

# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

## REGIONAL CONSULTATION THE CARIBBEAN



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

# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN THE CARIBBEAN

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](http://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 Caribbean regional consultation

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“The impact of violence on the lives of children is a blemish on the face of nations in all parts of the world – rich and poor countries, in the South and the North,” the Deputy Director of UNICEF, Rima Salah, told delegates to the Caribbean regional consultation on violence against children. “There is no doubt that the solutions must come from within;” she said, “they cannot be transplanted but, equally, it is unlikely that any community can overcome these challenges without opening up to the experiences of others”.

Finding out more about violence against children in the Caribbean region and exploring ‘home-grown’ solutions to it were the twin aims of the regional consultation that took place in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 9 to 11 March 2005. By feeding its conclusions into the United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against children – which will trace a global picture of the problem and the actions necessary to tackle it – the regional consultation also contributed to shared experiences and international action. The results of the consultation were later integrated into a report on violence in the Caribbean prepared by the University of the West Indies. This ‘snapshot’ of the problem, and some of the things being done to address it, is available on the Violence Study website, along with all the documents from the consultation itself.

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Among the participants from around the region who gathered to consider the topic and formulate recommendations on ending violence against children were 50 children and young people between the ages of 15 and 20. They spent the first day discussing the issues in an ‘Adolescent Forum’. They underlined the fact that in the Caribbean nations, violence is sometimes socially acceptable and that it has serious implications for children’s development.

They developed their own recommendations on reducing violence in schools, improving legal frameworks, addressing violence that takes place within the family, in institutions, in communities and in work situations. The recommendations from the Adolescent Forum were shared with the delegates at the regional consultation, who took them into account in their discussions too.

There were 145 participants at the regional consultation, from the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean and Haiti. They included representatives from ministries of education, health, labour and social services, youth and sports, and security. There were delegates from family courts, parliaments and many from civil society organizations including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, unions, religious organizations and parents’ associations. In addition, 25 senior officers of the United Nations system took part in the presentations and working groups and a senior representative of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) participated.

Also present was Professor Sérgio Paulo Pinheiro, the independent expert appointed by the United Nations Secretary General to lead the global study. He reminded the participants that violence against children is hidden beneath a cloak of silence and invisibility and that it takes no account of national, cultural, economic or ethnic boundaries.

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All the presentations underlined the fact that violence against children exists in all the countries of the region and cuts across social, cultural and racial boundaries. Participants were also reminded that all Caribbean nations have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and that Article 19 of the Convention requires States Party to provide adequate care and protection to children from all forms of violence. And yet,

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the young participants noted, violence against children in the Caribbean region seems to be increasing. They attributed this to the erosion of family life, the negative impact of the media, increased crime and apathy on the part of law enforcement agencies to curb crime. They felt that the one thing on which most people agreed is the need for more support for families, since many do not receive ‘quality, timely services’.

The young people made the following specific recommendations:

### **On violence in schools:**

- There should be an end to corporal punishment. Instead, the use of non-violent disciplinary measures should be encouraged.
- Mentoring and teacher training programmes that include studies in psychology, communication skills and conflict resolution should be introduced into schools as an ongoing process.
- Young people should be educated about their rights and responsibilities so that they can understand the positive and negative implications of their behaviour.

### **On violence in institutions:**

- The judicial system needs to be reformed so that children and young people do not feel threatened and intimidated when reporting instances of abuse against them.
- Legislation should be created and enforced to protect young people from adults who expose them to sexual or other types of exploitation.

### **On violence in the home and family:**

- Parents and guardians must be educated in non-violent means of communicating with and disciplining their children.
- Family support institutions need to be revisited, revamped and restructured, ensuring that these institutions’ core objectives meet the goals of more adequately equipping parents to become better guardians and role models.

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### **On violence in work situations:**

- By propagating the rights of the child, society can confront traditional ‘apprenticeship’ practices and complacent attitudes towards child labour that deprive children of their right to education and play.
- Intergovernmental organizations with responsibilities for children’s and human rights should establish and enforce clearly defined international laws towards eliminating child labour, pressing national governments to enact these laws within their own countries.

### **On violence in communities and streets:**

- Young people should be provided, as alternatives to the pull of violence and destructive forces within their communities, with outlets that focus their minds and energies towards more positive and productive activities.
- Investigation and research, with greater focus on utilizing the intimate knowledge of local peoples, should focus more on unearthing the hidden forms of child labour that result from illegal adoption, trafficking in people, etc.

The young people felt that the media are complicit in perpetuating violence and that they should be involved more positively in finding solutions to it. They focused on the fact that many societies see violence as ‘normal male aggression’ and as an essential part of ‘being a man’. They called for more research on this.

The youth delegates acknowledged their own responsibility “to change the status quo, transforming the role of youth from that of victims to stewards of our peers, our brothers and our sisters”.

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### Violence against children in the Caribbean region

The countries of the Caribbean are a diverse group. Some of them are small islands while others are continent-bound countries. Some have been independent for almost half a century while others still depend on colonial states. Some have middle to high incomes and others are among the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Some of the countries have the highest rates of violence in the world; some have almost no crime at all.

The regional review that was done to build up a picture of the scope of violence in the region covered all the member states of CARICOM except the Bahamas, plus three associate members. The countries included were: Jamaica, Haiti, Belize, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St. Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos, Anguilla, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands. All the countries are English speaking except Haiti, where the people speak French and/or Creole, and Suriname where many people are multilingual.

The countries share a similar historical and cultural background, including some factors that are considered by many to underlie some of the violence that takes place. For example, the indigenous people of many of the countries were almost wiped out after the arrival of European settlers in the late fifteenth century. People were brought in from Africa into forced labour in the sugarcane plantations and later East Indians and other groups were brought in for indentured labour. This history of slavery and brutal plantation life are believed by many to explain in part why people use and accept violence.

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In more recent times, drug trafficking throughout the region, most recently trans-shipment of cocaine and crack-cocaine, and the trade links between drugs and weapons, not only engenders violence itself as competing interests vie for supremacy but also creates a wider context in which violence occurs.

Long-standing political rivalries also often result in violence and these fuel ethnic and community rivalries and hatreds. The unequal distribution of wealth that often reflects the same community and ethnic lines is a factor too.

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Participants at the regional consultation considered other inequalities that cause unrest. Across the region, the quality of education available to children varies greatly. In some of the countries, both the facilities and the teachers are excellent; in other countries there are too few teachers and inadequate facilities. In those countries where schooling is low quality, the children grow up unqualified for the jobs available or otherwise with reduced opportunities to earn a living, and the vicious cycle of discrimination and exploitation continues. Young people who drop out or leave school are at higher risk of being drawn into a life of crime to make ends meet.

Inequalities between the sexes are also implicated in rising levels of violence: in many ways girls and women are at higher risk of violence but not only because they are in a subservient position to boys and men. In some countries the rise of women in business and academia is considered to have ‘marginalized’ men and led to increased domestic violence as these men reassert their authority at home.

In this culture of violence, some of the perpetrators and victims of violent crime are male adolescents and young adults. Primarily, however, children and young people are the victims of violence, the results of which affect them, their families, their friends and their communities. Violence not only leads to death and injury but also psychological damage, poor quality of life, reduced productivity and disruption to society.

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### What is being done to stop violence against children?

All the countries in the region have ratified the CRC and have committed themselves to protecting children from violence. Other treaties have reinforced these obligations, for example eight countries in the region have ratified the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights.

Few of the countries, though, have put in place a comprehensive national code covering children’s welfare. Jamaica and Belize both have a National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children. Jamaica has recently established a Child Development Agency to coordinate the work being done there. Grenada intends to review its Criminal Code, recognizing that the Code represents the legislation most relevant to violence against children, and is seeking international support to do this. In general, though, the actions that governments have taken have tended to be piecemeal.



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a child as under the age of 16 and others use an upper limit of 18 years of age. Some specific issues affecting children and putting them at risk of violence are missing from legislation, for example trafficking and offences related to child pornography. And boys are particularly disadvantaged under existing laws, for example they are often not taken into account in laws relating to rape or sexual exploitation.

Belize introduced a Family and Children Act in 1998 that was the first to list the rights of children and so codify them in national law, but others have been slow following this example. Across the region laws are not harmonized, so some of them refer to

Some countries have begun the important step of putting in place ways for people to report child abuse or children at risk of abuse. Dominica, for example, has established Child Abuse Reporting Procedures, designed to help children's agencies to work together so that children do not fall through the gaps in available services.

Guyana has seen a number of public education campaigns to help people understand the rights of children to be free of abuse, and people in the frontline of child protection services have been trained to be more effective when dealing with reports of abuse. School campaigns have aimed at helping children understand their rights and, as a result, the number of cases of abuse reported to the authorities has increased. This led to a review of the child protection system in Guyana, a review that continues.

Suriname has recognized the special needs of children with disabilities and those affected by HIV/AIDS and has developed a national policy on disability as well as a National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS. This covers legislation, lobbying of members of parliament, training for organizations working with children and the appointment of a children's ombudsman.

The legacy of slavery in the region not only explains many of the social and cultural traditions that have hindered acceptance of children's rights, including the right to be protected from violence, it also is considered to underlie the widespread acceptance of physical punishment as a suitable way of disciplining a child, and the emphasis at other levels on criminal sanctions as a means of solving social problems rather than addressing them through conflict resolution or mediation.

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The legacy of the colonial period can also be seen in the nature of the mechanisms in place to work on behalf of children. Governments rely heavily on private, often religious organizations to provide the services that children need, a leftover from the days when missionaries often accompanied the colonizing forces and took responsibility for social services.

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History is a difficult hurdle to overcome. Nevertheless, since the adoption of the CRC in 1989, the Caribbean countries have made some progress in safeguarding and promoting children's rights. The life conditions of children have also improved. Still, however, children across the region suffer violence, and many are deprived of the rights to education and health care or are exploited in labour. Many still go to bed hungry.

### Violence in the home and family

Children in the Caribbean countries experience violence in a number of forms in their home environment. They may witness domestic violence and suffer the trauma that can accompany seeing family members being harmed; and they may themselves be subjected to physical or psychological violence, sexual abuse and the violence of neglect.

These go largely unreported, so the official figures that are available probably underestimate the true scope of the problem. Surveys of adults' and children's experiences of child abuse generally suggest that there are many more instances of violence than those that come to light. And although official figures vary from country to country across the region, in all cases they are alarmingly high.

Some of the reasons why people do not report violence against children in the home, whatever form it takes, are obvious: they fear reprisals, do not want to bring shame on the family, and can hide behind the widely held attitude that abuse in the family is a 'private matter'. Often, also, the family depends for its survival on the income of the abuser and there is real fear of what might happen if that person is taken away. Most people – including

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at particular risk. Children from minority groups, children with disabilities, orphaned children and children whose parents are absent have been shown to be at heightened risk of various forms of violence, and children below the age of 12 are most at risk of abuse and neglect.

those with a responsibility towards the protection of children, such as teachers, health workers and the police – are also often unaware of the damage done to children by neglect, emotional abuse and physical punishment. As a result, they turn a blind eye and may even look on violence against children in the home as nothing to worry about.

Violence against children cuts across all social and economic barriers, but some groups of children are

There are some differences recorded in the most prevalent forms of violence in the various countries of the region. Jamaica and Dominica, for example, record relatively high levels of child sexual abuse; Granada's children are more likely to face abandonment and neglect. In Belize and Barbados, neglect is the most likely form of violence children will face in the home. However the patchy reporting means that these indicators may only partly represent the true situation. And there are very few reports at all on emotional, or psychological violence. In Belize, as an example, eight out of 10 children surveyed said they felt their mother did not love them, and in Jamaica 97 per cent of 11-12 year-olds said they had suffered verbal aggression from an adult at home.

It is clear that in all Caribbean countries, children are physically punished as a form of 'discipline' at a very young age. There is widespread support for this in the region, even among children themselves, and people believe that parents have a right to beat their children as long as it does not cause severe injuries. The hidden injury of psychological damage to the child and perpetuating of the cycle of violence go unnoticed. Very few countries have consequently introduced laws to prohibit corporal punishment: Guyana, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, and Haiti, although in Haiti the law is not enforced.

While both girls and boys suffer the violence of corporal punishment at home, hospital records in Jamaica, for example, show that boys are likely to be more severely treated. Most of the punishment is inflicted by

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parents, particularly mothers, although brothers and sisters also sometimes inflict violence on their siblings. In this way, violence becomes a part of family life and children learn that they can use it on those they consider weaker, inferior or subservient.

Girls are more likely to suffer sexual abuse at home than boys, although it may be that sexual abuse of boys is not so often reported. There are some discrepancies in definitions and data collection across the region that make it difficult to have a clear picture of the nature and scope of sexual violence against children. For example, the place where the

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abuse takes place is not always recorded, so it is difficult to know whether abuse by family members, for example, takes place mostly in the home while abuse by non-family acquaintances happens outside the home. This has led to conflicting reports, some suggesting that fathers are the most frequent abusers of children and some suggesting that children in single-parent households are more at risk from people who know them but are not related to them. What does seem to be certain is that sex abusers are usually male and that they are known to the child.

Another worrying discrepancy in the collection of data is that, in some countries in the region, sexual abuse of boys is not recognized under the law, only of girls. Legal procedures that do not take account of the difficulties for a child to give testimony against someone they know and who has abused them also mean that many instances of sexual abuse never get reported at all. Those that do often fail because the child's testimony is seen to be unreliable.

There is very little information available on child neglect in the region although it is known to be very common in some countries. Participants at the regional consultation included 'neglect' as a form of indirect violence. Parents, especially mothers, are the most likely perpetrators and there are some reports of boys being more vulnerable than girls. A study in Dominica suggested that children who do not live with both parents, those who have lost a parent, those who do not share social activities with their parents, and children with parents suffering mental health or drug and alcohol problems, are most at risk of neglect. Children who are neglected are known to be more likely to skip or drop out of school, to be put into institutionalized care, to end up living on the streets or to become involved in violence.

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One problem that is of great concern in the region is that of ‘absent parents’. Many women are left to raise their families alone, for various reasons, and this puts the children at greatly increased risk not only of violence at home as the family struggles to cope, but also of entry into premature work, or of ‘escape’ onto the streets. Similarly, men or older children may be left to care for the family without a mother, when she migrates for work. Women are in demand as domestic workers or in unskilled jobs in the United States, for example, and both men and women may migrate for seasonal work and leave children to fend for themselves.

Finally, there is a high level of domestic violence in the Caribbean region and children are therefore likely to witness violence in their homes even if they are not the direct victim of it. Between 2002 and 2005, nearly one quarter of all murders in Jamaica were a result of domestic violence; half of all men reported having hit their partner and 30 per cent of adolescents said they worry about the fighting and violence they see at home. In the British Virgin Islands and Barbados, 30 per cent of women report having been physically abused. Even these figures probably understate the problem because, as with violence towards children in the home, these ‘private, shameful’ events go largely unreported. In Dominica, for example, only 14 per cent of women who were victims of domestic violence had reported it to the police. Often the police, in any case, are unwilling to intervene in ‘domestic disputes’.

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by never going out to play or to school, and by not sleeping. They may intervene and get hurt themselves. Some children, conversely, identify with the perpetrator and may start to act aggressively themselves, criticizing or abusing their mother, for example, or a brother or sister.

While most of the perpetrators of domestic violence are men, there are reports of men also being victims of such violence. Children who witness this violence may identify with the victim (usually their mother) and live in fear. They may try to protect the victim

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### Violence in the community

The consultation heard that homicide rates in the Caribbean are nearly twice the world average: 22.9 per 100,000 compared with 10.7 per 100,000. Kingston, Jamaica, has one of the highest murder rates in the world. Crime rates in the region more generally – including crimes of violence – are also high. The involvement of young men in crime and violence in the Caribbean region is a significant problem. Children are caught up in this as both witnesses and victims and, as they move into adolescence, some may also be involved as perpetrators.

Reports indicate that children are exposed to very high levels of violence in their community: almost half of all children in Guyana said they knew someone who has been killed. Six out of 10 9-17 year-olds in Jamaica said a member of their family had been a victim of violence and more than a third of them had a family member who had died as a result. In a number of countries, children report that they do not feel their neighbourhood is a safe place and that they feel insecure on the streets. Violence and fear are very much a part of their daily lives.

This is reflected in the media, where some reports say that violence is portrayed as ‘normal’ and even ‘acceptable’. Some of the violence is acted out by celebrities who have the sympathy of the audience and the young delegates at the regional

consultation said they were concerned by the amount of violence they see on screen that seems to be portrayed sympathetically. Studies indicate that violent characters are more often rewarded than punished. There is a general view in the region that the media are insensitive to the problem and tend to sensationalize violence against children rather than report on it responsibly.

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Studies of children’s experiences as victims of violence suggest that, as they get older, they are more likely to be exposed to violence in the community and at school than at home. This violence can be very severe: in 2004 in Jamaica, for example, murders and shootings increased and 119 children were killed – 8 per cent of all murders. That same year, police reported 430 children shot and injured.

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Of grave concern is the fact that one quarter of all major crimes – armed robbery, assault, rape and murder – in Jamaica are committed by young people, mostly adolescent males between the ages of 13 and 19. The same problem occurs across the region, and adolescents are said to look upon violence as a survival tool, a passport to social mobility. Many young people are recruited into crime by others in the community, often when they have dropped out of school or are otherwise disaffected. In crime they find the recognition and power that they are denied at home and at school. Unemployment contributes to this, too, because they are similarly unable to find their place in the world of work.

Most of the young people involved in violence are young men, but girls are also implicated. A study of schoolchildren between the ages of 10 and 18 in nine Caribbean countries showed that 20 per cent of boys and 12.5 per cent of girls had at some time belonged to a gang. Forty per cent of the adolescents said they had feelings of rage – thoughts about hurting or even killing someone – and this is a significant risk factor in violence, sexual activity, alcohol and tobacco use. Self-inflicted violence is also a problem: 12.5 per cent of schoolchildren in the study said they had tried to commit suicide.

If young people are taken into custody as a result of their involvement in crime or violence, they are most likely to be detained in adult correctional centres where they come into contact with more violence, often as victims.

Some of the factors that are known to put children at risk of adopting delinquent behaviours as they grow up are physical and sexual abuse, not going to school and rage. Exposure to violence at home or at school, crowded homes, physical punishment, poor school achievement and low socio-economic status also have an impact. Parents are a vital influence, too, with some studies showing that conduct disorder in adolescence is associated with mothers being absent, parenting arrangements changing or a negative parental role model (usually the father).

Alcohol and drug abuse is also a factor in increasing crime rates and acts of violence, whether in the family or elsewhere. Alcohol and drugs are strongly implicated in domestic violence but more generally increase the vulnerability of users to violence at the hands of other people. Children suffer the long-term effects of substance abuse on their health as well as on their social skills and ability to find work and develop relationships. Finding the money to pay for drugs and alcohol also puts them at risk of exploitation and manipulation by others, and

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drug addiction is a major factor in the growth in child prostitution, as adolescent girls (but also some boys) turn to commercial sex in order to fund their habits. Pimps and brothel owners exploit this, providing drugs in order to keep the young people compliant and perpetuating the cycle of abuse and exploitation.

Studies suggest that when children feel ‘connected’ to their school life, the family and their church, then they may be more protected from these risk factors.

### Violence in schools

Discussions at the consultation also focused on the high levels of violence in the region’s schools. According to one study, some 60 per cent of students had witnessed violence in their schools and 29 per cent of the students had themselves caused injury to someone. As a result, many students no longer feel safe at school and some drop out or do not go to school regularly.

Some of the violence is inflicted by authority figures in schools: teachers and school administrators are reported to be harsh in their choice of words when scolding a child, and this can lead to low self-esteem for the child and behavioural problems. Corporal punishment is a particular problem because it is very much a part of Caribbean culture and has not been prohibited by law in most countries. In fact, in Trinidad and Tobago, where there were recently moves to abolish corporal punishment in schools, parents, teachers and students came together to call on Parliament to reinstate it.

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The young delegates at the regional consultation emphasized that much of the violence in schools is among students and that in some cases it is the teachers who are the victims. Violence within the student population is increasing, they said, largely because of the gang structures that operate and links with criminal activity. Gangs are responsible for selling drugs in schools and this can result in inter-gang rivalry that leads to violence. Stabbings and shootings are not uncommon and it is clear that weapons are being taken into schools.



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In addition to gang-related school violence, there are also high levels of hostility among students that underlie bullying, verbal abuse and physical exchanges. Special learners, younger students and students with disabilities are singled out. Aggressive behaviour among boys is seen to be normal, part of being a man, but there is increasing violence among girls too.

It has been suggested that part of the problem of violence in schools is related to inadequate staffing, inappropriate training of school staff and a lack of school counsellors and social workers.

### Violence in institutions

All the countries in the Caribbean region have children's homes. Some are run by the government, some by churches or private groups. There are very few reports available on these homes, although a recent report on 'places of safety' in Jamaica described the status of the children in homes as dangerous and likely to harm their development.

A little more is known about children who are in remand after coming into conflict with the law. Even here, though, what information is available tends to focus on specific issues such as physical violence or aggressive behaviour, so it is difficult to build up a comprehensive picture of the conditions in the institutions themselves.

It may be that this lack of information is a reflection of the lack of transparency in the way institutions are run and the fact that they are generally closed to public scrutiny. It may also be that the lack of studies and data illustrates the low priority given to the issue of violence against children in the various forms of institution in the region. A background report prepared for the regional consultation by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children notes that no State can effectively judge the extent of its fulfilment of human rights obligations while this situation persists. The Global Initiative recommended that participants at the meeting call upon governments in the region to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of children in laws applying to the family, alternative care, schools and the penal system. Governments were urged also to review safeguards to protect children from all forms of violence in residential institutions and other forms of alternative care.

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The Initiative noted also that the Committee on the Rights of the Child had on several occasions expressed concern at the prevalence of corporal punishment in the region and had recommended prohibition of it in law to the 13 States whose reports it had considered by early 2005. At the time of the regional consultation, 13 States and nine dependent territories in the region authorized corporal punishment in schools and other institutions. Ten States and one dependent territory also permitted whipping and caning as a sentence of the court or as punishment in penal institutions for young offenders.

A presentation at the consultation by Ena Trotman Stoby, Project Manager of the NCH Legal Reform Project in Barbados, underlined the importance of recognizing that there are many dedicated, compassionate people working in children's homes in the region but that there are also many organizational and environmental constraints that make their jobs more difficult. The personal commitment of such people, moreover, is more a case of luck than of management of the system: the majority of institutions have no clear philosophy of care, no guiding principles, no standards of care or written aims and objectives. Intervention programmes and education/training, where they exist, can be unchallenging and insufficiently innovative or therapeutic to meet the needs of the children. In such circumstances, Ms Stoby notes, "deficits can lead to a violent environment as employees use their own world view of how things should be done".

There is clearly much to be done in this area in reviewing laws relating to corporal punishment in institutions in the Caribbean, in promoting norms and standards, and in gathering the research evidence necessary to fully understand the scope and nature of this institutionalized form of violence.

### Violence against children in workplaces

Violence against children happens in a number of ways in relation to the workplace: sometimes there is direct physical, sexual or psychological violence against young people who are working. It is also known that young workers are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation simply because they are young. They may be subjected to violence by their employers or by other workers.

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Some commentators consider that ‘child labour’ – that is employing children who have not yet reached the legal age for work, or who are of legal age but under 18 and working in conditions that are hazardous – is in itself abusive because it deprives the child of an education and puts him or her at risk. The international community also recognizes that some forms of child labour can be considered ‘the worst forms’ because they *de facto* involve extreme danger. These ‘worst forms’ include all forms of slavery or anything that involves slavery-like conditions and situations where children are sold or trafficked into labour. They also include labour that is to repay a debt or is forced or compulsory; recruitment into armed conflict, prostitution or pornography; exploitation of the child for illicit activities in particular related to the production or trafficking of drugs; and work which by its very nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to harm a child’s health, safety or morals.

Although there is not much information on child labour in the Caribbean region, it is clear that significant numbers of children are involved in some of these forms of exploitation, particularly in the worst form of child labour that is linked to the sale and trafficking of drugs. When children are implicated in illegal or ‘hidden’ work – for example working as domestic help in someone’s home – it is particularly difficult to get information on their situation and even more difficult, therefore, to protect them from violence they may be facing.

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It is also true that children who enter child labour do so at the expense of their education. This has long-term implications for them. It makes them

less likely to find decent work or any work at all in many cases. It disempowers them because they have to depend on other people more, and it puts them at risk of exploitation by unscrupulous people who take advantage of their dependency to pay them low wages, coax them into illegal activities and generally abuse their vulnerability. All of these also increase the likelihood that they will fall victim to violence.

Although in many countries children are put into work prematurely in order to help the family financially, in this region children often enter child labour because their parents see it as a part of life. It is very common for children to be ‘apprenticed’ to their father and to learn his occupation, but this ‘apprenticeship’ often comprises more work than learning and takes the child out of school.

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In many Caribbean countries children are involved in domestic labour, agriculture, tourism and service sectors, trade and sales, manufacturing, fishing and hustling. Some are involved in the drug trade, commercial sex work and other illegal activities. In Haiti, more than 67,000 girls are in child domestic labour and, behind the closed doors of their employers' home, are at risk of physical, sexual and psychological violence. In Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, there are concerns that more and more children are being drawn into the commercial sex sector, especially in tourist areas.

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Commercial sexual exploitation puts children at risk of physical and psychological violence and is extremely damaging to their health. They are exposed to sexually transmitted infections but also can experience long-term reproductive health problems. In extreme cases, children have been known to be tortured by their 'clients', burned and cut. Children are generally chosen by those seeking to buy sex specifically because they are easy to exploit and abuse. Children living on the streets may also find themselves drawn into the sex trade. In many cases, they may turn to prostitution to feed a drug habit and drugs are also used by pimps and brothel owners to keep children docile so that they do not run away or complain.

Children in vulnerable situations are also exploited in other criminal activities, especially because they are seen as 'expendable' if they are picked up by the police. To get money for drugs or just to survive, children may end up packaging or selling drugs, or acting as 'lookouts' for criminals.

### Actions to end violence and protect children

There have been some tentative first steps in introducing projects and programmes to address violence against children in the Caribbean region, although in general these initiatives have not been adequately evaluated. This needs to be done before they can be adapted for use in other parts of the region or scaled up across the region as a whole. There is also a need to ensure that programming that is put in place takes account of the latest information available on the topic and filling gaps in the research is a particular priority in this regard.

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In relation to violence against children in the home and family, there have been some solid initiatives aimed at helping parents to raise their children without violence. For example, Jamaica has several organizations that undertake home visits and early ‘stimulation’ programmes for families at risk. These programmes help parents to stimulate their children and include teaching parenting skills and non-violent discipline strategies. Although some programmes have not been formally evaluated, all have been shown to increase the mothers’ knowledge of parenting and child development.

Based on the documented outcomes of one successful model, a replication process is now under way in communities highlighted in the National Poverty Assessment of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Jamaica also has a network of parenting education initiatives coordinated through the Coalition for Better Parenting which also runs a hotline for parents to call on support when they need it.

Jamaica also has parenting initiatives that target fathers specifically, such as ‘Fathers Incorporated’ and ‘Dads of Distinction’. Involving men in work to reduce violence is seen as very important but is often forgotten. There are also parenting programmes in Barbados and, in Trinidad and Tobago, an organization called SERVOL trains early childhood teachers to help parents and works with mother of children under the age of three in their own community. All these programmes seem promising but they are limited in scope – it is important that they be properly analysed and, if they can be shown to have a positive impact, then they should be reproduced on a larger scale.

***Involving men in work to reduce violence is seen as very important but is often forgotten.*** Advocacy and awareness-raising programmes are run in a number of countries but, again, these have not been evaluated and there is no way of knowing whether they make a difference. In some of them, the media participate and some activities are organized around a Child Abuse Prevention Month each year.

There is a real lack of services across the region for children who have been abused or neglected. Some countries have foster homes or institutions that receive abused children, but in some cases these cater only for children under the age of 12 and in all cases little is known about the approach they take to supporting the child and providing for her/his long-term welfare.

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Very few children are supported within the context of their own family. Removing them from the family is an enormous disruption to their daily lives; working with the whole family rather than just the child may be a better solution in the long term. It also addresses the need to make sure that the violent person does not just abuse other children when one child is taken away. An alternative approach to distancing an abused child from the abusive parent is to introduce the use of protection orders to keep the violent adult away from the family, rather than removing the victim(s). This also ensures that the victims of family violence are not doubly victimized by losing their right to live in the family home and with other non-violent family members.

In general, also, there is an urgent need for policies and programmes that support the family in a more general way. The family unit in many countries in the region is at threat for a number of reasons: migration for work, domestic violence and abandonment, for example. Where family structures break down, both women and children are at increased risk of violence. Programmes that aim to support the child within the context of her/his family are more likely to have long-term success.

At the consultation, UNICEF launched a region-wide programme to campaign for violence reduction called the XCHANGE campaign. The aim is to create safe and protective environments for children at home, at school or in the community. Young people themselves identify the key actions they would like to be involved in. These might include creating ‘green spaces’, talks by sports and entertainment stars and education programmes. During the regional consultation, a training programme was organized as part of the XCHANGE campaign for the children and young people present, and they will return to their countries and carry back the messages and the methods they learned.

Dominica has taken a proactive approach to violence in schools by creating a ‘violence and injury surveillance system’. In Grenada, the Ministry of Education has involved parents in reducing violence in schools and institutions. The Jamaican Ministry of Health has spearheaded the creation of the Violence Prevention Alliance, an umbrella organization uniting groups and agencies working towards violence prevention. Some other Caribbean states have put in place programmes to address violence in schools, including health and family life education programmes, and consultations with parents. To keep children in school, a number of initiatives provide help with school fees, run school feeding programmes and sports and leisure activities.

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In the areas of violence in institutions and in the workplace, there are as yet few specific programmes to address violence. In collaboration with the ILO's Statistical Information Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), a number of Caribbean countries have begun to assess the extent of child labour in the region. These studies will provide the information needed to plan targeted actions to eliminate child labour and the risks it involves, including violence.

There are some isolated programmes to address child labour: Belize has one called the 'Butterfly Project' which aims to eliminate and prevent the worst forms of child labour. Jamaica now has a draft National Plan of Action on Child Labour that focuses on developing comprehensive policies against child labour, providing alternative ways to earn an income for families that might otherwise send a child to work, and improving healthcare for children already working.

Where children may drop out of school, some countries offer alternative ways of learning: in Belize City a vocational training unit was established to provide skills training for young people who do not go to school. In Jamaica the HEART Trust/National Training Agency offers training programmes for young people who have completed at least Grade 9 of school. Again, however, these programmes need to be evaluated and scaled up if they are to have a measurable impact on the lives of children in the region more generally.

### Gaps and challenges

There is a real need to address uniformity of laws across the Caribbean region so that children are protected. As in some other regions, the fact that 'child' is not universally defined in legislation means that children get different levels of protection in the law. In some countries the age of majority under penal law is set at 16 but in others at 18. The same is true of the legal minimum age for work: consistency across the region would allow labour laws to be harmonized and people to be treated with equivalence under the law.

In relation to legislation: it is important to fill the gap in legislation relating to the sale or trafficking of children. Since trafficking is both a domestic and a cross-border crime, cooperation among the Caribbean nations is important here, as is consultation with those countries known to be 'destination' countries. There

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is also a need to review laws to criminalize the production, distribution and possession of child pornography. This is particularly important in those countries that are the destination of sex tourists, since often such abusers take photos of the children they abuse and distribute them for profit or pleasure.

Laws to cover the reporting of child abuse and then systems to make this possible would not only help those who can intervene quickly to protect children but would also send out a clear signal that society will not tolerate such violence. All laws need to take equal account of boys and girls, since at the moment boys are often omitted from laws, for example relating to rape.

Given the increase in gang-related violence in many countries of the region, it would be useful to review laws that might be used in cases related to gang violence and to introduce new laws where necessary. Within the context of juvenile justice, it is important also to set the age of penal responsibility and to provide adolescents with a guarantee of due process, in line with the CRC. In many Caribbean countries, children can be deprived of their liberty not only because they have committed an offence but also because they are deemed to be ‘uncontrollable’. This invariably leads to subjective, arbitrary judgements of the child’s behaviour. Establishing national committees made up of government, judiciary and civil society representatives, to visit detention centres to monitor the conditions has also been identified as a necessary step in protecting juvenile offenders’ rights.

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There is weak enforcement of the laws in some cases and this should be addressed. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that all the arms of the judiciary are trained to deal with cases involving children. One issue of concern that was raised in the consultation is that throughout the region people seem not to trust the law enforcement agencies or indeed the political leaders whose fundamental duty is to enforce law and order. Clearly there is an urgent need to find ways to restore confidence in law enforcement agencies; one way for this to be done is through strict enforcement of the law and bringing to justice those who promote or inflict violence.



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To underpin all actions to be taken, it is important to have up-to-date and reliable information on the problems that children face, how and why they occur, and what can be done to protect children and support those who have experienced violence. This means more and targeted research, documenting programmes that have taken place and assessing whether they were successful, and sharing this information with all those who can use it to protect children from violence.

***It is especially important to evaluate the impact of programmes for children so that lessons can be learned and so that successful programmes can be used as models to be tried elsewhere in the region.***

It is especially important to evaluate the impact of programmes for children so that lessons can be learned and so that successful programmes can be used as models to be tried elsewhere in the region. At the moment there are very few evaluation reports of projects or programmes to prevent child abuse

and neglect, protect children from violence or help those who have experienced it.

As a result, it is difficult to lobby governments to change policy or practices. It is also difficult to design programmes to help people to understand how important it is to stop violence against children. They need to know that laws are being put in place and that violence will not be tolerated. Children also need to learn that they have rights and that violence is not an acceptable tool of social interaction.

Children who come into conflict with the law should be treated as children, not adults. They should not be detained alongside adults; they need specific support and advice as they go through judicial processes; and everything should be done to ensure that they have a chance to rebuild their lives, including through education and/or training, within their family and community where possible, and with a view to leaving violence behind. When children are removed from their family, they need special counsellors to accompany them. Policemen and women need specific training on dealing with children, as do others who work within the justice and social support systems such as social workers, para-legal staff and the judiciary.

To encourage children to go to school and to keep them there, it is important to improve access to school and the quality of education. Children have to believe that school is in their best interests. There are many elements of this: increasing the number of school places, reducing class size, supporting children whose families need

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financial help, upgrading teacher training, banning corporal punishment, and promoting lifeskills education, including non-violent conflict resolution. These same improvements will also encourage adolescents to consider vocational training that prepares them better for the world of work.

Out-of-school activities are important if children are to be weaned away from the streets and to focus their energies. Sport is an obvious outlet for children and creative arts and play therapy can also be organized both as part of the school curriculum and in after-hours clubs and community centres. These same centres can serve as focal points for mentoring programmes that match adolescents at risk with responsible adults in the community who will watch over them and support them as they develop. Governments should encourage NGOs and the private sector to set up these programmes.

The media have a vital role to play in challenging attitudes and behaviours that are harmful to children. It is not just a question of reporting on children's issues but also taken them into account in programming in general. Depicting violence as somehow noble and valid, and using popular actors to play 'the bad guy' who wins in the end, does not help children to understand the impact of violence or to reject it in their lives. And it makes them reluctant to report violence where it does occur, for fear of being seen as 'different'.

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Children who become victims of violence, wherever it occurs, need special support. This requires trained, accredited staff who know how to deal with the multiple effects of violence, psychological as well as physical. This is especially true of victims of sexual violence who may face long-term repercussions. Involving children and young people themselves in analysing needs, designing programmes and measuring their impact is important. They know best the challenges they face and how these might be overcome.

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### Recommendations and next steps

At the close of the regional consultation, the working groups that had been looking in detail at the various ‘settings’ in which violence takes place shared their recommendations. The children and young people read out their declaration and called on CARICOM to organize a meeting to review progress of their recommendations after two years.

***The youth delegates declared, “Violence is a harsh and daily reality for the young people of the Caribbean but it is not a reality that we will accept”.***

The young delegates said that they recognized that violence is a harsh and daily reality for the young people of the Caribbean, but that they would not accept it. While they might not be able to do much if they were a lone voice, together they felt they

could be heard. They did not ask for special treatment, they said, but to be treated in accordance with the core values of human dignity that are the cornerstones of the United Nations Charter. “Society can do better!” they said, “Every day we are exploited and used as proxies for the deviance and perversion of adults whose real duty is to shelter and positively influence us”.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CARIBBEAN REGION FOR THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

#### **Violence in the home and family:**

1. Support all efforts to capture the diversity of forms of violence against children within the private sphere. Some forms of violence may not always be defined as such. The global study should include sufficient attention to forms of violence such as (emotional) pressure to perform in school, sports, etc. and self-inflicted violence. The reasons behind violence against children should be studied in depth, including immediate, underlying and structural causes as well as the motivation of the perpetrators.
2. Ensure more and better reporting of violence against children in the home and the family. Reporting of all forms of sexual abuse should be mandatory, including for medical professionals. Hotlines for children where abuse can be reported confidentially should be established and easily accessible for children.
3. Ensure easily accessible and unconditional support mechanisms for child victims, as well as for parents and families. Prevention of child abuse and violence within the home and family should include efforts for supporting better caring practices as part of ante-natal and early childhood care as well as reproductive health education and services. Support for child victims should include ensuring specialized agencies/units/ staff within police, social services, health facilities, etc.
4. FBOs, NGOs, youth groups and media need to develop public education on issues related to child rights and alternatives to corporal punishment to sensitize communities through specific programmes and special events such as implementing a 'violence prevention month'.
5. Governments and NGOs need to develop hotlines for children in order to allow them to report situations of violence and access concerned referral services. This must be combined with the training of youth peer counsellors.
6. Governments need to consolidate data collection systems at local and regional levels.
7. Governments need to carefully review existing laws to ensure that adolescents are properly protected against sexual exploitation.
8. Governments need to develop legislation to protect children from solicitation and access to pornographic material on the internet.
9. Governments need to put in place an ombudsperson for children.
10. NGOs and civil society entities must be allowed to file charges against perpetrators of violence.

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### Violence in the community and on the streets:

1. Parent training: Promote and support programmes to increase the capacity of mothers, fathers and other care-givers to understand and protect their children. Programmes need to include recognition of parents' own needs for support and training for improved 'self care' as well as understanding of the importance of early childhood development.
2. Outlet programmes for and with children and youth: Programmes are needed that give children and youth opportunities to have 'outlets' to vent their frustrations, share experiences of violence and express their feelings (using models such as 'adventure therapy', play therapy and creative arts) in order to help break the cycle of violence. Programmes must be integrated as part of the formal education curriculum with credit versus seen as optional after-school activities and available through community centres and drop-in centres for street children. Partnerships with young people, especially those who have experienced or participated in violence, is critical to reach out to other children.
3. Access to quality social work services, counselling and conflict resolution training: Increased access to user-friendly counselling and support for conflict resolution is very important, with recognition of the need for more proactive versus reactive counselling; standardized training with accreditation and licensing for both professional and para-professional social workers and counsellors and resource networks for better sharing of information/tools.
4. More child-sensitive and effective legal system: There is need for speedier trials and sentencing for under 18 year-olds while still maintaining basic human rights principles including privacy rights. Also independent legal aid and complaint systems are needed in the community to deal with police brutality and harassment.
5. Massive public education and social mobilization: Increased public information and advocacy on child rights and violence is needed at all levels in order to both influence politicians and provide information to the general public. This needs to include youth-friendly and accessible information, and training of the media to promote more appropriate reporting and to stop glorifying violence and perpetrators.
6. New donor community practices: Development of new donor agency practices that support rather than undermine small community-based 'self-help' programmes needs to be promoted. In order to encourage and support community and youth initiatives (such as those in response to violence against children) agencies need to be more flexible and less demanding.
7. Develop a consolidated national strategy to address violence since it is a cross-cutting issue: Where are we? Where do we want to go? How do we get there? What are the issues? Look at real issues and come up with a national policy to deal with the problems. Involve stakeholders. Tap into funding from a coordinated body.

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8. Strengthen the 'response' system: governments should enforce the national youth policies that exist: train more counsellors, social workers and other relevant professionals; educate law enforcement officials; improve law enforcement officers' response to juvenile offenders, especially repeats offenders; clear the bottlenecks in the legal system to minimize the detention period for children in conflict with the law; make violence as important an issue as any other brutal crime.
9. Strengthen preventive support systems: churches need to be encouraged to look at all aspects of children, not just spiritual ones, and develop programmes that will provide this support; tap into community leaders to assist with positive interventions with children.
10. Support 'victims' who have no recourse, legally or socially: public awareness and education to address the sense of shame, helplessness, stigma; break the culture of silence through advocacy; improve measures to encourage people to report cases of sexual abuse in communities; access to quality social work services and counselling
11. Work with media: make media be a part of the solution for changing behaviours, not just an agent for creating problems; use cultural icons to promote positive messages through multi-media channels.
12. Respect cultural differences: data collection should be context-sensitive – international data collection tools miss out on the real situation since they are unaware of the cultural context; donor agencies should respect indigenous knowledge; there is need for more depth into issues pertaining to subgroup cultures and problems – technical expertise needs to go to the minorities; more research is needed to document the magnitude and types of problems for violence against children in specific social settings.

### **Violence in schools:**

1. Sensitize people to the issues associated with corporal punishment and introduce effective alternative measures of discipline to teachers, parents and care-givers.
2. Take a holistic approach to dealing with conflict and alternatives to dealing with issues of violence in schools. Some recommendations include establishing character clubs, counselling centres and mentorship programmes that are already present in some countries.
3. Countries should do assessments of vulnerability of youth to First World cultural penetration and seek to devise multisectoral approaches to address negative impacts.
4. Raise awareness on violence against self, and empower peers, teachers, parents and care-givers to provide support and help before the young person commits suicide.
5. Design and implement programmes to build self-esteem and better understand psychosocial development of children from early childhood.

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6. Tap into the strength of young people to help in reduction of violence in the schools. Allow young people to contribute to developing solutions
7. Establish Health and Family Life Education programmes in all schools
8. NGOs looking to work with young people and families should be properly supported by government and international organizations
9. Explore the possibility of strengthening spiritual bases as a means of preventing violent behaviour and building resilience in our youth.
10. Public education and dialogue at all levels regarding discipline of children – examining corporal punishment, its consequences for children and alternatives. This needs to include full participation of relevant parties including parents and other care-givers, teachers, children and community leaders in order to promote mutual understanding and ownership.
11. Harmonization of national laws regarding violence in schools with international standards and development of implementation plans with support and resources. Implementation plans need to include monitoring and control mechanisms that protect the rights and promote the responsibilities of children, teachers and parents.
12. Development and piloting of culturally and developmentally appropriate models regarding discipline and classroom management that support the development of children towards a loving and supportive society in the Caribbean.
13. Participatory research, both quantitative and qualitative, of different systems of school discipline including cost and benefit analysis to determine the most suitable and effective strategies and to provide evidence for policy and planning.

### **Violence in institutional settings:**

1. Promote alternatives to institutional care. (Alternatives such as restorative justice, family placement, foster care and adoption).
2. Family planning for adolescents.
3. There should be a regional discussion on family planning/sex education, age of consent and mandatory reporting.
4. Independent human rights institutions/organizations for children for each country.
5. Support for parents in all forms: financial and otherwise.
6. Prevent institutionalization and deprivation of liberty by strengthening social and other support to families and by articulating clear policies on changes in the care and justice systems.

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7. Articulate de-institutionalization policies and systems reforms that will ensure the provision of alternative options for children needing care or being in conflict with the law.
8. Adopt a child protection Act that includes clear standards for services and professionals working with children, provides for essential training, screening, ensures separation of children from adults and by cause of placement, individual child care and regular medical inspection, periodic inspection and monitoring, establishment of independent complaint and redress mechanisms, and use of residential care only for therapeutic purposes and for limited periods of time.
9. Adopt legislation and procedures for accreditation and licensing of all non-state service providers to ensure compliance with the established child care standards.
10. Adopt specific laws that ensure physical integrity of the child and prohibits any kind of degrading treatment of children especially corporal punishment and establishes these as minimum standards for professional behaviour.
11. To reduce societal stigmatization of children leaving institutions, promote 'affirmative action' and opportunities where they can excel and become role models eg sports, arts, dance etc. and forge partnerships with media.

### **Violence in the work environment:**

1. Document child labour and related violence issues in the Caribbean region and ensure wide dissemination of findings.
2. Strengthen public awareness on children's rights and impact of violence against children
3. Support the development of community programmes including parent education workshops where the role of the adult/community in taking responsibility for the care and protection of children is reinforced and encouraged. These programmes need to build on faith-based organizations and other NGOs and on the active participation of children (peer-to-peer)
4. Establish a coordinating body to monitor trends and the impact of violence on children and handle/monitor complaints from children victims of violence in the workplace.
5. Develop comprehensive training programmes for the judiciary on child-sensitive approaches to handling children's complaints and testimonies.
6. Integrate rehabilitation and recovery into community services moving away from the institutionalized setting for recovery.
7. Support capacity building within government ministries and NGOs to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities to assess impact of services on children.



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8. Ensure that national legislation is harmonized with international child labour standards; articulate mandates and measures for their full implementation; monitor law enforcement especially with regard to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour (as per ILO 182); provide for periodic progress reporting and make findings available to the public in general.
9. Treat poverty and exclusion as human rights violations; prioritize poverty reduction programmes in budget allocations, identify time-bound goals and include prevention and elimination of child labour as indicators to measure progress.
10. Challenge traditional ‘apprenticeship’ practices and complacency with child labour as factors that perpetuate poverty; engage in participatory research that is empowering for respondents; and forge partnerships with media to organize public debates and broad education and awareness-raising campaigns.
11. Improve research methodology and involve children to reveal all hidden forms of violence against children in the work place, especially in domestic work, on family farms and enterprises and in the tourist industry.
12. Document and evaluate all government and non-government programmes that are aiming at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic exploitation and violence against children for their effectiveness, publicize the findings and establish a clear set of criteria for ‘good practice’.
13. Call on CARICOM to establish a ‘barometer’ on the Caribbean states’ performance regarding progressive elimination of all forms of exploitation and violence against children; use the Concluding Observations of the CRC Committee as benchmarks for performance and publish once a year the ‘barometer’ report.

### **On legal frameworks:**

1. One Act for children covering the various legislations dealing with children in each country.
2. Review laws dealing with children
3. Establish bodies eg., ombudsman to deal with matters relating to children
4. Expansion of legislation to include the (alleged) offender leaving the home
5. Separate family courts.
6. CARICOM to take more active role.
7. Initiate a regional discourse to banish corporal punishment.
8. Law should be passed banishing all forms of corporal punishment.
9. Implement laws relating to gangs.
10. Well-funded education programmes.
11. Programmes that bring together different agencies and institutions dealing with children.

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12. Well-trained counsellors to deal with children who have been taken away from their homes.
13. Have a national research and documentation centre.
14. Public education awareness programmes should be implemented.
15. Universities to set up database.
16. Set up implementation mechanisms foreseen by the law.
17. Train police continually at both entry and service levels to be more child-sensitive. Training should take place at police academies, police stations etc.
18. Data should be collected on children in the justice system.
19. Surveys of the state of children in schools or conduct social supervision of families.
20. Develop and fund restorative justice programmes targeting teenagers, especially those in gangs.
21. Support more longitudinal studies (early childhood to adolescence).
22. Research and monitoring of public spending on violence prevention and rehabilitation programmes – make the process ongoing; should be linked to national outcomes.
23. Research on children abused while in the justice system.
24. Government should prioritize programmes they need to have for children.
25. Support Parliaments and all other relevant bodies in securing consistency in legislation and compliance with all applicable international standards for the prevention of and response to violence against children. This should include the explicit prohibition in the law of all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment.
26. Support judiciary and all other law enforcement bodies, at national, regional and international levels, in making existing legislation for the protection of children against violence effectively applied countrywide for all children alike, without any form of discrimination. To that end, compilation and sharing of existing landmark judicial decisions and jurisprudence should be encouraged and legal aid made available for all child victims, free of charge and without any condition.
27. Making the rights of the child widely known and understood amongst the population at large, including the children themselves should be part of every strategy to effectively address violence against children. Everybody should be made aware of the concluding observations of the CRC Committee and all efforts should be made to guarantee that immediate and effective action is taken to address them.







