



UNICEF  
Innocenti Research Centre

# A Study on Violence against Girls

Report on the International  
Girl Child Conference

9–10 March 2009  
The Hague, the Netherlands

A joint publication of the  
UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre  
and the Government of the Netherlands



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This publication was jointly developed by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and the Government of the Netherlands. It includes a background document prepared by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (IRC), and summarizes the discussions and outcomes of the International Conference on Violence against the Girl Child held in The Hague from 9–10 March 2009.

The conference addressed gaps in knowledge, research and responses to violence against girls in the home and family, and was a follow-up to the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.

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# Acknowledgements

The UNICEF **Innocenti Research Centre** provided academic support and developed the conference background document. *A Study on Violence against Girls, Report on the International Girl Child Conference, 9–10 March 2009, The Hague, the Netherlands*, was produced by Karin Heissler and overseen by Susan Bissell and Lena Karlsson, under the overall guidance of Marta Santos Pais, UNICEF IRC Director.

The report was prepared in close cooperation with Janet Alberda, Femke Reudler Talsma and Carola van den Brink of the Human Rights Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands.

Catherine Way edited the report, Pamela Knight copy-edited the text and Allyson Alert-Atterbury of UNICEF IRC was editorial project manager.

As the conference was dedicated to the ‘girl child’, the cover of this report presents the faces of a diversity of girls from across the world.

The image that appears most prominently is of Nojoud, a girl from Yemen. Like many other girls around the world – and indeed, a subject that was discussed over the course of the workshop – she was married at a very young age to a much older man. Nojoud was ill-treated in the marriage and took the initiative to divorce her husband, which she fought and won in the courts.

As both Minister Verhagen and Ms. Brandt explained in their speeches, Nojoud has returned home and is now living with her parents and siblings and continuing her education. She has aspirations to become a lawyer. Nojoud was informed about the event taking place in The Hague and was provided with copies of the conference documents.

The International Girl Child Conference and this Outcome Document have been realized with the support of many organizations, experts, advisers and volunteers. We would therefore like to express our gratitude to everyone who made this conference and its outcomes possible.

A special acknowledgement goes to Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro who, by presenting the important in-depth United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children, inspired the Government of the Netherlands to put children’s rights, and especially violence against girls, high on the agenda. The Government of the Netherlands and the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre would like to express our gratitude for his role in the conference.

Professor Jaap Doek is also thanked for his ongoing involvement with the Girl Child Conference.

## **Conference Speakers (in order of appearance)**

**Mr. Maxime Verhagen**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands

**Mr. André Rouvoet**, Minister for Youth and Families, the Netherlands

**Ms. Michele Jankanish**, Director, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour/ International Labour Organization

**Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro**, Independent Expert, United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children, Research Coordinator at the Center for the Study on Violence, University of São Paulo, Brazil

**Ms. Jet Bussemaker**, State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport, the Netherlands

**Professor Jaap Doek**, Professor of Law, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

**Ms. Marta Santos Pais**, Director, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

**Mr. Bert Koenders**, Minister for Development Cooperation, the Netherlands

**Mr. Ernst Hirsch Ballin**, Minister of Justice, the Netherlands

**Ms. Daisy Mafubelu**, Assistant Director-General, Family and Community Health, World Health Organization

**Ms. Mona Amin**, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, Egypt

**Ms. Cindy (Cynthia) Kiro**, Children’s Commissioner, New Zealand

**Ms. Yoka Brandt**, Director-General for International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands.

Many institutions, organizations and individuals contributed to the final success of the conference. Gratitude is hereby expressed to the following important contributors to the conference and its outcomes:

### **International Organizations**

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Council of Europe (COE).

### **Interministerial Coordinating Committee**

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport; Ministry for Youth and Families; and Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

### **Working Group Preparation Committee**

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport; Ministry for Youth and Families; and Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, MOVISIE: The Netherlands centre for social development, UNICEF Netherlands; ECPAT/Defence for Children; Netherlands Youth Institute; Pharos: Knowledge Centre on Refugees, Migrants and Health; Plan Netherlands; and International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI).

### **NGO/Expert Advisory Panel**

TNO (Institute of Applied Scientific Research in the Netherlands), Netherlands Youth Institute, UNICEF Netherlands, MOVISIE, Plan Netherlands, Pharos, ICDI, Cordaid, International Child Support, Child Helpline International, ISS (Institute of Social Studies), ECPAT/Defence for Children, Terre des Hommes, Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO) and Save the Children.

### **Working Group Experts**

*Australia:* Pathways Australia; *Barbados:* Caribbean Child Support Initiative; *Belgium:* Euronet-FGM; *Burundi:* HealthNet International; *Canada:* York University, Ontario; *Colombia:* Asociación Afecto Contra el Maltrato Infantil (Association against Child Maltreatment); *Egypt:* National Council for Childhood and Motherhood; *India:* Childline India; *Indonesia:* Plan Indonesia; *Kenya:* Childline Kenya, Forum for African Women Educationalists, Plan Kenya; *Netherlands:* Free University Amsterdam, IOT (Turkish Community Advisory Committee; Mijn Kind Online,

Ministry of Justice, SPIOR Rotterdam (Platform of Islamic Organisations Rijnmond), VON: Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands; *Pakistan:* Bedari; *Senegal:* Plan West Africa, Tostan; *Sri Lanka:* Home-Start Lanka; *Turkey:* Amnesty International, Women for Women's Human Rights; *Uganda:* Parents Deal Group; *United Kingdom:* Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, Forced Marriage Unit, Home-Start International, University of Edinburgh; *United States of America:* Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse, Wellesley Centers for Women; and *Yemen:* Sana'a University.

### **Conference Moderator**

Ms. Chazia Mourali.

# Abbreviations

CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (United States)	MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (United Kingdom)	NGO	non-governmental organization
COPINE	Combating Paedophile Information Networks in Europe (a project)	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CRIN	Child Rights Information Network	OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys	SMS	Short Message Service
DWG	Donors Working Group on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting	SPIOR	Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond (Platform of Islamic Organisations Rijnmond, the Netherlands)
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes	StopX	Stop Xploitation (a website aimed at young people providing information on the issue of sexual exploitation)
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists	UN	United Nations
FGM/C	female genital mutilation/cutting	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank	UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services (India)	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ICT	information and communications technology	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
INGO	international non-governmental organization	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization	UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
IOT	Turkish Community Advisory Committee (the Netherlands)	URL	Uniform Resource Locator (on the World Wide Web)
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO)	VGT	Virtual Global Taskforce
IRC	Innocenti Research Centre (UNICEF)	VON	Vluchtelingen-Organisaties Nederland (Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands)
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks (part of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)	WCW	Wellesley Centers for Women (Massachusetts, United States)
ISP	Internet service provider	WHO	World Health Organization
ISPCAN	International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect	WWHR-	Women for Women's Human Rights (Turkey) New Ways
IWF	Internet Watch Foundation		
KPN	Koninklijke KPN N.V., also Royal KPN N.V. (a telecommunications company in the Netherlands)		



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## Foreword

In 2006, United Nations Member States welcomed the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, the first comprehensive global attempt to address the scale and impact of violence against children.

One of the key recommendations of the Study specifically addresses the gender dimension of violence, calling on States to ensure that programmes to counter violence are designed and implemented from a gender perspective that takes account of the different risks faced by girls and boys.

From 9–10 March 2009, the International Conference on Violence against the Girl Child took place in The Hague, the Netherlands. The conference reflects the commitment of the Government of the Netherlands and UNICEF to safeguard the rights of women and children all over the world and to move the issue of violence against girls up the political agenda.

The conference was initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands and organized jointly by the Ministry for Youth and Families, the Ministries of Justice; Health, Welfare and Sport; Social Affairs and Employment, and the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

The specific focus of the conference was on violence against girls in the home and family setting, since it is in these places, above all, that children should feel safe, protected and free from violence. In reality, however, it is in these places that girls often experience violence and abuse.

Building on the UN Study on Violence against Children led by Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, there is a clear need to follow up on the study's recommendations, putting the prevention of violence and the protection of affected children centre stage. The conference's slogan – 'Making Recommendations Work' – was therefore deliberately chosen to highlight the need for concrete action.

And indeed, experts from all over the world tried to do precisely that. Policymakers, UN organizations, other international organizations, academics and representatives of civil society organizations actively participated in the discussions, studying the causes of different forms of violence against girls in the home and family, assessing the potential for change and anticipating more effective ways of preventing violence.

The conference has resulted in a set of concrete recommendations to take the study's messages forward and to help move from commitments into action. To be successful, we need to build upon the significant normative framework that already exists on children's rights and to ensure that girls are effectively protected from all forms of violence.

We should go beyond a fragmented or 'compartmentalized' approach by pinpointing the links between different forms of violence and acknowledging that girls' vulnerable position is often due to a combination of factors.

Girls as well as boys need to be at the centre of our actions to put effective child protection systems in place. Children have been vocal in advocating the prevention of violence, and the voices of girls and boys need to be listened to, so that their needs, perspectives and experiences may be better understood and used to influence policy development and practice.

We must never lose sight of the rights and human dignity of the child. Similarly, we must never ignore our shared responsibility to end violence against children. As Professor Pinheiro concluded in the UN Study: "No violence against children is justifiable; all violence against children is preventable."



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**Maxime Verhagen**

**Marta Santos Pais**

A blue ink signature of Maxime Verhagen, consisting of a stylized 'M' and 'V'.

A blue ink signature of Marta Santos Pais, written in a cursive style.

Minister of Foreign Affairs  
The Netherlands

Director, UNICEF  
Innocenti Research Centre



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*Together with three young participants, Maxime Verhagen, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, officially opened the International Girl Child Conference on 9 March 2009.*

## Outcomes of the International Girl Child Conference

**In general, the participants in the March 2009 International Girl Child Conference:**

1. Welcome the contribution of the Government of the Netherlands to the mandate of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and invite other United Nations (UN) Member States to follow this example;
2. Urge the UN Secretary-General to appoint the Special Representative on Violence against Children as soon as possible<sup>1</sup>, so that he or she can begin implementing the mandate without further delay;
3. Invite the Special Representative on Violence against Children to start addressing the position of the girl child as soon as possible;
4. Recognize the importance of innovative approaches within the community, self-help and other programmes and best practices. Real change is only possible if it comes from within, at local level, and if it has political support;

---

<sup>1</sup> On 1 May 2009, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of Marta Santos Pais, Director of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, to the position.

5. Welcome the Child Rights Home in Leiden (the Netherlands) and other best practices such as child helplines, and pledge to promote these or similar positive initiatives in various other countries;
6. Pledge to use the conference and its outcomes as advocacy tools to combat violence against girls at different levels (local, national, international), using the media to expose and combat cruel practices where possible;
7. Call on the Government of the Netherlands to encourage other governments at ministerial level to move combating violence against the girl child up the agenda;
8. Call on the Government of the Netherlands to continue to promote inter-agency cooperation between actors such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO);
9. Urge all governments to take a leading role in combating violence against girls, and to take ownership of the problem, recognizing that the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the framework for action;
10. Recommend that regional organizations such as the Council of Europe, the African Union, the Organization of American States and the European Union actively promote effective and adequate measures to prevent violence against children, with a special focus on girls and their right to be protected from all forms of violence;
11. Underline the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships (including government, civil society, international organizations and the private sector) in making progress in combating violence against girls;
12. Underline the importance of child and youth participation in preventing and addressing violence against girls;
13. Welcome the suggestion that the conference's website be maintained, so that participants can keep in touch and continue to collect and share best practices and experiences in connection with combating violence against the girl child in the home and family;
14. Welcome a follow-up in November 2009, to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, where the Government of the Netherlands will present the overall results of the International Girl Child Conference.

**More specifically, the participants in the March 2009 International Girl Child Conference:**

**On the sub-theme  
Child abuse – See and Act**

1. Urge all actors involved in preventing and combating child abuse not to compete with each other, but to cooperate as effectively as possible;
2. Advise governments to monitor and oversee cooperation between these actors, using specific targets, indicators and benchmarks;
3. Invite actors to 'See and Act': When reporting child abuse, be prepared to contribute to solving the problem. Government and non-governmental actors should cooperate, organizing and funding the programmes and measures necessary;
4. Equip communities to solve problems. Avoid over-professionalizing, and acknowledge that child abuse is everyone's problem; make resources available to the community.

**On the sub-theme  
Parenting – Helping Parents**

1. Recommend that a multidisciplinary approach seeking to target and involve both adults and children be based on existing programmes: Different disciplines can work together;
2. Recommend extending the UN database on violence against women, which is being established with the support of funds from the Government of the Netherlands, to include information about programmes that are effective in preventing violence against children. Use it as a forum to exchange experience and best practices, particularly of programmes implemented in different social and cultural settings;
3. Recommend making parenting a mainstream issue, using children's rights as a framework;
4. Advise that an international rating system be set up, to enable comparison of successful policies in each country.

**On the sub-theme  
Girls and the Internet  
– Outcomes of World Congress III**

1. Support research into identifying factors that can protect girls from Internet abuse (e.g. age, education, level of parental involvement);
2. Recommend learning more about how perpetrators operate, so that more effective anti-abuse measures can be introduced;
3. Recommend that governments require Internet service providers (ISPs) to report and remove abusive websites;
4. Recommend conducting further research into, and evaluation of, Internet abuse, focusing on education and awareness-raising, with the involvement of children;
5. Support the development and effective implementation of codes of conduct for ISPs.

**On the sub-theme  
Domestic violence – The Girl Child:  
Witness and victim of domestic violence**

1. Acknowledge that violence against girls can be prevented by improving the education of girls and boys, of professionals working with children and young people, and of parents;
2. Acknowledge that every child that witnesses domestic violence reacts in a different way and therefore requires an individual approach;
3. Advise governments and civil society in industrialized countries to broaden their perspectives by participating in working visits to less privileged countries, exchanging and comparing knowledge and experiences and thus improving awareness of the universal needs of children;
4. Advise that the number of specialists, and the amount of grass-roots work, be increased;
5. Advise governments and all relevant actors to continue to invest in parental participation and the participation and involvement of children and young people.

**On the sub-theme  
Female genital mutilation/cutting  
– Power of the Community**

1. Recommend that governments improve the collection of disaggregated and reliable data in order to enhance the effectiveness of their actions to promote the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and call on the UN, including WHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to support governments in their efforts to do so;
2. Advise governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to adopt a holistic approach and facilitate the building of bridges between communities in the countries of origin and diaspora organizations in Europe, with a view to inspiring both to abandon FGM/C. This will encourage such communities to take matters into their own hands and develop strategies adapted to their own context. For example:
  - a. A high level of expertise is available at grass-roots level. This should be drawn on much more frequently. Ensure that the necessary financial and other resources are available;
  - b. Develop exchange programmes at community level between countries, especially between European and African countries;
  - c. Extend the Short Message Service (SMS) network between affected countries in Africa and the diaspora in European countries (with support from UNICEF);
  - d. Adopt a holistic approach: FGM/C is not an isolated issue;
  - e. Set up a network among religious organizations, encouraging leaders of different religions to take a stand against FGM/C;
  - f. Improve the self-reliance and empowerment of immigrant women in Europe;
  - g. Make more frequent use of the media and the Internet, since these are powerful tools for stimulating national dialogue;
  - h. Include youngsters in activities: As tomorrow's parents, they have an important role to play;
  - i. Involve famous role models as agents of change;
  - j. Strengthen existing networks rather than creating new ones.

**On the sub-theme**  
**Forced and early marriage**  
**– You Have the Right to Choose**

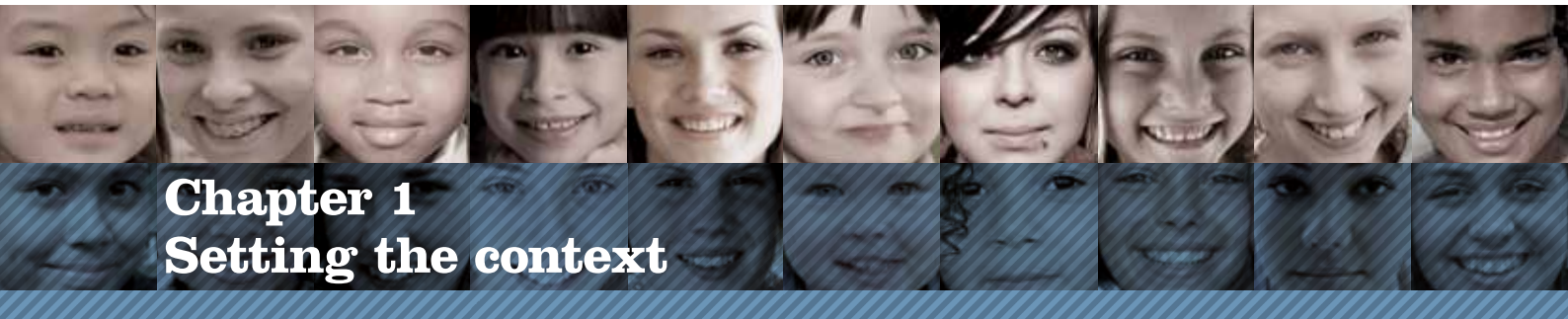
1. Recommend that the practice of forced and early marriage be abandoned, and emphasize that this is everybody's responsibility (governments, NGOs, the community and individuals), and empower girls and communities to promote change: Awareness, mobilization, action and protection are key;
2. Emphasize the urgency of abandoning the practice of forced and early marriage, especially in the context of the current financial crisis where child protection concerns may be heightened; emphasize the importance of legislation, e.g. ensuring the free and full consent of bride and groom, registering the birth and marriage of girls and raising the age of marriage;
3. Advise that safe spaces be created where girls can meet, learn about their rights and form bonds with other girls and women;
4. Advise that the prevention of and response to forced and early marriage be included in the curriculum of relevant professionals (health professionals, judges, lawyers, police, teachers, etc.);
5. Acknowledge that communities have to be involved in drawing up effective measures to stop the practice of forced and early marriage: Trust and sustainable cooperation are the key.

**On the sub-theme**  
**Honour-related violence against girls**  
**– No More Violence, More Honour**

1. Recommend that religious leaders from all faiths be involved in human rights/human rights violations issues;
2. Recommend that peer-to-peer projects be implemented within communities (involving boys, girls, fathers and mothers);
3. Recommend that governments collect systematically and adequately disaggregated data on human rights violations at national and community levels;
4. Recommend that governments abolish legal provisions that treat human rights violations more leniently than similar, non-honour-related crimes, and lift formal barriers to the return of abandoned girls.

**On the sub-theme**  
**Son preference – Transforming Son Preference into Non-Preference**

1. Acknowledge that new interpretations of relevant laws are needed in order to redefine the concept of family to ensure that protection extends to all living in the domestic domain (girls, people with disabilities, domestic workers);
2. Recommend that governments amend family and other laws that discriminate against girls, with a view to ensuring that they receive equal treatment and have equal chances in life;
3. Advise that role models among girls and boys, young people, families, community leaders, organizations, members of Parliament and civil servants be encouraged, as they can act as agents of change. They should be put in contact with one another, to strengthen their advocacy for equality of the sexes;
4. Recommend supporting efforts to make the education system (including formal, non-formal and informal education), sports organizations, the media and other relevant actors more gender sensitive;
5. In the interests of producing new narratives on gender equality, encourage organizations to review and, if necessary, question accepted norms of femininity and masculinity that perpetuate gender stereotypes and discrimination and that may lead to son preference. This process of reconstruction needs to be stimulated at personal, community and national levels. Channels through which this process will be realized need to be contextualized. For example, film might be an appropriate vehicle in India, while theatre might be better suited for Pakistan, and rap/oral history in countries of West Africa.



## Chapter 1 Setting the context

### UN Study on Violence against Children

Building on the recommendations adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in 2001 the United Nations General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth study on violence against children (resolution 56/138). Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro led its development, and three United Nations organizations were asked to support the process: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children was developed over a three-year period in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders from across the globe. It was presented to the General Assembly in October 2006 (United Nations General Assembly 2006b). It is the first United Nations study to consult with children and reflect their views and recommendations. A number of other key sources were also involved. A questionnaire was developed and circulated to governments; consultations were held at regional, subregional and national levels; data were compiled from official statistics and other reports; expert thematic group meetings were held; international organizations, civil society organizations (both international non-governmental organizations [INGOs] and national NGOs) submitted reports; and field visits were conducted (Pinheiro 2006: 8-9).

To accompany the document shared with the General Assembly, a more comprehensive book was also produced (Pinheiro 2006). To disseminate the findings among children and young people, two publications were prepared and distributed together: *The United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against*

*Children: Adapted for children and young people and Our Right to Be Protected*. The first book provides background information on the study and on issues of violence against children. The second, an activity book, provides suggestions and activities for young people and peer educators working with girls and boys aged 12–18 on violence against children. A third publication, *Safe You and Safe Me*, was prepared by Save the Children to make the findings accessible for children aged 7–12 years old (Save the Children Sweden 2006a).

The study examines violence against children in homes, families, schools, alternative care institutions and detention facilities, workplaces and communities. It does not specifically address children in armed conflict since this important area falls under the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, building on the study on the *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (1996), conducted by Graça Machel.

Meanings are important, and this is certainly the case with understanding what constitutes violence against children because meanings determine how and what is recognized as violence and how it is addressed. The study uses the comprehensive definition of violence contained in article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.” It also draws on the explanation in WHO’s *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002), which defines violence against children as:

**“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an individual or group, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity” (Pinheiro 2006: 4).**



The findings show that violence against children is a matter of grave concern, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, gender, ethnic origin and age. Some groups or categories of children are especially vulnerable to specific forms of violence. The study identifies gender as playing a key role in this regard, “as girls and boys are at different risk for different kinds of violence” (Pinheiro 2006: 13). In one of the study’s 12 overarching recommendations, Professor Pinheiro urges States to adopt a gender approach to designing and implementing policies and programmes to prevent and address violence (United Nations General Assembly 2006b: 27).

Many forms of violence remain hidden (United Nations General Assembly 2006b). Major reasons for this include fear and stigma. The need for social acceptance is another significant factor. Moreover, many types of violence are invisible because there is no safe or trusted place for children or adults to report it. All data on the prevalence and incidence of violence against children must therefore be treated with caution.

The report notes that certain forms of violence – for example, sexual exploitation, trafficking and armed conflict – receive the bulk of attention, whereas other types, particularly those that take place within the home and family setting, are largely ignored (Pinheiro 2006). Indeed, as acknowledged in research and policy circles, there has been hesitation to pursue children’s rights in the domestic sphere (UNICEF IRC 2005b: x).

## **Actions since the release of the study**

Following the release of the study in 2006, Professor Pinheiro led the first year of dissemination and follow-up, focusing particularly on implementation of its recommendations. Even before the study was finalized, however, multiple actors had started to address areas of concern. These included United Nations organizations, States, INGOs/NGOs and other civil society actors, among them children and young people. For example, acknowledging the need for multisectoral coordination to address violence against children, the Inter-Agency Group on Violence Against Children was established in 2005 with the participation of relevant United Nations organizations

and NGOs. Through regular consultations and information exchange, the group seeks to promote coordination, coherence and consistency in activities undertaken by the member organizations. In so doing, the group supports implementation of the study recommendations.

INGOs, NGOs and other civil society actors are also contributing in other ways in the follow-up process. For example, the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) hosts on its website a platform for civil society follow-up to the recommendations (<[www.crin.org/violence](http://www.crin.org/violence)>). Information about actions being undertaken by states, NGOs and INGOs, children and young people are posted on the site. The website StopX<sup>2</sup> has recently been launched for young activists against sexual exploitation of children. It provides space for young people to share and discuss ideas, information and experiences.

Nine regional consultations were held to provide technical expertise and input during development of the study. Many of the mechanisms established during the preparation process have continued in various manifestations to follow-up on the recommendations. For example, a meeting in South Asia in May 2005 resulted in the formation of the South Asia Forum for Ending Violence Against Children. It comprises government representatives from the eight countries of the region. Priority themes were identified, along with time-bound goals for implementation and follow-up. In August 2008, the forum held its second consultation. In addition to serving as a follow-up to the Secretary-General’s study, it served as the South Asia region’s preparatory meeting for World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents held in Rio de Janeiro (South Asia Coordinating Group on Violence against Women and Children 2009). The group identified priority issues for the region and structured discussions around them: sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; child trafficking for sexual purposes; physical and psychological punishment and its linkages to sexual exploitation; and child marriage.

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<sup>2</sup> StopX (Stop Xploitation) involves a collaboration between Viração; the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child; ECPAT; MTV EXIT (End Exploitation and Trafficking); and UNICEF. See <[www.stopx.org](http://www.stopx.org)>.



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*Early marriage may result in the denial of education or early dropout from school, contribute to health problems and lead to domestic violence. Conference participants emphasized the importance of empowering girls and communities to promote change.*

As part of the ongoing WHO Global Campaign for Violence Prevention, and as its contribution to follow-up on the study, WHO has scaled up its child maltreatment prevention activities. These include collaboration with the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) in developing and disseminating *Preventing Child Maltreatment: A guide for taking action and generating evidence* (2006; see <[http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2006/9241594365\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2006/9241594365_eng.pdf)>). It aims to assist countries to design and deliver programmes to prevent child maltreatment by parents and caregivers.

The guide provides technical advice for professionals working in governments, research institutes and NGOs

on how to measure the extent of child maltreatment and its consequences; how to design, implement and evaluate prevention programmes; and provides a list of important considerations for detecting and responding to child maltreatment. The guide is a practical tool that seeks to help governments implement the study recommendations. WHO and its partners are also working intensively with a small number of low- and middle-income countries to develop model child maltreatment prevention programmes built around the guide, with advice and support from WHO headquarters and regional offices.

Other initiatives have also taken off. In 2005, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe launched a three-year programme, 'Building a Europe

for and with children'. It includes an integrated Children and Violence project to support Member States in implementing international and regional human rights standards and in developing effective legal protection for children against all forms of violence (UNICEF IRC 2005b: x). In addition, the Council of Europe promotes follow-up to the study in line with its Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2009–2011, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 November 2008. The strategy calls on the Council to act as the European forum for follow-up to the recommendations contained in the study; promote a cross-sectoral exchange of experiences between countries; and encourage ratification and implementation of relevant legal instruments, including the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007). It also supports development of the European Policy Guidelines for National Integrated Strategies for the Protection of Children against Violence.

In November 2007, responding to one of the study recommendations, the United Nations General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on Violence against Children for a three-year period (United Nations General Assembly 2006b: 33). The Special Representative was not announced at the time of the conference. However, on 1 May 2009, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of Marta Santos Pais as his Special Representative on Violence Against Children. According to the mandate, the Special Representative will work closely with the other United Nations human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms, especially those focusing on children, to promote implementation of the recommendations of the study. The Special Representative will also identify and share good practices; and will work closely with Member States, the United Nations system and civil society to prevent and address violence against children. For the complete list of responsibilities, see <[www.un.org/ga/62/resolutions.shtml](http://www.un.org/ga/62/resolutions.shtml)>.

The General Assembly's acknowledgement and endorsement of the findings of the UN Study has led to a renewed commitment and momentum to act on the recommendations. This necessitates going beyond awareness-raising and speaking out against various types of violence against children. While advocacy is important, attention is particularly drawn to the need for concrete actions directed at and involving specific actors. In addition to

governments, these include the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector, the media, communities, parents and children to implement the recommendations and to show concrete evidence that positive change is taking place for **all** children.

In 2008, WHO, UNICEF and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collaborated in drafting a multi-country project plan for preventing child maltreatment to enhance early child development. The goal is to reduce maltreatment and its harmful consequences for mental and physical health; human capital and security; and economic development in low- and middle-income countries. The strategy is to build the capacity of these countries to implement action plans, policies and programmes to prevent child maltreatment; reduce its long-term consequences; and enhance child development by promoting safe, stable and nurturing relationships between children and their parents/caregivers.

Prior to the Girl Child Conference, the most recent opportunity to demonstrate commitment to protecting children from violence occurred during World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Rio de Janeiro, November 2008. It brought together representatives from States and civil society, including children and young people. The 'Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents' (2008) – also known as the Rio Outcome Document – identifies a number of time-bound actions intended for specific actors (Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents 2008). Insisting that the Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children cannot be "just one more report that gathers dust on shelves around the world," the Outcome Document not only builds on the work done since the First and Second World Congresses (held in Stockholm, Sweden, and Yokohama, Japan, respectively), but is also based on the recommendations of the study, refers to its recommendations and commits the signatories to its follow-up.

# International Girl Child Conference

From 9–10 March 2009, the International Girl Child Conference took place at the Kurhaus in The Hague. Organized by the Government of the Netherlands<sup>3</sup> in cooperation with the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, the event focused on addressing gaps in knowledge and responses to violence against girls in the home and family. It also aimed to enlist practical follow-up to the United Nations Secretary-General's study. Over the two days, participants shared experiences, knowledge, challenges and good practices about measures to improve girls' lives. The purpose was to identify empirically tested solutions that address aspects of gender-based violence. This information was shared in plenary speeches and discussions (*see* <[www.girlchildconference.com](http://www.girlchildconference.com)> *for transcripts of key speeches*) and in working group sessions (*see chapter 6 for highlights*).

Participants acknowledged the shocks and risks posed by the global economic crisis and climate change to the livelihoods of millions of households across the industrialized and developing worlds. But they reached consensus on the need for giving even greater priority, including political will and resources, to protect children from violence and to ensure that their needs and fundamental human rights are addressed. Moreover, the event served to renew commitment to implement the recommendations in the Secretary-General's study.<sup>4</sup>

The Official Opening and Welcome Address to the International Girl Child Conference was given by Maxime Verhagen, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, who hosted the conference. He highlighted his government's interest in actively addressing the problem of violence against girls. He expressed concern that although violence occurs in every society, many forms are accepted and therefore go unnoticed. The Minister noted that human rights is at the centre of the country's foreign policy and

that promoting and protecting the rights of children according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child occupies a special place in the Netherlands' Human Rights Strategy. Mr. Verhagen highlighted several concrete steps that his government has taken to address violence, including financial support to establish a database within the UN on violence against women, the development of European Union guidelines to address violence against children, and funds to support the work of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Violence against Children. He encouraged conference participants to share experiences and learn from each other, and urged the development of concrete recommendations for action.

André Rouvoet, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Youth and Families in the Netherlands, then spoke. He focused his talk on child abuse, and the policy and action of the Netherlands in this regard. Mr. Rouvoet pointed out that November 2009 marks the 20th anniversary of the Convention. To commemorate this event, the Netherlands is establishing a Children's Rights Centre in Leiden that will open in early 2010. The centre will provide national and international information and education on children's rights, organize events on the subject, and provide classes to groups of children on their rights. The Minister then described several domestic actions taking place to illustrate how the Netherlands is implementing the Convention. First, he mentioned that coordination of youth policy has improved in part due to the creation of the Interministerial Programme for Youth and Families. Mr. Rouvoet pointed out that special advice and reporting centres on child abuse exist throughout the country. He then spoke of the safe home approach, which is a joint initiative of the Ministry for Youth and Families and the Ministry of Justice. It involves support to and creation of a partnership of qualified professionals who engage with children and who are equipped with the skills and resources to identify and address child abuse at an early stage. He also mentioned the development of a reporting code to enable timely action by professionals (including teachers, doctors and nurses) when child abuse is suspected. More work on prevention of abuse, through public information campaigns and parenting support, is also being promoted. Finally, the Minister emphasized that, for enhanced prevention of child abuse, more help is required for parents to equip them with the skills and resources to be able to support the full development of their children.

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<sup>3</sup> The Conference was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, in cooperation with the Ministry for Youth and Families; Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport; Ministry of Justice; and Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 5 of this publication includes a summary of the overarching recommendations as well as those specific to the home and family.

Following a documentary film by ILO-IPEC on the subject of child domestic workers in Haiti, Michele Jankanish, Director, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of ILO, made several key remarks on the subject of children and work. She noted that children, especially girls, play an important, though often under-recognized, role in domestic work. She drew attention to ILO Convention No. 182, which gives special attention to children engaged in 'hidden' sectors of work and noted that 2016 is the target year for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

Ms. Jankanish then drew attention to the Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All, highlighting that achievement of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 concerning the completion of a full course of primary education for all girls and boys will not be possible unless more is done to address child labour and to provide higher-quality education to children. Although the overall numbers of children engaged in work is declining, as a region, Africa is lagging behind. More expansion and replication of good practices, including development and implementation of laws and policies, are required to bring about an effective end to hazardous work.

A keynote address was then made by Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Research Coordinator at the Center for the Study of Violence, Brazil and Independent Expert who led the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. Professor Pinheiro noted that the study marked a turning point for children's rights and that it has raised expectations – especially of the children who were consulted with – that must be realized for the protection and promotion of children's rights. While actions are taking place at international and domestic levels, he said the follow-up must take on greater urgency and priority. This is no less important in the context of the global financial crisis, in which rising rates of poverty bring about greater stress, especially to parents and caregivers, who may find it more difficult to be good parents. Professor Pinheiro also drew attention to the need for better data, especially broken down by age and gender, and including the need for birth registration. He observed that without having accurate demographic data, including on children, it is difficult to promote and implement effective social and economic policies.

Jet Bussemaker, State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport, the Netherlands, spoke on the subject of gender-based violence in particular, violence that

occurs in dependent relationships. She noted that this comprises domestic violence, honour crimes, trafficking and FGM/C. She then drew participants' attention to statistics that show how the Netherlands is affected by all such forms of gender-based violence and that the subject – and especially addressing it – rates high on the political agenda. The State Secretary then traced the evolution of the response to sexual violence in the Netherlands, observing that the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s brought the issues of sexual and domestic violence against women out into the open, making them political and social issues. She noted that in recent decades, the types and complexity of violence are increasing. In order to address them, a comprehensive approach is required. Ms. Bussemaker identified the strategies being adopted: education and prevention, early detection of violence, assistance (including care and shelter) to victims, prosecution of perpetrators, and recovery and aftercare for victims. She pointed out that all steps are interdependent and a necessary part of creating an effective system to address violence. Efforts being taken to realize this goal include: increasing the number of shelters (including for men who are victims of domestic violence or who are threatened with violence); collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Ministry for Youth and Families for implementation of the reporting code; and the creation of a temporary domestic exclusion order, which came into force in early 2009. Under the rules, the offender is required to leave the home, during which time the entire family participates in a support programme for recovery.

With regard to newer types of violence in the Netherlands, such as FGM/C, the State Secretary stressed that additional efforts are required. These include informing at-risk groups and people whose occupations may bring them into contact with girls of immigrant origin about the issue, including the harm the practice causes. Bringing on board key people from within the communities where FGM/C occurs is important. Not only are efforts to stop this practice taking place in the Netherlands, but Ms. Bussemaker also said that collaboration is ongoing with other European countries where the practice also occurs. In her closing remarks, the State Secretary emphasized that cooperation, within and across borders, is essential for preventing and addressing violence in dependent relationships.

Professor Jaap Doek, Emeritus Professor of Law (Family and Juvenile Law), Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam and former member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (1999–2007) and its Chairperson (2001–2007), gave a keynote speech towards the end of the first day. He focused some of his remarks on World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. He stressed the importance of having time-bound recommendations and proposed that an annual follow-up report be prepared and discussed in national parliaments to generate discussion on what actions had been taken to address the sexual exploitation of children. He noted that many States have not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000), and emphasized the need for more implementation and action, rather than the need for more recommendations.

Marta Santos Pais, Director, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, welcomed the commitment of the Government of the Netherlands to children's rights and to the protection of girls from all forms of violence. She acknowledged the strong platform built over the last few years with a solid international legal framework, the knowledge gained from the process of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards, and the inspiration provided by promising experiences and good practices. Furthermore, she highlighted that the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children and its recommendations provided a strong comprehensive strategy to guide the work forward. According to research supported by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, legal reform is an area where visible progress is taking place. But additional efforts are needed – to go beyond the simple condemnation and criminalization of violence against children so that legislation becomes a powerful tool for prevention, social mobilization and behaviour change. Ms. Santos Pais concluded her speech by emphasizing the shared responsibility to take further actions, based on the Convention, and to combat violence against children by listening to and involving girls and boys. She said that the way forward is clearly and simply put in the words of a young girl who participated in World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, "Let us stop talking beauty. Let us act beauty!"

The second day of the conference began with a short film of a visit that Bert Koenders, Minister for Development

Cooperation, the Netherlands, had made the previous week to a health centre in Mali. He then gave an opening speech, which focused on FGM/C. He reiterated that it is a complex and sensitive issue that must be addressed at multiple levels and through several strategies, but especially with grass-roots and community-level involvement and commitment to abandon the practice. Mr. Koenders said that although local ownership and commitment is central to any effective strategy to stop FGM/C, international cooperation and assistance, including development assistance, may also play a supportive role in the process. To this end, the Minister emphasized that promoting the sexual and reproductive rights of women is a priority in development assistance efforts, and that funds have been allocated through different organizations, including community-based efforts, to combat FGM/C in many countries where the Netherlands has a presence. Mr. Koenders then spoke about government efforts to support birth registration, which is a fundamental right, and which also serves as an important strategy in preventing violence against girls – in helping to prevent child marriage, for example.

Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Netherlands' Minister of Justice, then addressed the participants. He observed that while the home is often considered to be the safest and most protective place to be, for many, it is the opposite. The Justice Minister then described the country's policy to combat domestic violence. He identified the role of research in gaining more insights into the problem, and the exchange of information between care agencies, the police, municipalities and government ministries as domestic violence cuts across many sectors and therefore cannot be addressed by any single party alone. He noted that the recently passed Act on Temporary Restraining Orders and the reporting code will become mandatory under national law and will involve multiple stakeholders. Finally, Mr. Hirsch Ballin spoke about the importance of learning from the experiences of other countries in addressing domestic violence, including newer forms emerging in the Netherlands, such as honour crimes.

The first of three keynote addresses was made by Daisy Mafubelu, Assistant Director-General, Family and Community Health, WHO. Concerning violence against children, she highlighted the five priority areas for the organization to address: child abuse and maltreatment, child sexual abuse, child victims of domestic violence, the issues affecting adolescent girls and FGM/C. In this regard, Ms. Mafubelu noted that WHO is working in



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*The UN Study on Violence against Children included a recommendation to build the capacity of teachers, health workers, social workers, lawyers, police and others to more effectively detect and respond to violence against children. Yet, to avoid ‘over-professionalizing’ the issue, communities should be empowered to play an active role.*

partnership with INGOs and UN organizations to develop guidelines for the prevention of child maltreatment and to address intimate partner/domestic violence. While WHO emphasizes prevention, it also seeks to ensure that for children who have been exposed to violence, interventions are early and effective. The Assistant Director-General also noted that adolescent girls, especially those who are married, are often marginalized. Many have limited knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and diseases. More-over, evidence suggests that partner violence among such married girls is high. WHO is providing technical and financial assistance in the health sector in many countries, in order to strengthen their capacities in the area of adolescent and maternal health. It is also advocating for better laws and policies for more effective protection of adolescents. On the topic of FGM/C, Ms. Mafubelu informed the participants that all WHO Member States have agreed to condemn the practice and will work collectively to bring about its abandonment.

Mona Amin, National Project Director of the FGM-free Village Model, Egypt, provided remarks on behalf of H. E. Ambassador Moushira Khattab, Secretary-General of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, Egypt. Ms. Amin explained that the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, headed by the Prime Minister, is the highest body for women and children in the country. Under the council, two initiatives, the Girls' Education Initiative (which aims to close the gender gap in education) and the FGM-free Village Model, seek to address the critical needs and rights of girls, who are often the most marginalized because of gender discrimination and poverty. Ms. Amin then explained to the participants why the FGM-free Village Model has been described as a "success story". For some years, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood has made the abandonment of FGM/C a priority issue. Ms. Amin made it clear that to address FGM/C means recognizing that it is not just a reproductive health issue. The project involves multiple stakeholders at all levels, including line ministries, religious groups and the media. The involvement of many stakeholders, combined with several high-profile cases, has resulted in the issue being brought out into the open, thereby becoming part of popular public discourse. In 2007, the Grand Mufti (who is the highest official of religious law in the country) came out publicly against the practice, which had a very positive impact because of the respect and authority he commands. The project currently works in 120 villages.

In addition to community-level initiatives, there is a toll-free helpline where service and counselling are provided. According to the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), in 2000, of ever-married women, 90 per cent had been circumcised. In 2007, however, 50 per cent of 10- to 18-year-olds had undergone FGM/C, and the project has noted a generational shift towards a reduction of the practice.

The third keynote address was given by Cindy Kiro, then Children's Commissioner, New Zealand. The focus of her talk was how culture, tradition and sometimes religion are mechanisms that perpetuate discrimination against girls. She noted that changing discriminatory and harmful norms takes time, determination and leadership because there are many vested interests that support the maintenance of these practices. She pointed out that a major challenge is that most violence against girls is hidden, often within the home. Ms. Kiro emphasized the need to be careful about 'othering' indigenous or traditional communities, or religious or ethnic minorities, and labelling their practices unacceptable. She urged using the internal networks of these communities themselves, and educating opinion leaders so that they can champion the issues that need to be changed. The Children's Commissioner introduced a project being undertaken by a Maori community organization that is seeking to stop domestic violence among the seven main tribes in New Zealand. The organization employs a 'strengths-based' approach that celebrates positive aspects in the communities where they work. This is in strong contrast to many approaches that take a 'deficit' approach backed up by negative statistics and views that define the Maori people and culture as bad. She furthermore emphasized skills-building in positive parenting practices that reach mothers and fathers and that are shown to result in better-adjusted children. In conclusion, Ms. Kiro said it was important to build a critical mass in order to censure harmful practices. She noted that the international human rights instruments and the UN violence study provide useful tools from which to move forward.

In discussion with Chazia Mourali, the conference moderator, Professor Doek reflected on the two-day event, the major achievements and future steps. He articulated the views of many participants by stating there was no need for any additional recommendations on what must be done to address violence against children and to ensure fulfilment of children's rights. Rather, what is urgently



needed is the implementation of existing and internationally agreed commitments and recommendations for children, including those that emerged from the study.

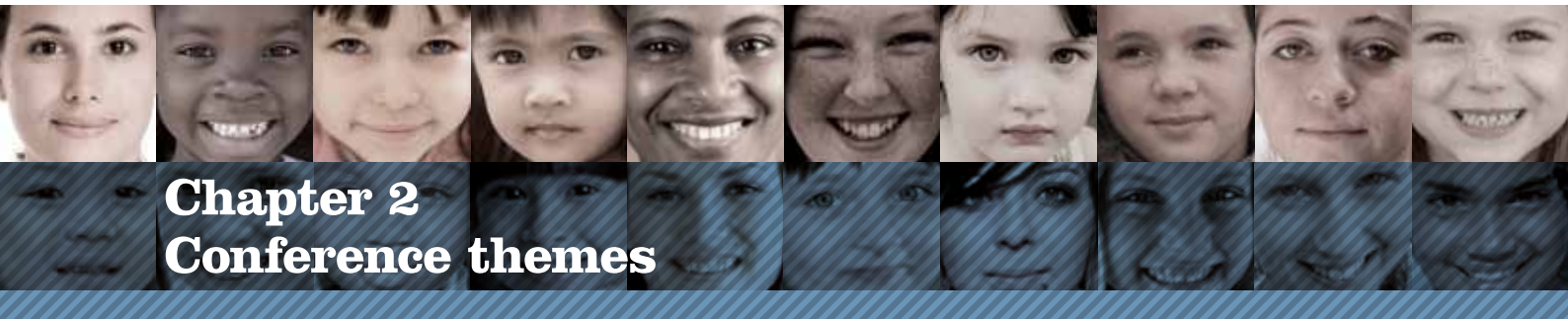
As priority first steps, he urged ratification of international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols; the translation of international commitments into domestic legislation and policies; and the appointment of the United Nations Special Representative on Violence against Children. He also urged further discussions on the themes of the conference and related issues as important follow-up actions to inform the design and implementation of context-appropriate interventions. He noted that these must address the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's study and in other international commitments.

The official closing speech was made by Yoka Brandt, Director-General for International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands. Ms. Brandt began by praising Professor Doek's clear summary and thoughtful comments. She acknowledged the drive and commitment of all the participants, and thanked everyone for their hard work, which had made the conference a resounding success. She appreciated the sharing of ideas and best practices from a variety of settings that took place in the working groups and acknowledged the active participation of young people. Ms. Brandt reiterated that the focus of the event was violence against girls in the home and family – types of violence that are often hidden from view and considered taboo for discussion. She expressed her appreciation that over the previous two days, topics that had often been considered sensitive were discussed in a respectful and open way. This offered hope that such forms of violence, especially their underlying dimensions, can be addressed.

Ms. Brandt noted that all the participants brought their own cultural, social and religious backgrounds to the discussion, yet spoke about the problem of violence against girls in a constructive and thoughtful manner. She encouraged the audience members to continue to work against all forms of violence, and to do so in cooperation with one another in order to bring about positive and lasting changes in the lives of girls and women.

On behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Development Cooperation, Ms. Brandt assured participants that the Government of the Netherlands as a whole is committed to eliminating violence against girls and will keep the issue high on its agenda. She noted that combating violence against girls is a top priority in the government's human rights strategy and is interwoven with several other policy agendas.

In conclusion, she stressed that we must all continue our work to address violence against children, and to keep implementation of the recommendations of Professor Pinheiro's study at the top of the international agenda. Finally, she told participants that the organizers plan to send participants a follow-up questionnaire in September or October 2009 to find out, "Which recommendations have you implemented in your country?" The government ministers who participated in the conference will also be asked to complete the questionnaire. The goal is to make the outcome of the survey public on the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In her closing remarks, Ms. Brandt again thanked everyone who contributed to making the event a success.



## Chapter 2 Conference themes

The materials cited in this document draw heavily on findings from the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children and the Secretary-General's report entitled 'In-depth study on all forms of violence against women', both released in 2006. This is not an exhaustive examination, however; there are many gaps in information about the specific types, incidence and effects of violence on girls. As highlighted in the study, while gender is acknowledged as an under-researched though important aspect of violence against children, data have seldom been disaggregated by the gender of the child.<sup>5</sup> This makes it difficult to tailor prevention and responses to the specific needs of girls and boys.

Bearing this in mind, this report is backed by a review of recent literature conducted and/or supported by a number of international organizations that work on the issue of violence against children, including Save the Children, UNICEF, the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (IRC) and WHO. This literature presents research that has been conducted in a variety of socio-economic and political settings across the world. The information provided is complemented by some important academic articles. Some of this research is dated, but attention is drawn to it because of the work's influence on subsequent academic and policy thinking. This document also incorporates inputs and outcomes of recent international meetings held on related issues, including the November 2008 World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. Highlights from the International Girl Child Conference are incorporated in chapter 6.

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<sup>5</sup> It is also often difficult to find data broken down by other forms of diversity, including age.

**Here follows an overview of each of the eight conference themes:**

### Preventing child abuse

There is an urgent need for comprehensive approaches to preventing child abuse, including improvements in detecting neglect and corporal punishment, as well as in structured decision-making and effective cooperation among stakeholders. 'Neglect' refers to "the failure of parents or carers to meet a child's physical and emotional needs when they have the means, knowledge and access to services to do so; or failure to protect her or him from exposure to danger" (Pinheiro 2006: 54). The definition of corporal punishment used in the study, informed by the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, is "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light" (Pinheiro 2006: 52). Corporal punishment involves not only physical violence but also humiliation. Emotional abuse may be the most damaging form of child maltreatment (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 9).

Scarce data exist on the prevalence and incidence of corporal punishment inflicted on girls and boys, in part because physical violence in the home is, in a majority of States, justified as a means of disciplining children (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 5). Nevertheless, despite the lack of national data, many small-scale studies have been done. According to the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, as of September 2008, only 23 States have prohibited corporal punishment in all settings, including the home. See <[www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)>.

On 2 December 2008, *The Lancet* launched its 'Child Maltreatment Series'<sup>6</sup> ([see <www.thelancet.com/series/child-maltreatment>](http://www.thelancet.com/series/child-maltreatment)). It comprises a series of articles summarizing what is known about the magnitude and consequences of child maltreatment, strategies for preventing it and approaches to providing care and rehabilitation for victims. In his introduction to the series, Professor Pinheiro drew attention to the fact that the articles, like the study, bring together important perspectives on the subject and how to address it, including the perspective of public health. He nevertheless stresses the legal obligations of governments to fulfil children's human right to be free from all forms of violence. All efforts, he says, should focus on "building a child-sensitive child protection system, founded on respect for the human rights of children and illuminated by children's own experiences and views" (Pinheiro 2008: 8).

## Parenting support

Most societies are patriarchal to varying degrees, and patriarchal attitudes are often taught and reinforced within the home. Mothers and fathers as well as other caregivers may require orientation and skills-building in gender-sensitive parenting techniques. This is needed to help change these entrenched attitudes, which perpetuate the inferior status of girls and women, reinforce notions of femininity and masculinity, and may tolerate or promote gender-based discrimination and violence. Examples included in the study show that some of these actions have been effective in preventing and addressing neglect and violence.

To reduce neglect and violence against children, the first line of action is maternal and child health services (Pinheiro 2006: 77). Programmes that focus on improving family functioning – especially family management, problem-solving and positive parenting practices of both mothers and fathers – have proved effective in reducing home and family violence against children, and other negative child health and development outcomes (Pinheiro 2006: 77). Home visits provide emotional support and training to promote positive parental knowledge, skills and behaviour, and they may offer an opportunity to link the family to other community

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the series focuses primarily on the situation of children in high-income countries.

services. Many parents/caregivers need help, not only in providing basic care but also in providing early stimulation and education for their children. Parents of children with disabilities may need additional support, including short-term respite to reduce stress on them and the family as a whole (Pinheiro 2006: 80). Although violence in the home is found at all socio-economic levels, studies from a variety of settings show that low levels of parental education, lack of income and household overcrowding increase the risk of violence against children (Pinheiro 2006: 80). Statistics also show that children growing up in single-parent families and step-families face greater risks to their well-being (UNICEF IRC 2007b: 23).

## Internet-based violence

The Internet plays an important role in transmitting new knowledge. In terms of protecting children, it may facilitate information and advice. However, as noted in a recent study, "The new technology gives people who are sexually interested in children a new medium to network, share information and fantasies, explore new identities and normalize their behaviour" (Swedish Children's Welfare Foundation and Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk under the Council of the Baltic Sea States 2007). Furthermore, the Internet may also expose children to violent and abusive materials (Quayle, Loof and Palmer 2008). Not only may exposure endorse the idea that sexism, for example, is acceptable, but the Internet also facilitates online solicitation or 'grooming' of children for purposes that may lead to exploitation and violence. Cyberbullying, which occurs in conjunction with the proliferation of mobile phones, may also expose children to harm (Pinheiro 2006: 312-315).

Quayle, Loof and Palmer (2008: 3), in their report for ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes), highlight the ease of production and sophistication of image production in 'virtual child pornography'. During 2001–2004, the COPINE Project (Combating Paedophile Information Networks in Europe) observed a large increase in new child abuse images. A study of newsgroups found an estimated 60,000 individual child victims. Especially concerning is that

no one knows who or where these children are, and the children in the new images appear to be younger than previously (Swedish Children's Welfare Foundation and Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk under the Council of the Baltic Sea States 2007: 9). In addition, the technologies offer new ways for young people to harm other youth and themselves (Quayle, Loof and Palmer 2008: 3).

In their review of the most common victims of Internet-based exploitation and violence, Quayle, Loof and Palmer (2008: 41) found little data, including by gender, age and ethnicity. They raise the possibility of a gender bias on the part of some law enforcement agencies and researchers in identifying victims. For example, with regard to abusive images, girls have been identified as the most common victims, and they appear in more extreme forms of images (Quayle, Loof and Palmer 2008: 42). Yet this finding may be the result of ingrained notions of femininity and masculinity, whereby girls and very young children are more likely to be viewed as weak and passive, whereas boys are associated with having agency and power.

Quayle, Loof and Palmer draw attention to an analysis of articles published in social science journals that related to youth exploited through prostitution. One author found that the majority of articles failed to acknowledge the existence of male sex workers (Dennis 2008: 11). When they were discussed, males were assigned more agency than female sex workers, and the chief risk they faced was HIV infection rather than violence. He further noted that with males the question of sexual orientation was always addressed, whereas female sex workers were always assumed to be heterosexual.

## Girls who experience and witness domestic violence

According to the preliminary report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, domestic violence takes many forms:

**“Young girls and children are often victims of sexual assault within the family. Elderly family members and the infirm may also be subject to ill-treatment. Female domestic servants are another category which is often at the receiving end of violence. In extended families, mothers-in-law are often violent towards their daughters-in-law. Though there are many incidents of assault directed against the husband, studies show that they are not so frequent and rarely result in serious injury. Despite all those different types of domestic violence, the most prevalent is the violence of the husband against the wife” (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 1994: para. 118).**

The more recent WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women (2005)<sup>7</sup> establishes that violence against women and girls is a much more serious and widespread problem than previously suspected (García-Moreno et al. 2005). As defined by the IRC, domestic violence includes “violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members” (Kapoor 2000:2). It is manifested through physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse. The forms of violence to which children are exposed vary according to their age and stage of development. Young children are more likely to be abused by primary caregivers and other family members because of their close dependence on them and limited, independent interactions outside the home and family setting, while older children are more likely to be victimized by people outside the home and family (Pinheiro 2006: 50).

Older children still experience domestic violence, however. Studies show that girls face increased risk of murder by intimate partners (dating partners or spouses) or by the families of the intimate partner (Pinheiro 2006: 52). Children of all ages witness domestic violence, and this has been found to be associated with subsequent victimization of females and perpetration of intimate partner violence by males. There is also a link between domestic and other forms of violence. A recent study of trafficking in South-Eastern Europe showed that the vast majority of children and young people who had

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<sup>7</sup> Data were collected from over 24,000 women in 11 countries, representing the following diverse settings: Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Montenegro, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania.



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been trafficked came from families that experienced domestic violence and abuse (Dottridge 2008: 9).

Although child sexual abuse is a particularly egregious form of violence, it is a difficult topic to survey because of sensitivity around the issue. Nevertheless, the WHO Multi-Country Study covering different settings found that up to one in five women report having been sexually abused before the age of 15 (García-Moreno et al. 2005: 13). Sexual violence is a particular concern for girls and women and also contributes to their vulnerability to HIV infection (García-Moreno et al. 2005).

## Community-led efforts to promote abandonment of FGM/C

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is often used as an illustration of harmful traditional practices. According to the statement issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on 'Eliminating female genital mutilation', the term refers to "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons" (OHCHR et al. 2008: 1). Prevalence rates are highest in Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti, followed by Egypt, Sudan and a number of countries in East and West Africa. Cases also occur in other parts of the Middle East and in Asia (Pinheiro 2006: 61). The practice varies widely within countries in terms of geography and population groups. The UN Inter-Agency statement also notes that some girls are also at risk among certain immigrant communities in Europe and North America (OHCHR et al. 2008: 1). Globally, it is estimated that 100 million to 140 million girls and women have undergone FGM/C, and 3 million girls are at risk of undergoing the procedure every year.

Because the practice is deeply entrenched in social, economic and political structures, work towards its abandonment must be comprehensive and involve all levels of society (UNICEF IRC 2005a). Achieving collective agreement by a significant number of families in a community to abandon FGM/C is an important dimension of this process. Research has confirmed that health information alone is insufficient to make people abandon the practice. This is because of

social pressure and the urge to conform to community standards, even among parents who are aware of the health risks and would like to abandon the practice.

Despite positive signs that the prevalence of FGM/C has declined in some countries, and the increasing numbers of women and men who are declaring support for its abandonment, in some areas, as noted by the UN Inter-Agency statement, prevalence remains high (OHCHR et al. 2008: 3). The statement of the UN organizations notes with concern evidence of an increase in the performance of FGM/C by medical personnel as a ‘harm-reduction strategy’ based on the assumption that health risks are reduced when the procedure is performed by trained health professionals (OHCHR et al. 2008: 12; UNICEF IRC 2005a). Yet there is no evidence that involvement of medical personnel reduces the obstetric or other long-term complications (OHCHR et al. 2008: 12).

## Combating early and forced marriage

Early marriage of girls is common in South Asia, East Africa and some countries of Eastern and Southern Africa and the Middle East (Pinheiro 2006: 57). Even where the practice is illegal, laws are often ignored, marriages are not registered, and customary or religious rules are accepted (Pinheiro 2006: 58). The absence of functioning birth registration systems further supports continuation of this practice in many parts of the world (UNICEF IRC 2001: 6; UNICEF IRC 2002). Where economic uncertainty is high, early marriage may be seen as a family survival strategy that also serves the girl’s longer-term financial interests and physical security (UNICEF IRC 2001: 6).

Early and forced marriage has a number of harmful consequences for girls. It usually leads to school drop-out as well as early pregnancy and childbearing, which may harm the health of the girl and her child (UNICEF 2008). Furthermore, girls who are married young are disproportionately affected by violence<sup>8</sup> by their husbands (Pinheiro 2006: 57). According to the 2002 report of

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<sup>8</sup>‘Violence’ in this case refers to physical, sexual and psychological violence, including rape in marriage (Pinheiro 2006: 57).

the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Radhika Coomaraswamy, “In the majority of countries criminal law can be invoked for assault in marriage but not for rape” (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2002: 20). In settings where dowry must be paid, dowry-related harassment, especially from in-laws, can be extreme and can lead to death (Pinheiro 2006: 58; United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2002).

## Preventing honour-related violence

As explained in the Secretary-General’s study, “In some cultures, suspected loss of virginity of a female member of the family, including as a result of rape, is perceived as compromising family honour, and may lead to her murder by family members” (Pinheiro 2006: 56). As explained in a 2007 UNICEF report, “‘Honour’ crimes are those committed against girls and women who are perceived to have contravened accepted social norms of behaviour and have therefore brought shame to their families” (UNICEF 2007: 35). This type of violence takes a variety of forms: verbal threats, physical and psychological abuse, forced marriage and even murder or forced suicide (Karlsson 2007). Causes of honour killing can also include refusal of an arranged marriage or persistence in maintaining a friendship with a person of the opposite sex who does not meet with the family’s approval.

The victims of honour killings are almost always women or adolescent girls, and the perpetrators are normally male family members, including the father or elder brother (UNICEF IRC 2007a: 70). Boys may also be affected, for example, if they are forced to control or even kill a sister, or if they have to take a stand in favour of the girl accused of disgracing the family’s honour (Karlsson 2007).

According to UNFPA, 5,000 girls and women are killed by family members in the name of honour every year. However, the full extent is unknown (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2002: 12). Although these acts are usually recognized as crimes, law enforcement is often lenient, and the motive of the crime may be legally recognized as a mitigating factor (UNICEF IRC 2007a: 70).

Cases have been documented in a number of countries and territories, including Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Jordan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan and Turkey. They also occur in countries with populations originating from Asia and the Middle East (Pinheiro 2006: 56). For example, honour crimes have been reported in Europe, which is home to large populations from these countries (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 12).

According to the UN Special Rapporteur, the perpetrators of honour killings are primarily husbands, fathers, brothers or uncles, although female relatives may also be directly involved or serve as accomplices. As honour killings often remain a private family affair, there are no official statistics, and the true extent of this practice remains unknown (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2002: 12). Male dominance and gender discrimination are the root causes of honour crimes. For this reason, they must not be treated in isolation from other forms of violence against girls and women (Karlsson 2007).

## **Transforming son preference**

Son preference takes many forms. It is often manifest in the neglect, deprivation or discriminatory treatment of girls to the detriment of their physical and mental health and development (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2002; Kapoor 2000: 6).

Estimates suggest there are 50 million to 100 million 'missing' females worldwide – girls and women who should be alive but are not due to discriminatory preferences (UNICEF 2007: 10). Son preference includes favouring boys' social, intellectual and physical (including nutritional) development over that of girls (UNICEF 2007: 24). In some parts of South Asia, West Asia and China, natural female-to-male birth ratios have been significantly altered as a result of extreme forms of son preference, such as sex-selective abortion of female fetuses and female infanticide (UNICEF 2007: 24). As documented in the Secretary-General's study, in some parts of South Asia there have been reports of high rates of murder of girls within a few days of their birth – such deaths often disguised and are registered as stillbirths (Pinheiro 2006: 52).

Gender differences in neglect also reveal son preference in some settings. Research in India on sex differences in neglect and over the early years of life show that girls are breastfed less frequently and for a shorter duration; once weaned they get food of an inferior quality, and they are taken to health services less often and later in the course of an illness. In China, infanticide contributes to the 117 to 100 sex ratio favouring boys (Pinheiro 2006: 54).



## Chapter 3 Why focus on violence against girls?

### International human rights concerns

Violence against children takes many forms. Although much goes unreported and data are often scant or unreliable, the vulnerability and experiences of violence of boys and girls often differ. So important is this reality that addressing the gender dimension of violence against children is one of the 12 overarching recommendations of the Secretary-General's study (United Nations 2006b:27). Addressing gender-based discrimination and violence has been raised previously in the international human rights system. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Outcome Document of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights urged States "to repeal existing laws and regulations and remove customs and practices which discriminate against and cause harm to the girl child" (United Nations General Assembly 1995).

Regarding the root causes of gender-based violence, in 2006, the United Nations Secretary-General presented the 'In-depth study on all forms of violence against women' to the General Assembly. It highlighted the structural and systemic causes of male violence towards women and girls, the risk factors that increase their vulnerability and the factors that shape their personal experiences of violence (United Nations General Assembly 2006a: 11). Moreover, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action drew explicit attention to the various forms of gender-based discrimination and violence that women and girls face and that impede their "full and equal participation in all aspects of political, civil, economic social and cultural life" (United Nations General Assembly 1995). Attention was also drawn in the text of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action to the need for state and non-state actors to work together towards:

**"The elimination of violence against women in public and private life, the elimination of all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation and trafficking in women, the elimination of gender bias in the administration of justice and the eradication of any conflicts which may arise between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and religious extremism" (United Nations General Assembly 1995: para. 38).**

This was reaffirmed during the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) in the Beijing Declaration.

In addition, in the context of war and conflict, armed groups and warring factions (both government and non-state actors) often target girls and women and subject them to extreme forms of violence and humiliation. In rehabilitation and reconstruction processes, the needs of girls and women are often inadequately addressed. In fact, girls and women may be at risk of rape and sexual abuse committed by relief workers and peacekeeping personnel (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2001). Precise legal standards have now been developed in response to these forms of violence.

Most notably, the Statute of the International Criminal Court has defined rape and other gender violence as acts of "crimes against humanity" and "war crimes", underscoring that it views them as being among the most serious crimes of concern to the international community (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2001: 7).

United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) concerning 'Women, peace and security' specifically address the impact of war on women and girls. They assert that rape and other forms of sexual violence constitute methods of warfare. Forced marriage may also constitute a war crime, as evidenced by



convictions meted out in February 2009 by the Special Court for Sierra Leone<sup>9</sup> (IRIN 2009). In so doing, the court set a precedent for convicting three former leaders of the Revolutionary United Front on the charge of “forced marriage.”<sup>10</sup> As reported in the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), the prosecution argued that “forced marriage should be considered a crime against humanity distinct from other forms of sexual violence such as sexual slavery because of the length of the association and its domestic nature” (IRIN 2009).

The fifty-first session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (26 February–7 March 2007) took as its priority theme, “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child”. Taking stock of progress and reviewing the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, Member States reported that even though achievements had been made, especially in relation to the enactment of legislation, the protection of the rights of girls had not made sufficient progress. Attention was drawn not only to the continuance of harmful traditional practices, including FGM/C and forced marriages, but also to the fact that girls were especially vulnerable to sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, including in conflict and post-conflict situations (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2007c).

In its resolution 50/2 of 10 March 2006, the Commission on the Status of Women drew attention to the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV. Also noted was the fact that HIV and AIDS reinforces gender inequalities, as women and girls bear a disproportionate share of the burden, including care and support for those infected and affected by the disease (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2007a: 4-5). In General Assembly resolution 60/141 (16 December 2005) on the girl child, concern was expressed about girls’ disadvantage as compared to boys’ in relation to education, nutrition

and physical and mental health care. It noted that this curtailment of their fundamental human rights denied them “the opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence and subjected them to various forms of cultural, social, sexual and economic exploitation.” The resolution also stated that girls were among the most adversely affected by poverty and armed conflict. (UN General Assembly, 2006c).

Under other Charter-based bodies of the UN, the Human Rights Council furthermore addresses the human rights of children as a cross-cutting theme (*see, for example:* <[www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/children.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/children.htm)> *for the wide range of topics covered under country and thematic mandates*). Gender-based discrimination and violence are frequently raised by the Special Procedures<sup>11</sup> to the Human Rights Council as issues of serious concern. Violence against girls is specifically addressed in the following mandates: the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children.

The UN Treaty-based bodies have frequently raised concerns about the persistence of these types of human rights violations and the different risks and vulnerabilities girls and boys face. During its Day of General Discussion on the Girl Child (January 1995), the Committee on the Rights of the Child drew attention to the persistence of gender-based discrimination and violence against girls and women. It was mentioned that the place of girls and women in society often remained inferior to that of boys and men, despite the fact that the human rights of women and girls are “an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights,” and the eradication of all forms of gender-based discrimination are priority objectives of the international community. Not only was it recognized

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<sup>9</sup> The court was established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone to bring to trial those persons responsible for atrocities committed during the civil war.

<sup>10</sup> The court also set a precedent by charging the men with war crimes for targeting humanitarian and peacekeepers in direct attacks.

<sup>11</sup> According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Special Procedures’ is the general name given to the mechanisms established by the Commission on Human Rights and assumed by the Human Rights Council to address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Currently, there are 30 thematic and 8 country mandates. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provides these mechanisms with personnel, logistical and research assistance to support them in the discharge of their mandates.” <[www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm)>

that the inequality is structural, but also that it is often reflected and reinforced in state legislation (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 1995: 2-3).

Gender bias within the family was noted during the meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to discuss the Role of the Family in the Promotion of the Rights of the Child (1994). Of particular concern was that girls are given a disproportionate amount of domestic work and are expected to conform to traditional stereotypes of women (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child 1994). During the Day of General Discussion on Violence against Children within the Family and in Schools, convened by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in September 2001, it was noted that girls and boys often experience dissimilar patterns of abuse and vulnerability. Girls may be at higher risk of sexual abuse or family violence such as honour killings and harmful traditional practices, whereas boys may face more discrimination from legislation or social values that subject them to brutal forms of school or family punishment that are not applied to girls (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2001: 5).

In its review of States Parties' reports, the Committee frequently draws attention to gender-based discrimination and violence, including against girls, as issues of concern. It also highlights the links between gender-based and other forms of discrimination. States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are further requested to draw attention to the measures taken to prevent and address all forms of discrimination and violence, including those that are gender-based (Hodgkin and Newell 2007). The Committee has also raised the issue of violence against girls in its General Comments. On adolescent health and development, the Committee pointed out that gender-based discrimination and stereotyping contribute to harmful traditional practices experienced by girls (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2003: 7).

Other Treaty bodies have issued general recommendations pertaining to the gendered nature of some forms of discrimination and violence in general, and the specific risks posed to girls and women in particular. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has issued two general recommendations on violence against women, in 1989 (No. 12) and 1992 (No. 19); the latter was the more comprehensive. It acknowledged that the attitude that women and girls

are subordinate to men and boys perpetuates practices that may lead to discrimination, harassment, coercion and violence in home and family settings and in the workplace. This attitude may furthermore discourage active participation by women and girls in politics and discourage them from pursuing higher levels of education, skills and employment opportunities. Such attitudes also contribute to demeaning and gender-stereotyped images in the media, which may in turn contribute to gender-based violence (OHCHR 2004: 248). Poverty, unemployment and conflict often exacerbate women's and girls' vulnerabilities and put them at risk of sexual exploitation and violence. Some traditional practices are harmful to the health of girls and women, and preference for male children can result in neglect or ill-treatment of girls (OHCHR 2004: 249).

In 2000, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued 'General recommendation XXV on gender-related dimensions of racial discrimination', which noted that racial discrimination does not always affect women and men equally or in the same way. Some forms may be directed towards girls and women specifically because of their gender, such as sexual violence. The effects can be unique to women and girls, such as pregnancy and ostracism resulting from rape. Females may face further discrimination due to the inherent gender biases in many legal systems and in social and economic life (OHCHR 2004: 217).

This draws attention to 'intersectional discrimination' against children, in which several grounds of discrimination operate at the same time (Ravnbøl 2009: ii). It can take various forms, including laws or policies (known as structural intersectionality) and discrimination in political and public forums for participation (political and representational intersectionality). This form of discrimination can be unintentional or intentional.

## Effects of violence on boys

While noting the multiple structures that put girls and women at risk of violence and make their experiences unique, it is important to reaffirm that problems of gender are not confined to females. Gender also comprises the different roles, responsibilities and access to and control over resources of males and females. As recommended in the Secretary-General's study, it is important to address the gender dimensions of violence against children, which requires consideration of "the different risks facing girls and boys in respect of violence" (United Nations 2006b: 27). Hence, in designing and implementing programmes and policies to tackle violence against girls, efforts must be taken to ensure they promote and do not undermine the inalienable rights of others, including boys.

Adopting a gender perspective to prevent and address violence against children necessitates critical examination of norms around masculinity and femininity. In most societies, but to varying degrees, boys learn that it is socially acceptable to control and dominate, and girls learn to accept this as the norm (International Save the Children Alliance 2005b: 110). Countering these norms is difficult because they are reflected in most aspects of social and economic life and are reinforced in the media and entertainment (International Save the Children Alliance 2005b). This may make victims reluctant to speak out.

For example, due to the stigma around homosexuality and entrenched norms of masculinity, the common perception in many settings is that boys cannot be raped (International Save the Children Alliance 2005b: 28). Although evidence indicates that girls are at greater risk of sexual violence than boys, it is also established that boys may be reluctant to speak out due to their fears about being perceived as "weak and unmanly" (Pinheiro 2006: 54). These biased norms may be reflected in programmes and policies. As a recent Save the Children Alliance report points out:

**"Many child sexual abuse prevention programmes in South Africa have focused on empowering girls, and have not included boys. However, boys and men are both victims and perpetrators of abuse, and it is impossible to deal holistically with the issue of child sexual abuse without involving males" (International Save the Children Alliance 2005b: 102).**

Even in seemingly innocuous activities such as sport, often seen as promoting self-esteem and well-being, gender stereotypes may be promoted and reinforced: "For the most part, girls play with girls in 'girls' activities' and boys play with boys in 'boys' activities', though sometimes they play together in gender-mixed activities" (UNICEF IRC forthcoming in 2009). This draws attention to the importance of addressing gender in all aspects of life, including play and leisure. Gender differences can easily become divisive in sport, with boys being seen as better athletes than girls (UNICEF IRC forthcoming in 2009). Thus sport may reinforce gendered norms and disparities, while also putting some athletes at risk of violence.

The majority of studies on sexual abuse in sport have investigated male coaches found guilty of abusing underage female athletes. Yet research shows both male and female perpetrators and victims of sexual abuse and other forms of violence in sport (UNICEF IRC forthcoming in 2009). Children who have experienced violence and maltreatment are less likely to participate in sports. Furthermore, social and economic marginalization, race and culture influence children's experiences of sport (UNICEF IRC forthcoming in 2009).

At its fifty-first session, which, as mentioned previously, was dedicated to addressing discrimination and violence against girls, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women convened several high-level round tables to share good practices and lessons learned. It was noted that there is a need for the greater involvement of boys and men in efforts to prevent and combat violence against girls and women (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2007a: 5). Hence, efforts to prevent and address violence against girls must also consider their effects and impacts on boys, as well as on adult women and men.



## Chapter 4 Conceptual background

### What is meant by 'childhood'?

There is a widely held and sentimental view of children as dependent and vulnerable (Zelizer 1994). On the other hand, especially manifest in the media, is the portrayal of children as lacking respect for authority and perpetrating violence and crime, including bullying other children and their elders. To reconcile these contrasting portraits demands greater recognition of children in their social context and attention to their own perspectives on their lives. Societies across the world are undergoing profound social and economic transition. Although it is comforting to think that children should be isolated from such changes, in fact they too are not just affected but are often active participants in these processes (James and Prout 1997). Children may generally lack the power of adults, but they nevertheless are social, economic and political beings – even if they cannot directly participate in political processes.

While the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years, it is recognized that girls and boys go through a diversity of experiences as they transition from childhood to adulthood (Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead 2008; Lansdown 2005). Indeed, the concept of the 'evolving capacities of the child' is mentioned explicitly in article 5 of the Convention. As Gerison Lansdown (2005: ix) notes, this concept has profound implications: It acknowledges the dynamic nature of children's relations with their parents, other family members and the wider community. It also takes note of the State's responsibility for ensuring that children are supported and encouraged in the process of growing up and are able to participate effectively in these processes. If policy and programme interventions are to achieve their goals of preventing or dealing with violence, more attention must be paid

to these shifts in the individual life cycle and how children are affected by social, economic and political contexts.

The types of violence experienced and their impacts on a child's life often depend on the child's stage of life (Pinheiro 2006). Studies have found that infants may be more vulnerable than older children to neurological damage resulting from maltreatment (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 5). During the primary school period (roughly ages 5 to 10), in-school bullying is a serious problem affecting self-esteem whose effects may be carried into adulthood (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 9; UNICEF IRC 2007b: 32-33).

Gender roles and relations also are not static, and they change over time (Mayall and Zeiher 2003; International Save the Children Alliance 1999). At puberty, gender, sexuality and sexual identity typically play more important roles in children's lives. Children who do not conform to traditional gender roles may face physical and/or humiliating punishment at home and in the community. As Quayle, Loof and Palmer (2008: 71) write, "Hostile reactions to their sexuality by society may leave them alone in a marginalized situation that then exposes them to exploitation." Sexual diversity may furthermore put both girls and boys at risk of sexual harassment or violence in sport (UNICEF IRC forthcoming in 2009).

Girls appear to be at greater risk of sexual violence and forced or early marriage at puberty. And girls in particular may face an earlier transition to adulthood if they experience early marriage, pregnancy and/or childbirth (Bruce, Greene and Mensch 1998). Although marriage practices vary socially and culturally, there is a tendency to view girls as ready for marriage and adulthood at the onset of menstruation (WHO and UNFPA 2006). In contrast, boys are seen as reaching

adulthood much later. According to this report on marriage and adolescence, by 2015, an estimated 100 million girls will marry before reaching their 18th birthday. Girls from poorer families and living in rural areas are most likely to be married young. This is because their parents experience social and economic pressure to marry off their daughters when they are young, before they are seen to become economic liabilities (WHO and UNFPA 2006: 11). This shows the class dimension of the transition to adulthood. A study from Bangladesh (Blanchet 1996) found that wealthier urban girls and boys tend to have a longer childhood than do their poorer and rural counterparts.

Puberty is also the period when there is a greater likelihood of engaging in hazardous and self-harming behaviours, such as drug and alcohol abuse, unprotected and unsafe sex, self-injury<sup>12</sup> and eating disorders. As noted in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1632 (2003) on 'Teenagers in distress: A social and health-based approach to youth malaise', young people in Europe are increasingly found to be engaged in risky behaviour such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, illegal drug use, eating disorders and unprotected sexual activity (UNICEF IRC 2005b: 12). While such findings draw attention to the harm (including self-harm) some children experience as they move to adulthood, this is not a universal experience. Many girls and boys prove themselves to be socially and economically competent and capable of making sound decisions concerning their lives.

More concerted efforts are needed to instil non-violent, non-sexist norms and values in girls and boys. As noted in the Secretary-General's study, the "media play a central role in shaping opinions and influencing social norms that can also affect behaviour" (Pinheiro 2006: 87). Children are exposed to and affected by violence and negative and discriminatory gender stereotyping in the mass media, including in new media and electronic games (Pinheiro 2006). Their exposure is increasing due to globalization and ease of access to the media and related technologies. One of the study's recommendations called for States to "encourage the media to promote non-violent values and to ensure full respect for the rights of the child in all media coverage" (Pinheiro 2006: 19).

Children are also affected by the larger context, such as the impact of globalization, effects of climate change and oscillations in world markets. In fact, it has been argued that girls and boys are more affected by globalization than other groups in society, and have little or no guidance to help them through these processes because:

**"The world in which many young people are growing up is unrecognisable to their parents, rendering it harder for them to comprehend the challenges facing their children and the appropriate levels and nature of protection needed. Global corporations are competing with the family and school to become the most influential institutions in young people's lives. Yet, unlike parents, these institutions bear no responsibility for young people, are not accountable to them and have no interest in them other than their spending power" (Lansdown 2005: 32).**

Today's children and future generations will bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change (UNICEF IRC in cooperation with UNICEF Programme Division 2008: x), but not all children are affected equally. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told ministers and Heads of State at a global meeting in 2007, "Those who are least able to cope are being hit hardest. Those who have done the least to cause the problem bear the gravest consequences" (UNICEF IRC in cooperation with UNICEF Programme Division 2008: 1). The most socially and economically marginalized people living in developing countries are most likely to be the hardest hit by climate change. The loss of arable land due to rising sea levels and temperatures is expected to undermine, even devastate, the agricultural livelihoods of countless households in many developing countries (IBRD/World Bank 2008: 208). The associated rise in food and commodity prices over the past few years has led to protests and unrest in many parts of the developing world. In early 2008 this prompted the World Bank and United Nations organizations to provide emergency aid to affected countries and the Secretary-General to call for a review of biofuel policies<sup>13</sup> (Vidal 2008; Borger 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Self-injury may be defined as the deliberate act of harming one's own body, for example, by cutting or burning oneself.

<sup>13</sup> The cultivation of biofuels (e.g., palm oil) has recently been criticized for diverting fertile land from food production (Vidal 2008).

These changes are also likely to raise stress, tension and even violence in households. The burden of responsibility for meeting everyday needs is apt to fall unevenly on family members. A 2008 UNICEF report on climate change suggests that, because women and girls shoulder much of the burden of securing food, water and energy, the droughts and unpredictable rainfall predicted to result from climate change will most probably increase their workload. This would leave less time for important activities such as school, income-generating activities and caring for family members. Climate change could therefore force girls to drop out of school in order to help their mothers with these increasingly burdensome activities (UNICEF IRC in cooperation with UNICEF Programme Division 2008: 4).

Many families across the globe are being affected both directly and indirectly by the global financial and economic crisis. The impacts are and will continue to vary by gender, with women and girls likely to suffer the most. In March 2009, the UN Commission on the Status of Women convened an expert panel to examine the emerging issue of the gender perspectives of the financial crisis. The experts agreed that the crisis would affect all countries, but with different impacts between and within countries and a disproportionate burden on women, especially poor, migrant and minority women

(UN Commission on the Status of Women 2009: 2). Furthermore, as a recent (2009) World Bank policy brief on the topic notes:

**“The current global financial crisis, on top of recent food price increases (which, while down from their peak last year continue to affect the poor in developing countries), will have serious gender-specific consequences for women in poor countries and their children. Decelerating growth rates in countries with pre-existing high infant and child mortality rates and/or low rates of female schooling leave women and girls highly vulnerable to the effects of the crisis. Their situation is even more precarious in the sub-set of countries where limited fiscal resources constrain governments’ ability to cushion human impacts. If left unchecked, these consequences will reverse progress in gender equality and women’s empowerment (and in meeting the MDGs), increase current poverty and imperil future development” (Sabarwal, Sinha and Buvinic 2009: 1).**

On International Women’s Day, 8 March 2009, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Yakin Ertürk, issued a press release on the gender dimensions of the crisis. She noted:



(From left to right): Three conference speakers, Daisy Mafubelu, Assistant Director-General for Family and Community Health, World Health Organization; Bert Koenders, Minister for Development Cooperation, the Netherlands; and Cindy Kiro, Children’s Commissioner, New Zealand, sat together during the plenary sessions.

**“The scale and impact of the current crisis is still largely unknown, but it is expected that women and girls in both developed and developing countries will be particularly affected by job cuts, loss of livelihoods, increased responsibilities in all spheres of their life, and an increased risk of societal and domestic violence. A systematic gender analysis of the current economic crisis is critical for developing viable solutions and upholding human rights standards.... Studies have shown that violence against women intensifies when men experience displacement and dispossession related to economic crises, migration, war, foreign occupation or other situations where masculinities compete and power relations are altered in society. This makes it crucial to challenge norms of masculinity in times of global economic and financial crisis” (Ertürk 2009).**

## Who do we mean by ‘girls’?

The study on violence against children notes that both girls **and** boys are victims and that gender and gender inequality often play a role in the types of violence they experience (UN General Assembly 2006b). As noted in a European review of the problem, “violence knows neither gender nor bias, though there may be gendered distinctions in the degree of violence in some contexts” (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 12). For example, WHO estimates that globally 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 have experienced sexual violence (Pineiro 2006: 52; WHO 2006).

As mentioned previously, during war and conflict, gender-based violence – especially sexual violence against women and girls – is a particular concern. UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and the more recent 1820 (2008) concerning ‘Women, peace and security’ specifically address the impact of war on women and girls, and assert that rape and other forms of sexual violence constitute methods of warfare. As intended by the perpetrator, this type of violence frequently leads the victim to be stigmatized and isolated by the community, often in addition to multiple, adverse mental, sexual and reproductive health consequences.

Experts met in Florence, Italy, from 12 to 13 June 2008, to present findings on current research related to children and transitional justice, including reconciliation processes addressing human rights violations during armed conflict. They noted that children have an important role to play in transitional justice processes and that more efforts are required to support the meaningful participation of girls and boys. The meeting recommended the development of specific strategies to engage girls and women in transitional justice processes. While traditional justice mechanisms and processes can be useful in addressing the broad range of crimes committed during armed conflict, it is essential that they conform to international human rights standards, in particular with regard to gender equality. This is especially important because traditional mechanisms are often based on patriarchal structures. Further investigation is needed to determine the suitability of specific traditional mechanisms for crimes involving sexual and gender-based violence, and also to ensure that such processes meet international standards concerning gender parity, non-discrimination and child rights, and that the rights of girls and women are fully respected. (Linnarsson and Siegrist 2008).

When speaking of girls’ experiences of violence it is necessary to clarify the term, because not only is ‘childhood’ diverse (Alanen and Mayall 2001), but also the experiences of girls vary tremendously. A complex combination of factors – age, stage of life, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, colour, caste, sexual orientation, health (both physical and mental), minority status, citizenship and status as an asylum-seeker or refugee – plays out in issues around violence against girls. In fact, while the type of violence may be affected by gender, another aspect (such as race, religion or citizenship) may cause the violence to be perpetrated in the first place. As one study shows, Roma children in Hungary are particularly vulnerable to racially motivated violence (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 8). A recent UNICEF report found that “where gender discrimination intersects with these ‘other sites of oppression’, levels of violence are likely to be compounded” (UNICEF 2007: 19).

Moreover, the State is not always a benign actor. Levels of complicity range from the persistence of gender discrimination in laws and their interpretation, to more sinister forms such as ignoring international humanitarian law in terms of the protection of civilians,

including children, in conflicts between and within States. Evidence shows that indigenous children may be more vulnerable to violence than many other population groups, and indigenous girls may be at greater risk of gender-based violence and discrimination. Many indigenous communities live under extreme strain due to environmental degradation of their lands, displacement, loss of traditional livelihoods and, in some cases, deliberate actions by state authorities to force them to assimilate into the dominant culture (UNICEF IRC 2004: 11).

Risks come not only from external sources but also from within the community, especially for those undergoing heavy social and economic stress. Indigenous peoples endure far higher rates of poverty, and indigenous children, particularly girls, are the worst affected. Among some indigenous populations, alcohol and substance abuse is rampant, with direct and harmful implications for children (UNICEF IRC 2004: 12). Girls in these communities may be especially at risk of domestic violence (UNICEF 1994: 5). While the isolation of indigenous communities tends to protect them from HIV and AIDS, it has also been found that it hampers their access to information about how to protect themselves from infection (UNICEF IRC 2004: 10). Indigenous children also often have poor access to health-care services. As schooling rates in indigenous communities are often low, and even lower for girls, indigenous girls and young women lack access to school-based information about prevention (UNICEF 1994: 4).

Lack of access to culturally appropriate, quality education ensures the transmission of poverty and marginalization from one generation to the next. This puts indigenous children at particular risk of becoming involved in harmful work, including activities that can lead to commercial sexual exploitation. In some parts of the world, indigenous girls are at greater risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation than girls from the majority population (UNICEF IRC 2004: 13). Interventions to support indigenous and minority populations may backfire if the initiatives do not reflect the complexity of the issue and if the communities affected are not approached with respect. As Lansdown (2005: 11) writes, “The treatment of many children from minority communities reflects a pathologising of their cultures and communities, with a consequent pattern of ‘rescuing’ them in order to promote their optimum development.”

At the home and family level, household composition, birth order and sibling composition also play a part in determining roles and responsibilities (Punch 2001). Some of these features may increase certain children’s risk of violence. The eldest daughter in a socially and economically marginalized household without sons may experience pressure from her family to migrate for work, or she may herself feel responsible to do so. This could lead to unsafe forms of migration that result in trafficking or other forms of violence. Hence, while the girl’s sex and gender inequality may put her at greater risk of certain types of violence, it is in fact a combination of household composition and birth order that forced her into that particular position of vulnerability.

## Recognition of children’s resilience and capacities

It is well established that most girls and boys have experienced and witnessed some form of violence (Pinheiro 2006; UNICEF IRC 2005c). However, as is evident from the Secretary-General’s study and other research, the type, frequency and severity of violence vary. The consequences can be devastating, resulting in both short-term and long-term harm affecting all aspects of children’s health and well-being and their capacities to learn and grow (Pinheiro 2006: xi). Studies across many sociocultural settings find that witnessing and experiencing abuse as children make them more susceptible to lifelong impairments and risks, including intimate partner violence (García-Moreno et al. 2005: 7-8; Pinheiro 2006: 13-14).

Nevertheless, some studies show children’s resilience, even in the face of tremendous violence and hardship. Even within contexts of high stress and cruelty, affected girls and boys may develop important social values and competencies (Boyden 2007: 27-28). Becoming a capable actor does not necessarily require peaceful processes; it can happen despite children’s exposure to and experiences of conflict and violence.

Despite such evidence, children’s inherent and evolving capacities to prevent violence, protect themselves and cope with the effects are often ignored or dismissed in efforts to support them. Lansdown (2005: 13) writes, “Prevailing assumptions about children’s capacities



impose static judgements and measurements about ‘normal’ stages defined by Western standards and lead to a pathologising of children who fall outside the ‘normal’ parameters.” This is due to a prevailing model of child development that views children as being in a “state of immaturity characterised by being irrational, incompetent, asocial and acultural, and passive and dependent” (Lansdown 2005: 10). As a result, much of children’s agency is rendered invisible.

This can be further traumatizing for children and render them even more vulnerable. In her study of child sexual abuse in the United Kingdom, Jenny Kitzinger (1997) shows that even child victims of sexual abuse demonstrate means of resistance. Yet she notes that children’s strategies to protect themselves are often ignored, and the failure to accept children as agents of their own lives ignores their exercise of power. It is therefore important to recognize that informal mechanisms, such as peer support and informal networks, may also be appropriate and effective in identifying at-risk children and undertaking proactive initiatives to prevent violence (Pinheiro 2006: 80-81). In fact, peer groups and friends serve as an important but often under-recognized support structure for many girls and boys.

This last point draws attention to the importance of consulting with children and involving them meaningfully in efforts to prevent and address violence, including its causes. Doing this requires a safe and supportive environment that is accessible to children of various backgrounds and to adults who recognize children as social actors. Examples include the creation of ‘child-friendly’ materials and the involvement of children in local, regional and national consultations. One example was children’s participation in an NGO advisory panel for the Secretary-General’s study (UN General Assembly 2006b: 7).

More recently, close to 300 children and adolescents actively participated in World Congress III, providing their own recommendations to end sexual abuse and exploitation of children (UNICEF Press Release 2008; Bhandari 2009; Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents 2008). Children and young people made recommendations under all five conference themes. These included empowering parents to protect their children from sexual exploitation; providing sex education in school curricula for children starting at age 10; teacher training to ensure that sex education is



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*Workshop themes ranged from introducing effective international programmes on parenting support to combating early and forced marriage. Group discussions resulted in several proposals, including on how to implement the UN study recommendations to prevent and respond to violence against girls.*

effective; improved legislation and education to stop child marriage (which participants viewed as related to sex exploitation and abuse); and greater awareness by and discussion in the media on the issues (Bhandari 2009: 20-22, 26 and 40).

Other case studies document children's meaningful and ethical participation in research, policy advocacy and programming (Feinstein and O'Kane 2009). In Bangladesh, the process of developing the National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2001–2002) was led by the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, but it involved an inter-agency core group representing UNICEF and ILO, as well as several INGOs (including Save the Children) and NGOs. The process involved civil society, including children, in research to determine and assess the situation and in preparing the plan and its implementation (Feinstein and O'Kane 2009). Ethical considerations (including informed voluntary participation, protection of children's identities and provision of psychosocial support during and after the consultations through NGO partnerships) were incorporated into all interventions and were documented. Children were also meaningfully involved in developing the country's National Plan of Action for Children (2004–2009). Girls and boys of different ages and back-grounds participated in local, district and national consultations, and children were also represented in government drafting committees.

## Dimensions of violence against children

Although the United Nations Secretary-General's study draws attention to gaps in information about violence in the home and family, it highlights its multifaceted nature (Pinheiro 2006: xvii). A significant weakness of many studies is their 'compartmentalized' view of violence – a "focus on specific forms of violence in isolation, with little consideration of the associations between these forms of violence or the fact that children frequently experience multiple forms of violence during their lives" (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 4). It follows that violence committed within a home or family environment may overlap and/or have linkages with violence that takes place in other settings (Pinheiro 2006: 65).

Although more is known about bullying in industrialized countries than in other parts of the world, evidence suggests linkages between domestic violence witnessed at home and bullying at school. A study in the United Kingdom found that children who witnessed domestic violence were also more likely to be victims of bullying. A study from Italy similarly showed that being bullied at school was associated with witnessing parents' violence at home, especially for girls (Pinheiro 2006: 65). As the study on violence against children also notes, many factors from other aspects of children's lives are also likely to affect their chances of being a victim or perpetrator of violence in schools. Poor parent-child relationships; harsh, lax or inconsistent discipline; poor parental monitoring; weak social ties; and affiliation with antisocial peers are only a few traits that may affect what happens to children at school (Pinheiro 2006: 131). Evidence suggests that children who come into conflict with the law are also more likely to have experienced violence at home, as well as poverty and a lack of adequate care and protection (Pinheiro 2006: 193).

Some forms of home-based violence may be the result of societal pressures, such as traditional practices like FGM/C and child marriage. Even though the perpetrators know the damage that can ensue and would prefer to avoid this result, the consequences of not conforming – social stigma – may seem to be the greater harm. Another issue is the important matter of defining what constitutes violence. Definitions of child 'maltreatment' are usually made "in terms of physical, emotional, and sexual violence, or neglect perpetrated by individual adults, usually parents or those close to the child," as noted by Dr. Richard Reading and his collaborators in *The Lancet*. Yet, as the authors point out, "these approaches do not permit collective harm and exploitation" (Reading et al. 2009: 333).

These considerations are important when developing policies and programmes to address violence against girls. Identifying eight priority themes for the conference served to map out the issues on violence against girls in the home and family setting in greater depth. But given the many dimensions of violence suggested above, it is important to keep in mind that these constructions are artificial to some extent and that there are many interrelated and overlapping issues. For example, children who are physically punished are far more likely to experience other forms of violence than those who are not. And the effects may be intergenerational:

Such children are more likely to end up in abusive relationships and/or to abuse their own children or spouses (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 5).

Another aspect of the multifaceted dimensions of violence is recognition of 'new' forms of violence against children. The study draws attention to the challenges posed by the Internet and communication technologies, recognizing that access to information is a fundamental right and that these technologies can play important roles in transmitting new types of information (Pinheiro 2006: 312). These mediums are difficult to regulate, however. They may result in children's exposure to violent and discriminatory imagery (including hate crimes), online solicitation and cyber-bullying, which is also linked to the proliferation of mobile phones among children (Pinheiro 2006: 312). During World Congress III, previously lesser-known forms of sexual exploitation, such as through exposure to abusive images and other violent crimes conducted over the Internet, were raised as issues of concern (UNICEF Press Release 2008). These technologies create challenges for policymakers because the Internet may facilitate violence but may also empower young people, serving as a preventive and protective medium. Moreover, crimes committed over the Internet often occur on multiple sites and regional and/or international cooperation is required in order to tackle them.

## Violence in the home and family

What is meant by 'home' and 'family'? These terms are social constructions, so their meaning varies according to context and over time. The 'home' and the 'family' may not necessarily be a single unit and may not be situated in close proximity as home and family were traditionally understood. The spatial division of homes and families may be due to social and economic necessity. Many studies show that large numbers of children are growing up with one or both parents living elsewhere for work, even abroad, while children remain at home in the care of other kin (Global Commission on International Migration 2005).

The long-standing tradition whereby children are sent to live with other family members for the purposes of education and/or to strengthen kinship ties can be important in times of economic hardship (Hashim 2005; Whitehead and Hashim 2005). 'New' practices are also developing in response to ongoing social and economic change, including HIV and AIDS. In such situations migration can be a rational strategy for coping with the illness and loss of key household members (Young and Ansell 2003). While researchers and policymakers have tended to see left-behind or migrant children as victims or even as 'trafficked', some of these



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*Michele Jankanish, Director of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, International Labour Organization, made key remarks on the subject of children and work.*

responses may in fact be protective strategies by parents and children. And they may lead to positive outcomes for children (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007).

Homes and families are also uprooted as a result of conflict, unrest and natural disasters. In many parts of the world, many children are growing up with some or all family members in camps for internally displaced persons or refugee settlements. Complexity in defining terms also arises because 'family' often extends beyond immediate and extended members to include 'fictive' kin who are treated as family (Carsten 2000). Moreover, the concept of family is evolving: Many different types of family units have become more common in recent decades, such as same-sex parents, single parents and step-parents. Children may circulate between different households to spend time with one or more biological parents and even half- or step-siblings (UNICEF IRC 2007b: 23). The phenomenon of HIV and AIDS has also influenced the family unit, including inheritance practices, which have profoundly affected the rights and economic and social well-being of surviving children (Cooper 2008).

Although the International Girl Child Conference focused on violence in home and family settings, it should be noted that millions of children grow up outside a 'family' environment (however defined). This is due to many reasons, including the death of parents and lack of an extended family; physical or mental disability or illness; and economic, political or social reasons. These children reside in institutions such as orphanages, children's homes, care homes, prisons, juvenile detention facilities and reform schools. Although such facilities are expected to provide children with support and care similar to what they would receive in a stable home, reports indicate that girls and boys in such institutions are at greater risk of violence compared to children living with their parents (Pinheiro 2006: 175).

The roles and responsibilities of family members are also evolving as traditional gender roles adapt to changing social and economic realities. In some settings, the household power balance is shifting as women take on increasing social and economic roles outside the home and in the formal workplace, and as children and adolescents – due in part to the effects of globalization – are more reluctant to adhere to traditional power structures, often centred around the father as the head of the household (Foumbi and Lovich 1997: 24). This

dynamic can lead to frustration, powerlessness and violence on the part of many family members. As noted in a UNICEF report on the role of men in the lives of children, "As men perceive a loss of control in their household, the frustration they may be feeling for other reasons, such as underemployment or poor working conditions, can too easily turn to violence. It is striking to note that as women take on more of the financial responsibility within the household, they too are beginning to exhibit frustration and aggression due to stress" (Foumbi and Lovich 1997: 24). Attempts to address domestic violence have, however, tended to be more reactive rather than preventive. The report notes, "Programmes have mainly focused on public education and shelters for battered women and their children. There are, however, a few that have worked with adolescent and adult men, seeking to address the deep-rooted causes of violence and promote alternate gender roles" (Foumbi and Lovich 1997: 24).

Another important distinction is between rural and urban childhoods. The Council of Europe has focused specifically on 'urban' childhoods, especially with regard to girls, because of violence and other social problems. Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1532 (2001) 'A dynamic social policy for children and adolescents in towns and cities' seeks to address the problem of violence committed by and against young people in urban areas (UNICEF IRC 2005b: 10). Statistics show that children are more often victims than perpetrators of violence. The Recommendation highlights children at risk and notes that girls are particularly vulnerable to early pregnancy and motherhood. No doubt there are also dimensions of 'rural' childhoods that pose particular threats to girls. Yet, there tends to be an urban bias to research on children in developing countries, even though disproportionately more young people live and work in rural areas (Panelli, Punch and Robson 2007). For example, evidence suggests that rural young are more likely to be socially and economically disadvantaged than their urban counterparts (Panelli, Punch and Robson 2007: 5, 70). This has gender implications. For example, girls may be more closely controlled than boys, who may be encouraged to seek their independence from parents earlier (Panelli, Punch and Robson 2007: 216).

Not only are 'home' and 'family' problematic terms, but the roles and responsibilities within them, including children's contributions, vary according to the social and economic setting. Although many middle- and upper-

class children across the world have to balance homework with chores and play, for poorer children in both the industrialized and developing worlds (particularly in the latter) the weight may be entirely different and may include variables such as paid work (Alanen and Mayall 2001). Moreover, children's relations to their parents may involve interdependence, especially if they are economic contributors to the household (Punch 2002). Girls and boys assume different roles and levels of responsibility depending on their sex and age, which affects their access to and control over resources. Hence the household division of labour is normally affected by gender and age.

## Children's work

This raises questions about the types of work being performed by many children around the world. Only a small fraction of the literature considers that work is not necessarily physically and psychologically damaging, and that it is often a normal part of children's development (Boyden, Ling and Myers 1998; Woodhead 2004). A recent literature survey finds that views on children and work largely remain polarized around two opposing positions: the first, as mentioned previously, of the harm associated with children and work, and the other, that work is normal to children's development, especially as they mature (Bourdillon 2006: 1202). Most of the treatment, especially of the developing world, reflects a normative view of childhood in which paid work is harmful to children's development (Boyden, Ling and Myers 1998; Nieuwenhuys 1996). The childhood associated with schooling and play is assumed to be 'proper', whereas when children engage in productive activity their childhood is described as having been 'stolen' (James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 141). Current standards and laws in much of the world reflect the view that working for strangers is incompatible with a 'good' childhood, whereas activities within the home are considered character-building (Zelizer 2005: 246), socialization, training or play (Nieuwenhuys 1996: 237).

The definitions that have emerged to describe children's economic activities not only reflect this view but they also shape and inform popular and legal views and assumptions about what is acceptable or prohibited (Boyden, Ling and Myers 1998: 76). 'Child labour' is defined as activity harmful to children's physical or psychological development, whereas 'child work' is understood as a benign activity that imparts skills and

knowledge (Myers 1999: 22). Often the focus of scrutiny (and criticism) is on activities undertaken outside the child's household, yet this scrutiny avoids equal inquiry into activities by children within their own home, even though such activities may be equally or even more harmful. This has gender implications. Global data on working children suggest that adolescent boys are more likely to be engaged in child labour than adolescent girls (UNICEF 2007: 66). But this portrayal is incomplete and shows the gender bias implicit in many approaches to child labour. It further distorts understanding of the wide range of activities that children engage in as part of their daily lives. Girls are more likely than boys to be found engaged in 'invisible' types of work that tend not to be counted, such as domestic work, either in their own home or the homes of others (UNICEF 2007). And this type of work can put them at risk. As this report on girls and violence argues:

**“The very same invisibility and isolation associated with working in the informal sector that has historically excluded girls from the international statistical rolls on child labour may contribute to their heightened vulnerability to sexual and other hidden forms of abuse” (UNICEF 2007: 66).**

Of additional concern is the tendency in much research and policymaking to focus on the most sensational subjects, such as hazardous work, trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, which make girls and boys appear vulnerable and easily taken advantage of (Montgomery 2005). Work that is less 'exotic' and that poses mental or psychosocial risks gets less attention (Woodhead 2004).

This correlates with the view in the industrialized world that work is an adult activity and schooling is the only appropriate type of children's work. From this standpoint, children belong in the private sphere of the 'nurturing' household and school, not outside in the public and adult sphere that is associated with labour, civil society and markets. Olga Nieuwenhuys (1996: 237) has written: "Irrespective of what children do and what they think of what they do, modern society sets children apart ideologically as a category of people excluded from the production of value."



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*Girls and young women in economically deprived areas are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Poverty increases the risk of early marriage, denial of an education and becoming involved in harmful work, including commercial sexual exploitation.*

## Addressing violence at the structural level

The UN study focused on the home and family, but recognized that what happens there reflects norms and practices embedded in all areas of life. The division of labour by gender and age at household and societal level mirrors the patriarchal organization of social and economic life (Pateman 1988). This is the case in most societies, both modern and traditional. As mentioned in the 'In-depth study on all forms of violence against women', some forms of violence against women and girls are not necessarily random. Rather, they are deeply rooted in unequal structural relationships between women and men (UN General Assembly 2006a: 13). These exist and are perpetuated in gender-specific socialization practices that take place within the home and family. In this way, girls learn what it means to be a girl and what it takes to become a woman in their specific context. As a consequence, girls' social resources may put them at a specific disadvantage when they are faced with certain forms of violence. In response to domestic violence, it has been shown that boys are more likely to run away and fight back (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 7). While more research is needed to confirm the corollary, this finding could suggest that girls are more likely to remain in a violent household because they have been socialized to be more acquiescent.

The gendered values and practices taught within the family, including norms about femininity and masculinity, are often reinforced in the wider community. This includes the media, the private sector and schools. Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1555 (2002) expresses concern that the representation of women in the media continues to perpetuate sexist and discriminatory messages about females, associating them with the domestic sphere or, conversely, as sex objects (UNICEF IRC 2005b: 11). Not only do many educational institutions and teaching methods reflect a 'hidden curriculum' that endorses gender inequality and biases, but also physical and psychological punishment and violence are rife in many schools (Pinheiro 2006: 112).

Although on the surface they may appear unrelated, religious and belief systems and traditions also affect interactions within and outside the household. For many

people, they create a sense of belonging and identity, giving meaning to life. Moreover, they can often play protective roles and may even help people deal with experiences of violence. Nevertheless, these traditions and belief systems comprise gendered rules of behaviour: Children learn what it means to be a 'good' boy or girl. Similarly, parents also learn what it means to be a 'proper' parent. Adherence to societal values and practices is seen as critical to being a proper and honourable member of one's family and community. Yet they may lead to actions that outsiders might view, and the child or woman might experience, as violent. For example, the practice of FGM/C can cause severe and long-term harm to girls' health and human rights, including their right to health, to be free from all forms of discrimination and violence, to life and physical integrity, and to education. While some parents, family members and girls themselves may recognize that the practice can cause serious and permanent harm, they nevertheless adhere to it because in their community it is considered "part of what they must do to raise a girl properly and prepare her for adulthood and marriage" (Donors Working Group 2008). They may fear the social consequences of not adhering to the tradition, both for the girl and her family. Studies have documented the social exclusion and harassment experienced by girls who have not undergone FGM/C, leading to the fear that uncircumcised daughters will not be able to find acceptable husbands (UNICEF IRC 2005a).

FGM/C is often considered part of a proper upbringing and sometimes as an important rite of passage to adulthood (UNICEF IRC 2005a: 26). It is therefore embedded in notions about family honour and belonging to a community. Hence, abandonment of the practice is perceived as involving a loss of status and protection (UNICEF IRC 2005a: 11). The same may be said about early marriage of girls: In many settings being a good daughter necessitates adhering to the custom even if the girl is reluctant. In settings of high levels of violence and/or poverty, early marriage may also be perceived as a protective mechanism (UNICEF IRC 2001). Where social expectations represent a major obstacle to families who might otherwise abandon a practice, it is very difficult for one family to go against the social norm on its own. A collective shift is necessary; change can come only when a 'critical mass' of families in a community abandon the practice (UNICEF IRC 2005a).

# Human rights laws, standards and mechanisms

International and regional human rights laws, standards and mechanisms (including national human rights institutions) make explicit the rights and protections all human beings are entitled to, including where States are obligated to play a facilitating and protective role. States have also made evident their commitment to upholding human rights and children's rights at various international and regional events, where many have signed on to timebound commitments and action plans. These include the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (May 2002) and World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (November 2008).

While most States have signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols as well as many other human rights conventions, fundamental gaps remain in regional and domestic implementation of these standards. UN Treaty bodies regularly remark on these gaps in their General Comments and during their review of country implementation reports. Nevertheless, some progress has been made, including in implementation. International standards are increasingly being used to inform judgements, conclusions and standard-setting in regional and domestic courts. For example, the European Court of Human Rights, European Committee of Social Rights and European Committee against Torture have drawn on the Convention in their rulings (UNICEF IRC 2005b: ix). This demonstrates the "potent value of having effective regional human rights mechanisms to pursue international standards alongside the United Nations human rights Treaty bodies" (UNICEF IRC 2005b: ix).

Human rights standards not only play a role at the state level, but have also proved their importance in education and community discourse to prevent harmful practices, gender-based discrimination and violence against girls. The formal language of human rights can be perceived as alienating, especially when advocated at the community level. But when community workers are able to show that basic human values and aspirations

are usually consistent with universal human rights, discussions among religious leaders, elders and villagers around sensitive topics such as FGM/C and child marriage can serve to bring out and overcome the inconsistencies between social practices and deeply felt human values. This can help lead to the abandonment of harmful practices and the promotion of positive changes for girls and their communities (LeJeune and Mackie draft; UNICEF IRC 2005a).

## The role of the State

To prevent and address violence against children, including girls, the State has primary responsibility for building a legal and policy framework and providing the support needed by families, schools and communities to fulfil their roles (UN General Assembly 2006b: xviii). Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 54 articles, the four key articles comprising the General Principles are most relevant for tackling violence against girls. These are: the best interests of the child (article 3); non-discrimination (article 2); the right to life, survival and development (article 6), and respect for the views of the child (article 12). Furthermore, as stated in article 4 of the Convention, "States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention" (*see*: <[www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm)>), These are detailed in the list below.

### General measures of implementation<sup>14</sup>

- The process of law reform calls on States Parties to enact legislation to address gaps and to ensure compatibility of existing and new legislation and judicial practice with the Convention.
- Independent national institutions for children's rights need to be developed – such as children's ombuds offices, child rights commissioners and focal points within national human rights institutions.
- Comprehensive national agendas or strategies for implementation of the Convention are needed; their relationship to the follow-up process to the 1990 World Summit for Children and the 2002 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children is important.

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<sup>14</sup> UNICEF IRC 2009: 2.



- Child rights-focused permanent institutions and structures within government are required to ensure coordination and pursue implementation.
- Allocation of resources to children “to the maximum extent of their availability” is key in States Parties’ efforts to ensure progress in implementation.
- Systematic monitoring of the implementation of the Convention is needed through effective child-related data collection, analysis, evaluation and dissemination.
- Education, training and awareness-raising on children’s rights need to be promoted.
- The involvement of civil society, including children, is critical if there is to be progress on implementation.
- International cooperation. (UNICEF IRC 2009:2)

Laws and policies are only part of the solution, and they must be used in concert with other strategies. For example, legislation that criminalizes certain behaviours may send a powerful message about social conventions that are harmful and contrary to girls’ human rights. But they are unlikely to reduce or end discrimination and violence if implemented in isolation. In settings where child marriage or FGM/C is highly prevalent, to criminalize the practice would implicate almost everyone in the community, thereby making enforcement difficult. Such an approach may cause further harm, driving the practice underground. Hence a ‘common programmatic approach’ that works at multiple levels is advocated by many agencies as the most effective means by which to bring about an abandonment of FGM/C (*refer to the section ‘Power of the Community’ in chapter 6 for more details*).

States must also consider their roles in creating and perpetuating some cross-border forms of violence. Although some States may view trafficking in persons as due to problems in the country of origin, the issue cannot be examined or addressed separately from issues involving citizenship (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson 2005). As acknowledged in the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly resolution 1337 (2003), women’s vulnerability to various forms of exploitation and abuse is increased through “repressive migration policies and the resulting illegal status of women in destination countries” (UNICEF IRC 2005b: 12).

Some laws may intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate biases. Despite international and national efforts to end gender-based discrimination, inequalities have often been institutionalized in laws and policies and/or

reinforced in their interpretation and implementation. Moreover, most States are still reluctant to intervene legislatively in the ‘private’ sphere of the home and family. Although all Member States of the Council of Europe have banned corporal punishment in schools, only a much smaller group has formally prohibited it in the family and other settings (UNICEF IRC 2005b: 13). Following this, the Council of Europe launched a Europe-wide initiative against corporal punishment of children (June 2008).

Indeed, the ‘home’ has tended to be treated as a special type of institution suspended from the rest of social and economic life. This has implications for children. As discussed earlier, work done within the household, especially by children, is seen as ‘chores’, a necessary part of the socialization and training required to become a functioning adult (Nieuwenhuys 1994). In many countries in the developing world, ‘work’ children do for the household and in the informal sector (disproportionately done by girls) is generally not counted in labour statistics, even though it may be more arduous and hazardous than activities performed in the formal and public sphere of work (Boydén, Ling and Myers 1998).

Religious laws also have a gender component. While some religious laws give equal rights to men and women in some circumstances, others put women at a significant disadvantage (UNDP Bangladesh 1999). In addition, children, especially girls, are in an even worse position because it is customary to see them as being rightfully under the authority of their parents, their fathers or older male guardians, in particular, until they reach the age of majority.

States have overall accountability and responsibility for preventing violence against children and for protecting them from violence. However, where States do not or are not able to function due to internal or external factors, the international community (the UN system and regional bodies) often provides support to national governments in the form of humanitarian and/or development assistance. Nevertheless, there have been glaring gaps in the provision of protection to women and girls by humanitarian personnel, although efforts have been made to address them. These have included improving inter-agency coordination, such as through establishment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in 1992, and ensuring that all personnel adhere to strict ethical standards.



## Chapter 5 Recommendations from the UN Study on Violence against Children

This chapter outlines recommendations from the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. They must be factored into all strategies and solutions to prevent and address violence against girls.

The 12 overarching recommendations pertain to all forms of violence, wherever they occur. They are primarily directed to state actors, in particular to the legislative, administrative, judicial, policymaking, service delivery and institutional functions. Recommendations are also made to other actors, including parents and children. A summary follows.<sup>15</sup>

### **Recommendation 1**

Develop and integrate 'multifaceted and systematic' frameworks that are time bound, integrated into national planning processes, and come under the leadership of a state agency having the mandate and resources to be effective;

### **Recommendation 2**

Prohibit all forms of violence in all settings, including all corporal punishment and harmful traditional practices;

### **Recommendation 3**

Give priority to prevention and to addressing the underlying causes of violence, including its structural elements;

### **Recommendation 4**

Transform attitudes and practices that condone or normalize violence against children, including gender-biased roles and discrimination, acceptance of corporal punishment and harmful traditional practices;

### **Recommendation 5**

Enhance the capacity of those who work with and for children. Ensure codes of conduct and clear standards of practice that prohibit and reject all forms of violence;

### **Recommendation 6**

Ensure accessible, child-sensitive and universal health and social services and legal assistance;

### **Recommendation 7**

Actively engage with children and respect their views. This involves engaging with girls **and** boys;

### **Recommendation 8**

Ensure that mechanisms for children and others to report violence are safe, known, confidential and accessible;

### **Recommendation 9**

Build confidence in the justice system and end impunity by bringing to justice all perpetrators of violence against children and ensure they are held accountable through appropriate proceedings and sanctions;

### **Recommendation 10**

Address the gender dimension of violence against children. States must ensure that programmes to counter and address violence are designed and implemented from a gender perspective, taking into account the different risks faced by girls and boys. States must promote and protect the human rights of women and girls and address all aspects of gender discrimination as part of violence prevention strategies;

### **Recommendation 11**

Improve data collection and information systems (disaggregated by variables that include sex, age, household characteristics and ethnicity) in order to identify vulnerable groups and to inform state policy and

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<sup>15</sup> For the complete list of recommendations, see United Nations General Assembly 2006b: 25-28.

programming at all levels. Monitor and evaluate the impacts of interventions to ensure they are achieving their goals and especially that they are not causing harm;

### **Recommendation 12**

Strengthen international commitment and conformity to international human rights standards and agreements.

### **Specific to the home and family, the study outlines additional recommendations to States:**

- Support parents/caregivers to be more effective as child-rearers. Invest in health, education and social welfare services for disadvantaged groups;
- Target programmes for vulnerable families in difficult circumstances;
- Develop gender-sensitive, parent education programmes focusing on non-violent forms of discipline that take into account children’s evolving capacities and the importance of respecting their views (UN General Assembly 2006b: 28).

## **A ‘multifaceted and systematic framework’**

As Professor Pinheiro wrote in the introduction to the study:

**“Violence against children is multidimensional and calls for a multifaceted response. This Study combines human rights, public health and child protection perspectives, and experts in these different fields have collaborated to support its preparation. The Study has benefited from the growing body of scientific studies that have examined the causes, consequences and preventability of violence against children” (UN General Assembly 2006b: 5).**

Hence, it is critical to examine the issue from a variety of perspectives and sociocultural settings to form a holistic understanding of the nature, magnitude and dimensions of violence against children, and to identify, monitor and evaluate appropriate solutions. This necessitates analysing the situation from the perspective of a diversity of disciplines. These include public health and

science, social sciences (economics, sociology, anthropology, politics and education) and the humanities. The knowledge base must be substantive, and the activities (for example, laws, policies, services, programmes and monitoring efforts) must be integrated, cross-sectoral, accountable and participatory.

While contributions from multiple sectors are necessary and important to understand and address the problem, Professor Pinheiro calls attention to the paramount obligation of governments to prevent and respond to violence against children as part of their human rights obligations. As signatories to international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States have the primary legal and moral obligation and responsibility to prevent and respond to all forms of violence. Moreover, and consistent with a rights-based approach, “Whatever the action taken, the best interests of the child must always be the primary consideration” (Pinheiro 2006: 17).

State efforts must focus on prevention, have an effective and accountable national legal framework (including law enforcement), involve service provision (including social welfare, education and health) and include the participation of civil society actors, including children. Indeed, as holders of rights, children are entitled to participate in the processes and decisions that concern and affect their lives.

Endeavours do not stop at national borders, however. There is an international dimension to a human rights-based approach, reflecting increasing global and regional interdependence brought about through trade, new technologies, migration, security issues, transnational crime and the environment, including climate change. This is reflected in a country’s adoption and ratification of international and regional human rights instruments,<sup>16</sup> multilateral and bilateral agreements on issues of common concern, foreign policy matters and provision of development and humanitarian assistance. Actions must take place at community, national and international levels. Sufficient resources must be allocated to enable implementation, and effective structures and mechanisms must be in place. Gender sensitivity must

<sup>16</sup> This involves taking appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including implementation of article 4, the General Measures.

be considered in all actions. Actions must be tailored to the setting in which violence takes place. As Lansdown writes, “Global solutions that define strategies for addressing need without also addressing the context in which those needs arise are not necessarily helpful” (Lansdown 2005: 19).

**At the national and subnational level, elements would likely involve the following:**

**Prevention**

- Develop knowledge about the context in which violence takes place (including social norms and traditional practices and the structural dimensions of male dominance over women) and its multifaceted aspects.
- Address poverty, discrimination and vulnerability; socially and economically marginalized children may make life choices that increase their risk of violence.
- Address gaps in the knowledge base so that efforts are empirically informed, appropriately directed and monitored to ensure they are achieving their intended results and not doing further harm.
- Engage with the media to raise awareness, help break down barriers to open discussion on ‘sensitive’ issues and encourage responsible reporting.
- Produce and disseminate child-friendly, age-specific and diversity sensitive information about child rights and violence against girls, and involve girls and boys in producing these materials and in preventive activities.
- Engage with the private sector to identify its possible role and promote corporate social responsibility.

**Legal reform and law enforcement**

- Ratify all relevant international instruments without any reservations and take steps to ensure that national laws comply fully with relevant international human rights standards. Address gaps in secular as well as religious or customary laws, and build the capacities of officials at all levels to promote effective law enforcement.
- Approach legal reform as a process. Address it comprehensively where legislation includes aspects of prevention, provision of services, protection, participation and criminalization. Follow the General Measures of Implementation of the Convention on

the Rights of the Child (include awareness-raising, resource allocation, drafting and implementation of time-bound plans of action, and engagement with civil society and children) for its effective implementation.

- Ensure that officials are held accountable and address corruption.
- Ensure that justice systems are child-friendly and accessible to children who may be victims, witnesses or offenders.
- Promote the development of independent children’s rights institutions, such as child ombudspersons, to monitor governments and the actions of other key stakeholders.
- Ensure that the UN Treaty bodies and Special Procedures and regional human rights mechanisms continue to pay particular attention to combating all forms of violence against children, including violence against girls, within their respective mandates; ensure a gender perspective in the reporting process; and maintain their efforts to encourage States to create and maintain data on children that are disaggregated by sex, age and other variables.

**Capacities and services to improve protection and response**

- Prioritize prevention but ensure that services for victims are gender-sensitive and respect their dignity and human rights.
- Build the capacity of teachers, health workers, social workers, lawyers, police and others to detect and respond to violence against girls and boys effectively.
- Promote child-friendly reporting mechanisms and ensure coordination between service providers (including professional bodies working for and with children) to prevent and respond to violence.
- Change teaching methodologies to treat children as active participants in their own learning rather than as passive recipients of information. Address gender stereotyping in curricula and approaches to teaching (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia 2001: 20).

## Participation

- Ensure children's meaningful participation. Take steps to ensure children have the confidence and life skills required to contribute to the best of their abilities; adopt a non-discriminatory approach that ensures that all girls and boys have an equal opportunity to participate, regardless of their class, gender, ability, language, ethnicity, sexual preference, religion, etc.; be committed to transparency, honesty and account-ability in follow-up actions and responses (Feinstein et al. 2005: 7).
- Consult with children of all age groups, while recognizing that some violence is age specific, making it especially important to consult with girls and boys at specific ages. For example, girls in the early stages of puberty may be at greater risk of violence than girls in other age groups (UNICEF 2007: 76).
- Recognize children's evolving capacities and develop materials and information that are appropriate for children and adolescents of different ages and ability status.
- Widen the scope, quality and impact of children's participation by helping them form, strengthen, network and lead groups and forums (Feinstein and O'Kane 2009: 67).
- Teach and sensitize adults, including parents and professionals working with children, on the value of children's participation (Feinstein and O'Kane 2009).
- Include boys and men as partners in efforts to address gender discrimination and dominant forms of masculinity and femininity (International Save the Children Alliance 2005b: 20).
- Promote open and non-judgemental discussion and engagement on the issues (and their related antecedents) with all members of the community.
- Promote child-friendly structures for involving children in decision-making processes.

## Monitoring and evaluation

- Ensure that quantitative and qualitative data collected at all levels are disaggregated by a range of variables. Nationally aggregated statistics tend to mask the reality of girls within their communities (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2007b: 4). This could hide important disparities and pockets of marginalization and vulnerability.

- While quantitative data-collection techniques may reach larger numbers and show broad trends, qualitative data are essential for understanding why some communities, families and children are more vulnerable than others and to address root causes of violence against girls and children in general.
- Support children's meaningful involvement in data-collection efforts as well as in monitoring and evaluating interventions and services that affect them.
- Develop indicators for monitoring and to better track the impact of policies and progress over time.
- Evaluate the impact of interventions to identify where corrective steps are required, to identify good practices, as well as for scaling up and generating lessons learned (UNICEF 2007: 78).

Girls remain largely invisible in public policies and programmes (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2007b: 1). Moreover, too much focus on child/adult distinctions may blind policymakers to the fact that children are also affected by macrolevel social and economic policies and development and foreign policy goals. Hence:

- Gender equality goals should cut across all policy areas, including macroeconomic planning and gender-sensitive budgets and audits (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2007b: 2).
- The needs of girls must be considered in poverty reduction strategies and programmes (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2007a: 5).
- Efforts to promote and protect human rights, including the rights of girls and women to be free from discrimination and violence, may also be incorporated into foreign policy and development goals (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands 2007).



## Chapter 6 Outcomes of the thematic workshops

This chapter summarizes the results of the workshops that covered the eight sub-themes of the International Girl Child Conference, including examples of good practices to address the particular form of violence discussed. These case studies<sup>17</sup> come from a variety of sources, including the Secretary-General's study and its source material as well as documentation compiled by IRC. An overview from each workshop is presented, emphasizing the main observations and recommendations that emerged from the discussions.<sup>18</sup> Participants included representatives from government, civil society, bilateral and multilateral institutions (including UNICEF, ILO/IPEC and WHO), current and former members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, experts, professionals, young people active in anti-violence efforts and representatives of foundations, research institutes and academia.

### See and Act (summary)

This workshop called attention to the need for cooperation among sectors at all levels to prevent and respond to violence against children and adolescents in the family. It also sought to identify the necessary elements and priority actions for building prevention and response mechanisms. Examples of several effective cooperation systems currently in place in several regions of the world were presented and discussed.

In the home and family setting, children experience all forms of physical and sexual violence, humiliation

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that not all of the examples provided have been evaluated.

<sup>18</sup> The content of this chapter is primarily derived from notes taken by the Rapporteurs for the International Girl Child Conference, to whom thanks is given.

and other types of psychological violence and neglect (Pinheiro 2006: 50). Perpetrators of this violence include parents and step-parents, guardians (alternate family caregivers), extended family members, spouses (in the case of child marriage) and in-laws (Pinheiro 2006: 51). All children in all regions of the world are at risk of physical violence in the home and family. The forms of violence, however, vary according to age, stage of development and, in some circumstances, gender (Pinheiro 2006: 50; UNICEF 2007). Some forms are specific to girls in certain parts of the world, such as early and forced marriage, 'honour' crimes, harmful traditional practices and son preference.

Data vary by country/region but are often unreliable, as many types of violence are not reported or are misreported. Moreover, not all forms of violence are prohibited by law, or the laws are ineffective or not enforced. For example, corporal punishment is illegal in all settings, including the home, in only 23 countries, see <[www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)>. Child marriage is banned in many countries, but it persists in customary and statutory laws, and the ban often remains unenforced (UNICEF 2007: 29).

Cooperation among sectors is essential to address the multifaceted dimensions of violence. Prevention and response systems must work with stakeholders at all levels, from local to national. The principle of the 'best interests of the child' must be paramount in these efforts, although in practice this is a challenge. Nevertheless:

**“Clearly defined mechanisms and procedures, including guidelines for decision-making, case management and minimum standards, help contribute to reliable and effective procedures to determine and implement a child's best interests. They need to be primary considerations for each individual child, taking into account his or her views” (UNICEF IRC 2008b: 35).**

## CASE STUDY 1

### Child protection mechanisms at the community level: Nepal

Paralegal committees have been formed in 23 districts of Nepal to address all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of children and women. The emphasis is on prevention, early detection, case follow-up, conflict resolution, and monitoring and reporting. The committees have become an integral part of Nepal's district protection system, linking members of vulnerable communities with support service providers, government agencies and district-level NGOs. The committees' sensitization programmes raise awareness about risks, human rights and support structures. These programmes have helped communities become more attentive to trafficking and other forms of violence against children and women. The paralegal committees also challenge social norms, such as acceptance of child marriage and domestic violence.

Major achievements include greater confidence and awareness of children and women about their rights and where to go for help. The committees have also sensitized communities to challenge discriminatory and harmful attitudes and traditions, including child marriage and domestic violence. The committees are well known for their effective investigations of reported abuses, which have challenged the prevailing impunity around violence and exploitation of women and children. In 2006, of 764 reported cases of abuse and exploitation in four districts of Nepal, the local paralegal committee solved almost 92 per cent. The approach has proved successful because of the strong network and cooperation between those involved at village, district and national levels. Compatible mandates and division of responsibilities among the involved organizations have also helped ensure success, as have linkages with teachers, elected officials and children's clubs.

But challenges persist. It has been reported that some committee members initially faced pressure from their husbands or other men in the community for undertaking untraditional gender roles. At times, the work is limited by gaps in national legislation on the rights of children and women. Providing ongoing skills-building and support for the committees is a problem, especially in isolated districts. Participation of children and youth

remains low, and more child-friendly material and information are required. Male involvement in prevention actions has been weak, and men and boys need to play a more active role in reducing violence. Domestic violence is common, and more action is required to address it. Membership of the paralegal committees may favour higher-caste women and exclude Dalits (members of the lowest caste). Linkages with agencies that provide livelihood support are required to help address poverty, a root cause of exploitation and one that may also increase children's and women's vulnerability to harm. Although case records are maintained, further systematization is required to create a database for better follow-up and monitoring.

*Source: UNICEF IRC 2008b: 6-11.*

## CASE STUDY 2

### Preventing and addressing corporal punishment in the home: Romania

In 2003, Save the Children Romania started campaigning to prohibit all corporal punishment in the home. First, it surveyed 1,200 children aged 8 to 13 to find out the extent of the problem. Girls and boys reported that the most commonly adopted method of 'education' in families was corporal punishment. Three quarters of the children believed that authorities should punish adults who hit children, and 82 per cent believed that corporal punishment should be prohibited by law.

The next step was launch of the campaign, 'Beating is not from heaven'. The name was derived from a well-known Romanian proverb that suggests the opposite, that beating **is** from heaven. The aim was to achieve legislative prohibition of corporal punishment and to encourage families to embrace non-violent child-rearing. Two brochures were prepared for parents, 'Understand your child' and 'Promoting positive discipline – It is possible without hitting'. Training sessions were organized.

Actions also focused on officials. A campaign brochure, 'For the ones who still believe that beating is from heaven', was distributed to members of Parliament, government departments, local authorities, UN organizations and civil society groups. There was also intensive letter-writing, a round-table session in Parliament and street and media campaigns including advertising and posters.

In August 2004, a new Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child was adopted. Article 28 states: “The child has the right to be shown respect for his or her personality and individuality and may not be made subject to physical punishments or to other humiliating or degrading treatment...” According to the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children <[www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)>, this makes Romania a State with full abolition of the practice.

Source: *International Save the Children Alliance 2005a: 35.*

### CASE STUDY 3

#### Children in contact with the law: Latin America

Obligatory reporting of child abuse is established in most recent Latin American criminal codes. The rights of the victim are generally protected by provisions allowing testimony obtained during the investigation to be admitted as evidence at trial, in order to avoid the trauma of repeated interrogation. For example, the code of Ecuador expressly forbids submitting a child victimized by any form of abuse to the same medical examination more than once, unless re-examination is necessary for the victim’s treatment and recovery. Many codes adopt a balanced approach that includes prevention, temporary protective measures, rehabilitation of victims and offenders (especially family members) and penal sanctions. Most Latin American countries have recently adopted domestic violence legislation. This trend was encouraged by the 1994 adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, which has been ratified by most countries of the region.

Source: *UNICEF IRC 2007a: 67.*

## Presentations, discussion and recommendations

The working session included presentations describing response systems to domestic violence against children in several parts of the world: the Netherlands (the RAAK approach), India and Kenya (Childline) and the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe (the ‘Building a

Europe for and with children’ programme). The first presentation, made by Stan Van Haaren and Marian Van Leeuwen, focused on implementation of the RAAK approach in the Netherlands. The presenters explained that between 2008 and 2010, the Action Plan against Child Abuse will be implemented throughout the country. The plan takes a regional approach, with each of the 35 regions developing its own plan of action so that it is geared to the local situation. While the primary objectives remain the same across the country, each region sets its own priorities. Whereas previously actions to address child abuse were under-resourced, had inadequate legislation to tackle the problem and took a piecemeal approach to children, the new action plan seeks to build strong cooperation between multiple stakeholders, each of whom has clearly defined responsibilities and ample resources. Early detection and response are vital, and the capacities of professionals working at many levels are enhanced.

Childline Kenya is linked to organizations and is included within the referral system of the government for enhanced coverage and services. As explained by the presenters, Irene Nyamu, Coordinator, Childline Kenya and Nancy Kanyago of Plan Kenya, a major challenge is to ensure that the mechanisms are in place, so that when children call and report abuse, action can be taken. In India, girls are disproportionately victims of abuse, and Childline India is sensitive to the gender concerns of children. As described by Nicole Menezes of Childline India and Nirali Mehta of Plan India, the rescue teams are part of the services provided, and to be effective, partnerships with other service providers are essential. Childline has benefited from the wide information and communications technology (ICT) that exists in many parts of India.

As outlined by Lioubov Samokhina, Programme Officer, ‘Building a Europe for and with children’ is a programme launched by the Council of Europe in 2006 to promote children’s rights and to ensure their protection from all forms of violence. At the regional level, it seeks to implement the UN violence study. The purpose of the programme is to help decision-makers and other actors design and implement integrated national strategies for protecting children’s rights and preventing violence against children. Components include standard-setting, awareness-raising and monitoring. With 47 Member States, the Council of Europe has the potential to improve child protection systems for children in many countries.



During the discussion, attention was drawn to the importance of basing interventions on the local context. Nevertheless, there were common features to all approaches.

All the examples involved multi-stakeholder partnerships and referral systems, including government service providers that are identified as key to effective child protection systems.

### Discussion points

Participants emphasized the need to break the ‘conspiracy of silence’ around domestic abuse and violence and the need for government acknowledgement of the problem. They noted that ‘See and Act’ go hand in hand, and mechanisms – including trained volunteers and professionals in place – are required for systems to work and children’s best interests to be served. Working group members also noted that while inter-agency collaboration is needed to build effective child protection systems, ensuring the best interests of the child must be mainstreamed throughout all elements



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*Girls are more likely than boys to be found engaged in ‘invisible’ types of work, such as domestic work – either in their own homes or the homes of others. These forms of hidden work tend not to be counted and are under-recognized, and may heighten girls’ risk of sexual and other forms of abuse.*

of the system and must be the primary goal. Not only must the government be part of the system and officials be active participants, but the community must also be involved. In many settings, it is the community that takes responsibility for resolving domestic abuse and violence.

### Recommendations

- The many actors needed to establish systems to prevent and address abuse and violence must be encouraged to cooperate, not compete.
- In addressing child abuse, governments should take the lead role in monitoring and supervising cooperation between actors. Governments should establish targets, indicators and baselines to monitor and evaluate progress.
- Adequate funding and resources (material and human) are needed to ensure that systems provide effective response and support through all stages of assisting the child, from identification and reporting to referral, support and follow-up.
- The tendency to ‘over-professionalize’ the problem should be avoided. Communities should be empowered to play an active role in preventing and addressing the problem, so they need sufficient resources.

## Helping Parents (summary)<sup>19</sup>

Supporting parents and caregivers is a crucial element in preventing child abuse and neglect. This workshop focused on several parenting programmes that have proved effective in reducing violence against children, including those that address the gender dimension of discrimination and violence. Basic themes included how to identify the key elements to success and the preconditions for effective implementation.

As the institution of the ‘family’ changes in response to social and economic pressures, families face increasing levels of stress. The pace of urbanization is altering living patterns and livelihoods; environmental factors such as climate change are affecting livelihoods; and widening income gaps and rapid social change have

<sup>19</sup> A number of good practices are documented in the United Nations Secretary-General’s study; see for example Pinheiro 2006: 76-80.

tended to raise levels of interpersonal violence (Pinheiro 2006: 50). The risk of fatal maltreatment for children is worse for children in poorer countries:

**“For children under five years of age living in high income countries the death rate from maltreatment is estimated at 2.2 per 100,000 for boys and 1.8 per 100,000 for girls. In low to middle income countries the rates are two to three times higher (6.1 per 100,000 for boys and 5.1 per 100,000 for girls). The highest homicide rates for children under five years are found in Africa – 17.9 per 100,000 for boys and 12.7 per 100,000 for girls. Many child deaths however are not routinely investigated and there is general agreement that fatalities from child maltreatment are far more frequent than official records suggest in every country” (UNICEF IRC 2003: 22).**

There is also evidence that girls may be at greater risk of maltreatment and violence in some countries and regions:

**“For example, gender ratios – in particular in East and South Asia – indicate the murder of baby girls in numbers that far exceed those classified as intentional injury in official mortality statistics. According to the latest population census in India, the national female-male sex ratio in the zero to six age group has dropped to 927 girls for every 1,000 boys in India as a whole. In the states of Punjab and Haryana the ratio is as low as 793 girls to every 1,000 boys. In the face of growing surveillance by local authorities there are reports of increasingly active attempts to disguise infanticide as death by natural causes. For example, by deliberately weakening and dehydrating a newborn, by withholding prescribed medicines and by feeding alcohol to cause diarrhoea” (UNICEF IRC 2003: 22).**

In many parts of the world, transitions from childhood to adulthood are being eroded, largely as a consequence of globalization (Lansdown 2005). Childhood is a dynamic construct, but the nature and pace of the changes taking place now are unprecedented, and the world in which many young people are growing up is unrecognizable to their parents. Parents need support to manage these changes, which may create more stress and put their children at greater risk of abuse, neglect or violence.

Parents and families that are unable to care for their children may place them in institutional care or resort to fostering or adoption. In some cases this may be in the child's best interests, but if not properly regulated and controlled, it may pose serious risks to the rights of children. Intercountry adoption became very popular in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s. The practice had been to adopt children from institutions, but soon girls and boys were being procured directly from their biological parents in exchange for consumer goods or money (UNICEF IRC 1997: 16).

HIV and AIDS has also brought changes to the family institution. The rate of child abandonment has gone up significantly in some AIDS-affected communities. Abandonment may be motivated by poverty, fear, or the inability of parents to raise a child. Fostering or adoption may be positive alternatives for affected children and families, but monitoring is required to ensure these practices are guided by the child's best interest and do not expose children to violence (UNICEF IRC 2006: 16).

During regional consultations with children for the Secretary-General's study, girls and boys frequently raised the issue of corporal punishment by parents and teachers as a matter of concern (Save the Children 2005a). Many called for alternative methods of discipline not involving physical or verbal abuse, including "being offered a proper explanation for what they had done wrong" (Pinheiro 2006: 53).

In 2008, a study was undertaken of children's perceptions of parenting practices in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, focusing on socially and economically disadvantaged children aged 8 to 16 (Choudhury and Jabeen 2008). The study found that children are socialized to have specific ideas about what is appropriate behaviour for both genders, and this affects their views of how fathers and mothers should behave. Specifically they expected fathers to be providers and protectors and to take major decisions regarding children; whereas mothers were expected to be focused on nurturing, caring and home maintenance (Choudhury and Jabeen 2008: iv).

Not surprisingly, the study also found that children strongly dislike physical and humiliating punishment. Most girls and boys said they should be told what they have done wrong instead of being beaten. Physical and psychological punishment was found to be one of

the prime factors pushing children to leave home and quit school, which could put them at risk of ending up in an exploitative situation. The children also said that grandparents are a source of affection, help and comfort, especially important to them when they get into trouble.

Although children from all socio-economic classes are at risk of violence committed by parents or caregivers, studies from a variety of settings show that "low parental education levels, lack of income, and household overcrowding increase the risk of physical and psychological violence against children" (Pinheiro 2006: 68). Among some nations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), teen pregnancy can cause a number of problems for both mothers and children (UNICEF IRC 2007b: 31). Young mothers are more likely to drop out of school, possibly leading to socio-economic hardship that will affect both them and their children. Young parents may need extra support to cope with these heavy responsibilities. States need to promote family-friendly policies that support gender equality in the workplace (to ensure equal treatment of men and women in recruitment, access to work, remuneration and advancement based on merit) and gender equity at home (the division of labour in child-rearing and domestic tasks) (Bennett 2008: 26).

#### CASE STUDY 4

### Child-rearing challenges: The Swedish approach

Over the past decades, policy in Sweden has attempted to reconcile economic efficiency, equity for women and the best interests of the child. The country provides 480 days of paid parental leave to each family, pooled as follows: a 360-day (16-month) family leave that can be shared by the parents and linked to employment status. In addition, a further 60 days (12 weeks) is allocated to each parent. The policy seeks to protect gender equality, family well-being and the best interests of the child. Costs are mostly recuperated through taxes on women's labour and can be further reduced by employment insurance and employer contributions, which, in many countries provide a supplement to low, flat-rate benefits.

Another strategy is a national, universal preschool system that offers affordable and quality care for all

children from the age of 1 year. This publicly supported service appears to be a critical element in a parental leave policy that adds considerably to the security of families and the development of young children. Though expensive, the system is cost-effective, given that over 76 per cent of women work, 80 per cent of whom are in full-time jobs (as of 2005).

Source: Bennett 2008: 39.

### **CASE STUDY 5** **Integrated child development services: India**

India's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme is designed to promote the holistic development of young children, especially those from disadvantaged and low-income groups, by strengthening the skills of mothers and communities and improving access to basic services (Mother and Child Health and Education Trust 2009). It is the world's largest integrated early childhood programme, and provides services to millions of pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and children under age 6.

The services include supplementary nutrition, pre-school education, immunization, health check-ups, referrals and nutrition and health education. There is emerging evidence of its positive impact on children's nutritional status (UNICEF 2007: 26). Although it is primarily geared to the health and nutritional needs of children under 6 years, there is convergence with other programmes and services. These include formal education, sanitation and safe drinking water, and women's empowerment.

ICDS also serves several critical protection needs. Service providers can identify at-risk women, such as mothers who are under 18 years old or who are experiencing domestic violence. They may also detect and raise awareness about gender-based discrimination, including son preference, and abuse and neglect of children.

ICDS is directed at pregnant women, mothers and young children – not fathers. Yet, as the study on violence against children points out, "Parenting programmes should strive to strengthen the skills of both mothers and fathers" (Pinheiro 2006: 78).

### **CASE STUDY 6** **Good fathering practices: South Asia**

Since 2003, Save the Children Sweden has worked with men and boys in a number of creative ways in several South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan) to address constructs of masculinity that condone violence against women and children. Recognizing that these attitudes and actions are learned through socialization that starts from early childhood, initiatives are aimed at challenging the dominant paradigms. The purpose is to construct alternative male role models that promote gender equity and encourage fathers to be more involved in caring for their children. This is important because evidence shows that men's active and non-violent participation in childcare is good for both children and women: Children have better health and developmental outcomes and women's domestic burden is eased as men take on a greater share of household tasks. Moreover, fathers who report positive connections to their children have fewer mental health problems and are less likely to abuse substances or participate in criminal activity.

Workshops using documentaries and short films have been conducted with adolescent boys and young men in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan to stimulate discussions about masculinity. Life skills manuals have also been developed for boys, with modules on 'preparing for fatherhood'.

The issue of masculinity has led to reflection and debate by a number of organizations trying to identify ways to address the underlying dimensions of gender-based discrimination and violence. Doing so requires involving boys and men as partners and not focusing only on negative behaviours. Networks of organizations that work with boys and young men have been established across the region. Furthermore, partnerships have been forged with the White Ribbon Campaign, an initiative among men in 47 countries to reject violence against women. Further research, advocacy, capacity-building and policy formulation are required.

Sources: Pinheiro 2006: 80; Save the Children, UNFPA and Instituto Promundo 2006.

## CASE STUDY 7

### Gender socialization: Jamaica

A number of behavioural patterns were noted among boys and young men in Jamaica, including a steady decline in school enrolment (from primary school through university), a rise in urban crime and the growing influence of peer and street cultures. To counter these trends, UNICEF supported the establishment of a Gender Socialization Project. Implemented by the University of the West Indies and operating in six low-income communities, it worked to involve young males in a process of self-examination. The methodology consisted of in-depth interviews, group meetings and discussions after staged public events. An evaluation revealed that the initiative sparked debate in the community about the impact of gender-based roles on their lives, and increased their understanding of the consequences of socialization, especially among men.

*Source: Foubi and Lovich 1997.*

## CASE STUDY 8

### Positive parenting through advocacy and capacity-building: Mexico and Nicaragua

Several organizations in Central America and Mexico have launched positive awareness-raising campaigns aimed at eradicating violence against children under the slogan 'Education with Tenderness'. Aimed at promoting affection, equity and respect for children, the initiative has involved a media campaign in Mexico using the slogan 'It is better to love them'. The same television spots have been used in Nicaragua, along with a radio component.

Ending corporal punishment was the focus of a regional workshop in Nicaragua in 2003 with Save the Children and key civil society and government representatives. The workshops gave visibility to the issue and helped the participating organizations start recognizing it as a form of child maltreatment.

The Nicaragua Ministry of Education sponsors 'schools for parents' at 40 schools. They have raised the issue

of punishment as a negative child-raising practice that needs to change. The Ministry has also provided training for school principals and teachers on the importance of not using violent methods, such as striking students with rulers, in the classroom. The Ministry raised this issue as a result of its participation in a workshop on the subject.

*Source: International Save the Children Alliance 2005a: 29.*

## Presentations, discussion and recommendations

During the workshop, presentations covered Australia's Positive Parenting Program, which has been adapted in other countries, including the Netherlands; Sri Lanka's Home-Start initiative; and the Roving Caregivers Programme in the Caribbean.

The session began with a presentation by Aileen Pidgeon, a developer of the Pathways Triple P-Positive Parenting Program. This is an evidence-based programme developed for use in Australia to provide parenting support for mothers, fathers and caregivers with children up to 16 years old. Pathways focuses specifically on families in which child abuse has been reported or is strongly suspected. The approach is evidenced-based and is now being implemented in other countries, including the Netherlands.

A presentation was then made by Madusha Dissanayake, Chairperson/National Organizer, Home-Start Lanka, and Anna Stuttard, Director, Home-Start International. This programme makes use of trained community volunteers (many of whom are parents themselves) who visit households that have at least one child aged 0-6 years old. It is being implemented in urban, low-income areas. The volunteers usually visit the homes at least once a week for two hours and share guidance and provide in-family support. The aim is to address problems before they become more serious.

The Roving Caregivers Programme, presented by Susan Branker-Lashley, Programme Director, Caribbean Child Support Initiative, is a home-based intervention being implemented in several Caribbean countries.



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*Children of all ages and backgrounds witness and experience domestic violence. The forms to which they are exposed often vary according to their age and stage of development. Participants acknowledged the importance of investing in parental education, involving children and young people, and adopting an approach that ensures the best interests of the child.*

It focuses on parents with children up to the age of 3 years old. It trains and deploys young caregivers called 'Rovers' to rural homes to teach parents about early stimulation of their children and good parenting practices. The programme seeks to promote children's development, health and nutrition, parents' self-esteem and child-rearing knowledge and practices. It also assists in income-generating activities for families. An impact assessment of the programme has shown improved results for both children and parents who have participated in it. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a pilot programme is underway with the cooperation of the country's Ministry of Health.

### Discussion points

- The need for evidence-based programmes that show benefits for parents and children was emphasized.
- Interventions to help parents should build on existing infrastructure and not create parallel services that may be difficult to scale up or replicate.
- In many sociocultural settings, parents are not the only primary caregivers; girls and boys are socialized and develop in the extended family and the wider community. Hence, parents are not the only actors in preventing child abuse and neglect. The important role of other significant persons in children's lives should be acknowledged and accounted for in developing and implementing programmes.

### Recommendations

- Interventions should build on existing programmes and adopt multidisciplinary and interactive approaches that include women, men and children.
- The UN database on violence against women, being established with funds from the Government of the Netherlands, could also include programmes that are effective in preventing violence against children. The database could serve as a forum to exchange experiences and good practices from around the world on addressing violence against children.
- Higher priority should be placed on supporting parents to be more effective caregivers.
- Child rights should be the guiding approach for all interventions.
- Monitoring and evaluation of parenting programmes and policies need to be more effective to assess progress and constraints domestically and across countries.

## Girls and the Internet (summary)

This workshop aimed to build on the five themes discussed at World Congress III<sup>20</sup>, particularly the emergence of the Internet as both a means of online abuse and a tool for awareness-raising and preventing violence.

The types of threats children face from technology are changing, but they include exposure to violent imagery through video and online games; production, distribution and use of materials depicting sexual violence, especially sexual abuse and child abuse images; and online solicitation (also known as 'grooming') (Pinheiro 2006: 315). Many preventive programmes are in place in Europe, but few evaluations have been conducted to measure their impact. The lack of information, except for data supplied by INTERPOL and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the United States, is a concern. A recent report produced for the World Congress III notes the following:

**"At present we have to rely largely on anecdotal accounts from people working with current law enforcement data bases, and this would suggest that the majority of new images are of white, westernised and Asian children, but there has been no systematic analysis and collation of data"** (Quayle, Loof and Palmer 2008: 42).

The Children and online Sexual Violence conference that took place in Stockholm (12–13 February 2009) drew attention to the need for more research on how new technologies facilitate sexual exploitation in the travel and tourism industries, and how they link to child trafficking. Also raised was the need to address the normalization of sexual harm through the media, especially in advertising, fashion, entertainment and video games, which may show prostitution and pornography as normal, positive and desirable (Allmänna Barnhuset et al. 2009).

<sup>20</sup> The five conference themes were as follows: forms of commercial sexual exploitation and its new scenarios; legal framework and accountability; integrated cross-sectoral policies; initiatives of social responsibility; and strategies for international cooperation.

Agreements are needed within and between countries on definitions, laws and perceptions of what is acceptable regarding Internet and communication technologies and their content (Pinheiro 2006: 315). Because of sociocultural differences, some countries are more willing to allow sexualized images of children in mainstream media; some permit publication of images of abuse (Pinheiro 2006: 315). At the time the study on violence against children was published, data were scant, though growing. A 2008 ECPAT report on online child sexual abuse notes the following:

**“Since 2001, the number of Internet users worldwide has increased by 205 per cent, from 479 million in June 2001 to 1463 million in June 2008; this same period has seen an increase in global coverage from 7.9 per cent of the world’s population to 21.9 per cent. The number of web pages has likewise increased by 403 per cent, from c.35 million in October 2001 to c.176 million in July 2008, and this number continues to grow by 3.14 million sites per month (Baines 2008: 5).**

The Secretary-General’s study stressed the need for better knowledge about the issue, more emphasis on prevention (including a greater role for the private sector) and for strong international and national standards and better cross-border cooperation in their implementation (Pinheiro 2006: 315). Participants in World Congress III emphasized the need to empower children and young people to use the Internet safely and to get them involved in developing and implementing preventive measures (Bhandari 2009). The Outcome Document of World Congress III, under a specific action for ‘child pornography and child abuse images’, included a series of recommendations to address violence committed across and through the Internet (*see appendix B*).

## CASE STUDY 9 The Virtual Global Taskforce

Established in 2003, the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT) consists of specialist law enforcement agencies from around the world<sup>21</sup> who work together to fight online child abuse. The VGT seeks to make the Internet a safer place for children and young people; to identify, locate and help children and young people at risk; and to hold perpetrators to account.

**Achievements:** Through VGT efforts, law enforcement agencies have successfully facilitated cross-jurisdictional investigations and information-sharing. It should be noted that the VGT’s success is credited to efforts at the practitioner level, and not to multilateral agreements or cooperation between governments. Successful investigation and crime prevention have been achieved through partnerships among stakeholders involving the private sector, NGOs, educators and others, including children. VGT members share their resources and expertise with law enforcement agencies in developing countries, particularly those where child prostitution is linked with production of images of child sexual abuse. One initiative is Operation Pin, which aims to deter casual or opportunist offenders seeking to access websites with child abuse images.

The VGT website, launched in January 2005, provides information to adults and children on how to stay safe online. Member agencies have also been able to pool their resources to respond to reports of abuse via the ‘Report Abuse’ function at <[www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com](http://www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com)>. Reports are automatically forwarded to the appropriate country of jurisdiction.

In July 2008, the first International Youth Advisory Congress took place in London, led by a VGT member, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (United Kingdom). Approximately 150 young people met with those responsible for Internet safety and

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<sup>21</sup> Current membership of the Virtual Global Taskforce comprises the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP); INTERPOL; Australian Federal Police High Tech Crime Centre (AHTCC); Royal Canadian Mounted Police National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre (NCECC); U.S. Department for Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); and Italian Postal and Communications Police.



security, including representatives from government, industry, law enforcement and the media. Delegates to the four-day event produced a 'Children and Young Person's Global Online Charter', comprising 10 recommendations. General recommendations addressed children's right to education and information about cybersafety and the need for a global homepage on browsers highlighting Internet safety guidelines so that all children can access them. Other recommendations included:

*For governments:* Ensure that citizens know about cybersafety, pressure industry to unify abuse-reporting mechanisms, promote online safety with the media and implement transborder agreements between nations.

*For industry:* Embed a mandatory and universal browser-based mechanism on the toolbar of all social networking sites so that threatening behaviour can be reported quickly and easily, and all information and intelligence regarding reports of child exploitation and abusive images can be passed to law enforcement agencies.

*For law enforcement agencies:* Register all convicted sex offenders and require them to report regularly to law enforcement. For convicted offenders who have failed to report, release their personal information to protect potential victims.

*For the media:* Broadcast Internet safety films and resources widely to reach youth audiences; tackle cyber and mobile bullying; and give young people more of a voice in highlighting and reporting these issues.

**Challenges:** Child sexual exploitation is not a priority in many jurisdictions, especially when it competes for attention with street violence, gang activity and drug trafficking. This is despite significant public interest in child protection and media attention to this type of criminality. The failure to include online child sexual abuse in government policing plans results in a lack of priority and resources at both national and local levels.

The absence of parallel legislation against online sexual abuse of children in all jurisdictions can impede investigations both inside a country and abroad. Furthermore, while it is essential to criminalize these activities, adequate provision must be made to

ensure successful investigative outcomes. Legislation must also be dynamic to respond to changes in abusive behaviours and the environments for abuse. Additional efforts are needed to prevent online sexual exploitation and to empower young people to use the Internet safely.

As a follow-up to World Congress II held in Yokohama, Japan in 2001, several countries established specialist centres to investigate online child sexual abuse. But even the best resourced centres cannot keep up with the pace of expansion of publicly available Internet technologies. While awareness of the seriousness of online child sexual abuse is growing, government failures to prioritize the investigation of such criminal activity mean fewer resources for local investigative capability.

And while specialist centres provide national coordination of intelligence and serve as focal points for international collaboration and technical resources such as forensic analysis and covert Internet investigation, the majority of investigations and arrests still fall to local police forces. This is because national centres lack the resources to assume responsibility for all such crimes committed within a jurisdiction. To meet the demands of such investigations, local law enforcement agencies need dedicated child abuse investigation units, staffed by officers with specialist training. They also need the resources to investigate online child sexual abuse, from production and distribution of materials, online solicitation of children for sexual purposes and other related forms of exploitation. National centres need sufficient capacity to provide specialist support (for example, covert online investigators) to these local units when required.

Concerning the private sector, Internet service providers can do more to produce transparent child protection strategies. They can also be more responsible by providing a mechanism for reporting directly to law enforcement from the online environment in which the sexual abuse of children is experienced or detected. *Source: Baines 2008. Also see the Children and Young Persons' Online Global Charter, <[www.iyac.net/iyac\\_charter.pdf](http://www.iyac.net/iyac_charter.pdf)>.*

# Presentations, discussion and recommendations

The session comprised a keynote address and three presentations by experts and representatives of organizations working on the issue of the Internet both as a means of online abuse and prevention.

The first presentation, by Ethel Quayle, an expert on commercial sexual exploitation of children, focused on research findings on prevention and communication via the Internet. The emphasis was on those characteristics that appear to put some children at greater risk of online abuse and exploitation. For example, research undertaken in 29 European countries found that children show a high level of awareness about precautionary measures online. But older children in particular often adopt actual behaviours that are inconsistent with their attitudes and stated principles. Research undertaken with young people in the United States finds that those who are at risk of aggressive solicitations share several characteristics: They send personal information about themselves; use the Internet from a cell phone; and feel isolated, misunderstood, depressed or lack support and guidance within their family. In regard to abuse images (or child pornography), there is little known about the children who are victimized. The social conditions that leave children open to exploitation are as follows: poverty, social disruption, corruption, an acceptance of abusive practices and a willingness of others to exploit.

The second presentation, by Remco Pijpers, Director, Mijn Kind Online (My Child Online), focused on corporate social responsibility and the empowerment of children in ICT use. Mijn Kind Online is a centre for expertise and advice on ICT and its safe use by children. It was founded by KPN, a telecommunications company in the Netherlands, and Ouders Online (Parents Online), a community group. The point was made that parents and caregivers should teach children to be empowered when they are online so that they are better able to protect themselves. In the 1990s, people were more anxious about children's engagement with the Internet, but it has now become a social networking tool and includes ongoing relationships involving children (for example, through instant messaging and social networking sites

like Facebook). With regard to corporate social responsibility, KPN has an abuse department, sponsors a hotline against abusive images, and also supports a children's browser (MyBee) for filtering. The independent foundation Mijn Kind Online, which was founded and supported financially by KPN, supports programmes to educate and help parents, teachers and children with ICT and children's safe and positive interaction with the Internet.

The third presentation, by Gabrielle Shaw, Head of International Affairs and Relations, Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, United Kingdom, highlighted hotlines, blocking illegal sites, filtering and policing of ICT. Blocking and filtering are key preventive measures, yet they alone are insufficient.

More is needed to combat the commercial gain of criminals who trade in child abuse images. To put an end to online abuse requires effective partnership between law enforcement officials and other organizations. For example, in the United Kingdom, law enforcement works closely with the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a hotline that plays an active role in noting illegal content. Furthermore, law enforcement works with youth organizations to ensure that children are educated and informed about staying safe online. Young people's ability and confidence to report directly to law enforcement about online abuse is very important in dealing with this issue.

## Discussion points

- Child sexual abuse needs to be contextualized, both online (grooming, solicitation and exposure to images) and off-line (child abuse, domestic violence, 'honour' crimes). Adolescents without sufficient family support, for example, those living with domestic violence, drug abuse and related problems; being bullied at school; and feeling isolated are at greater risk for both online and offline violence.
- Most adolescent girls have been sexually approached or harassed in the street or on the Internet at some point, yet they are able to deal with the situation without adverse effects to their psychosocial well-being. But if a person shares personal information online, including photos, such data are far more difficult to remove, which may lead to embarrassment and even harm. In addition, some young people feel

safer when using the Internet, leading them to give out private and personal information that they might not share in another setting. This information may be easily misused, putting them at risk of embarrassment, abuse and even violence.

- Because of discrimination and stigma around issues such as homosexuality, some young people (especially boys) are more likely to meet their partners through the Internet, which may result in grooming and subsequent abuse. Yet, because of fear of social stigma, they are often hesitant to report what happens to them.
- More needs to be learned about the subject from the perspective of the perpetrators. It was also recognized that the problem derives not only from websites and with adult perpetrators, but it also results from Internet-based social networks used by children and young people.
- Few countries have sufficient legislation to address Internet-based abuse. Abusive images of children include not only pictures (including virtual images) but also cartoons. This raises questions about how they may be legally prohibited.
- Participants discussed the need to find a balance between allowing space for children to experiment with their sexuality and ensuring their protection from sexual abuse and exploitation.

### Recommendations

- More research is required to identify the resilience factors that protect some children from harm when they access the Internet. Such variables might include age, level of education and parental involvement.
- To develop more effective preventive measures, more knowledge is needed about the issue from the perspective of perpetrators.
- Policies and laws should require Internet service providers to report on and remove abusive websites. The need is urgent for further research, education and awareness-raising on the topic.
- Efforts are needed to involve more children in research, prevention and education on Internet-based sexual abuse.
- Support should be provided to develop and implement codes of conduct for Internet service providers.

## The Girl Child: Witness and victim of domestic violence (summary)

This workshop focused on how violence affects children, girls in particular; the overlap between child abuse and domestic violence; and the prevention of violence, and the treatment of affected children and their families.

As documented in research, no one factor accounts for domestic violence. Both boys and girls are affected both directly and indirectly as victims and as witnesses. However, girls' and women's traditionally unequal access to economic and political resources and power underpins their vulnerability to violence and the difficulty of getting out of such situations (Kapoor 2000: 7). Because domestic violence cuts across many sectors, integrated and comprehensive frameworks are needed to address all the interrelated factors (Kapoor 2000: 13).

Guidelines have been developed to ensure protection and fair treatment of children who come into contact with the justice system as witnesses or victims of violence, recognizing that many procedures and mechanisms are not child-friendly. Adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council, the 'Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime' include recommendations for police, lawyers, social workers and others. They are directed at ensuring that children are treated in a caring and sensitive manner, and that gender is taken into consideration so that the different needs of girls and boys are respected (UN Economic and Social Council 2005). The guidelines also provide for recovery and reintegration services that serve children's best interests.

To prevent and address domestic violence, partnerships are required with stakeholders at every level: the family; the community (traditional elders, religious leaders, community groups and men's groups); civil society (professional organizations, NGOs and the media), and the State (between multiple sectors, including between criminal justice, health care and education). At the international level, the UN, the World Bank, regional development banks, INGOs and bilateral development partners all play a role (Kapoor 2000: 14).

## CASE STUDY 10

### The Children's Council: Hong Kong, China

In 2003, the first Children's Council of Hong Kong was established with the sponsorship of the Home Affairs Bureau of Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region of China. It was set up as an annual forum for children to participate in public discussion and decision-making on issues affecting them. During its third meeting in June 2005, a group of participants decided to focus on ending domestic violence and protecting children from its effects.

With guidance from a mentor from the Co-ordinating Committee of three NGOs working for children,<sup>22</sup> the group conducted a survey to collect views from other children and interviewed concerned officials of the Child Protective Services Unit of the government's Social Welfare Department. The survey showed that over half of primary and secondary school pupils had been hit by adults who had used their hands or hard objects. In addition, 35 per cent of primary school pupils reported having witnessed domestic violence.

In the motion they presented to the Children's Council meeting in November 2005, the group highlighted the effects of domestic violence on children, the extent of the problem and existing government measures and their weaknesses. They made the following recommendations:

- Mandatory parent education
- Provision of funding for a children's hotline staffed by professional counsellors, social workers or volunteers trained on domestic violence
- Production of documentary television programmes;
- Involvement of children in relevant committees
- Child representatives on the Working Group on Combating Violence and the Committee on Child Abuse, so that children's voices may be heard
- Strengthening of information provided on domestic violence in schools

<sup>22</sup> The Co-ordinating Committee comprises representatives of three child-focused NGOs: Against Child Abuse, the Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF and the Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights. The committee's objectives are to increase public awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to promote children's rights.

- Review and assessment of current public education efforts
- Amendment of the Domestic Violence Ordinance;
- Promotion of training in and awareness of domestic violence for the police force.

Two legislative counsellors, an official from the Social Welfare Department, a representative of the police and an academic concerned with child abuse and domestic violence were present when the motion was debated and during the 'Questions and Answers' session. They listened to the views of the group, contributed their opinions and responded to questions. The Children's Council approved the group's recommendations.

The group's motion paper on domestic violence is to be published and disseminated to secondary schools, NGOs, government officials, legislative counsellors and public libraries in Hong Kong, as well as overseas actors who work for children's rights. In addition, the Co-ordinating Committee was expected to meet with the Children's Council Working Committee to discuss strategies for following-up on the recommendations.

*Source: Save the Children Sweden 2005: 33-35.*

## CASE STUDY 11

### Legislation and child-friendly court proceedings: Goa, India

The Goa Children's Act, 2003, is a comprehensive piece of legislation intended to promote and protect the rights of children in the Indian state of Goa. It makes specific references to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Act outlines a range of services intended to promote children's full development and protection, including education, health and nutrition. It further prohibits child exploitation and abuse and has a comprehensive focus, particularly on commercial sexual exploitation. It makes explicit the responsibility of owners and managers of hotels and other establishments for the safety of a child on their premises as well as at adjoining beaches and parks. The law furthermore prohibits the harmful traditional Hindu practice of dedication of a girl child as a *devadasi*, whereby she is 'married' and dedicated to a god. This usually happens before the girl reaches puberty. While traditionally the *devadasi* experienced high social status, there is evidence to suggest that it



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*Conference discussions included the emergence of the Internet both as a means of online abuse and a tool for awareness-raising and preventing violence. The types of threats children face from technology are changing, yet data, particularly disaggregated by gender, age and ethnicity, are lacking.*

can lead to the sexual exploitation of the girl. Although the practice has been made illegal, there are indications that it still continues.

Photographic studios are required to inform the police if they receive sexual or obscene photographs of children to be developed or printed, and the failure to report such actions is punishable with fines. The Act proposes establishment of a children's court to try all offences against children, whether or not they fall under the purview of the Act. This would enable children to give evidence in a child-friendly space without having to face their perpetrators. The principles emphasize the best interests of the child, including respect for the child's privacy, ensuring sensitive interaction during questioning and encouraging and respecting the child's views. Guidelines also include provision for trials in camera, avoiding delays and providing all possible information and preparation to make the process as unthreatening to children as possible.

Sources: *The Goa Children's Act, 2003*, at <http://goagovt.nic.in/documents/goachildact2003.pdf> and UNICEF IRC 2008a: 12.

## **Presentations, discussion and recommendations**

Following introductory comments by the chair of the workshop, four presentations were made of programmes or research from several settings: the Netherlands (Child and Youth Trauma Centre), the United States, Colombia and Burundi (prevention and psychosocial programme for children and families affected by armed conflict and domestic violence).

Francien Lamers-Winkelmann, Professor of Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, and Coordinator of the Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, the Netherlands, made the first presentation. He reported significant levels of domestic violence in the Netherlands: Estimates suggest that 100,000 children are affected a year. He presented the findings of a study of 130 children, all of whom had experienced domestic violence. He found that three quarters of the children's parents suffered from a psychiatric illness, and at least 75 per cent

of them had been physically abused or neglected. He noted that once children are in therapy, they disclose even more incidents but are likely to under-report if they are not being treated. He said that girls are more often sexually abused than boys.

Jeffrey L. Edleson, Director of the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse, and Professor and Director of Research, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota, the United States, presented an overview of three decades of work on the topic of children and domestic violence. During the first decade (the 1980s), the violence was hidden and its victims were 'invisible'. Awareness of what was happening, including the co-occurrence of violence against partners and children, grew during the following decade. Since 2000, he noted that there has been a greater understanding of the varying effects of domestic violence, including its effect on children. According to research, the majority of girls and boys who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence do not become perpetrators or repeat victims. He emphasized the need for increased channels of support to victims and more comprehensive understanding and assessment of the types of harm and coping strategies. More prevention work is needed, including with boys and men. In the United States, the child protection system was overwhelmed when legislation criminalizing children's exposure to domestic violence came into effect. Social services were unable to respond to the reported needs, illustrating the importance of having services in place, ongoing investment in capacity-building and the provision of professionals to address domestic violence.

From outside the industrialized world, a case study was presented by Dr. Isabel Cuadroz, a child psychiatrist who is Executive Director and Honorary Chairman of the Association against Child Maltreatment in Colombia. Existing data suggest a rise in cases of abuse. As compared to boys, evidence suggests greater numbers of girls than boys are physically and sexually abused. Dr. Cuadroz highlighted the importance of having culturally sensitive and appropriate responses to child abuse.

From Burundi, Prudence Ntamutumba, Coordinator of the Psychosocial and Mental Healthcare Programme, HealthNet TPO, explained that children and families are not only affected by domestic violence but also by armed conflict. She reported that there are 7,500 former

child soldiers and in addition there is a high prevalence of violence against girls and women. In order to change practices that result in high rates of gender-based violence against girls and women, it is necessary to work with parents. Efforts must take place at multiple levels, not only at the grass-roots, but also at the state level. NGOs can play effective bridging roles between individual victims, communities and the State.

### Discussion points

- Regular exchange of information and knowledge is needed, as well as identification of the best access points to reach children and their caregivers for timely and effective prevention and protection initiatives. Approaches and solutions must be in the child's best interest and be designed for the sociocultural context in which violence takes place.
- Domestic violence needs to be examined in the wider context, and related causes need to be identified, including gender discrimination and violence that affect both girls and boys.
- Better understanding of the protective factors is needed, including those within the wider family and the child's familial and social networks. These factors may play a role in preventing and addressing domestic violence.

### Recommendations

- More prevention through education that focuses on children and adults, including parents and professionals who work with children and youth, is needed.
- Capacity-building is needed for police and other professionals, including NGO personnel who intervene in cases of domestic violence, so they can better understand and address the needs of girls and boys affected by this form of violence.
- Greater recognition is required of the fact that children who witness and are victims of domestic violence react in different ways; there is a danger in applying universal approaches.
- Governments must demonstrate their commitment to addressing the problem, including by allocating sufficient resources (including financial resources) and promoting the exchange of knowledge between countries.

- In the context of the global financial crisis, more rather than fewer resources should be allocated and they should prioritize the well-being of children and families.
- While the cross-cultural exchange of information and good practices is important, interventions must be developed according to local information and systems.
- Rather than create new infrastructures and services, existing interventions must be evaluated for their effectiveness, and successful ones should be expanded.
- Where new services are required, they must be developed based on evidence of good practice.
- Investments must be made to increase and build the capacities of service providers.
- Parents and children must be actively involved in efforts to address the issue of domestic violence.

## Power of the Community (summary)

This workshop focused on strengthening the community-led cooperation between Europe and countries of origin with regard to abandonment of FGM/C. The main questions considered were:

- How to mobilize practising communities in Europe
- What lessons can be learned from community-led initiatives in Africa
- What adaptations are required in a European or other international context.

The inter-agency statement of OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM and WHO noted that an estimated 3 million girls in Africa are at risk of undergoing the practice every year (OHCHR et al. 2008: 4). The practice has been documented in 28 countries in Africa and a few countries in Asia and the Middle East. With increasing migration, there is evidence that girls and women living outside their country of origin have also undergone or are at risk of undergoing FGM/C (OHCHR et al. 2008: 4; Donors Working Group 2008). The inter-agency statement identifies that the practice is mostly carried out on girls under 15 years old, although women, married and single, are occasionally subjected to the procedure (OHCHR et al. 2008: 4).

But progress is being made. A number of regional human rights standards have made explicit the need to end harmful practices such as FGM/C. The Protocol to the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the 'Maputo Protocol') explicitly prohibits and condemns FGM/C and other harmful practices (UNICEF IRC 2005a: 30). Resolution 1247 (2001) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on female genital mutilation urges governments to take a variety of actions to combat FGM/C (UNICEF IRC 2005a: 30). The issue has also been raised at major international conferences. For example, the Cairo Declaration, which resulted from the 2003 Afro-Arab Expert Consultation on 'Legal Tools for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation', makes concrete recommendations to address and stop the practice (UNICEF IRC 2005a: 30).

Many approaches have been taken to address FGM/C. For example, where FGM/C is associated with initiation rites, some organizations have supported the development of alternative rites of passage that promote the positive aspects of the ritual while doing away with FGM/C. The impact has been mixed, however, and girls may still undergo FGM/C at a later date. Some projects combine education about the hazards of the practice with skills training and finding alternative employment for those who perform FGM/C (UNICEF IRC 2005a: 26). The limitation with this approach is that it does not address the social convention that creates the demand, so it has not been successful in ending the practice. A multifaceted 'common programmatic approach' has proved most successful in addressing FGM/C, and is described below.



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*Conference participants proposed the establishment of a network among religious organizations, with the aim of encouraging their leaders to take a stand against female genital mutilation/cutting. It was recognized that a high level of grass-roots expertise is already available and should be used to its fullest effect.*



## CASE STUDY 12

### The 'common programmatic approach'

Programmes that have led to the abandonment of FGM/C have been “systemic and have stimulated and supported large-scale social transformation where overcoming gender roles and stereotypes and empowering women and girls was of fundamental importance” (Donors Working Group 2008). The following elements comprise the common approach:

- A non-coercive and non-judgemental approach is used.
- A clear understanding of the harm caused by the practice is formulated.
- Entire communities are involved.
- There is a build-up to a collective and coordinated decision to abandon the practice by a group that has intermarried or is closely connected in other ways.
- An explicit, public affirmation is made by the community to abandon FGM/C.
- An organized communication process ensures that knowledge of the decision to abandon FGM/C spreads rapidly to other communities and is sustained.
- The government enables and supports change.
- Traditional, religious and government leaders and parliamentarians are engaged.
- Dialogue is stimulated between the community and with local and national media to create public awareness of the decisions made by the community.
- Policies and legislation are promoted, revised and reformed.
- Health care and support are secured for girls and women who have already undergone FGM/C.

This approach helps address the structural dimensions of gender-based violence, and may also lead to a decrease in child marriage and domestic violence and an increase in the school enrolment rate of girls.

Sources: Donors Working Group 2008; UNICEF IRC 2005a; Pinheiro 2006; OHCHR et al. 2008.

## Presentations, discussion and recommendations

Participants discussed good practices leading towards abandonment of FGM/C. There were examples from several community-led efforts in affected countries, which demonstrated cooperation between Europe and countries of origin. Four presentations were made on the topics of insights into the abandonment of FGM/C based on research and documentation: the experience of the Tostan Community Empowerment Programme in Senegal, experiences in Europe (establishing bridges between Europe and Africa through Euronet-FGM) and an example from Egypt (the FGM Free Village Model of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood). The commonality emerging from all the presentations was the need for positive communication from within the affected communities, as evidence shows that prescriptive or imposed messages do not work. It was also agreed that putting an end to FGM/C is a process involving long-term commitment and efforts. The need for a holistic approach appropriate to the local context is vital; legal remedies alone are not successful.

From UNICEF, Francesca Moneti, Senior Child Protection Specialist, Social Norms and Gender Equality, brought insights into the abandonment of FGM/C from research and experience. First, she noted that explicit public commitment is required in order to open the way for behaviour change and new social norms. Second, programmes must be based on comprehensive strategies that promote local development and that are based on human rights and gender equity so that FGM/C is not treated as a single issue. Third, an integrated strategy is required at the national level to enable and support change. Fourth, abandonment of FGM/C requires changing the socially constructed 'rule' that the practice is best for their daughters. It does not change the basic values and aspirations of parents to want what is 'best' for their children. Fifth, the vision is to bring FGM/C to an end within a single generation.

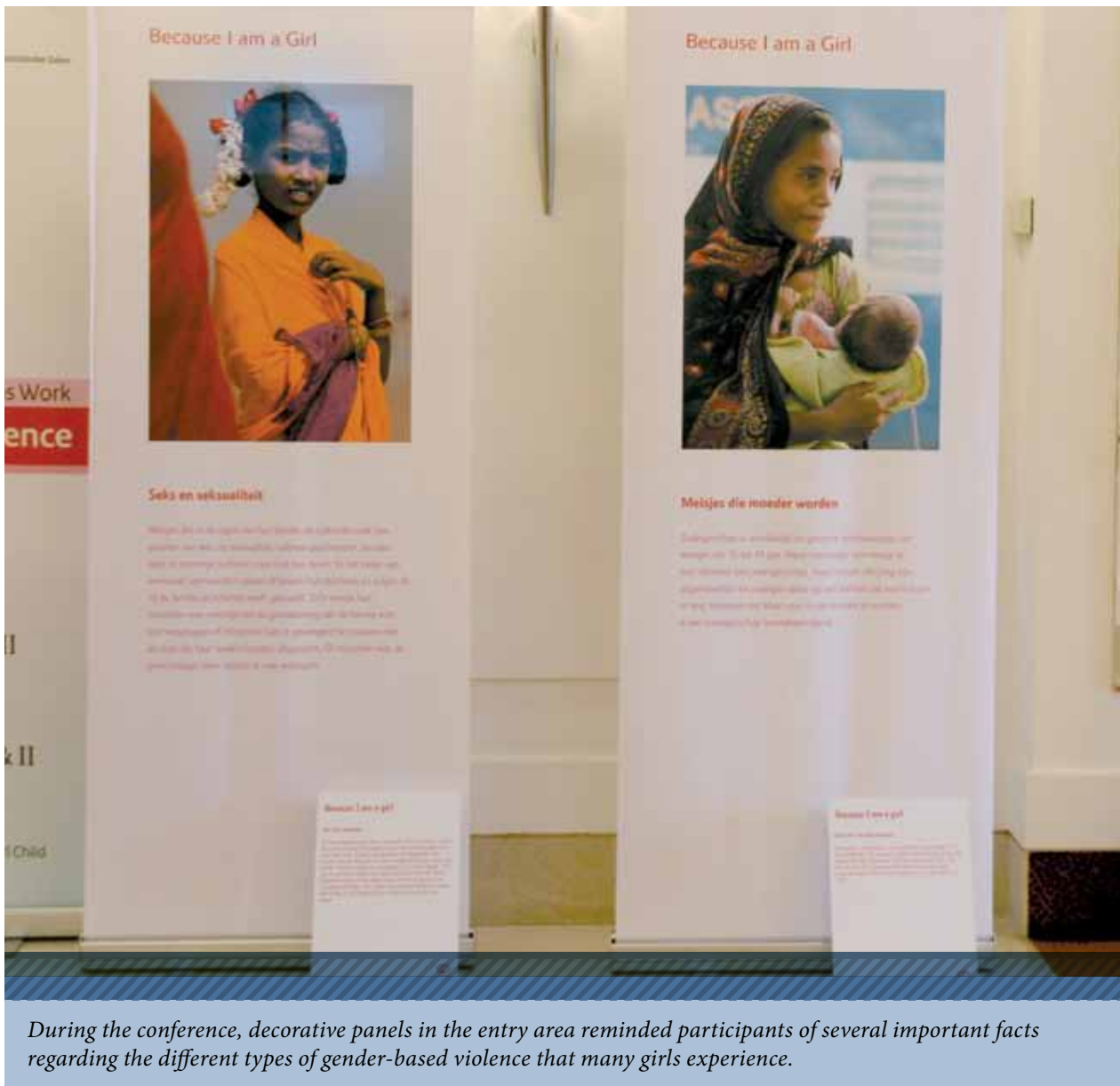
The second presentation, made by Molly Melching, Executive Director, Tostan, focused on experiences of implementing a programme to bring about an end to FGM/C. Ms. Melching reported that a public declaration

against the practice in southern Senegal came about after three years of education. She emphasized that all people must be included in the process, and noted that for migrant groups, a connection between the home community and the diaspora in Europe and America is needed to terminate the practice in destination settings. The positive role of SMS (text messaging) networks with the diaspora was mentioned. It is envisioned that in Senegal the practice of FGM/C will be completely abandoned by 2012.

With regard to the diaspora, Khady Koita, President of Euronet-FGM, spoke of the strategies being used to end the practice among African migrants in Europe. First, consistent with priorities mentioned by the other presenters, she stressed the need for the involvement

of communities. Second, she noted that the European context is different from Africa, so, while elements of the social convention models presented earlier can be helpful, they cannot be duplicated. They must be designed for the appropriate local context. Contacts between affected communities in Africa and Europe are required. Moreover, a holistic approach that comprises prevention as well as law enforcement is necessary.

Commenting on the previous presentations, Mona Amin, National Project Director, FGM Free Village Model, Egypt (on behalf of H. E. Ambassador Moushira Khattab, Secretary-General of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, Egypt), drew attention to several important elements of any strategy to end FGM/C. First, she pointed out that the terminology used to draw attention



*During the conference, decorative panels in the entry area reminded participants of several important facts regarding the different types of gender-based violence that many girls experience.*

to the harmful effects of the practice must be carefully selected so as to draw support and not alienate prospective allies. Second, Ms. Amin mentioned the role of young people as agents of change to bring about an abandonment of the practice. She also noted the positive role that the media and the Internet can play. She spoke of the importance of government commitment. Finally, she endorsed the importance of the vision of bringing about an end to FGM/C within one generation.

### Discussion points

- The need for holistic approaches must include efforts at the grass-roots level.
- To end FGM/C in Europe and the countries of the diaspora, it is necessary to connect communities in countries of origin with those in countries of migration. Participants noted that affected diaspora communities in Europe are often excluded from developments taking place in their countries of origin, so it is important to build a bridge between them. This is necessary to inspire them to take the initiative in developing strategies appropriate for the local context.
- Good practices in the abandonment of FGM/C come from Africa, including Egypt and Senegal, but also from Europe (for example, the use of persons in decision-making positions (*sleutelpersonen*) in the Netherlands).
- Working with religious leaders is important. One participant proposed organizing a conference that would bring together religious leaders of different faiths to make a common declaration against the practice.
- Given the current level of political will to address the issue, it is a good moment to seize the momentum and to take action.

### Recommendations

- Enhance the effectiveness of data-collection efforts, especially the need for more disaggregated and reliable information, in order to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of actions to eradicate the practice. This recommendation was made to UN organizations to follow-up with governments and to facilitate action.
- Facilitate bridge-building between communities in countries of origin and diaspora organizations

in Europe, with the goal of having communities in destination settings develop strategies for their local context. To achieve this:

- Make better use of expertise at the grass-roots level
- Develop exchange programmes among communities
- Extend the mobile texting (SMS) network between Africa and the diaspora in European countries
- Ensure a holistic approach
- Facilitate the establishment of a network between religious organizations
- Support efforts to increase the self-reliance of affected immigrant women in Europe
- Make better use of the Internet and media to stimulate national dialogue
- Include children and young people in activities
- Bring on board famous and well-respected persons to serve as influential agents of change
- Build on existing networks
- Ensure that activities at the grass-roots level are adequately funded and resourced.

## You Have the Right to Choose: Combating early and/or forced marriage (summary)

This workshop focused on holistic approaches, collaboration between States and civil society actors, and transnational alliances to end early and forced marriage. The main questions addressed were:

- What changes are necessary to ensure a free choice of partner and full consent for all young people?
- How can young people be empowered and how can parents be supported to resist external social pressure, particularly from the extended family and community?
- How can people work together to stop forced and early marriages in an international context?

Evidence shows that girls are most directly affected by early and/or forced marriage, but boys too may be forced into early marriage (UNICEF IRC 2001). For girls the experience is more likely to be physically harmful (UNICEF IRC 2001: 4). In some settings in which early marriage is practised, the husband-wife age gap is wide,

exacerbating unequal power relations and putting girls at further risk of abuse and violence (UNICEF IRC 2001: 5). A girl's early marriage is often accompanied by early school drop-out (UNICEF IRC 2001: 1). According to Professor Pinheiro's report (2006: 57), child marriage is common in the following areas: South Asia, West Africa, some countries in East and Southern Africa (in particular, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda) and in the Middle East (especially Yemen). Early marriage is also practised in some European countries (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 12). Among the countries participating in the DHS, Bangladesh has one of the earliest ages of female marriage (Amin, Selim and Waiz 2006: 5). The majority of girls marry before the legal age of 18, most marrying soon after puberty.

The practice has many underlying dimensions, so legislative reform, although important, alone is ineffective in stopping it or reducing gender inequality in marriage. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child urges States Parties to take a variety of measures, including passing legislation to prohibit the practice below 18 years and making marriage registration compulsory (Organization of African Unity 1999, now known as the African Union). For example, as stated in article 21, States Parties are required to undertake the following:

**“Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory” (Organization of African Unity 1999).**

Experiences and lessons learned can be drawn from Nepal's paralegal committees (*see 'See and Act'*) and efforts to end FGM/C (*see 'Power of the Community'*), along with the following elements:

- Cash incentives have had some success, as in the Female Secondary School Stipend Scheme in Bangladesh (Amin and Sedgh 1998). Other efforts include involving adolescent boys in promoting children's rights, including girls' rights to stay in school (UNICEF IRC 2001).
- Birth and marriage registration should be promoted and the systems made functional.

- Efforts are needed to improve the economic situation of girls so they have higher status and more control over their lives. This can include training in livelihood skills and ensuring that marriage is not a precondition for eligibility for microcredit programmes and savings clubs (UNICEF IRC 2001: 15).
- Girls and boys need to learn about sex, reproduction and their risks at an early age (UNICEF IRC 2001).

### CASE STUDY 13 Legislation and change: Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka traditionally had a low age of marriage, but the average age is now 25 years. The country's success in raising the age of marriage was driven by the introduction of legislative reforms requiring registration of all marriages and the recorded consent of husband and wife. Courts have also ruled that certain non-consensual marriages arranged by parents were invalid.

Underpinning these broad initiatives, which apply to Sri Lankan citizens of any religion, is a legal argument that Islamic law recognizes the importance of consent to marriage. Islamic law has texts indicating that parental authority in a daughter's marriage does not permit complete disregard of the child's welfare, and accepting the requirement of obtaining a child's consent to marriage. These legislative changes have been supported by social policies on health and education, including free education from primary to university level. *Sources: Goonesekere 1998: 117, 324; UNICEF IRC 2001: 15.*

### CASE STUDY 14 Girls' advisory committees: Ethiopia

The creation of girls' advisory committees is an innovation in Ethiopian primary schools seeking to prevent child marriage and other forms of gender discrimination. These school-based committees work closely with parent-teacher associations. Along with student members, each committee has male and female teachers, a community member and a female teacher who serves as an adviser. The student members act as links between the



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*During the two-day event, experts from all over the world actively participated in the discussions, studying the causes of different forms of violence against girls in the home and family, assessing the potential for change and anticipating more effective ways of preventing violence.*

community and the school, reporting on upcoming child marriages, cases of abduction, teasing and harassment, and extended absences of girls from school.

When an impending marriage is announced, the committee visits the parents and attempts to dissuade them. If the parents refuse to listen, they are invited to school, where teachers encourage them to cancel the marriage, explaining that it is illegal. Mothers are reported to have said they were glad their daughters had not been forced into marriage, but that they would not have been able to resist without the guidance and support provided by the school. This child-led activity illustrates the necessity of taking an integrated approach in which children's efforts are supported by authority figures such as schoolteachers and the law.

Sources: UNICEF 2007: 30; Pinheiro 2006: 82.

## **Presentations, discussion and recommendations**

Presentations were made by practitioners working in four key areas related to early marriage: law reform (an example from Yemen); empowering girls and women (the Human Rights Education Programme for Women implemented by Women for Women's Human Rights, an NGO in Turkey); community awareness-raising (the Joining Hands against Forced Marriages project of SPIOR, the Platform of Islamic Organisations Rijnmond in the Netherlands); and international cooperation, including consular measures (for example, the Forced Marriage Unit, a joint initiative of the United Kingdom Home, Foreign and Commonwealth Offices).

Efsa Kuraner, associated with Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways, Istanbul, Turkey, emphasized the role of empowerment training for girls and women as a means by which to combat early and forced marriage. Ms. Kuraner explained that the organization's Human Rights Education Programme for Women has been implemented since 1998 throughout the country. The programme includes awareness-raising among women about gender violence and empowers them against all forms of violence, including forced marriage. The success of the programme has

been attributed to the following factors: employing a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnected nature of all women's human rights issues; utilizing participatory methodologies that start from women's own experiences and self-identified needs, create group solidarity, and allocate sufficient time and space for internalization and implementation of new strategies and knowledge; and forming partnerships with communities and at the state level.

Marianne Vorthoren of SPIOR introduced the approach used by this coalition of 58 mosques and other Islamic organizations to prevent forced marriage. SPIOR undertakes education and awareness-raising among Muslim communities. It involves the whole community, including imams and teachers, in its activities. As SPIOR is part of the community, it is trusted and accepted. Religious texts are used to show parents that according to Islam, forced marriage is not allowed. As part of the Joining Hands against Forced Marriages project, SPIOR holds separate meetings for boys and girls and their parents, and joint meetings for young people and their parents to discuss the issue and to bring the practice to an end.

Dr. Husnia Al-Kadri, Director, Gender Development Research and Studies Centre at Sana'a University, Yemen, noted that several studies undertaken by the centre show a high prevalence of early marriage in Yemen. The absence of formal recognition that early marriage is a violation of a girls' rights has made it difficult to address the issue. She added that customary and religious practices that accept and enforce early marriage furthermore hinder such recognition. Workshops convened with policymakers, parliamentarians, members of the shura council, mass media, academics, religious scholars and NGOs to disseminate findings from the research raised awareness of the issue and its harmful consequences. As a result of lobbying undertaken with several organizations, and intense public and parliamentary debate, the legal minimum age was raised to 18 years old.

Concerning international cooperation and consular measures, Kay Sweet of the Forced Marriage Unit, a joint initiative of the United Kingdom Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, described the unit's mandate. She mentioned that one of its tasks is to assist those who have been forced into marriage or who have been left behind against their will in a country of origin. Ensuring that their needs are met is at the forefront of

all the unit's efforts. In order to perform their work, staff members of the Forced Marriage Unit liaise closely with British embassy staff, police and NGOs in the countries concerned. Good cooperation with the airlines is also essential. NGOs – both in the United Kingdom and abroad – also play a role in looking after the victim after she has been rescued. Ms. Sweet also mentioned that prevention is the focus of work undertaken with local communities in both the United Kingdom and countries of origin.

### Discussion points

The fact that in many countries early and forced marriage is not prohibited in legislation and not formally recognized as a crime was raised as a serious impediment to stopping the practice. Participants underscored the importance of developing solutions based on a solid understanding of the social and cultural context, and involving the community, including religious leaders, in all efforts.

### Recommendations

- Promoting the abandonment of the practice must be advocated for as the responsibility of all members of society.
- Greater awareness-raising of the issue, including its potentially harmful consequences, should be promoted. This includes sharing knowledge and good practices, including between networks, organizations and individuals.
- Addressing violence against girls, which includes early and forced marriage, should be included in broader strategies to address the global economic crisis. This requires assessing not only the societal cost of violence against girls but also the costs and consequences of not addressing it. Governments must enact and enforce legislation, such as a law instituting a minimum legal age for marriage, recognizing the need for free and full consent by both partners and for birth and marriage registration. They should also promote quality and equitable universal primary school enrolment and attendance in order to delay marriage. Greater resources, including funding, are also needed to ensure the effective implementation of those measures.

- Efforts should be made to create safe and accessible spaces where girls can meet, exchange information and form bonds that may help protect them and prevent early and forced marriage.
- Professionals such as health workers, judges, lawyers and teachers should be sensitized on the issue and take steps to address it when performing their professional duties.
- Communities and girls should be empowered to help end early and forced marriage. It is essential to involve the community, including religious leaders, and to build trust to address the issue, including the underlying structural dimensions.

## No More Violence, More Honour (summary)

The position of workshop participants was that a change of mentality is crucial in preventing honour-related violence. They shared good practices from several NGO efforts and discussed the role of government in effective prevention. Religious and belief systems were also seen as essential in efforts to prevent honour crimes.

Incidents of honour crimes have been documented in a wide number of countries, including; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Turkey and Uganda (UNICEF 2007: 36). Honour crimes have also been reported in Europe (UNICEF IRC 2005c: 12). Crimes committed in the name of honour are included in the broad definition of violence outlined in Recommendation 5 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States of the Council of Europe on the protection of women against violence (2002) (UNICEF IRC 2005b: 4). The recommendation urges governments of Member States to take all measures to ensure that women may enjoy their full human rights and fundamental freedoms, including economic, social, civil and political rights. It urges multisectoral efforts to prevent and address violence and to ensure the active participation of men in efforts to combat all forms of violence against women.

## CASE STUDY 15

### Taking action against honour crimes

Opinions vary about the most appropriate ways to address the issue of crimes committed in the name of honour. Some argue that local efforts require support from the international community. Others express concern that international involvement, especially media coverage by a 'Western' press, may generate a backlash that undermines the efforts of local activists, especially those working in traditional cultures. Most agree, however, that eradication strategies must support the implementation of protective laws. Also necessary are services specifically directed to girls and women who may be at risk, such as safe havens, which must provide concrete assistance and support. At the same time, though, efforts must be increased to promote shifts in community perceptions about gender roles and concepts of honour and shame.

In Jordan, a grass-roots campaign against honour killing gathered some 15,000 signatures on a petition to repeal an article in the penal code that pardoned honour crimes that are the result of a wife committing adultery. As a result, in 2001 a temporary amendment was passed precluding exoneration based on adultery, although it retained adultery as a mitigating circumstance. Efforts are ongoing to abolish aspects of the penal code that give exemptions and reduced sentences to those who kill in the name of honour.

Sources: UNICEF 2007: 36-37; UNICEF IRC 2007a: 70.

## CASE STUDY 16

### Honour crimes in Sweden: The response by Save the Children Sweden

In January 2002, a young girl from an immigrant background was murdered by her father because she had a Swedish boyfriend. This led to a debate about honour-related violence, and a number of actions were taken by the government and members of civil society. Within two days of the murder, Save the Children Sweden opened a clinic for girls, and later also for boys, who were affected by honour-related violence. Three strategies were developed to support affected girls and boys:

- Professional support and treatment are offered at the clinic so girls and boys can receive psychotherapy to heal the traumas they have experienced from honour-related violence and other causes.
- A telephone helpline was set up allowing children to call anonymously and receive advice and support.
- An opportunity to get treatment through email communication was established.

Between 2002 and 2006, 500 children and young people, a majority of them girls, received treatment through regular contacts with psychologists via email. These strategies have also been important for prevention, allowing risky situations to be detected and addressed at an early stage.

Source: Karlsson 2007.

## Presentations, discussion and recommendations

This session included four presentations. The first was made by Andy Clijnk, Programme Manager of the Honour-Related Violence Programme, Ministry of Justice, the Netherlands. This government interdepartmental programme started in 2005 to combat honour crimes. In addition to law enforcement and ensuring safety and shelter for victims, the programme also conducts a social prevention programme 'On the (b)right side of honour', conducted in turn by migrant organizations.

Anne Floor Dekker, Project Manager, Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands (VON), made a presentation on refugees as agents for change. She explained that together with 400 national and local refugee organizations in the country, VON develops and implements programmes against honour-related violence. For programmes to be successful, Ms. Dekker underscored the importance of having the commitment of board members of all the organizations. She added that recognition and support from the State and local government are needed. Spokespersons from local organizations are trained as 'changemakers' so that they can engage effectively with others on the topic. She noted that efforts must also take place in countries of origin on the issue of honour-related violence.



The Turkish Community Advisory Committee (IOT) focuses on prevention of honour-related violence in the Netherlands-Turkish community. IOT is the official advisory council to the Government of the Netherlands on the integration and participation of Turkish migrants in the Netherlands. The committee is an association of nine Turkish federations that together represent over 250 local Turkish organizations. Its scope to raise awareness and to prevent honour-related violence is therefore vast.

Carola Dogan, Project Coordinator, Honour-Related Violence, IOT, explained that IOT, like VON, works with local NGOs and focuses on prevention. By creating a safe and comfortable environment in which to discuss the issue, first with key figures and then at the grass-roots level, IOT is breaking down taboos and generating constructive discussion for action. According to IOT, wide ownership and commitment are essential, along with promoting a change in ideas about honour, including in child-rearing practices.

Leylâ Pervizat, women's human rights defender and feminist researcher, focused her presentation on the role of religious leaders in promoting women's human rights and preventing honour-related violence in Turkey. She noted that the concept of 'honour' is dynamic and changes regularly. This lack of clarity of the concept is problematic because the risk factors change. Furthermore, she noted that honour-related violence is not explicitly included in the country's penal code. She acknowledged that the government had taken action by publishing a press release against the practice and an important conference outcome document. Ms. Pervizat explained that, in Turkey, Amnesty International trains religious leaders on human rights, which includes the subject of honour-related violence and discrimination against women. By employing a variety of teaching methods and discussing relevant topics, the course has established credibility and engaged participants, thus proving very successful. A mix of methods is used, which keeps participants' interest. Each class is tailor-made to the needs of the specific group, but they all learn that perpetrators of honour-related violence can be both men and women. She noted that the pressure from women on men can be enormous and that boys may also be victims. Incest and homosexuality also play a role in honour-related crimes.

All presentations made it clear that a holistic approach is required to address honour-related violence, and efforts must be set in the wider context of violence against women and children.

### Discussion points

- Regardless of belief, honour-related crimes are unacceptable. No exceptions can be made to civil and criminal law to allow some groups to enforce what they may see as 'honour' but is also a violation of basic human rights.
- Tackling honour-related violence requires changing mindsets and attitudes, including the underlying factors that contribute to gender-related discrimination and violence.
- Females have tended to be the most involved in cases of honour-related violence. The challenge, therefore, is to open up the issue to a wider audience that includes men and boys.
- The perpetrators of honour-related crimes are also victims of the system that pressures them to punish those seen as violating codes of honour.
- In settings where abortion is not possible, pregnancy (especially out of wedlock or with partners seen as unacceptable) may result in honour-related crimes.
- Comprehensive and holistic approaches are required to combat this challenge. This includes addressing the underlying structural dimensions, including gender-based discrimination, and involving multiple actors, including religious leaders.

### Recommendations

- Religious leaders from all faiths need to be involved in human rights issues, including honour-related crimes.
- Peer-to-peer projects involving girls, boys, mothers and fathers from affected communities are needed to help change attitudes and practices.
- More data are needed at community and national level. Governments should be responsible for data collection and should ensure that data are disaggregated at national and community level.
- Legal reform is needed to abolish provisions that treat honour-related crimes with more lenience than other crimes.

# Transforming Son Preference into Non-Preference (summary)

This session addressed how to change 'son preference' into 'non-preference'. The key question was: How can we support the process of social transformation by stimulating youth participation, promoting innovative use of the media and recognizing the power of education?

## CASE STUDY 17 Street theatre to stop violence against women: India

Mohan, a 16-year-old boy from a small town in Uttar Pradesh, says he felt badly when men and boys would tease his mother and sister – so he decided to do something about it. He joined a street theatre group that performs skits on gender and gender-based violence. The group performs role-plays in communities on special days in order to make people aware of the need to stop violence against girls and women. The boys' group is part of a larger grass-roots campaign called Men's Action to Stop Violence against Women.

What started out as an initiative for men subsequently expanded to include boys. It offers a chance for boys and men to speak out in opposition to violence against women and gender inequality through rallies, campaigns, public debates and workshops. The group serves as a watchdog, working with the police, doctors, lawyers and the media, as well as with boys and men in universities and schools.

The issues raised are often sensitive, so the group invests resources to develop and adapt appropriate and innovative tools for working with different age groups. The most popular is a traditional game, snakes and ladders, used to introduce discussions on gender and violence. In over 100 villages 'watch' groups have been organized to intervene in violent situations, support victims and make schools and colleges violence-free zones.

Sources: *Save the Children Sweden 2006b: 26; Feinstein and O'Kane 2009: 58.*

## CASE STUDY 18 Promoting gender equity and respect: Ethiopia

Save the Children Sweden has started a programme in Addis Ababa to encourage boys and young men to establish gender-equitable relationships as a means of ensuring the right of girls and boys to good sexual and reproductive health. The approach seeks to make boys and young men aware of their entitlements and responsibilities, and to help them build relationships based on communication, mutual trust and respect. The approach also takes into account the gender implications of HIV and AIDS. Although the focus is on adolescent boys and young men, some girls' groups have also been formed. Groups and clubs have been established in schools and in the community. Activities include peer education initiatives and social coffee meetings as a means of communication with young people.

Source: *Save the Children Sweden 2005: 27.*

## Presentations, discussion and recommendations

After an introduction and discussion of the underlying dimensions of the issue, a number of presentations were made. Subjects included: how to stimulate youth participation to encourage social transformation; how to harness the power of the media to influence gender preferences and discourage gender-based violence; and the role of education in ending gender preferences and stopping related violence. The overview presented a global picture and made the case for holistic approaches that bring about legal, social and institutional change. The other presentations shared situations and experiences of activists, NGOs, INGOs and researchers from parts of Africa (Plan and the Forum for African Women Educationalists), Indonesia (an activist who works with children working in dumpsites) and Pakistan (the NGO Bedari).



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*Discussions during sessions on 'son preference' centred on amending laws and changing social conventions that discriminate against girls. Harnessing the power of the media, the role of education, and more active involvement of men in the care of children were all recognized as important actions.*

More specifically, Rangita de Silva-de Alwis, Director of International Human Rights Policy, Wellesley Centers for Women (WCW), outlined the concept of son preference, its underlying patterns and the legal, social and institutional changes that are necessary to transform son preference into non-preference. She highlighted that son preferences manifest themselves in discriminatory ways, and serve as a continuum and root cause of domestic violence, affecting both women and children. To effectively address domestic violence, domestic legislation must broaden its approach and provide effective remedies for victims in the form of protection orders and special services for children, including counselling and educational resources. Coverage of the law should extend to a reconstituted concept of the family so that all children, whether they are children of the perpetrators, children of relatives or of domestic workers, may be protected. Although they are affected by the law, children and young people are rarely actively engaged in law, policy and institutional reform initiatives. Their contributions should, however, be sought and included.

The second group of presentations focused on how to stimulate youth participation to bring about social transformation. Helen Tombo, Senior Advocacy Coordinator on Children's Rights in Africa, Plan, focused on such efforts. From personal testimony to the experience of young people in Ethiopia and Kenya, Ms. Tombo underscored the efforts children themselves are making to bring about a change in practices that favour boys over girls. In Ethiopia, Plan works with partners in creating children's clubs. Members of the clubs take the initiative to prevent child marriage and to inform community members about children's rights. Boys and girls work together to stop early marriage of girls. Recently, in early February 2009, a draft civil registration law (which includes rules about birth, marriage, divorce and death registration) was presented for discussion and feedback. With the anticipated passage of this law, pretexts that contribute to early marriage, such as not knowing the age of the girl, will become more difficult to condone. The second presentation in this group was made by Resa Aprianengsih, a young female activist on children's rights in Indonesia. She also spoke of the importance of involving girls and boys in efforts to address gender-based discrimination and violence, including son preference.

Ways to harness the power of the media to influence gender preferences and discourage gender-based violence were the focus of the next two presentations. Saleem Malik, Executive Director of Bedari, Pakistan, spoke about the entrenched underlying patriarchal structures that contribute to the widespread acceptance of discrimination, abuse and violence against girls in Pakistan and the wider South Asia region. In order to break the myths that surround views that girls and women are liabilities and burdens, it is necessary to invest in education for girls, and to work with boys and men to change these views. Mr. Malik spoke of the positive role that the media can play in hastening the change in attitudes and practices. He also noted that efforts must take place at other levels in order to bring about effective social transformation. This includes improvements in the workplace so that women can join the workforce without fear of harassment and also receive equitable compensation for their work. In addition, discriminatory inheritance laws must be changed.

Odette Houedakor, Child Protection Adviser, Plan West Africa, then spoke about her organization's efforts to harness the media. She drew attention to the cultural context of gender-based discrimination in West Africa, noting that violence is used as a means of retaining discipline and a social order often defined by adult males. She noted that formal education in the region puts emphasis on rote learning rather than supporting children to develop and make use of their own analytical skills. Moreover, at the level of the family, the development of these skills is rarely fully supported. Hence, many children and young people do not have the skills or tools to effectively communicate their messages to others. The media provide a powerful way to make people aware of youth issues and to let young people speak out. Plan is therefore using the media as a tool to build children's capacities, including life skills in problem-solving, analytical thinking, communication and conflict resolution. These strategies include: capacity-building of child rights journalists' networks; and strengthening children's and youths' capacities to produce and disseminate quality media (for example, Kids Waves, which currently reaches 6 million listeners across 11 West African countries). In addition to Kids Waves, rap music has proved to be an effective way to engage youth and to communicate messages and issues of relevance to them.

The next two presentations focused on the role of education in influencing gender preferences and discouraging gender-based violence. Sharada Srinivasan, Assistant Professor of International Development Studies in the Division of Social Science, York University, Canada, highlighted the role of the State and other institutions in broadcasting the message that daughters' welfare and rights are public matters and are not in the 'private' domain. Second, there is a need to ensure greater visibility of the contributions of daughters. Concerning the role of education, she noted that after the home and family, it is assumed that school is the other place where children should spend most of their time. Schools must, however, be child (including girl) friendly. Often girls are kept out of school even if their parents would like them to get an education because attending them poses threats to their safety, sexuality and family honour. Not only are more schools needed, but they must also be safe and gender-friendly. Another hindrance to girls' enrolment and attendance in school concerns infrastructure. A dearth of female teachers may be a disincentive for girls to enrol and attend. Moreover, teachers must be gender-sensitive and support girls' participation in the classroom. The curriculum must furthermore be gender-sensitive and include topics on gender awareness, including the gendered division of labour. It is important to support role models of women and men who challenge prevalent dominant masculinities and femininities. From within mainstream media and the education system, negative stereotypes that result in son preference must be challenged. Engagement must take place with girls and women and boys and men.

Codou Diaw, Executive Director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), also presented material on the role of education in transforming son preference into non-preference. Highlighted was the FAWE experience working with communities (including chiefs and multiple generations) to prevent girls' early marriage and FGM/C and promote their education. FAWE furthermore trains teachers and children on gender awareness, equipping girls and boys with the skills to fight gender-based harassment.

## Discussion points

- In countries with large-scale female infanticide or the killing of female foetuses, the concept of son preference must be challenged. In these settings (which include China, India and the Republic of Korea), the term 'daughter aversion' is more commonly used than 'son preference'.
- The practices and biases against girls and in favour of boys vary from setting to setting. While in many cultures daughters are as equally appreciated as are boys, the structures of social and economic life can result in girls being treated in an unequal and discriminatory way.
- There is a need to promote greater visibility of the contributions of girls to their households and in wider life.
- Social transformation is needed to bring about gender equality, and this process requires legal change. Change is needed not only in laws relating to domestic violence but also in those concerning inheritance, land ownership, and family and customary law.

## Recommendations

- New interpretations of relevant laws, including 'family law', are needed. This includes redefining the concept of 'family' to ensure that all members are included, such as daughters and kin with disabilities.
- Other laws that discriminate against girls and women should be revised to promote and protect gender equality.
- Role models need to be identified among children, young people, families, community leaders, members of Parliament and religious leaders. They can serve as agents of change and work together to help bring about transformation in ideas about son preference.
- The education system (both formal and non-formal components), sports activities, the media and other institutions must be made more gender-sensitive.
- Support should be provided to organizations that are reconstructing understandings of femininity and masculinity and what it means to be a girl or boy. This process must take place at the individual, household, community and national levels. A wide variety of approaches and channels are being pursued, including film (India), theatre (Pakistan) and rap music and oral history (West Africa).



## Chapter 7 Conclusions and next steps

The conference focused on eight themes concerning violence against girls: holistic approaches to address and respond to violence; helping parents; violence conducted over the Internet and through new technologies; girl children as witnesses and victims of domestic violence; harmful traditional practices such as FGM/C; early and forced marriage; crimes committed in the name of honour; and boy child preferences. Nevertheless, as made explicit in the Secretary-General's study and over the course of the conference, violence is multifaceted, and no type can be effectively tackled in isolation. Indeed, many types of violence against girls are underpinned by the same structural and systemic dimensions of gender.

Drawing on discussions and outputs of the two-day event, and in addition to the recommendations from the Secretary-General's study, two priority themes also stand out for special attention:

### Widen our understanding of 'childhood'

Alan Prout (in Alanen and Mayall 2001: xii) cautions, "it [is] important to avoid constituting childhood as a narrow empirical field outside and adrift from general social theory and analysis." Yet, the tendency is to see childhood as distinct and separate, and this perception must be revisited.

- We must move away from compartmentalized approaches to childhood. The entire life cycle must be examined, leading to a better understanding of the socialization goals and sociocultural context in which girls and boys are raised and grow up.

Childhood must be examined in the context of girls' and boys' interactions with their immediate family, the wider community and society, rather than as isolated or distinct from social, economic, political and religious forces.

- The impact of shocks and risks on the household, including children, needs better understanding. This includes better comprehension of poverty (including elements such as the global financial crisis, climate change and HIV and AIDS) and its impact on the lives of girls and boys.
- For more effective policies and programmes, especially those addressing violence prevention, there is a need to better understand some concepts that relate to childhood, and to child protection in particular. For example, the concept of 'resilience' needs further exploration. Why are some children better able to protect themselves than others?

It is important to build the capacities of girls and boys and create space for them to engage in constructive dialogue with their peers, parents/caregivers, service providers and state authorities about matters of concern to themselves. But there is a need to revisit what is meant by 'child participation'. Some child participation agendas are tokenistic and raise expectations of and for children that cannot be realistically met. Furthermore, as the promotion of child participation involves challenging entrenched power hierarchies between adults and children, it can be risky (O'Kane 2007: 231). This is especially the case in environments with high levels of conflict and power struggles. Using multidisciplinary methods, the impact of programmes claiming to promote child participation must be assessed to determine how they affect the lives of children and those around them. It is important to learn from and build on these findings and evidence of good practice.

## Monitor, evaluate and demonstrate results for children

- Interventions must be grounded in the lived realities of children's lives and ensure that their 'best interests' are being served. This raises an important question and challenge: What is meant by the 'best interests of the child', and according to whom and over what time period? Another challenge is how to measure the short- and long-term effects of laws and legislation, programmes and policies on children and others in society.
- We must move away from instinct-based programming. Evidence-based programming and policy-making that draw on knowledge gleaned from a mix of disciplines is important to establish a more holistic understanding of the challenge, including its underlying and related dimensions. This is also important for developing rights-based and culturally appropriate solutions that have local and national ownership and commitment.
- Too many interventions remain 'models' and 'pilots'. Lessons learned must be distilled from those that succeed and fail, and the costing of models and pilots must be taken into account from the outset of interventions to support scaling up.
- The social and economic consequences of not having child protection systems in place should be calculated. Thinking and planning should start now for the revision of the Millennium Development Goals beyond 2015 to ensure they have a greater focus on equity and inclusion and on building children's capabilities and capacities.



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*Conference moderator Chazia Mourali demonstrated her appreciation of the recommendations made by Professor Jaap Doek, who provided a wrap-up session on the closing day of the conference.*

# Appendix A

## International Human Rights Instruments, Global Commitments and Guidelines

### International human rights instruments and labour laws

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)

Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children (1996)

Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and its Optional Protocol

Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption ('Hague Adoption Convention', 1993)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its Protocol (1967)

### Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its two Optional Protocols:

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000)
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000)

### International Bill of Rights, in particular:

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990)
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in particular its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children ('Palermo Protocol', 2000)

### International Labour Organization conventions:

- Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, (No. 138) 1973
- Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, (No. 182) 1999

### For war crimes and crimes against humanity:

- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)

### Binding human rights instruments and mechanisms, by region

Several key instruments and mechanisms are as follows:

#### African Union

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), and Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ('Maputo Protocol')

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)

#### Council of Europe

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950)

Convention on Cybercrime (2001)

Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005)

Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007, not yet in force)



European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Other Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987)

European Social Charter (1961) and the Revised European Social Charter (1996)

### **European Union**

Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA of 22 December 2003 on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography

### **Organization of American States**

Inter-American Convention on International Traffic in Minors (1994)

Inter-American Convention on the International Return of Children (1989)

Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994)

### **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**

SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution (2002)

SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia (2002)

### **Regional legal mechanisms**

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

European Court of Human Rights

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

### **Global commitments articulated in the following:**

#### ***Outcome documents of the three World Congresses against (Commercial) Sexual Exploitation of Children:***

'Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action', Outcome Document of the First World First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (1996)

'Yokohama Global Commitment' and 'Young People's Declaration', Outcome Documents of the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2001)

'Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents' and 'Adolescent Declaration to End Sexual Exploitation', Outcome Documents of the Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (2008)

'A World Fit for Children', Outcome Document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (2002)

Beijing Declaration, Outcome Document of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995)

Millennium Development Goals (2000, in particular Goal 3 to promote gender equality and empower women) and the Millennium Summit (2005)

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, Outcome Document of the World Conference on Human Rights (1993)

World Summit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action (1990)

### **Guidelines**

Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (2004)

Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (UN Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/20)

Guidelines on the design of direct action strategies to combat commercial exploitation of children (ILO/IPEC, 2007)

Guidelines on the Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking (UNICEF, 2006)

Preventing Child Maltreatment: A guide for taking action and generating evidence (WHO and ISPCAN, 2006)

Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking (OHCHR, 2002)

*Sources: Pinheiro, P. S., World Report on Violence against Children, United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children, Geneva, 2006; United Nations Children's Fund, From Invisible to Indivisible: Promoting and protecting the right of the girl child to be free from violence, UNICEF, New York, 2007; World Health Organization and International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Preventing Child Maltreatment: A guide to taking action and generating evidence, WHO, Geneva, 2006.*

### Excerpts from the Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action

The following are recommendations from the Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (2008) that specifically address forms of sexual exploitation committed via the Internet or other new technologies<sup>a</sup>:

#### Child pornography/child abuse images<sup>b</sup>

- Criminalize the intentional production, distribution, receipt and possession of child pornography, including virtual images and the sexually exploitative representation of children, as well as the intentional consumption, access and viewing of such materials where there has been no physical contact with a child. Legal liability should be extended to entities such as corporations and companies in case the responsibility for or involvement in the production and/or dissemination of materials lies with them.
  - Undertake specific and targeted actions to prevent and stop child pornography and the use of the Internet and new technologies for the grooming of children into online and off-line abuse and for the production and dissemination of child pornography and other materials. Victim identification, support and care by specialized staff should be made a high priority.
- Conduct educational and awareness-raising campaigns focusing on children, parents, teachers, youth organizations and others working with and for children with a view to improving their understanding of the risks of sexually exploitative use of the Internet, mobile telephones and other new technologies, including providing information for children on how to protect themselves, how to get help and how to report incidences of child pornography and online sexual exploitation.
  - Take the necessary legislative measures to require Internet service providers, mobile phone companies, search engines and other relevant actors to report and remove child pornography websites and child sexual abuse images, and develop indicators to monitor results and enhance efforts.
  - Call upon Internet service providers, mobile phone companies, Internet cafes and other relevant actors to develop and implement voluntary Codes of Conduct and other corporate social responsibility mechanisms, together with the development of legal tools for enabling the adoption of child protection measures in these businesses.
  - Call upon financial institutions to undertake actions to trace and stop the flow of financial transactions undertaken through their services that facilitate access to child pornography.
  - In order to block access to websites containing sexual abuse images, set up a common list. The list will be based on uniform standards and developed under the auspices of INTERPOL. It must be continually updated, exchanged internationally and will be used by the provider to block access.
  - Undertake research and development, in the realm of the private sector, of robust technologies to identify images taken with electronic digital devices; and trace and retract them to help identify the perpetrators.

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<sup>a</sup> For purposes of clarity, the text has been adapted for use in this publication.

<sup>b</sup> Increasingly the term 'child abuse images' is being used to refer to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in pornography. This is to reflect the seriousness of the phenomenon and to emphasize that pornographic images of children are in fact records of a crime being committed. However, many laws use the term 'child pornography' and it is therefore otherwise used in this document.

- Promote public/private partnerships to enhance the research and development of robust technologies to investigate abuses and to trace the victims, with a view to immediately stopping exploitation and providing them with all the necessary support for full recovery.
- Make technologies easily available, affordable and accessible for parents and other caregivers, including providing guidance on the use of filters to block inappropriate and harmful images of children.



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