



# HANDBOOK ON PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The hurt can stop ... violence against children can be prevented



*Handbook on Preventing Violence Against Children, 1st Edition*



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# INTRODUCTION

Mission of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement:

*To improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.*

## KEY POINTS

- Children are the smallest, weakest and most dependent members of society; they are the most vulnerable to violence.
- The International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has declared violence a “Great Humanitarian Challenge” affecting vulnerable people, especially children.
- The level of violence against children around the world is catastrophic.

# INTRODUCTION

## WHO THIS HANDBOOK IS FOR

This handbook is for anyone interested in creating safe environments free of violence for children.

## FOCUS ON CHILDREN

- All people are vulnerable to violence—but children are the most vulnerable.
- Children are the smallest, weakest, most dependent members of society.
- Childhood, especially the years 0–6, establish the foundation for a person’s life. Experiencing violence at an early age has many negative impacts across the entire lifetime of the child.
- Protecting children from violence is the responsibility of all adults; violence against children is never the child’s fault.

## HOW THIS FITS WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF THE RED CROSS RED CRESCENT

Violence is a global catastrophe that diminishes the health, dignity and human potential of children and makes them vulnerable. The mission of the International Red Cross Red Crescent is: “To improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.”

- The International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has declared violence a “Great Humanitarian Challenge” affecting people around the world, especially the most vulnerable such as children and youth.<sup>1</sup>
- One of the three strategic directions of the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for the years 2010–2020 is to: “Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.”<sup>2</sup>
- The IFRC has a global strategy on violence (2010–2020) that places special emphasis on preventing violence against children and youth.<sup>3</sup>

*Advancing the Red Cross Red Crescent Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values, we commit to work with people vulnerable to violence, with a particular focus on children and youth; to prevent, mitigate and respond to violence—locally and globally—through advocacy and promoting change in knowledge, mindsets, attitudes and behaviours in order to foster environments that respect human dignity and diversity and are caring, safe and peaceful.*

Vision of the IFRC on Addressing Violence<sup>4</sup>

## OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL STATISTICS

- 500 million–1.5 billion children experience violence each year.<sup>5</sup>
- 150 million girls (14% of the world's child population) and 73 million boys (7% of the world's child population) have experienced sexual abuse.<sup>6</sup>
- 133–275 million children witness violence between their parents/carers on a frequent basis.<sup>7</sup>
- In some countries 97% of students report that they have been physically punished at school.<sup>8</sup>
- Only 2.4% of children in the world are protected from physical violence in all settings.<sup>9</sup>
- More than 20,000 images of sexual torture of children are posted on the internet each week.<sup>10</sup>
- Every year, 1.2 million children are trafficked, and this number is increasing.<sup>11</sup>
- At any one time, an estimated 1.8 million children are being sexually exploited for profit across the world.<sup>12</sup>
- Today, 250,000–300,000 children under the age of 15 are associated with fighting forces.<sup>13</sup>

It doesn't matter what statistics say. Whether the percentage of abused children is 75 or whether it is 58 is unimportant. Each child that is abused is one too many.

Plan International<sup>14</sup>







# VIOLENCE & POWER

*We owe our children—the most vulnerable citizens in any society—a life free from violence and fear.*

Nelson Mandela

## KEY POINTS

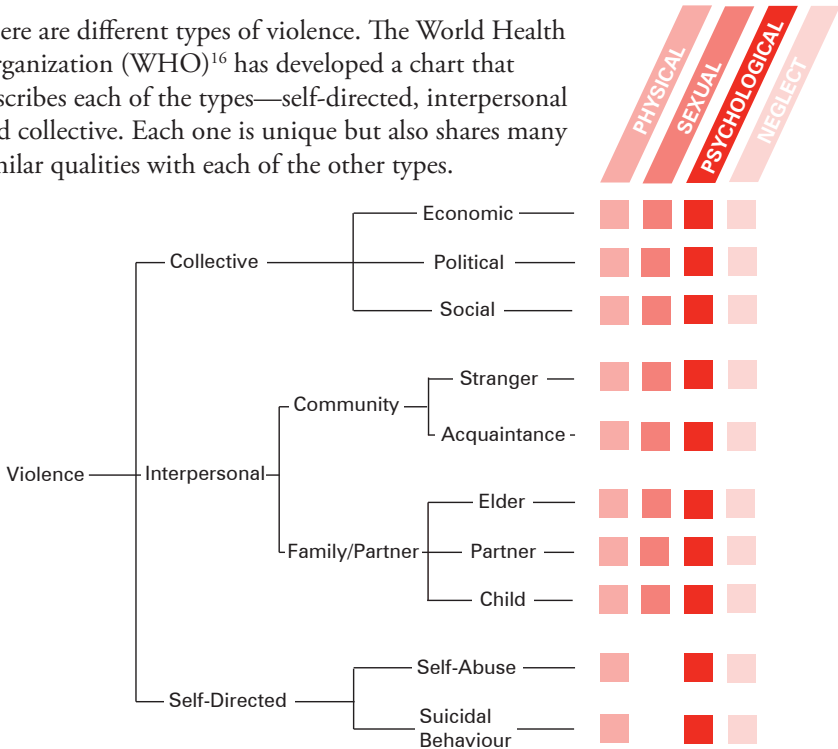
- No violence against children is justifiable, and all violence against children is preventable.
- Violence against children includes emotional, physical and sexual harm and neglect of people under the age of 18 years.
- Abuse of power is a key factor in all types of violence; adults have a responsibility to protect children and use their own power in a healthy and supportive way.

# VIOLENCE & POWER

## DEFINITIONS

**➤** Violence: The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) defines **violence** as: *the use of force or power, either as an action or omission, in any setting, threatened, perceived or actual against oneself, another person, a group, or a community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in death, physical injury, psychological or emotional harm, mal-development or deprivation.*<sup>15</sup>

There are different types of violence. The World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>16</sup> has developed a chart that describes each of the types—self-directed, interpersonal and collective. Each one is unique but also shares many similar qualities with each of the other types.



➤ **Child:** The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* defines a **child** as: *every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.*<sup>17</sup>

➤ **Interpersonal violence:** includes *violence in the family or community or among intimate partners.*

One type of interpersonal violence is violence against children: *all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse.*<sup>18</sup>

Violence against children occurs in all settings where people live and interact:

- **homes:** a child's nuclear or extended family
- **institutions:** orphanages, hospitals, religious centres, prisons or detention centres, reform schools
- **schools:** public or private
- **workplaces:** domestic work, or formal or informal jobs
- **communities:** neighbourhoods, cities, refugee or displacement camps.

➤ **Community violence:** includes *violence between individuals who are not related and who may or may not know each other—bullying, harassment, random acts of violence, and sexual assault by strangers;* generally it occurs outside of the home.

I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.

Mahatma Gandhi



➤ Power means *having choices about who you are and what you do*. This includes access to resources including support, nurturance, information, education, mobility, legal protection, and a healthy environment as well as money. It is *the capacity to participate in decisions affecting one's day-to-day living*;<sup>19</sup> *the ability to get things done, the capacity to act, or the ability to choose what will happen*.<sup>20</sup>

We cannot go back and make a new start, but we can start now and make a new ending.

Franklin Covey

The misuse of power is the basis of all violence: one person has more power over another and misuses it to physically or emotionally hurt another person. Misuse can include neglect and all types of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

## HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

- Violence against children is not a modern trend. It has existed in different forms throughout history—on every continent, in every country and community.
- The power to use violence against children has historically been authorized through two “rights”: the right to own property and the right to own children.
- Culture has been used throughout history as an excuse to hurt children; this is unacceptable. *Cultures* do not hurt, degrade and humiliate children—*people* do. Over time every culture changes; practices that are proven to be damaging, can be changed.
- Around the world, acknowledgement of violence against children continues to face barriers of disbelief and denial, but the issues are becoming better understood, and actions to prevent violence and intervene are growing in all parts of the world.
- Tomorrow’s history is today: the future health and safety of children depend on actions taken today.

## SOURCES OF POWER

- who you know
- who you work for
- your position or status
- your age and strength
- special knowledge or information you have
- resources you control
- rewards you can give

## QUESTIONS ON POWER FOR ALL ADULTS TO ASK THEMSELVES

- Where does my power come from?
- How do I use my power in a responsible manner?
- What are the power dynamics within my family, organization, community?
- What kind of power do the children I live with or work with have?
- How might I misuse my power?
- In what ways or in what situations am I vulnerable to misusing my power?

*Violence is not an inevitable aspect of the human condition. In much the same way as infectious diseases and other threats to public health have been in the past, violence can be prevented and its impact reduced.*

WHO<sup>21</sup>



The fundamental law of human being is interdependence. A person is a person through other persons. You can't be human in isolation. You are human only in relationships.

Archbishop  
Desmond Tutu





# EMOTIONAL ABUSE & FAMILY VIOLENCE

*Throughout history some children have been loved and cherished and **others brutalized by violence.***


Savitri Goonesekere

## KEY POINTS

- Emotional abuse is the cornerstone of violence against children. It accompanies physical and sexual violence and it also can be an independent form of abuse.
- Emotional abuse is a repeated attack on a child's self-esteem; it crushes a child's self-worth.
- The seven types of emotional abuse are: rejecting, degrading, isolating, terrorizing, corrupting, ignoring, and exploiting/ adultifying.
- Family violence is a form of violence against children—and can include many or all the different types of emotional abuse.

# EMOTIONAL ABUSE & FAMILY VIOLENCE

## DEFINITION

 Emotional abuse is *an ongoing attack on a child's self-esteem*; it is *psychologically destructive behaviour by a person in a position of power, authority or trust.*

## OVERVIEW

Regardless how it is done—through words, gestures, or other actions—emotional abuse always gives the same message to a child: “You are not good enough!” Emotional abuse affects children’s self-esteem, ability to form healthy relationships, and capacity to cope with stress; and it has harmful health consequences.

Sticks and stones can break your bones, and words can break your heart.





I have been emotionally abused most of my life. I would much rather have been hit than emotionally abused because bruises go away but emotional pain doesn't. My mother told me that if I hated living with them, then to move out. I finally have. Right now I don't like myself.

18-year-old female

### SAMPLE STATISTICS\*

AMERICAS: In Jamaica, 97% of 11–12-year-olds interviewed reported experiencing verbal aggression from an adult at home.<sup>22</sup>

ASIA: In India, a study found 50% of children reported facing emotional abuse; girls and boys reported equal levels of emotional abuse; due to neglect, discrimination and abuse, 48.4% of girls wished they were boys.<sup>23</sup>

EUROPE: In England, 15% of registered maltreatment was for psychological abuse.<sup>24</sup>

MIDDLE-EAST & NORTH AFRICA: In Egypt, within a six-month period, a study found 51% of parents cursed their children.<sup>25</sup>

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: In Botswana, a study of teachers found 60% believed emotional abuse of children by teachers definitely occurred in their schools.<sup>26</sup>

\* The "Sample Statistics" boxes provide a few examples of the level of violence occurring within countries in each region. While specific statistics are highlighted from some countries—primarily because studies have been conducted in those locations—it does not imply that violence against children only occurs in those countries. Violence against children is an issue across all continents, countries and communities.

## TYPES OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

TYPE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE	NON-CONTACT
Rejecting	to refuse to acknowledge, accept, hear, make time for or support a child
Degrading	to insult, criticize, mock, imitate, call names and otherwise belittle a child
Isolating	to separate a child from others; to cut a child off from normal social experiences which results in extreme aloneness and the feeling that he or she is like an outsider within the family
Terrorizing	to coerce or simply cause distress by intimidation, causing a state or instance of extreme fear, violent dread, or fright—children are terrorized through observing or being threatened by violence to themselves, their loved ones, or their pets and favourite objects
Corrupting	to constantly show the child anti-social, harmful, destructive, even illegal behaviours and activities that meet the needs of the caregiver; frequent swearing, encouraging physical violence and lack of support for school are some examples
Ignoring	to fail to provide sensitive, responsive caregiving; to deprive a child of essential stimulation and responsiveness; to interact only when necessary; to be psychologically unavailable
Exploiting/ Adultifying	to make use of a child for one’s own advantage or profit; to make excessive, age-inappropriate demands

## CHILDREN WHO ARE EXPOSED TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

### DEFINITION

**➤** Children who are exposed to family violence are *those who see, hear, or otherwise experience violent and inappropriate behaviour between family members.*

### OVERVIEW

Violence in families is common. Often, like all forms of violence, it is kept secret. This is encouraged by the false message that violence is a “private” issue—that it is “family business.”

The impact of family violence hurts everyone in the family: the person being attacked, the person committing the attack, and everyone who observes, hears or knows about the violence. Children who are exposed to family violence are being emotionally abused in all categories: rejected, degraded, isolated, terrorized, corrupted, ignored and exploited/adultified.

My grandparents hated me and my sister because we were girls. My grandfather wouldn't even let me sit down on the couch because I was being lazy. But if my cousin would do it, it was okay.

13-year-old female

### SAMPLE STATISTICS

Worldwide, 133–275 million children are exposed to violence in the family.<sup>27</sup>



## LESSONS LEARNED FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

When family violence occurs, children feel responsible for the anger, tension and violence in conflicts between their parents and other family members. Often they see themselves as the cause of the violence. This leads to feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. They may attempt to maintain “peace” within the family, start to misbehave, or hide from the anger.


Family violence is especially harmful because of children’s development stage—they are still forming their intellectual capacities and sense of identity in relation to the world around them. Seeing or hearing violence in the family at a young age can impact a child for an entire lifetime.

My mom is an alcoholic. When I come home from school I never know what I’ll find. My little brother cries quietly. I take care of him and tell him everything will be fine—but I’m lying. It’s all too much.

13-year-old female

## SIX HARMFUL LESSONS CHILDREN LEARN FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

1. Violence is a legitimate way to solve problems.
2. Violence has a place in the family.
3. There are few, if any, consequences for violence.
4. Violence is an acceptable way to manage stress.
5. Violence can be tolerated.
6. It is okay to hit someone who is smaller, weaker or less powerful.



# PHYSICAL ABUSE & NEGLECT

*To paraphrase several sages:  
Nobody can think and hit  
someone at the same time.*

Susan Sontag

## KEY POINTS

- Physical abuse is any physical force or action that results in or may potentially result in a non-accidental injury.
- Physical neglect is the failure of caregivers to meet the basic physical or medical needs of a child.
- Abuse is often confused with discipline—they are different. Discipline teaches children rules for life, self-control and self-discipline. Abuse is hurting, humiliating and scaring children. There is overwhelming evidence that physical punishment does not change children's long-term behaviour for the better.

# PHYSICAL ABUSE & NEGLECT

## DEFINITION

**➤** Physical abuse is *when a person in a position of power or trust purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child*. It may involve hitting a child a single time or it may involve a pattern of incidents. Physical abuse also includes behaviour such as shaking, biting, kicking, burning or poisoning a child; holding a child under water; or any other harmful or dangerous use of force or restraint.

## OVERVIEW

Children who experience normal accidents in everyday activity generally develop bruises and cuts in common areas such as the forehead, knees, shins and elbows. Children who are physically abused often show bruises and cuts on their back, face, side of head, buttocks, upper thighs, lower legs and lower abdominal area.

I was physically abused almost every day until I was about 14 or 15. When I look back now I see how bad my mother's actions were. I feel that my emotions are now affected because of the abuse.

16-year-old male

## SAMPLE STATISTICS

**AMERICAS:** In Brazil, each year 6.6 million children (12% of people under the age of 14) are victims of physical violence—an average of 18,000 per day, 720 per hour or 12 per minute.<sup>28</sup>

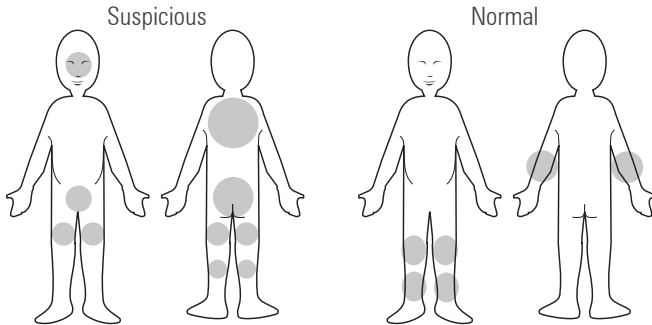
**ASIA:** In Indonesia, two-thirds of boys and one-third of girls report having been beaten.<sup>29</sup>

**EUROPE:** In Romania, 84% of children reported being physically punished.<sup>30</sup>

**MIDDLE-EAST & NORTH AFRICA:** A survey in Yemen found 90% of children reported experiencing physical and humiliating punishment.<sup>31</sup>

**SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA:** A study in Cameroon found 97% of children reported being physically punished at school.<sup>32</sup>

## Illustration: Suspicious Bruising and Abrasions

**SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME**

**➤** Shaken Baby Syndrome refers to *a variety of injuries that may result when an infant (usually 6 weeks to 4 months of age) or a young child is violently shaken.* It is the most common cause of infant mortality and accounts for the most long-term disability in infants and young children due to physical abuse. It is frequently a single event and there may be no external signs of injury. Often there is no intent to harm the child, but the impact may be severe. Inconsolable crying, feeding problems and difficulties with toilet training are the most common triggers for shaking an infant/child.

70% of perpetrators of Shaken Baby Syndrome are male and are often the father of the victim.

Salazar<sup>33</sup>

One in four shaken babies dies as a result of the abuse.<sup>34</sup> In many cases there are no external indicators of injury either to the head or the body.

**PREVENTING SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME**

Despite the fact that Shaken Baby Syndrome is completely preventable, it results in many deaths around the world each year. Education offers the best hope for eliminating this form of child physical abuse. Basic parenting courses as well as Shaken Baby Syndrome awareness programs for new parents, siblings, other family members and babysitters focus on simple messaging:

Stop! Calm Down! Walk Away! Try Again!  
Take a Break—DON'T SHAKE!

*Babies are victims of violent shaking mainly in their first year of life, as that is often when they cry inconsolably and when parents and carers become most frustrated ... abusive head trauma reaches a peak at ages six to eight weeks, when babies cry the most.*

Mock, Peden, Hyder, Butchart and Krug<sup>35</sup>



## DISCIPLINE VERSUS ABUSE

Discipline is often a complex and challenging issue. Abuse is often confused with discipline—but they are different. Discipline teaches children rules for life, self-control and self-discipline. Abuse is hurting, humiliating and frightening children. There is overwhelming evidence that physical punishment of children does not improve children's long-term behaviour.



**TEN FALSE MYTHS ABOUT HITTING CHILDREN**

MYTH	FACT
<b>X</b> Hitting is the best option	✓ Although hitting children might have short-term results, it does not improve long-term behaviour.
<b>X</b> Hitting is harmless	✓ Hitting children once, twice or often can have harmful effects. Some effects can be immediate like bruising, shame, fear, anger and humiliation; other impacts can be long-term like lack of trust, depression, poor health, and using violence to solve problems.
<b>X</b> Hitting some parts of the body is okay	✓ It is unsafe and ineffective to hit any part of a child's body.
<b>X</b> Without hitting, children become uncontrollable	✓ All children make mistakes and sometimes misbehave; this is natural. Mistakes are how all children learn if they are used as "teaching moments" rather than to cause fear, shame or injury.
<b>X</b> Hitting is needed as a last option	✓ There are no situations where hitting children is the only option.
<b>X</b> Most adults hit only in serious situations	✓ Many adults hit children before trying other things; they hit out of their own frustration.
<b>X</b> Most hitting stops when children grow older	✓ Many adults who hit young children continue hitting as children get older.
<b>X</b> If adults do not hit, they will need to crush a child's self-esteem	✓ There are many options for disciplining children without hitting or crushing self-esteem.
<b>X</b> Hitting is difficult to stop without a lot of training	✓ Although all adults can benefit from learning new ways to support children, adults can simply decide not to hit.
<b>X</b> It is unrealistic to expect adults to never hit children	✓ Adults should not hit other adults or children—it is harmful and against the <i>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> —adults can treat children with respect and influence behaviour positively.

## HEALTHY OPTIONS FOR DISCIPLINE

- ✓ Do NOT hit children.
- ✓ Discipline when you are calm—do not discipline when you are angry.
- ✓ Separate yourself from the child when you are very upset.
- ✓ Model appropriate, safe behaviour; remember children learn by watching and copying adults.
- ✓ Show, explain and encourage positive behaviours.
- ✓ Talk through problems; try not to raise your voice or use negative language—hurtful words are ineffective.
- ✓ Set boundaries and provide clear consequences before a problem occurs; use safe, natural consequences.
- ✓ Be consistent, firm and fair.
- ✓ Use time-outs.
- ✓ Teach children why it's not okay to break rules.
- ✓ Know what to expect from children at different ages.
- ✓ Respect and know the uniqueness of your child.
- ✓ Remember that healthy discipline takes time and patience.

*When anger rises, think of the consequences.*


Confucius

People cannot think that beating an adult is a crime and beating a child is education. We must know that it is a mistake, as much as hitting women or slavery were in the past.

Xuxa Meneghel

## NEGLECT

### DEFINITION

 Physical neglect occurs *when a child's need for food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, education, medical care, and protection from harm are not adequately met*. Not always intentional, neglect may be a result of insufficient resources or other circumstances beyond a person's control.

### OVERVIEW

When a child's basic needs are not met, it can have negative consequences to physical, emotional and spiritual health and growth. Neglect is the silent killer of children.

Children's basic physical needs are:

- **adequate nutrition:** quantity and quality
- **adequate shelter:** safe, clean, free of hazards
- **adequate clothing:** appropriate for weather
- **good hygiene:** skin, hair, teeth
- **supervision:** daily and during potentially dangerous activities, e.g., swimming, driving
- **medical and dental care:** as required and timely
- **adequate education:** cognitive stimulation
- **adequate rest**
- **safe environment:** safety rules, removal of dangerous elements, safe driving, etc.
- **adequate exercise and fresh air**
- **moral guidance and discipline.**

When my mother was pregnant with me she neglected the things that I needed to grow. She would party all the time and do drugs. My father had to force food in her and tried to stop her from doing drugs. She used to physically abuse me until she traded me to my father for his car. So my dad went to court to get custody of me.

14-year-old male

## SAMPLE STATISTICS

WORLDWIDE: One billion children live on less than \$2.50 per day; 25,000 children die each day due to poverty.<sup>38</sup>

AMERICAS: In Canada, neglect was the most common form of child abuse reported to social workers totalling 103,957 investigations (21.85 investigations per 1,000 children).<sup>39</sup>

ASIA: One in six female infants in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan dies due to neglect and discrimination.<sup>40</sup>

EUROPE: In the United Kingdom, studies suggest 10% of children experience neglect.<sup>41</sup>

MIDDLE-EAST & NORTH AFRICA: In Israel, the National Council for the Child reports that 309,141 children are at risk of abuse due to hunger, threats, beating and lack of education and medical care.<sup>42</sup>

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: In Kenya, neglect was reported by parents as the most common form of abuse against children: 22% of children reported experiencing neglect.<sup>43</sup>

## FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder refers to a *range of physical and mental birth defects that may develop in individuals whose mothers drank alcohol during pregnancy*. The damage to the brain is permanent and irreversible. To prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, it is critical to not consume alcohol during pregnancy.

From the womb onwards, children are dependent. As they develop, their ability to meet their own needs increases. However, they remain dependent on adults for many basic requirements, and failure to meet these needs results in neglect.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a red long-sleeved top, is seen from the back, hugging a child from behind. The child is wearing a tan jacket and has their face buried in the woman's shoulder. The background is dark and out of focus.

# SEXUAL VIOLENCE

*It is not easy to open oneself to the knowledge that millions of children are raped. But we cannot close ourselves off and hope for the best. Our daughters are in danger. Even our sons are in danger. Behind each statistic, there is a child.*

Bass and Thornton<sup>44</sup>

## KEY POINTS

- Sexual violence occurs when an older child, adolescent or adult uses a younger child for his or her own sexual gratification.
- Sexual violence may be contact or non-contact.

# SEXUAL VIOLENCE

## DEFINITION

➤ Sexual violence is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of acts, including coerced sex in marriage and dating relationships, rape by strangers, systematic rape during armed conflict, sexual harassment (including demands for sexual favours in return for jobs or school grades), sexual abuse of children, forced prostitution and sexual trafficking, child marriage, and violent acts against the sexual integrity of women, including female genital mutilation and obligatory inspections for virginity.<sup>45</sup>

➤ Sexual abuse occurs when a child/youth is used for sexual purposes by an adult or youth. Sexual violence can involve touching (contact) or no touching (non-contact). Both contact and non-contact sexual abuse include a wide range of behaviours.

### CONTACT

- touched in sexual areas
- forced to touch another's sexual areas
- embraced/held in a sexual manner
- having sex with a child in any way using any object
- physically and sexually tortured in ritualized abuse

### NON-CONTACT

- shown sexual videos and pornography in person, via internet, by cell phone photos
- forced to listen to sexual talk, including obscene telephone calls
- forced to pose for seductive or sexual photos or videos
- forced to look at the sexual body parts of another person
- forced to watch sexual acts
- teased about sexual body parts
- subjected to intrusive questions, comments, or observations, verbally, or through notes, email, chat rooms or text messages
- made the object of voyeurism which is unwanted watching

➤ Incest: when sexual abuse occurs in the family by a parent, parent figure, sibling, or another person very close to the child in the family.

## CONSENT

Different countries around the world have decided on different ages at which people can give consent to have sex with another person. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* defines children as under the age of 18; articles 19, 34 and 36 state that children have a right to be protected from sexual violence.

Children are NOT able to consent to sexual contact with people who are in positions of trust, authority and power. In these circumstances, even if a child agrees or gives permission to sexual contact, it is still never acceptable.

Sexual exploitation is one form of sexual violence; it is *an actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.*<sup>47</sup> Children are used as a commodity and can be sexually exploited in a number of ways:

- Child pornography is *the production, selling and/or distribution of sexual print, photographs, video or online material involving children*. It is now often referred to as “child abuse images.”
- Child prostitution is *selling children’s bodies for the sexual gratification of others*.
- Child trafficking is *the movement of children from one place to another, within a country or across countries, for the purpose of involving them in pornography, prostitution, sex tourism or for other sexual activities*.

A child molested by a stranger can run home for help and comfort. A victim of incest cannot.

Vanderbilt<sup>46</sup>

## SAMPLE STATISTICS

WORLDWIDE: 150 million girls (14% of the planet's child population) and 73 million boys (7% of the planet's child population) have been subjected to sexual violence.<sup>48</sup>

AMERICAS: In the Caribbean, a study of children ages 10–18 years found 10.5% of girls and 9.1% of boys reported experiencing sexual abuse.<sup>49</sup>

ASIA: India has the world's largest number of sexually abused children—a child below 16 years is raped every 155th minute, a child below 10 every 13th hour and one in every 10 children is sexually abused at some point.<sup>50</sup>

EUROPE: An estimated 10%–20% of children experience sexual abuse.<sup>51</sup>

MIDDLE-EAST & NORTH AFRICA: In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 19% of surveyed undergraduate college students reported at least one act of sexual abuse against them before the age of 16 years from an immediate family member; a further 36.2% reported sexual abuse by a relative.<sup>52</sup>

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: In Namibia, 21% of women in a survey reported childhood sexual abuse.<sup>53</sup>

I have been sexually abused four times. I really want help but I'm too scared. My friend had the same thing happen but won't tell anyone. My sister is in the hospital because she tried to kill herself. No one understands. I'm scared.

15-year-old female

## COMMON BEHAVIOURS OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN

Children who have been sexually abused often display common behaviours including:<sup>54</sup>

- Secrecy: Many children keep sexual abuse a secret due to threats, fear, or manipulation by the person who has hurt them.



- Helplessness: Children's sense of vulnerability and helplessness is intensified when abuse happens.
- Entrapment and Accommodation: If the secret of the abuse continues, children can become trapped with no way out, no place to run and no one to tell—the only option is survival. Children learn to accommodate (live with) the abuse by minimizing it, rationalizing it, denying it, forgetting it, or escaping through addictions, running away, self-harm, fantasies or mental illness.
- Making delayed, conflicting or unconvincing disclosures: Children may delay telling someone they trust about the abuse because they fear punishment, rejection, do not want to get anyone in trouble, are ashamed or scared, or they may think no one will believe them and that the abuse was their own fault.
- Retraction: If a child does tell someone about the abuse, he or she may become overwhelmed by guilt, fear, anxiety or confusion and want to take back (retract) their disclosure.





# VULNERABLE CHILDREN

*Some groups or categories of children are especially vulnerable to different forms of violence ... children with disabilities, orphaned children ... indigenous children, children from ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups, children living or working on the streets, children in institutions and detention, children living in communities in which inequality, unemployment and poverty are highly concentrated, child refugees and other displaced children.*

Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro

## KEY POINTS

- All children live with some risk of violence and abuse, but some children are especially vulnerable.
- Children with unique vulnerabilities are: those in institutions, those with disabilities, children who use the internet and technology, children who are marginalized, those who are indigenous, those affected by disaster and/or war, and those experiencing gender-based violence.

# VULNERABLE CHILDREN

## OVERVIEW

**All children live with some risk of experiencing violence:** their age, size, inexperience, dependence, and place in society make them vulnerable to abuse of power by adults or by more powerful children. However, some children are at even higher risk than others and therefore in special need of protection.

## CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS

### VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Examples are children in:

- schools
- hospitals
- orphanages
- religious institutions
- sport facilities.

### POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS

- limited protection systems
- unaccompanied by family members
- dependence on institutional personnel

### STATISTICS

- As many as 8 million of the world's children are in residential care.<sup>55</sup>
- The risk of violence in institutions is six times higher than in foster care.<sup>56</sup>
- In the USA, the Roman Catholic Church has spent more than \$2 billion in sexual abuse related costs from thousands of allegations.<sup>57</sup>



## CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

### VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Examples are children with:

- temporary or permanent disabilities
- “visible” disabilities like injured or non-functioning limbs, blindness, hearing impairments
- “invisible” disabilities such as a heart condition, epilepsy, developmental or emotional impairments.

Children may have multiple disabilities.

### POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS

- isolation
- discrimination
- dependency
- less physically able to defend themselves
- communication challenges
- cognitive ability
- status in society
- low self-esteem
- false myths and stereotypes
- unprotective systems in organizations that fail to consider their special needs

### STATISTICS

- In the Ukraine, about 30% of all severely disabled children in special homes died before they reached 18 years of age.<sup>58</sup>
- In New Zealand, 44% of boys and girls in special schools had experienced some form of sexual abuse.<sup>59</sup>
- In the USA, children with disabilities are 1.7 times more at risk of abuse from their caregivers compared to other children.<sup>60</sup>



Children who live with a physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health disability are among the most stigmatized and marginalized of all the world's children.

UNICEF

## CHILDREN WHO USE INTERNET/TECHNOLOGY

VULNERABLE CHILDREN	POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS	STATISTICS
<p>Examples are children who use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ internet</li> <li>▪ chat rooms</li> <li>▪ cell phones</li> <li>▪ hand-held devices.</li> </ul>	<p>Predators and other aggressors accessing children via chat rooms, instant messaging, text messaging, camera phones, email, web cams, websites.</p> <p>Trends in online child abuse include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ increasing level of “home-grown” pornographic images produced by predators, like live streaming video images of children being abused</li> <li>▪ growing use of security measures and peer-to-peer networking where information can be shared without downloading from websites</li> <li>▪ increasing use of violent and graphic images involving violence against younger children</li> <li>▪ rising online bullying between young peers</li> <li>▪ more instant delivery and manipulation of images using camera phones and hand-held wireless devices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More than 20,000 images of child sexual abuse (child pornography) are posted on the internet every week.<sup>61</sup></li> <li>▪ The estimated annual business volume of child pornography on the internet ranges from \$3–20 billion USD.<sup>62</sup></li> </ul>

I never escape the fact that pictures of my abuse are out there forever. Everything possible should be done to stop people looking at pictures of child abuse. Each time someone looks at pictures of me, it's like abusing me again.

16-year-old female<sup>63</sup>



**MARGINALIZED CHILDREN**

VULNERABLE CHILDREN	POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS	STATISTICS
<p>Examples are children who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ living on the streets</li> <li>▪ child labourers</li> <li>▪ born in “low castes”</li> <li>▪ living with stigmatized diseases, like HIV/AIDS</li> <li>▪ immigrants</li> <li>▪ otherwise seen as “less than” others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ low position in society</li> <li>▪ seen as “less than” others</li> <li>▪ lack of protection systems</li> <li>▪ being marginalized: children pushed to the margin by violence are now vulnerable to even more violence—a vicious cycle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children who are orphaned by AIDS are more likely to face violence, exploitation, stigma and discrimination.<sup>64</sup></li> <li>▪ In Peru, 73% of children living on the street report having left home due to family violence.<sup>65</sup></li> <li>▪ In Fiji, 80% of child domestic workers report that their employers have sexually abused them.<sup>66</sup></li> </ul>

**INDIGENOUS/ABORIGINAL CHILDREN**

VULNERABLE CHILDREN	POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS	STATISTICS
<p>Indigenous/ Aboriginal children are those who belong to the first peoples or original inhabitants of a particular location.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ poverty</li> <li>▪ substance abuse/ addictions</li> <li>▪ historical trauma and abuse in communities</li> <li>▪ racism</li> <li>▪ family break-down</li> <li>▪ economic exclusion</li> <li>▪ political marginalization</li> <li>▪ lack of resources</li> <li>▪ lack of education</li> <li>▪ health risks</li> <li>▪ lack of access to justice</li> <li>▪ exposure to armed conflict</li> <li>▪ exposure to civil unrest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In Australia, Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander children are over six times more likely than other children to have substantiated cases of child abuse.<sup>67</sup></li> <li>▪ In Honduras, every Tolupan (Aboriginal population) child is believed to be malnourished.<sup>68</sup></li> <li>▪ In Canada, the rate of deaths from injuries is 3–4 times higher for Aboriginal children than for other children.<sup>69</sup></li> <li>▪ Young girls from hill tribes and indigenous rural communities in Taiwan, Northern Thailand, Myanmar, China and other countries in the Mekong Delta are thought to be especially at risk for trafficking.<sup>70</sup></li> </ul>

## CHILDREN AFFECTED BY DISASTER

### VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Children may be affected by:

- natural disasters
- human-made disasters
- technological disasters.

### POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS

- pre-existing risks for violence and discrimination against children in a community before a disaster
- the nature, scale, scope and duration of a disaster
- the amount and quality of support in response from helping agencies—includes how, when and by whom children's needs are met and the behaviour and conduct of individuals representing helping agencies
- availability of support systems—includes informal and formal structures to support children and families
- protection mechanisms that are in place—includes prevention and response systems
- prevention education provided to children prior to and reinforced during an emergency

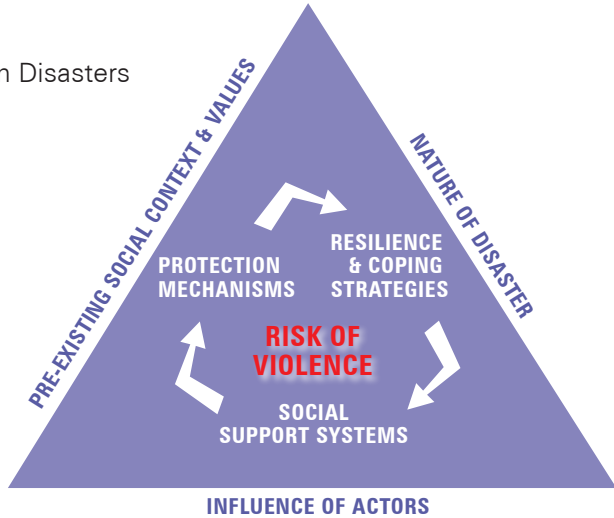
### STATISTICS

- After Hurricane Hugo hit the USA, child abuse increased at 3, 6, and 11 months after the hurricane, compared to the preceding year—from 12.6% to 301% at 3 months, and from 3.5% to 50.9% at 6 months.<sup>71</sup>
- After the Loma Prieta earthquake, child physical abuse increased at 3, 6, and 11 months after the earthquake.<sup>72</sup>
- More than half the children living in displacement camps in Africa's Great Lakes region have experienced some form of sexual abuse.<sup>73</sup>





Illustration:  
Risk of Violence in Disasters



## CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

### VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Examples of how children are used in armed conflict are:

- fighters
- cheap labour
- sex slaves.

### POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS

- small
- weak
- dependent
- obedient
- cheap to feed and support
- easy to manipulate; are often forced to become addicted to drugs that make them even easier to control

### STATISTICS

- 250,000–300,000 children are estimated to be involved in armed conflict at any given time; the cumulative number is significantly higher.<sup>74</sup>

These statistics are shocking enough, but more chilling is the conclusion to be drawn from them: more and more of the world is being sucked into a desolate vacuum. This is a space devoid of the most basic human values; a space in which children are slaughtered, raped, and maimed; a space in which children are exploited as soldiers; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality. Such unregulated terror and violence speak of deliberate victimization. There are few further depths to which humanity can sink.

Graça Machel<sup>75</sup>

## GENDER

### GIRLS

#### POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS

- lack of power
- lack of access to and opportunities for education
- traditional beliefs that girls are of less economic and prestige value to a family than boys
- beliefs that the purity of girls reflects the honour of a family

#### STATISTICS

- Estimates suggest there are 50–100 million “missing” females worldwide—girls and women who should be alive but are not due to discrimination.<sup>76</sup>
- One in six female infants in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan dies due to neglect and discrimination.<sup>77</sup>
- In India there are 933 girls for every 1,000 boys.<sup>78</sup>
- In China there are 117 boys for every 100 girls—this is attributed to foeticide against girls.<sup>79</sup>

The global statistics on the abuse of girls are numbing. It appears that more girls have been killed in the last 50 years, precisely because they were girls, than men were killed in all the battles of the twentieth century. More girls are killed in this routine “gendercide” in any one decade than people were slaughtered in all the genocides of the twentieth century.

Kristof and WuDunn<sup>80</sup>

### BOYS

#### POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS

- cultural bias that males “can’t be victims”
- feeling responsible for being victimized if own body responds sexually to sexual abuse; struggle with sexual identity
- played-down if sexually abused by an older woman

#### STATISTICS

- Males 15–17 years old are the most likely population to be killed.<sup>81</sup>
- 73 million boys worldwide are sexually abused.<sup>82</sup>

Violence against boys is often overlooked. Their hurt is real.



# IMPACT

*What happens to children when they are six months old or six years old can impact them when they are 60 years old or 86 years old.*

Adapted from WHO<sup>63</sup>

## KEY POINTS

- Violence causes long-term devastation to children, families, communities and whole societies.
- Violence has a catastrophic human impact, costs billions of dollars in direct and indirect expenses and losses, and threatens development activities.

# THE HUMAN IMPACT

## IMPACT

The impact of violence can affect children, families, and communities—no one is left untouched and the often devastating effects can be felt across a lifetime or even generations.

Possible impacts include:

- minor to severe physical injuries
- developmental delays
- learning disorders
- aggressive behaviours
- depression
- stress disorders
- conduct disorders
- addictions
- suicide
- health problems that often extend into adulthood
- feelings of:
  - betrayal   - powerlessness
  - shame   - stigma.

## STATISTICS

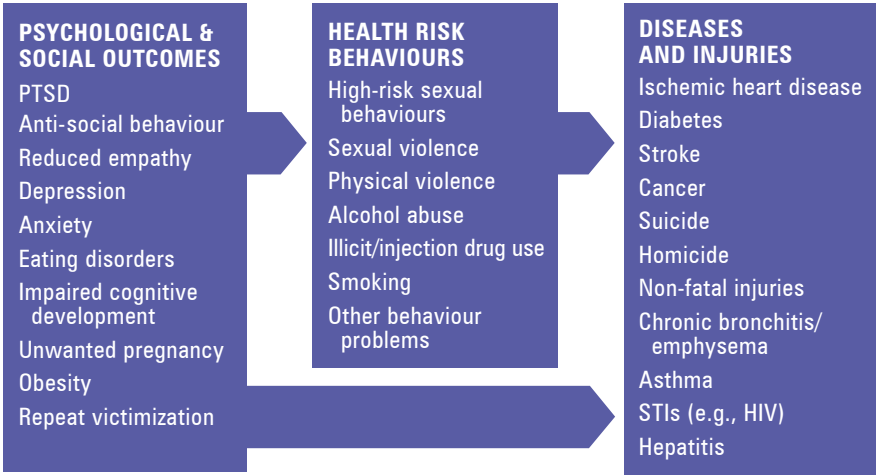
Children who experience violence are:

- 103% more likely to become smokers
- 95% more likely to become obese
- 103% more likely to become alcoholics
- 192% more likely to become addicted to drugs
- 43% more likely to become suicidal.<sup>84</sup>

Being a victim of child maltreatment is associated with victimization by and perpetration of other types of violence, such as intimate partner, sexual and self-directed violence. Consequently, programmes that prevent child maltreatment also have the potential to reduce involvement in violence later in life.

WHO<sup>85</sup>

Illustration: The Consequences of Violence Against Children<sup>86</sup>



Butchart, 2008

## FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HUMAN IMPACT

Children suffer the physical pain of being traumatized, and are also left with the psychological scars of blaming themselves. Behavioural indicators are varied and influenced by:

- severity of the abuse
- frequency of the abuse
- age of child at onset
- nature of child’s relationship to abuser
- availability of supportive persons
- child’s genetic endowment for coping.



## ECONOMIC IMPACT

### IMPACT

**Direct costs** of violence against children include costs associated with:

- hospitalization
- medical services
- protective services
- police investigations
- foster care and other placement services
- family preservation
- rehabilitation
- treatment programs.

**Indirect costs** are more difficult to assess than direct costs and reflect the long-term consequences of violence, such as:

- special education
- mental health
- substance abuse
- teen pregnancy
- welfare services
- homelessness
- criminal behaviour.

### STATISTICS

- In Brazil, child abuse accounted for 77% of hospital costs in the city of Recife.<sup>87</sup>
- In Chile, the cost of child abuse is estimated at 2% of the gross domestic product.<sup>88</sup>
- In the USA, the estimated cost of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse each year is \$507 billion.<sup>89</sup>

A study in the USA found that the cost of a program to prevent child abuse equalled 5% of the cost of intervening in child abuse.<sup>90</sup>

Waters, Hyder, Rajkotia, Basu, Rehwinkel and Butchart

## IMPACT ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### IMPACT

The negative impact of violence on the development of communities and societies is only beginning to be understood. In fact, “violence slows economic growth, undermines personal and collective security, and impedes social development.”<sup>91</sup>

### STATISTICS

- In Brazil, the districts where homicide rates exceeded 100 per 100,000 were districts with rapidly rising population growth, large concentrations of adolescents and pre-adolescents, high household density, limited access to public sewers, limited job availability, and low educational achievement.<sup>92</sup>

Violence against children has incalculable costs to present and future generations and it undermines human development.

The African Declaration on Violence against Girls<sup>93</sup>

*It is in childhood that people form their view of the world and how to act within it. If children are socially and economically marginalized, know only poverty and hardship, discrimination and abuse, that experience will shape them as adults.*

Amnesty International<sup>94</sup>







# WHY VIOLENCE HAPPENS

*The quality of a child's life depends on decisions made everyday in households, communities and in the halls of government. We must make those choices wisely, and with children's best interests in mind ... **As children go, so go nations.** It's that simple.*

UNICEF


## KEY POINTS


- The Ecological Model is a comprehensive framework that analyzes the different factors at the individual, family, community and societal/cultural levels that can put children at risk of violence.
- People who hurt children have a serious problem and need to stop.


# WHY VIOLENCE HAPPENS


## COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE

No single factor predicts violence; rather, violence is caused by a complex relationship between individuals, relationships, communities and societies. The Ecological Model<sup>95</sup> shows how different levels relate to each other and can combine together to increase the risk of violence.

Individual level: includes a child's biological, personal and family history.  Risks for a child can include being seen as different for any reason (physical or mental development, disability, health or ethnicity) and a history of violence in their families.

Family/Relationship level: includes relationships within the immediate family, with other children and with relatives. A history of abuse in the family, alcohol or substance abuse, or high stress all can increase the risk of hurt to children. Having a parent working overseas and being dependent on other relatives can also be a risk factor. 

Community level: includes community support systems—formal and informal—and the levels of poverty and violence in the community. 

Societal/Cultural level: includes social values that give some people power over others, and that determine gender roles and the status of children. These are influenced by media messages, gender stereotypes and laws that can either help prevent violence or increase the risk of violence. 

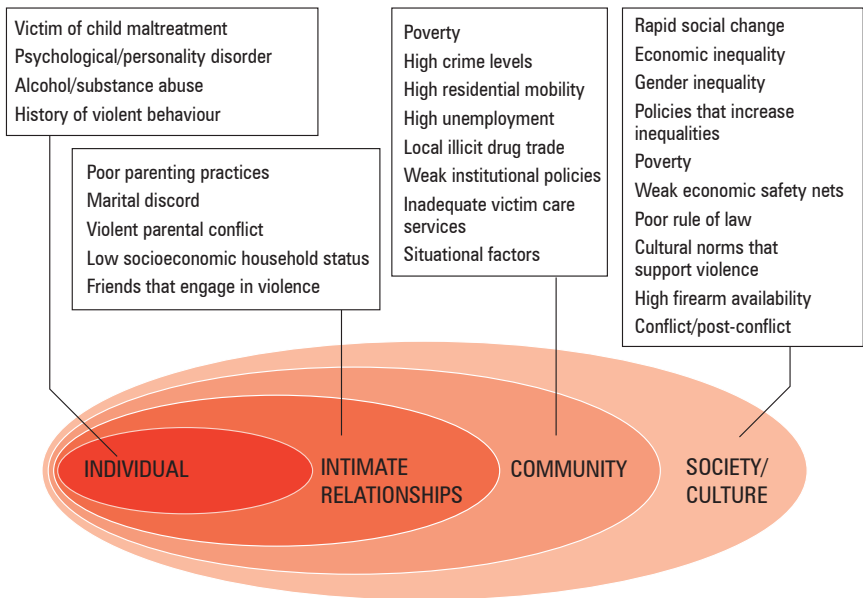
If we could read the secret history of those we would like to punish, we would find in each life enough grief and suffering to make us stop wishing anything more on them.

Hebrew scholar

*In the midst of increased conflict, violence and confrontation, we must seek possibilities to be peacemakers. The responsibility for peace begins with each person, in relationship with family and friends and extends to community life and national activities.*

YMCA World Statement on Peace<sup>96</sup>

Illustration: Ecological Model<sup>97</sup>



Krug, Dahlbert, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano, 2002

## PEOPLE WHO SEXUALLY HURT CHILDREN

### PHASES OF SEXUAL OFFENDING

In order for sexual abuse to occur four conditions must exist:


1. The person hurting the child must be motivated to sexually abuse +
2. The person hurting the child must overcome internal/personal barriers against abusing +
3. The person hurting the child must overcome any external barriers against abusing +
4. The person hurting the child must overcome any resistance from the child.

Children are “groomed” and manipulated by people who want to sexually hurt them through a series of phases.

1. **Engagement:** A child is targeted by a person who wants to hurt him or her, the child’s trust is built up as a friendship is developed, and then the person begins to control and isolate the child which is made easier because of the child’s loyalty.
2. **Sexual activity:** The person begins to slowly increase contact and reduce any boundaries—and uses shame, fear, bribes, threats or manipulation to make the child cooperate. Sexual activity is intensified and repeated against the child.
3. **Secrecy:** The child is forced into keeping secrets.

### KEY POINTS ABOUT PEOPLE WHO SEXUALLY HURT CHILDREN

- People who sexually hurt children have a serious problem that must be stopped.
- A person can begin hurting a young child and continue hurting him or her into the teenage years or even adulthood.
- Many people who sexually hurt children have themselves also been abused.
- Children can be sexually hurt by both males and females; males are most often the sexual offenders.
- Children are often sexually hurt by someone they know well and trust: family members, neighbours.
- Treatment for people who hurt children sexually is absolutely necessary.
- The success of treatments varies for each person; the level of re-offending continues to be high for sexual offenders.
- The main goals of treatment are for people who hurt children to learn to choose not to abuse, and to control their violent and deviant behaviour.



# HANDLING DISCLOSURES OF VIOLENCE

*Silence will not cure a disease. On the contrary, it will make it worse.*

Leo Tolstoy

## KEY POINTS

- All adults have a responsibility to know the steps that should be taken to support children and get them help when they disclose about violence.
- Abuse is rarely disclosed; children often do not talk to anyone about their abuse due to fear, denial, embarrassment and shame.
- When disclosures occur, adults have a responsibility to ACT: **A**cknowledge the child's situation and feelings and **A**ccess support and help; **C**omfort the child and **C**arefully listen to the child; and **T**ake notes and **T**ake action by reporting the abuse immediately.
- How a disclosure is handled can influence the level of trauma experienced by a hurt child.
- Although children have vulnerabilities, they also have resiliency—the ability to cope and “bounce back” from traumatic events.

# HANDLING DISCLOSURES OF VIOLENCE

## WHY CHILDREN DON'T TELL

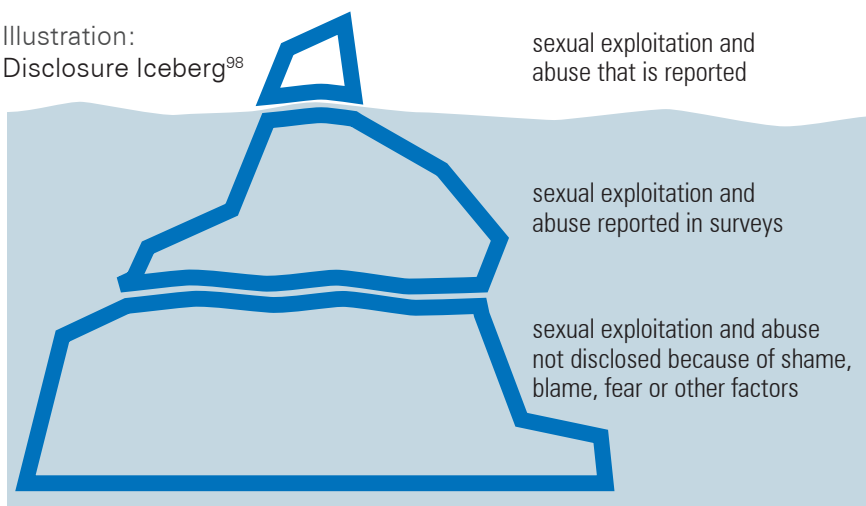
Children may not disclose violence because they may:

- be frightened
- try to pretend it did not happen
- be taught abuse is normal
- be in denial
- still like or love the person who has hurt them
- feel guilty; think it's their fault
- not know whom to tell
- not want to get into trouble
- be embarrassed and ashamed
- fear they will break up the family
- do not realize what happened was wrong.

We are at a disadvantage because of our age. Adults don't believe what we say when something like this happens. That's why we don't say anything.

15-year-old male

Illustration:  
Disclosure Iceberg<sup>98</sup>




Adapted from Krug, Dahlbert, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano, 2002

## TYPES OF DISCLOSURES

Violence against children can be disclosed accidentally or purposefully. Regardless of how it becomes known, whether through words, artwork or behaviour, disclosures are usually mixed with strong emotions—relief, guilt, fear and chaos—because now someone else knows the secret. However abuse is disclosed, it needs to be handled sensitively while following specific procedures.


### VERBAL DISCLOSURES

 Verbal or purposeful disclosure occurs *when a child decides to talk to someone about her or his abuse*. A child discloses for many reasons:

- to stop the abuse
- to gain more freedom
- to get back at the offender
- to protect other children from being victimized.

Children usually want the situation to change without confrontation, without outside interference, and often without separation from family or loved ones.

### NON-VERBAL DISCLOSURES

 Behaviours can have many meanings, and are the result of numerous factors. This complicates non-verbal disclosures as *observers try to make sense of what they are seeing, hearing or sensing*. Sometimes the behaviours signal abuse. The abuse may be discovered in a variety of ways:

- observation by a third party
- physical injury
- inappropriate behaviours
- chronic low self-esteem
- sexually transmitted infections or pregnancies.

### ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

Anonymous allegations may seem less believable than identifiable reports. No one wants to create rumours, especially when they might destroy a person's career or reputation. While it is important to use common sense in responding to rumours, it is equally important to listen to what children are saying, ask open-ended questions, and report when necessary. Many children have continued to suffer because no one filed an official report of alleged abuse.

## HANDLING DISCLOSURES

The way disclosures of violence are handled, is an important factor in determining the psychological impact on the child. Therefore, the person responding to the disclosure needs to follow clear steps while asking three basic questions:

1. What do I need to know?
2. What do I need to do?
3. When do I need to do it?

## RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

When abuse is suspected or when abuse is disclosed **all adults have a responsibility to ACT:**

**A**cknowledge the child's situation and feelings

Access support and help

**C**omfort the child and take him/her to a safe place

Carefully listen to what the child says

**T**ake notes and document what the child says and/or what you see

Take action—report the abuse immediately

### QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES—DO NOT “INTERVIEW”

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ✓ DO ask general, open-ended questions: “Do you want to tell me about that?”          | ✗ DO NOT ask leading questions like, “When, why, where, how did this happen? Who did this to you?” |
| ✓ DO state observations: “I see you have bruises on your legs.”                       | ✗ DO NOT draw conclusions like, “Have you been beaten?”  |
| ✓ DO validate feelings: “I see that you are upset.”                                   | ✗ DO NOT analyze through remarks like, “You must hate your father for doing that!”                 |
| ✓ DO express concern: “I need to know that you are safe; let’s try to get some help.” | ✗ DO NOT make promises such as, “Everything will be alright if you report.”                        |

I am only one; but I am still one. I cannot do everything, but I can still do something; I will not refuse to do something I can.

Helen Keller



## REPORTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Reporting violence against children can seem like an intimidating process. Most reports must be made by people who do not see themselves as experts in violence, so they may be tempted to “mind their own business” or “let the professionals deal with it.”

### QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

- What are the laws regarding protection of children against violence in your country/territory/location?
- What are the legal requirements for reporting violence against children?
- What are the procedures for making a report? What information is required?
- What are the formal support systems for reporting and handling violence against children? Do they include police, health and/or social services?
- What are the informal support systems for reporting and stopping violence against children? Do these systems complement formal systems, or substitute when the formal systems are lacking, weak or not trusted?
- Who is included in the informal systems—respected elders, village committees, religious leaders, women’s groups, children’s groups, others?
- How are formal and informal support systems accessed?
- If a child has medical needs, who can provide support?

## FALSE ALLEGATIONS

False allegations, which are very rare, are often confused with “unproven” or “unfounded” cases. Unproven cases do not produce enough information to permit a determination of fact. This can be influenced by a child’s lack of verbal or communication skills, communication disabilities, or by poor investigation techniques.

## RESILIENCY

### DEFINITION

**➤** Resiliency refers to *a person's capacity to adapt and remain strong when faced with challenges*. While all children live with some vulnerability, they also have the potential to help protect themselves from harm and to “bounce back” from adverse events; they have resiliency. It is essential that children participate in decisions to help keep them protected from violence and harm.

### FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RESILIENCY<sup>99</sup>

<p><b>INDIVIDUAL FACTORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ assertiveness</li> <li>▪ ability to solve problems</li> <li>▪ self-awareness</li> <li>▪ empathy</li> <li>▪ having goals and aspirations</li> <li>▪ sense of humour</li> </ul>	<p><b>COMMUNITY FACTORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ government support for children's safety, recreation, housing</li> <li>▪ access to school and education, information, and learning resources</li> <li>▪ safety and security</li> </ul>
<p><b>RELATIONSHIP FACTORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ presence of positive mentors and role models</li> <li>▪ social support</li> <li>▪ parental monitoring</li> <li>▪ friendships</li> </ul>	<p><b>CULTURAL FACTORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ tolerance for different beliefs</li> <li>▪ cultural and/or spiritual identification</li> </ul>



The bamboo that bends is stronger than the oak that resists.

Japanese proverb

## TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

All children who are hurt by violence need support and care. Support and care can come from family and members of the community; it may also come from professionals. It is the responsibility of adults to protect children from harm and to help them heal when they have been hurt.

*Children are betrayed every day by silence, inaction, and impunity. Teachers who have sexually assaulted their pupils continue to teach. Police officers who have tortured children before witnesses remain on duty. Orphanage staff who subject children to shocking levels of cruelty and neglect suffer no consequences. Too often, children are victimized twice: first by the initial abuse, and again by the failure of authorities to hold perpetrators accountable.*

Human Rights Watch<sup>100</sup>





# LAWS TO PROTECT CHILDREN

*In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private welfare institutions ... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.*

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3

## KEY POINTS

- There are international, regional and national laws that protect children from violence and abuse.
- Internationally, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* was introduced in 1989. The *Convention* specifically addresses the rights of children to be safe from sexual and other forms of abuse.
- Nationally, most countries have laws to protect children from different types of violence.

# INTERNATIONAL LAWS TO PROTECT CHILDREN

## UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Children are born with fundamental freedoms and the inherent rights of all people. These rights are not optional; every child everywhere is entitled to them because of his or her status as a human being. This is the basic premise of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. This *Convention* was adopted on November 20, 1989 and is now the most universally-ratified international convention in history.

The *Convention* outlines the many ways that societies are responsible for their children. The over-riding theme is the **best interest of the child**.

In 2002, the UN passed optional protocols on children in armed conflicts and on the sale of and use of children in any form of pornography, child labour and in the sex trade.

The vision of childhood that unites countries and peoples is at odds with the one that most children in the world actually experience. Into this gap between the ideal and the reality, between the *Convention* and the *convention*, more young lives plunge with every passing day. And with each child that falls into this chasm, a little more of the world's shared future is compromised.

UNICEF<sup>101</sup>



## KEY ARTICLES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

## ARTICLE SUMMARY

ARTICLE	SUMMARY
19	Protection from abuse and neglect: The State is to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, by parents or others, and to undertake prevention and treatment programs.
27	Standard of living: The State recognizes the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
34	Sexual exploitation: The State is to protect the child from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.
36	Other forms of exploitation: The State is to protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.
39	Rehabilitative care: The State is to take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts.

## OTHER ARTICLES THAT RELATE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

- Article 12: Child's right to be heard
- Article 21: Control of adoptions
- Article 24: Preventive and rehabilitative health care
- Article 25: Periodic review when in care of State
- Article 28: School discipline
- Article 32: Prevention of economic exploitation
- Article 35: Prevention of abduction, sale of, traffic in children
- Articles 37 & 40: Youth justice

It takes a whole village to raise a child.

African proverb

## ARTICLES ON PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## ARTICLE SUMMARY

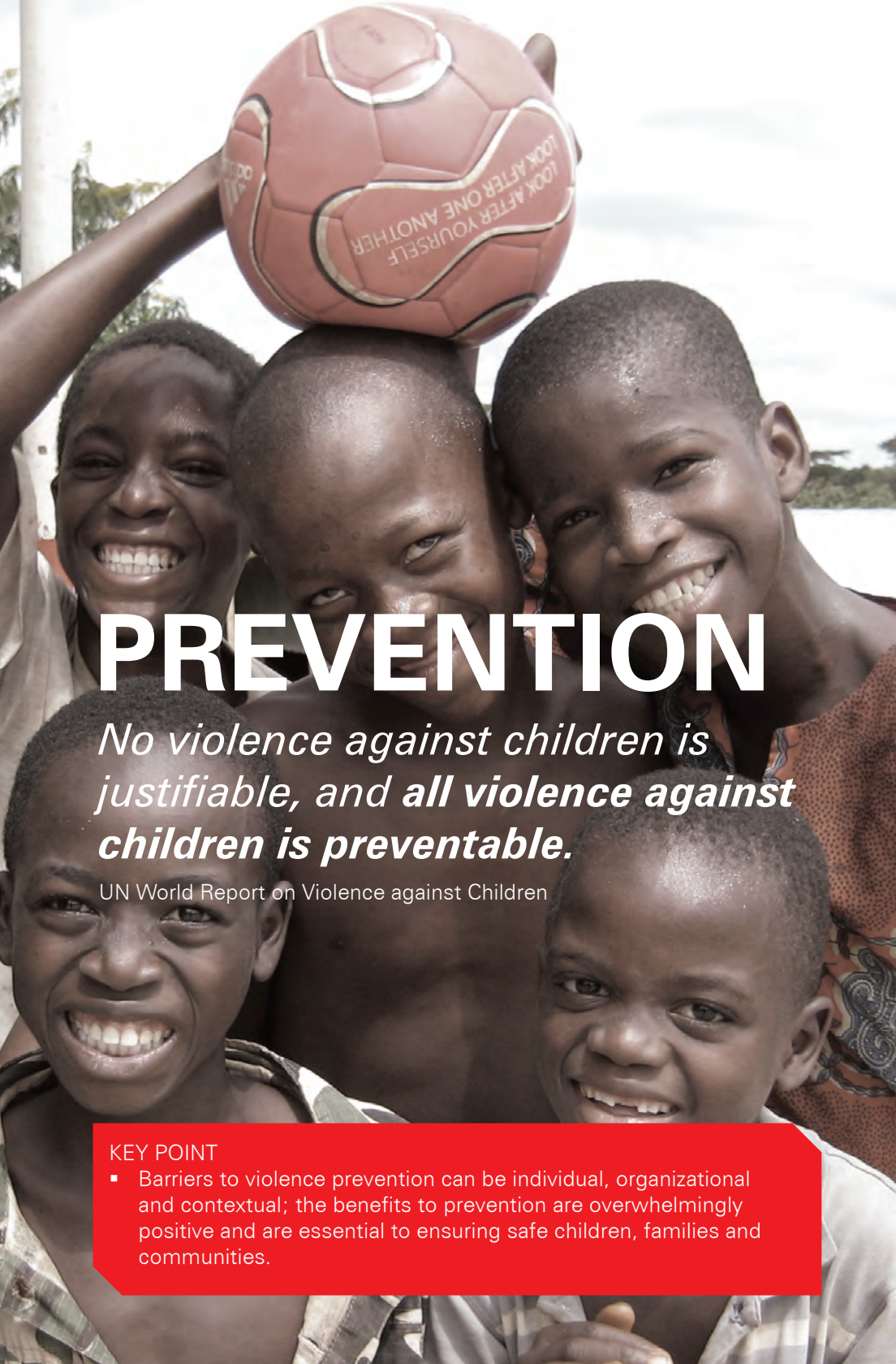
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9	Separation from parents: The child has the right to live with parents (unless this is deemed incompatible with the child's best interests), and the right to maintain contact with both parents.
14	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion: The State shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her rights in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.
18	Parental responsibilities: The State is to recognize the principle that both parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children; the State is to assist parents or guardians in this responsibility.
27	Standard of living: The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.

## OTHER INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS PROTECTING CHILDREN

- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948
- *Geneva Conventions*, 1949; *Additional Protocols*, 1977
- *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 1966
- *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 1966 (and Optional Protocol)
- *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination*, 1979
- *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, supplementing the *UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 2000
- *Resolutions 1261, 1265, 1314, 1325, 1379* of the Security Council
- *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2007





# PREVENTION

*No violence against children is justifiable, and all violence against children is preventable.*

UN World Report on Violence against Children

## KEY POINT

- Barriers to violence prevention can be individual, organizational and contextual; the benefits to prevention are overwhelmingly positive and are essential to ensuring safe children, families and communities.

# PREVENTION

## BARRIERS TO PREVENTION

There are many reasons why societies, communities, organizations and individuals have refused to address violence. These barriers may be numerous and occur at many levels.

### CONTEXTUAL BARRIERS

- diverse understanding of protection issues
- complex issue—children are at risk from a variety of people in different settings
- weak protection systems within communities
- many different social and cultural contexts

### ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS

- complex organizational systems
- child safety not prioritized
- overburdened staff
- funding

### INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS

- emotional issue
- lack of awareness/training
- inevitability myths
- denial or dismissal of issue:
  - “It’s not my problem.”
  - “This will open a ‘can of worms.’”
  - “It’s not a problem here.”
  - “It’s important but not a priority right now.”

## BENEFITS TO PREVENTION

- Children, families and communities are safer!!
- Economic and human costs are dramatically reduced.
- Risk management for organizations is achieved.
- Moral, ethical, and legal duty of care is met.
- Needs of the vulnerable are met.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Benjamin Franklin





A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a yellow and white saree, is seen from the back, writing on a wall with a red marker. The background shows a classroom with other people sitting at desks.

# TAKE ACTION

*Despite the fact that violence has always been present, the world does not have to accept it as an inevitable part of the human condition....**Violence can be prevented. This is not an article of faith, but a statement based on evidence.***

WHO<sup>102</sup>

## KEY POINTS

- Everyone has a role in preventing violence against children—everyone can take action.
- There are concrete actions people can do as individuals, within families, within organizations and within communities to prevent violence against children.

# TAKE ACTION

## INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Every person has a valuable role in helping to prevent violence against children. Some steps individuals can take include:

- Educate yourself on the issues. Information on preventing violence against children may be found in your local community, in a library, or online—there are many websites dedicated to the issues.
- Advocate for the safety of children in all settings—homes, schools, workplaces, institutions, communities—among your family, friends, colleagues, community and those who make laws.
- Encourage local media to highlight the issues.
- If you know or think a child is being hurt, ACT (for more information, see section on “Handling Disclosures of Violence”).

## CANADIAN RED CROSS VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The Canadian Red Cross through its RespectED: Violence & Abuse Prevention program has worked on preventing violence against children since 1984. These programs have reached over 4 million people in Canada. RespectED programs are now also being implemented by other National Societies in different parts of the world.

RespectED programs address violence against children, relationship violence, bullying and harassment, and help organizations create safe environments for children in their care.

RespectED programs for children, youth and adults are available in multiple languages, a variety of delivery formats (including in person and online) and are adaptable for local circumstances. To learn more, visit: [www.redcross.ca/RespectED](http://www.redcross.ca/RespectED).

*Education is a key agent of change capable of breaking the cycle of violence, not just against children but among adults, too. It can encourage children to learn self-respect, respect for others and how to express their feelings and negotiate for what they want without resorting to physical or psychological violence.*

UN World Report on Violence against Children<sup>103</sup>

## FAMILY LEVEL

Steps that families can take to prevent violence against children:

- Create safe environments free of violence. Parents and family members can help prevent violence against children by creating safe environments within the home that value respect, listening, constructive problem-solving, and care.
- Be a role model: behave in ways that you want your children and other family members to behave.
- Educate your children on violence prevention and their right to be safe.
- Let children know that you are there for them no matter what, and they can talk to you about any issues.

I need you to be all of who you are in order for me to be all that I am.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

## COMMUNITY/ORGANIZATION LEVEL

Steps that organizations can take:

- In your organization, create safe environments for children and youth using the “Ten Steps” approach. (See Appendix for a checklist for organizations.)

### TEN STEPS TO CREATING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. Understand the issue of violence against children.
2. Recognize the vulnerability and resilience of children.
3. Define protection instruments.
4. Build a prevention team.
5. Complete a risk assessment.
6. Develop policies and procedures.
7. Educate adults and children.
8. Respond to disclosures of violence and abuse.
9. Work together to meet challenges.
10. Maintain safe environments through monitoring and support.

For more information, visit: [www.redcross.ca/tensteps](http://www.redcross.ca/tensteps)

Steps that can be taken in a community:

- Advocate for the development and implementation of comprehensive community-based programs that target children and adults.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

1. Target both children and adults with prevention knowledge, tools and support.
2. Recognize that girls and boys can have unique vulnerabilities but also share many; both need prevention education.
3. Collaborate with children, adults and local agencies at all stages of the program development, implementation and monitoring; promote community ownership.
4. Consult with diverse groups to reflect diversity and ensure cultural appropriateness.
5. Use a rights-based framework that places the best interest of the child at its centre.
6. Utilize participatory, safe and fun approaches to prevention.
7. Have a comprehensive approach that supports the creation of protective systems, including policies and laws, in all places where children spend time.
8. Integrate child protection delivery into existing networks and systems—build on existing strengths and support systems.
9. Evaluate programs, including formal evaluative studies with academic partners.

We are the people we have been waiting for.

Alice Walker



**APPENDIX:**

CHECKLIST FOR ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Questions to Help Create Safe Environments for Children

	YES	NO	PARTIAL	COMMENTS
<b>DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE...</b>				
... a working group to lead the development and integration of child protection policies, procedures and systems? <sup>1</sup>				
... a Code of Conduct for all personnel? <sup>2</sup>				
... a Child Protection policy including appropriate and inappropriate touching of children? <sup>3</sup>				
... a safe, clear, confidential and accessible reporting structure for personnel?				
... a clear, well-defined investigation process?				
... support and monitoring systems to hold personnel accountable?				
<b>ARE PERSONNEL— (BOTH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS)—</b>				
... required to sign a Code of Conduct?				
... required to complete a full screening process? <sup>4</sup>				
... provided a copy of the Code of Conduct?				
... educated on the Code of Conduct and Child Protection policy?				

<sup>1</sup> Can be a working group or a designated focal point.

<sup>2</sup> The Code of Conduct must prohibit violence; discrimination based on age, gender, disability, religion/faith, sexuality, ethnicity, language, family status or political beliefs; and unsafe behaviours related to media and technology platforms. Rights and responsibilities need to be clearly defined including special provisions for the protection of children. Reporting structures need to be identified with a clear outline of disciplinary, grievance and appeals procedures.

<sup>3</sup> Build the Child Protection Policy on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

<sup>4</sup> Screening process should include an application form; clear position description; interview process with questions about working with children or vulnerable groups; personal reference checks; and a criminal record check or equivalent.

	YES	NO	PARTIAL	COMMENTS
<b>DISASTER POPULATIONS</b>				
Are communities provided information on creating and maintaining safe environments for children? <sup>5</sup>				
Do children and adults know where to report unsafe behaviours?				
<b>PARTNERS</b>				
Are partners provided information on the organization's Code of Conduct and Child Protection policies and procedures?				
Are partners required to sign agreements to adhere to the same Code of Conduct and Child Protection policy?				
<b>ARE PREMISES...</b>				
... assessed for areas where children may be isolated or at increased risk of harm?				
... used to visibly display information on safe environments?				
... kept safe with visitors' sign-in and/or visible identification?				

<sup>5</sup> Information must include prevention of all forms of violence against children.

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## RED CROSS RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT 7 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

### HUMANITY

The Red Cross endeavours to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, protecting life and health and ensuring respect for the human being.

### IMPARTIALITY

The Red Cross is guided solely by the needs of human beings and makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, or political opinions.

### NEUTRALITY

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature.

### INDEPENDENCE

The National Societies must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

### VOLUNTARY SERVICE

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

### UNITY

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

### UNIVERSALITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

*The Red Cross is a light in the darkness. It is our duty to see it does not go out.*

Albert Schweitzer

The hurt can stop ... violence against  
children can be prevented.