

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

REGIONAL CONSULTATION EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



United Nations Secretary-General's Study
on Violence against Children

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This is one of a series of booklets reporting on the regional consultations organized to contribute to the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.

In preparation for the meetings, all the regions researched the situation in their region and prepared a compilation and analysis of concluding observations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to country reports submitted by States Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Governments and others also provided information on programmes and projects designed to prevent violence against children, protect them and support those who had fallen victim to it. Governments additionally completed a questionnaire designed to elicit information on the legal frameworks in place to protect children from violence and sanction those responsible for it. Public submissions were sought and input from civil society organizations taken into account. Also, a number of countries held national consultations to prepare for the regional meeting and in many cases the national groups put in place mechanisms to continue efforts to combat violence against children as the Study process continues.

All this preparatory work allowed a clearer picture to be gained not only of what already exists in the areas of protection of children, prevention of violence and support to victims, but also where gaps and challenges remain.

In each region, the participants in the consultation – including children and young people themselves – developed an outcome document that in most cases was both a statement of intent and also a practical indication of actions that need to be taken. In some regions, countries also developed specific national action plans that they undertook to implement as a matter of priority.

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The full reports of the consultations, the background materials prepared for the meetings including government's completed questionnaires, the statements of the children and young people and the outcome documents are available on the Study website: www.violencestudy.org.

This report contains highlights of the regional consultations and summarizes the background information prepared. Sources and references are to be found in the original materials.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the UN Study Secretariat or the regional consultation partners concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The Eastern and Southern Africa regional preparatory consultation

Three hundred and thirteen people from 22 different countries came together in Johannesburg, South Africa, in July 2005 for the Eastern and Southern Africa regional preparatory consultation on violence against children. One of the children summed up in a poem the urgency of this meeting, which aimed to better understand the violence children face and what must be done to end it. "What is a joy of childhood when children live in fear/Of monsters who are not fairytales, but people who are dear?" the poem begins. It ends with an important reminder for all those who work to tackle the problem: "Listen to the children of this land/For we are praying, lifting our voices and our eyes".

"What is a joy of childhood when children live in fear of monsters who are not fairytales, but people who are dear?"

This meeting was just one stage in a rich process of providing information to the United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children all over the world. In the first stage, the countries of the region completed questionnaires sent out to all governments. Angola, Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia had already sent in their answers

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before the meeting; Botswana, Burundi, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somali, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe planned to do so before the end of 2005. National meetings were also held in some countries -- something that happened all across the globe in 2005 – and in this region the Indian Ocean countries held a subregional meeting, resulting in a Final Declaration from the participants on the elimination of violence against children in the Indian Ocean.

When they came together as a region, the countries felt it was important to also invite to the consultation bodies that are already in place to support and promote regional cooperation. The African Union (AU) was considered particularly important and so the AU Labour and Social Affairs Commission sent a representative to the meeting.

The consultation gave an opportunity to gather information on violence against children in the countries of Eastern and Southern Africa, to share ideas that have been tried to stop violence and to protect children, and to develop recommendations to feed into the global Study.

This would not have been possible without the knowledge and ideas of the 56 children who also met in Johannesburg in the days before the preparatory consultation and who, led by youth facilitators, identified and defined the types of violence children face, strategies they use to address it and ideas for what might be done in the future. The children and young people from 18 countries developed their own recommendations that were then taken into account in the final recommendations.

Here are some of the things the children said:

On violence in the family:

- I think that all children that are being violated at home or in the family should talk to an adult or social worker about their problems, then those people should report to the government.
- Some of our parents fight in front of us, causing us a lot of pain and distress. Some of our parents always come home drunk and do not care for our physical, emotional and nutritional needs. Some children are looking after their parents and siblings because their parents are not responsible.

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- Children run away from home because of neglect. It is better to live on the streets than to live at home with bad parents.
- What can be done? Governments should introduce stiffer punishments for those who abuse children.

On violence in schools:

- One of the children informed us that the headmaster says they should be beaten 20 strokes on their backs as a form of punishment when they do something wrong. This is an example of physical abuse.
- Corporal punishment should be banned. Governments should enforce the law to forbid corporal punishment and provide a sentence for the people that break the law. We recommend that teachers stop immediately hitting children at school for any reason.
- The government should tell all teachers who do violence they should not come back to school ever.
- The Department of Education should find a way to punish children who bully other children, because their parents do not always respond when they are called to the school.
- Governments should put strict measures and should monitor teachers so that teachers who fall in love with children or who rape should be sacked instead of being transferred.

On violence in institutions:

- Children must live in a place where they feel safe and at home.
- Police must stop punishment of children.
- Governments should end sexual abuse in institutions by dealing with the culprits accordingly, for example by jailing them for the rest of their life so that it gives an example to those with intention to do it.
- Governments should provide legal assistance for children and train magistrates and court clerks who are sensitive to children's needs.

On violence in the workplace:

- Children as young as seven years old are taken to the battlefield. Children crush stones, work as domestic workers and prostitutes. They also work on farms – long hours and get paid very little or nothing at all.

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- Children deserve to be treated as equals in the workplace and those who abuse us should be severely punished. Equality and quality in the workplace is what children want.
- The government should ensure that the workplace is safe and healthy.
- Governments should make all children go to school so that no-one works.

On what children do to protect themselves and each other:

- Children start support groups/clubs at school with girls and boys who have been abused.
- Many children walk in groups with other children or with adults.
- When we contact the authorities, they don't always listen.

Dr Jean Benjamin, Deputy Minister of Social Development for South Africa, said that the rate of violence against children is escalating and that it is the duty of Africans themselves to decide what to do about it. She challenged everyone to find practical answers to the problem.

Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the Independent Expert appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General to head the Study on Violence against Children, agreed that violence is common even though publicly people disapprove of it. He noted that children suffer in silence from all sorts of violence, for example sexual abuse, but that their suffering is not in plain view like other, culturally accepted forms of violence, like corporal punishment. Professor Pinheiro told the delegates that one of the children he had met in Europe reminded him that children can see things that adults cannot, and that seeking out children's views is very important.

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Per Engebak, who spoke on behalf of the three United Nations agencies involved in putting the Study together, reminded everyone of the important link between violence and HIV/AIDS in Eastern and Southern Africa. "For children in this region," he said, "sexual abuse doesn't just hurt. It is often a death sentence". The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

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and the World Health Organization (WHO) have identified the Study as an important opportunity to “gather evidence, set standards, provide guidelines, advocate and leverage resources to stop violence against children”.

Violence against Children in Eastern and Southern Africa

Children in Eastern and Southern Africa face a number of different forms of violence in their daily lives. Sadly, they too often experience violence in their own homes, not only when parents or others in the family are violent towards each other, but also as victims of violence themselves.

Some of these forms of violence are universally acknowledged as wrong: sexual abuse of a child by someone in the family circle, for example, is considered everywhere as a heinous crime against the child. Some forms of violence, though, are not even considered violent: when parents use physical punishment against a child, for example, or screaming and use of humiliation as a form of ‘discipline’, the child feels the impact of these as strongly as any more commonly recognized forms of violence. The memories of childhood beatings and severe scoldings stay with them for a long time – not as a good lesson they learned, but as pain and humiliation and a barrier of violence between them and the people they look to for care and protection.

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All forms of violence that happen in the home environment are under-reported. This is not only because they happen in the privacy of the home and so ‘invisibly’. It is also because, even when they know that children are on the receiving end of violent acts, people are reluctant to do anything about it or report it to anyone else. The ‘sanctity of the home’ and the ‘privacy of the family’ are poor excuses for allowing a child to suffer.

Using violence as a way of ‘teaching’ the child does not only happen in the home. It is common in schools throughout Eastern and Southern Africa, as in other parts of the world, even where it is banned in law. The

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truth is that people who have a position of responsibility over the child – whether as a parent, a teacher or some other carer – too often abuse that position and assert their ‘superiority’ by using violence against the child. Far from being ‘educational’ in the sense that parents and teachers claim it to be, violence in the guise of ‘education’ only teaches the child that it is legitimate to inflict violence on a weaker person. And the cycle of violence continues.

The overwhelming effects of HIV/AIDS in Africa have left children in this region vulnerable to violence. More than 8.2 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS. Some have been left in the care of others who are not able to cope and who may take them out of school and put them to work.

The full impact of HIV/AIDS has not yet been felt; the children of this region will continue to be at risk of violence, abuse and exploitation for many years to come. They must be protected at all costs.

Some live on the streets, eking out a living from small jobs like running errands or selling cigarettes. Some children take on the responsibilities of head of the household, caring for their younger brothers and sisters (and sometimes a sick parent), earning the money they need to survive. And the full impact of HIV/AIDS has not yet been felt; the children of this region will continue to be at risk of violence, abuse and exploitation for many years to come. They must be protected at all costs.

AIDS carries another risk for children, especially girls. Whether because they have heard the myth that sex with a virgin child can ‘cure’ AIDS, or because they seek out a sexual partner they think is less likely to be HIV-positive, some adults in this region abuse children for sex. Vulnerable children seeking a way to survive may also turn to transactional sex or commercial sex because they see no other way to put food on the table.

Sexual abuse and exploitation are by definition violent. Children are not ready for sexual activity: they tear more easily and so are at high risk of becoming infected. Girls especially may suffer long-term health problems that hinder their chances of having children. Children are generally too small and weak to fend off stronger adults. And in addition to the physical damage they suffer, children abused and exploited for sex can suffer long-term psychological harm, unable to build relationships of trust with others as they grow into adulthood and, as they understand better what has been done to them, ashamed and disgusted, at risk of harming themselves.

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Sexual violence also occurs in schools in Eastern and Southern Africa. Older children may force themselves on younger students, but more often it is the teacher who targets a younger child, usually a girl. He may threaten her with violence or shame, or sometimes just with low marks and failure. It is not surprising, therefore, that many girls, who are victimised drop out of school.

Respect for age-old traditions and customs is sometimes good and can help children. But accepting customs without questioning them can be dangerous too, wherever they exist.

Sexual abuse and exploitation partly explain why the rate of under-age pregnancy is high in the region, but there are other causes too. One is the tradition of marrying off girls at a very young age, even though the age of marriage has been fixed in law in many

countries. Where penal law and customary law co-exist, it is often customary law that wins out, not least because communities accept it and no-one looks upon it as potentially harmful to children's well-being.

Respect for age-old traditions and customs is sometimes good and can help children. In traditional African societies, for example, children are looked upon as a 'gift' to be nurtured and protected. But accepting customs without questioning them can be dangerous too, wherever they exist.

Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is also sometimes called 'cutting', is a good example of this. FGM is practiced in some countries of Eastern and Southern Africa, including in Ethiopia (where the prevalence among women aged 15-49 is 80%), Eritrea (89%), Kenya (32%), and Tanzania (18%), and it can take place at an early age. In Eritrea, for example, 89 per cent of girls are subjected to cutting before they have reached the age of seven. It happens because of tradition: it has no medical value, no monetary or spiritual worth, and the social benefits that are promoted, are questionable. Cutting a girl child's genitals and sewing her vagina almost closed is violent in itself and carries enormous risks for the girl: bleeding, infection and death can and do happen. It also has long-term repercussions on the girl's physical and psychological health. Sadly, FGM is so widespread that in some communities girls face discrimination if they have not been subjected to this violent procedure and so it continues. The only way to deal with it is to ban it completely and to promote collective abandonment of the practice. The ritual, unregulated circumcision of boys is less rarely mentioned but is also harmful when done under unsafe conditions.

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In a number of countries in this region – Angola, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda – the aftermath of prolonged civil war has left children at high risk of abuse and exploitation. Many children were and continue to be recruited into the conflict as child soldiers or to provide services to soldiers – as couriers, look-outs, servants or, in the case of girls, as ‘wives’, taking on household tasks and providing sex. These children have experienced violence in its most severe forms and need long-term support to overcome this.

Many children, too, have been separated from their families, have lost families or are living still as refugees in the region. Many of these children, especially orphans, have been thrust into taking adult responsibility and have to find a way to survive. They are at the mercy of those who would exploit this for their own profit: unscrupulous employers, abusers and increasingly traffickers and those who help them to persuade or coerce children into relocating, ostensibly to find work or a better way of life but in reality into a life of extreme abuse and exploitation. Some 200,000 children in Burundi alone, for example, live in camps for displaced people. A further 180,000 live in border refugee camps in Tanzania.

Why does violence occur?

There are some obvious answers to why violence against children happens, although none of these are good reasons. Nothing justifies violence against children.

A number of factors are known to put children at risk. When families are struggling to survive, children are often seen as an exploitable commodity: they are put to work or sent away or may themselves escape onto the streets. Stresses on the family can tip parents over the edge and end up in violence within the family, not only against the child but often against the mother too, or between the parents. The same thing happens within a community, where tensions build up and violence breaks out. At its most extreme, this can become conflict or persecution of one group by another, sometimes ending in mass killing or chasing out whole populations.

A breakdown in the family’s traditional protection system, or the same at community level, means that children’s vulnerability to abuse and exploitation is increased. If governments or social organizations do not step in to rebuild those systems or replace them, even temporarily, with other means of protection, then children may fall victim to violence.

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Temporary forms of protection can, in turn, become places where violence occurs if they are not strictly regulated and monitored. Children in institutions are frequently also victims of violence at the hands of those who are supposed to take care of them. The same is true of children in police custody, whether or not they have actually done anything wrong.

In all of these situations, the reason why the child becomes a victim of someone else's anger, desire, perversion, ignorance or malice is because that person does not understand or respect the fact that children are full human beings with full human rights. They also have some special rights that are theirs because they are children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) sets out these rights and the responsibilities of adults to protect and promote them. They cover all the things a child needs to prosper, including good health, education, family care, freedom from exploitation and much more. They also include the right to be protected from all forms of violence.

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What is clear in Eastern and Southern Africa is that, in almost all the countries in the region, many people believe that children traditionally are to be submissive to adults and discussion about their rights is seen as 'foreign'. Participants at the consultation considered the role that the legacy of colonial domination plays in this hierarchical view

of social structures. In societies which have grown with a legacy of master/servant, superior/inferior hierarchies, it is not surprising that adults attempt to impose their will on children – whether in the home, in school, in an institutional setting, in the workplace or generally just in the community – and that they do this in whichever way they think fit, including by using violence.

What is being done to stop violence against children?

If violence against children is going to end, then there must be a clear signal from governments that it is wrong and that it will not be tolerated in any form. This sounds simple enough, but it involves two important steps:

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putting in place clear, appropriate and comprehensive laws that take into consideration universally accepted standards, and then making sure that people know that these exist and that they will be vigorously enforced. Laws that are not followed through do not protect children.

Governments in Eastern and Southern Africa have been diligent in participating in international agreements designed to guide countries in incorporating universally accepted minimum standards into their national laws. All the countries in the region except Somalia have ratified the CRC and so agreed that children have rights and that adults have a duty to protect and promote them. In the absence of a unified national government, Somalia has not been in a position to ratify the CRC but the country has nevertheless signed the Convention as a first step to ratifying it.

Most of the countries have also signed up to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, an important regional commitment to protecting children and guaranteeing their rights. Burundi and Sudan have not yet signed the Charter.

Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan are among the very few countries in the world not to have adopted ILO Convention No. 182 (1999) on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Under this treaty, countries commit themselves to moving swiftly to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. These include slavery or equivalents such as forced labour or debt bondage; child prostitution and pornography; recruitment into armed conflict; exploitation in illicit activities such as drug running; any labour that has involved trafficking of a child; and any labour that is hazardous to the child's health, safety or morals. For Convention No.182 to be fully effective, it is also important that every country sets a minimum age for work and, indeed, for any law to be meaningful, it is vital that countries ensure that all children are registered at birth so that their age can be known.

Not all the countries in the region have gone onto the next stage, which is bringing national laws into conformity with international agreements. In some countries this is almost automatic. For example the Ethiopian Constitution says that all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are automatically an integral part of the law of the land. In other countries there is a process in place for that to happen – for example in South Africa international treaties have to be presented for parliamentary approval.

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In most countries, though, international agreements have to be ‘domesticated’, that is to say that it is necessary to review national laws and change them or introduce new laws that give effect to the international standards. This has not always been done and, although most of the countries in the region are in the process of reviewing their laws, there is a long way to go before children of the region are fully protected under the law.

Some important legislation has been put in place, though, in recent times. In Lesotho, for example, the Sexual Offences Act of 2003 is aimed at combating sexual violence and prescribing appropriate sentences for those who commit it. It modernizes and simplifies earlier legislation and in particular includes provisions to protect vulnerable people, especially children, the elderly and disabled people. The Act makes it unlawful not to report a case of child sexual abuse when it is known.

Namibia has taken the important step of abolishing marriage or family relationship as a defence to charges of rape. This is important because it means that a man cannot just marry a girl he has raped and think he is somehow protected from prosecution.

In relation to commercial sexual exploitation of children, South Africa has made it a criminal offence for anyone to be involved in exploiting a child for sex and for failing to report it to the police. The 1998 Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act of Tanzania makes it an offence to permit a child to participate in any form of sexual activity and also addresses sexual abuse, assault and rape. A person who sexually abuses a child under the age of 15 is liable to imprisonment for not less than 20 years. Uganda has made ‘defilement’ a capital offence. This has been found in many countries’ experience to discourage reporting by families and indeed children, since few people want to take the risk of reporting an abuser who might then face the death penalty.

While most countries are ready to legislate against sexual violence, there is much more controversy surrounding the status of corporal punishment. Some countries not only tolerate it but sanction it in law. In Botswana, for example, The Education Act (Corporal Punishment) Regulations state that corporal punishment is constitutional and therefore lawful as a way of punishing a child at school and in the home, even though some conditions are applied (for example at school only a light cane and no more than 10 strokes can be used).

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In Ethiopia, in contrast, a Ministry of Education directive has specifically forbidden corporal punishment in schools, and the same applies since 2001 in Kenya. In Malawi corporal punishment is prohibited by the Teachers' Code of Conduct and a number of other countries have outlawed corporal punishment through codes, directives or policy papers. In reality, however, there is almost no monitoring of what happens in schools, children have no means to seek redress when they are punished, and the policy remains distant from the practice.

In an important initiative, the Government of Zambia consulted children themselves when reviewing the Constitution of that country. Children were invited to make submissions that will be taken into account as the review process gets under way.

Once laws are in place, they have to be enforced. This is too often not the case. In some countries, though, governments have attempted to move to action through the development of National Plans of Action (NPAs) for children or on specific issues such as orphans and vulnerable children, trafficking or child labour. What NPAs do is bring together the many different groups that work for children, so that they can decide what actions need to be taken as a matter of priority and discuss who will be best placed to take on the different responsibilities. In many instances, developing an NPA also involves setting up or nominating some sort of coordinating structure to oversee it. This might be a government ministry that takes on the task, or it might be a working group with representatives from several ministries or it could be a completely new grouping altogether.

In Angola, for example, there is a Post-conflict National Strategy for Children that includes, among other things, plans for birth registration, family tracing and reunification and the creation of child-friendly spaces to protect children. Botswana is developing the second phase of its National Programme of Action for the Children of Botswana which will run until 2013 and which looks at the needs of particularly vulnerable children including those on the streets, working children, children with disabilities and orphans.

Lesotho has revised its legislation to protect children more comprehensively and has created a Child and Gender Protection Unit in police stations to respond to increasing cases of abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence against children and young people. Adolescent Health Corners have been opened in most government and church hospitals to pay particular attention to the needs of adolescents.

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Malawi received funds over five years to implement its NPA against Child Abuse and set up a Taskforce on Children and Violence to coordinate those involved. These included government ministries, NGOs, the Malawi Human Rights Commission and others.

In Namibia, police in all 13 political regions have a Women and Child Protection Unit and, where such units do not exist, the public can report directly to any charge office of the police. There are efforts to train a focal point in each charge office to deal with issues related to violence against children and women. This is particularly important in the light of concerns raised at the regional consultation that throughout the region there is a growing lack of confidence in law enforcement and justice systems.

The NPAs are just some examples of what is often known as ‘platform actions’ on behalf of children – they are designed to make sure that all other actions have a solid base and that the state is sending out clear signals that it takes abuse, neglect and violence against children seriously.

In practice, the challenge is following through: when laws are in place, they have to be applied consistently and across the board. Structures that are established have to have sufficient resources including trained staff and, as staff members move on, new people have to be trained to replace them. NPAs must put less emphasis on the P (plan) and more on the A (action) and this, too, takes resources and follow-through.

The United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children is a major opportunity for all countries in all regions to do this.

Violence in the home and family

There is no way of knowing exactly how many children suffer violence in their homes at the hands of parents, guardians or other relatives or members of their close circle. One of the biggest problems in gathering data on this is that most people, including the police and authorities, look upon the home as a private domain where other people should not interfere. They see violence as ‘family business’ and turn a blind eye to it.

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It is also true that much of the violence that affects children in the home and family is not really considered to be violence at all. For example, if a parent hits a child who does something wrong, this is put under the heading of discipline, or education, or even good for the child's future. Those who say these things would not feel the same way if an adult hit another adult who did something wrong. Somehow they see children as less important human beings or sometimes not human beings at all, but just the beginning of something that will one day, in adulthood, become a real person.

So physical discipline of children is seen throughout the region as a necessary element of childrearing. Most parents say that they were punished and 'turned out all right' so their child will also survive the beatings. But children say very different things: they are deeply hurt by violence inflicted on them by the people they want to trust and love.

Even if the punishment is not physically severe, the emotional harm on the child can be serious. Children remember the names they are called, the humiliation that is heaped upon them and the feeling of helplessness they have when they do not live up to family expectations. A girl told the young people meeting in Johannesburg that she pleaded for forgiveness from her stepmother but was still

beaten: "My stepmother would beat me. In the afternoon, after I got home from school. She said I did something but I didn't do it. She would blame me. She would beat me with a stick on my legs and here, with a long stick. The skin would get cut and I would bleed. I used to cry. I asked her to stop. I would apologize. I said I was sorry I did those things. But I hadn't done anything." This girl is eight years old.

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Most of the countries in this region do not yet have laws banning corporal punishment of children. Even those that do find it difficult to implement the law when such punishment is so widely accepted and no-one reports it when it happens. Most of the countries do, on the other hand, have legislation on child sexual abuse, often as part of the penal code. Still children are sexually abused by family members – usually a father or stepfather, an older brother or another male member of the family. Sexual abuse is always a terrible, violent act against a child:

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it is physically and psychologically damaging and in every country most people find it completely unacceptable. However when a child is abused in their family environment by people they love and trust, it is particularly destructive. Abused children often grow into adults who find it difficult to trust other people, so that they are even more alone in their grief. They may avoid making friends or finding a life partner because they cannot cope with the thought of intimacy. Sometimes they become self-destructive and try to hurt themselves. Abused children need long-term support so that they can rebuild their trust and learn to live again.

Violence in institutions

To avoid violence in the home, some children run away and seek out a life on the streets, or they may be taken from the family into some form of alternative environment such as a children's home, halfway house or group residence.

Private care institutions are rarely inspected and the well-being of children in them is not monitored. There have been many reports of children being abused in institutions and even of deaths.

Most of the countries in Eastern and Southern Africa have created a system of institutions for children who need care outside their family. In South Africa, for example, there are 'places of safety' for children who are removed from their families because of abuse or neglect. It is clear, though, that

most countries are struggling to fund such facilities and to ensure that they are properly set up and inspected. These institutions need trained staff, too, so that the children who live in them, already vulnerable and often victims of violence, get the very best care and attention available.

In reality what happens when governments do not provide the facilities, systems and personnel needed for alternative care institutions, is that private organizations step in and set them up. This is not necessarily a bad thing but in practice private care institutions are rarely inspected and the well-being of children in them is not monitored. There have been many reports of children being abused in institutions and even of deaths.

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The violence that exists in the home, in fact, may be simply transferred to the institution: physical and psychological punishment, neglect, exploitation of the child by putting her or him to work, and sexual harassment or abuse. This, too, reflects total denial of the rights of children to live a life free from abuse, exploitation and violence. It is also proof again of social tolerance of violence against children and the belief that, somehow, they are lesser beings than the adults who have responsibility for them.

When sexual abuse of children is reported, wherever it has taken place, it often happens that the child's family is coerced into using customary settlements rather than going through the courts. In Somalia, for example, the preferred method of justice is compensation. Money or cows will be offered, depending on how serious the violation has been, and this is seen as compensating for the child's suffering. The same practice is reported as common in Botswana, Comoros, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Sudan and Zambia.

The issue of violence against children in institutions also includes children who are in police custody or in the justice system. Most countries in the region have legislation relating to juvenile justice systems and are intended to ensure that children's rights are protected when they come into conflict with the law. In practice, however, financial and other constraints often mean that these systems do not function well.

Most countries in the region do not allow capital punishment for those who were under the age of 18 when they committed an offence and most do not allow for life imprisonment for children. There is thus some sense that children must be helped to find 'a way out' and rebuild their lives. There is little in place to help them do this, however, and too often children who are in custody or in jail are kept alongside adult prisoners, sometimes hard-line criminals. Most countries call for separate facilities for children but this is rare and the facilities simply do not exist. In the company of adult offenders, not only do children risk learning all the wrong lessons, they also are vulnerable to violence and abuse.

Many countries do allow corporal punishment of children who have committed offences, including lashings and strokes of the cane. Tanzania, Malawi, Ethiopia and Botswana all allow corporal punishment.

All the children who find themselves in custody, of course, have not necessarily done anything wrong. Even when they are just under investigation or in pre-trial detention, though, they may be held with adult offenders,

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or they may suffer beatings and verbal thrashings from the police. Children may also be accused of wrongdoing by their parents; in Rwanda, provisions exist for a child to be committed to ‘re-education’ centres if parents can show serious dissatisfaction with the child’s behaviour. Children who live or work on the streets are arbitrarily picked up as vagrants even when they have committed absolutely no offence.

Violence against children in the community

Street children are a common sight in almost all the countries of Eastern and Southern Africa. They may have run away from home and live on the streets or they may work on the streets instead of going to school and take any money they earn home at night. Many younger children enter into informal work on the streets to help support their families, especially as the impact of HIV/AIDS takes its toll and in the wake of conflict that has decimated family structures.

Although there is very little reliable information available on the lives of children on the streets of the region, it is known that they are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, gang violence and police brutality. As more and more children move onto the streets, authorities in the region, as in other regions, have struggled with how to deal with this and, by default, often just round up the children and put them into detention. Often in the course of this they are treated violently. And it is not only the police who use force against the children: ordinary people who see them on the streets look upon them as criminals and as a nuisance and may abuse them and mistreat them.

While gangs can and do offer some forms of protection, they are also ‘mini communities’ in which violence is often used to define hierarchies in which the strong lead the pack and the weaker – usually younger – children are kept submissive through force.

Often to protect themselves, children living or working on the streets will form themselves into gangs or join gangs that already exist. There is little information on the gang phenomenon in this region. While gangs can and do offer some forms of protection, they are also ‘mini communities’ in which violence is often used to define hierarchies in which the strong lead

the pack and the weaker – usually younger – children are kept submissive through force.

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Violence in schools

The links between education and violence are complex and many. Educating parents and all those who have a responsibility to protect children – teachers, social workers, law enforcement agents, the judiciary, government agencies and civil society organizations – on the rights of the child is vital. It is only by tackling ignorance of and prejudice against children's rights head-on that people's attitudes towards children and ultimately their behaviour can be changed.

It is also clear that, when they are educated about human rights and in particular about their own special rights, children have a better chance of growing up respecting others and in particular understanding that adults have a duty of care to children.

Education is more generally of utmost importance to children so that they are prepared for all the challenges life will bring and so that they can earn a decent income and secure a better standard of living for themselves and their families and, in turn, their own children.

It is important, in short, that children should go to school. There they should not only be able to learn but also to feel safe and experience first-hand the respect and protection that has been promised to them.

This is not always what they find. Violence in school is a major concern in Eastern and Southern Africa and there are few laws or policies in place to deal with it. Sexual violence inflicted by teachers is not uncommon. Girls are subjected to violence, harassment and exploitation from teachers and other students. Sometimes teachers coerce girls into sex by threatening to give them bad grades, abusing their position of responsibility. Sometimes they use physical force. In some countries if girls become pregnant while at school, they are expelled and not allowed to return after the birth of their child, so that their future is doubly compromised. This is the case in Botswana and Tanzania. In Zambia, in contrast, girls who become pregnant are given leave of absence and allowed back to school. Defilement and sexual abuse are seen as very serious offences by courts of law and now attract very stiff punishments up to life imprisonment, for instance in the case of defilement.

In Malawi, girls who fall pregnant by a teacher are often forced to marry him. Studies of schools in South Africa, Kenya and Zambia have shown that some girls drop out of school to avoid harassment.

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Bullying is also a problem in many countries as children learn that they can impose their will on other students by intimidating them, threatening them or even inflicting violence on them. A number of governments in the region have attempted to address this but it remains a big challenge.

Beating a student, subjecting them to humiliation, forcing them to suffer in other ways, is violence pure and simple. And far from being a way of helping children to learn, it just teaches them fear and more violence.

It is particularly difficult to deal with when teachers themselves use violence as a way to impose their will. Such people call this ‘discipline’ and many parents and indeed children themselves accept it as such, but beating a student, subjecting them to humiliation, forcing them to suffer in other ways, is violence pure and simple. And far from being a

way of helping children to learn, it just teaches them fear and more violence. One 15 year-old boy related how teachers punish children in his school. Apart from using the cane on them, teachers make them sit with a blanket over their head in the searing heat, kneel with their heads under the desk while they are hit with a pipe, or they force them to carry out heavy, dangerous tasks such as pulling out tree trunks.

Violence against children in workplaces

Children are obliged to do onerous tasks when they enter the world of work at a young age, too. Once children are put to work, they are in many ways treated like adults; no concessions are made for their immaturity, their weaker physical powers or their lack of experience. As a result, when they do not live up to the expectations of their employers or co-workers, they are often looked upon as lazy or unwilling and are punished. They may be slapped or screamed at. Sometimes they are deprived of food, made to do even more miserable tasks, or not paid for the work they have done.

On the other hand, sometimes children are exploited because of the very fact that they are not adults: children are made to crawl into tight spaces, for example, where adults could not go. They are sent along tunnels and down shafts. They are given tasks that require delicate or small fingers, often to the detriment of their vision.

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These hazards face children even when they are working ‘legally’, that is to say they have reached the legal minimum age for work in their country. Children are rarely given the labour rights that adults have access to (although of course not all adults are given these rights either). They are paid less, work long hours, endure difficult conditions and, because they are children, are beaten and mistreated if they complain. Here, as in so many other situations, violence against children is seen as ‘legitimate’ by adults who look upon them as inferior beings with inferior rights.

In addition to the violence meted out to working children, there are children who are below the minimum working age and should not be working at all but who, for a variety of reasons, are put to work. Orphans, children in child-headed households, children with no family support, children from families that expect them to contribute to the family income, and children whose families or acquaintances simply set out to exploit them and profit from their labour, are taken out of school (or never sent there in the first place) and sent into child labour.

Some people consider that child labour is, as a matter of definition, a form of violence. It deprives children of an education, puts them into situations in which they are vulnerable to abuse of many kinds, and is often detrimental to their health. Where children are in one of the worst forms of child labour, they must be withdrawn immediately and long-term plans put in place to help them to survive and rebuild their lives. But the reality of most child labour is that it is seen as ‘inevitable’ and even ‘desirable’ by families and communities who struggle to put food on the table or where, traditionally, children have worked alongside adults. In Ethiopia, for example, only 40 per cent children aged 5 to 17 were in school in 2001. Some 85 per cent of the country’s children were engaged in ‘productive’ or ‘housekeeping’ activity and the majority of children in rural areas, some 89 per cent, were working in agricultural or related activities such as herding cattle and helping adults in farming. More than 90 per cent of all working children were unpaid family workers.

One very common form of child labour in Eastern and Southern Africa is child domestic labour. Girls and sometimes boys are sent, even at an early age, to work in the homes of relatives or other families as domestic servants. These invisible children, hidden away from public scrutiny in someone’s home, may

Girls and sometimes boys are sent at a very early age to work in the homes of other families where they are considered a servant, a piece of household equipment that needs to be maintained but to which no duty of care applies.

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be as young as seven or eight years of age and may be expected to work long hours in a day. They are the first to rise in the morning to prepare food for the family and are last to go to bed at night after they have cleaned up, looked after old and young family members, and done any other outstanding chores. Even then they may not sleep peacefully because many children are abused by men in the family or by other domestic helpers.

The woman of the household, however, is the one most likely to inflict systematic violence on the child who does her work. Children report that they are beaten, burned and screamed at. Although not all children in domestic labour are treated this badly, most have to carry heavy loads, use sharp knives, work with boiling liquids and dangerous cleaning products in confined, hot, badly ventilated spaces. And in return for their efforts they are given a place to sleep and food to eat. Very few receive any payment at all.

The International Labour Organization's International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour, ILO-IPEC, has worked throughout the region to support governments as they begin to implement the provisions of the Worst Forms of Labour Convention. Tanzania, for example, was one of the first countries in the world to develop a Time-Bound Plan against the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which sets clear goals and deadlines by which they have to be reached. UNICEF and ILO-IPEC have commissioned studies to look in more detail at certain sectors of work in Kenya, Tanzania, Lesotho, Ethiopia, South Africa and Swaziland.

What is clear is that, whether they are 'working children', under-age children in labour, or children under the age of 18 in one of the worst forms of child labour, all children are vulnerable to violence in the workplace, wherever that may be.

Local men increasingly seek out young sex partners, partly because they are less able to resist but also because there are myths in the region that children are less likely to be HIV-positive or even that sex with a child can 'cure' AIDS.

Children whose workplace is the street, and who are involved in so-called 'informal work' face the same kinds of hazard: abuse and maltreatment, harmful working conditions and economic exploitation. They are also at particular risk of being drawn into commercial sexual exploitation not only by others who exploit them but also because they may believe

that prostitution is an easier way to earn money. The prostitution of children is of serious concern in Eastern and Southern Africa. Local men increasingly seek out young sex partners, partly because they are less able to resist but

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also because there are myths in the region that children are less likely to be HIV-positive or even that sex with a child can ‘cure’ AIDS. Clearly these myths are unfounded and clearly they put children at even greater risk.

Frequently, however, children are exploited in prostitution as part of the wider adult prostitution sector. The men who buy sex simply do not bother to take account of the age of their victim and, in any case, have a general preference for younger women. In some countries, for example Swaziland, there is no specific legal prohibition on child prostitution. In many parts of the region, prostitution and rape are common and reflect prevailing attitudes on the ‘needs’ of men and the role of women to service those needs.

Men (and sometimes but rarely women) travel specifically to some countries of the region for the purposes of sexual exploitation. These ‘sex tourists’ may choose children for sexual exploitation for the same reasons as local men do but, additionally, they explain their actions by claiming that the children in the country they visit engage in commercial sex ‘because it’s the custom here and everyone does it’ or because they want to help out the poor child and her family. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is a violent act in many ways. It is also a crime in international law and in the domestic law of most countries.

In some cases, it is the child who is moved. Trafficking of children into commercial sex or indeed into other forms of labour exploitation is of growing concern in the region. Southern Africa has been identified as a hub for traffickers who move vulnerable children across borders in order to exploit them. Once out of their home environment, children are even more vulnerable to abuse because they have no-one to turn to for help. They may not speak the language of the country, may have no legal papers and are probably in contravention of laws on prostitution or illegal labour. And to keep them quiet, traffickers and those who exploit the children’s labour use violence and threats. The same is true even where the child is moved within the same country; it is the isolation, the powerlessness and the force of the profit motive that ensure that a trafficked child is a child victim of violence.

Actions to end violence and protect children

If actions to protect children from violence are to have maximum impact, they need to be documented, evaluated and shared. Actions that can be shown to be effective should then serve as examples and be tried out in other countries by other organizations, first modified if necessary to fit the particular needs of that country.

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Importantly, actions that cannot be shown to have an impact, or that in fact have a negative impact, should be reviewed immediately and should not be allowed to use up scarce resources.

Throughout this region there is a long tradition of charitable organizations that date back to colonial times and that accompanied colonial authorities as a sort of ‘social arm’ of those authorities. Traditionally these organizations and their work were not subject to public evaluation or scrutiny. Today NGOs and others working on behalf of children cooperate and attempt to share and learn lessons that can only improve their work, nevertheless evaluation and the drawing of lessons are not yet systematic across the region.

As a result, in Eastern and Southern Africa not enough has yet been done to look closely at or document those programmes that work and share them across the region. There are interesting projects and programmes in most of the countries of the region but many of these are not well known and their impact is not clear. Some programmes have been tried and tested, though, and it is time to see if they can be used more widely to help the region’s children.

In Botswana, for example, Childline Botswana has had some success in establishing a hotline and drop-in counselling service. Children who have been abused or are still being abused are able to turn to the hotline or counsellors and find the support they need or be referred to other support services. This builds on the experience of other countries and regions, where hotlines have proved to be an effective, anonymous resource for children. But of course it presumes that children have access to telephones and are ready to use them to seek help. Putting in place the drop-in centre takes account of the fact that this is not always the case. The combined service is clearly working: since 1991, Childline Botswana has recorded a steady increase in children turning to them for help.

In South Africa, another example is an innovative model known as the Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs) established to respond to the growing problem of rape. These centres seek to lessen the trauma of sexual violence and to reduce secondary victimisation of survivors, primarily women and children by providing professional medical care, counselling, access to dedicated investigators and prosecutors, all under one roof. The TCCs were designed and implemented by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), together with the Departments of Health, Social Development and Justice and Constitutional Development, as well as the South African Police Services. Thuthuzela has improved the process of reporting and prosecuting of rape and other sexual offences, and offender

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conviction rates are increasing. The Government of South Africa is working to scale-up this model to a planned 80 centres by 2010. They are also providing support for replication of the model in other countries in the region.

Gaps and challenges

In addition to the need to evaluate initiatives and share these so that there can be better learning across the region about what works and what does not work in the area of child protection and prevention of violence, the regional consultation identified a number of other gaps and challenges.

These formed the basis of the recommendations that have been submitted to the Study Secretariat for consideration as the Study is put together. They cover the need for comprehensive law reform that puts children at the centre of efforts to eliminate abuse, exploitation and other forms of violence. They also underline the need for projects and programmes to help people to understand better the harm that violence does to children, including those forms of violence that at the moment are not understood as violence at all, like corporal punishment in the family and in the educational system.

Understanding is a key to mobilizing people, too. When communities understand the impact of violence on children and indeed on the whole community, they are more likely to want to help stop it. This opens up many possibilities for setting up protection systems for children, from neighbourhood watch groups to children-led clubs and activity centres.

The role of children is also important to any efforts to stop violence against children. There have been some efforts to talk to children and seek their experience in this area – including through their involvement in the regional consultation – but more can be done. Children are best placed to see how and where violence happens. They have good ideas on what can be done to stop it. And they can give early warning of other children who are at risk or are suffering.

Among the rights that are guaranteed to children through the CRC is the right to express their opinion in all matters concerning them – there is no more urgent subject on which children's voices need to be heard than the violence that is ever present in their lives.

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Recommendations and next steps

In the course of the regional preparatory consultation, a Steering Committee met with government representatives to finalize the next steps. The Committee included the Governments of Kenya and South Africa, the AU African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, UNICEF, OHCHR, UNHCR, the ILO and NGOs from Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

They agreed that all the countries that had not sent in their replies to the Study questionnaire would do so. They also decided who would be responsible for follow-up and asked the AU Commission on Social Affairs, the Government of South Africa and UNICEF's regional office to take on follow-up roles.

In the closing session of the regional meeting, Macharia Kamau, UNICEF's country representative for South Africa, reminded the meeting that there are three important prerequisites for children's protection: peace, democratic governance and freedom. These are not always in place in some parts of Africa and it is the responsibility of governments to ensure that they are. Together as a region, countries were urged to popularize the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and to drive forward a unified African position on violence against children.

Violence against children works against a country's development, as children who should be growing in health and safety struggle every day to cope with the pressure that violence brings into their lives.

against a country's development, as children who should be growing in health and safety struggle every day to cope with the pressure that violence brings into their lives. "The true measure of a nation's humanity," she said, "is the respect with which it treats its children".

Ms Carol Bower, on behalf of the NGOs participating in the meeting, called on everyone to look upon violence not as an ongoing problem but a real emergency. And Ms Cheryl Gilwald, Deputy Minister of Correctional Services in South Africa, emphasized how violence against children works

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA FOR THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Violence in the home and family

Legal frameworks:

- All countries are urged to enact domestic legislation to prohibit corporal punishment, especially in the family, in order to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- Where corporal punishment is expressly banned, enact prosecutorial guidelines so that the legislation is not used to criminalize parents except when it is in the best interests of the child. Support the implementation of such domestic legislation by sensitizing and training parents and guardians in positive and effective alternatives to violence.
- Ensure that constitutional and legal provisions recognize that children have human rights in all settings, especially the home.
- The protection and promotion of the rights and well-being of children is one of the most important concerns of the AU. It was therefore pointed out that those member states that have not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child should do so as soon as possible and promote its implementation.

Institutional frameworks, policies, programmes and resources:

- Ensure that birth registration systems are in place so that it is possible to identify children and assist them if they are abused.
- Contextualize corporal punishment and clarify how it is different from discipline.
- The corporal punishment debate should move away from looking only at alternatives and look at the underlying causes of indiscipline especially within the home and find ways to deal with it.
- Governments, not just donors, should fund measures to address corporal punishment so that there is local ownership of these initiatives.

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Awareness, advocacy and training (home and family + community)

- Sensitize policy makers to the issue of corporal punishment.
- Educate through the media about the issue of corporal punishment.
- Develop and popularize alternatives to corporal punishment.
- Promote ongoing national campaigns to sensitize communities on the rights of children and the duties and obligations of duty bearers.
- Train the media on reporting cases of abuse in ways that respect rights of children.
- Educate families on the harmful effects of corporal punishment.
- Get children, parents and communities to buy into programmes promoting alternative discipline measures otherwise there will continue to be a disconnection between indiscipline and corporal punishment.
- Sensitize the general public on the reasons why children become exposed to corporal punishment and situations at home such as the lack of understanding, skills, information, exclusion and poverty that may predispose children and their families to violence.
- Harmonize specific HIV/AIDS messages at all levels. Ensure that they are child friendly and focused.
- Bridge traditional norms with human rights.
- Build alliances with traditional leaders, parents, and in particular men.
- Maximize the use of media (both print and electronic).
- Take advantage of national and international campaigns to maximize the spread of the message.
- Aggressively sensitize the community on gender-based violence, corporal punishment, HIV/AIDS and harmful practices and dispel myths.
- Educate communities on the rights of children.
- Children should be made aware of their rights and responsibilities so that they can also protect themselves.
- Make information on where and how to seek help readily available.
- There should be a greater awareness of the vulnerability of children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS to violence and abuse.
- Teach children about their culture so they can appreciate it and carry it forward.
- Combat and resist the idea that hitting children could be considered ‘reasonable chastisement’ rather than it is violence and a violation of a child’s rights.

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Violence in the community

Legal frameworks:

- There should be legislation that deals with the transmission of HIV/AIDS in criminal law statutes as well as provisions in comprehensive Children's Acts that specifically criminalize transmission of AIDS to children and these statutes need to have minimum sentences.
- Traditional harmful practices should be criminalized and child marriage should be banned.
- There should be a positive duty imposed on all healthcare workers, teachers, doctors and social workers to report neglect or harm to children to the authorities.

Institutional frameworks, policies, programmes and resources:

- Encourage the use of positive cultural practices.
- Provide psychosocial support as a priority community-based intervention.
- Inform communities about existing laws, policies and programmes.
- Ensure that standards to protect children from corporal punishment are both home-grown and within an international framework. Encourage locally bred alternative forms of discipline to avoid corporal punishment from being pushed underground and provide information in local languages.
- Revive community and indigenous structures to take care of orphans and vulnerable children at the family level. Ensure that community-based family placements are supported with adequate resources.
- Establish support structures for children and families in the form of multi-purpose centres.
- Provide para-legal services to ensure more access to affordable legal assistance.
- Integrating refugee children into already existing programmes would be an effective way to share the burden and is in line with many international and national legal instruments.

Violence in schools

Legal frameworks:

- All countries are urged to enact domestic legislation to prohibit corporal punishment, including within schools, in order to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

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- Support the implementation of such domestic legislation by sensitizing and training teachers in positive and effective alternatives to violence.

Institutional frameworks, policies, programmes and resources:

- Identify structures such as Parent Teacher Associations and parent clubs to monitor compliance of bans against corporal punishment.
- Involve children themselves in making decisions about discipline.
- Ensure flexible school timetables to accommodate HIV/AIDS affected and infected children.

Awareness, advocacy and training:

- Countries must provide education, training and practical alternatives to corporal punishment to teachers.
- School curriculum should include child rights education.

Violence in institutions (out-of-home placements and justice/correctional systems)

Legal frameworks:

- Ensure that constitutional and legal provisions recognize that children have human rights in all settings, including in out-of-home placements and the justice and correction systems.
- Support the implementation of such domestic legislation by sensitizing and training staff of these institutions in positive and effective alternatives to violence.
- There should be more attention paid to the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who commit violence.

Institutional frameworks, policies, programmes and resources:

- Promote restorative justice and the use of family courts and diversion programmes.
- Provide rehabilitation especially for children in conflict with the law.
- Formalize child protection protocols and systems.
- Promote establishments of Child Protection Units in police stations as a minimum standard of child protection.

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- Employ more government personnel to work with children.
- Adequately support and fund foster care programmes.

Advocacy, awareness and training:

- Train all staff in the criminal justice system on children's rights.
- Raise awareness on alternatives to corporal punishment with all those who come in contact with children.
- Countries must provide education, training and practical alternatives to corporal punishment to institutional staff.

Violence in the workplace

Legal frameworks:

- Where children have to work, states should develop codes of conduct that prohibit corporal punishment as means to sanction effective performance.
- The ideal is that children do not have to work, but attend school. However, working children should be protected in every sense of the word from harmful practices associated with work.

General recommendations

Legal frameworks:

- Where tensions exist between customary law and criminal law, advocate for Constitutional Court decisions to be made in the best interests of the child in order to prohibit corporal punishment.
- Harmonize domestic laws with international conventions to come up with a coherent framework that protects children and prohibits corporal punishment.
- Resolve discrepancies between customary law and common or civil law.
- When a review of laws related to violence against children is under way, use the opportunity to prohibit corporal punishment.
- Reinforce the implementation of international conventions, laws and policies related to violence against children by sensitizing parents and the community at large on an ongoing basis.
- Involve children in designing and implementing legislation.

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Institutional frameworks, policies, programmes and resources:

- Integrate violence against children in national planning processes and development plans.
- In the case of war-torn countries, the international community should condemn and punish perpetrators of violence against children.
- Provide psychosocial support for complainants.
- Place corporal punishment on the agenda of parliamentary committees and policy forums.
- Mobilize for specific budgetary allocations to address violence against children.
- Governments need to provide more treatment and support for children infected with HIV/AIDS.

Role of civil society:

- Civil society organizations should lobby parliamentarians to ban corporal punishment.
- Government and the NGO sector should come together and decide on who is responsible for what, to conserve resources. There should be better consultations and coordination between NGOs and governments.
- There needs to be better monitoring of the work of NGOs to avoid unregistered NGOs from operating.

The role of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union (AU) and other regional structures:

- Clarify and enhance the role of NEPAD and the AU with regard to violence against children.
- Encourage the AU to be more active in monitoring the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and encourage countries to report on their progress.
- NEPAD should be constructed in such a way that it is more pro-active on children's issues on the continent. Encourage countries to report on violence against children to NEPAD and guide governments on how to link local issues with global issues, for example the Millennium Development Goals.

Children's participation:

- Governments should give young people a strong role in decision making.
- Encourage and facilitate children's participation in the work of NGOs.

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Advocacy, awareness and training:

- Ensure that messages are informed by research.
- Target regional instruments not only national instruments (eg harmonization of standards, policies and legislation in the region) AU, South Africa Development Community and the East African Community.
- Develop consistent multi-sectoral training programmes to address violence (sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS, and harmful practices) against children.
- Target politicians, policy makers and other opinion makers for advocacy against child abuse.
- Monitor and evaluate advocacy and training programmes for efficiency and effectiveness.
- Ensure active, meaningful and relevant child participation in decision making about advocacy programmes.
- Facilitate inter-country sharing of good practices and coordinated programme planning.
- Develop child friendly materials that highlight alternatives, ill effects or consequences of violence, support services and recourse, eg posters and brochures.
- Make violence against children a theme for the Day of the African Child.

Data collection, analysis and research:

- Involve communities to determine research priorities. There is a need to build capacity at grassroots level in order to empower community structures to see the benefit of data collection and monitor the situation, collect information and, ultimately, put in place reporting mechanisms.
- There is need for data collectors and researchers to have knowledge of local situations.
- There is need for researchers and data collectors to be religion- and culture-sensitive.
- Develop standardized ethical protocols for research especially research with children.
- Given the marginal status of orphans and other vulnerable children, there should be a concept of social responsibility on the part of researchers on the implications of research on policies, programmes and the lives of interviewed people.
- Strategies for research on HIV/AIDS need to be specifically tailored in order not to create further stigma within communities and need to take into account issues like home circumstances, cultural practices and ethics.

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- Research should be coordinated, as data collection is usually done by independent researchers at academic institutions.
- Integrate academic and research institutions into research undertaken by government and civil society. Research results must receive political backing.
- There is need for developing and implementing integrated monitoring systems, otherwise it will be difficult to pull resources for data collection.
- Ensure that research priorities inform funding priorities.
- There is need to address the lack of awareness about the importance of research on violence against children on the part of governments and institutions in order to be able to prioritize it.
- There is need for capacity building for researchers on child rights, psychosocial counselling and indicators of abuse.
- Couple research with psychosocial counselling to prevent psychological trauma.
- Use other forms of data collection eg picture taking, drawing, exhibition, other visual means/ tools, to make it more enjoyable, accessible and fun.
- Children should be trained to participate in research alongside adults. This will provide adults with a better understanding of the issues at stake.
- There is need to conduct research on alternative measures, for example: Do they work? How are they applied? How have they been developed? Have they been developed in a participatory way for example with the participation of children, families and communities?
- Research needs to focus also on the context in which the abuse/violence takes place, in order to understand all factors related to corporal punishment so that results can be used to influence parents' behaviour vis-à-vis children.
- There is need to conduct comparative studies between countries that have young laws and countries that have abolished corporal punishment for a long time.
- There is need to conduct research on alternative rites of passage that promote culture and are not harmful to children.
- There is also need for comprehensive research that sees violence against children from a holistic perspective.
- There is need to conduct research on why duty bearers believe in corporal punishment and why they would accept alternative measures to provide a basis for educating parents and children.

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- There is need to undertake research on the different perceptions that people have about the difference between corporal punishment and discipline.
- There is need to disseminate findings in local languages using simple and culturally appropriate ways of speaking to communities, children, civil society and government institutions.
- There is need for research to be action-oriented and translated into practical programmes on the ground.
- Research needs to be linked to advocacy; otherwise it is only sterile collection of data that are not used. It is important for people, especially at community level, to see research as beneficial to them.

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Notes

