and I cannot do anything. I know I can go to the local leaders'. Girl, below 10, rural area

It is interesting to note that the group of children above 12 mentioned less leaders and police as protection referral persons compared to the group of children below 12; showing that older children have less confidence and trust in the effectiveness of local authorities.

*'You can go to the local leaders and they do not help you'.
Boy with disability, 15 years old, rural area*

*When they beat me I report to my child-led group AEJT and they refer it to the local leaders. But local leaders are not very effective: my parents then beat me again'.
Boy, 12 years old, rural area*

Some children also reported friends and relatives as support persons to ask help to, when they face this type of abuse.

*'When they beat me I leave home and I go to my grandmother who consoles me'.
Girl, 12 years old, semi-urban area*

'When they beat me I go to my grandfather or to the local leader, it depends about the mistake I have made'. Boy, above 13, semi-urban area

'When they beat me I can go to the local leaders but I go to my friends who console me and tell me to be patient'. Girl, 10 years old, semi-urban area

Children who are members of Children forums (child-led group established by Save the Children) or AEJT (child-led Organization) clearly reported that when they face such abuse they ask for support to their group. These children are very confident that the child-led group can help them and sensitize their parents on the rights of the child.

*'When a child is beaten he/she has to report to the children leader. They give advice to the child and they go to their parents and try to sensitize them'.
Boy, above 12, rural area*

'When I am beaten by my parents I have to go to the children forum; they go to my parents to teach them about children rights and I am sure that it helps to change their attitude'. Boy, above 12, rural area

The children with disabilities (7) reported very different protection structures: neighbours, local leader and headmaster are the persons they would ask for support in case they face corporal punishment. Sometimes, nobody is mentioned to provide support in this case.

*'When my parents beat me I stay at home; I do not trust anybody and I think nobody can help me'.
Girl with disability, 13 years old, semi-urban area*

*'When my mother beats me, I ask help to the headmaster'.
Girl with disability, 7 years old, rural area*

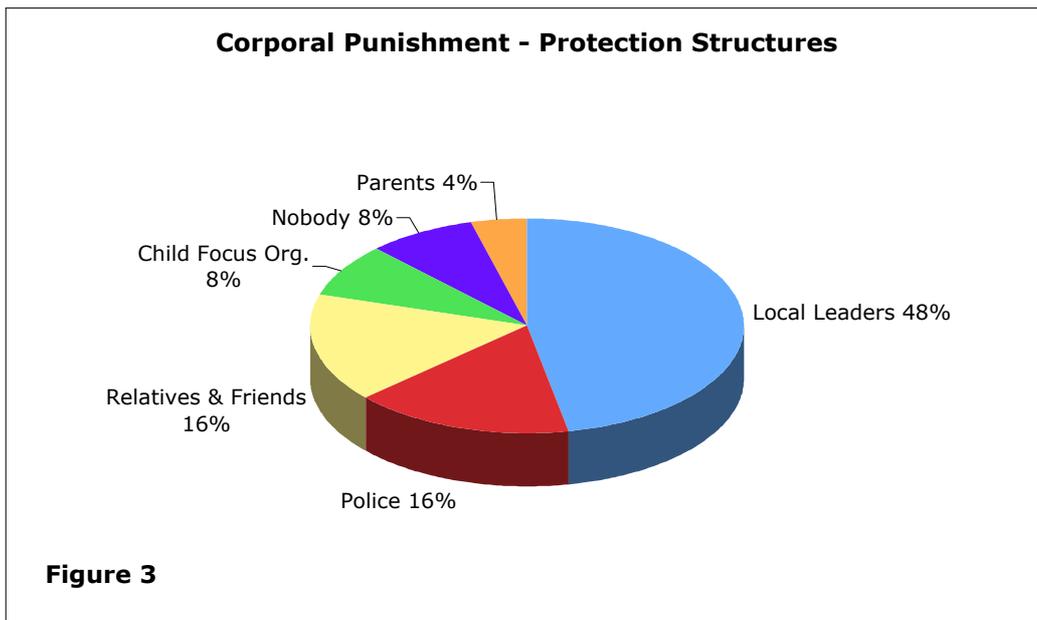
*'When they beat me I report it to the local leader who can support me'.
Boy with disability, 16 years old, semi-urban area*

The group of children head of households have reported they are frequently exposed to verbal violence; adults use to insult them because they are orphans and do not have anybody who can defend them. 100% of the targeted girls and 50% of the targeted boys who identified this abuse, reported that they do not have anybody to refer to and ask support when they are subjected to these insults. The remaining 50% of boys named two protection structures they feel confident to report their problems to: the local leader and the 'Nkundabana' (Kinyarwanda word meaning 'I love children'), adult volunteers who mentor children living without adult support (a structure established by Save the Children); they can solve the conflict with sensitization and peace mediation.

*'There is nobody who can support me, I try to stay calm but often I cry with my heart full of sadness'.
Girl head of household, 17 years old, rural area*

*'Sometimes I report this cases to other adults and they come back to me with worst insults. There is nobody who can help me in this situation'.
Boy head of household, 14 years old, rural area*

*'When they insult me I refer to the 'Nkundabana', they ask me who insulted me and together we go to the perpetrator and they sensitize him/her not to tell me those bad words any longer'.
Boy head of household, 16 years old, rural area*



Children have then been asked to identify how corporal punishment could be prevented/addressed.

55% of the targeted children who identified this protection issue reported that an ‘exemplary punishment’ is the best way to prevent this violence from happening again. This also reflects the fact that children in Rwanda are very much exposed to punishment through detention of the perpetrators of the Genocide. Detention centres are present everywhere in the country, detainees dressed in pink uniform carry out public works in communities and children’s relatives or parents may be in detention centres.

‘They have to be beaten as they beat their children and put in jail so I hope they will stop to abuse children again’.

Boy, 12 years old, semi-urban area

‘The perpetrators have to be punished so they will stop to beat children’.

Girl, 11 years old, rural area

30% of children instead, reported that the measure to be taken to address this problem is to sensitize the perpetrators through the promotion of children’s rights and through reconciliation.

‘The leaders should meet all the parents, in the presence of the children and start to teach them the rights of children’.

Boy with disability, 15 years old, semi-urban area

‘I hope that several workshops will be organized in order to transfer knowledge of child rights and protection’.

Boy of children forum, 14 years old, rural area

10% of children reported that children should respect more their parents/foster parents and avoid any mistakes so that they would not be punished again.

‘You have to respect the persons who adopt you and avoid any mistake which can cause the violence’. Girl, 14 years old, semi-urban area

‘I will respect my parents so they will no longer beat me’. Boy, 11 years old, rural area

Some children reported that they would fight for their rights so that they can stand for themselves and overcome the issue.

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Child labour

The second most common child protection issue reported by targeted children is **child labour**. 40% of targeted children from all areas reported they are often exposed to forced labour, specifically children living in rural area. Girls seem to be slightly more affected, although a significant number of boys mentioned this issue as well.

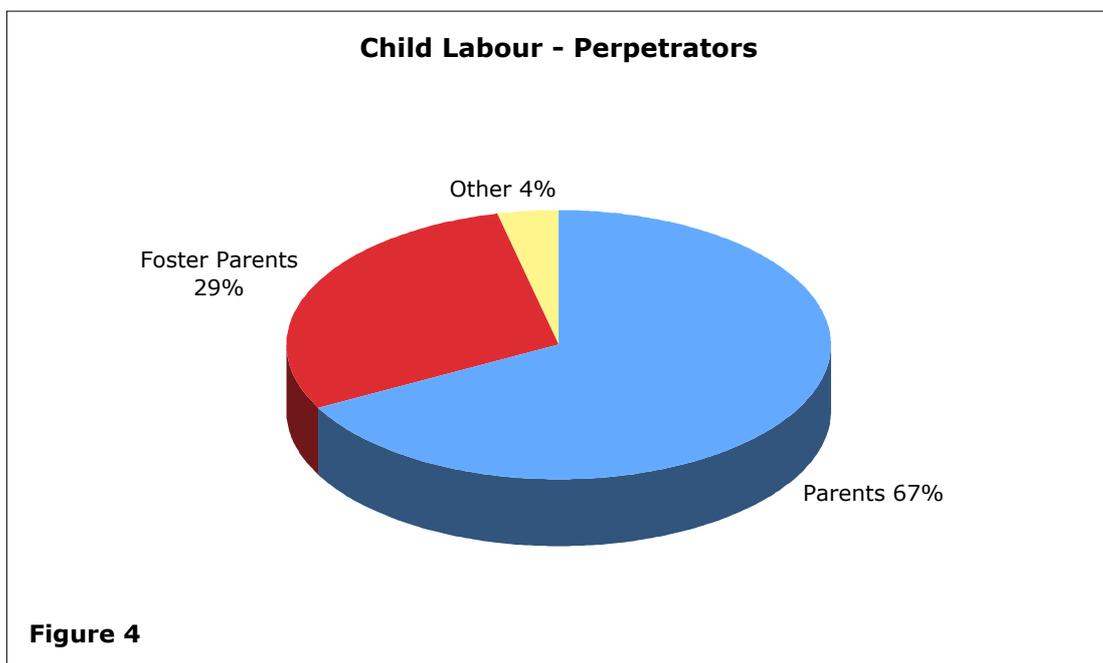
More than 95% of children who reported child labour as an abuse, identified parents and foster-parents as the biggest perpetrators, highlighting that children are exploited in order to provide a better income for the family. Children complained not about the fact they have to work but about the heaviness and excessiveness of the work.

*'A lot of foster parents abuse their children and force them to work too much, for instance I live with a couple who never gave birth to a child and forces me to do all possible works at home'.
Girl, 13 years old, rural area*

'I spend the all day working and I rest at night only'. Girl, 14 years old, rural area

Interesting to note that some children head of households reported that they are 'self-exploited', due to the fact they have nobody who looks after them. It is their life condition that forces them to work hard in order to guarantee the basic needs for themselves and for their siblings.

'I am exploited by myself; I do not have anyone who looks after me'. Boy, 14 years old, rural area



60% of children reported the local leader as the focal person whom they could refer to, in case they are exploited; he/she can overcome the problem peacefully approaching the perpetrators and warn them about the consequences of their actions. If this does not work, they can punish them. However, children do not seem to know what reporting procedures they have to follow when approaching the local leader.

*'I can refer to the local leader because he can teach my parents that children can work jobs proportionally to their energy and power'.
Girl, 11 years old, rural area*

13% of targeted children, who have identified this child protection issue, would refer for support to a child-led organization, in particular those children who are members. The child-led group has the capacity to mediate between the parties with sensitization activities and, if necessary, by addressing the case to the local leader.

*'I can refer the problem to my group AEJT. They can report to the local leaders and together go and talk with my parents'.
Girl, 15 years old, urban area*

10% of children, who identified this abuse, reported that they do not have anybody whom to refer this abuse to and they would prefer running away. This reflects an outstanding problem in Rwanda, with children escaping from their homes and looking for fortune in the major cities of the country or across the border, mostly heading to Uganda.

'Some children work with no rest and they decide to run away'. Girl, 16 years old, rural area

Some children named the Police as a referral structure to consider when they are exploited, so that perpetrators can be punished.

Few other children would refer to God and religious persons to receive some comfort.

'Only God can help children'. Girl, 14 years old, semi-urban area

70% of children who identified child labour as a form of abuse, reported that the best way to prevent and address this issue is to sensitize children so that they can better protect themselves and also the perpetrators and warn them on the consequences of their actions.

'We have to know all about our rights and parents have to be sensitized. The leaders should have the role to stay closer to children and monitor whether our rights are respected'.

Boy, 14 years old, urban area

'Children must respect their parents and parents must respect their children'.

Girl, 12 years old, rural area

30% of children instead reported clearly that they would like to see the perpetrators punished so that children will not be exposed to such exploitation again.

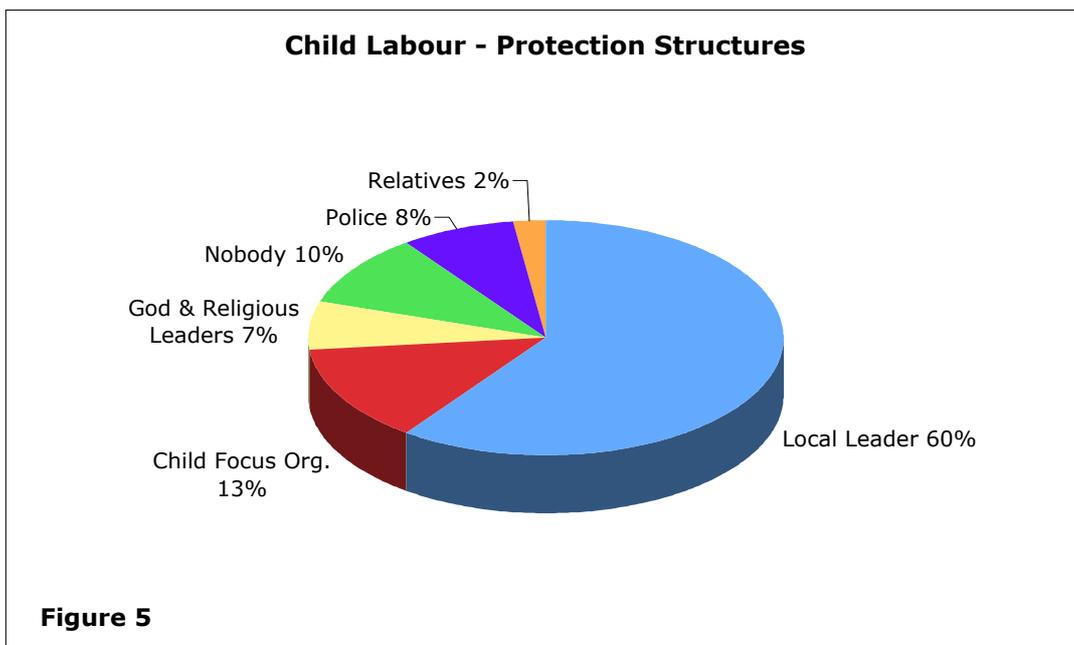
'They have to be punished so they do not exploit us again'. Boy, 10 years old, semi-urban area

Some children reported that they should change their behaviour and respect more the will of their parents.

'If we want our rights to be respected, we should respect our parents'.

Boy, 12 years old, rural area

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Economic Violence

The third child protection issue reported by 31% of targeted children is **economic violence, meaning the lack of access to basic services such as school, medical care, shelter, clothing and food.**

*'The president of Republic of Rwanda said that each child has to go to school without the necessity of school fees at least up to the completion of nine years basic education but this is not happening; local leaders have to report the case to the Minister of Education'.
Boy, 14 year old, urban area*

Children also reported the lack of health care, clothing and shelter.

'Parents do not take you to the hospital when you are sick'. Boy, 14 year old, rural area

The reason of these abuses can be due to poverty but sometimes also to denial. Parents and foster-parents are the persons most identified by children as perpetrators of this child protection issue.

*'I do not feel comfortable to stay with other children because of the lack of means in my family. I miss food and often I see other children working as house-boy/girl earning little money. We do not have rights'.
Girl, 16 year old, rural area*

According to some children, poverty is the reason why some parents are not able to provide them with basic needs.

*'My mother does not have money to let me go to school because she spent what she had to send me to the hospital'.
Boy with disability, 13 years old, rural area*

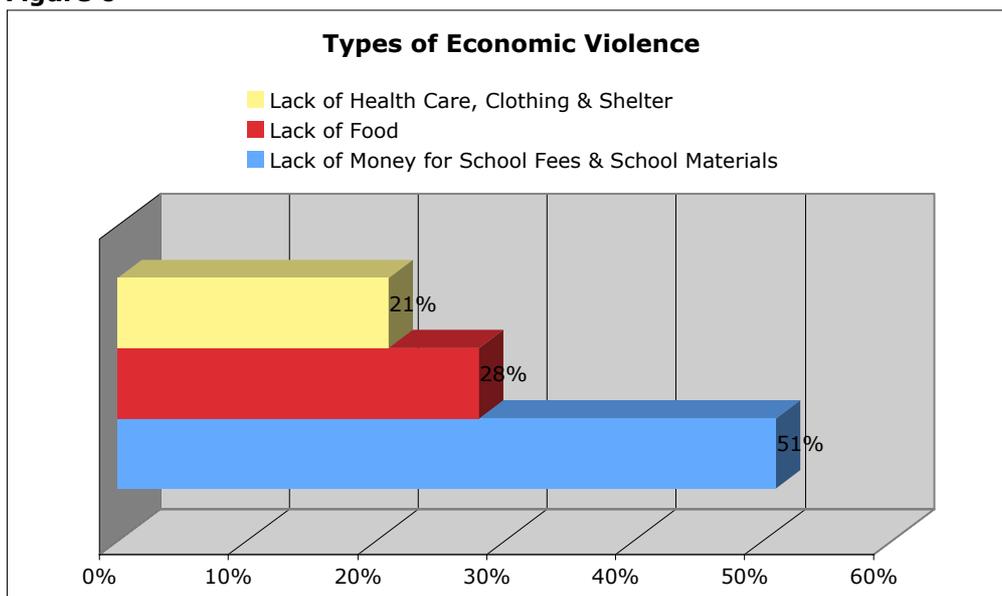
28% of children reported that they suffer from lack of food. Orphans in particular are the most exposed to such issue.

*'I am an orphan and I do not have what to eat'.
Girl, 13 years, urban area*

51% of children highlighted the lack of money for school fees and uniforms; this situation leads children to drop out of school and sometimes the money that children earn through their work is not invested in their education because their parents use the money for other purposes, such as drinking alcohol.

'I live only with my father who often drinks. He always needs money and he does not understand the importance of an education, so what I earn I give it to him and he does not pay me the school fees'. Boy, 15 years old, urban area

Figure 6



The majority of children (70%) who reported deprivation of their rights as a protection issue identified the leaders as the main structure whom to refer to, when they face these problems.

*'Leaders and policemen can ask my parents no longer use traditional medicines and oblige them to take me to the hospital'.
Boy, 13 years old, rural area*

Among the group of children head of households, 75% of them reported they do not have anybody to refer who can help them to overcome these issues. Only few of them reported a member of their family whom they can trust.

*'I do not have anybody who can help me; I have to take care of myself and find money how I can'.
Boy head of household, 16 years old, rural area*

'My aunt is the only one who can help me'. Girl head of household, 17 years old, rural area

Most of the targeted children head of households (75%) reported that the only way to address these issues is to be directly supported by Organisations through sponsorships and be involved in child-led groups that can help them to develop micro-credit projects.

*'Sponsorship is needed to help us'.
Boy, 14 years old, rural area*

Other children head of households reported they must be supported by foster-parents.

*'The persons who have adopted children must to take care of them as they promised!'.
Girl, 13 years old, rural area*

Others reported they should work even harder for a better sustainable future.

*'We have to cultivate hardy'.
Boy, 16 years old, rural area*

50% of children who are part of the child-led Organization 'AEJT' reported that the issues of school drop-out and lack and denial of proper health care could be addressed by sensitizing parents in family planning and in the importance of appropriate health care assistance.

*'Parents have to plan for their family; they should have a number of children in proportion of their possibilities to pay them the school fees'.
Girl, 13 years old, rural area*

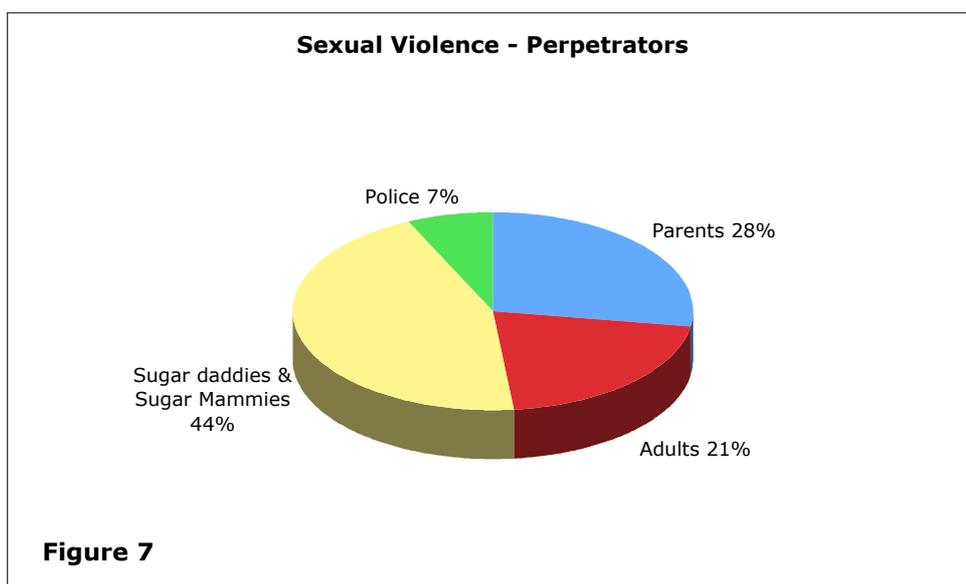
'Meetings have to be organized to sensitize the parents in taking their children to the hospital so that the children are not cured with traditional medicines'. Boy, 15 years old, rural area

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Sexual violence

The fourth protection issue most reported by targeted children is **sexual violence**. Nearly 20% of them reported this as one of the most common abuses that they face in their communities. The children belonging to the historically marginalized group, girls in particular, have reported the issue of sexual violence more than others.

*'There are rapes perpetrated by sugar daddies, sugar mummies and parents'.
Girl, 9 years old, urban area*



44% of children who mentioned this abuse reported that sugar daddies and sugar mummies are the most common perpetrators; followed by parents and foster parents. Some children also reported men adults in general.

Those children belonging to the historically marginalized group have also reported sexual violence perpetrated by police officers.

*'Policemen use to sexual abuse children in Kabuga and Gikondo prisons'.
Girl, 15 year old, urban area*

Among the children who reported sexual violence as a child protection issue, 73% of them would refer these cases to the local leaders and to police, in order to punish the perpetrators and prevent the abuse from happening again. Parents, and in particular mothers, are also reported by children as the people they would ask for support when they face such abuse suggesting that parents can facilitate in reporting the abuse to formal structures.

*'I have to report immediately to my mother, she goes to the local leader and police and they have to arrest the perpetrator'.
Girl, 14 year old, semi-urban area*

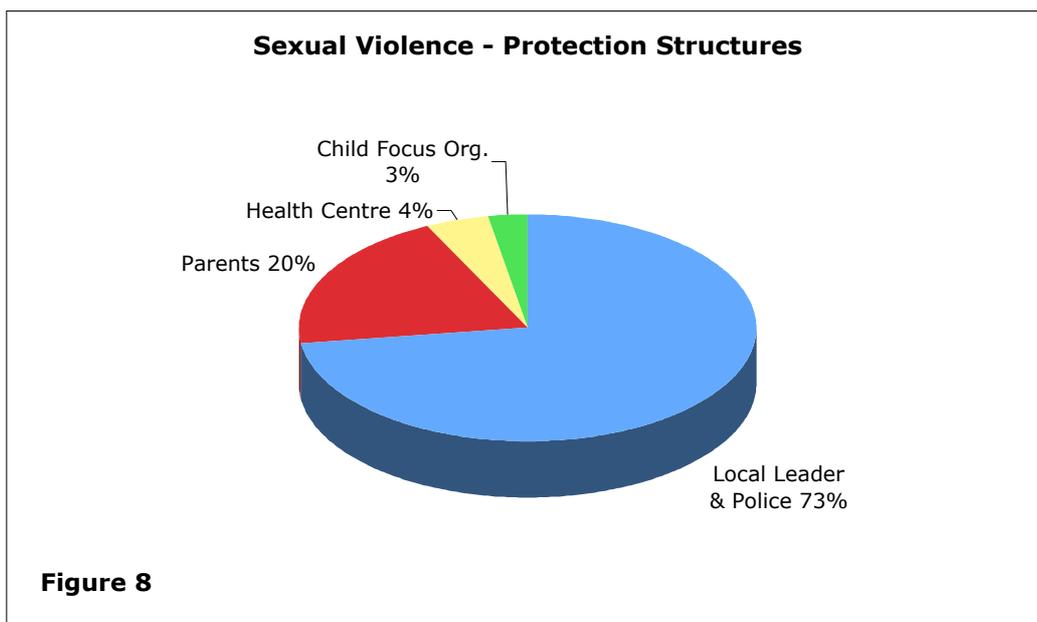
*'Police and Sector representatives can arrest the perpetrators and punish them'.
Boy, 15 year old, urban area*

Few children also reported the health centre and medical doctors as structures to be referred to when a child has experienced such abuse. Health care support is considered important to prevent the potential health consequences children could face when they have been exposed to a sexual violence.

*'I have to refer to the medical centre and after to the police; medical doctors could make me a test if I am affected by HIV-AIDS or if I am pregnant'.
Girl, 16 year old, semi-urban area*

Other children considered child focus organizations in the community also a valid protection structure to refer to.

*'I would refer to my parents and to my group AEJT and Save the Children as they know how I should behave in this situation'.
Boy, 14 year old, urban area*



Interesting to note that most children reported that house is the place where sexual abuse happens most, children did not clearly specify whether they meant the house of the perpetrators or their own home.

*'Those bad things happen at home'.
Girl, 13 year old, urban area*

50% of children reported that punishment measures have to be put in place in order to avoid sexual violence from happening again.

In particular, most children targeted in urban areas reported imprisonment of perpetrators and exemplary punishments as the only way to defend children from these abusers.

'We cannot burn all the sexual abusers because they are many; we might try to sensitize them and try to educate them but if they continue to abuse children serious punishments measures have to be taken, because this is a big problem which affects the whole Africa'. Boy, 15 year old, urban area

24% of children instead, reported that in order to prevent sexual abuse children have to avoid the perpetrators, refusing their gifts and trying to dress properly avoiding provocative clothes.

*'Young girls who dress short skirts attract sugar daddies and they might be in serious danger any time. Each child has to dress properly'.
Girl, 14 year old, urban area*

*'We have to avoid those persons who give us what we do not have because when we grow up we will have our own things'.
Boy, 13 year old, semi-urban area*

Only 10% of children who reported sexual violence as a child protection issue would recommend sensitizing the community from preventing people to commit this type of violence.

*'People have to be sensitized on children's rights and the bad consequences of sexual abuse committed to children'.
Boy, 14 year old, urban area.*

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Denial of the right to play

A fifth child protection issue, raised by 8% of targeted children, in particular those belonging to the historically marginalized group above 12 is the **denial of their right to play** with their friends.

*'Children do not have right to have fun and no right to play with other children'.
Boy, 14 year old, urban area*

'Parents and teacher prevent us from playing and be free'. Boy, 16 year old, rural area

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Children's knowledge of laws/policies that are in place to protect children from violence in Rwanda

40% of children reported that they are aware of some laws/policies in place to protect children from violence in Rwanda, despite the fact that not all of them reported the name and the details of the laws. They explained the content of the laws as follows:

*'There is a law which states that police has to arrest people who abuse children'.
Girl head of household, 17 year old, rural area*

*'One law says that a child in Rwanda has the right to study 6 year of primary school and another law says that when a child is abused, the perpetrator has to be punished'.
Girl, 10 year old, rural area*

45% of children clearly reported that they do not know any law and some of them also reported that they believe some polices exist in Rwanda, although they are not aware. Others highlighted that laws may exist but they are not enforced, because they do not see any change in their daily lives.

'I think there are some laws which protect children of Rwanda but I do not know what they are about'. Girl, 11 year old, rural area

'I do not know any law; I think there are not laws in place because I have not received any support yet'. Girl, 10 year old, semi-urban area

15% of children reported to know a law that in reality is the advocacy message of the First Lady Child Rights Foundation called 'Imbutu', which was publicized across Rwanda.

*'Treat every child as your own'.
Boy, 12 year old, urban area*

Most of the targeted children reported they would like to be part in the development of laws and play a role in administration structures that protect children in Rwanda and they shared some ideas on how to reinforce exiting laws/policies and develop new ones.

Some examples below:

'Laws must protect children especially those with disabilities; laws have to guarantee medical support to children with disability'. Girl with disability, 13 year old, semi-urban area

'Laws that give immunity to children have to be adopted and strong punishment needs to be given to abusers, because people do not fear the actual laws'. Boy, 14 year old, rural area

*'Children have to be given a voice and play a role in administration structures'.
Girl, 10 year old, rural area*

*'All policies which protect children have to appear in the constitution of Rwanda'.
Boy, 12 year old, urban area*

Findings Theme 2: Extent and Perception of Children's Participation

56% of targeted children reported knowledge of a child-led group in their community.

In general, children above 12 years living in urban and rural areas of Kigali city are more knowledgeable of the existence of child-led groups in their community. Most of them named 'AEJT' - Association des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs (Association of working children and youth). AEJT members organizes recreational activities (football tournaments, sports, songs and drama) and use these opportunities to sensitize children on child rights and protection issues. AEJT members also conduct home visits to sensitize the parents of the children about children's rights and child protection.

'I am part of AEJT, we talk about children rights and we play drama. I interpreted the role of the husband who beats his wife because she gave birth to a child female; women have same rights than men'. Boy, 13 year old, urban area

'I am part of AEJT; in this group I meet other children and we play, we learn and we talk about our rights and we share the problems we face in our community'. Girl, 10 year old, rural area

It is worth mentioning how children in Kigali city have identified among child-led groups those groups of children who steal to earn a living; these

groups are considered very well organized and very powerful.

*'I know a child-led group who uses to steal!'.
Girl, 8 year old, urban area*

*'There is a group of children who steals fruits!'
Boy, 11 year old. Rural area.*

Child-led groups established by Save the Children were also reported. Save the children has been establishing and supporting Children's Forums in the District of Gicumbi since 2006. Children's Forums are peer-elected committees of five children under sixteen years of age (at the time of election). The role of the Children's Forums is to provide training to their peers on children's rights and to initiate activities to improve the protection of children in their communities. Their work includes reporting child abuse and violations of children's rights. Children's Forums also collect the views of vulnerable children on the issues they face, explore with them possible solutions and provide recommendations to the authorities for follow-up. Save the Children in Rwanda has provided 3,805 members of the Children's Forums with training on child rights and protection, life-skills and peer-education.

*'There is a child-led group of Save the Children, it teaches children's rights'.
Boy, 12 year old, rural area*

Most of the children from the historically marginalized group were not aware of any child-led group existing in their community. Only 30% of them mentioned the child-led group called 'URUKUNDO' (Love) which organizes football matches, dance and performs drama; the name is from their geographic area of origin.

30% of children below 12 (from the historically marginalized group) reported the child-led organization 'AMAHORO' (Peace). Amahoro is a children association established by 14 orphans affected by HIV-AIDS in Kacyiru (Kigali city) in 2000. Their aim is to support the most vulnerable children in their community, among which children belonging to the historically marginalized group living in Rwanda. They provide direct support (food, school fees and school materials) to 600 vulnerable children enrolled in primary school and 150 children in secondary school. They also support children in setting up clubs that organize football matches, dance and perform dramas. AMAHORO also operates in the Northern Province (Gakenke) and Bumbogo in Gasabo District and in Gasabo (Kigali city).

Save the Children and its partners are not operational in these areas.

*'I know the child-led group Amahoro, they support children in paying their school fees and children in this group dance'.
Girl, 14 year old, urban area*

In the north of the country, Gicumbi District, children from semi-urban area (Byumba) seemed to be more exposed to child-led groups than their peers in rural areas (Mutete or Rubaya). In general, 75% of children above 12 living in the semi-urban area (Byumba) reported to know more child-led groups than children below 12 (25%) living in the same area.

Children identified some child-led groups as follows:

*'There is a group called "IYIZIRE MWANA" (Child come closer to me), they support other smaller children to go to school'.
Orphan girl, 10 year old, semi-urban area*

*'There is a group of children that do the cleaning and we call it Association "TWITEZE IMBERE" (develop ourselves').
Boy with disability, 16 year old, semi-urban area*

*'I am part of a group led by children called Natalie. We use to cook soups and bring them to the children who suffered in the hospital'.
Girl with disability, 13 year old, semi-urban area*

In rural areas (Rubaya and Mutete), children reported to know less child-led groups than their peers in the semi-urban areas (Byumba) of the same district.

*'There is a child-led group called TWITEZE IMBERE (Develop ourselves) that asks the members to contribute with fifty Rwandan francs each per week in order to buy school books for children who cannot afford, the members are below 14 year'.
Boy, 12 year old, rural area*

*'There is a group led by children at Gomba cell supported by Save the Children, members use to sell rabbits'.
Boy, 15 year old, rural area*

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53% of targeted children reported that they have participated, at least once in their life, in community or national events and/or consultations on child protection. Most of the children living in urban and rural areas reported that they have participated in the day of African Child.

The only big difference was noticed with the children belonging to the historically marginalized group, where only 25% of them reported to have participated in an event or research on child protection.

In the north of the country instead, in the District of Gicumbi, children above 12 reported to have been exposed to events on child protection more than the children below 12 living in the same area.

*'I participated in the day of African Child in the playground of my school. I danced with my peers and we ate all together. The representatives of the Sector spoke about children rights and they communicated that if the children face any issue they can refer to the local leader'.
Boy, 12 year old, rural area*

'I participated in the Day of African Child, It was a big event and I enjoyed! They talked about

rights of children and we play a drama where we interpreted South African children who were killed when they were fighting for their rights'. Boy, 13 year old, semi-urban area

Children with disabilities also reported to have participated in such events and the following are some of their comments:

'I participated in the day of African Child at school, children danced and we sang; we enjoyed eating baked corns and we had traditional drinks. I was too busy in drinking and eating to remember what they said to us at the end of the event. Girl with disability, 13 year old, semi-urban area

'I participated in the day of African Child at Regional Stadium of Byumba. I sang with my friends and we talked about children rights. Afterwards the representatives of the event (local leaders) went to celebrate and we children went home'. Boy with disability, 15 year old, semi-urban area

In Kigali city, the majority of children who are part of child-led groups reported their participation in consultations and events that happened in their community. In particular, children above 12 years reported their participation in workshops and meetings organized by the child-led group AEJT in collaboration with other organizations about child protection and child rights.

The most significant comments of the children are the following:

'I participated in two days workshop, we talked about child rights and child protection; they thought us how sexual violence could happen and where to refer in case of any abuse. Parents were expected to come but they did not show up'. Girl, 12 year old, urban area

'We participated in a workshop hosted by Plan Rwanda and I remember they asked us to draw a story of a child exposed to abuse'. Boy, 13 year old, urban area

In Kigali outskirts, 70% of targeted children above and below 12 reported that they have participated in some events on child protection without giving details about the events, others reported they participated in the day of African Child organized by the child-led group AEJT.

'I participated in the day of African Child in the Sector of Mageragere. We danced and I enjoyed because I had the opportunity to meet many of the children living in this area'. Boy, 12 year old, rural area

Some of the children belonging to the historically marginalized group showed participation in events and/or consultations on child protection; only few of the ones above 12 reported they have participated in the day of African Child at the Red Cross Office and one among them expressed his/her participation in events organized by a group called 'Amahoro' (Peace).

'With Amahoro Group, we went to Gisozi to help Orphans Children affected by HIV - AIDS, and we also visited those children which their houses have been destroyed'. Girl, 14 year old, urban area

Nobody from the group below 12 living in the same area reported they have been exposed in any event/research/consultation before.

'I have not participated in any event before, my parents do not want me to go anywhere'. Boy 10 year old, urban area.

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80% of the children from all targeted areas reported their knowledge of civil society organizations working on child protection in their areas and although they are not aware about the child protection issues that the organizations cover, they have a broad idea on the types of interventions the organizations are implementing in their communities.

In general, the oldest children are slightly more informed on this regard than the youngest ones.

Overall, 25% of targeted children mentioned Save the Children. This was reported mostly by children living in areas where Save the Children and/or its partners are operating. It has to be noted that also in the areas where Save the Children and/or its partners are not operating, some children reported to know the organization.

Other civil societies organizations reported by children are: 17% Unicef, 16% Caritas, 14% AEJT, 12.5% Plan Rwanda, 8% Champ Project, 7% Red Cross, 5% Amahoro, 4% World Vision, 3% EER Anglican Episcopal Church, 2.5% SOS Village, 8.5% Other. Most of the organizations

mentioned by children are those working on child protection issues in the targeted areas; in particular, they are providing service delivery or material support (pay the school fees, provide health support), youth empowerment, advocacy on child rights, health care provision, education, water and sanitation and livelihood programmes.

'I know EER Anglican Episcopal Church. I think they support children to go to school but I have not received any help from them yet'. Boy with disability, 15 year old, semi-urban area

'I know Save the Children; one day they even come to visit this school. They promote children rights'. Boy, 12 year old, rural area

'I know Plan Rwanda, Save the Children and UNICEF. They all help children in paying school fees and sensitize communities on children rights'.

Girl, 12 year old, urban area

'I know the project CHAMP: it gives school uniforms and school materials to children'. Girl, 11 year old, rural area

'I know FARG (Fund that helps genocide survivors), KORWA (Association who support marginalized groups in Rwanda), AMAHORO (Peace) who helps orphans affected by HIV-AIDS'. Boy, 15 year old, urban area

Findings Theme 3: Extent and impact of discrimination against children

The majority of the children (95%) reported that there are specific groups who suffer discrimination more than others.

In Rubaya, rural area in the north of the country, children and in particular the group of girls below 12 reported that in their community, girls are generally more discriminated than boys because they do more domestic chores and have less opportunities than boys. On the other hand, some boys above 12 reported that they are discriminated due to the lack of support they receive to cope with poverty.

'Girls are treated differently than boys, they grow up with fear to participate in some experiences; and we have more works to do at home than boys: my mother forces me to do a lot of work and often I feel very tired'. Girl, 11 year old, rural area

'I feel excluded sometimes because I have never received any support from anybody'. Boy, 15 year old, rural area

The children head of households reported they feel discriminated due to their life condition; they often receive insults and some of them feel excluded from any type of support because they are from those families considered responsible of having perpetrated the genocide.

According to children, the support they receive from the adult volunteers 'Nkundabana', who try to help them in identifying possible solutions to the problems they face and provide them with

psycho-social support is not enough to overcome their condition of poverty and discrimination.

'I feel sometimes discriminated by FARG (Fund for genocide survivors) which does not provide me with any support because my family was part of the ethnic group who perpetrated the Genocide against Tutsi; I am also a victim of Genocide, this organization should include me as a beneficiary of their aid programmes'. Boy, head of household, 16 year old, rural area

'I feel excluded sometimes because I cannot have the same opportunities in life than my peers'. Girl, head of household, 17 year old, rural area

In urban and semi-urban areas the majority of children reported that orphans and children with disabilities are the most discriminated and in the outskirts of Kigali city, children also reported that very poor children are not welcome and excluded to play with others.

'Children sometimes do not want to play with me because of my disability and some other girls do not want neither become my friends; I do not refer to anybody because nobody can help me'. Girl with disability, 13 year old, semi-urban area

'Sometimes I feel discriminated by my mother who forces me to work very hard but I have terrible pain in my leg'.

Boy with disability, 13 year old, rural area

'Children do not want to play with those from very poor families due to their different way of living'. Girl, 13 year old, rural area

'I feel discriminated sometimes because I cannot have the same things that other children have'. Orphan girl, 10 year old, semi-urban area

As an overarching conclusion, most of the children targeted during the study, feel in a way or another, discriminated against but they do not recognize their role as possible discriminators.

Table 3. Types of discrimination and groups of children discriminated against

Types of discrimination and groups of children discriminated against	Mostly reported by:
Poor children and children living in the street are discriminated due to their life condition and their dirty clothes. Children do not play with them	All categories of children
Children head of households are excluded and are insulted by adults. They feel excluded from any type of support because they are from those families considered responsible of having perpetrated the genocide.	Girls and boys above 12 living in rural areas
Girls in general are discriminated because they do more domestic chores and have less opportunities than boys	Girls below 12 living in rural areas
Children with disabilities are discriminated by their parents because they are forced to work hard even if they have disabilities. They are also excluded from other children to play together and children often tease them	Children with disabilities below and above 12 living rural areas
Orphans living with foster families are excluded by other children and they are discriminated within the family by the step-mother/step-father who do not treat them as their own children	Boys and girls below 12 living in urban and rural areas

Recommendations from Children and Potential Interventions to Address them

During the collection of data, children highlighted some recommendations on how to improve prevention and protection structures and mechanisms in their communities.

Below, major recommendations by children are highlighted and possible interventions to implement them are provided. The list of possible interventions is not exhaustive but can be used as guidance for programming.

- **Actual endorsement of legislations and policies that protect children** - children recognize that laws and policies to protect children from violence may be in place but they do not see how these laws benefit them, therefore their suggestion is to ensure that the laws are implemented;
Potential interventions: Civil Society Organizations should advocate with one voice to local authorities and the National Government for an increase in the budget allocation devoted to children and for the implementation of existing policies. This can be achieved by sensitizing communities in the existing laws and policies that protect children so that they can claim their endorsement from local authorities, become peer educators with other adult community members and support the establishment of a protective environment for children at community level.
- **Punishment of perpetrators who commit violence and abuse to children** - many children reported that punishment of perpetrators would be key in preventing violence from happening again. This also reflects the fact that children in Rwanda are very much exposed to detention as a mean of punishment for the perpetrators of the Genocide. Detention centres are present everywhere in the country, detainees dressed in pink uniform carry out public works in communities and children's relatives or parents may be themselves in detention centres;
Potential interventions: Sensitize the legal service providers, in particular judges, lawyers and police officers, about the peculiarities of addressing child abuse legal cases and the consequences of abuse on children, to ensure that they apply the necessary sanctions, both in civil and penal courts, and that legal decisions are endorsed and acted upon.
- **Responsiveness of local leaders and police to children's reports of abuses** - children see in these structures the referral systems most present and formally recognized by their communities but they are also aware that their response mechanism is not so effective and needs to be improved;
Potential Interventions: Children have shown trust in local leaders and the police and this shows the potential that these stakeholders have to become child rights' advocates in their communities. Civil Society Organizations and the Government should invest more in building the capacity of local leaders and the police in understanding child protection issues and provide appropriate support to children who refer to them.
- **Conduct sensitization activities on child protection to parents, religious leaders, teachers and other stakeholders in the communities** - children recognize the importance of awareness and sensitization to the key stakeholders in their communities;
Potential Interventions: Civil Society Organizations and the Government should invest more in Early Childhood Care and Development, Child Protection as well as better parenting skills trainings to parents with young children so that they can provide them with a better start in life; support nation-wide and community-based campaigns on the prevention of violence against children and alternative methods of disciplining children, both in the family and at schools, with the support of religious leaders; to advocate for a legislative total ban of corporal and humiliating punishment on children in all settings in Rwanda and strengthen referral mechanisms and service providers' capacity to deliver quality services to children who experienced abuse.

- **Sensitize children themselves on child rights and protection issues to enhance their self-protection skills and build the capacity of child-led groups:** children recognize that being knowledgeable about potential child protection risks that they may face helps them preventing them. They also recognize that being part of child groups or associations may help them to share the problems and challenges that they face.
- **Potential Interventions:** Support the operationalization of Children’s Forums in all districts, sectors and cells (as per Government of Rwanda, MIGEPROF, regulations) by providing life skills, child rights and protection trainings to the children elected as Children Forums’s representatives and build their capacity to become peer educators; support child-led groups and associations established independently by children who organized themselves and give them voice and opportunities for becoming advocates for children in their communities; sensitize children in child protection risks, prevention and reporting of child abuse cases.
- **Provide material support to the most vulnerable children (pay the school fees, provide health care):** children recognize that sometimes violence or abuse is also connected to poverty and they suggest that Organizations could address their underlying poverty by supporting them through sponsorship programmes;
Potential Interventions: Civil Society Organizations which do not provide material support to children should link more closely with the ones which do provide this type of support to be able to link and refer children in need and provide an holistic package of interventions; advocacy with the Government should be conducted to ensure that schools is completely free for all children (addressing the issue of schools fees, uniforms and the supply of text books) and that all children are covered by the health insurance. Child Protection Interventions should have components of income generating activities and linking to the Government Social Protection Programme.
- **Organize parents groups and child protection committees that act as referral mechanisms for abuses against children:** children suggested that adult child protection committees may help sensitizing other adults and prevent abuse against children from happening. In the areas where these committees are already operational, they need to promote more their role and responsibilities with children as sometimes children are not aware of their existence;
Potential Interventions: Support the operationalization of Child Protection/Gender Based Violence Committees and Nkundabana (Mentors for Child-headed Households) in all districts, sectors and cells (as per Government of Rwanda, MIGEPROF, regulations) by training and building their capacity in child protection and prevention of child abuse, referral and follow-up.
- **Provide the same support to orphans of the Genocide, independently from whether their families were perpetrators or victims:** Children head of households sometimes feel discriminated against because they come from families which were perpetrators of the Genocide and they feel they do not receive the same type of support as others;
Potential Interventions: Civil Society and Government of Rwanda to avoid any discrimination when defining criteria for providing support to Orphans and Vulnerable Children.
- **Conduct sessions and sensitization on family planning to couples and parents so that they can afford to guarantee access of their children to basic rights:** children have realized that family planning is key to prevent families to have more children than they can actually support.
Potential interventions: Support the Government of Rwanda’s efforts in sensitizing couples and young people on birth control, family planning and child rights.

The original quotes and recommendations from children reported in this study are a strong call to Government officials, Child-focus Civil Society Organizations, UN agencies, and Donors in Rwanda to act upon their suggestions by expanding existing programmes and initiating new ones in order to strengthen communities’ systems and mechanisms that prevent and protect them from violence and abuse and making communities a safer place for children.

ANNEXES

Case Stories

Case 1

E. is a 16 year old girl head of a household and she looks after her sister who is 14. Their father died during the Genocide and she believes that her mother was poisoned and died due to this. E. likes to be in peace with other people but sometimes she feels that some community members do not accept her and her sister and insult them for no specific reasons. She feels that she has many more responsibilities than other children because her life condition forced her to work very hard in order to guarantee the basic needs for her and her sister. E. tells us that sometimes she receives visits from the 'Nkundabana' (Kinyarwanda term meaning 'I love children'), who are community volunteers trained by Save the Children and they try to help her in identifying possible solutions to problems that she and her sister are facing; but she admits this is not enough to overcome their poverty issues. E. knows a child led group which meets regularly and talks about children's rights, but she is not part of this group because she is too busy at home and she feels too shy to approach them. E. dreams that she and other orphans will receive more opportunities from life, for instance to be supported by the government or by civil society organizations which promote children's rights, so that she could enjoy the same rights as other children.

Case 2

P. is a 12 year old boy with a leg disability. His father has been in jail for the past 13 years and he has just been condemned to further 30 years of imprisonment. Sometimes, P. goes to visit his father in jail, together with his mother, but he never has the opportunity to talk properly to him because the visiting time allowed is always too limited. P. likes to play with his friends but sometimes he feels excluded by other children because of his disability. This does not happen when he is with AEJT (child led group), where he feels integrated with other children, they play together and discuss about children's rights.

P. suffers when his mother forces him to work very hard until he feels pain in the leg, he thinks that his mother does not understand when he is suffering and this makes him feel very sad. His mother has referred him to receive special treatment at the hospital but his leg is not fully functional yet. Due to the fact that his mother spent all her money to try and cure him, she no longer has the money to pay his school fees and therefore he does not attend school regularly. P. is convinced that all children, especially those with disabilities, have the right to health and they should be referred to the hospital for treatment when they are sick. P. dreams to be part of a group of children with disabilities formally recognised by the government so that he could properly advocate and promote the rights of children with special needs in his community.

Field visits schedule and number of participants

Date	Location	Method to collect data	N. Participants	Gender Male	Gender Female
29th March 2010	Byumba – Gicumbi	Group Session <12 years	10	5	5
29th March 2010	Byumba – Gicumbi	Semi structured interview	3*	1	2
30th March 2010	Byumba – Gicumbi	Group Session >12 years	11	6	5
30th March 2010	Byumba – Gicumbi	Semi structured interview	2*	1	1
31st March 2010	Rubaya – Gicumbi	Group Session >12 years	11	6	5
31st March 2010	Rubaya – Gicumbi	Semi structured interview	2*	1	1
1st April 2010	Rubaya – Gicumbi	Group Session <12 years	10	5	5
1st April 2010	Rubaya – Gicumbi	Semi structured interview	2*	1	1
5 th April 2010	Nyamirambo - Kigali	Semi structured interview	2*	1	1
6th April 2010	Nyamirambo - Kigali	Group Session <12 years	10	3	7
6th April 2010	Mageragere – Kigali	Group Session >12 years	11	6	5
8th April 2010	Nyamirambo - Kigali	Group Session >12 years	9	6	3
8th April 2010	Mageragere – Kigali	Group Session <12 years	12	7	5
9 th April 2010	Mageragere – Kigali	Semi structured interview	4*	2	2
12 th April 2010	Nyamirambo - Kigali	Semi structured interview	2*	1	1
13 th April 2010	Kacyiru – Kigali	Group Session >12 years	10	6	4
14 th April 2010	Kacyiru – Kigali	Group Session <12 years	10	5	5
20th April 2010	Mutete - Gicumbi	Group session > 12 years	8	4	4
20th April 2010	Mutete - Gicumbi	Semi structured interview	2*	1	1
From 29 th March to 12 th April	Nyamirambo & Mageragere - Kigali	Questionnaires >12 years	17 ^o	9	8
From 29 th March to 12 th April	Nyamirambo & Mageragere - Kigali	Questionnaires <12 years	18 ^{oo}	11	7

* Children who participated in semi – structured interviews were also targeted in the group sessions

^o 10 Children who participated in group sessions as well

^{oo} 10 Children who participated in group sessions as well

A total of 112 children (59 males and 53 females) participated to the group sessions, 19 children (9 males and 10 females) were targeted for the semi structure interviews and 35 children (20 males and 15 females) filled in questionnaires.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Save the Children in Rwanda is conducting a research in order to know from children in Rwanda what child protection issues they face, whom they go for help and what persons, organizations or structures can help them in their communities.

Thank you for your help in filling in this questionnaire, your ideas and opinions will be useful to us and we hope they will help to address child protection issues in the future!

1. Age, gender, and place
2. Write something about you – what you like most in your life?
3. Do you know about any child-led groups existing in your community? Yes/no
If yes, what are the activities undertaken by the group?
4. Have you ever participated in community/national events/consultation or research on child protection issues (e.g. Day of the African Child; Children’s Parliament & Children’s Summit)?
Yes/no
If yes, what was about? What role did children play in the event/ consultation/ research?
5. Do you know any organisations which works on child protection issues within your community? Yes/no
If yes, which one? What do they do?
6. What do you think are the most common abuses/violence that children face in your community?
7. Who are the people who commit those abuses/violence?
8. If a child faces a violence or abuse in your community, where and to whom can he/she ask for help? What type of help would she/he receive?
9. How can abuse and violence against children be prevented/addressed?
10. Which children are discriminated against or excluded by other people in your community? Why are these children excluded?
11. Do you also feel excluded sometimes? When?
12. Do you know of any laws/policies that are in place to protect children from violence? Yes/no
If yes, what are the names of these laws/policies and what do they say about protecting children from violence?
13. How could the laws in Rwanda be improved to better help children to be protected from violence?