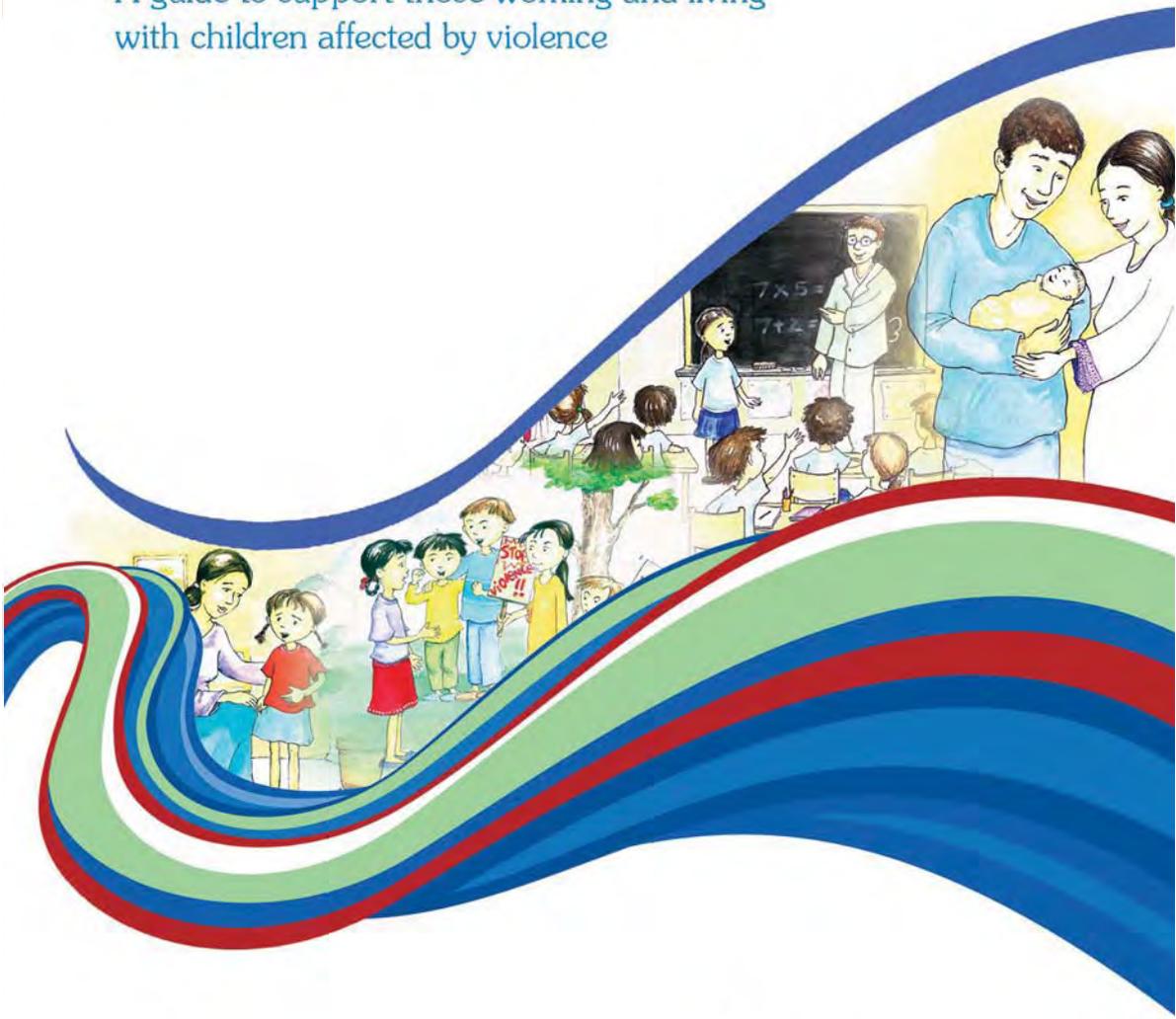


Protect the children!

A guide to support those working and living with children affected by violence



Save the Children

Save the Children fights for children's rights.
We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

Save the Children works for:

- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity

ISBN 978-9937-8024-5-1

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Illustrations : Jane Appleby
Printed by : Biz Link Concern, Lalitpur

This publication is funded by: The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Save the Children Norway, Save the Children Sweden

Published by

Save the Children Sweden
Regional Office for South and Central Asia
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All violence against girls and boys is preventable!

Violence and abuse against children happen all over the world. Millions of boys and girls are facing injuries, disabilities, sometimes even death and life-long emotional effects because of the violence they experience. Violence against children has significant economic and other costs to society.

Save the Children has developed this book as part of a package of learning materials for child rights workers about relevant measures to protect children against violence. The book discusses the different forms of violence and gives advice on how to act to promote the protection of children.

Girls and boys have the right to protection against violence. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child gives each girl and boy under 18 rights in all areas important for his or her development to health, education and protection – without discrimination of any kind.

That children have rights does not mean that they don't have duties. Boys and girls are part of the family, community and society where all citizens, children and adults, have duties towards each other. Both adults and children are, however, protected by human rights standards against violence and it is the responsibility of all – including the state – to implement these standards.

This book is for child protection and frontline workers – all those in direct contact with children – such as those working in health and social services, those working in shelter homes and in institutions, teachers, community members, and religious leaders. It may also be children engaged in child clubs and working with peer-to-peer support, adults, and child protection workers in emergency situations.

There are differences in protection services available for children, although a general trend is that there are too few places and people from whom children can seek protection when in need. Many communities practise traditional forms of child protection, while other communities also have a structured form of child protection provided by the government system.

A child protection system or committee is an organisation that works with the authority of central, district and local government to take decisions to act, protect and assist children. The committee may consist of elected members of the community, including children, working together with local individuals and services provided by government and local, national or international organisations. Health services, social services, schools and the police will be part of this protection system to ensure child-friendly services. Religious leaders may also be important in the protection of children.

Girls and boys have the right to protection. Please use this book and help implement children's right to a life free from violence.

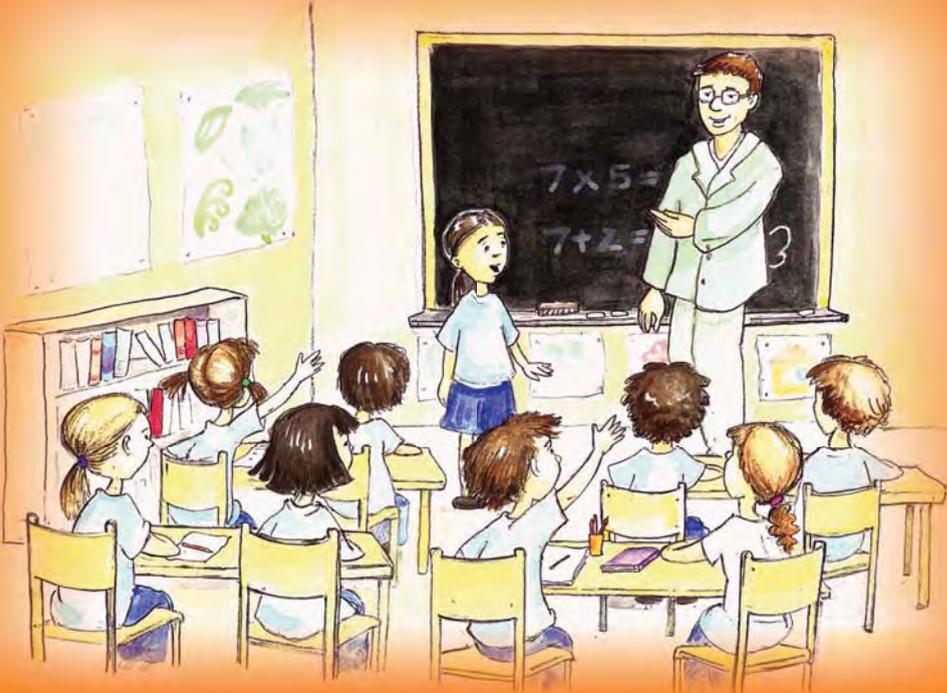
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Chapter

1

Listen to the child





Chapter 1

Listen to the child

What is violence against a child?

A child may be hurt physically or emotionally. Harm may be caused through:

- Humiliation
- Violent punishment
- Neglect

- Physical injury
- Sexual abuse and rape
- Exploitation

Why do we need to encourage a safe, listening environment for children who have experienced violence?

A child may not find it easy to talk about the violence. A child protection worker may therefore need to trust their sense that a child has been harmed and encourage the child to talk to them:

To find out what has happened

To plan the best protection strategy for the child

To connect with both the child and the family

To try to help the family

- Police may need to:

Interview the child

Videotape the interview with the child

Secure the evidence for use in a court case against the abuser

- Teachers may need to:

Notice if a child is having difficulties at school

Sense if he/she thinks there may be a problem at home causing the difficulties

Look for signs of physical violence on the child

- Parents may need to:
 - Be shown how to listen and talk to their child about the violence
 - Learn how to protect the child from the effects of the violence
 - Try to prevent the violence
 - Be a supportive helping environment for the child

What is the child trying to say when he/she has experienced violence?

- See what is happening to me
- Believe me
- Protect me
- Listen to me without judging
- It's not my fault
- Stop the violence in my life
- Tell me the truth so that I can trust you
- Keep this a secret
- Help me to feel safe with you
- Help me to understand what has happened to me
- Help me to get others to understand
- Help me to get justice

You might only get one chance

You, who are the first to hear or notice the problem, are the *child's trusted helper*. *You are the one to see what is happening and to try to stop the violence and pain.*

- What you say to the child in the first moments can make a difference between the child trusting you and getting help, or the child losing hope. The child may not ask for help again if he/she does not trust you.
- Your ability to listen to the child will help him/her to trust adults.

Your first conversation with the abused child

Let us think of this as a story:

Elsa is a teacher. She notices that her student Rosa has been quiet and withdrawn and not doing well at her studies. She knows that Rosa's mother has AIDS and that Rosa is caring for her. Elsa wants to have a talk with Rosa and she knows that this conversation needs to be handled very sensitively and carefully. She needs to make sure that Rosa trusts her enough to open up to her.

Elsa will need to try to:

- Find a safe place to talk that feels private.
- Make the time for Rosa that is not rushed or pressured.

- Ask Rosa in a gentle way about what is happening in her life. Elsa might say *“I have noticed that you look sad. Is there anything that you would like to talk with me about?”*
- Listen carefully and let Rosa know that Elsa is interested in her situation.
- If Rosa does not want to talk, it is important not to pressure her. Elsa might say *“I see that this is difficult for you to talk about today. You can come to me any time when you feel comfortable to talk about it.”*
- Observe Rosa carefully to see if her situation continues or gets worse.
- Make Rosa feel that Elsa believes her and does not judge or blame her for the problem.
- Make Rosa know that it is not her fault that violence is happening to her.
- Listen without interrupting. If something Rosa says is not clear, Elsa could say, in a gentle and understanding way: *“Rosa, please could you explain this a little more to me so that I understand clearly what has happened to you.”*
- Praise Rosa for her courage to speak to Elsa about hurtful things.
- Ask her if she has spoken to anyone else about the violence – such as her mother, her brother or her sister.
- If Rosa begins to cry, Elsa should try to comfort her – for instance by putting her arm around her, drying her tears, holding her, reassuring her that it is all right to talk about hurtful things.

Rosa will need Elsa to:

- Understand if Rosa feels angry at Elsa, if Rosa hits out or swears or uses angry language. Elsa could handle this by saying *“I understand that you are angry, but please do not hit out at me because of it. I am here to help you.”*
- Keep everything Rosa says a secret. Elsa may say *“I promise to keep this a secret between you and me. Nevertheless there are some people I have to inform about this because only by knowing they will be able to try to help you to become safe.”*
- Be honest and direct.

After the talk, these are the important things for Elsa to do:

- Not leave Rosa crying or in a bad emotional state. Children sometimes kill themselves after talking about this great secret for the first time, especially if they feel they cannot be helped.
- Tell the truth to Rosa – not to promise things that cannot be done.
- Leave the child feeling hopeful.
- Help the child feel that there are some good things in her life as well.
- Try to tell Rosa clearly what Elsa plans to do to help her situation.
- Assure Rosa that Elsa will stand by her during the coming time.
- Find a new time to talk so that Rosa knows Elsa is there for her.

Chapter

2

Stop the violence and act





Chapter 2

Stop the violence and act

Who stops the violence?

It must be someone with the authority and responsibility to act
– for example:

- Police
- Child protection committee (relevant structure to follow up child abuse)
- Probation officer
- School principal

- Director of children's home
- Elders and community leaders

Parents and adults always have the responsibility to try to prevent violence, support and care for the child.

What to check for first

- Has the child been hurt?
- Is there risk of infection?
- Should the child be examined by a doctor – broken bones, bruises, burns, hair pulled out, injury to the genital region, etc.

Next step

- Take the child immediately to the nearest health facility.
- Document the violence in a report.
- Explain to the child where they are being taken to and why.
- Explain what will happen.
- Stay with the child to comfort and assist him/her.
- The medical examination should be gentle and child-friendly so as not to further harm the child.

Immediate action: Investigate and assess

If there are signs of sexual abuse, severe physical punishment, or serious neglect:

- Where did the abuse occur? (home, school, community, institution)
- What kind of violence has been used?
- How long has it been going on for?
- How old is the child?
- What is the relationship between the child and the abuser?
- Are there other children in the family who may be at risk?
- How will the family react? The child may be in more danger after talking about the violence.

What to do when the child reports the abuse

- If it is a less grave form of violence and a one-time incident the helper could talk to the abuser and ask him/her to:
 - o apologise to the child
 - o take responsibility for his/her actions
 - o promise never to abuse a child again.
- The accused abuser could be arrested or removed from his/her home.
- If the abuser is a family member, the child could be removed from the family and put in a safe place.

Find a safe place for the child

- Take action to protect the child (and other children in the family). This is usually done by a police officer, a social worker or by members of a child protection committee/system.
- Remove the abuser or take the child to a safe place.
- If the child is old enough, the worker should listen to where he/she would feel most safe.
- Try to avoid separating children from their mothers/fathers or other primary caregivers, who do not harm the child.

What is a safe place?

- With relatives that he/she trusts, who understand the situation and can give the child emotional support and care.
- A temporary shelter in the community with staff trained to handle children who have experienced violence.
- A children's home or foster family, where the child can stay safely until it may be possible to return home.

How to follow up to make sure the child is not abused again

- If the child has been abused in his/her family, it is important to keep working with the family so that the child may someday return home again.

- Watch out as there may be other children in danger in the same family, school or institution.
- Avoid sending the child far away from the community she/he knows – friends, schoolmates and family.
- Make sure the child understands that she/he is not to blame for having caused the abuse.
- Avoid sending the child to remand centres or homes for “youth offenders”. The child has not committed a crime.
- Caregivers need to know and understand the laws that protect the child.

How to deal with the person who has committed the crime

- *Father or breadwinner* – if he is sent to jail, how will the family support itself financially? Try to get funding from the government or an organisation.
- *Teacher* – if this is proven in court or otherwise, the teacher should be removed from the school. He/she needs to be counselled to understand what he/she has done wrong.
- *Other children* – this needs to be dealt with by teachers, child protection workers, community leaders, and/or parents. The offending children need to understand that what they are doing is wrong and to apologise to the child. The school or local community may need to organise a child protection committee to help build a non-violent school environment.

Follow-up care for the child

- It is important that child protection workers do not create a situation of conflict and distrust in the process of protecting the child, so that the parents turn against them. The parents are key to help develop safer communities.
- Make sure that the child feels safe, comforted and taken care of.
- Tell the child (depending on their age) what is going to happen – even if it is an unpleasant process that she/he will need to endure.
- Speak to the child in simple language and be truthful.

The aim is always to:

Stop the violence

Get help for the child as soon as you can

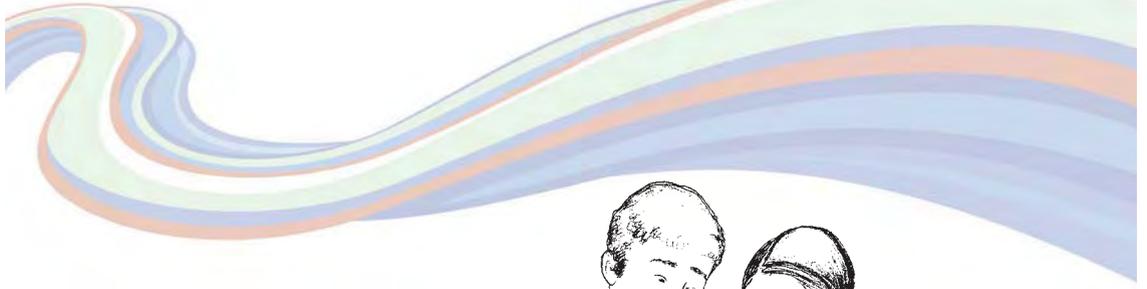
Make sure the responsibility for the violence lies fully with the abuser and not the child

Chapter

3

Protect the child





Chapter 3

Protect the child

Oswaldo is a child protection worker. He works in a shelter for children. He knows how important he is for the children he works with. He gets to know them well through listening to them and by making them feel supported. He might be the first adult ever to treat the child with respect and understanding. The children who are abused are often girls, low-class children, or children with disabilities. Here are some of the ways he can help the child:

- *Trust* – he must keep his promises, come in time, and keep the secrets the children tell him.
- *Equality* – he must treat all the children with the same respect.

- *Safety* – he and all his colleagues should have signed a “Child Protection Policy/Code of Conduct”. By doing so they have promised never to abuse the children and always to report any abuse they get to know of. The children know this and know they must report any bad treatment that they see or experience.
- *Rights* – he teaches the children *You have rights*, you must protect yourself. Children must be asked their opinion about what is important in helping them recover.
- *Feelings* – he encourages the children to talk about their feelings to him or in small groups. *All feelings are allowed* – anger, sorrow, shame, guilt, revenge and hate, fear for the future.
- *Expression* – he *plays* to help the children express their feelings. One idea he uses is to pretend he has a bowl which he holds in front of the children and lets them pour their feelings into it. This helps the children feel relieved to find a way to describe their feelings.
- *Confidence* – he helps them *rebuild their confidence* in themselves. He understands that they blame themselves for the problems they face and that they have lost trust in adults.
- *Respect* – Oswaldo may have to *handle aggressive behaviour* from the child, especially if the child has had to survive by living on the streets, selling sex, lying, cheating and stealing. Some ways to do this are:
 - Be *firm, calm, and not use bad language* back to the children
 - Try *not to anger* the child
 - Do *not make fun* of the child or mock her/him

- o Do *not punish* the child by locking him/her in a frightening place or using violence against him/her
- o *Never hit back* at the child. Hold him/her firmly but without hurting
- o Try to *calm the child*
- o Help the child develop *rules for good behaviour*.
- *Artistic* – try to *be artistic* with the child, draw, write stories, perform plays where the children can act their experiences.
- *Praise* – let the child receive positive feedback for her/his kindness, courage, and/or abilities.
- *Patience* – Oswaldo and the other workers need to understand that the healing process may take a long time.

Special care for small children and babies

Young children could show the following signs of stress. The child should not be punished for showing these symptoms:

- Clinging anxiously
- Screaming when strangers appear
- Bed wetting
- Sleep and eating disorders
- Fear of the dark

Small children need much good loving care.

Young children who can talk might try to talk about what happened to them:

- Listen to them
- Answer their questions
- Reassure them with simple words *“That was bad, now you are safe, it won’t happen again.”*

Signs of recovery

- Children start to smile and laugh
- Children play with other children
- Children lose fear of the dark or of strangers, and can play at a distance from the caregiver
- Children eat and sleep well
- Children’s language development is normal

Chapter

4

Rights, development,
protection and participation





Chapter 4

Rights, development, protection and participation

In the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a child is a person under the age of 18.

1. Child rights

The CRC says that all children have a right to:

- Survive
- Go to school
- Have good health
- Develop well
- Grow up in their families
- Give their opinions about decisions that will affect their lives
- Be protected from all kinds of violence

The state is responsible:

The state is responsible for making sure that the rights of all children in the country are implemented and respected, but also all adults working with children and parents must respect and help realise children's rights.

Teaching children their right to be protected:

If children are taught their rights, whether at home, in schools, in shelters and in institutions, they are better able to protect themselves.

Children must know that *they have a right:*

- not to be sexually abused, hit and humiliated by their parents, teachers or any other person
- not to do harmful work
- to be protected and helped when bad things happen to them

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has 52 Articles that explain each right in detail.

Knowing the rights of the child when you are a child protection worker is necessary because:

- You can be more confident of doing the right thing
- You can stand up and defend the child in a stronger way
- You can help children protect themselves by informing them of their rights
- You can let others know of children's rights and help to prevent violence

2. Child development

Child development is the wonderful journey of children from a tiny cell to adulthood. From the tiny beginning in the mother's womb, children grow and develop into a unique adult person. How a child develops depends on:

- What he/she has inherited from both parents
- The amount of love, care and guidance given by caregivers
- Good and bad experiences
- The physical and mental growth of children
- Having learnt to develop relationships and express feelings
- Learning skills and to solve problems

Child development research has shown:

The first 3 years of children's development are very important because this is the time the brain develops most, although it continues to change slowly throughout childhood. The way in which parents and caregivers show love and care for the child becomes important:

- “Answering” the child's cries
- Smiles
- Baby-talk
- Hugging, touching and caressing
- Enough healthy food during pregnancy and the first years

What a child learns and how he/she learns, grows out of the communication between the child and those in close environment. Babies are acting socially – very early in life babies smile, they gaze at human faces, they start imitating us, they reach out to touch us, and they “talk” to us. We need to respond to the child to help them develop in the right way.

What can make the child's development go wrong?

- Violence
- Loss of one or both parents
- Witnessing terrible, frightening scenes
- Lack of education
- Poor nutrition

- Lack of opportunities
- Living through war and displacement
- Harmful traditional practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation
- Drugs and alcohol abuse in the family

Not all children who experience violence have a poor development. Some children have special strengths to survive in spite of terrible things happening in their lives.

The consequences of violence influence a person's life:

Children who have experienced serious violence may as adults:

- Lead normal lives
- Have good jobs
- Be good parents
- Have friends

Even though they are coping with life they may have periods where they:

- Are disturbed by sudden, strong, painful memories of the abuses
- May become depressed and anxious
- Feelings of shame, anger and helplessness may return
- Some may experience difficulty in feeling secure enough to develop close relationships, including sexual relationships, with others.

Different ways of coping in life with the pain of abuse:

- Some seek help from close friends.
- Some find it useful to talk to a health professional.
- Others deal with the pain in less positive ways by over-eating, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, getting rid of their anger by doing violent things – actions which can seriously affect health and future well-being.

How to try to stop violence in children's lives:

As child protection workers we can take steps to prevent violence by taking the following steps:

- Help the child to get education.
- Help the child to find the families or caring relatives.
- Be there to comfort and listen when terrible things have happened.
- Understand the needs of the child.
- How we act now will affect how the child copes as an adult.

We can help children develop coping mechanisms to take care of themselves when they face the pain of what they have experienced

3. Child protection

Child protection is about intervention, protection and prevention. It is the actions taken to keep children safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation and physical violence.

The role of a parent is:

- To protect children from accidents happening in and outside the home
- To protect children against violence or abuse at home, in the community and at school
- To get children vaccinated against diseases and to use mosquito nets where needed
- To protect their children during wars and natural disasters
- To advise their children on how to avoid getting AIDS

Actions to take for child protection:

- Developing *laws* to protect children better.
- Building the *knowledge and skills* of people working to protect children.
- *Safeguarding policies* – that is, that all those working in services providing for children have to sign a document promising that they will never abuse or exploit children.
- Creating *awareness* of violence against children and their rights.

- Teaching parents and teachers about *non-violent discipline* and behaviour.
- Holding workshops with men and boys to discuss their role in *preventing violence in the family setting*.
- *Child protection systems/ committees* at village, district and national levels are organised to prevent violence and help children who have been abused in any way.
- *Child rights groups* – children coming together to inform the public about their rights and about the harmful effects of violence against children.
- Teaching children *how to protect themselves* and *to know their rights*.
- *Child-friendly courts* – where children involved in cases of violence are interviewed and treated in child-friendly ways.

The aim of child protection work is to:

Make sure in every way possible that everybody knows about children's right to be protected according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Take all kinds of action to make every child feel safe and protected.

Child protection work can be done by the following people:

- Specially trained persons employed by government-run child protection services as part of social or health services
- Local, national or international non-government organisations working with children's programmes

- People working in shelters, safe places and children's homes
- Health workers, teachers, local police, religious leaders and community leaders in general – provided they have been trained in child protection
- Boys and girls organising themselves in child rights clubs and creating awareness on their rights in communities, and perhaps also at national level
- Trusted people in the communities acting to protect children: for example, parents' committees, women and men organising different actions to protect children, religious leaders campaigning against violence, elder women and men following up children, etc.
- Parents may decide to stop using physical punishment at home and advise their children on how to protect themselves

Child protection work is about asking:

- Who is mostly at risk and why? (Ask children!)
- Where are the risks coming from? (Ask children!)
- Knowing this, how can we prevent children from experiencing violence? (Ask children!)

Child protection in the community:

- The communities that wish to protect their children need to work together with children themselves. Without a clear picture of risks, child protection will not work efficiently.

- The more people organise themselves in communities to do child protection work, the stronger and more effective they become.

4. Child participation

- Child participation means that children and young people are giving their opinions.
- They are involved in taking decisions and actively taking part in things that are important for their lives and development.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says that children have the right to participate: The older the child, the more the child's ideas and wishes have to be listened to by adults making decisions for the child. This is a right. Obviously the child also has obligations to help out in the family and in the community. But they still have the right to participate and be protected from harm.

The benefit of listening to children:

- Understanding what children think and already know. Adults are often surprised by children's thoughts about life and their ability to understand some things deeply.
- Recognising that children have many skills, talents and creative ways of thinking and working, all of which can be very useful in developing safer, non-violent communities which most of us want to live in.
- Instead of just seeing children as helpless and sad victims, adults

can support children in finding solutions. This may make children overcome the feelings of helplessness, help them restore trust in adults and make them feel they can do something to overcome violence.

How can adults and children work more closely together to prevent violence?

- When adults and children work and talk together, this gives the best possible chance to create openness about the hidden subjects of sexual abuse, physical and humiliating violence, neglect and exploitation.
- Bringing these dark forces of violence out in the sunlight is the first step to destroying their power.
- Communities have to open their eyes and say: Violence *is* happening amongst us! We have not wanted to see or understand; now we must! And do something to change the situation.

From the United Nations Study on Violence against Children (2006) we know that:

Children do not want to only be seen as “victims” of violence; they have given strong messages that they want to be actors in ending it. This is very good news for adults. But: we must always know that the responsibility to prevent and act to reduce violence against children lies with adults.

Here are some ways in which girls and boys are taking action:

- Children's organisations fighting for child rights
- Children engaging in global, regional and national decision making
- Children involved in public discussions informing and influencing
- Child rights and peace clubs in villages for children in and out of school
- Children performing dramas which make adults aware of violence and how children experience this
- Children holding exhibitions about violence
- Children as members of child protection systems/committees. Children's role is important in discussing *general approaches and ideas* to reduce violence; in reporting what they have tried and discussing how effective it was; in planning new activities; and in guiding adults with the knowledge children have of the risks they face.
- Children's groups working with child rights may encourage and support other children to report violence. Children can also teach other children how to protect themselves against violence.
- Children can help teachers and each other to create non-violent schools – to have codes of conduct, to stop bullying.
- Children may be consulted by the government in guiding the development of national child protection systems and in developing new laws.

Children should not:

- Be directly involved in handling actual cases of abuse
- Be involved in confidential discussions in child protection systems/committees about actual families

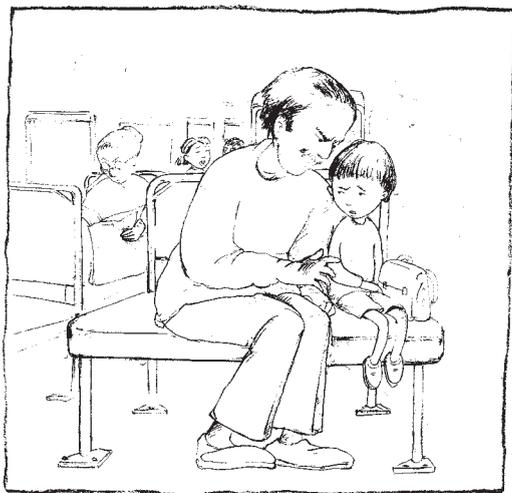
Care must be taken when child groups are talking about sensitive things like sexual abuse in communities where these things are hidden. Adults can guide children in choosing the best ways to get their message over safely.

Chapter

5

What is violence?





Chapter 5

What is violence?

Some things we know about violence:

- Violence against children happens when somebody misuses their power. It could mean physical power, or for example the power given by wealth, social status or age.
- Parents/caregivers have power over their children because their children love and trust them and depend on them for everything.

- Some adults get rid of their own frustrations and anger by exploiting children.
- Violent acts against children are often carried out by persons that children should be able to trust and rely on.
- Most children experience more than one form of violence, and there may also be more than one person being violent to them.
- A person hitting a child often says harsh, unkind, and humiliating words which children may find more hurtful than the beatings they get.
- When a child is sexually abused, the abuser often uses shaming language and threatens the child that terrible things will happen if she/he tells anyone.

Children can also abuse other children:

- This usually occurs with younger children, or children who can't fight back.
- The child to child violence is often hidden from adults.
- Those who bully take care that there are no adults around to stop them.
- The violence can be sexual, calling bad names, threats and physically violent attacks.
- Children who are bullied may be ignored and rejected by the others, and kept from taking part in social activities.
- These children are often afraid to tell teachers or parents of this violence, since they believe in the threats of older children.

- Such violence can follow children throughout their school years. Violence in schools is a cause of drop-out and even of children taking their own lives.

Why do some adults harm children by violent acts?

- Violent acts are often committed by people who were raised to believe that this is an effective way of disciplining children.
- The use of violence may occur when parents feel frustrated, angry, powerless, and out of control with their lives.
- Abusers are often those who themselves have been abused as children, and have not had enough affection and care from their parents. However, it is important to stress that certainly not all persons who experience violence in their childhoods grow up to be violent themselves.
- Violence in the home may follow alcohol or drug abuse. When drunk, negative and depressive feelings may be turned into a wish to hurt and humiliate others who can't fight back.
- Some adults sexually abuse children while continuing to have sexual relationships with other women and men. Others prefer to have sex with children instead of adults – they are known as paedophiles.

What is sexual abuse of children?

- Sexual abuse is all forms of sexual violence, including incest,

early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography and sexual slavery. Child sexual abuse may also include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child and showing pornographic material.

- Both men and women abuse boys and girls, although abuse of girls by males is by far the most common. Boys may be very vulnerable to sexual abuse in certain societies, and boys who are sexually abused may find it even more difficult to tell about it and get help.

What is physical punishment of children?

- Physical abuse involves the use of physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering (e.g. hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture).
- Beating, smacking, kicking, twisting arms, banging the head against a wall, making the child sit or stand in painful positions. In these ways, and many others, parents, teachers, police, relatives and employers punish children.

Why are children punished?

Adults say they will punish children:

- For bad behaviour
- To discipline them
- For doing something wrong

- For breaking things
- Because it is perceived as a cultural/traditional way of bringing up children

Adults admit that they may hit their children when in fact the anger and frustration they feel has nothing to do with their children's behaviour:

- They may feel despair due to poverty or helplessness.
- They may be exhausted and frightened.
- Sometimes, physical violence against children is simply a cruel act done against children who have not done anything “wrong”, but who adults dislike, who remind them of disturbing things, or who they see as a burden.
- Orphans, children with disabilities or children of minority groups can be attacked in this way.
- Babies who cry a lot may be shaken violently by a parent. This can cause bleeding into the brain, brain damage or even death.

What should be done?

- Adults must recognise that each child, whatever her or his background or situation, has the right not to be harmed.
- Adults learn and practise new ways of communicating with children without the use of violence.

Violence using words:

- Screaming and shouting very hurtful, insulting words to children, often when hitting them at the same time. This is very scary to children. If the adult is also drunk, then they know they can't reason with him/her. Words may make children run away from home, and are difficult to take back once spoken. The younger the children are, the more they believe in the threats.
- Sometimes the words can be spoken slowly, coldly, cruelly. They are carefully chosen to hurt, and make children feel worthless, shameful, rejected, and they may also feel deep anger and hatred.
- Children often say that such words, spoken by those that should love them and care for them, are often much worse and more painful and harmful than the physical pain.
- Words of rejection and humiliation make children feel unloved, unwanted and worthless. These can have serious consequences for social development and relationships with others.
- It is difficult to remember pain, but words, and the feeling they caused, can be remembered always.

Exploitation

Child exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or socio-emotional development. It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, abuse, victimisation, oppression or ill treatment.

There are two main forms of child exploitation:

- Sexual exploitation: the abuse of a position of vulnerability, of power or trust for sexual purposes:
 - o Making use of a child's vulnerable situation to sexually abuse him/her
 - o Using a child to make money by selling sex to other people
 - o Using the child to make pornographic films

- Economic exploitation: the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour:
 - o Taking advantage of children to make them work for adults without being paid or cared for
 - o Using children as slaves in domestic labour
 - o Using children as workers in factories
 - o Using children as child soldiers
 - o Using children as bonded labour
 - o Using children in criminal activities or dangerous work of all kinds

Thus exploitation is about:

- Exploitation happens when children are used to satisfy another person's needs, without any thought about the harm they can suffer. Children are looked on as "things" that can be sold or

exchanged for money or services. They are not seen as human beings.

- Exploitation leads to cruel, unjust and harmful treatment; it harms children's health and their development. It takes away their education and future prospects.

Be especially alert to the following situations:

Child protection workers need to be especially alert to children who are taken in by families of all social classes and occupations, including aid workers and government employees, for the purpose of domestic work:

- The situation of children can become invisible.
- How are the children being treated?
- Why are the children there?
- Are the children under the age of legal employment?
- Should the children be in school?
- What kind of contract do the children have?
- Are the children having contact with their family?

Neglect

A child is neglected when parents or caregivers do not take care of the child's basic needs for and rights to:

- Love

- Food
- Clothing
- Education
- Cleanliness and health care

Neglect has serious effects on a child's health and development, and especially babies and small children can die because of this. Older children may leave home in search of better conditions.

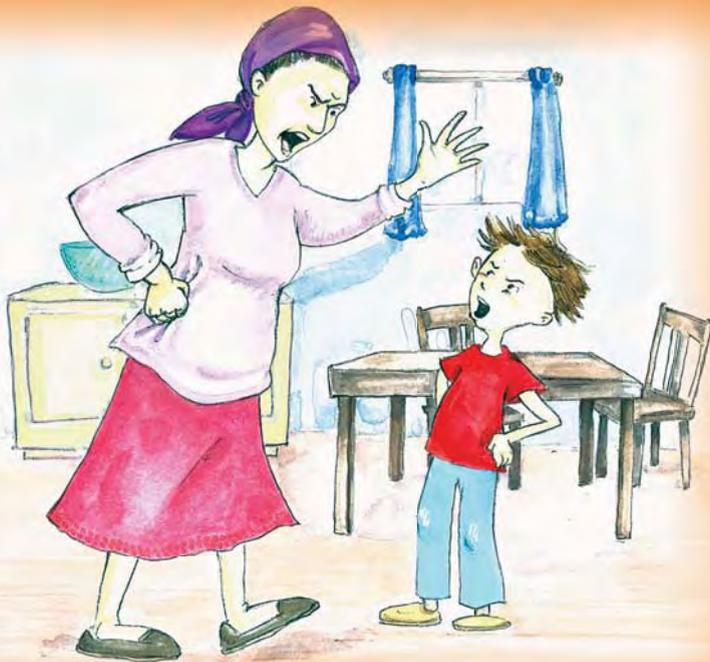
What are some of the causes of neglect?

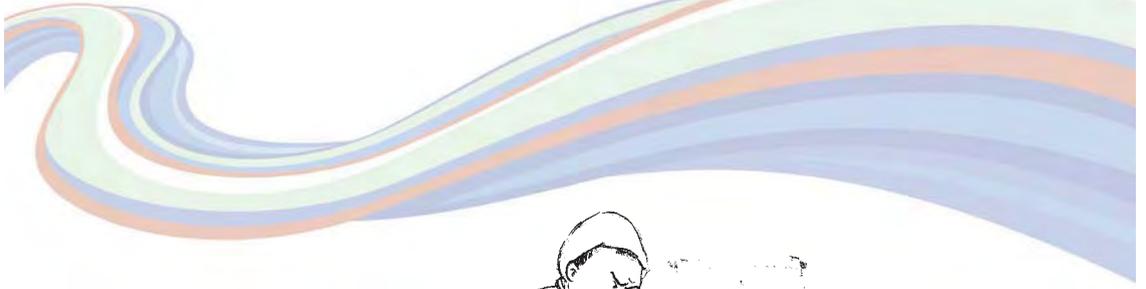
- Poverty
- Ignorance
- Mental or physical illness
- Lack of support for the caregiver
- Having too many children to care for
- Being in a refugee situation
- Many parents/caregivers may have struggled to do their best, but circumstances have forced them into a situation where they cannot provide for their children.
- A child may be neglected on purpose by caregivers who do not have feelings for the child.
- Children may be living in big institutions where there are too few caregivers looking after them.

Chapter

6

Violence may destroy a
child's life





Chapter 6

Violence may destroy a child's life

The most damaging kind of violence is when it is caused by an adult that the child trusts.

- Many parents still think that punishing children by giving them a slap or a beating, and saying hurting words, is a normal thing to do when bringing up their child.

Many countries are changing their laws to better protect children from physical punishment.

The amount and kind of harm depends on:

- The *relationship* between the abuser and the child – the closer the relationship, the greater the *betrayal* of trust
- The *age of the child* when the abuse occurred – the younger the child, the more serious the damage
- The child's *personality*, strengths and vulnerabilities
- *Past experiences* the child has faced
- Whether or not the child had *support* from some person during the abuse, such as a friend, a teacher, a sister, a brother, an aunt
- The *resilience* of the child – some children are able to tackle things better than others when things go against them in life, especially if they have the support of some trustworthy person, and have personal strengths. Thus one child experiencing the same kind of violence as another might be less affected.
- The *length of time the abuse lasted* – the longer the abuse went on, the more damage to the child

Violence destroys trust and can destroy a child's life

Babies learn to trust their mothers and fathers when they are fed, comforted, hugged, played with, kept warm and comfortable. This is

the beginnings of our ability to trust and love others. If we lose trust in others, this will affect our lives in serious ways:

- *Self-esteem* – is about how children feel about themselves. When children are told by their caregivers that they are bad, ugly, stupid, worthless, and not wanted, they begin to believe these things about themselves, and feel that in some way they deserve the treatment they are being given.
- *Fear and anxiety* – fear of the pain, the anger, the bad words, the humiliation and of being abandoned. Children’s minds become filled with thoughts of what has happened and what might happen, they can’t learn or play, they have nightmares, and become afraid of everything.
- *The feeling of being different* – children who have been sexually abused can begin to feel “different” from their friends. They have been alone in a secret world and been forced to do things many children cannot even imagine. This is a lonely place to be, and this is why many children who have been abused find help when they can share their experiences with others in similar situations.
- *Shame and guilt* – children who are treated violently feel shameful and guilty. Children are humiliated by the treatment they have received, and feel that others think badly about them. Children may believe that they have disgraced themselves and their family. Children feel that in some way the violence is their own fault, something they have caused to happen. Children may feel guilty about bringing shame on their family, or that they have told the secret of their abuse to someone else.

- *Abusers are cunning* – they often make children feel responsible for what is happening to them; “You accepted gifts from me, therefore you have allowed me to do this to you.” In this way, society blames the girl or the boy herself/himself for the most dreadful abuse of her/his rights to be protected, and the person responsible may go free.

Chapter

7

See me!





Chapter 7

See me!

How to know when children are being abused:

- Always think of the possibility!
- Learn to *read* children's "language" of distress.
- Find out what the child is trying to communicate.
- Boys and girls of different ages and sexes show their distress in different ways.

The language of distress shown by babies and small children:

Babies in pain will be screaming and crying a lot. If you are a nurse and only look in their ears and throat for signs of infection, without gently undressing the baby, you may miss:

- Bruises and broken bones
- Bleeding and tears in the genital area – suggestive of sexual abuse
- Signs of infection in the genital area – highly suspicious of sexual abuse
- Burns, scalds (burns with boiling water)
- Some of these things as well as poor weight/height – baby is not growing
- That baby is dirty, with a big “nappy rash”

From about 2 years: small children will show their fear by:

- Clinging to their mum and screaming when others come near
- Follow mum around everywhere, and look anxious
- Refuse to be comforted by anybody else
- They may show a lot of fear when the abuser appears

Small children who have been abused may also show the following signs:

- Lost their bladder and bowel control
- Are not eating or sleeping properly
- Wake up with nightmares
- Have stopped talking

If signs of normal development were there before – and have gone – something may be wrong. Children are not being naughty, they are just saying that “I’m not happy!”

- Small children can’t find the words to talk about, for example, sexual acts, but they may show them in their play or in their drawings.

Primary school age children. Look out for the following signs of violence:

- A child who has done well in school starts to get behind in her/his schoolwork.
- A child drops out of school.
- A child changes behaviour and becomes aggressive, or afraid, or does not want to play or be together with others.
- A child has headaches, stomach aches, can’t walk properly, or has bruises on his body.

- A child has no friends.
- A girl is getting ill, and the nurse finds a genital infection, and perhaps that she is HIV-positive.

Adolescents having experienced violence

- Are much more aware of what is being done to them and also how people will react if they tell the truth.
- They may leave school and home.
- They may start to use drugs and alcohol.
- They may try to get help for themselves.
- They show changes in behaviour. Girls may be more withdrawn, boys more aggressive, and may even attack their abuser.
- Sexually abused girls may show fainting attacks and sexualised behaviour towards men in general.
- They may show symptoms of STDs or AIDS.
- They may become pregnant and try to get an abortion.
- They may take their own lives if they give up hope.

Chapter

8

Parents can help stop the
violence





Chapter 8

Parents can help stop the violence

Parents are key people in changing the attitudes and practices passed on from one generation to the next. If all parents were convinced that non-violent upbringing was the best way, then the world would take a giant step forward in ending violence against children.

As a parent:

- YOU can decide to break the chain of violence and do things differently.
- YOU can question why you need to hit and humiliate your child. Is it because you think it will make him/her grow up to become a good person in society?
- YOU are the example for your child – children learn from the way their parents solve conflicts, listen and show love and respect to each other.
- YOU can teach your children about right and wrong by talking to them gently but firmly. *“You should not have taken that pen because it did not belong to you; the boy who owns the pen will be sad; let us go and put it back. Please, if you need a pen, come and ask me next time, don’t take from others.”*
- YOU show love by listening to children, playing with them, praising them when they have done well and making them feel good about themselves.

You can create love and respect by:

- Explaining the way to do things and why things should be done this way
- Listening to your child’s thoughts and questions and responding to these with patience and honesty

- Treating your children with respect
- Trying to find out if there is a reason for your child's behaviour
- Finding other ways of punishing your child than beating or saying hurting words
- Never denying your child food or drink, or putting him/her in scary places
- Sometimes, getting help from others who the child knows and respects, can help solve problems. Ask his/her favourite uncle or aunt to have a talk with the child, or perhaps a teacher who he/she has a good relationship with.
- Teaching your child how to learn to solve conflicts by talking and listening.
- You need to show an example to your children about taking too much alcohol. If you feel that you have a problem with this, and it makes you lose control or become violent, you should seek professional help.
- Through parent-teacher associations – parents can demand that schools apply non-violent methods of disciplining children.
- Parent's groups can get together with children's clubs and support them in making the communities aware about violence against children and the right of children to be protected.
- Parents who practise non-violent upbringing can spread their experiences and ideas through local radio to encourage others to do the same.

If your child has been the victim of violence by someone in the family or community:

- Believe what your child is telling you! Listen to her/him properly and try to get a clear picture of what has happened. Don't abandon your child. Support and stand by her/him.
- Comfort the child and get help to stop the violence. Make sure your child is safe.
- Help your child get medical help if needed.

Chapter

9

The risks of violence in
emergencies





Chapter 9

The risks of violence in emergencies

There are many risks for children during natural disasters and in conflict situations, such as family separation and recruitment into armed forces or armed groups. Sexual violence and exploitation are chronic risks to girls and boys. In every emergency, boys and girls risk being physically harmed as civilians increasingly are becoming targets and victims of violence and risk being killed.

The tremendous stress under which caregivers live can lead to disproportionate punishment of children.

Below are mentioned three situations that pose risk to children and proposed action points.

I. The risk:

Children may be separated from their families due to natural disasters and armed conflict. Sometimes, the parents have been killed, sometimes they are lost. These children are most at risk of exploitation, including trafficking, sexual and other kinds of violence.

Actions to take:

- A programme must be set up as soon as possible in co-operation with the local population to find separated children and start to trace their family or relatives. Siblings must be kept together.
- If it is necessary to have a temporary shelter while the tracing is going on, there must be staff trained in child protection looking after the children. Children themselves should also, with training, take part in monitoring the safety of such shelters. To the extent possible, one should avoid putting children in institutions.
- If it is not possible to find the family or relatives, extended family care or temporary fostering arrangements may be considered if in the best interests of the child.
- All placements outside the family should if possible be followed up by community-based child protection arrangements.

2. The risk:

The family may become refugees. During emergencies, large numbers of the population lose their homes and often have to move out of their communities to live in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. They may stay under very poor conditions for years, or even generations. Such conditions affect how humans develop and behave and make children more vulnerable to violence, at home and in the community. Children might also risk that aid workers take advantage of their vulnerable situation, for instance by making them exchange food for sex.

Actions to take:

- Find out, together with children and members of the refugee community, where the risks are coming from and why.
- Establish child protection committees, where also girls and boys are included as members, and train them in child protection and child rights.
- Organised learning either in temporary or established schools helps to protect children. All children should know of a trusted teacher at school to whom they can report violence.
- Help children set up child rights clubs to spread awareness of their rights.
- Train camp staff, administrators, community leaders, police, health workers and teachers in child rights and protection.
- Decide together with police, government representatives and

community leaders, what procedures should be used to deal with those who abuse and exploit children.

- Set up child-friendly spaces where children can play in safety under adult supervision.

3. The risk:

Children are always at risk of violence during armed conflict from the soldiers or armed groups who are fighting each other. Children are not only vulnerable to bullets, bombs and mines, but also to forced recruitment, rape, detention, beating and torture.

Actions to take:

- Humanitarian agencies working in the area can, together with children and adults in the community, assess the risks to children. On the basis of this risk assessment, they can try to make contact with army commanders/leaders of armed groups and demand that they uphold children's rights.
- International and national NGOs can train army personnel on the Geneva conventions, child rights, and child protection.
- Documentation can also be sent to national army headquarters, and to UN monitoring and reporting bodies.
- Schools, NGOs, children's clubs and parent groups can spread awareness among parents and children of the dangers of recruitment and association with soldiers.

Listen and Act

Children have the right to be cared for and protected. Save the Children has therefore developed material for children to know their rights – and for child rights and frontline workers to know about child development and how to encourage, care for and protect children.

1. Listening, Learning and Acting

Staff in Save the Children and Child Rights Workers wanting to know more about relevant measures to protect children will benefit from reading and using this book. The book discusses the consequences of violence, gives an update on the UN Study on Violence against Children and advice on how to act to promote the protection of children.

2. Protect the Children!

This book is for frontline workers such as teachers, nurses, people working in shelter homes and institutions, members of protection committees and social workers – all those in direct contact with children, including parents. The book is easy to read and gives a background for understanding the child and practical advice on how to support the child.

3. Listendoll

This is an illustrated storybook for children from the age of four and upwards who have suffered trauma and a difficult life situation. It is the story of a doll who faces a terrible wind that blows her life apart. She is taken by a wise bird to the forest

where the trees tell her a secret. “Bad things happen, they just do, but you are still you.” They teach her to listen in a new way that gives her strength and perspective. The story book may be accompanied by a doll made by young people as an income generating activity.

4. Safe You and Safe Me

This book is for children from seven years and upwards to learn about the types of violence faced by children around the world, and gives ideas on how they can protect themselves. The book encourages children to ask questions and state their opinions.

5. Equal You Equal Me

Through this book children from seven years can learn about the types of discrimination they may face in their daily lives and the many forms of discrimination faced by other children throughout the world.

Save the Children supported the UN in developing the UN Study on Violence against Children (2006) and is following up on the recommendations from the study. Studies and learning material have been developed in this process and can be accessed at: www.rb.se/book.shop.



Save the Children