



# OVERVIEW

UNICEF/SWZ00177/Piacci



Children at the Gavroche Centre, Bucharest, Romania.

Over the next twelve months, around 3,500 children under the age of 15 will die as a result of physical assault and neglect in the world's richest nations. In Germany and the United Kingdom, two children die every week – three in France. More than 1 million children are trafficked across international borders every year. Over 300 million children in the world work – some of them in hazardous conditions, some of them forced. Street children fight for survival daily on the streets of Europe and Central Asia, exploited by criminals, dodging the police. One out of every ten schoolchildren faces violence at school – some of it so traumatic that suicide seems the only way out.

These figures from UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization and the United Nations show that the children of our region are as vulnerable to violence as any in the world. We can't assume that we are more developed or more civilized – the figures show we are not. Behind every case that hits the headlines and shocks people's hearts there are thousands of children who simply

become statistics. Violence against children is hidden and corrosive. It destroys lives and potential and breeds societies that accept the unacceptable – that children can be punched, kicked, beaten, starved, taunted and tortured.

Violence has so many different faces, and can take place anywhere children spend their time – in the family, in the street, in schools, in State care and custody. Anyone who comes into direct contact with children is a potential perpetrator – parent, caregiver, relative, community member, an other child, school teacher, police officer. But no matter what the abuse and where it takes place, the root causes are often the same. The causes of violence include:

**Discrimination** – Whether it is for reasons of gender, ethnic origin, religion, disability, disease or sexual orientation, discrimination legitimizes violent behaviour. Discrimination in social, education or health services can result in ethnic groups, such as Roma, being socially excluded, increasing the vulnerability of children to violence.

**Social acceptance** – Countries across Europe and Central Asia have different thresholds of acceptance to violence. For instance, almost all countries accept corporal punishment as a means of disciplining children. These attitudes reflect the way that people react, both in their own behaviour and in the low incidence of reports of violence.

**Poverty and social stress** – Studies on child maltreatment deaths within the family in rich nations have found that poverty and stress, along with drug and alcohol abuse seem to be

\* Innocenti Report Card No. 5, *A league table of child maltreatment deaths in rich nations*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, September 2003.

closely linked with child abuse and neglect.\* At its worst, poverty has proved an underlying factor in various world conflicts that have set communities against each other.

Yet the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the physical integrity, safety and dignity of children, and countries have laws to stop violence.... don't they?

Somewhere between theory and practice something is missing. And it's time to find out and to act.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has launched a project to put an end to the violence. The first step is to get a picture of exactly what is happening, and he has appointed Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro to head a global study on violence against children. The study will map out what is happening today in four different settings – the school, the home, institutions and the community. Information on each of these appears in this pack – showing what data we now have, what steps have been taken to tackle the problems, and what needs to be done in the future. Some of the issues – such as bullying and abuse – are already on the agenda of many governments; others, such as harmful traditional practices and violence in institutions and youth training, are newer. But one thing is common to all topics, the lack of sound data. Facts and figures on violence are hard to come by, but without them, it is hard to find the appropriate solutions to ensure that our actions are really effective.

Nine regional consultations will feed the Study, including the Europe and Central Asia Consultation in Ljubljana, Slovenia (5-7 July 2005). This Consultation will bring together experts, academics, practitioners and children to look at what's going wrong and to find a way to begin to put it right. Their work is a



*Taja Oman, Ana Eržen, Urška Petrovčič, 7th Grade, Kranj, Slovenia.*

call to action – to break the silence, mobilize, motivate and put in place the political agenda which will change the world for children today and tomorrow – creating a world where violence against children is no longer tolerated.



# VIOLENCE IN RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES



Lucija Hrastnik, 4th Grade,  
Mozirje, Slovenia.



Nina Gorše, 4th Grade, Slovenia.

No one knows exactly how many children are in residential placements in Europe and Central Asia. The best estimates put the figure at around 1 million, but different standards and methods of compiling data make comparisons between countries very difficult.

And the classic picture of the child who has lost his or her parents and lives in a children's home is far from accurate. There are all sorts of reasons why children find themselves in a residential facility: their parents may be ill or temporarily unable to look after them, they may be the children of asylum-seekers, they might be held in police custody or prison, or they may have learning and physical disabilities.

Lack of data makes it difficult to assess the extent that children face violence in institutions, but increasing evidence of abuses and reports by child-care organizations are raising concerns that children – doubly vulnerable because they are alone in a strange environment – are clearly at risk. And according to the background paper for consideration at the Consultation, "... from the United Kingdom to Uzbekistan, abuse of one form or another is taking place on a significant scale".

## The facts

- Cases of abuse in institutions have come to light all over the region. Ongoing investigations in Ireland and Portugal testify to sexual, physical and mental abuse over decades: in Ireland, the Government-established Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse received 3,000 complaints, 60 per cent of them from people over 50 who had been abused as children in residential care.
- In Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova there is no explicit ban on corporal punishment in institutions.
- According to NGO reports on the situation of children's rights, 80 per cent of children in boarding schools are treated cruelly in Kazakhstan, while in Albania orphans are reported to "often become victims of physical abuse".
- Residential homes are often inadequate, unhygienic with poor heating and a lack of nutritious food.
- Much violence takes place amongst children themselves. A UK study on violence amongst children in residential care shows that half of the reported cases were between children including high-impact physical violence, such as knife attacks to kicks and punches, half were non-contact, such as vandalism and threats.
- Young people are often kept in custody with adults: according to the German National Coalition for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is evidence of threat, blackmail and even rape. The Council of Europe's Anti-Torture Committee\* noted that custodial staff have been seen to punch, kick or hit young people with batons in Croatia.
- There is evidence of police officers ill-treating children and young people in police custody in Albania, France, Georgia, Romania, Switzerland, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
- Children from ethnic minorities are over-represented in care and custody. According to the World Bank, as many as 40 per cent of institutionalized children in Romania are Roma, even though Roma account for just 10 per cent of the overall population.

\* Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

## What is being done?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child puts governments firmly in charge of protecting children in care and bans the arbitrary imprisonment of children. It also stipulates that children should be treated sensitively and separated from adults in custody.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers has adopted a recommendation setting out children's rights in residential institutions, including the right to a non-violent upbringing.

The European Union has passed a directive that child asylum-seekers be placed with adult relatives, a foster family or specially-designed centres in order to ensure their protection.

The Council of Europe's Anti-Torture Committee\* has a mandate to inspect places where young people are detained.

An increasing number of States are recognizing the problems and are undertaking or allowing investigations into conditions and concerns about violence in residential facilities of all kinds.

## How do we go forward?

- Ban corporal punishment and humiliating treatment in institutions worldwide;
- Set regulations on allowed and banned forms of discipline and punishment;
- Set basic guidelines on care provision;
- Set up anti-bullying strategies in all residential settings;
- Screen staff working with children, but also provide them with proper training and appropriate working conditions;
- Provide education, recreation, nutritious food, health care and contact with the outside world to help stop frustrations among children;
- Ensure that children are in a position to express concerns or complaints about their treatment without fear of retribution;
- Develop non-residential alternatives to care and correction placements.



UNICEF/SWZK00277/Prozi

*Boys working in the grounds of a juvenile detention centre in Moldova.*

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\* Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.



# VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

UNICEF/SWZK0271/Picazi



*Child begging on the streets of the capital, Tbilisi, Georgia.*

The world is a dangerous place for an unprotected child. Studies show that not one single country is exempt from violence in the community – although measuring the extent is difficult.

Poverty, crime and exploitation are everyday facts for many of the region's children. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia there are special risks: poverty creates a fertile ground for crime and pushes children and young people out onto the street or into cruel or illegal work, and many are attracted to violent and criminal gangs. Killings and wounding are rising steeply, especially in Eastern Europe. Other children make their homes on the street and live from begging or prostitution, suffering violence from customers or the police. Poverty leads to exploitation, with organized crime profiting from misery by trafficking children for sexual exploitation or to work alongside criminals.

Even in the most structured areas of community life there can be hidden dangers. Children face violence in leisure time, in clubs and even in religious settings, such as churches. They can be made to train too hard or diet too much for sports performance, or face corporal punishment or sexual abuse by trainers or carers.

## The facts

Statistics on violence in the community are difficult to find. More data is needed to help governments to act. The extent of trafficking and child sexual exploitation is still being

investigated, and crime statistics only reveal the cases that come to light. The following figures aim to give a general picture of the situation.

- Gang violence has risen steeply in Eastern Europe. In the Russian Federation, homicide rates for young people aged 10-24 rose by over 150 per cent after the collapse of communism. Shootings more than doubled in Azerbaijan, Latvia and the Russian Federation.
- In the Netherlands, in 1995, young people aged 15-17 were four times more likely than adults to be victims of assault.
- In Bremen (Germany), gang violence accounts for almost half of reported violent offences.
- Of the estimated 10,000-16,000 on the streets of St. Petersburg, half are under 13 years. Around 10 to 30 per cent of them are particularly exposed to violence because they are involved in criminal activities, such as trafficking drugs or stolen goods; about 20 per cent of those under 18 earn a living from prostitution.
- Police routinely round up street children, and detain and charge them with minor offences.
- Forced labour is common in the cotton fields of Central Asia. Inhumane conditions are faced by child workers in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- The London police identified 14 children who had been trafficked for domestic slavery in 2003.
- Some Albanian and Romanian children are brought to Western Europe to work with criminal gangs for burglaries and other crimes.
- Since 1995, over 5,000 cases of child abuse by Catholic clergy have been reported worldwide. Thirty priests have been convicted of sexual abuse in France in recent years, 21 cases were recorded in the United Kingdom between 1995 and 1999, and 13 cases between 1994 and 2001 in Germany.
- Expert reports estimate that about 20 per cent of young people involved in sport are at risk from abuse, and about 10 per cent are actual victims.

## What is being done?

International treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights, set out ways to protect children – including their right to life and to family life.



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Conventions by the International Labour Organization (ILO) aim to stamp out cruel forms of child labour such as sale and trafficking, prostitution, and working in the army, in dangerous industries or forced labour.

The Council of Europe's most recent convention aims to stop trafficking. Its Cybercrime Convention gives police means to work cross-border to stop child pornography sites.

The United Kingdom has opened the first unit to protect children in sport, and the Football Association has set up an Ethics Strategy Group to tackle the problem.

### How do we go forward?

- Governments must put into practice the measures they have agreed to in the various international treaties.
- Charges such as vagrancy, prostitution and loitering should be decriminalized for children.
- Sexual exploitation and possession of child pornography must be criminalized.
- Governments must bring in extraterritoriality principles, allowing their nationals to be prosecuted for sex crimes committed abroad.
- Police should be trained to consider and respect children's rights, and handle their cases with particular sensitivity.
- Anyone who works with children should be checked beforehand to ensure they have no history of criminal violence.
- Measures against child labour should be designed in a way that takes into account all factors and that prioritizes policies to end poverty.



Children at the Gavroche Centre, Bucharest, Romania.

- Action against trafficking – both national and international – should take into account children's special needs
- Rich countries should immediately increase international aid to reduce poverty.

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Friendship, David Lazič, five years old, Slovenia.



# VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS



Friendship, Tina Bekri, 3rd Grade, Kamnik, Slovenia.

Most children in Europe get the chance to go to school every day. It is their chance to learn, to play, to get to know themselves and the world, and to build their future.

Today's schoolchildren are no longer likely to face cruel punishments from teachers – almost all of the Europe and Central Asia region now outlaws corporal punishment in school. But violence waits in the shadows – most often in the form of bullying. Children who are a little bit different – cleverer, bigger or smaller, or with a different-coloured skin or a different accent – can find themselves the target of taunts and attacks. Teachers too can become bullies or victims.

The high profile cases – the shooting of pupils by pupils or the suicides of children who could take no more – are proof that violence can have tragic consequences if it is not tackled in time. Safe schools are schools without violence, and schools without violence need to be developed and fostered by governments, teachers, pupils, parents and the community.

## The facts

An European Observatory on Violence in Schools has been set up to collect data. Based at the University of Bordeaux in France, it covers Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

But facts and figures about violence are always difficult to find. Many children are afraid to speak out, and the statistics can be influenced by the questions researchers ask or the size or nature of the group they choose. The following examples aim to give a general picture from different countries in the region:

- In 2000, a study in Georgia on child abuse and physical violence against children found that, of 4,382 children aged six to seven, 31.8 per cent reported experiencing physical punishment in schools, in 96 per cent of cases by school teachers.
- A 2002 survey in Armenia conducted by UNICEF among parents and children aged 7-18, found that beating and slapping are common in schools as well as in the home.
- According to a government report of the Russian Federation, 16 per cent of pupils suffer physical abuse and 22 per cent mental abuse from teachers.
- Studies by the University of Bordeaux in France show that of 35,000 pupils questioned, 10 per cent had been bullied. Slovenian studies report 45 per cent of pupils being bullied. In 2004, the United Kingdom children's charity ChildLine announced a 42 per cent rise in the total number of children counselled about bullying over their telephone helpline – the biggest annual increase in the charity's 18-year history. Around 500 children call each year because they are suicidal.
- Girls are more often bullied than boys. Boys carry out 85 per cent of the attacks. There are very few studies on girls as bullies. Eighty per cent of violence is carried out by the 12-16 age group.



An example of good practice at the Vardeshen Special School, Armenia, where children receive individual counselling to help them overcome the effects of violence.

## What is being done?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says children must be provided with a safe environment at school.

According to a table compiled by the campaign group Global Initiative, corporal punishment is in principle banned throughout the Europe and Central Asian Region apart from the British Channel Island of Jersey, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and



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Turkmenistan, although there is no knowledge about whether practice is in line with the law.

Campaigns against bullying have been launched in many of the region's countries. Stars, such as David Beckham and Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, have given their support to bullied children.

The Council of Europe launched a Charter for Democratic Schools without Violence in 2004. It was put together by children from 40 schools in 19 European countries and adopted by more than 17,000 pupils Europe-wide. It sets out ways in which schools can react to violence and bullying in a positive way that involves teachers, pupils, auxiliary staff and the local community.

Programmes that involve the whole community and favour openness in the school environment are proving successful – especially when they are introduced before the climate of violence becomes too entrenched. Some countries – such as Sweden – are looking at new laws which put a legal obligation on school authorities to stop bullying and violence, and make it easier for students to lodge complaints.

### How do we go forward?

- States should take effective measures to create healthy and happy schools.
- Early warning systems should be set up to spot difficulties before they erupt into real violence. Prevention is the key to building schools without violence.
- Schools need to develop a strategy against violence which involves teachers, pupils, governors, and the local community. Children need to be involved at every step.
- Teachers – and pupils – need to follow anti-violence training and violence prevention classes should be included in the school timetable.
- New, less intrusive ways of resolving conflict need to be prompted – such as mediation where solutions are found to problems by bringing people together to make joint decisions.
- Schools need to be built along democratic lines – with openness between pupils and teachers being the rule not the exception.



UNICEF/SWZ/K0283/Khorian

An example of good practice at the Vardeshen Special School, Armenia, where children receive individual counselling to help them overcome the effects of violence.

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Friendship, Tjaša Britovšek, 5th Grade, Mislinja, Slovenia.





# VIOLENCE IN THE HOME AND FAMILY



UNICEF/SWZK00171/Pirozzi

Mother and son in Turkmenistan.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child calls the family “the natural environment for growth and well-being”, but studies throughout Europe and Central Asia paint a darker picture. Quite simply, for many children home is not a haven but a hell – the place where they face the most violence, yet the place where it is the least visible.

Society still hesitates to act against violence within families. Children are often considered the “property” of parents, rather than people with their own rights to protection. Violent and humiliating punishment by parents and close carers remains lawful and very common in the majority of Europe and Central Asia countries. Harmful traditional practices such as female genital circumcision and honour killings are left unchallenged because of ignorance or a fear of offending.

Every day, many children across Europe are hit, kicked, threatened, ridiculed or isolated. If an adult were subject to any of these actions it would be a criminal assault in any European country.

## The facts

These examples aim to give a general picture for Europe and Central Asia. Facts and figures about violence against children are always difficult to find. Many children are afraid to speak out, and statistics can be influenced by the questions researchers ask or the size or nature of the group they choose. Some issues – such as sexual abuse and some harmful traditional practices – are only just being documented: the vast majority of cases do not come to official notice.

## Violence in the family

- According to UNICEF, two children die every week in the United Kingdom and Germany from maltreatment and three die every week in France.

- The risk of homicide is about three times greater for children under the age of one than for those aged 1-4. That age group, in turn, faces double the risk of those aged 5-14.
- A 2003 study of students in Croatia showed that 93 per cent had experienced violence.
- Most parents in most countries still believe it is acceptable to smack or slap a child.
- About 10 to 30 per cent of children in many States are beaten severely with belts, sticks or other objects: in some cases the abuse of children amounts to torture.
- Over half the Moldovan children interviewed for one study reported being harmed or injured.
- Three quarters of a sample of British mothers in the mid-1990s admitted to ‘smacking’ their baby before the age of one.

## Sexual abuse

- The most likely victims are girls, pre-teens or early teens and children with disabilities;
- Studies carried out in 14 European countries put the rate of sexual abuse both within and outside the family at 9 per cent: 33 per cent for girls and 3 to 15 per cent for boys;
- In 2000, a Romanian study showed that 9.1 per cent of children questioned said they had been abused and 1.1 per cent had been raped;
- In Tajikistan, 9.7 per cent of mothers reported that their husbands and/or a relative had sexually abused their children.

## Harmful traditional practices

- Honour killings, where family members murder relatives they believe have acted immorally, have existed for centuries in Turkey and Albania;
- Young women have been killed by their families in Germany, the United Kingdom, and Sweden for refusing to follow traditional ways;
- Child marriage is still common amongst the Roma and has led to girls being forcibly married in Slovakia and Albania;
- In the United Kingdom, about 200 cases of forced marriage are reported to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office every year.



House of love and sun, Erik Veznaver, five years old, Koper, Slovenia.

### What is being done?

Reports show that Europe is ahead of other regions in taking measures to stop violence against children. All countries in Europe are quickly changing from a past in which violent and humiliating punishment of children was common and accepted. Sweden started the process of law reform half a century ago and became the first State in the world to explicitly ban corporal punishment in 1979. It is now also illegal in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Ukraine. Other countries, which have said they intend to bring in a law against corporal punishment, include the Netherlands, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Law reform is accelerating. The European Court of Human Rights has issued a number of judgements that require laws against child violence to be toughened up in Europe and stressed that Governments have an obligation to criminalize non-consensual sex.

Programmes to promote good parenting are a growing trend in Europe. For example, in Moldova, parent education is being mainstreamed through the health-care system. In Serbia and Montenegro, mobile outreach teams and multidisciplinary groups for child protection have been set up in towns and cities using different professional skills and mobilizing the communities.

### How do we go forward?

- States should be made accountable for failures to protect children from all forms of violence;
- Europe must become a corporal punishment free zone;
- The best interests of affected children should be the primary consideration in all policies and individual decisions on action to prevent and respond to violence against children;
- Governments must listen to children and take their views into account when they decide on anti-violence action;
- Schools, the health service and social services need to be mobilized to teach adults that violence against children is wrong;
- Children should learn how to solve conflicts non-violently. They should learn about sexual responsibility and consent at school;
- All deaths and serious injury to children in the home should be routinely and rigorously investigated;
- Anyone working in child protection should be properly paid, trained and subject to ethical codes;
- Courts should set up child-friendly ways of taking evidence;
- Regional and international human rights mechanisms should be open to children. For instance, they should be able to bring cases to the Court of Human Rights;
- Child victims/survivors of violence must have ready access to free treatment focused on rehabilitation and reintegration;
- Journalists should play their part in showing the extent of the problem, not just sensationalizing individual cases;
- European countries need to be made more aware of harmful traditional practices.



UNICEF/SWZK00307/Proezi

Grandfather and granddaughter in Tajikistan.

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Špela Bajželj and Sara Rudež, 7th Grade, Kranj, Slovenia.



# WHO WE ARE



Ion Sestacovschi, nine years, Moldova.

The UN Study on Violence Against Children is a pioneering example of partnership among organizations committed to building a better world.

We aim to build on our common values to ensure that everyone throughout the world, no matter what their religion, culture, traditions, background or age, can enjoy the same rights and live fulfilling lives free from violence and insecurity.

### ***The core partners for the Ljubljana Consultation are:***

- The Government of Slovenia
- The Council of Europe
- UNICEF
- The World Health Organization
- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- The NGO Advisory Panel to the UN Study on Violence Against Children



**WHO WE ARE**

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# ABOUT THE UN STUDY



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## THE REPORT

### **1) What is the UN Study on Violence Against Children?**

The study is a landmark effort to provide a detailed global picture of the nature, extent and causes of violence against children, and propose clear recommendations for action to prevent and reduce such violence.

As the first report of its kind on this subject, the study is a critical tool to draw much-needed attention to a global problem. Ultimately the purpose of the study is to urge governments to fulfil their obligation to prevent and eliminate violence against children.

The study was mandated by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General appointed Independent Expert Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro to lead the study. Mr. Pinheiro is a former Secretary of State for Human Rights of Brazil and has directed the country's Centre for the Study of Violence since 1990.

### **2) How does the Study define "violence"?**

The study defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, which results or is likely to result in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. The study also bases its understanding of violence on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **3) What prompted the Study?**

The issue of violence has come up in a number of country reports submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It became apparent that there was a need for a better understanding of the global scope of the problem and mechanisms to measure and address it.

Following two days of discussion on violence against children in 2000 and 2001, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the Secretary-General be requested, through the General Assembly, to conduct an in-depth international study on violence against children. The Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution supporting this recommendation, and requested the appointment of an Independent Expert.

### **4) What is the focus of the Study?**

The study will focus on the nature and extent of violence against children in five settings:

- the home and family
- schools and educational settings
- other institutional settings (orphanages, children in conflict with the law)
- the community and on the streets
- work situations

For each type of violence, the Study will review what is known about the causes and associated risk and protective factors. Its focus will be on prevention strategies, in particular through the identification of best practices in prevention, including those designed by children.

Several cross-cutting issues that increase a child's vulnerability to violence will also be considered in the report, including:

- violence in the media and other virtual settings, including child pornography
- traditional harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and early/forced marriage
- violence against children from ethnic minorities, immigrant or migrant communities
- violence against children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS
- children as perpetrators of violence, including bullying.

### **5) Why is violence against children during armed conflict not included in the Study?**

The impact of armed conflict on children was fully addressed by Graça Machel's 1996 landmark study. The Study will, however, address some aspects of violence that children experience due to the instability caused by armed conflict, such as domestic violence.

### **6) Which UN agencies are involved in the Study?**

UNICEF, WHO and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will collaborate closely to support the work of the Independent Expert. A number of other UN agencies like ILO are also actively involved with the Study.



UNICEF/SVZK00018/Pirozzi

*A boy at a Social Rehabilitation Centre in the Russian Federation.*

### **7) When will the Study be finalized?**

The study is being produced over two years. The final report will be submitted by the Independent Expert to the Secretary-General, who is expected to present the recommendations of the report to the General Assembly in October 2006. The document will be a brief and policy-oriented presentation of the relevant findings and clear recommendations, designed for the primary audience of States/Governments.

### **Two separate reports are also planned:**

- A more elaborate publication that will echo the key recommendations of the General Assembly Study Report and provide more in-depth information about the situation of children, best practices and implementation.
- A child-friendly version of the Study Report, designed specifically for children and young people.



# CHANGING ATTITUDES

UNICEF/SWZK00179/Piccozi



*A mother holds her baby at a Maternal Centre in Chisinau, Moldova.*

**“Kids need a bit of discipline. It never did me any harm.”**

Studies into mental health consistently show the link between violence and poor health. Adults who were abused as children make up a link in a tragic chain: they are less likely to enjoy happy and fulfilled lives, and they are more likely to turn to violence themselves – the one way of solving problems that they learnt as a child.

**“Everyone is dead set against a ban on corporal punishment. It’s not possible to change people’s attitudes.”**

The Swedish case proves the opposite. When Sweden first talked about a ban, there was a good deal of opposition. It was made law in 1979. Awareness-raising campaigns and good parenting classes brought about a sea change in attitudes. By 1995, only 6 per cent of parents thought it was acceptable to smack a child.

**“Ok, the cases we see in the papers are bad, but violence and sexual abuse in families is really very rare. The family is a safe haven for kids.”**

The cases that hit the headlines are the tip of the iceberg. Research done by organizations, such as the Council of Europe, is critical of the media for sensationalizing the unusual – such as abductions by strangers – whilst most violence and abuse

takes place in the home. A UNICEF Innocenti Report Card showed that 3,500 children under 15 die as a result of physical assault and neglect each year in industrialized countries.

**“We can’t interfere in other people’s cultures... even if we don’t like what they do.”**

Nothing excuses the sort of violence that happens when girls are circumcised, children forced into early marriages or punished – even killed – for some transgression to cultural rules. Awareness-raising projects, such as the EC Daphne programme, have shown that it is possible to work with community and religious leaders to change attitudes.

Fathers have changed their minds on genital circumcision when confronted with the reality of the pain their daughter goes through. Communities have begun to look at ways to preserve the ceremonies that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood in a celebratory and non-violent way.

**“My neighbour slaps her kids around – but it’s none of my business.”**

Ignoring violence is tantamount to condoning violence. It might not be right to confront the perpetrator face on, but there are many ways to help. The police or authorities can be alerted or you can support the child and get in touch with a telephone helpline. You can also join the campaign against child violence through one of the many campaigning groups Europe-wide and get your voice heard.

**“Kids are tough. They soon forget.”**

Interviews with kids of as young as five from a range of countries showed the extent of the damage. “It hurts you inside,” said one seven-year-old. A poll of children carried out by UNICEF found that children want the opportunity to talk things out, not to be hit or shouted at.

**“Most parents don’t smack their kids.”**

Studies show that where corporal punishment is still legal, most parents believe in it and use it. Research in the Slovak Republic in 2002 found that 98.6 per cent of parents believed they should smack children, and 42 per cent thought it was OK to do it with an implement.



## CHANGING ATTITUDES

**“Well, violence is not pleasant, but it’s hardly a priority problem. It’s not as if it’s harming the economy, is it?”**

Violence costs money. It means money for the health service – first of all to deal with battered limbs, and then later on to patch up battered lives as older children and adults abused as children turn to drugs, alcohol or truancy to escape their problems. A 1999 WHO report on prevention suggests that human and financial costs of child sexual abuse to society is costly: “Preventive costs are many times less than the combination of initial and long-term costs ... to the individual, family and society.”

**“Sticks and stones may hurt their bones but words can never hurt. So if I don’t smack my child, I can’t do them any harm, can I?”**

Punishment that doesn’t use violence can be just as harmful. Work by the Council of Europe has shown that mental violence – such as threatening, ridiculing or scaring children – poses a serious health problem in Europe. Children are also affected by violence between parents. The best solution is for Governments to provide support for parents to help them work out how to react appropriately.



UNICEF/SWZK00180/Pirozai

A grandfather with his daughter-in-law and 3 of his 10 grandchildren in Tajikistan.



My family, Marina Eberl, six years, Brezovica, Slovenia.





# MEDIA



UNICEF/SVK0279/Pfnoazi

A boy watches TV in a Temporary Isolation Centre in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The media shape the way we see the world – and are, therefore, in a frontline position to change attitudes to violence against children. Journalists, photographers, editors and programme makers act as the eyes, ears and voices of the public, and have a primary responsibility to draw attention to abuses of power and human rights. Through their work, they can encourage governments, the public and civil society to effect changes. They are uniquely placed to help people understand how to stop violence against children.

Reporting has to be ethical. Studies on the way the media report show that too often the focus is on horrific, one-off cases; that journalists too easily sensationalize; and that the tendency to exploit stories, rather than explain them, lets society ignore its responsibility in the case.

UNICEF's handbook on *The Media and Children's Rights* was produced to help media professionals working on stories about children to do so responsibly, protecting the child and pointing the finger at the relevant adults who failed in their obligations towards the child.

Organizations, such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), recognize journalists' responsibility not only to report fairly and accurately, but also to reflect children's own opinions. Respect for child rights is part of the IFJ's professional code of ethics. It has also drawn up international guidelines on the subject to help media professionals (Putting Children in the Right).

## What can journalists do?

- Generate debate on the issue of violence against children in our region by appropriate coverage of the issue.
- Respect children's privacy and protect their identity in such cases.
- Give children access to media to express their own opinions.
- Solicit the views of children with due respect for identity protection.
- Ensure effective investigative reporting is not compromised by protecting sources.
- Challenge governments on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Combat child abuse by 'de-sexualizing' the language used, and pointing out those being exploited are children.
- Work together with NGOs or people that the kids trust when gathering material.
- Encourage projects that involve kids – such as Children's Express news agency in the United Kingdom – and use material prepared by them.
- Make an effort to tackle issues from the point of view of the child – for instance interviewing street kids about how they see their world.

## What should journalists avoid?

- Sexual, violent or victim-focused journalism potentially damaging to children.
- Stereotyping and sensationalizing material.
- Reinforcing prejudices and preconceived ideas that contribute to tolerance of violence against children.
- Fostering an image of adolescents or younger children as sexually mature.
- Portraying children as 'villains' (in reports about street crime, for example).



Hana Forčič and Urša Terčon, nine years, Komen.



**MEDIA**

[www.violencestudy.org/europe-ca](http://www.violencestudy.org/europe-ca)



# WHAT YOU CAN DO



*We care about each other, Luka Kuhar, 5th Grade, Ljubljana, Slovenia.*

## IF YOU ARE a member of Parliament

- **Legislate for the protection of children** against all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation and make sure that mechanisms are in place for consistent implementation, and accountability.
- **Monitor the situation of children** and ensure that structures to report and respond to violence are in place. You can suggest that an independent body for **monitoring child rights** is established by law.
- **Monitor the consistency of government policies to protect children from violence** and evaluate their impact on children.
- **Make support to families** a political priority and include it in political manifestos.
- **Make sure that an adequate budget is allocated** by government for the prevention of violence against children and for the protection of victims. Call for prioritization of specific funding lines that will benefit children.
- **Consult and cooperate with civil society groups** that are working to stop violence against children and participate in campaigns to mobilize public opinion. Ensure that children and young people are also actively involved in the process.

## IF YOU ARE a professional in direct contact with children

- **Learn how to recognize early signs of violence and abuse** in children and report cases.
- **Break the silence.** Engage in dialogue with your colleagues, and ask for training on the impact of violence on children and on appropriate and timely responses.
- **Be a role model.** Adopt a professional code of conduct that respects the physical integrity and dignity of children.
- **Challenge social acceptance of violence.** Stimulate societal dialogue on violence against children, engage parents and children and activate groups in your community to find ways to stop the violence.
- **Put pressure on policy makers** to make the well-being of children a national priority.

## IF YOU ARE a member of a civil society organization

- **Raise awareness about violence against children.** Collect information on violence and start campaigns for its prohibition and elimination.
- **Monitor government actions and programmes** and challenge politicians to make the elimination of violence against children a priority.
- **Challenge social acceptance of violence against children.** Stimulate and facilitate public discussions on violence at community and national levels.
- **Help governments** to develop models for prevention and protection of children against violence. You can share your experiences, good practices and lessons learned.



UNICEF/SWZK00234/Pirozzi

*A worker and child at a home for children orphaned by AIDS and abandoned children in Kaliningrad, Russian Federation.*



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### IF YOU ARE a parent or legal guardian of a child

- **Be a role model.** Make a personal commitment to positive, non-violent parenting and encourage others to do the same.
- **Learn how to recognize signs of violence and abuse** in your child, find out where it can be reported and where you can get help if it affects your family.
- **Help your children to understand their rights.** Ensure that your own children and their friends are aware of their right to be protected from all forms of violence, and have access to the necessary advice and advocacy to assert that right.
- **Break the silence** and spread the message that violence against children is not acceptable and undermines child development.
- **Mobilize people around you.** Support school, community and national campaigns to prohibit and eliminate all forms of violence against children.

### IF YOU ARE a child or a young person

- **Learn why** violence is harmful and unacceptable and spread the word.
- **Learn how to recognize** different forms of violence against children and young people.
- **Find out where you can report violence** if you ever become a victim, or if it happens to any of your friends or neighbours.
- **Learn how** to protect yourself from abuse and harm and recognize risky situations that you can prevent or avoid.
- **Speak up** about violence that you have experienced or have witnessed being inflicted on other children and young people, so that they can be properly protected or helped.
- **Take an active part** in different activities for children and young people to prevent and stop violence against girls and boys.
- **Remind adults** of their responsibility to protect children from violence and call them to account if they don't act.
- **Be a role model.** Make a personal commitment to create non-violent environment for you and your peers.

