

**DEFENCE for
CHILDREN**



Ghana

Child Protection Policy

OCTOBER 2018

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SUMMARY

The child protection handbook is designed to explain exactly what child protection is, the available international and national legal tools, as well as the measures that members of DCI ought to take to proactively defend the rights of children in Ghana. There is a chapter explaining how staff should respond to a case with suggested questions and guidelines that are meant to elicit trust and foster a positive relationship with the complainant. The following chapter describes who is responsible for ensuring the protection of children's rights. In this handbook, there is a description of the sexual exploitation of children, which includes suggestions for what health education programmes ought to include and a guideline on reporting and prevention of this type of violence. There is a short chapter on recognizing and preventing trafficking and the sale of children. Chapter seven regards harmful traditional practices that have to be phased out in Ghana in order for children's rights to be more readily protected. The following chapter outlines the consequences and remedies of violence and neglect with an emphasis on home visiting programmes as the best method of prevention of violence and neglect at home. Chapter nine addresses alternative care options in cases where families cannot support children or are the aggressors themselves. Chapter ten describes juvenile justice and discusses delinquency prevention with an emphasis on the requirement of a coalesced effort between all members of society to achieve this goal. Diversion from the formal legal system and rehabilitation are also discussed in this chapter. Chapter eleven describes the causes of child labour as well as prevention and other support networks. The last two chapters in the handbook discuss the rights of children and offer some follow-up guidelines after a referral is made to the Department of Social Welfare and the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit.



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Chapter 1: The nature of child protection

What is child protection?

The term ‘child protection’ is used in different ways by different organizations in different situations. In this handbook for DCI-Ghana, the term will mean protection from violence, abuse and exploitation.

In its simplest form, child protection addresses every child’s right not to be subjected to harm. It complements other rights that, inter alia, ensure that children receive that which they need in order to survive, develop and thrive.

Child protection covers a wide range of important, diverse and urgent issues. Some issues, such as child prostitution, are very closely linked to economic factors. Others, such as violence in the home or in schools, may relate more closely to poverty, social values, norms and traditions. Often criminality is involved, for example, with regard to child trafficking. Even technological advances have child protection aspects, as can be observed by the growth in child pornography.

What is at stake?

Violations of the child’s right to protection, in addition to being human rights violations, are also massive, under-recognized and underreported barriers to child survival and development. Children subjected to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect are at risk of:

Shortened lives
Poor physical and mental health
Educational problems (including dropping out of school)
Poor parenting skills later in life
Homelessness, vagrancy and displacement

Conversely, successful protection actions increase a child’s chances to grow up physically and mentally healthy, confident and self-respecting, and less likely to abuse or exploit others, including his or her own children.

Chapter 2: Standards on child protection

International consensus developed on the need for a new instrument that would explicitly lay out the specific and special rights of children. In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly. It rapidly became the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, enjoying almost universal ratification. The Convention on the

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Rights of the Child (“the Convention”) advances international standards on children’s rights in a number of ways. It elaborates and makes legally binding many of the rights of children laid out in previous instruments. It contains new provisions relating to children, for example, the rights of children to participation, and the principle that in all decisions concerning the child, the child’s best interests must come first. It also created for the first time an international body responsible for overseeing respect for the rights of the child, the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Recognition of the child’s right to protection is not limited to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There are a number of other instruments and Acts, that also lay out these rights. These instruments and Acts include:

Children’s Act
Juvenile Justice Act
Domestic Violence Act
Human Trafficking Act
Guidelines on action for children in justice system in Africa
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children

Chapter 3: Responding to a Case

What constitutes reasonable grounds for child protection or welfare concern?

- Observation of an injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse.
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- Admission or indication by someone of an alleged abuse.
- A specific indication from a child that he or she was abused.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence (e.g. injury or behaviour) that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way.

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What to do if reasonable grounds for concern exist

Examine the report you receive by questioning the information that has been reported to you using open-ended, non-presumptuous questions, if necessary, for further clarity.

A referral should be made under the following circumstances:

- Existing concern about a child at risk of sexual abuse;
- Physical injury caused by assault or neglect, which may or may not require medical attention;
- Incidents of physical abuse that alone are unlikely to constitute significant harm, but taken into consideration with other factors may do so;
- Children who suffer from persistent neglect;
- Children who live in an environment that is likely to have an adverse impact on their emotional development;
- Where the parents' own emotional impoverishment affects their ability to meet their child's emotional and/or physical needs, regardless of material/financial circumstances and assistance;
- Where parents' circumstances are adversely affecting their capacity to meet the child's needs because of domestic violence, drug and/or alcohol misuse, mental health problems, or intellectual disability;
- A child living in a household with, or having significant contact with, a person at risk of sexual offending or with previous convictions for offences against children;
- An abandoned child;
- Children left home alone;
- Bruising/injury to a pre-mobile baby;
- Pregnancy where children have been previously removed;
- Suspicion of fabricated or induced illness;
- Where a child under one year is present in a home where domestic violence is a concern.

Suggested questions for concerned staff regarding a child's welfare

1. Is the child behaving normally for his or her age and stage of development?
2. Does the child present a change in behaviour?
3. How long has this behaviour been observed?
4. How often does it occur? Where?
5. Has something happened that could explain the child's behaviour?
6. Is the child showing signs of distress? If so, describe (e.g. behavioural, emotional, physical signs).
7. Does the behaviour happen everywhere or just in the school or childcare setting?
8. Is the child suffering?
9. Does the behaviour restrict the child socially?
10. Does the behaviour interfere with the child's development?
11. What effect, if any, does it have on others (e.g. other children)?
12. What are the child's parents' views, if known?

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Responding to a child who discloses abuse – suggested guidelines

Remember, a child may disclose abuse to you as a trusted adult at any time during your work with them. It is important that you are aware and prepared for this.

- Be as calm and natural as possible.
- Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child.
- Remember, the child may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the child has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell you as much as they are able and wish to.
- Do not pressure the child. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief.
- Accept what the child has to say – false disclosures are very rare.
- It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgment on, or anger towards, the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child.
- It may be necessary to reassure the child that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.

When asking questions:

- Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only.
- Avoid asking leading questions – i.e. asking whether a specific person carried out the abuse. Also, avoid asking about intimate details or suggesting that something else may have happened other than what you have been told. Such questions and suggestions could complicate the official investigation.

Confidentiality – Do not promise to keep secrets

At the earliest opportunity, tell the child that:

- You acknowledge that they have come to you because they trust you.
- You will be sharing this information only with people who understand this area and who can help. There are secrets, which are not helpful and should not be kept because they make matters worse. Such secrets hide things that need to be known if people are to be helped and protected from further ongoing harm. By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything (or, indeed, anything) there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the child's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely that the child will return to you at another time.

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Think before you promise anything – Do not make promises you cannot keep

At the earliest possible opportunity:

- Record in writing, in a factual manner, what the child has said; include, as much as possible, the exact words used by the child.
- Inform your supervisor immediately and agree on measures to protect the child.

On-going support

Following a disclosure by a child, it is important that the staff member continues in a supportive relationship with the child. Disclosure is a huge step for a child. Staff should continue to offer support, particularly through:

- Maintaining a positive relationship with the child;
- Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child;
- Continuing to include the child in the usual activities.

Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as indicated above. Where necessary, immediate action should be taken to ensure the child's safety.

What to do if you are concerned about a child's safety and/or welfare

Protecting children should not be seen as a separate response from promoting their welfare. Those with protection concerns must be mindful of the welfare and needs of a child in the same way that those with child welfare concerns must be alert to potential abuse and neglect.

Informal consultation

If any person has misgivings about the safety or welfare of a child, they may seek advice through initiating an informal consultation. This could be just a telephone call and provides an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal referral is warranted.

The consulting party needs to state explicitly that they are not making a report – that they are giving details of a concern, but no identifying information in relation to a child or family.

Out-of-hours services/In case of an emergency

Ensure that you are aware of your local area Emergency Services Arrangements. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm.

How to make a formal referral to Department of Social Welfare and the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit

In order to make a formal report, a referral form must be filled out and either mailed or taken in person to either the Department of Social Welfare or the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit. The proper organization will take appropriate action that is in the child's best interest.



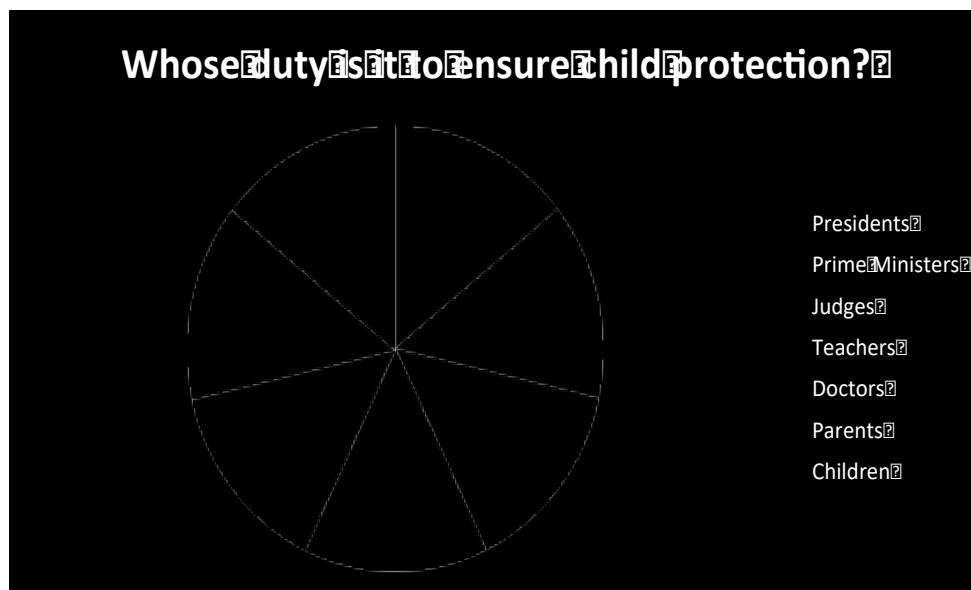
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What happens after a referral is made to Department of Social Welfare and the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit

After a formal referral form is filled out, then delivered to the appropriate office, the Department of Social Welfare and Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit will take all necessary actions to protect the victim's welfare. DCI-Ghana Staff members should stay in contact with both the victim and the appropriate office officials in order to facilitate the case as well as to follow up on whether the victim has been helped sufficiently.

Chapter 4: Ensuring child protection

The fundamental objective of child protection is to ensure that all those with a duty to safeguard the protection of children recognize that duty, and are able to fulfill it. Given the ethical and legal imperatives, child protection is the business of everyone at every level of society in every function. It creates equal duties for all, as the chart below demonstrates:



These duties may be reflected in the legal standards that a country puts in place. They may also be reflected in the choices a government makes, including its allocation of resources.

The child, the family and the State



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The most important actors in any child's life are often, and should most often be, his or her parents. As such, the family can be the single most important factor in determining whether or not a child is protected. Conversely, given the centrality of the family in the child's life, it can also be a frequent source of violence, abuse, discrimination and exploitation.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child ("the Convention") places considerable emphasis on the role of the family in raising children and similarly to older human rights instruments, recognizes the right of the family to protection and support. Article 5 makes clear the responsibility of the State in protecting and respecting the role of the family, stating that:

States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

According to the Convention, the primary responsibility for raising children rests with parents. When parents are unable to do so, the State has a duty to assist them. At the same time, article 19 refers to the State's obligation to, "protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child."

In the most extreme cases this obligation on the State might even entail removal of the child from his or her home. However, this should always be a last resort. This is made clear in article 9 of the Convention, which provides in part that:

States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where one of the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child's place of residence.



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Chapter 5: Sexual exploitation of children

It is difficult to imagine a more shocking or shameful example of the violation of human rights than the sexual exploitation of children.

The Convention affirms the right of children to protection from, “all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse,” including child prostitution, child pornography and other unlawful sexual practices. The term ‘sexual abuse’ is often used to refer to abuse within the home or family, but there is no real agreement as to the distinction between sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. For this reason, the term ‘commercial sexual exploitation’ is sometimes used to refer to child prostitution and child pornography. However, children clearly have the right to protection from any form of sexual exploitation, whether commercial or not: sexual exploitation of domestic servants or students by teachers (for example, trading good grades for sexual favours) violates the rights of the victims regardless of whether there is any ‘commercial’ dimension. Systematic sexual abuse of the civilian population in times of conflict or repression is also a crime against humanity, whether the victims are children or adults.

Law Reform

The criminal law should be reviewed to ensure that:

- It prohibits all forms of sexual exploitation of all children, including both sexes and all ages under the age of 18
- The possession, production and dissemination of child pornography are prohibited
- Child victims of sexual exploitation are not subject to punishment as criminals or juvenile delinquents
- All forms of sexual abuse of children are punishable by sentences that reflect the gravity of these offences
- Neither filing of a complaint nor prosecution of an offence requires the permission of the parents of the victim

Prevention

Programmes to reduce sexual exploitation should recognize that victims of other rights violations are more liable to become victims of sexual exploitation or trafficking. The approach should encourage all social services that come in contact with children, such as health services, schools or day-care centers, to be part of the identification and referral of abuse at home. Efforts should be made to reach out to children who have left home and dropped out of the school system in order to provide them with shelter and reinsertion into an appropriate form of education, and an alternative to life on the streets.



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Sexual Health Education

Sexual health education of children is important for several reasons:

- It enables the child to understand the nature of sexual activity and helps safeguard against sexual abuse based on misrepresentation of the nature of the act.
- It helps children who become sexually active to protect themselves against the dangers of sexually communicable diseases, including HIV infection.
- It can help reduce the incidence of adolescent pregnancy, including pregnancy in unmarried teenagers, which in many countries may lead to prostitution.

Sexual health education programmes should:

Begin before the onset of sexual activity

Provide a clear explanation of the risks of unprotected sex and the methods, including abstinence, of reducing these risks

Include the practice of communication and negotiation skills

Reporting, detection and intervention

Mechanisms for reporting crimes against children and for providing assistance to victims should be widely available and publicized. Measures that have proven useful include:

- Telephone hotlines
- Providing adolescents with easy access to confidential counseling
- Ensuring access to police stations in rural areas
- Ensuring that female victims have ready access to female officers
- Ensuring that all police officials understand the gravity of sexual exploitation of children and the needs of victims
- Establishing special teams composed of police officers and medical and/or social personnel to receive and investigate complaints of sexual exploitation

Preventing child sex tourism

Programmes for the prevention of sex tourism should be established by both sending and receiving countries, and should include the following actions:

- Mobilize competent departments, including National Tourism Administrations, to undertake measures against organized sex tourism
- Gather evidence of organized sex tourism and encourage the education of concerned government officials and top executives in the tourism sector about the negative consequences of this activity
- Issue guidelines to the tourism sector insisting that it refrains from organizing any forms of sex tourism and from exploiting prostitution as a tourist attraction



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- Establish and enforce legal and administrative measures to prevent and eradicate child sex tourism, in particular through bilateral agreements to facilitate the prosecution of tourists engaged in any unlawful sexual activity involving children and juveniles.

Chapter 6: Trafficking and sale of children

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation is considered trafficking, regardless of whether or not force, abduction, fraud or other means are utilized (Human Trafficking Act 694 (2005)).

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 35 of the Convention provides that, “States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form”. Children who have been victims of any form of exploitation have the right to physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (article 39). If the victim’s right to identity has been affected, the State also has an obligation to provide assistance and protection in re-establishing the victim’s true identity (article 8). Identity includes name, nationality and family ties (see Chapter 6).

Developing Programmes - Attack the root causes of trafficking

- Reduce the vulnerability of children, families and communities by attacking the root causes of trafficking, including poverty and social attitudes.
- Address the processes associated with trafficking at the point of origin, at transit areas and at destinations
- Close legislative loopholes and strengthen law enforcement
- Reduce public tolerance of trafficking and, where possible, the demand by clients
- Reinforce cooperation among the countries of origin

Interception of child to prevent further exploitation

Effective interception and rescue can prevent child victims of trafficking from further exploitation. Interception can take place at the points of departure, transit, and arrival.



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Protection and assistance of victims

All too often the importance of protecting and assisting the victims of trafficking is overlooked. The rescue and recovery of such children and their return or reintegration into their home community is perhaps the most challenging area of programme intervention.

Victims of trafficking have multiple, urgent needs that include:





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Chapter 7: Harmful traditional practices

The Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits traditional practices harmful to the health of children. During the last decade, a broad consensus has emerged that these practices include female genital mutilation, child marriage, and forced marriage.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, concerning the right to health, contains a paragraph that provides:

States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

General recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

The Committee's general recommendation 14 recommends:

- (i) The collection and dissemination by universities, medical or nursing associations, national women's organizations or other bodies of basic data about such traditional practices;
- (ii) The support of women's organizations at the national and local levels working for the elimination of female circumcision and other practices harmful to women.

Early marriage shall be prohibited

UN human rights instruments indicate that there should be a minimum age for marriage, but do not specify the age considered appropriate. There is, however, a tendency to interpret these standards as prohibiting the marriage of persons under the age of 18. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has stated that it:

Considers that the minimum age for marriage should be 18 years for both man and woman. When men and women marry, they assume important responsibilities. Consequently, marriage should not be permitted before they have attained full maturity and capacity to act (General recommendation, 21).

Establishing a lower minimum age for marriage for girls than boys is considered discrimination.

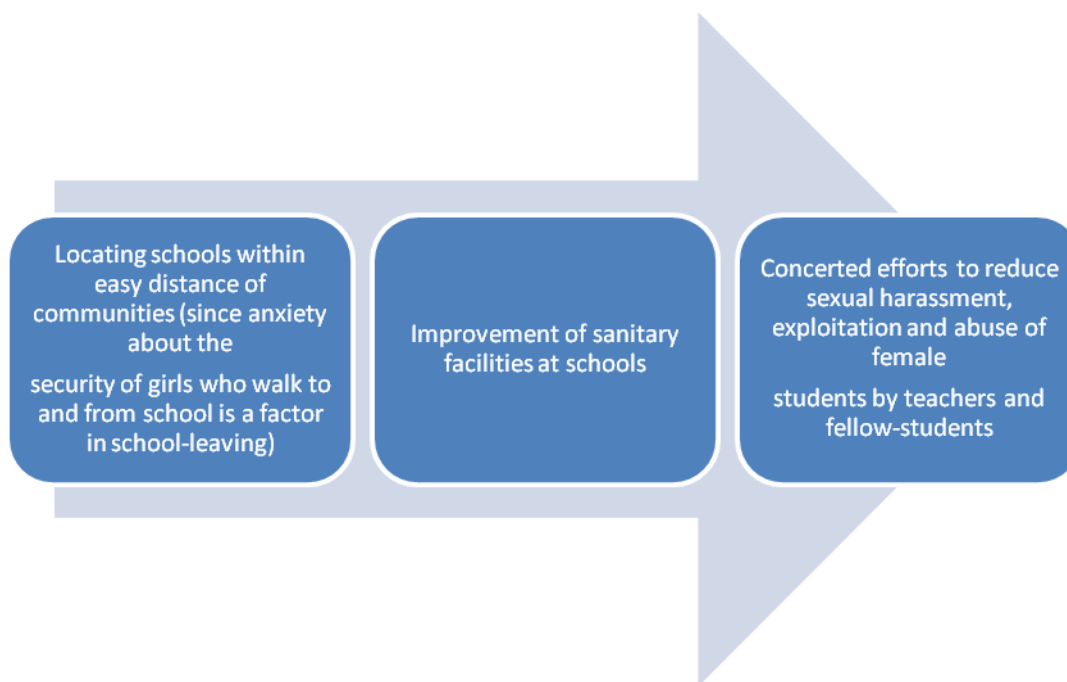


Education- this prevents exploitation of children

Education is as vital a component in the prevention of child marriage as it is for preventing other forms of exploitation of children, and particularly the continuing education of girls through secondary school. Preventing girls from dropping out of school can involve ensuring that the cost of schooling is not an obstacle for poor families, providing programmes that offer children the possibility of earning some income while attending school and campaigns to make parents more aware of the advantages of education for girls.

Making schools safe and supportive environments for girls is also an essential component of programmes designed to prevent adolescent girls from dropping out of school.

This may require:1



Chapter 8: Violence and neglect

Violence can be found in the family, in schools, in institutions such as orphanages and other places of residential care, on the streets, in the workplace and in prisons. It can arise as a result of cultural beliefs, norms and traditional practices or within the context of conflict situations.

The consequences of domestic violence for children



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Consequences of violence can take many different forms. In addition to the psychological and physical effects, victims of physical abuse during childhood leave an increased risk of becoming violent offenders themselves. Violence is also one of the main reasons that children leave home.

A positive, holistic approach to domestic violence

Action against violence, therefore, should seek to strengthen the protective environment around children. This includes involving teachers and health and social workers as well as others who are often the frontline of those caring for and more generally interacting with children. They need to be equipped with the skills to recognize when children are being subjected to violence and know how to respond. In addition, they will often require a referral service for cases to be followed up.

This approach should also address attitudes, customs and traditions, and emphasize non-tolerance of all forms of violence. Physical violence and other more severe forms of violence are more likely where everyday harassment is tolerated.

Home visiting programmes

Home visiting programmes that monitor child development and provide advice, support and referral to families with young children have been described as the best and most practical method of bringing about a significant reduction in child abuse and neglect.

Confronting the possibility of child abuse is a small part of the work of most home visitors. Nonetheless, one of the most important advantages of such services is that they can help to prevent the conditions in which child abuse is likely to arise, and also identify at the earliest possible time those children who are either being abused or are thought to be at serious risk.

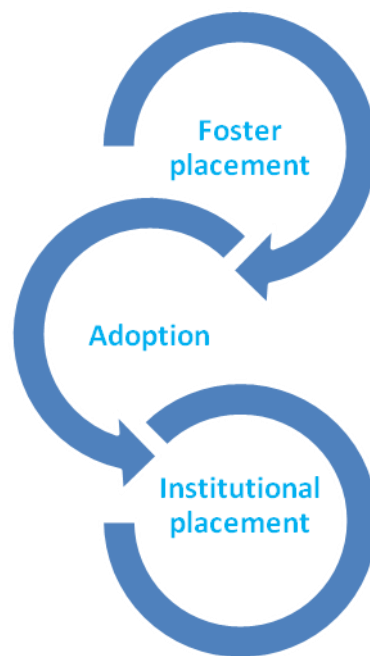
Home visiting services have been found to be far less effective when they attempt the narrower task of targeting only those families where child maltreatment is suspected. Not only are such interventions likely to be too late, they are also likely to cause hostility, resentment and denial as families feel themselves accused and stigmatized. Home visiting, therefore, works best when it is extended to all families with young children, when it is embedded within regular health and social services, and when it makes first contact with the family in the first few days or weeks of a child's life. In this way all families can be supported and resources can eventually be targeted, with less risk of confrontation, lack of cooperation or stigma, to those families who might otherwise begin the descent into the kinds of problems that are the favoured breeding ground of child abuse and neglect. Home visitation also has the advantage of being relatively inexpensive and cost-effective.



Chapter 9: Alternative care

While children have the right to be cared for by their parents or family, a child who no longer has a family, has become separated from his or her family, or whose family represents a serious danger to his or her health or development has the right to alternative care.

The three types of alternative care mentioned in Article 20 of the Convention are:



It is widely agreed that three principles should guide decisions regarding long-term substitute care for children, once the need for such care has been demonstrated:

- Family-based solutions are generally preferable to institutional placements
- Permanent solutions are generally preferable to temporary ones
- National (domestic) solutions are generally preferable to those involving another country

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The duty to monitor care

Children who have been placed for purposes of care or protection have a right to periodic review of their treatment and all other circumstances relevant to their placement (Article 25, Convention on the Rights of the Child). This applies not only to children in institutions, but to all forms of placement including adoption, foster care, guardianship and kafala. Procedures should be established to receive complaints from children in this situation.

Prevention of child abandonment

National networks of family support centers that provide parents with assistance so that they can become self-sufficient in caring for their children can help reduce rates of institutionalization.

These centers should provide services such as:



Home supervision visits by social workers are a valuable means of child protection that can help reduce unnecessary resort to institutionalization. Since many children institutionalized by their parents are born to very young, often single mothers, or to women who already have several children, effective access to family planning is an essential component of a comprehensive plan

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to reduce the number of abandoned children. It is particularly important to ensure that adolescent girls have access to such services.

Chapter 10: Juvenile justice

Juvenile justice is a broad topic covering prevention of delinquency, the type of offences which children may be charged with, the way they are to be treated by the police, by the courts and in facilities for juvenile offenders.

Delinquency prevention

There is a high correlation between neglect and exposure to violence during childhood and involvement in crime. There is a need for effective programmes that help adolescents involved in crime overcome their problems, to the extent possible, and assist them in preparing for life as law-abiding members of society. Exposing them to further violations of their rights when they come into conflict with the law is always both wrong and counter-productive. The successful prevention of juvenile delinquency requires efforts on all parts of a society to ensure the harmonious development of adolescents, with respect for and promotion of their personality from early childhood.

Diversion from the formal justice system

Instead of depriving children of liberty, the Convention on the Rights of the Child urges States to “seek to promote...measures for dealing with such children without resorting to judicial proceedings” (Article 40). Entry into the formal justice system can be traumatic and can stigmatize an adolescent. It should therefore be avoided whenever the matter can be adequately dealt with in a less formal way. Diversion can take the form of a warning that future offences will have more serious consequences, voluntary acceptance of some form of supervision or counseling, a commitment to attend school or to avoid persons or places associated with the offence, community service, or restitution to or reconciliation with the victim. The alternative to formal adjudication must be compatible with the rights of the child, which precludes measures such as corporal punishment.

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Rehabilitation

The UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty set forth a comprehensive approach to the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders, inspired by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some of the main principles are:

Facilities should be decentralized, to prevent juveniles from being detained far from their families and communities, and small enough to allow for individualized attention.

The system should include open or semi-open facilities, to meet the needs of children who require a residential setting but do not pose a serious danger to the community.

Treatment should begin with an evaluation of the needs of the individual, and should include appropriate forms of education, work, spiritual and psychosocial counselling, recreation and care of medical problems, including drug or alcohol dependency.

Respect for the rights of the child is essential to rehabilitation, because it encourages respect for the rights of others.

Chapter 11: Child labour

Work is not necessarily bad for children. Children can help their parents in the home or in the family farm or business, as long as the work is not dangerous and does not interfere with school attendance and other normal childhood activities. This is often referred to as 'light work'. The term 'child labour' refers only to forms of employment or unpaid work that violate the rights of children and should be prohibited.

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Causes of child labour

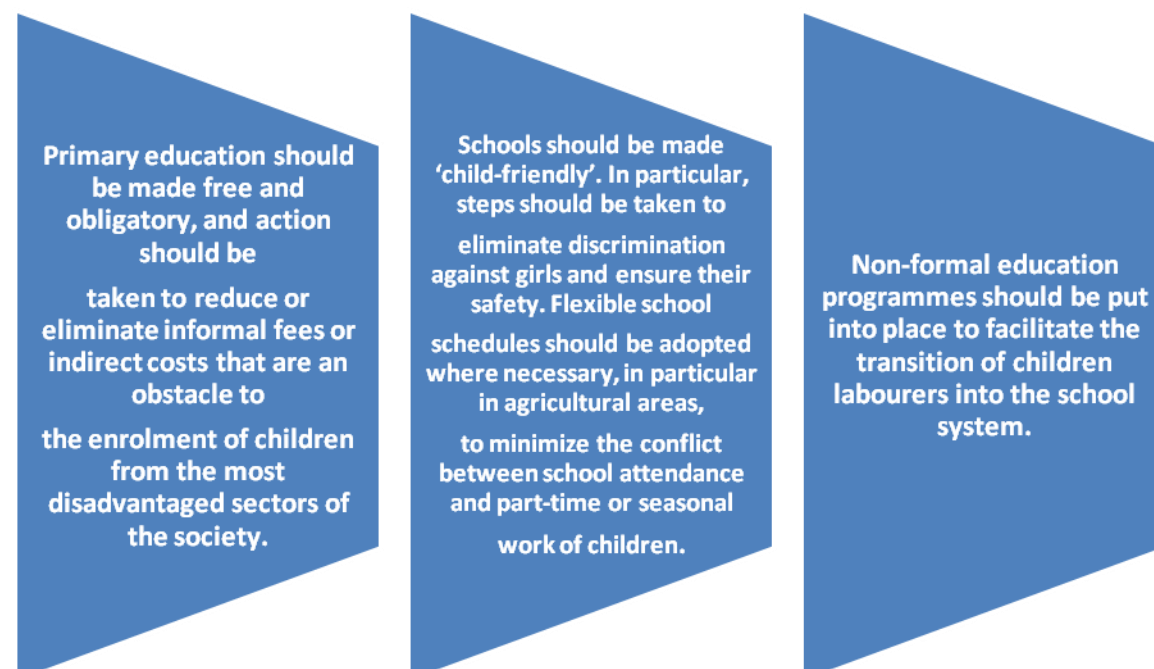
Poverty is evidently one of the principal causes of child labour. Many children who work, whether in the home or in paid employment, do so in order to help their families survive. Paradoxically, however, child labour is also a cause of poverty. It usually deprives children of an education and the opportunity to acquire skills, and in some cases also results in physical disabilities that further limit the earning potential of the victim.

Other causes of child labour include family indebtedness, the lack or poor quality of schools, breakdown of the extended family, uneducated parents, and cultural expectations concerning the role of children, as well as high fertility rates and consumerism.

Offer quality educational opportunities

A comprehensive programme for improving school systems should be implemented to reduce school dropout, as well as to encourage and facilitate the integration or reintegration of child labourers into the school system.

Experiences in different parts of the world indicate that the following measures can be valuable components of such a programme:





Ghana

Community-based social support systems

Children often become child labourers in response to a sudden event that affects the family income or expenses such as illness, death or the loss of employment by an adult wage-earner. To resolve this issue, community-based programmes designed to help families surmount such crises make a valuable contribution to comprehensive programmes aimed at reducing child labour. Similarly, community-based programmes designed to enhance the earning power of adult family members in sectors and communities where child labour is most prevalent, such as by providing access to credit or training, can be effective.

Chapter 12: The rights of child victims

The right to confidentiality

The right of victims to confidentiality is meant to protect their privacy, honour and reputation, which may be affected in two ways. First, the media may publish or broadcast images of the victim or his or her name or other information that permits the public to identify the victim. Secondly, the community might stigmatize the victim even if the case has not received any media coverage. This is most relevant to children who are victims of sexual abuse or exploitation in societies where the social norms against extramarital relations are strong.

The right to humane treatment during legal proceedings

Only a small percentage of the victims of violence and abuse seek assistance. Fear of insensitive treatment by law enforcement agencies, medical and social investigators and the courts is one of the main reasons why victims do not come forward.

The right to social reinsertion

The rehabilitation needs of trafficked children are often complex and require long-term attention. Returned children may require long-term psychosocial or medical support and to be reintegrated into school or work life as well as into their families and communities. They may need immediate financial or material support, especially to avoid being trafficked again. If the child's family is part of the problem, he or she may require alternative care. The child needs to be kept safe in order to recover from the harm done.

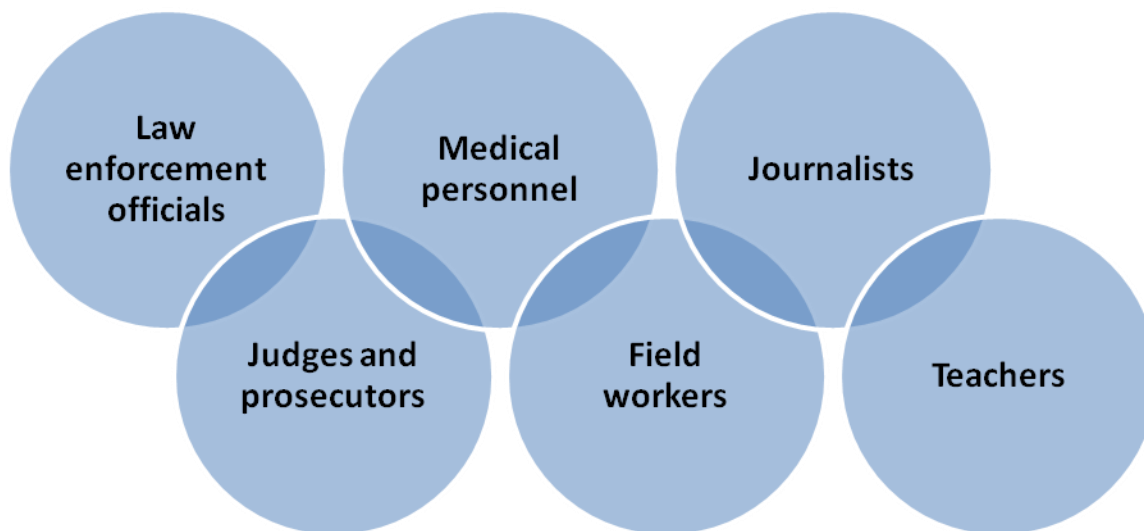
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The right to seek reparations

The right of child victims to seek reparations for injuries suffered is important for several reasons. First, like any other victims, children have a right to be compensated for the moral, physical and psychological injuries caused by violation of their rights. Second, holding the perpetrators responsible economically can be an effective deterrent, especially where corporations or public or private agencies are involved in the violation. Third, compensation of the victims can help facilitate social reintegration.

Training and awareness

Activities designed to increase awareness of the impact of violations of the rights of children on the victims, as well as the rights and psychosocial needs of the victims and appropriate procedures and practices for respecting and protecting their rights, should be organized for:



Such programmes should include interviewing and confidence-building techniques for communicating with child victims.