

FIVE YEARS ON:

A global update on violence
against children



A report from the NGO Advisory Council
for follow-up to the UN Secretary-General's
Study on Violence Against Children

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Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Katherine Covell and Jo Becker on behalf of the NGO Advisory Council for Follow-up to the UN Study on Violence against Children, with input from members of the Advisory Council.

The NGO Advisory Council was established in 2006 to work with NGOs and other partners, including member states, the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and UN agencies, to ensure that the recommendations from the UN Study on Violence against Children are effectively implemented. The Advisory Council includes representatives from nine international NGOs, including major human rights and humanitarian agencies, as well as nine representatives selected from their regions. The current membership includes:

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Acronyms

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GA	General Assembly
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMCT	World Organization Against Torture
SAIEVAC	South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children
SMSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	Violence against Children
WHO	World Health Organization

Foreword

Sound research and relevant, objective, and disaggregated child-related data are indispensable to understand the environment within which children grow and develop; to assess the impact on children of planned or adopted decisions; to acknowledge and address risks compromising their fundamental rights; and to anticipate opportunities for change. Data and research enable governments to take the right decisions at the right time; and they are crucial for the transparent and accurate assessment of progress in the safeguard of children's rights.

When violence against children is at stake, sound data and analysis gain renewed importance. Without good data, national planning is compromised, effective policy-making and resource allocation efforts are hampered, and targeted interventions limited in their ability to prevent and combat violence against children. Indeed, data and research are instrumental to capture the magnitude and incidence of this phenomenon, to understand prevailing attitudes and perceptions, and to lend care and protection to children at risk.

Unfortunately this is an area where many gaps prevail. Widely perceived as a social taboo, an accepted practice or a needed form of discipline, violence against children remains hidden and seldom reported, and official statistics have a reduced ability to assess the true scale and extent of this phenomenon across nations and social groups. As a result, information on violence against children is scarce, only representing the tip of the iceberg; and opportunities to consolidate children's protection and invest in violence prevention are equally constrained.

This explains why the UN Study on Violence against Children presented significant recommendations in this area; and it also explains why the consolidation of research and national data systems constitutes a priority for my mandate as Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children.

The NGO Advisory Council has been a crucial partner in these efforts, and the report "Five Years on: A Global Update on Violence against Children" reaffirms the Advisory Council's critical commitment to promote progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence.

Five years after the UN Study was presented to the General Assembly, this report summarizes significant research from academic researchers, UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations, at times incorporating interviews with children themselves. The report acknowledges progress in overcoming the invisibility of violence, but it also highlights how far we are from safeguarding the right of all children to develop to their full potential in a violent-free environment, as violence remains widespread, socially condoned, and in many cases considered as a lawful practice, form of discipline, or sentencing of children.

Only through the active efforts of a wide alliance of all relevant stakeholders will it evolve from a concern of a few into a priority for all, and I welcome the continuing efforts of the NGO Advisory Council and many other partners to accelerate progress in the prevention and elimination of violence against children everywhere and at all times!

Marta Santos Pais
Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

INTRODUCTION



Eleven-year-old Kamran is a sex worker in a poor neighbourhood of the city of Karachi. Kamran had his first sexual experience at age eight and was raped soon after, by a man who then paid him. He has never been to school. © UNICEF/NYHQ2008-0938/Shehzad Noorani.

Introduction

In 2001, the UN General Assembly, acting on the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, requested the UN Secretary-General to undertake an in-depth study on violence against children. The Study provided the first global report on the extent, causes, and effects of violence against children—in the home, the school, institutions, the workplace, and the community. It was also the first United Nations report to be based on widespread collaboration among the OHCHR, UNICEF, the WHO, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, and direct consultation with children themselves. The report found that millions of children across the world were victims of sexual, physical and/or, emotional violence, many on a daily basis. Societal acceptance of violence against children appeared to be the norm and to be a key obstacle to its elimination.

The UN Study put forward 12 overarching recommendations for action. It urged states and other stakeholders to strengthen international, national, and local commitments to end violence against children; to prohibit all violence against children in national law; to promote non-violent values and awareness raising; to enhance the capacity of those who work with or for children; to ensure accountability and end impunity; and to take a range of other actions to prevent violence against children and to respond to it effectively if it occurs. The ultimate goal of the recommendations was to establish conditions that would end all forms of violence against all children. The UN Study concluded, “No violence against children is justifiable; all violence against children is preventable.”

When the report of the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children (UN Study) was presented in 2006, it revealed that despite extensive international human rights obligations, children globally experience staggering levels of violence. The magnitude of violence against children documented by the UN Study represented an urgent call to action, and the Study presented clear and concrete recommendations on how states should respond. Five years later, we find that violence, including severe violence, continues against millions of children globally. There has been some progress on some of the Study’s recommendations – but concerted action to prohibit and eliminate violence against children is as urgently needed today as when the report was submitted to the General Assembly (GA) in 2006.

As Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the independent expert appointed by the Secretary-General to undertake the UN Study, emphasized when he presented his follow-up report to the UN GA in 2007: “Children are sick of being called ‘the future’: they want to enjoy their childhoods, free of violence, now.” The central message from the UN Study is as relevant as ever: “No violence against children is justifiable, and all violence against children is preventable.”¹

This report summarizes the state of violence against children in the five years since the release of the UN Study. It is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, but it is illustrative of

the continued pervasiveness of violence in children's lives. The data represent recent reports from academic researchers, UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations, conducted since 2006 using a variety of methodologies. Like the UN Study, we base our definition of violence on article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse."

The overall findings are cause for grave concern. Violence continues against children in all settings; some forms of violence in some settings may even be on the increase. The sad reality in 2011 is that children continue to be humiliated, beaten, burned, and sexually abused by the adults in their lives, their parents, teachers, caregivers, and employers. Children continue to be traumatized by community violence, trafficking, exposure to domestic violence, and direct physical, verbal, and sexual assault. Areas of progress are too few.

The lack of comparable data on violence against children continues to be a concern and the true global scale and prevalence of violence against children remains unknown and based on estimates. The studies surveyed for this report show, however, that levels of violence against children remain shockingly and unacceptably high as reflected in the following examples:

- A 2010 UNICEF study of 37 countries found that 86 percent of children ages 2 to 14 are subject to violent discipline (physical punishment or psychological aggression) by a parent or caregiver, and two out of three are subject to physical punishment.²
- In some countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States, children are two to three times more likely to be victims of violent crimes than are adults.³
- In Africa, an estimated 92 million girls from 10 years of age and above have undergone female genital

mutilation/cutting (FGM).⁴ In some countries, such as Somalia, Sudan, and Mali, 85 percent or more of girls under age 15 are circumcised.⁵

- Children with disabilities are four to five times more likely to experience violence and sexual abuse than non-disabled children.⁶
- In the United States, a 2010 report found that 12 percent of youth in juvenile detention facilities reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimizations in the previous year; facility staff perpetrated 80 percent of the sexual abuse.⁷
- Seventy-eight states still authorize corporal punishment by teachers. In some states, as many as 97 percent of children say they have experienced corporal punishment in school.⁸
- A 2007 survey in India carried out across 13 states found that over 53 percent of the children studied reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse;⁹ in Swaziland, one-third of girls between ages 13 and 17 reported that their first sexual experience was forced, and that it took place in their own homes.¹⁰
- The known number of juvenile offenders who were executed worldwide rose by more than 50 percent in the last five years. Between 2006 and 2011, at least 37 juvenile offenders globally were put to death for crimes allegedly committed before age 18, compared to 21 during the previous five years.¹¹
- In 2008, child helplines had more than 14.5 million contacts with children; violence and abuse were the most common reasons for contact.¹²

Violence perpetrated against children does not just occur in isolated cases; many children are subject to multiple incidents. In the United States, for example, one study found that over one-third of children said they had experienced violence two or more times in the previous year, and more than one in 10 experienced five or more instances of violence during that time.¹³ The effects on the child are traumatic, stressful, and additive. Multiple exposures to violence are particularly devastating to the development of very

young children. Over the past five years, increasing evidence from developmental neuroscientists tells us that children's brains are wired to deal with their present circumstances. When the child's present is characterized by violence, the brain is wired to cope with a malevolent world. Children who are exposed to violence often suffer from anxiety, depression, aggression, difficulties with attachment, and regressive behaviour. The child is at risk of developing patterns of aggression in responding to others, including dating violence and delinquency, and is more likely to have trouble in school and become involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.¹⁴ While there is no inevitability, it is often children who are victims of violence who become future bullies, perpetrators of dating and partner violence, and violent parents.

A fundamental obstacle to ending violence against children is the continued social acceptance of it. Globally, children continue to be disempowered and have very low status. There remains a belief that violence against children is an inconsequential and normal part of childrearing. The acceptance of violence against children is reflected in three areas: laws that still allow for its justification, inadequate child protection mechanisms, and frequent impunity for perpetrators. National laws in many countries still provide a legal defence for those who physically assault their children, but not if they assault their partners or their pets, and lesser sentences are given to adults who harm or even kill their children than to those who harm other adults. Many individuals have little confidence in the ability of authorities to respond effectively. For example, a 2009 survey across 18 Latin American and Caribbean countries found that less than half of respondents believed official institutions were effective in combatting violence against children.¹⁵ Crimes against children are much less likely to come to the attention of law enforcement agencies than crimes against adults. One study found that while 37 percent of adult victims of violent crimes reported the incident to the police, only 11 percent of

children reported such crimes to the authorities.¹⁶ In consequence, convictions of adults for violent crimes against children continue to be relatively rare.

Progress in ending violence against children since 2006 is not always easy to identify. However, one area in which there have been notable steps forward is the legal prohibition of corporal punishment of children. Between 2006 and 2011, the number of states achieving full prohibition of corporal punishment in all the settings of children's lives, including the home and family, increased from 16 to 30, including the first three African States: Tunisia, Kenya, and the new state of South Sudan.¹⁷ At this time, Brazil is very close to a total ban. A strategic plan to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment in Africa was developed in April 2011, at a consultation in Burkina Faso.¹⁸

States have renewed their political commitments to address violence against children, such as the sexual exploitation of children, and to eliminate the worst forms of child labour at major international conferences in Brazil in 2008 and in the Netherlands in 2010, respectively. A groundbreaking new treaty to protect domestic workers was adopted in 2011 and a complaints/communications procedure under the CRC awaits acceptance by the UN GA this autumn. The number of state parties to other international instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Pornography and Child Prostitution, has grown. Individual member states have strengthened national legislation; for example, several have acted since 2006 to prohibit female genital mutilation.

States have undertaken regional initiatives to address violence against children. The South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC), launched in 2010, includes government and civil society representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; its governing body includes children.¹⁹

Acknowledging the inadequacy of child protection mechanisms in the region, SAIEVAC's goal is the steady implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study. The Twelfth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers Responsible for Children and Adolescents, held in June 2010 in Buenos Aires, recommended the development of effective laws and policies to combat violence against children, in line with the recommendations of the UN Study and identified violence against children as a priority concern for future ministerial meetings.²⁰ Similarly, the Fourth High-level Arab Conference on the Rights of the Child, hosted by the Government of Morocco, in December 2010, called for action to end violence against children and for implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study.²¹ In 2008, the Council of Europe launched an explicit campaign for prohibition of all corporal punishment across its 47 member states, and in November 2010, the Council launched "One in Five," a campaign to stop sexual violence against children.²²

Intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO) around the globe are engaged in efforts to prevent violence against children, to respond when it occurs, and to work with children, their families, and their communities to create safer environments for children, often with measurable results. Further signs of progress are described in the following sections of this report. Together they suggest that there is growing awareness of the reality of violence in children's lives and the need to eliminate it. Violence against children, perhaps, has at least become more visible.

While this progress is encouraging, it is not enough. Violence against children is an unconscionable and continuing scourge demanding urgent action. To effectively prevent and respond to violence against children, governments, and other stakeholders should immediately implement the overarching recommendations from the UN Study:²³

1. Strengthen national and local commitment and action

I recommend that all States develop a multi-faceted and systematic framework to respond to violence against children which is integrated into national planning processes.

2. Prohibit all violence against children

I urge States to ensure that no person below 18 years of age should be subjected to the death penalty and sentences of life imprisonment without possibility of release. I urge State to prohibit all forms of violence against children, in all settings, including all corporal punishment, harmful traditional practices, such as early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation and so-called honour crimes, sexual violence, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment.

3. Prioritise prevention

I recommend that States prioritise preventing violence against children by addressing its underlying causes... States should allocate adequate resources to address risk factors and prevent violence before it occurs.

4. Promote non-violent values and awareness-raising

I recommend that States and civil society should strive to transform attitudes that condone or normalise violence against children, including stereotypical gender roles and discrimination, acceptance of corporal punishment, and other harmful traditional practices.

5. Enhance the capacity of all who work with and for children

I recommend that the capacity of all those who work with and for children to contribute to eliminate all violence against them must be developed.

6. Provide recovery and social reintegration services

I recommend that States provide accessible, child-sensitive and universal health and social services, including pre-hospital and emergency care, legal assistance to children and, where appropriate, their families when violence is detected or disclosed.

7. Ensure the participation of children

I recommend that States actively engage with children and respect their views in all aspects of prevention, response and monitoring of violence against them, taking into account article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

8. Create accessible and child-friendly reporting systems and services

I recommend that States should establish safe, well-publicised, confidential and accessible mechanisms for children, their representatives and others to report violence against children.

9. Ensure accountability and end impunity

I recommend that States should build community confidence in the justice system by, inter alia, bringing all perpetrators of violence against children to justice and ensure that they are held accountable through appropriate criminal, civil, administrative and professional proceedings and sanctions.

10. Address the gender dimension of violence against children

I recommend that States ensure that anti-violence policies and programmes are designed and implemented from a gender perspective, taking into account the different risks facing girls and boys in respect of violence.

11. Develop and implement systematic national data collection and research efforts

I recommend that States improve data collection and information systems in order to identify vulnerable sub-groups, inform policy and programming at all levels, and track progress towards the goal of preventing violence against children.

12. Strengthen international commitment

I recommend that all States should ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography... States should ratify all relevant international and regional human rights instruments that provide protection for children.

In 2007, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to appoint at the highest possible level a Special Representative (SRSG) on Violence against Children to “act as a high-profile and independent global advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children in all regions.”²⁴ Appointed in 2009, the SRSG, Ms. Marta Santos Pais, has worked with member states, regional groups and bodies, UN actors, civil society, and children themselves to heighten awareness and develop strategic initiatives on addressing violence against children.

States are encouraged to support renewal of the SRSG’s mandate upon its review in 2012. In addition, when supporting renewal of the mandate, States are urged to agree that the SRSG’s office should be supported from the UN core budget, so that the SRSG is not dependent on voluntary contributions and can be an even more effective voice in ending all forms of violence against children.

VIOLENCE IN THE HOME AND FAMILY



Through community dialogues, circumcisers also learn about the harms of FGM/C; many then join efforts to abandon it. In Kabele village, a former circumciser holds the tool she once used to cut girls. © UNICEF/NYHQ2009-2263/Kate Holt.

Violence in the home and family

"I did have a friend who got abused (sexually) and I tried to help by calling social services but they didn't help at all, they actually made it worse. So I wish social services could learn to deal with it better."

*(13-year-old girl in Canada)*²⁵

"I was hated because I was deaf, even by my parents. My mother used to beat me so much. There was a time when another relative pierced me [points to a scar on her leg]. They say 'You are always a problem. We will have police arrest you if you continue to cause problems.' Even my brothers don't care about me. I think they are even happy because I am suffering. They tell me: 'You are very stupid. We will fight you if you are not serious. We're not going to give you food.'"

*(16-year-old deaf girl, northern Uganda)*²⁶

"Parents must not keep silent if a rape case happens in the family or village." *(child from Cambodia)*²⁷

Violence against children in the family continues to be a global problem. Many instances of violence remain unreported, and data for many countries are lacking. Nonetheless, there are sufficient surveys and research studies to demonstrate that children continue to be at higher risk of violence in their own family than in any other setting.²⁸

In some countries across regions, reports of violence against children in the home are rising. While, in many cases, these increases may be attributed to greater visibility and awareness of violence and greater willingness to report it, the high rates of violence are still great cause for alarm. In the United Kingdom, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) referred a record 16,385 serious cases, many of them of severe neglect, to police or social services in 2010-2011.²⁹ Not only was this a 37 percent rise from the previous year, but also the biggest increase ever recorded. In Northern Ireland, between 2007 and 2008 there was a 15 percent increase in the numbers of children on the Child Protection Registry.³⁰ In Taipei, Taiwan, government statistics show the number of child abuse cases increased by 30 percent between 2005 and 2009.³¹ Similarly, a government report in Australia showed over 300,000 reported cases of suspected child abuse and neglect in 2008-2009, a 27 percent increase from 2005.³²

Increases in violence against children in the family can often be linked to stressful living circumstances. High levels of economic recession and unemployment, social problems, political

conflict, and natural disasters all increase stress for parents. In Christchurch, New Zealand, for example, reported child physical abuse rates jumped by 20 percent after the February 2011 earthquake.³³ A 2007 study in the Netherlands found that the risk for child abuse and neglect is five times higher in families when both parents are jobless.³⁴ In the Canadian territory of Nunavut, an area plagued by poverty and social problems, the rates of physical and sexual violence towards children are, respectively, four and ten times higher than the national rate.³⁵

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Parental use of physical violence to “discipline” children is a traditional and long-accepted pattern of parenting in most countries of the world. Findings from a number of recent international and national studies conducted by academic researchers, UNICEF, and NGOs converge to show continuing high rates of corporal punishment in families. Millions of children continue to be slapped, punched, kicked, and beaten by their parents, sometimes with an object. Often this physical violence is accompanied by verbal violence—shaming, humiliating, and threatening.

“One time my Mum was really angry and she like slapped me in the face and that really hurt and she called me a bitch and stuff and there was a hand mark.” (13-year-old girl, New Zealand)³⁶

In March 2011, UNICEF reported on parental use of violent discipline in 37 low and middle-income countries. It found that, on average, 86 percent of children experienced physical punishment or psychological abuse, and 17 percent experienced severe physical punishment (e.g. repeated beatings,

or hitting the child on the head, ears, or face).³⁷ A 2009 survey across 18 Latin American and Caribbean countries found that 19 percent of respondents personally knew of a child who was beaten or physically mistreated by a family member in the previous 30 days. Reported rates in the region were highest in Bolivia (29 percent), Peru (27 percent), and Guatemala (25 percent).³⁸

Children Reporting Severe Physical Violence: Selected Countries	
COUNTRY	% REPORTING
Maldives	21
Morocco	24
Mozambique	37
Namibia	30
Paraguay	35
Thailand	38
Yemen (rural)	58
Yemen (urban)	23

Source: UNICEF

A 2008 report from Afghanistan describes physical violence in each of 61 families interviewed. Corporal punishment was reported used with children as young as two-years-old, and severe incidents were described including shooting the child and hitting the child with electric cables.³⁹ In Ghana, among children ages 10 to 16, approximately 62 percent of children reported beatings by their parents, most frequently with a cane. Perhaps most disturbing, children stated that these beatings were a reflection of their parents’ love for them, and that they, in turn, had

the authority to punish their younger siblings.⁴⁰

Young children are not the only victims of violent punishment. A 2009 Save the Children study of families in Italy found that 34 percent of parents slap their 11- to 13-year-old children and almost a quarter of those ages 14 to 16 were still slapped by their parents.⁴¹ A 2008 study by the NSPCC in the United Kingdom found that over a six-month period, 160,000 children between ages 15 and 17 - approximately seven percent of teens - had been hit by a parent.⁴²

Slapping and hitting can escalate to violence that injures, and in some cases kills, children. In 2008, according to the U.S. National Child Abuse and Neglect Data Systems, an estimated

1,740 U.S. child fatalities resulted from abuse (including shaken baby syndrome) or neglect by their caregivers.⁴³ Almost half of these fatalities were caused by parental abuse and neglect, and nearly one quarter due to physical violence alone. Almost half of the child victims were under the age of one, and roughly a third were between ages one to three. Most of these children were killed by their parents. A similar pattern of child homicides by parents is reported in Canada by Statistics Canada.⁴⁴ In 2008, there was a slight increase in the number of child homicides – mostly against male children. Younger children were the most vulnerable to parental violence with those younger than one-year-old being most at risk of being killed. Homicide victims under age four were mostly killed through being shaken or beaten to death.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Children's reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by family members, fearing the consequences, makes it difficult to obtain accurate statistics on its prevalence; however, available data are deeply disturbing. In Colombia, the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Science estimates that every year some 11,000 children are victims of sexual abuse.⁴⁵ A 2007 survey in India carried out across 13 states and with a sample size of 12,447 revealed that over 53 percent of the children studied reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse.⁴⁶ The incidents included fondling, forcible kissing, and rape. In Swaziland, one-third of girls between the ages of 13 and 17 reported that their first sexual experience was forced and that it took place within their own homes. The most common perpetrators were men or boys from the girls' neighbourhood.⁴⁷

The sexual abuse of boys is increasingly recognized as a particular concern. For example, a global survey of student health found that in the five sub-Saharan African countries that participated,

21 percent of boys reported that they had been physically forced to have sex.⁴⁸

Some studies have found that the increasing availability of pornography, including through the internet, have contributed to cultural trends that sexualize children and contribute to sexual abuse.⁴⁹ Young people also report that parents may be complicit in the sexual exploitation of their children. For example, children in Thai focus group discussions on sexual exploitation described how parents take their children to work as prostitutes, naming the hotels where this happens.⁵⁰ Sexual abuse of children continues not only because of adults who perpetrate it, but also because of those who condone it through their silence.

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE AND NEGLECT

Psychological violence against children—in the form of insults, name-calling, isolation, threats, and belittlement—is more prevalent than any other form of violence. The UNICEF survey of low- and middle-income countries, for example, found that on average, almost three in four children experienced “psychological aggression” in the previous month, while about half had experienced physical punishment.⁵¹ A 2009 survey of Latin American and Caribbean countries found that 23 percent of respondents knew a child who had been verbally or emotionally mistreated by a family member in the previous 30 days, as compared to 19 percent who knew a child who had been beaten or physically mistreated. The highest rates in the region were reported in Bolivia (38 percent), El Salvador (36 percent), and Guatemala (35 percent), and the lowest rate in Brazil (11 percent).⁵²

Children suffering neglect may be left alone, given inadequate food, clothing, or medicines, or be exposed to drugs or weapons in the home. In some cases in Nepal, children with disabilities were starved to death or were not given sufficient

food and water in order to control their bowel movements when the parents were not at home.⁵³ Deaths from neglect are not at all unusual. However, more common are a variety of poor developmental outcomes among children who are neglected. Recent evidence clearly shows that those neglected in childhood show in adulthood higher rates of mental illness, increased rates of drug or alcohol abuse, difficulties forming relationships, and compromised brain development.⁵⁴

Children also suffer significant negative effects from witnessing violence in the home. Prevalence studies in Europe, for example, find that 12 to 15 percent of all females are end up in relationships of domestic violence. Interviews with children in women's shelters have found that the great majority of children are present when such violence occurs. A 2010 Save the Children project in Spain, Iceland, and Italy highlighted the psychological trauma experienced by children in homes where domestic violence occurs. They may experience isolation, insecurity, aggressiveness, depression, sleep disorders, and socialization difficulties.⁵⁵ Research in some countries suggests that domestic violence against mothers is often accompanied by violence against children: Dutch studies have estimated that 30 to 70 percent of children with mothers who are being abused are subject to violence themselves.⁵⁶

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING

Female genital mutilation/cutting continues to be among the most brutal forms of violence perpetrated against girls. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 100 to 140 million women and girls worldwide have been subjected to FGM; in Africa, an estimated 92 million girls age 10 or older have undergone FGM.⁵⁷ Some of the highest rates of FGM are found in Sudan, Somalia, and Mali.⁵⁸ A 2009 study conducted by the School of Public Health in Addis Ababa of Somali girls living in refugee

STATES WITH FULL PROHIBITION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN ALL SETTINGS (by year)

POST-VAC STUDY

2011	South Sudan
2010	Kenya Poland Tunisia
2008	Costa Rica Liechtenstein Luxembourg Republic of Moldova
2007	Netherlands New Zealand Portugal Spain Uruguay Venezuela

PRE-VAC STUDY

2006	Greece
2005	Hungary
2004	Romania Ukraine
2003	Iceland
2000	Bulgaria Germany Israel
1999	Croatia
1998	Latvia
1997	Denmark
1994	Cyprus
1989	Austria
1987	Norway
1983	Finland
1979	Sweden

camps in eastern Ethiopia found that 52 percent of girls ages seven and eight had undergone FGM. This figure rises to 95 percent for 11- and 12-year-olds.⁵⁹ Amongst parents, including mothers, 84 percent reported their intention to have their daughters “circumcised.” The researchers reported that the only change from earlier data was that most girls had experienced the less extreme form of FGM, the partial or total removal of the clitoris. Less commonly practiced was the extreme form, that of infibulation in which the vaginal opening is narrowed, and the labia repositioned in addition to removal of the clitoris. Although in some countries, such as Mali, rates are dropping, they remain extremely high. In 1996, an estimated 94 percent of women and girls in Mali had undergone FGM. After the government initiated a national programme against FGM in 2002, a government health survey in 2006 found that rates had dropped, but 84 percent of girls under the age of 15 had still been circumcised.⁶⁰

PROGRESS

There has been major progress in the legal prohibition of corporal punishment. Thirty states now have a full ban, including in the family home. In July 2010, Tunisia became the first African state to prohibit all corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the home, closely followed by Kenya. Poland became the 22nd European state to prohibit corporal punishment in August 2010. With independence, the new state of South Sudan became the 30th state to ban all forms of corporal punishment of children. In 2008, the Council of Europe became the first inter-governmental organization to launch an explicit campaign for universal prohibition of all corporal punishment across its 47 member states.⁶¹ Additional states are expected to implement bans in the next few years. A study by the Children’s Commissioner of New Zealand provides recent evidence (supporting earlier evidence from Sweden) that laws can be successful in changing attitudes and practices

toward physical discipline. In the first year after the New Zealand ban, many fewer parents accepted the use of violent disciplinary strategies.⁶²

In all regions, there have been governmental and non-governmental initiatives to promote positive, non-violent forms of discipline in the home. Save the Children, for example, has been working in 17 countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific; a number of Eastern European countries including Russia and Romania; several countries in the Middle East; and North America.⁶³

Legislation prohibiting FGM has been adopted by Eritrea (2007), Egypt (2007), Guinea Bissau (2011), the Kurdish regional government in Iraq (2011), and Kenya (2011). Ghana amended its laws on FGM in 2007 and Portugal included specific provisions on FGM in its criminal code in 2007. In 2008, the World Health Assembly passed a resolution on the elimination of FGM, emphasizing the need for concerted action in all sectors.⁶⁴

Progress toward implementation of such bans within communities has also been noted, for example amongst Maasai communities in Kenya, where programmes led by World Vision and others led to a reduction of FGM incidence from 97 percent to 59 percent in only two years. The programmes included alternative rites of passage for girls, and community discussions with women, men, youth, and religious and political leaders led by local activists including health personnel.⁶⁵

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS



Michael, 14, attending the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) at Kumah Town Elementary School which is supported by Save the Children. The ALP classes enable children who have missed out on their primary education to 'catch up' so they can then join mainstream schooling. Photo: Anna Kari.

Violence in schools

“Teachers beat us and even give names to the sticks they beat us with. If you fail a test you get beaten and if you start crying you get an extra beating. Some of us want to drop out of school because of this beating. Sometimes we get scars.” *(Namibian child)*⁶⁶

“Our school principal ...makes us go down on our knees over small stones or bottle screw tops for over 20 minutes.”
*(eight-year-old girl, Paraguay)*⁶⁷

“I have been very much disturbed; emotionally disturbed and very much stressed. I am trying very hard to forget how it happened but I am failing. I can’t just forget it. It’s like it’s just about to happen again, like its just happening. I remember every detail.”
*(15-year-old Zambian girl raped by her teacher)*⁶⁸

These comments by children are neither isolated nor unusual. At schools around the world, children of all ages are subjected to harsh and humiliating verbal abuse, corporal punishment, bullying, and sexual victimization and harassment. They are exposed to this violence in classrooms, in school playgrounds, and on their journeys to and from school. They suffer violence at the hands both of their teachers and their peers. For all children, but especially those living in violent homes or communities, schools should be places that provide safe learning and socializing environments. But for millions of children, school is a feared and compulsory place of daily violence. In Brazil, for example, a survey of 1,200 students found that 70 percent had been victims of school violence.⁶⁹ In Mexico, 55 percent of students in Mexico City believe some of their fellow students bring firearms to school.⁷⁰ In South Africa, one-quarter of students report that schools are unsafe and that rape and violence are major problems.⁷¹ In Nepal, 14 percent of students who leave school drop out because of fear of their teachers.⁷²

Teachers may be more likely to resort to violent discipline under stressful conditions, including overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources, and an increased emphasis on student testing and achievement.⁷³ As governments make progress in increasing the number of children attending school, the level of school violence has sometimes risen. As enrollments increase, resources often do not keep pace. Teachers have less capacity to intervene in peer violence when classes are very large and may resort to punitive management strategies such as corporal punishment. In such instances, not only the individual teachers, but also the states that fail to provide them with sufficient resources or adequate training in alternative, nonviolent ways to maintain order in the classroom, are violating the rights of children.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Seventy-eight countries continue to allow teachers to physically punish children in their care, and the use of corporal punishment remains widely accepted in schools even in some of the countries in which the practice has officially been banned. In states across most regions, its use is widespread and the rates of use continue to be astonishingly high. In some countries, more than 80 percent of school students, from the youngest to the oldest, report experiencing corporal punishment at school.⁷⁴ In absolute numbers, this means millions of children are exposed to physical assault at school. Over half the secondary school children in Ghana reported being whipped by teachers with wood or metal objects, many reporting serious physical injuries as a result.⁷⁵ In Zimbabwe, 67 percent of children reported that teachers routinely inflict corporal punishment. In Bangladesh, 91 percent of schoolchildren report being physically punished.⁷⁶ In 20 states of the United States, children are routinely hit on the buttocks with a wooden “paddle” or with rulers, and in some instances are pinched, hit, thrown on the floor, and restrained in a manner sufficiently violent to cause bruises. Hospitalization is sometimes required as a result of the assault, or, in some cases, as a result of violence affecting an existing disability.⁷⁷

The most frequent victims of corporal punishment are boys, children with disabilities, and children of ethnic minority status. In almost all countries authorizing it, corporal punishment is used more with boys than with girls.⁷⁸ In Singapore, it is legal to use corporal punishment on boys but not girls.⁷⁹ In Egypt, 80 percent of boys and 67 percent of girls are subject to corporal punishment in schools.⁸⁰ According to research carried out in the U.S. in 2009, children with disabilities make up 19 percent of those who receive corporal punishment in schools, yet represent just 14 percent of the nationwide student population.⁸¹

Even where officially banned, in some states corporal punishment continues with little apparent consequence for those who use it. In Cameroon, for example, corporal punishment is illegal in schools but close to 97 percent of students report its use.⁸² In Haiti, despite the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, school children report being beaten with whips and electric cables.⁸³ A 2007 study of school children in Jordan found that despite prohibition of corporal punishment, over half the children had suffered severe violence, including being hit with an object such as a rod, rope or cane, or being bitten or burned.⁸⁴ In one case, a 12 year-old boy in Jordan lost an eye after being hit by his teacher so hard he fell and hit a closet.⁸⁵

While teachers’ reasons for administering corporal punishment are often trivial, the consequences are not. Numerous children have died due to injuries suffered at the hands of their teacher.⁸⁶ Recent deaths of children resulting from school corporal punishment include: a 13-year-old Sri Lankan girl who died from serious injuries received from being punished with a cane at school; a nine-year-old in South Africa who died after being beaten with a plastic pipe for making a noise; a 14-year-old boy in the Philippines who was punished for not doing his homework when he returned to school after suffering typhus; an 11-year-old girl in Delhi whose teacher banged her head and made her stand in the sun for two hours because she had not done her homework; a seven-year-old boy in Malaysia who was assaulted by his teacher because he had been accused of stealing from another child; and a 14-year-old boy in Karnataka, India who died after being punished by his teacher for being late to school. Fatalities may not be common, but physical harm, lasting psychological harm, underachievement, school absence, and school drop-out are all commonly correlated with corporal punishment.⁸⁷



Bullying in schools is common, and in parts of the world is increasingly taking place online. With the advent of social networking sites, and proliferation of the internet and phone and camera technology, “cyber-bullying” is on the rise, and girls are the most frequent victims. Photo © Gemenacom.

VERBAL ABUSE

Children are routinely subjected to humiliating remarks by teachers. In the few states where verbal or psychological violence by teachers has been researched, the rates appear to be even greater than are those of corporal punishment. In Ghana, although 71 percent of children report corporal punishment at school, shaming and humiliating students are reported to be more common.⁸⁸ In Finland, 5 percent of children report some form of physical violence by teachers (which is illegal), whereas 15 percent report verbal

violence, including disparaging and belittling comments, threats of violence, and criticism of appearance.⁸⁹ Not only is such teacher behaviour damaging to the child’s self-esteem, but also it creates a very poor classroom climate, which discourages learning and promotes peer bullying.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Whereas victims of corporal punishment in school are disproportionately male, girls are most often sexually victimized in schools. In the Netherlands, 27 percent of students report sexual harassment

by school personnel.⁹⁰ UNICEF has documented rape of children as young as age six at primary schools in Kenya.⁹¹ According to the National Center for Education Statistics in the United States during one school year (2007-2008), there were 800 rapes on elementary, middle, and high school campuses and 3,800 cases of sexual battery aside from rape, including both teacher and student perpetrators.⁹²

Studies from numerous countries have shown that teachers may pressure students to take part in sexual acts in exchange for good grades.⁹³ A child in Vietnam explained: "some teachers could take advantage of bad grades for sexual abuse. For example, if a child lets a teacher abuse him or her, he or she can get a better grade."⁹⁴ Data also reveal that students are not only vulnerable to sexual harassment or rape in school buildings or on school grounds. A 2007 study in Swaziland found that 9.5 percent of girls had been subject to sexual violence while on the way to or from school.⁹⁵

The devastating consequences of sexual violence in schools include poor school performance and drop-out, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and increased substance abuse and mental health problems.⁹⁶

BULLYING

Bullying is common in schools around the globe. Studies in which students are asked about their experiences with bullying find that 20 percent of students in China, 33 percent in the Philippines, 40 percent in Ghana, and 47 percent in Chile report being bullied in the previous 30 days.⁹⁷ In the U.K., recent data show that 9 out of 10 children report

bullying in their school and one out of five between the ages of 10 and 15 said they were frightened or upset by bullying. Boys between 10 and 12 were the most common victims.⁹⁸

Forms of bullying at school generally fall into three categories: physical, (punching, kicking, biting), emotional (threats, name calling, insults, racial or sexual comments, social exclusion), and cyber-bullying or internet harassment. Bullying continues

to be a particular problem for adolescents who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender.⁹⁹ In some cases documented by Plan International in its *Learn Without Fear* campaign, teachers even incite children to bully others.¹⁰⁰

A 2008 National Crime Victimization Survey illuminates the nature of school bullying in the United States. The data showed that children are more likely to be bullied inside the school (79 percent), most often in the classroom, than on school grounds (23 percent) or on the

school bus.¹⁰¹ Bullying rates go down with age, and range from 43 percent of younger children being victims of bullies to 24 percent of older children. Physical injuries show the same age-related pattern. These patterns and percentages have essentially remained stable since 2005.

With the growth of the internet and new technologies, bullying has taken on new forms. Cyber-bullying remains less common than the more traditional forms of physical and verbal bullying, but its use is increasing. Cell phone (mobile phone) cameras and digital cameras are a particular growing problem (although they have usefully been used in some states by students to record teacher violence against them). In the U.K., for example,

CYBER-BULLYING RATES AROUND THE WORLD	
COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE
Australia	10
Belgium	34
Poland	52
Germany	14
Japan	10
South Korea	53
Spain	29

Source: University of South Florida, Cyberbullying Research Center.

the British Crime Survey found that one in four victims of bullying reported receiving unwanted or nasty emails, texts, or postings on a website. The survey also found that while victims of physical bullying are most often boys, victims of cyber-bullying are more likely to be girls.¹⁰² Because social networking sites disseminate and preserve accounts of humiliation, they lend a new dimension to bullying that is hard to escape. As 17-year-old Paulo from Brazil said, "You cannot go home from the Internet... It is like being haunted."¹⁰³

The growth of interest in and evidence about the pervasiveness and serious effects of school bullying has not been paralleled by the adoption of prevention programmes, despite their availability. For example, only 25 percent of schools in Norway have adopted a bullying prevention programme, and surprisingly, given the focus on violence in schools in America, only four percent of U.S. schools have done so.¹⁰⁴ To make matters worse, there is significant evidence from children in many countries that their teachers do not intervene to stop bullying.¹⁰⁵ As described by a 13-year-old boy in Ecuador:

"Once a friend hit me in front of the teacher, he pushed and kicked me and he made me fall... and I got hurt. The teacher did nothing."¹⁰⁶

PROGRESS

A 2011 global progress survey by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children reports that corporal punishment in schools is now illegal in 117 states, with the most recent including Kenya in 2010 and the new state of South Sudan in 2011. Corporal punishment is unlawful in schools in 43 percent of states in Africa, 52 percent in East Asia and the Pacific, 96 percent in Europe and Central Asia, 46 percent in the Americas and the Caribbean, 57 percent in the Middle East, and 25 percent

in South Asia.¹⁰⁷ Plan International reports that between 2008 and 2010, there have been changes in legislation to protect children from violence in schools that affect an estimated 390 million children. Even if new laws are not immediately complied with, they can serve a strong educative function, which over time changes attitudes.

When teachers are trained in children's rights and positive classroom management strategies, the rates of school violence go down. Both Plan International, through its Learn Without Fear Campaign, and Save the Children have conducted extensive training of teachers in positive discipline in everyday classroom management. In Thailand and Mongolia, Save the Children's methodology has been integrated into the pre-service training of teachers, and its materials are influencing the development of national regulations to require non-violent school environments.

Although programmes specifically targeting bullying are still too few, some innovative laws and policies are being introduced. For example, the state of New Jersey in the United States adopted an Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights following the suicide of a student who had been bullied. The new law requires each school to designate an anti-bullying specialist, increase staff training, and investigate all complaints within one school day, and requires each district to have a safety team, made up of teachers, staff members, and parents, to review complaints.¹⁰⁸

Progress is being made, but more must be done.

VIOLENCE IN CARE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS



A baby lies in a crib at an institution for children up to three years of age, in the city of Shumen, Bulgaria. Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia has the world's greatest rate of children growing up in formal alternative care settings, including 626,000 children who live in residential institutions. © UNICEF/NYHQ2011-1058/Kate Holt.

Violence in care and justice institutions

“It felt like I couldn’t breathe, they did mess up, obviously they did because I am underage and all I did was skip school...”

(12-year-old U.S. male victim of a taser/stun gun)¹⁰⁹

“One day just a while ago they locked us all down here. They beat everybody, everybody from the section. They stopped only when some people took the blame... All the same, we stayed locked up all day in a room without water, without food, without anything. There were about fourteen of us.” *(17-year-old boy held in a Brazilian detention centre)¹¹⁰*

“I saw this with my own eyes...They got the girl out from the room. She was a girl who could not speak...They brought her to the classroom: no-one sleeps there. They brought the girl (to the room), unlocked the room, and locked her in. They raped her... I saw three men...it’s very difficult and shameful to describe.” *(detainee in Phnom Penh describing gang rape)¹¹¹*

“At the police station [name withheld] made me strip naked. All three of us were stripped naked. He took the other two outside and kept one inside and closed the door. He and two other guys put me laying down on the floor. One guy put his foot on my head. One guy beat me with an electric wire and the other guy beat me with a big electric cable. That happened every day for the first three days.”

(unaccompanied migrant boy detained by police in Ukraine)¹¹²

The 2006 UN Study found that children in care and justice institutions are at higher risk of violence than virtually all other children. This situation continues today. Regardless of the type of institution, the type of abuse, the age and sex or health status of the child, NGO and academic research reports indicate extraordinarily high levels of abuse to children living in care and justice institutions.¹¹³ That they continue to experience abuse at levels significantly above children in the general population is a particularly reprehensible violation of their protection rights.

VIOLENCE IN CARE INSTITUTIONS

Millions of children who are orphaned or separated from their families are living in foster homes, group homes, or larger care institutions. The highest rates of institutionalization in the world are in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where 626,000 children were living in institutions in 2007. Despite research showing that children in institutions are significantly

more likely than their peers to be victims of all types of abuse, the rate of institutionalization in the region has been increasing. In 2000, the rate of children in formal care was 1,503 per 100,000; by 2007, it had risen to 1,738 per 100,000.¹¹⁴

A 2009 study of children living in residential care in Poland conducted by Nobody's Children Foundation illustrates the pattern of violence against children in care.¹¹⁵ Children reported that in the year before the study, 53 percent had experienced verbal abuse from caregivers and custodial staff; 32 percent reported experiencing physical abuse from caregivers and staff; and 32 percent reported physical violence from peers. Eleven percent reported being raped by either staff or peers (this represented twice as many rapes than in the general population). Ten percent reported other forms of sexual abuse including exposure and touching.

In the United States, studies found that rates of sexual abuse of children in the foster care system are four times higher than among the general population of children.¹¹⁶

Other recent reports have cited similar findings in Australia, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, England, Poland, Serbia, and Sweden.¹¹⁷

In many countries, 60 percent or more of children in institutions are children with disabilities.¹¹⁸ They are also most at-risk for victimization. The WHO has found that children with disabilities are four to five times more likely than their typically developing peers to experience violence, regardless of the type or severity of their impairment.¹¹⁹ Research in over 25 countries in the

Americas, Eastern Europe and Russia, the Middle East, and Asia has documented violence and abuses against children with disabilities living in institutions, including the use of forced electroshock treatment, long-term restraints, and systematic sedation.¹²⁰

In Bulgaria, a recent report of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee exemplifies the widespread violence against children with mental disabilities in institutions.¹²¹ The report documents cases of sexual abuse, neglect severe enough to cause death, and physical violence, including a head injury resulting in death and a case of strangulation. In addition, many institutions use illegal chemical and physical restraints on the children. These practices include tying the child's limbs to beds or wheelchairs, the use of

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DISABILITIES

When a girl with a disability is raped, the police men they have to keep their secret. If you will tell I am raped by this and this man,...so we did not go to the police they would not believe us... if you tell them you are raped; what kind of man would want to sleep with you?...One of our friends was pregnant and the doctor told her; The man who slept with you he could have slept with a dead body ...They think because no one would want to sleep with us and since we are assumed to have no feelings for men we are not affected. And so rape would happen more often to us.

Teen Girl, Ethiopia,

Source: Boersma, 2009

restraining jackets, and the use of antipsychotics to immobilize the child. As one child in Canada said, "If you act out, they give you injections."¹²²

A 2010 report about a care centre for children with mental disabilities in the United States documented how the children were subjected to electric shocks on the legs, arms, soles of their feet, finger tips, and torsos – in many cases for years, and for some, a decade or more. These shocks were so strong that they caused red spots or blisters on the skin. Some

students even received hundreds of shocks a day.¹²³

In 2009, two reports were released on the situation of children with behavioural disorders treated in “therapeutic facilities” within the protection system in Spain.¹²⁴ Both reports described violations of children’s rights deriving from the measures allowed in these centres including isolation, the use of physical restraints, and administering medication not prescribed by doctors to control children’s behaviours. The law does not define what a behavioural disorder is, or the procedure for transferring children into such facilities. This legal gap leaves children vulnerable to abuse.

VIOLENCE IN JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS

Children who are deprived of their liberty are at high risk of violence from their first point of contact with the law.¹²⁵ In Canada, there has been public outrage over the use of tasers (conductive energy weapons or stun guns) to physically restrain children during arrest and while in custody.¹²⁶ As recently as April 2011, an 11-year-old child living in foster care was tasered as he emerged from a home where he was suspected of stabbing someone. Painful restraints used on children in private detention centres have also led to protests and legal action in the United Kingdom.¹²⁷

Incarcerated children are highly vulnerable to physical and sexual assault in developed and

MY LIFE

My life I no longer love

Id rather be set free above

Get it over with while the time is right

Late some rainy night

Turn black as the sky and as cold as the sea

Say goodbye to Ashley

Miss me but don’t be sad

Im not sad Im happy and glad

Im free, where I want to be

No more caged up Ashley

Wishing I were free

Free like a bird.

Ashley Smith, 2006

Ombudsman & Child & Youth Advocate (2008).

The Ashley Smith Report.

Retrieved from: <http://www.gnb.ca/0073/PDF/AshleySmith-e.pdf>

New Brunswick Youth Centre

developing countries alike. A 2010 report from the U.S. Bureau of Justice that surveyed 9,000 youth in 195 juvenile detention facilities found that an estimated 12 percent of youth reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimization during the 12-month period examined by the report. Eighty percent of the sexual abuse reported in the study was perpetrated by staff at the facilities. The actual number of incidents is likely much higher than those reported as many children in detention facilities will not report instances of abuse, especially on-going abuse, out of fear and shame.¹²⁸

Recent studies have found violence, inhuman and degrading treatment, and even torture in countries

across regions. In Burundi, where children as young as age 13 are detained in adult prisons, dozens of child prisoners interviewed by Human Rights Watch described forced or coerced sexual activity with adult male prisoners.¹²⁹ In Zambia, children also are routinely held with adult inmates. A study conducted in late 2009 and early 2010 found that juvenile detainees frequently experienced physical abuse at the hands of prison officers or fellow inmates. They were also subject to degrading and painful punishments, including being stripped naked and confined in a bare cell in water above their ankles for days at a time with limited or no food and no toilet facilities—forcing the child to sit or stand in his/her own excrement.¹³⁰ In Benin, the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) and its local partner found that conditions of child detention often amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment and that children in police stations were often tortured.¹³¹ In Uruguay, the organization found that children were detained in their cells for more than 20 hours a day with no possibility of educational or leisure activities, and that drugs were used to control children’s behaviour.¹³²

Cambodia has detention centres specifically for those who are convicted of drug offenses.¹³³ Among those detained alongside adults in the centres are children – often from the streets and under age 15. A 16-year-old described his observations in a youth centre:

“(A staff member) would use the cable to beat people... On each whip, the person’s skin would come off and stick on the cable.”¹³⁴

Treatment in these detention centres included being shocked with electric batons, whipped with twisted electrical wire, and forced to donate blood. Some

children reported rape. These ‘treatments’ have been used with children as well as with adults.¹³⁵

Children in both adult and juvenile justice facilities may be subject to gang violence, verbal and physical assaults from peers and staff, and the routine use of chemical and mechanical restraints. The case of Ashley Smith in Canada typifies the horrific treatment – and tragic outcomes – of children who come into conflict with the law, even for trivial reasons. Ashley was 15-years-old when she was initially given a 90-day jail sentence in New Brunswick for throwing crab apples at a postal worker. However, she remained behind bars as she received additional charges and sentences while incarcerated. She was unable, reports say, to contain her feelings of fury at being tasered, gassed, shackled, drugged, and isolated. Over an 11-month period she was transferred 17 times to different facilities where she spent the majority of her time physically restrained in isolation cells. To control her behaviour, she was forcibly restrained, sometimes with duct tape, and injected with anti-psychotic drugs. At age 19, in October 2007, Ashley strangled herself with a ligature.¹³⁶

VIOLENT SENTENCING

In at least 40 countries around the world, children are legally subject to inhuman, violent sentencing, including whipping, flogging, caning, or amputation for offenses committed before age 18. In some of these states, children can lawfully be sentenced to death by lethal injection, hanging, shooting, or stoning, or can be sentenced to spend the rest of their lives in prison.¹³⁷ Many countries allow both life sentences and corporal punishment, even when the age of criminal responsibility is as low as 10 years, as it is in Tuvalu.¹³⁸ In 2011, 2,380 individuals in the United States were serving life sentences without the possibility of parole for crimes they committed when they were under the age of 18.¹³⁹ Most had



A girl in New York is handcuffed and bound, awaiting her court hearing. In New York, as well as other states in the US, juvenile girls and boys are locked up in prison-like facilities, and excessive use of a face-down 'restraint' procedure in which girls are thrown to the floor, often causing injury, have been documented, as well as incidents of sexual abuse, and inadequate educational and mental health services.

no access to rehabilitation or any educational programming since such programmes are used for those who will be leaving incarceration. The effect of being sentenced to die in prison is devastating:

"They said a kid can't get the death penalty, but life without, it's the same thing. I'm condemned... I don't understand the difference."¹⁴⁰

The Child Rights Information Network reports that at least nine countries (Bangladesh, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Tonga) allow all three forms of inhuman sentencing—corporal punishment, life sentences, and the death penalty.¹⁴¹ In Saudi Arabia, for

example, children can be detained for up to six months without judicial review, kept in solitary confinement, be flogged, have limbs amputated, or be executed. Detention can be for such trivial offenses as exchanging a phone number with a child of the opposite sex.¹⁴²

Rates of juvenile executions have increased. According to Amnesty International, between 2006 and 2011, globally, at least 37 juvenile offenders were put to death for crimes allegedly committed before age 18. Iran executed the vast majority of these juveniles (31), while Saudi Arabia executed four, Pakistan one, and Yemen one. During the previous five-year period, 21 known executions of juvenile offenders were carried out around the globe.¹⁴³

TREATMENT OF MIGRANT, ASYLUM-SEEKERS, AND REFUGEE CHILDREN

According to the World Bank and International Organization of Migration, the number of international migrants has increased rapidly in the last few years, from 191 million in 2005 to 215 million in 2010. Many of these migrants are children, often travelling without family members and vulnerable to indefinite detention and violence. Between 2007 and 2010, Human Rights Watch conducted several studies documenting violence by state security forces against unaccompanied migrant and refugee children in Europe.¹⁴⁴ For many unaccompanied children, some as young as six-years-old, arrival in Europe means facing degrading treatment and police detention. In France's Charles de Gaulle airport, for example, border police routinely use handcuffs and strip-searches on the children; some report being sexually harassed. Many are denied entry. The words of a 17-year-old boy describe the abusive treatment:

"One group (of officers) came to search me... There were four police officers, one searched me. I had to take off all my clothes, and one searched my suitcase. One woman and another officer were there just to watch. It was very humiliating to be naked before the woman. Their manner of searching me was humiliating. The black police officer made fun of me. I felt like I was treated like an idiot and I felt intimidated." ¹⁴⁵

In Ukraine, migrant and asylum-seeking children report beatings and torture during interrogations, including use of electric shocks, and being detained with unrelated adults of both sexes.¹⁴⁶ In Greece, officials, including coast guards, regular police, and port police officers, have subjected unaccompanied migrant children to torture, such as mock executions, routine kicking, and beatings. Officials routinely detain children, including girls as young as age 10,

often holding them with adults.¹⁴⁷ A child held by police in Greece described his experience:

"He loaded the gun and held it to my head and said 'I will kill you.' He pulled the trigger but the gun was empty... I said I was 14. They all started laughing... I couldn't lie on my back because of the beating." ¹⁴⁸

CHILDREN IMPRISONED WITH THEIR MOTHERS

In many regions, young children are detained with their mothers through arrest and pre-trial detention periods that can last for months or even years. Some infants are born in prison. Many countries have Mother and Baby units, or special provisions in their penal codes for pregnant women or women with young children. In many cases, the child's best interest is to remain with the mother, even if she is incarcerated. However, without appropriate protection measures, children may be at risk of physical or sexual violence from other detainees or facility staff or be subject to deprivation that amounts to violence.¹⁴⁹ For example, in Zambia, the law states that children may stay with their mothers in prison up to age four and "may be supplied with clothing and necessities at public expense." In practice, however, a 2009-2010 study found that the Prisons Service provides no food for children who live with their mothers in prison, nor does it provide infant formula to women unable to breastfeed.¹⁵⁰

PROGRESS

Progress in ending violence against children in care and institutions has been extremely limited. The UN Study recommended that one of the best ways to prevent violence against children in institutions is to keep them out of institutions to begin with. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, nearly every country has taken steps to reform their child care systems and introduce family-based alternatives to residential care. Some progress has been achieved:

the rate of children placed in family-based care has increased from 43 percent of all children in formal care in 2000 to 51 percent in 2007. During that period, the total number of children in residential care in the region decreased from 757,000 to 626,000.¹⁵¹ However, these figures do not tell the full story: during the same period the birth rate decreased and higher proportions of children have been placed in care. As a result, the proportion of children placed in residential care has also risen.¹⁵² Countries continue to work towards de-institutionalization. In February 2010, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers issued a recommendation to all Council of Europe member states to take all appropriate measures to replace institutional care for children with disabilities with community-based services within a reasonable timeframe.¹⁵³ In November 2009, the UN GA welcomed the Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children, which highlight the need to prevent unnecessary family separation and use placement in institutions as last resort.

In the arena of juvenile justice, Thailand and Scotland have taken positive steps forward by

raising the age of criminal responsibility, albeit not sufficiently (respectively from 7 to 10, and 8 to 12), although other states have lowered the minimum age. Other countries, too, have made progress in advancing juvenile justice. On 17 May 2010, the United States Supreme Court issued a decision that it was cruel and unusual punishment to sentence someone to life without parole for crimes committed before age 18 that did not involve homicide. The ruling affected 129 individuals who had been convicted to life without parole for non-homicide crimes. In Yemen, juvenile executions have been halted while authorities review age assessment policies.

Modest changes are occurring regarding the detention of children with incarcerated mothers. In South Africa, following a Constitutional Court judgment in 2007, it is now required to take into account the best interests of the child in determining a mother's sentence. In December 2010, the UN adopted new Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (the Bangkok Rules); these include the treatment of children of prisoners.

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE



Solaiman is of the many young children that work long hours in cramped conditions making jewellery, cosmetics and household items for a pittance in Lalbagh, Dhaka, Bangladesh. There are more than 4.9 million children working in Bangladesh and although 85% of children start primary school, nearly half of them drop out. Photo: Munem Wasif/Agence

Violence in the workplace

“When I was very young I don’t understand the meaning of (Madam’s) favourite utterance ‘*kis haram ki oulad ha*’ (whose illegitimate child is this). However when last year I came to know the meaning, one day I responded.... She really beat me severely and pulled me out of the house. She never paid my salary and even alleged that I had stolen.”
(10-year-old female domestic worker, Pakistan)¹⁵⁴

“The husband wakes me up and rapes me. He has threatened me with a knife and said I must not tell anyone.” (15-year-old domestic worker, Guinea)¹⁵⁵

“I was put to work in a small factory making embroidery clothes. It was a small room and there were six other boys like me, working for 14 hours every day and paid little or no money at all. The uncle who brought me here a year back had promised my parents that he will send me to school and give me some light work so that I can send some money back home.” (seven-year-old boy, India)¹⁵⁶

A 2010 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) notes that although there has been some reduction in child labour in the previous four years, there remain 215 million children across the world who are trapped in child labour, of whom 115 million are exposed to hazardous work that poses a danger to the child’s health and safety.¹⁵⁷ The majority of child labourers, it reports, work in agriculture. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Labor released a list of goods being produced by child labour.¹⁵⁸ Looking at 122 products in 58 countries, they found children to be mining gold, making soccer balls, sewing clothing, and harvesting crops, amongst other things. The most common agricultural goods produced by child labour are cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, coffee, rice, and cocoa. Despite the optimism that has accompanied the extensive ratification of ILO Convention No. 182, which reflects an almost global consensus that there should be an immediate end to the worst forms of child labour, millions of children, some as young as age five and six, are vulnerable to violence in the workplace. Such violence may take the form of physical beatings or verbal abuse by their employer, sexual assault, forced confinement, debt-bondage or slave-like conditions, unrelenting hours, or hazardous tasks that put the child’s health and safety at risk. Globally, the ILO estimates that 22,000 children are killed at work every year.¹⁵⁹

CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS

The UN Study found that child domestic workers are at particular risk of violence due to their isolation and the invisible nature of their employment. Often working 12-18 hours a day behind locked doors, child domestic workers clean houses, do laundry, cook meals, clear trash, and look after other children not much younger than themselves.

New figures released by the ILO in 2011 estimate that there are at least 52.6 million, and perhaps as many as 100 million, domestic workers worldwide, and that up to 30 percent of them are children. In many countries, domestic workers are not included under labour laws, and therefore have no labour protections. They are also subject to high rates of violence at the hands of their employers, including sexual abuse. It is mostly, but not exclusively, girls who are exploited and subjected to violence in domestic work. As explained by a girl in a recent survey of child domestics conducted by the Asian Human Rights Commission:

“My parents are absolutely clear that only male child deserves school education because after studies he will help them. My father is convinced that girls don’t need to study as they have to help their mothers and contribute in family income. My mother is saving money from my salary because she has started the preparation of my marriage and huge finances are required for girls’ marriage in our community.”¹⁶⁰

In Guinea, a Human Rights Watch investigation found that girls working as domestic workers toiled up to 18 hours per day, received inadequate food, and no help when sick. Frequently, they were subjected to physical, emotional, and sexual violence.¹⁶¹ A nine-year-old girl in Guinea described constant violence:

“Sometimes my employers beat me or insult me. When I say I am tired or sick, they beat me with a whip. When I do something wrong, they beat me too...When I take a rest, I get beaten or am given less food. I am beaten on my buttocks and on my back.”¹⁶²

Similar abuses are documented in Pakistan, which has over 250,000 child domestic workers, according to the ILO.¹⁶³ Fourteen-year-old Muhammad Zafar’s story is illustrative. He was rescued by police in Karachi, after

neighbours reported that he was being kept shackled at the home of his employers. He had not been paid for 19 months. According to Pakistani NGOs, there were at least six documented cases of death due to violence against child domestic workers in Pakistan in 2010.¹⁶⁴

The difficulty of ending the abuse and exploitation of child domestics is exemplified in India. The Child Labour Prevention Act of India was amended on 10 October 2006, to ban children under age 14 working as domestic workers (as well as in dhabas, restaurants, hotels, and other hospitality sectors), making employing them a punishable offence.¹⁶⁵ The central government asked state governments to develop action plans to rescue and rehabilitate children who were working as child labourers. One year later, Save the Children found that only three state governments had published these plans — Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu — and 74 percent of child domestic workers were under age 16.¹⁶⁶ Save the Children also found that child domestic workers continued to be subjected to many different forms of abuse, from unsafe working conditions and lack of food, to being beaten, burnt, and sexually abused. Sixty-eight percent of the children surveyed by Save the Children reported experiencing physical abuse, with almost half resulting in injuries. Almost one-third reported some form of sexual assault; 20 percent reported being forced to have sexual intercourse.¹⁶⁷

The pervasive abuse of child domestic workers is found everywhere. In the words of Severine, from Togo:

“Instead of beating us, slapping us, making us kneel down in the gravel, wounding us with blades, putting pepper in our private parts, denying us food as punishment for making mistakes we would rather you gave us advice and taught us good manners.”¹⁶⁸

CHILDREN IN ILLICIT LABOUR

The ILO estimates that twice as many children are involved in illicit labour-connected activities—the production and distribution of illicit drugs and the production of pornography and prostitution—as are involved in armed conflict.¹⁶⁹

Children who are working in the global drug trade are exposed to high risk of violence and possible drug addiction. In Mexico, for example, the Children's Rights Network estimated that 30,000 children work for the drug cartels.¹⁷⁰ Generally, girls repackage quantities of narcotics for sale on the streets and boys work as

Children in Armed Conflict

Issues related to children in armed conflict were not covered by the UN Study on Violence against Children, but were the subject of an earlier landmark UN study carried out by Ms. Graca Machel on the impact of armed conflict on children. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that thousands of children continue to be raped, killed or maimed in war, serve as child soldiers, act as spies, suicide bombers, or human shields, or to become sex slaves for armed forces or groups.

lookouts. Some children, however, are asked to be couriers or assassins. Fourteen-year-old Edgar Jimenez Lugo, a hired assassin since the age of 11 years, admitted to killing four men. "I slit their throats," he explained when interviewed, "I didn't know what I was doing."¹⁷¹ In Afghanistan, which supplies much of the global illicit market for opiates, hundreds of children reportedly labour in the poppy fields, preventing their schooling and exposing them to significant risk, including drug addiction.¹⁷²

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a hugely profitable part of the multi-billion dollar global sex industry. In India, over one-third of sex workers in India are reportedly children – some as young as age 10.¹⁷³ In

Colombia, an estimated 20,000 to 35,000 children are estimated to be victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and in the Philippines, a regular destination for adults seeking sex with children, up to 100,000 children are estimated to be victims of prostitution.¹⁷⁴

ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) has documented the continuing, and sometimes increasing, commercial sexual exploitation of children around the globe, including tourism for the purpose of sexually exploiting children.¹⁷⁵ The vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation increases for indigenous

children and for children whose families are struggling economically. Risks can also rise when natural disasters¹⁷⁶ or civil conflicts lead to a breakdown in government and social services, as well as in highly touristed areas that lack adequate child protection mechanisms. A study in the Dominican Republic, for example, found that children ages 6 through 14 were found to be living and working on the beach

and were openly abused sexually by tourists in local parks, beaches, and on the street.¹⁷⁷

Conviction rates for perpetrators of commercial sexual exploitation of children remain low. For example, in El Salvador, only 11 percent of reported cases between 2005 and 2009 ended with a conviction;¹⁷⁸ in Chile, 12 percent of reported cases end in a completed trial.¹⁷⁹

CHILDREN WHO ARE TRAFFICKED

Unknown numbers of children are trafficked each year. Living in areas of political or civil unrest, high rates of HIV and AIDs, deep poverty, family neglect, or abuse, makes children highly vulnerable to trafficking. Children may be

trafficked to neighbouring states with the support of desperate parents who are promised a brighter future for their children by intermediaries. But rarely is there the promised schooling or paid employment. Rather, children work excessively long hours in dangerous jobs and routinely face violence, intimidation, and sexual assault. That 'brighter future' is usually one of prostitution, drug-trafficking, or exploitive labour.¹⁸⁰

ECPAT International and The Body Shop released a comprehensive report on child trafficking in 2010.¹⁸¹ Examining 41 countries, they show that millions of children are trafficked each year. Most often, the children are moved from poorer areas to richer and more profitable regions. Most are trafficked for sexual exploitation, although many children are trafficked into agriculture, the domestic sector, the entertainment industry, or construction. Some boys are trafficked to work as camel jockeys. The statistics reveal that there has been very little progress in reducing trafficking, and that the proportion of children involved in trafficking has actually been increasing.

Efforts have been made to reduce child trafficking through legal frameworks and law enforcement, but, ECPAT concludes, there has not been enough attention to child victims. The reforms in general lack a child focus. Surprisingly, 29 percent of the countries ECPAT reviewed, including the United States, Mexico, and one-third of European countries, have no current policy to prevent trafficking. Where countries do have policies to prevent human trafficking, only 24 percent have child trafficking policies. Even where rates of child trafficking and resultant sexual exploitation are known to be very high, there is little evidence of a focus on children. In Asia, for example, only 21 percent of the countries reviewed have adopted a specific policy to prevent child trafficking. Adding to the overall inadequacy of government responses

Natural Disasters Increase Trafficking of Children

The 2007 drought in Swaziland resulted in increased rates of child abuse, trafficking, and sexual exploitation. In response to the food and water shortages faced by 40 percent of the population, many children from poor households were taken from school and sold into the sex trade in exchange for food.

Monsoon rains and burst dams in August 2008 led to a spurt in trafficking in South Asia. Many children, mostly between age 7 and 14 were taken to urban centers of India. Some of the girls ended up as domestic workers, but many were either sent to work in brothels or were sold as brides.

Source: ECPAT International. (2009)

to this problem, only 10 percent of countries have a special police unit to combat crimes against children including trafficking and exploitation.

CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

Millions of children are on the move, both within and between countries, with or without their parents. They are part of large-scale and mixed population movements that bring together migration, trafficking, displacement, and asylum seeking currently taking place in many parts of the world. Their movement might place them at risk (or at an increased risk) of inadequate care, economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect, or violence.

For instance, girls who migrated to South Africa from other countries have reported that they were forced to have sex with border guards to secure entry.¹⁸² In some cases, children on the move end up in work that is highly dangerous or exploitative. Being outside their family and community, children on the move are often more vulnerable to coercion, violence, physical and mental abuse, and exhaustion. Discrimination and language barriers may leave them at the mercy of an

employer, who might retain pay or force them into debt bondage or illegal confinement. Children with no right of residency in the place they have moved to – which in some cases applies to movement within the same country – and who are under the legal working age, are particularly vulnerable. They have fewer options of work and are at higher risk of ending up in hazardous work. They have no recourse under the law if employers exploit them or withhold their wages.¹⁸³

The living conditions in which children on the move find themselves – in transit and at destination – can expose them to a range of hazards and harms. At their destination, children may end up in institutions, in detention centres, on the street, or in overcrowded, low-quality accommodation, shacks, or informal settlements.¹⁸⁴ Children working in markets and for blacksmiths in Lomé, Togo, or Cotonou, Benin, for example, report unhealthy living conditions.¹⁸⁵ Children who move to join kin households (e.g. for fostering, education, domestic work, or apprenticeships) experience varying standards of care offered by their relatives. While many are treated well, some children living with relatives are subject to violence or exploitation.

PROGRESS

In 2010, the ILO reported that the number of children involved in hazardous child labour had dropped by ten percent between 2004 and 2008, and had declined even further – by 31 percent – for children under age 15. Reductions in child labour rates were greatest in the Asia-Pacific, Latin American, and Caribbean regions. However, the overall reduction of child labour rates had slowed compared to previous years, and rates in Africa were on the rise.¹⁸⁶

In 2008, the government of Brazil hosted the World Congress III Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Rio de Janeiro, gathering nearly 3,000 people from five continents, including 300 adolescents, to move forward the global agenda

to stop the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. By 2010, areas of progress included a new law on child pornography sanctioned in Brazil, the establishment of helplines for children in nine new countries, and a South Asian collaboration between Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Bhutan, to institute a harmonized helpline for the region.¹⁸⁷ In May 2010, the SRSg on Violence against Children, together with the SRSg on Children and Armed Conflict, launched a campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the CRC. Since then, the Central African Republic and St. Lucia have signed and 12 additional countries have ratified the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography: Guyana, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Malta, Guinea-Bissau, Djibouti, Mauritius, Pakistan, Jamaica, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and San Marino; bringing the total number of states parties to 149. The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, an instrument of self-regulation for the tourism industry that was initiated by ECPAT, has been signed by over 1,000 tour operators, hotels, travel agents, and related companies in 42 countries.¹⁸⁸

In May 2010, governments met in the Hague for an international conference to recommit themselves to the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by the year 2016, adopting a roadmap in order to accelerate progress. On 16 June 2011, the International Labour Organization adopted a new international Convention (Convention 198) and accompanying Recommendation on decent work for domestic workers. This groundbreaking new treaty extends basic labour rights to domestic workers, and obliges governments to protect domestic workers from violence, harassment, and abuse. Provisions specific to child domestic workers require governments to set a minimum age for domestic work in accordance with existing ILO standards, and to ensure that domestic work by children under age 18 does not interfere with their education.

VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY



Providence, 16, was raped in a refugee camp near Goma after fleeing her home in North Kivu, in the DRC. The UNHCR estimates that there have been nearly 400,000 displaced in North Kivu since the start of 2007. Photo: Lionel Healing

Violence in the community

"It was scary being out on the street by myself. Men would toot their car horns. They thought I was a prostitute. I didn't eat meals, just a chocolate bar." (15-year-old runaway girl, Scotland)¹⁸⁹

"There is nowhere safe for us. The soldiers go everywhere, even into our homes." (11-year-old boy, Nablus, Occupied Palestinian Territories)¹⁹⁰

Millions of children continue to be exposed to violence in their communities. The area in which they live may affect the cause and type of that violence, whether it is gun and gang violence in North America; drug and gang related violence in Mexico; election violence in Haiti, Kenya, and Zimbabwe; or political violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, and Yemen. Children may be victims of violence because they live on the streets, or because they are displaced by civil conflict or natural disaster. With 1.5 billion people now online, children are also increasingly vulnerable to internet-related violence, such as child pornography. Regardless of cause or area, community violence in the lives of children can disrupt their healthy development and even take their lives.

Violence in the community affects children directly and indirectly. Directly, community violence makes neighbourhoods, parks, schools, and streets dangerous places for children. In some cases, children are at even higher risk of physical assault or other violent crime than adults are. In the United States and the United Kingdom, for example, children, as compared to adults, are two to three times as likely to be victims of violent crimes.¹⁹¹ In Jamaica, boys under age 18 account for 60 percent of victims of violence-related injuries.¹⁹² Indirectly, community violence affects the child's perceived safety, heightening fear and hyper-vigilance, and limiting their activities. A 2010 report from Save the Children Sweden, demonstrates how acutely aware children are of community violence.¹⁹³ Almost 90 percent of children in Lebanon and 76 percent of those in the Occupied Palestinian Territories reported violence in their communities. A World Vision survey of children in nine countries across regions found that on average, only 53 percent said they had at least one safe place to play.¹⁹⁴ Only half felt safe in their own neighbourhood.¹⁹⁵ Children exposed to such community violence show decreased school attendance and lower academic performance; and a lack of safe parks or other play areas negatively affect their social and motor development.

CHILDREN LIVING OR WORKING ON THE STREET

Although it is impossible to obtain accurate statistics, various estimates have placed the number of children living on the street at 100 million globally.¹⁹⁶ Latin America is believed to have as many as 40 million street children, and India alone may have 18 million.¹⁹⁷ Children are living on the streets in every region of the world from the poorest developing countries to the most affluent countries. They are there because of family homelessness, violence, neglect, or child abandonment; because of the AIDS epidemic, civil wars and political instability; and because of failing economies. Children living on the streets may be divided by cultures, nationalities, and geographic distances, but they share the same high vulnerability to violent victimization. The following examples are illustrative.

In India, family homelessness is a major cause of children living on the streets. A 2007 study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India reported that 70 percent of children living on the streets were doing so with their families.¹⁹⁸ Two-thirds of the children were subjected to physical violence by their family members, by others on the streets, or both; 23 percent of the children also reported sexual assault.

During 2008-2009, on average one child was abandoned every 4 days in Guatemala City. The Consortium for Street Children estimates that there may be as many as 5,000 children living on the streets in Guatemala.¹⁹⁹ Some are there because they have been abandoned. One study found that 43 percent left home because they were trying to escape violence in their family; however, once on the streets, they are exposed to much more violence.²⁰⁰

Increasing levels of political protest, civil war, and global economic difficulties are adding to the

numbers of children on the street. In Yemen, even before the increased upheaval linked to the “Arab Spring,” a 2008 report found that 30,000 children were on the streets, with the numbers rising. Sixty percent of them were believed to live and work on the streets, while the remaining 40 percent worked the streets but returned to some kind of makeshift home at night.²⁰¹ A 14-year-old boy, who spent his days on the streets selling cigarettes and sweets, and his nights sleeping outside near a school, explained a common situation for these children:

“My father went to Saudi Arabia three years ago to find a job but didn’t come back. I have three brothers and one sister and my mother asked me to find any job here in Sana’a to sustain them.”²⁰²

In Tanzania, over half of the parents living along Mahita Street in Morogoro Municipality admitted to engaging their children in street begging to earn a living.²⁰³ A sharp increase in the numbers of children living on the street has been observed in Karachi, Pakistan, where fishermen’s children were sent to the streets to beg and sell drugs because of the unemployment of parents due to seasonal work.²⁰⁴ Every child on the street lacks basic protections. Each one is vulnerable to violence.

POLITICAL AND CIVIL UNREST

Recent reports indicate large numbers of children are vulnerable to extreme violence as a result of political or civil unrest, including election violence and political conflict. In much of the Middle East, government crackdowns against popular uprisings have compromised children’s safety. International attention has most recently been focused on Syrian security forces and the torture and deaths of those involved in protests, including children. Amnesty International reported in June 2011 that at least 82 children had been killed by Syrian security forces during violent attacks against protesters.²⁰⁵

In August, it reported that at least ten children who had participated in anti-government protests had been killed after being subjected to beatings, burns, electric shocks, and other abuse.²⁰⁶

UNICEF has expressed particular concern about the extent of violence in the lives of children in Yemen and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Children are facing front line risks in Yemen as

Political Violence in Syria

At least three children were killed in late April 2011 during popular protests in Dera'a, Syria. On 29 April, hundreds of people participating in peaceful protests were attacked by Syrian security forces, who repeatedly shot at them and arrested several hundred people. Hamza Ali al-Khateeb, age 13, was one of many who went missing. A month later, his family received a phone call reporting that his body was at the al-Jeeza hospital morque. According to video images and material made available to Amnesty International, there were injuries to his face, head and back, and his penis had been cut off.

Fifteen-year-old Tamer Mohamed al-Shar'i also disappeared during the mass arrests and shooting on 29 April. A witness said he saw eight or nine interrogators bludgeon the head, back, feet and genitals of the boy, whose hands were tied behind his back. The witness said he saw Tamer Mohamed al-Shar'i beaten "until he bled from the nose, mouth and ears and fell unconscious." A video of his corpse showed a badly beaten head and damaged eye.

Source: Amnesty International (2011)

ELECTION VIOLENCE IN KENYA

Eldoret has a history of inter-ethnic conflict and has seen some of the worst violence since the victory of incumbent President Mwai Kibaki was announced on Sunday. A mob, angry about election results which the opposition claimed were rigged, doused the Kenya Assemblies of God church near Eldoret with petrol before setting it on fire.

A Kenyan mother escaped from the church arson attack only to see her young child tossed back into the flames. BBC correspondent Karen Allen spoke to the woman who had managed to climb through the window of the burning church with her three children, the youngest, age three, in her arms. "As she climbed through the window, the attackers were on the other side – they grabbed her baby and threw it back in. The child died in the inferno," our correspondent told BBC News 24.

Several hundred people, mainly from President Mwai Kibaki's Kikuyu ethnic group, are thought to have been sheltering in the church. At least half of those who died were children.

George Karanja told the Associated Press he had helped pull 10 people from the flames, but was not able to save his 11-year-old nephew.

"He was screaming, 'Uncle, uncle!'... He died," said Mr. Karanja.

Source: BBC News, Survivors recall church inferno, 2 January 2008

they become involved in government protests through their parents. In April 2011, UNICEF Yemen reported over 600 child casualties in less than two months.²⁰⁷

During December 2008 and January 2009, 350 Palestinian children were killed and approximately 10,500 were displaced during the worsening situation between the Occupied Palestinian

Territories and Israel.²⁰⁸ The daily lives of children in Gaza have been described as difficult and dangerous; they may be killed, maimed, detained and tortured, or used as human shields.

CHILD VICTIMS OF PROTESTS IN YEMEN, 2011

18 February - 8 April 2011

- 552** injured by tear gas
- 47** injured by physical violence
- 31** injured by live ammunition
- 24** killed
- 8** arrested or unlawfully imprisoned

Source: UNICEF Yemen

Election and post-election violence has created similar levels of exposure to violence for children living in Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe.²⁰⁹ Homes and schools have been destroyed and many children have been displaced. In Kenya, the exact numbers killed are unknown, however, it is estimated that as many as 75,000 children were displaced and living in camps following the election violence of 2007-2008. In the camps, children are at heightened risk of illness and violence.²¹⁰

DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE

A 2011 report on criminal activity in Mexico shows that children are increasingly the victims of the country's illicit drug trade.²¹¹ Children as young as age four are being targeted and killed by members of the rival drug cartels. The Network for the Rights of Children in Mexico estimates that 994 children have been killed in drug violence between late 2006 and 2010. Many more children are left orphaned and thus vulnerable to exploitation and violence on the streets. According to news reports, drug-related violence

has left 17,000 children orphaned in the state of Chihuahua alone over the past three years.²¹² In Ciudad Juarez, 110 children died between 2007 and 2010 as a direct result of drug wars (caught in the cross fire between federal police, the armed forces and the drug cartels) and over 10,000 have lost parents, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.²¹³ Some children in Ciudad Juarez say they have seen three, four, or five people killed on the streets. Seven-year-old Alicia says she feels unsafe in public places and eight-year-old Leonardo draws a picture of himself "in a drug traffickers hotel with gold taps."²¹⁴

YOUTH GANGS

The political, social, and economic conditions that may increase children's vulnerability to trafficking and street involvement provide fertile ground for the formation of, and recruitment to, youth gangs. The growing number of youth groups involved in violence has become an issue of major public concern in many countries. In El Salvador, for example, where estimates of youth gang membership range from 10,500 to 39,000, initiation for new gang members can involve beatings. A female recruit described her induction:

"My initiation was four gang members beating me for eighteen seconds. They beat me hard, mostly on my back and my legs, but I wasn't severely injured. I wasn't given any other option for initiation."

Female recruits may be given the option of choosing between being beaten and having sexual relations with members of the gang.²¹⁵

Violent youth gangs also are of concern in many parts of North America where children who are marginalized by poverty, ethnic, or immigrant status search for a sense of belonging and power.²¹⁶

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND INTERNET-RELATED VIOLENCE

Access to the internet is growing exponentially, providing children with both extraordinary benefits, but also risks of violence and exploitation. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) reports that according to some surveys, one in five children will be targeted by a predator or paedophile each year, and that 30 percent of teenage girls say that they have been sexually harassed in a chat room.²¹⁷ The growth of new technology has led to an explosion in pornography, including child abuse images.

A World Vision study in Cambodia, for example, found that many children were exposed from an early age to hard-core pornography, including images of violent rape, and described such images as “normal.”²¹⁸ In 2011, a U.S.-Chinese police investigation uncovered an organization running 18 separate Chinese-language websites devoted to pornographic images of children. The sites required “members” to pay to post and download graphic images of children.²¹⁹

VIOLENCE AGAINST REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CHILDREN

Children displaced from their homes by war and natural disaster continue to be extremely vulnerable to violence. In 2011, harsh drought and famine drove hundreds of thousands of people from around Somalia into Mogadishu and refugee camps in Kenya. In July 2011, there were 1,300 new arrivals daily at Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, home to nearly 400,000 refugees. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that rates of sexual and gender-based violence in the camp quadrupled in the first half

of 2011 compared to the same period in 2010.²²⁰ CARE International found that women and girls were particularly vulnerable to rape and abduction while on the journey to the camps, and reported in July 2011 that cases of sexual-based violence at their in-take centres had doubled since the refugee influx began.²²¹ Children with disabilities,

In January 2007, a man was arrested in Lima, Peru for using the internet to facilitate sex tourism through a travel agency. He would make contact with children through an internet chat forum, and offer them large sums of money for nude photos of them. He then used the photos as blackmail to force the children into sex with incoming tourists. He also distributed the images to an online child pornography network.

Source: ECPAT (2008)

particularly girls, are especially at risk of such setting because of physical and communication barriers and a perception that these children cannot identify the perpetrator or are less likely to report such incidents.

DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT VIOLENCE

In some developed countries, hostility against immigrants and ethnic or religious minorities has manifested itself through violence. An extreme example was the 22 July 2011 massacre of 77 people in Norway, including 33 children, by an anti-Muslim extremist.²²² In France and Spain, surveys of 1,000 young people in each country found that Muslim youth were significantly more likely than non-Muslims to say they had been unfairly treated or picked on.²²³ Throughout Europe, the Roma community suffers continued harassment, discrimination, and Roma children are often segregated from mainstream schools. In 2010, the government of France dismantled and evicted hundreds of Roma families from settlements

and deported over 1,000 Roma to Romania and Bulgaria.²²⁴ Roma families, including children, have been evicted from their homes elsewhere in Europe, rendering them homeless and at heightened risk of violence.²²⁵

PROGRESS

There is little good news about children's exposure to violence in their communities at this time; in fact, this may be one area where violence is increasing. As indicated above, in some states global conditions are resulting in more children being vulnerable to physical and sexual violence in their communities because of rising unemployment and cuts to social services.

One bright spot saw the first ever Street Child World Cup, held in Durban, South Africa in March 2010, giving street children from around the world a chance to showcase their potential and bringing crucial attention to the lives of vulnerable children around the world. Street children ages 14 to 16 from South Africa, Brazil, India, Nicaragua, Ukraine, the Philippines, Tanzania, and the U.K. took part in the inaugural event.²²⁶

Despite an increase in internet-related violence, access to new forms of communications, including social networking sites have given children an opportunity to organise and participate in social movements calling for greater democracy and openness, as witnessed in the Middle East and North Africa.

The ITU and partners from industry, civil society, government, UN agencies, and other stakeholders have taken steps to protect children from internet violence and exploitation. In 2009, the ITU introduced online safety guidelines for children, parents, IT industries, and policy-makers. In November 2010, the ITU and its partners launched the Child Online Protection Global Initiative. The aims of the initiative include the development of industry codes of conduct, the establishment of national hotlines, awareness campaigns, legislative toolkits, and trainings for parents, guardians, and educators.²²⁷

Conclusion

This report has provided only a glimpse of the scale of violence children are still suffering daily. The data described here, and in particular the children's testimonies, clearly demonstrate that violence against children remains a global scourge that needs urgent action. Moreover, austerity measures taken in response to global economic difficulties can lead to less priority placed on children, less social spending, and less effective protection against violence. Globally, there is still insufficient awareness of the levels and consequences of violence on children's lives and healthy development. Some forms of violence remain socially acceptable, despite a strong human rights consensus against all such violence. Children's low status in society continues to render them extremely vulnerable to many forms of violence, and they rarely have recourse to effective remedies or redress. Few perpetrators are held accountable.

As we have highlighted in this report, there has been progress in some areas. This progress, however, has been embarrassingly slow and we are far from achieving the goals and commitments made by States when the UN Study report was presented to the GA in 2006. We have seen many meetings and conferences organised around the world, new studies being published, some new laws being passed, even a new international convention adopted. Nevertheless, millions of children are still facing violence on a regular basis, at home, in school, in the community, in the workplace, in institutions, or when they come into conflict with the law – and many are paying for it with their lives.

The NGO Advisory Council for follow-up to the UN Study on Violence against Children is committed to continue to work alongside the SRSG and other UN organisations and procedures towards the elimination of all forms of violence against children. To do so, we seek renewed commitments from States and other actors.

We therefore reiterate the need for urgent action and follow-up to the recommendations of the UN Study. We are calling on states that have not yet done so to develop national strategies to address violence against children, with adequate resources and a high-level focal point, and ensure their implementation. States must immediately prohibit all forms of violence against children in all settings. We call on all states to strengthen efforts in the other areas outlined by the UN Study recommendations. These include improved data collection to effectively measure the effect of actions to end violence against children; public education campaigns; better measures for prevention, capacity strengthening, recovery, and social reintegration; more effective reporting and accountability mechanisms; and active engagement with children to involve them in devising strategies to end the violence they experience.

To maintain momentum, we urge that the mandate of the SRSG on Violence against Children be renewed in 2012. Ensuring continued high profile global advocacy for the UN Study recommendations is an imperative. States should ensure sufficient resources for the effective functioning of the mandate by funding it from within the UN's core budget, as is the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict.

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

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Julien, 12, (not his real name), who ended up in the street after being accused of witchcraft by his family, sits in a hallway at the Bana Ya Poveda transit and rehabilitation centre for street children in the Selembao area of Kinshasa, DRC. Photo: Olivier Asselin