

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Day of General Discussion

Friday, 28 September 2001 – OHCHR (Palais Wilson, Geneva)

Violence Against Children within the Family and in Schools

Submission by the Education, Literacy and Media Sub-Group and the Sexual Exploitation Against Children Sub-Group of the NGO Group for The Convention on the Rights of the Child

**VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
IN THE FAMILY
AND
IN THE SCHOOL
2001 THEME DAY SUBMISSION TO THE
UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

Made Jointly By

The Education, Literacy and Media Sub-Group and the Sexual Exploitation Against Children Sub-Group of the NGO Group for The Convention on the Rights of the Child

OVERRIDING PERSPECTIVES

Violence against children occurs in the family and in the school. It is directly in opposition to the general spirit and aims of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to numerous specific standards it embodies, and to the best interests of the child and society. This violence must be overcome through its prevention and correction and by setting in place positive conditions disallowing it the opportunity to exist.

Effective pursuit of these goals requires sufficiently well balanced and related progress in establishing **discovery standards** (reliable and valid indicators of the nature and perpetration of offenses) and related **impact evidence** (consequences), as well as the identification and development of viable **interventions** (for both prevention and correction) and establishment of supportive **moral imperatives** (values and attitudes) in the general and relevant expert publics. These can be logically tied to the prevention, protection and participation themes.

Physical abuse, physical neglect, psychological abuse, psychological neglect, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation are the major forms of violence against children in families and in schools. The available relevant knowledge bases provide direction for the present and promise for the future. Many of their elements are pertinent to both family and school environments, while some are particular to one or the other.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child articles, standards and general comments, specifically or meaningfully relevant, should be applied in well-targeted ways to achieve advances.
2. Violence must be defined to include the acts of commission and omission: physical abuse, physical neglect, psychological abuse, psychological neglect, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation.
3. Short and long term goals and strategies should be developed and implemented to establish and apply discovery standards, impact evidence, interventions and moral imperatives to understand, overcome and prevent violence in the family and in the school.
4. Relevant expert persons, institutes and organizations, governmental and non-governmental, should be enlisted in cooperative efforts to accomplish advances.
5. Special events drawing attention and support to efforts to prevent and combat child maltreatment, such as the "World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse (19 November 2001), should be publicized and supported.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILY AND SCHOOL CONDITIONS

6. Establish an expert team to oversee the development of goals, plans, guides, strategies and activities. Participation is encouraged for the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Education International, the International School Psychology Association, World Vision International, ECPAT International, EPOCH-Worldwide, the International Federation of Social Workers, the International Association of Juvenile and Family Court Magistrates, the Society for Research in Child Development, and relevant expert university and institute centers.
7. Apply Convention on the Rights of the Child article 29 and its general comments. Develop general comments for other articles dealing directly with violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation (i.e., 19, 32, 34, 36, 37, 39) or highly relevant to such conditions (e.g., 5, 6, 24, 28 -especially para. 2) and apply their standards and interpretive guides to this work.
8. Establish preliminary discovery standards for cross-national and cross-cultural research and practice through collecting and organizing available scientific and practice knowledge and through producing new knowledge where needed, being sure to incorporate consideration of cultural values that are and are not in conflict with the Convention.
9. Clarify the present state of knowledge for impact evidence, interventions and moral imperatives relative to discovery standards for recognized forms of violence in the family and school.
10. Conduct cross-national and cross-cultural research to determine incidence and prevalence of violence in the family and school and to determine the nature and implications of related impact evidence, interventions and moral imperatives, and of other influencing variables; advance recommendations for practices and further research based on the results of this cross-national research.
11. Encourage all States Parties to establish laws, regulations, policy and practice to make violence against children in families and schools subject to legal and/or social service intervention; to institute relevant data standards, gathering and monitoring; and to support broad public as well as individual school and family promotion of pro-social and non-violent values and behavior.
12. Establish Ombudsman for Children and/or Children's Commissions with the right to investigate related public policy and action, including confidential records such as those of child protection services, to determine the status of societal response and activity regarding violence to the child and to guide improvements.
13. Encourage all States Parties to prohibit corporal punishment, psychological abuse and child pornography.
14. Encourage all States Parties to make it illegal for anyone to produce child pornography; distribute, export, import, advertise, or in any way market child pornography; or have possession of child pornography depicting real or imagined persons (available evidence indicates that pedophiles use child pornography as instruments of criminality to groom and seduce children).
15. Enlist the news and entertainment media and faith-based institutions in public education to intervene in and to end violence in the family and school and to foster pro-social and non-violent conflict resolution behavior.
16. Register each child's identity at birth and maintain records that assure violence against the specific child will be known and accountability for associated and subsequent actions will be assured.
17. Establish the importance and guidance for families and schools to meet the basic human needs of children (e.g., physiological, safety, love and belonging, and competency-esteem) and to support children's progress toward responsible autonomy (e.g., full development of potentials, independence, and social responsibility).
18. Establish programs to clarify the nature and precursors of and to promote the development of healthy human sexuality.

19. Establish programs to assist children suffering maltreatment which may cause or has caused them to run-away from home, live on the streets, and/or be exploited as child prostitutes.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FAMILY CONDITIONS

20. Provide a full range of relevant child development knowledge, including pre-school learning possibilities, family dynamics knowledge and practical competency education to prospective and new parents.
21. Provide stress-management and non-violent conflict resolution and problem solving education to prospective and new parents.
22. Provide home-visitor services to all new parents (integrating family life and child care mentoring and advocacy from a trusted person).
23. Facilitate the involvement of prospective and new parents in supportive social networks (e.g., neighborhood alliances, church membership).
24. Establish public information and relations campaigns to inform families of best, dangerous and prohibited practices, resources for support, and related societal values perspectives.
25. Provide intense public education programs for timely and/or particularly underestimated violence (e.g., emotional neglect in the early months and years of life can produce significant developmental retardation, distortion and disability; shaken-baby syndrome can produce death or life-long gross incapacity; Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, "SIDS," can be reduced through having infants sleep on their backs).
26. Provide community respite services and protective services for families and family members at risk or in crisis.
27. Recognize domestic violence (violence between parents or adults in a family) as a form of psychological violence against child observers.
28. Provide public education incorporating practical guides to prepare citizens to intervene when child abuse or domestic violence is observed in a family.
29. Provide resources and guidance to families to promote the healthy development and expression of human sexuality.
30. Provide public education incorporating practical guides to prepare parents and children with information and skills to protect children from physical, psychological and sexual maltreatment.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SCHOOL CONDITIONS

31. Establish school personnel as mandated reporters of child violence occurring in the family or in the school.
32. Require pre-service and continuing service education for educational personnel to prepare them to recognize, report and prevent child maltreatment as necessary to achieve professional certification and employment.
33. Provide pre-service and continuing service human and child rights education to educational personnel to enable them to provide human and child rights education to students and to establish child friendly and human rights respecting learning environments.
34. Provide child development and family dynamics knowledge and practical competency education (including hands-on mentored child care experiences) to 12-18 year old students
35. Establish child friendly and human rights respecting learning communities.
36. Provide education that includes the following as among basic skills: critical thinking, democratic practices, non-violent conflict resolution and problem solving, and pro-social behavior.
37. Prepare children to value themselves, to act to protect themselves from physical, psychological or sexual mistreatment and to obtain protection when they are mistreated physically, psychologically or sexually.

38. Prepare educators and educational specialists (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, social workers, administrators) to assume leadership roles in monitoring, reporting, and intervening to prevent or end violence.
39. Establish specific school points/mechanisms of accountability, advocacy and leadership in promoting the full healthy development of children and interventions in suspected or established violence against children (e.g., “child development” teams at the system or school level made up of psychologists, counselors, social workers, educators, parents, and administrators).
40. Establish clear documented standards and procedures for school personnel to follow in cases of suspected or established violence against children in the family or school.
41. Involve children in the setting of standards for the behavior of adults and children in the school and the setting and application of pro-social behavior support and violent behavior consequences (see for example the “Just Community Schools” model).
42. Prepare educational personnel, children and parents to understand, prevent and correct bullying.
43. Regularly survey the perspectives of children about damaging, dangerous, encouraging and supporting conditions in their lives (including evaluations of the performance of education personnel) and take actions logically dictated to secure, sustain, or strengthen needed conditions.
44. Employ a form of the Danish “Class Teacher” model in schools. This model establishes a particular teacher in a complementary parental role as a trusted person, advocate and mentor who meets daily with the same set of children throughout the years of the full school experience. This relationship greatly increases the likelihood that child treatment and development will be monitored and supported in a sensitive manner respecting the unique qualities of each child, that social support will be available to the child from an adult and from peers, and that interventions for problems and opportunities will be well-targeted and timely.
45. Establish child resiliency as a goal for education by supporting the development of affiliation (social anchors within trusted, caring relationships) and efficacy (realistic confidence in existing or potential competency to deal with problems and opportunities).
46. Identify children at risk as victims or perpetrators of violence and provide interventions and monitoring of developments and needs across time, years if necessary, by a designated school person or persons until the risk is eliminated.

OFFERS OF COOPERATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The following organizations or institutes associated with the Education, Literacy and Media Sub-Group and the Sexual Exploitation Sub-Group offer to provide cooperation and technical assistance in areas of their expertise to make the advances recommended herein.

- World Vision International (6, chemin de la Tourelle, Geneva, 1209, Switzerland; Tel. 41 22 798 41 83, Fax. 41 22 798 65 47; website: www.wvi.org)
- The International School Psychology Association (ISPA Central Office, Hans Knudsens Plads 1A, 1.tv., 2100 Copenhagen 0, Denmark. Tel. 45 4498 2106. Fax. 45 3929 3700; email: jspa-denmark@mobilixnet.dk; website address <www.ispaweb.org>)
- Child Rights Education-International (Institute for Child Rights and Development, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada; Tel. 250 472 4762; email: snhart@iupui.edu; website address: childrightseducation.org)
- Education International (5, Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 1210 Brussels, Belgium Tel. + 32.2.224.06.11, Fax: + 32.2.224.06.06, E-mail: educint@ei-ie.org, <http://www.ei-ie.org>)

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