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Violence against young children:
A painful issue

Bernard van Leer ⬤ Foundation

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Editorial

A paradox surrounds the issue of violence against children. The most severe forms of violence are generally considered more reprehensible when perpetrated against children than against adults: sexually assaulting or causing serious physical harm to a child are typically seen as the most heinous of crimes.

Yet in most parts of the world, some less severe forms of violence – administered in the name of discipline – are not only considered more socially acceptable when perpetrated against children than against adults, they are seen as necessary or as the only solution to a problem. As Rose Odoyo, of ANPPCAN, explains, "[Teachers] still have the attitude of 'spare the rod, spoil the child', because they are overwhelmed. They often have class sizes exceeding 70, and they resort to the cane as their only way of coping." (See pp 32–33).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child makes no allowance for any gradations of the current social acceptability of different kinds of violence against children. It unambiguously proscribes "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation".

It is striking that, although the convention has been ratified by almost every nation state, a practice it clearly prohibits continues to be widely accepted and even viewed with approbation around the world. This forms the main topic of our interview with Jaap Doek (pp 6–9), chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which requested a study on violence against children from the UN General Assembly. The request was approved and this autumn a major report on this issue will be published with the findings of the study.

Corporal punishment is not the only example of a deeply rooted cultural practice which confers social acceptability on instances of violence against the child. Customs such as branding, scarring, female genital mutilation, infanticide and forced early marriage also clearly fall under the convention's scope, and yet are deeply ingrained in some cultures.

Nor is it the only difficult area when it comes to defining violence. The convention includes 'mental' violence, which will be subject to widely differing interpretations across different cultures: what appears to some people to be humiliating treatment will be regarded by others as a normal part of childrearing.

Clearly, poverty plays a major role in violence against children. Poverty often equals limited opportunities, stress, and social inequities that give rise to many forms of violence. In the slums of Rio de Janeiro, for example, poverty contributes to the existence of armed drug trafficking groups, who often recruit children from the slums, placing great stress on parents (See the article by Promundo, Brazil, pp 10–15).

Related to the children and violence debate are terminological issues about the relationship between 'violence', 'abuse' and 'neglect'. The concept of child abuse is interpreted so differently in different cultures – in particular, with regard to the issues of child labour and what constitutes emotional neglect – that violence is increasingly adopted as apparently a more concrete term.

There is a consequent risk that too much weight can be placed on the word: describing such problems as lack of access to healthcare and education as a kind of 'societal violence', as some activists do, carries a danger of diluting the word's immediacy and impact.

Leaving aside these grey areas, there is no doubt that corporal punishment is the greatest source of controversy when it comes to discussing the issue of violence against children. It is likely to cause some cognitive dissonance among a significant part of the global public to cite a teacher's cane and a parent's smack alongside other instances of violence against children such as:

Although the convention has been ratified by almost every nation state, a practice it clearly prohibits continues to be widely accepted and even viewed with approbation around the world.

• sexual abuse, whether by family members, teachers or other trusted adults, or in the context of trafficking, pornography or sex tourism. Our story on the Oak Foundation (pp 21–25) discusses some of its projects on child abuse and its attempt to mainstream a concern for sexual abuse into existing agencies' activities.
• violent and humiliating treatment in institutions such as orphanages and care homes – a widespread problem, often hidden from public view;
• violence against children living on the streets, whether by rival gangs, vigilantes or private security guards;
• violence by law enforcement officers against children who are in conflict with the law – still legal in a significant minority of countries;
• child-on-child violence, i.e., bullying.

Elsewhere in this edition of ECM are other articles which cover some of these subjects. The Human

Dignity Initiative talks about violence in schools in Israel, and there are further contributions from El Salvador, Colombia, and Jamaica.

(It is worth noting that while war is undoubtedly a context in which much violence is perpetrated against children, it has so many distinguishing characteristics that it is usually treated as a separate subject in its own right.)

In many countries, laws explicitly permit 'moderate' or 'reasonable' physical punishment of children. This makes it the difficult task of social workers and judges to decide what is the point at which an approved form of parenting suddenly morphs into the most reprehensible of crimes.

The awkwardness posed by identifying this rather stark transition, and therefore defining what 'violence against children' includes, perhaps explains the relative lack of reliable statistical information

on the subject. Surveys in most parts of the world do, however, tend to find a clear majority of people reporting both that they were hit as children and that they regard hitting as an acceptable part of parenting.

A notable exception is Sweden, which in 1979 became the first country to ban all forms of violence against children. Parents are almost never taken to court under this law, but the public education effect has been dramatic: opinion polls show that only around one in 10 Swedes now regard hitting children in the name of discipline as acceptable, compared to well over half before the law was passed.

Much of the rest of the world has a long way to go to catch up. But there is now growing visibility and international momentum around the issue of violence against children, which will be enhanced by the publication of the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children later in 2006.

Why should we care about violence towards children? The answers from a child development perspective and a child's rights perspective differ in emphasis. From a developmental perspective, there is ample research demonstrating the negative effects of physical and humiliating punishment on children:

notably, a stunting of their creativity and capacity for initiative, loss of self-esteem and respect for authority figures, reduced capacity to communicate and form emotional bonds, and internalising the lesson that violence is an acceptable way for the powerful to solve their problems – with clear implications for society when they grow up.

From a child's rights perspective, the response is simpler: stopping violence against children is not only a means to an end, it is an end in itself.

Editors: *Teresa Moreno and Jan van Dongen*
Contributing writer: *Andrew Wright*

This issue of ECM is dedicated to the memory of **Dries van Dantzig**, chair of the Foundation's Board of Trustees from 1972 to 1985 and a high-profile campaigner on child abuse. A psychiatrist and World War II concentration camp survivor, Van Dantzig strongly advocated a mental health care system that is as easily and widely accessible as physical public health care. Van Dantzig was particularly appalled by injustice and violence when perpetrated against children, and he argued that it is the responsibility of all of society to fight child abuse.

"The core human rights that apply to adults also apply to children"

Interview with Jaap Doek, Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

In autumn this year, the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children will present its findings to the UN General Assembly. The study is the second to be conducted at the request of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, exercising a power granted by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The first study, in 1996, dealt with the effects of armed conflict on children.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child requested the study on violence against children after devoting two Days of General Discussion to the theme in 2000 and 2001. After the request was approved by the General Assembly, in February 2003 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed Brazilian professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro as the independent expert to direct the study.

The study's aim is to "lead to the development of strategies aimed at effectively preventing and combating all forms of violence against children, outlining steps to be taken at the international level and by States to provide effective prevention, protection, intervention, treatment, recovery and reintegration." It is a joint initiative supported by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Jaap Doek has been the Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child since 2001. A law professor and judge, he was instumental in founding the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), the African Network for Prevention and Protection of Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), and Defence for Children International (DCI).

Professor Doek attended the nine regional consultations that have been held in the process of putting together the study, and is a member of the study's editorial board. Here he talks to *Early Childhood Matters* about the issues at the heart of the study and his hopes for its impact.

ECM: Why did the Committee on the Rights of the Child decide to request a study on violence against children?

JD: The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives the committee the power to request studies, and the only other time this power has been used, the results were positive. The study on the effects of armed conflict on children resulted in an Optional Protocol which has now been signed by 110 states, and the creation of a Special Representative in the office of the Secretary General in New York. The reports received by the Special Representative help to keep this important issue in the spotlight.

We are aware the power to request studies should not be used too often, because it would dilute its effect. But on the basis of the reports the committee had received from states parties by the year 2000, we could see that violence against children was a phenomenon that deserved more attention. There was enough to talk about to fill two of the annual Days of General Discussion with topics on the theme of violence – in institutions, on the streets, in the juvenile justice system, and in the home. It deserved a study.

What will happen to the study when it is published?

There will be two outputs. There will be a report, of around 30–35 pages, which will be presented to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General. And there will be a book, which will go into much more depth with chapters dealing with each setting in which violence occurs. The book should be seen as a background document for the report, but it is the report which will contain the key recommendations.

The Secretary General will present the report to the General Assembly. It is hard to predict what the impact will be. It depends on what the recommendations are, and what the General Assembly wants to do with them.

The report will set out a program of action and the success of the follow-up measures will determine the impact of the report. Ultimately it is up to states parties to implement the recommendations – there may be some activity at a regional level, but it is at national level where we will succeed or fail.

What will the follow-up measures be? Will the study ask for the appointment of a UN Special Representative on the issue of violence and children, as happened with the study on children and armed conflict?

The study may or may not ask for an Optional Protocol and a Special Representative – and if it does, this may or may not be granted. But what is crucial is that we have specific, concrete, timebound recommendations. These will provide the framework for UNICEF and NGOs to put pressure on states parties to implement the report's recommendations. A special representative can play a strong adcocacy role, but so can a working group or committee, knocking on the doors of governments and NGOs, promoting the issue and encouraging them to take action. Without concrete and timebound recommendations, though, this becomes much more difficult.

It will be helpful to create a separate monitoring system for the issue of violence towards children. The Committee on the Rights of the Child depends on states parties submitting their monitoring reports – and some are better at this than others. But they can pay only limited attention to violence in an overall report on the convention. If we create a separate mechanism for monitoring on violence, they will pay this more attention.

One thing in our favour is that the nine regional consultations have established good momentum and networks of players in government, NGOs and the media that we will be able to draw on.

When the Secretary General presents the study, what reaction do you hope to get from the General Assembly?

Ideally what we want from the General Assembly is a strongly worded resolution with unanimous backing. If we can't have that, I would rather have a resolution that strongly supports the study and gets majority backing than a unanimously supported resolution with weak wording – 'taking note' of the study, for example.

UNICEF, WHO and OHCHR will be lobbying very hard to get a solid resolution drafted and then to win the support of as many states as possible.

Was there any difficulty in agreeing on a definition of violence that does justice to the issue of inflicting emotional and psychological damage?

Violence is not limited to the physical, that's for sure. But no, we had no difficulty about the definition of violence. Of course, it is difficult to translate it from paper into practice. What constitutes a cruel and humiliating punishment, for example? It differs from culture to culture. But within each culture, people know what is meant by a cruel and humiliating punishment, and that is what matters.

At the heart of all of this is emphasising that the core human rights that apply to adults also apply to children. Essentially, the right to integrity of physical and mental well-being is the value we are needing to instill.

Take the issue of corporal punishment. We could cite studies that show the bad effects of corporal punishment on children in later life. But we don't want to go down that route, because it would allow others to cite studies which show it's not harmful – there are fewer of those studies, but they do exist. We want to avoid this whole debate. Our view is that regardless of whether or not it does long-term harm to the development of children, corporal punishment is wrong because children have the same right as adults to be protected from violence.

Is corporal punishment likely to be the most contentious part of the study's report?

Yes, I think corporal punishment by parents is sure to be the most contested part of the report; indeed, I believe it will be the only seriously contested

part. Most states parties now agree that corporal punishment is unacceptable in schools, institutions, the juvenile justice system and so forth. But when it comes to corporal punishment in the home, there is no such consensus.

There are reactionary attitudes to corporal punishment in the most unlikely places. Here in the Netherlands, corporal punishment is supported by politicians who would normally see themselves as advocates for children. There is a debate raging in New Zealand, where a member of parliament is trying to abolish a law that excuses parents who hit their children. Others want to keep this clause, but explicitly define when it is reasonable for parents to hit their children.

The committee's view is simple. Of course you should abolish it. Once you start trying to explicitly define what is reasonable, you open the door to absurd discussions. Canada's Supreme Court recently decided that parents could hit their children provided the child was above the age of 3 and under the age of 12, and provided they used their bare hands – or feet – and didn't connect with the child's head. Why 12? Is it simply because, as a cynic might suggest, children above the age of 12 are more likely to hit you back?

So we have countries one would normally consider civilised discussing detailed guidelines on the circumstances in which they consider it acceptable to hit children. This is, in my opinion, embarrassing.

Why do you think there is such lingering support for parents hitting their children?

It is very hard for me to understand. There are deep-rooted traditional beliefs about childrearing, of course – 'spare the rod, spoil the child', and so forth. And there are the anecdotal stories – you hear high-ranking ministers talk about how they were beaten themselves and they believe it never did them any harm.

But a lot of it is fundamentally about power, about exerting control over the child. When parents say that hitting their children is in the best interests of the child, it is true that often they genuinely believe that. But it is often, deep down, about asserting their power. They are showing who's boss.

You must also remember that practically it's much more difficult for governments to tackle corporal punishment in the home than it is in schools and institutions. If a teacher hits children, it's relatively easy to have him sacked and stop him from teaching again. If a parent hits a child, it's very difficult for the state to intervene, in all but the most extreme cases.

It becomes, then, a question of social pressure. The challenge is for us to make it socially unacceptable for parents to hit their children.

Do you believe history is on your side in this?

Yes, I do. There are a growing number of states introducing fully fledged bans on violence against children. In countries which are at the leading edge, such as Sweden, there has been a perceptible shift in public attitudes. But it is a long road ahead.

The study defines children as under-18s. At the Bernard van Leer Foundation, as you know, we focus on under-8s. What issues have come up in the study that you believe are particularly relevant for young children?

Young children depend much more on third parties for protection, which means we must pay this group special attention. The main issue here, I believe, is parenting skills. A lot of parents feel powerless because they cannot reason with a young child of 1 or 2 years old who is behaving in ways that make them desperate – throwing a tantrum in a supermarket, for example. These parents need professional tips on how best to act.

In my dream world, every new parent would pass a test in parenting skills, rather like a new driver having a licence to be allowed on the roads. Obviously that can never happen. But governments do have a big role to play in promoting the idea of parenting classes. Here in the Netherlands, it's increasingly seen as normal for fathers as well as mothers to go to such classes during pregnancy. That's the way it should be.
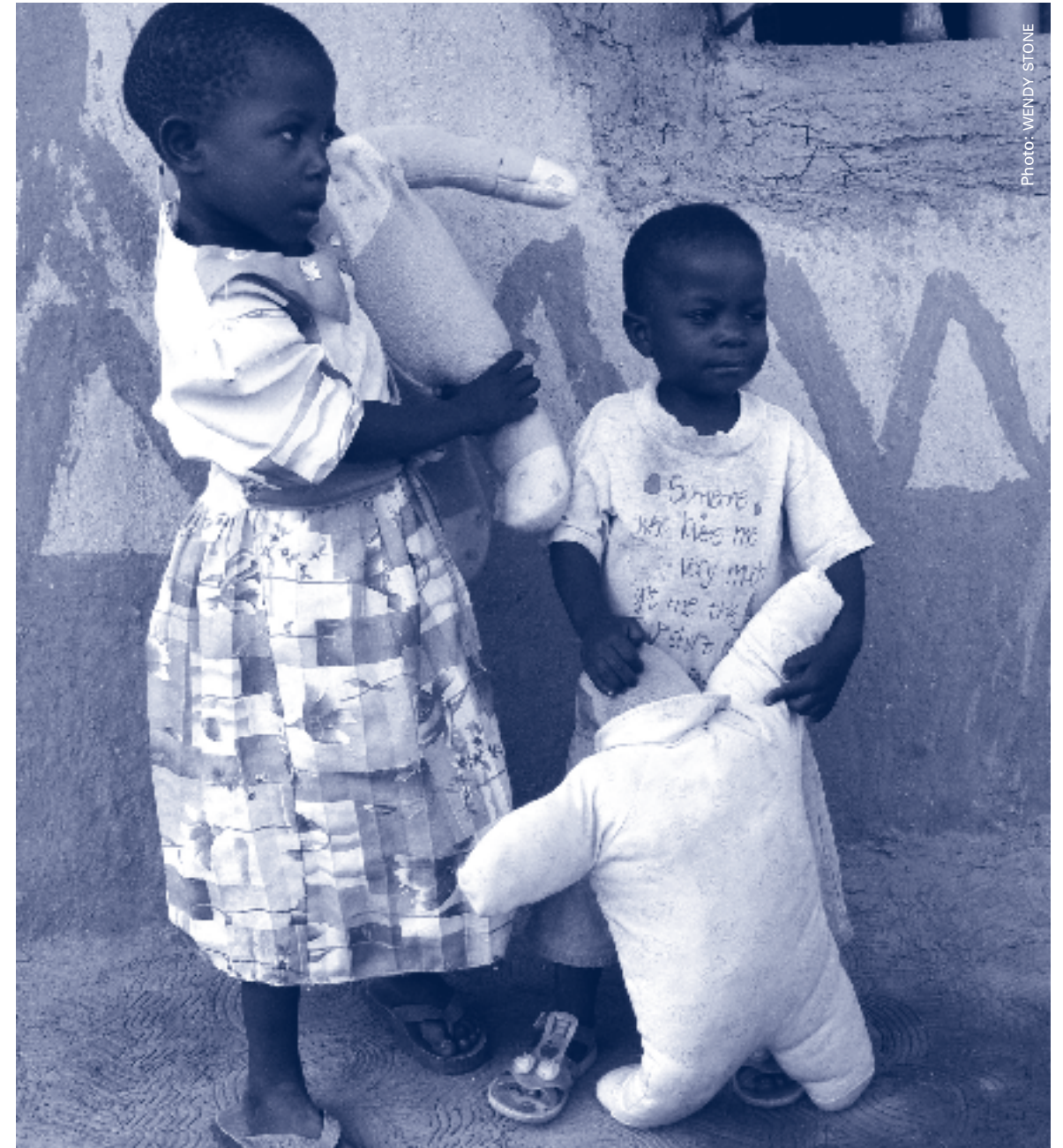
"The challenge is for us to make it socially unacceptable for parents to hit children." (Jaap Doek)

The problem is that it's the responsible adults who are most likely to go to parenting classes, but they're also the ones who are least likely to be violent to their children. We need to find ways of targeting the unreceptive, of getting the parents most at risk of violent behaviour to parenting classes. But we need to do this without stigmatising the parents who are considered to be the high-risk cases. This is the challenge.

If smacking works, why are the prisons so full?

Building on voices of respect to reduce physical punishment against young children

Gary Barker and Tatiana Araujo, Instituto Promundo, Brazil*

Brazil is no different to many other parts of the world in that violence against children is widespread – particularly the use of physical or corporal punishment. Household sample surveys carried out by Promundo in three low-income neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro found that between 60 and 77% of parents have used physical violence (mostly physical punishment including slapping, spanking or beating) against children on one or more occasions in the past month. Physical violence was most frequently used against children aged between 4 and 12 years. In the same 543 households, 22–44% reported incidences of physical violence between adults (mostly men against women).

Despite legislation in support of children's rights, Brazil has until recently had few public education campaigns or community-based initiatives aiming to prevent or reduce physical punishment and other forms of physical violence against children. Instead, efforts have mostly focused on responding to serious cases of abuse or neglect and reporting cases of violence. While such interventions are vital, it is equally important to identify ways that physical punishment, and the trauma associated with it, can be prevented. The concept of prevention strikes at the heart of the 'adult–child interaction', i.e. whether children are viewed as subjects in their own right or as objects or inferior beings who must be moulded by their parents. Indeed, from a developmental perspective, when parents give their children respect and 'personhood' from the earliest moments of their lives, children are more likely to grow up with greater confidence and ability to interact with the world around them.

The project "Children – Holders of Rights"

In conducting the research reported here, it was important not to stigmatise low-income families and parents; corporal punishment and child abuse are also widespread among middle-income families in Brazil and elsewhere. Furthermore, poverty is associated with limited opportunities, a range of stresses (financial, physical and emotional) and social inequalities that in and of themselves represent forms of violence against children and families. In the low-income favelas[1] of Rio de Janeiro, structural inequalities[2] (also known as structural violence) contribute, for example, to the existence of comandos or bandidos (armed drug trafficking groups), who control the drug trade and other criminal activities, recruit young people from the favelas and engage in conflict with rival comandos and the police.

Such conditions place great stress on parents, who frequently take extreme measures to ensure the safety of their children, such as locking them up at home. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of recreational activities and early childhood or after-school programmes that could provide safe spaces for children outside their homes. Promundo's research and longstanding collaboration in these communities has led to the observation that parents

Violence in the low-income favelas place great stress on parents. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of recreational activities and early childhood or after-school programmes that could provide safe spaces for children outside their homes.

frequently use physical punishment as a way to protect their children from community violence. We have observed, for example, parents slapping or hitting a child to get their attention, often when the child is outside the home and not responding to instructions to come inside away from the violence. The following statements describe the level of community violence:

"We live in fear…when we hear gunshots, we all go running…we hide under the bed…[my children] say they are afraid. This is not a good place to raise a child."

Mother of young children, Bangu

"The violence comes from both sides: the bandidos and the police. Depending on where you live, you may trust the bandidos more than the police."

Mother of young children, Bangu

"We know that our children need to play… that they should not stay locked up inside the house. They want to go out and play. But we know we have to lock them up inside the house. Outside it's too much of a risk."

Mother of young children, Santa Marta

'Voices of resistance'

At first glance, the activities of Promundo suggest a pessimistic outlook for children living in the favelas. However, 'voices of resistance' can be found. These are parents and caregivers who do not believe in using physical violence against children and who have found alternatives. It is important not to oversimplify the difference between 'violent' and 'non-violent' parents. The vast majority of parents in the communities where we work have positive intentions toward their children, but face numerous stresses in caring for them. Focusing on the voices of resistance can help identify protective factors or voices that can mitigate against or prompt others to question the use of corporal punishment.

Promundo researchers interviewed parents about their relationships with their children, their knowledge and use of existing services and their use (or not) of physical punishment and other forms of violence. The process led to identification of four (sometimes overlapping) categories:

1. Parents who use and justify physical punishment as a way to maintain parental authority and see it as a valid educational practice.
2. Parents who say they are opposed to corporal punishment in principle but sometimes (or frequently) use it because they lose control or don't know what else to do.
3. Parents who use serious forms of physical violence against children and display negative feelings toward their children (violence that could be classified as abuse).
4. Parents who do not believe in physical punishment and, for the most part, use non-violent forms of discipline. Some use verbal aggression and threats; others demonstrate relationships based on respect, dialogue and negotiation.

Category 4 has provided the best insight for designing community-based interventions. Listening to the parents who question violence against children has led to the identification of several key factors:

- **Their own experiences of violence when they were children.** Some had themselves been subjected to physical violence when they were children but did not believe that it was right or appropriate. Others did not suffer corporal punishment as children and wanted to pass on their experience of a positive relationship to their own children.
- **Their knowledge, belief and experience of non-violent forms of discipline.** These parents showed some experience and belief in the use of dialogue, time-outs and grounding their children, instead of using physical punishment. Thus they not only knew about other forms of discipline, they had tried them and found them effective, and thus felt confident to use them again.
- **Their description and belief in children's rights.** Some showed a degree of respect for even young children as being able to make certain decisions, having rights to opinions and expressions and being complete human beings, not simply extensions of themselves. As one mother said:

"A child is a person just like us. They have desires, a will... They get mad just like us. We have to understand the child's universe. We have to know how to negotiate and there are times when we have to set limits. But I don't believe that we are the kings of it all."
Mother of children aged 0–6 years

- **Their awareness that the parental style of interaction can influence how children interact with others.** Some parents were concerned about how their children perceived them. They understood that if they presented a role model for violent behaviour, their children would be more likely to repeat the same behaviour when interacting with others. The following quotes illustrate how these parents viewed the issue:

"Do you know why I don't agree with spanking? The world is already too violent… If I use violence, I'm just going to show them how to be violent and they'll pass that on to their children."
Mother of children aged 7–12 years

"Beating your children just generates fear… He'll be afraid of you but he won't respect you."
Father of adolescent children

"I talk with my children and if necessary give them a time-out. I believe that it has to be done with dialogue. If violence worked, there are so many prison inmates who were beaten as children and it didn't serve anything."
Mother of children aged 0–6 years

The research led to another important finding from both qualitative and quantitative aspects: parental knowledge of children's rights and child development was not necessarily associated with lower rates of corporal punishment. Indeed, nearly all the parents interviewed (those who used violence and those who did not) showed a fairly high level of knowledge about children's rights legislation in Brazil and basic aspects of child development. Although such knowledge is obviously important, it appears that other parental conditions, factors and characteristics seem to be more important in explaining whether parents use or do not use physical punishment. Indeed, the key seems to be the quality of the interaction between parent and child, and secondly, whether parents believe

that children are independently minded, complete human beings with rights, as the mother above said, 'just like adults'. Parents with such beliefs do not allow their children to do anything they want. They perceive that, as parents, they have a responsibility to protect and care for their children. They also perceive that they have power over their children, but believe that they should use this power to protect and teach rather than to dominate.

An additional component of the research involved asking children aged 5–12 years about corporal punishment. The consultation consisted of 11 two-hour sessions with 65 children (separated into groups aged 5–8 and 9–12 years). The researchers used activities such as role-plays, clay modelling, storytelling and drawing. In these sessions the children affirmed that they felt fear, sadness and anger when subjected to physical punishment and that they acutely resented those all-too-frequent moments when they felt that their parents did not listen to them and take their wishes into consideration. Many children described desperate attempts to get their parents to listen to them. In one activity, the children were asked to pretend that they were the parents and that their make-believe son or daughter was acting up. Most of the children said they would talk to their 'child', perhaps use a time-out or send the disobeying 'child' to their room. The children were then asked what they would do if after using a time-out, their 'children' continued to disobey them. Their responses showed that children as young as five were already reproducing their parents' behaviour. One child said angrily, "If my child didn't obey me I would get the broom and beat her just like my mother does with me."

The research results, together with Promundo's ongoing experiences with low-income communities, provided the basis for introducing a series of activities designed to promote discussion on raising children without violence. One of the first steps was to develop a manual, entitled *Caring without violence: Everyone can*, aimed at community workers. The manual was developed in collaboration with the Centro Internacional de Estudos e Pesquisas sobre a Infância (CIESPI) and was inspired in part by materials produced by Save the Children–Spain. It

presents a series of group educational activities that can be carried out with parents. These include role-plays, group brainstorming exercises and personal reflections about physical punishment and about the recognition of children as 'subjects of rights', i.e. that children are 'just like adults' and that parents are not 'the kings of it all' (see box).

The manual and its activities were tested and used initially with parents in three communities as part of a five-year initiative to build community-based service networks for children and young people. Activities were also conducted with staff at early childhood education centres and after-school programmes for school-age children. It emerged that daycare staff were already aware of children's rights and showed a high degree of respect towards children. The challenge, as voiced by teachers and daycare staff, was to get the same message to the parents and to encourage them to reflect critically about the issues.

Strategies to find time in parents' busy schedules involve offering flexible meeting hours (evenings or weekends), child care, snacks and sometimes

Persons and things

In the 'Persons and things' activity, the group of parents is divided into two groups: one is the 'persons', and the other is the 'things'. Each 'person' is assigned one 'thing'. During the course of about 15 minutes, the 'persons' control their 'things'. They tell them what to do, what not to do and make them perform various tasks. The 'things' must obey the 'persons'; they are not allowed to talk back and they have no will of their own. After the 15 minutes, the group discusses how it feels to be a 'person' or a 'thing'. They then reflect on how the activity might resemble family dynamics and how they may treat young children as 'things' or how parents may also be treated as 'things', for example, in the workplace.

This and other similar activities can help parents think about how they view their children. The activities also help them analyse how they learned their parenting behaviour and how various life conditions – including stress related to work and community violence – may lead to physical punishment.

combining an immediate need (such as storytelling with the children) with a more abstract need (e.g., improving parent–child relations). Community-based workers (who are from the communities themselves and are paid a stipend as part of the project) often have contact with the families (as friends, neighbours, etc.) and can serve as outreach workers, visiting their homes if they miss a session, or distributing information about forthcoming activities.

Voices of resistance in action
As a result of this initial experience, Promundo began a new initiative aimed at reducing physical punishment of children. This is based on the premise that the key factor is to engage parents in critical reflection of the parent–child interaction and to encourage a supportive community environment that builds on the voices of parents and other community members who already question the use of violence. The key hypothesis, based on this research, is that parents who see their children as 'subjects of rights', having full 'personhood', are less likely to use physical punishment than parents who do not view their children as having inherent rights, or who see their children as inferior or as extensions of themselves and their own needs. The initiative uses four key components:

1. **Parent discussion groups.** These will include activities from the *Caring without Violence* manual and other group educational activities and discussions, using a Paulo Freirean approach[3] to raise awareness and promote critical reflection about parent–child interactions. Rather than simply a presentation of information, the groups will focus on increasing awareness based on reflection about the parents' beliefs.
2. **Community campaign for a non-violent environment.** This is currently being designed in collaboration with an advertising agency. It is based on the voices of resistance and the baseline research, and will reinforce existing messages of non-violence in the community. Rather than chastising or criticising parents, the campaign will feature discourses from parents who already question violence.
3. **Educational video and booklet to promote critical reflection.** Presented as a cartoon without words, the video follows in the tradition of the Promundo/Program H series on gender (*Once*

upon a boy, Afraid of what? and *Once upon a girl*). These videos have been used in the public education sector and by NGOs worldwide to promote gender equality. They are designed for use with groups. The facilitator can stop the video at any point and ask the participants to construct the dialogue themselves, thereby promoting critical reflection about the issues. The video on children as subjects of rights will show children at several different ages or stages of evolving capacities and present parents interacting in violent ways with them. An adult, in this case a grandmother, intervenes, showing the parents the effects of their negative attitudes. (The example of a grandmother acting as a positive voice was prompted by recent research.) The video (like the campaign) will not seek to make parents feel guilty, but will demonstrate the positive aspects of parenting in addition to the challenges.
4. **Impact evaluation model.** As with previous work promoting gender equality, Promundo is carrying out qualitative and quantitative impact evaluation to assess changes in attitudes, behaviour and social norms related to physical punishment of children as a result of our program activities. The centrepiece of this evaluation is an attitude scale that measures the extent to which parents see their children as subjects of rights. This combines questions and indicators from existing measures of parenting styles to develop a new scale, which is being validated with a household sample.

Lessons learned
Previous work conducted by Promundo, looking at ways to reduce men's violence towards women, has provided significant input for the work on violent behaviour against children. Previous research confirmed that group education focusing on critical reflection combined with community campaigns can change attitudes and behaviour and create a supportive community environment. Previous work also built on identifying positive discourses – in that case the voices of men who showed more gender equitable views toward women and who actively questioned the role of violence against them. Similarly, the ongoing work with children listens to the voices of parents who already question violent behaviour directed towards children. Emerging lessons include the following:
• **Early childhood programmes and their staff are**

key allies in the process, particularly in reaching parents, and often already question the use of violence against children. Indeed, a child rights perspective already exists in the public education system and in early childhood centres located in the communities where Promundo works. There are few reported incidents of teachers using physical violence against children, and teachers (at the primary and pre-school level) advocate children as being subjects of rights. The staff can therefore represent important allies in engaging parents and helping create a supportive community environment.
• **Engaging parents and caregivers, while challenging, is the key to the process.** Many parents in low-income neighbourhoods work long and irregular hours. They may also have more than one job. They are often physically too exhausted to participate in group activities. Others lack the childcare arrangements that would allow them to participate. This is why Promundo provides childcare facilities while the parents participate. It is often difficult to engage the men/fathers, particularly in low-income urban settings like those in Rio de Janeiro, where approximately one-third of households are female-headed. Special recruiting processes aim to include as many fathers as possible in the groups.
• **It is important to build on existing protective factors and positive practices.** Initial interactions with parents confirm that it is unfair and unproductive to carry out activities that point the finger at parents, highlighting what is negative about their behaviour. Even in the most stressed settings, where there is extensive community violence and parents frequently use physical violence, the vast majority of parents have positive intentions and want the best for their children. Rather than chastising parents, our intervention starts from the premise that raising young children is a formidable challenge (especially for low-income families) and parents need help and support. Similarly, our community messages build on the positive things parents already do, rather than starting with a deficit perspective.

While there is still much to do, initial work through a process of critical reflection is beginning to show

impact. Some community workers were initially distressed by the widespread acceptance of corporal punishment. However, after a series of sessions in which the parents reflected about what it means to be parent (and carried out the 'Persons and things' activity, among others), their attitudes changed.

"At the beginning, some of the parents would say 'Why would you hug your child? If you take care of them, feed them, give them a roof over their head, that's enough.' But then the mothers' attitudes started to change, they saw the importance of not using violence…of spending more time with their children."
Community worker

Clearly a community-based intervention like this one will not change attitudes and behaviour on its own. It is important to point out that, in addition to its community work, Promundo is working closely with Save the Children–Sweden (SCS) and other partners on national-level advocacy efforts. The Brazilian office of SCS is leading efforts to enact national legislation specifically condemning corporal punishment. It is also promoting a national awareness campaign about ending corporal punishment. Working together, the two organisations, and their partners, are exerting a synergistic effect, each complementing the other's activities.

Notes
1 Slums.
2 Structural violence occurs whenever people are disadvantaged by political, legal, economic or cultural traditions. Unequal access to resources, political power, education, health care, or legal standing are forms of structural violence. See Deborah DuNann Winter and Dana Leighton, 1999. Structural violence introduction <www.psych.ubc.ca/~dleighton/svintro.html>.
3 Paulo Freire was one of the most important educators in Brazil and is known worldwide for creating what he called a 'pedagogy of the oppressed', a process for promoting critical reflection and a critical conscience among low income individuals in which, by analyzing their own conditions, they become active participants in transforming their realities. See Freire, P. (1996). Pedagogia do oprimido. Editora Paz e Terra, 23ª Edição, 1996. <www.paulofreire.org>

A case study from Israel

Addressing violence in schools through transforming their organisational culture

The Human Dignity Initiative, Israel, with Bernard van Leer Foundation programme staff

"As I entered the school, I saw the principal holding a pupil with one hand and speaking on the phone – probably with the pupil's mother – with the other, attempting to convince her to take her son away, as he was throwing stones in school. The child refused to cooperate with the attempts to calm him down or to send him home, and continued shouting, spitting on the principal and the secretary and cursing the people around him. The principal requested me to wait in his room until the issue was settled. This event evoked in me extremely difficult emotions, and yet it allowed me a quick initial glance at the issues the principal has to deal with in everyday life, as well as at behaviour patterns I would encounter at school."

Organisational consultant for the Human Dignity Initiative

Violence in schools is of great concern in Israel, as elsewhere in the world. This includes individual children behaving violently (as described above) and more general violence among and across groups of children. The Bernard van Leer Foundation is concerned with two issues related to violence in schools. One is how to protect younger children from being bullied by older ones; the second is more preventative and seeks to discover if it is possible to alter a school culture by encouraging younger children to behave differently when they reach the higher grades.

These issues form the basis for the project "Young Children and the Human Dignity Initiative", which supplies organisational consultants to primary schools in different parts of Israel. The project is supported by the Foundation and conceptualised and carried out by Sikkuy, an Israeli civil rights organisation. Sikkuy has introduced the Human Dignity Initiative into a range of environments in Israel. Its work in schools stimulated the Foundation to enter into shared learning about how the Human Dignity Initiative can enlist young children and improve their human environments.

The nine primary schools in the project are located in neighbourhoods that are disadvantaged socially, politically and/or economically. They present a range of challenging environments, for example:
- One school is explicitly based on 'democratic principles' between staff and students, with children from kindergarten onwards involved in the discussions and the voting that structures the school's daily life. The issue in this school is how to agree on boundaries that staff, students and parents will respect.
- A Jewish religious school sees Human Dignity work as based on values enshrined in scripture, and struggles to develop appropriate behaviour based on those values for different categories of actors within the school.
- Arab schools in Israel reflect the contradictions of democratic values in the society around them. For example, Arab teachers are frequently made to wait at roadblocks and experience undignified treatment by Israeli soldiers.

Because of the different cultural contexts, the project has to seek universally acceptable norms whilst respecting diversity. Examples of such norms are the unacceptability of corporal punishment and agreement that a situation where 'children do not dare raise their eyes to me' represents repression, not respect.

The project's problem analysis does not present children as little hooligans in urgent need of discipline. Sikkuy conceives of any organisation as a complex system of relationships that must become imbued with respect for each individual's dignity. Within a primary school, for example, Sikkuy expects the behaviour of all actors – principal, staff, parents and children – to become mutually respectful. The only new resource introduced into a school by the project is a consultant from the Human Dignity team, who, over a period of three years, is expected to mobilise and institutionalise resources for empathy and respect that are already present among the various actors within the school.

The project exemplifies Foundation thinking on early childhood, children's rights and children's participation because it:
- explicitly recognises the personhood and dignity of young children;
- establishes symmetrical relationships of respect between children and adults, rather than the more usual asymmetrical relationships;
- translates abstract rights – a child's own rights as well as other people's – into tangible everyday behaviour;
- encourages a child to understand their intrinsic value, as well as the value of another person;
- promotes early exposure to values of human dignity and related behaviour.

> **The Human Dignity Initiative** in schools is an expression of the relations between children and children, teachers and children, teachers and teachers, and between parents and children. The value of 'dignity' is expressed through daily behaviors such as empathic listening, acceptance of the other, and conflict resolution through mutual respect. The opposite of human dignity is humiliation and violence. A Human Dignity programme integrates consciousness-raising of all programme participants with the creation of organisational structures that anchor awareness in concrete, visible, measurable change. (The Sikkuy team can be reached at <sikkuy@inter.net.il>)

Starting from the top

The project, which began in September 2004, illustrates the principle of starting from the top, i.e., with the school principal. Some principals were verbally aggressive towards staff and children, routinely resorting to public humiliation. "Leaders need to serve as personal models – the eyes of others in the organisation are constantly on them, assessing to what extent the leaders exemplify in their daily behaviours the values being promoted" (project documents).

Some problems 'at the top' included the following:
- One principal was enthusiastic about his school entering the project, but was not willing to allocate the time needed to conduct workshops for teachers, and the school ultimately withdrew from the project.
- The consultant had to cope with a principal's use of personal power to enforce respectful relationships (a contradiction in terms). At a workshop conducted by the consultant for teachers, this principal tried to bully the consultant, but to her credit later acknowledged that this was inappropriate.
- The project was inaugurated in one school with a display of balloons on which children had written messages expressing respect, but their excitement took a little time to subside, in which short duration the principal and one teacher had already begun screaming "Where is your respect?" and "Shut up!" at the children, again not perceiving the contradiction in their behaviour.
- A school principal had begun 'values education' activities based on Jewish scripture that were close to the ideas of the Initiative, but he did not include teachers who removed their head covering after the school day because he did not consider them to be suitable role models.

Most principals involved in the project show a capacity to learn and to grow in respectful behaviour. They are aware of their central role. In one school, levels of violence decreased significantly after a new principal took over, even before the school joined the Human Dignity Initiative. In addition, principals may be at the apex of power within a school, but in dealing with the world outside, they too are vulnerable to the arrogant exercise of power by 'superiors.' There are reports

of the local government Head of Education arriving at a major meeting very late, and of an Inspector of Schools chastising a school principal in front of staff.

Alternatives to power relationships
"Often, teachers fear the child's behaviours…The teacher's response to this fear is to show the child who's boss, to demonstrate to the child how strong the teacher is and how small the child is. One of the project's purposes is to enlarge a teacher's ability to contain the children's behaviour and feelings, without resorting to the use of power" (project documents).

Fear of loss of authority and the need to 'show who's boss' is also what motivates principals to humiliate teachers in public, and in turn moves officials from the Education Department to 'put down' school principals. At these levels, violence and abuse is verbal, not physical, but surveys have established the occasional use of physical violence by teachers against students. For example, in one school, the consultant noticed that teachers were carrying small sticks or short lengths of rubber hose in their briefcases. They were apparently using these 'weapons' to threaten children and maintain order. According to informal chats between the consultant and students, some of the teachers actually used them to punish unruly children. During a workshop, the consultant worked with the teachers on different ways to confront bad behaviour, and the issue of the sticks and hoses came up. The teachers reluctantly acknowledged that corporal punishment contradicts human dignity, so the consultant asked the teachers to demonstrate their commitment to dignity by depositing the hoses and sticks in a wastebasket. Everyone complied.

The sticks and hoses clearly served a purpose and apparently gave the teachers a sense of security. The consultant's act was bold, but would it have been better if the principal had done it? The consultant felt that the principal's tenuous authority with the staff had prevented his taking such action. When a defence mechanism is challenged (and here, taken, in one dramatic moment), the teachers should be provided with new tools and abilities for confronting the fears that prompted the earlier carrying of 'weapons.' The next step is for the consultant to explore with the teachers how they might maintain order without using threats of corporal punishment.

Avoiding verbal abuse
Irritated teachers, in the heat of the moment, may be tempted to use verbal abuse, such as: "When God distributed brains, he skipped you" or "I knew you wouldn't get it". Many teachers are convinced that empathy, listening and understanding are not compatible with maintaining order and setting limits, asking "What do we need all this soft stuff for?" or "How can we be empathic towards a kid who hits other kids or who uses profane language?" Project activities have prompted animated discussions about the place of empathy in setting limits. For example:
- A teacher remembered her childhood and being hurt by her teacher's authoritarian style. She told the group that gaining an understanding of her own experiences has helped her to change her approach to students. At first she opposed listening empathically to a violent child, but later agreed to listen to the child without necessarily condoning the bad behaviour.
- Another teacher reported a successful shift to a facilitative style, and that shortly after "a child asked me how I am feeling, something that has never happened in the past".
- During a workshop on 'dignified' and 'undignified' behaviour, one teacher cried, later reporting that she had realised that her marital relationship was not based on human dignity. She raised the subject with her husband and they resolved the ensuing crisis. The school principal saw this as demonstrating the project's success. The project consultant commented: "I was flattered that I had managed to reach people with the message, although I had not intended that the workshops should affect relationships in this way".

Encouraging teachers to analyze difficult situations
Difficult situations can be analyzed along the lines of 'event–thought–reaction–outcome.' A teacher reported feeling offended and angry when a parent upbraided her for not giving a child a solo role in a play, although no solo roles had been assigned so that all children could participate equally. The example was used in a workshop to analyze how a negative event could be made to yield positive outcomes through a reaction based on careful thought in the split seconds available. Fairly soon afterwards, a meeting was held, in the presence of the principal and the inspector of schools, between a

Parents and students team up to define guidelines for dignified behaviour.

teacher and some parents who had filed a complaint against her. The teacher used the 'event–thought–reaction–outcome' analysis and presented her version of the situation in a manner that generated a workable solution.

When teachers use respectful behaviour and use strategies that facilitate problem analysis, anger management and development of empathy, it has had a positive effect on the children. For example:
- A kindergarten teacher interrupted a physical fight between two children and asked them to sit down and discuss the cause of their dispute, in what way each of them had been responsible for it, and what could be done differently the next time such a conflict arose. The two returned calmly, with an agreed analysis, and became friends again.
- Children in one school did not seem to have a vocabulary for discussing emotions. This seemed part of a wider communication problem. The teachers exclaimed: "We never realised how little we listen to the kids, how little we know about them, because we never really talk to them". Clear measures of progress have been developed, for example: "At the end of first grade (age 6), children will be able to identify and name their feelings".
- A child may be told: "Yossi listened when you spoke, now you must listen when he speaks". Children are encouraged to develop the ability to restrain themselves and to experience the accomplishment of having done so.
- Schoolyard play can be characterised by indiscipline, even anarchy, and serious injuries can be sustained. Younger children fear violence and bullying by the older ones. In one setting, play areas were divided according to age, and each week one class took responsibility to prepare a special activity for the others. Teachers found ways to make supervision more effective without increasing their 'on duty' time.

Positive situations do not emerge automatically, and teachers have to develop facilitative skills. A fourth-grade student once asked for the responsibility of distributing bread at lunch break to his class, but then announced that he would keep the sack of bread for himself. When reasoning failed, the teacher snatched the sack from him and he ran out of class, humiliated. Teachers analysed this incident at a workshop, in terms of possible alternative behaviour for the teacher, for example sending another child to the neighbouring class for additional bread that could be distributed to the hungry children and then talking to the errant boy without the pressure of immediate action.

When children go home
Encouraging the adults in the children's school environment to behave respectfully towards them is an important part of the Human Dignity project, but adults in the home environment need to do the same to reinforce the message of positive behaviour.

Although the project has no direct involvement with the home environment, the changed attitudes at school can sometimes exert a change at home. For example:
- A father was telephoned by the school to say that his son was behaving badly. His response was: "So hit the kid and he'll get the message". Teachers sometimes hesitate to contact parents whose children are in trouble for fear of such a response. However, in another school, a child reported that after a classroom discussion of human dignity, he went home and told his father what he had learned, and the father then said that he would never hit the child again.
- Even before the Human Dignity project, schools had made efforts to deal better with parents, for example by encouraging home visits by teachers and appointments for parents with staff. One school had a standard letter of praise to parents whose children did well. Generally, however, where such positive mechanisms for interaction existed, their use was not sufficient to generate any strong momentum.
- At a parents' evening in one school, the staff decided to go beyond the conventional presenting of children's grades. Instead, they tried to empathise with parents who came in feeling defensive about their parenting, and to use the

meetings to foster personal contact. Staff reported considerable improvement in the quality of the meetings.

The struggle continues
This description of the project focuses on the positive processes of organisational change that have occurred in schools. However, such change is often not achieved easily. Consultants' reports from all nine schools emphasise the considerable challenges associated with their efforts to bring about change. Project assessments are expected from the nine schools at the end of the project period in late 2007 and a subsequent analysis will be reported a year later. The ensuing documents will present the lessons learned concerning what has worked under certain conditions, and what has not worked. It will be interesting to see what happens when the children aged 5–8 years at the beginning of the project reach the higher grades and begin to set the tone through their behaviour to younger children.

A view from the Oak Foundation
Protecting children from violence and abuse

Florence Bruce, Senior Programme Officer, and Fassil Marriam, Regional Programme Coordinator, East Africa; Child Abuse Programme, Oak Foundation

The term 'child protection' is used in various ways. In some parts of the world it has been used in a narrow sense to identify the action taken by the state to remove children from environments that are violent, abusive and exploitative. Today, however, the term is being expanded. For example, in contexts of war or natural disasters, it can include programmes that offer education, play and recreation, providing structures and activities that help children regain a sense of normal life. The notion of 'protection' thus takes a much wider meaning than simply protection from harm or abuse.

In some countries (e.g., the UK), the term 'child protection' is being used in a more positive way "to place it alongside approaches which emphasise childhood resilience and strength" (Parton 2006). Early intervention programmes are an example. This changing context places protection much closer to the notion of prevention.

Oak's programme on child abuse is targeted specifically at sexual abuse (a cross-cutting form of violence to children that excludes no sector of the population) and sexual exploitation of children in exchange for cash or in kind (goods, benefits, advantages, etc.). The two are linked intimately in the lives of many children around the world and in many programmes they are considered together. For example, a child domestic worker who is sexually abused by her employer's family may have no option when thrown out of the home but to sell sex on the streets.

 "Sexually abused children do not stand out in a crowd", Oak was told[1] and there is no easily recognisable target group needing support. Nor are the sexual abusers of children easily identifiable. They are mainly men but, as we are now finding out, a large percentage of them are children under 18. Many of the victims of sexual abuse go undetected for years or even forever, if they do not seek help. This is why primary prevention programmes are still necessary and why the Oak Foundation aims to mainstream a concern for sexual abuse into existing agencies' work in a number of fields (such as education, domestic work, children about to leave care and community development). However, for mainstreaming to be successful, good preliminary data on the issue is needed, as well as relevant training programmes for agencies that may be willing to mainstream child protection concerns but may not necessarily have the appropriate skills to do so.

The problem of sexual exploitation of children is more visible, but the children may not be accessible to the services trying to help them. Where they are accessible, it is very difficult to help them to leave prostitution and to find alternatives. All too often, they simply 'graduate' into adult prostitution or die of AIDS.

The phenomenon of child sexual abuse images on the internet is one of the most abject forms of child abuse and exploitation. The legal framework across countries is currently piecemeal and serious data is in short supply. While police in some countries are becoming more efficient in tracking down consumers and suppliers, in many places little is known about the culprits and how they operate. Similarly, the motivation that makes men seek out young girls is little understood, although some work is being done in this area (e.g., ILO/IPEC 2004).

Statistics about the extent of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation vary enormously from country to country. Indeed, research in the UK suggests that a very small percentage of cases actually come to the attention of the statutory services and this is likely to be the case in many countries. Many programmes are working unknowingly with children who are sexually abused. While this is not necessarily a bad thing in itself, it does mean that professionals

and programmes need to be alert to the possibility of abuse as a factor in any unusual or difficult behaviour on the part of the child.

Worldwide, there are very few professionals or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with sufficient capacity to address sexual abuse of children. It was reported to Oak, for example, that the nursing training curriculum in one area of Switzerland

The Oak Foundation

Based in Geneva, the Oak Foundation has offices in London, Zimbabwe, Belize, Sofia and (since May 2006) Portland, USA. It commits its resources to address issues of global social and environmental concern, particularly those that have a major impact on the lives of the disadvantaged. The resources of the Oak Foundation originated from an interest in the Duty Free Shoppers business which Alan M. Parker helped build up. Since 1998 when the Foundation was reorganised and began to hire new staff, it has developed eight thematic and two country (Denmark and Zimbabwe) grant-making programmes <www.oakfnd.org>. The child abuse programme is run out of the Geneva office with five staff, two of which are in Sofia and Addis Ababa.

Where does the Oak Foundation work?
Bulgaria, Switzerland and Ethiopia are the primary targets and Latvia, Uganda and Tanzania are secondary. Support is targeted to prevention, recognition, recovery and advocacy projects run by NGOs plus support to the groups spearheading international research, training and political action. Emphasis is currently on encouraging partners to develop joint NGO programmes that will develop joined-up thinking on services for children.

The Oak Foundation in East Africa
In East Africa, children are still largely considered as the property of their families/communities and are rarely allowed to express ideas on issues affecting their future. Oak has helped develop school-based and community-focused children's clubs to empower children. It is believed that empowered children will be less exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation.

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a joint programme between Oak and five local organisations aims to provide integrated services for child survivors of child sexual abuse and to protect and rehabilitate children trafficked from rural areas. Another two programmes in Nazareth, Ethiopia, and Kampala, Uganda, are bringing together relevant governmental, non-governmental and community organisations to address the problem in a coordinated manner.

A partnership with the African Child Policy Forum, a regional organisation, is developing child-protection policies for NGOs and other child-oriented organisations. It is hoped that formal policies will greatly reduce child sexual abuse in care institutions by the staff and visitors.

Assessment of child trafficking in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda is being achieved by working with the African Network for Prevention and Protection Against Children (ANPPCAN). The study focuses on the scale of the problem, the profile of the traffickers and the impact of trafficking on child development. A protection, prevention and rehabilitation programme for child victims will be implemented based on the assessment findings.

A number of prevention and recovery programmes in high-risk areas are attempting to attract children away from prostitution. Provision of micro-finance to families and young adults thought to be at risk of prostitution may be one way forward.

gives the issue a low level of priority. In addition, professionals such as doctors, lawyers, nurses, midwives, teachers and police officers have limited knowledge of identifying and treating child abuse and there are few policies and protocols to guide them in handling such cases.

As a result, the programme of support offered to NGOs in Oak's priority countries (see box) includes a wide range of prevention and recovery programmes. These include telephone help-lines, piloting multidisciplinary casework, data collection at local level, short-term shelters for child victims, school clubs, campaigns to prevent child abuse and programmes to support adolescents leaving care. The Oak Foundation also provides exposure and training in new approaches, particularly the area of child resilience (see box).

There are many tragic stories of children being abused by development agency staff in refugee or displaced-person camps, NGO projects and children's institutions. These remind us of children's vulnerability, even when they are supposedly in a place of safety. In the past two years, the Oak Foundation has helped fund standards relating to the protection of children from abuse while in the care of private or state agencies. There is a clear need for training of staff in this area and a formal process for agencies to report staff members who are accused of abusing children. The "Keeping Children Safe" materials developed by a coalition of development and child rights agencies is a set of 11 standards and a training pack to accompany them. The materials provide a framework for agencies and institutions to establish effective measures to prevent and respond to violence and abuse against children (see <www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk>).

Identifying what makes children vulnerable
Many agencies do not recognise that the children in their programmes could be at additional risk of sexual abuse. It is therefore important to identify the situations that make children vulnerable. These include situations where children are abused at home, by neighbours or friends; in schools and childcare institutions; and in more extreme circumstances such as war zones, on the streets, child trafficking routes, children caring for their

siblings because their parents have died of AIDS, and in high-risk jobs such as domestic work.

Many of these extreme situations occur when children are deprived of parental care. Others, however, arise where families are still apparently complete but may include stepmothers who discriminate against stepdaughters, leaving them to leave home and roam the streets; or stepfathers who seek out an isolated mother to have access to her daughters or sons; or even mothers working abroad, who may leave their daughters vulnerable to the male members of the family. There are many situations that make children vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation and further research is needed to identify and prioritise them.

Integrating child protection into communities
Because the issues of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation will need to be closely integrated within emerging **official** child protection systems, they will also need to find their place within child programmes at **community** level. Figure 1 shows how programmes to promote child protection – and advocacy on child protection – need to be integrated alongside normal child development programmes in the community. The overarching concern to promote children's rights and child resilience should form the guiding framework for all work with children (see the workshop organised by the International Catholic Child Bureau, June 2005, in this respect).

Several steps need to be undertaken when designing a community-level programme to counter sexual abuse and exploitation to:
1. understand risk and protection in the context of the community;
2. build community action;
3. promote child resilience and protection;
4. create a sense of ownership.

1. Understanding risk and protection. Before a programme can begin, there needs to be some understanding of the forms of abuse and exploitation prevalent within the target community. The type of questions that need to be asked include the following:
a) How do communities currently protect their children from abuse and exploitation?

Children's rights

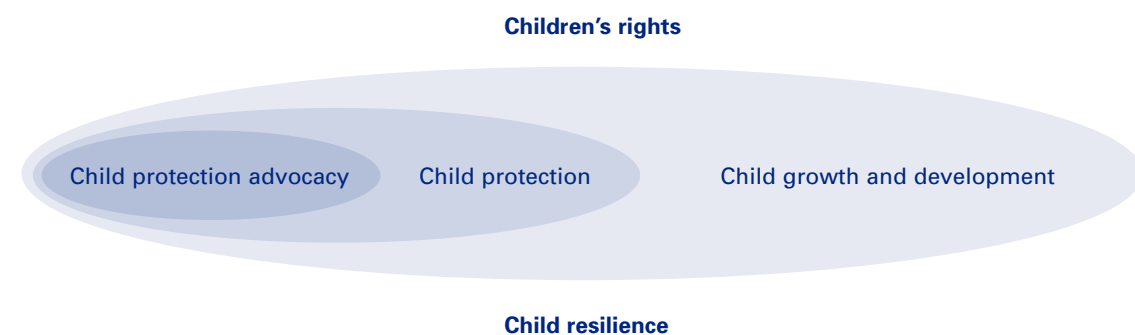Child protection advocacy   Child protection   Child growth and development

Child resilience

Figure 1. Integrating child protection/advocacy within programmes

b) How do they define abuse? (Important to ask children separately from adults and girls separately from boys.)
c) What makes children vulnerable to sexual abuse and sexual exploitation (factors in the child's personality, family or environment)?
d) What can, or does, protect them?
e) What negative non-intentional side effects of action can be anticipated?

Poverty is only one factor and, indeed, many poor people do not perpetrate or suffer from sexual abuse and exploitation. Can anything be learned from them? Other factors include parenting patterns, social exclusion, family violence, disability, access by traffickers and presence (or lack of) community action networks. Ongoing studies at a very local level are needed to pinpoint the main factors that protect children.

Once baseline data is available, a programme to protect children can be built. A recent baseline developed for the Emmanuel Development Association of Ethiopia provided the first study on child abuse in the town of Debre Birhan. It included both girls and boys as respondents, a fact that added significantly to the quality of the study (Emmanuel 2005). It is to be noted that UNICEF is currently developing a child-friendly tool to measure and assess violence against children that will also be helpful in conducting assessments of this type (in preparation).

2. Build community action. Community action should be mainstreamed within other community work on education, health, economics, social work, etc. Activities to promote child protection might include:

- information/education to children;

- outreach to children at risk;
- developing ways for children to be heard and believed;
- a place of safety within the community for children who cannot stay at home;
- support from positive reference figures, such as 'aunts';
- children's groups for peer support, listening and action.

For advocacy on protection at local level, activities could include:

- children's groups and youth groups to collect data, identify gaps and speak up about abuse and exploitation;
- community action groups;
- a readiness to challenge practices that lead to child abuse and to promote those that strengthen and protect children;
- accessible, formal, child-friendly protection systems and, where these are lacking, action with local government to provide them.

Communities must also take an uncompromising stance with regard to abusers, who have to get the message that abusing is a crime for which they will be punished. Communities must stand up for their weakest members and community elders should speak out in favour of protecting children. However, many countries have long-held taboos about sexual abuse and there have been very few successful convictions. Happily this situation is starting to change and penalties have become extremely high in some countries. While successful convictions may have an enormous deterrent effect, it is unrealistic to expect that all offenders will be caught and brought to justice. This is why there will always be a need for ongoing prevention activities.

Community action needs to be backed up by state child protection mechanisms (social workers, the police and the judiciary). Further investment in police and judicial training are needed as well as training on conducting child-friendly investigations for gaining evidence for court.

3. Promote child resilience and protection. It is important for fieldworkers to know that, on the one hand, it makes a difference if we can eliminate just one or two risk factors from a child's environment even if other greater risks may remain e.g., poverty, local drug-dealing environment. While on the other hand, promoting behaviours, events and attitudes which foster child resilience may have very positive impacts for a child's wellbeing.
For example:

- an adult who takes an ongoing and caring interest in a child;
- a caring network of people around the child;
- linking an isolated child or mother into a wider network of care;
- identifying what brings meaning to a child's life and providing opportunities to nurture this;
- identifying the abilities of the child and giving scope for these to be expressed; and
- providing the child with opportunities to experience beauty, nature, art, etc.

Positive experiences, events, people or simply words are also invaluable; some children have never heard the words 'well done'. A recent workshop run for Oak's Ugandan partners made a recommendation to add some positive posters to a campaign on the dangers of child abuse and exploitation. Many campaigns put too much emphasis on negative ideas (such as depicting 101 abusive ways to discipline a child – which could give parents ideas!). Presenting a positive image of a child and a helping community can begin to change the way people consider children. It is also important to provide opportunities for study and recreation, especially in a violent environment.

4. Create a sense of ownership. Promoting the growth and resilience of children in community settings needs to raise the levels of concern – and action – by the community itself, including children. While Oak has supported NGOs working within communities where prevention and recovery

programmes are mainstreamed, there is so much more to do particularly in achieving community ownership of programmes to ensure their sustainability over time.

Learning from the past
The Oak child abuse programme has developed its own learning programme and this will be developed with key partners. It will look for evidence about the impact of taking the child's perspective into account, it will seek to understand more about the motivations of the negative actors involved in abuse and exploitation, and it will seek to identify how communities develop their own child protection strategies where formal systems are non-existent.

At an international level, the UN Study on Violence against Children, a welcome and timely initiative by the UN Secretary General, may well lead to a range of new studies and programmes, even legislation. It has certainly galvanised a wide range of actors around this fundamental violation of children's rights and may well prove in retrospect to be the turning point for greater awareness and political will, at least in some countries, to combat violence to children.

It is over 80 years since Eglantyne Jebb put the right to protection from exploitation into the first international declaration of children's rights. Let us hope that it will take far less time for communities and governments to act to ensure future generations are protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation and violence.

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Bulgaria
Big Brothers Big Sisters Foundation

Lena Karnalova, BBBS Programme Coordinator

The Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Foundation was started in 1904 and is the oldest and largest mentoring programme in the world. There are many country-specific programmes operating within BBBS. All have a common theme – that of recruiting, training and supervising volunteers to operate in one-to-one mentoring relationships with children who are at risk of failing to reach their full potential because of family or environmental constraints. The BBBS model has been evaluated and the results suggest that an ongoing friendship relationship with a young person has a significant impact; enriching and strengthening their characters and leading to more positive and constructive behaviour in their education, peer and family environment. Children involved with BBBS also appear less likely to get involved in drug or alcohol abuse or to demonstrate violent behaviour.

In 2001, the BBBS Foundation in Plovdiv (Bulgaria's second-largest city) instigated a project aimed at preventing violent behaviour among children living in institutions. The project is funded by the Oak Foundation of Switzerland. The institutions involved include an orphanage, a street shelter for ethnic minority (Roma) youth, a school for deaf children and a school for children with mental disabilities. The project builds on BBBS activities, recruiting volunteers who befriend the children and serve as consultants and role models for positive behaviour. However, the application of the mentoring relationships and the specific organization of activities are different. In standard BBBS programmes, the children are not institutionalised. Most of them live with their families and the little and big 'brothers and sisters' communicate solely with their own matched partner with few joint activities. In this project, group activities and specialised workshops were needed to foster interaction between the children and the volunteers (mostly high-school pupils or university students).

Group activities
Group activities take place once or twice a month. Volunteers conduct pre-planned activities that aim to reduce levels of aggression and violence. These include role-plays, art, drama, visits to the cinema or puppet theatre and structured conversations. The children particularly enjoy and benefit from applied and theatrical art activities.

Work in pairs
The purpose of communication between a child and an adult volunteer is to overcome trauma caused by violence, expand the social skills of the child and improve the child's ability for social integration. Throughout the activities in pairs, the children talk with the volunteers, go on visits outside the institutions, attend various cultural and educational events and, most important of all, share their problems, troubles and joys. The programme's consultants monitor the activities and progress at least once a week and ask for feedback from both child and volunteer.

Summer camps
Camps have an intensive programme of activities aimed at strengthening the pair relationships and acquiring environmental/natural resources knowledge. When children need to be prepared for 'closing' of the pairs, which normally occurs after around 12 or 16 months, this takes place in the summer camp.

Information and awareness
The programme also raises awareness of the need to prevent child abuse by publishing information aimed at children, parents and teachers, and organizing distribution among the local community.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters camps have intensive programmes of activities aimed at strengthening pair relationships.

Mihail's story

Mihail is 11 years old. His father has taken little interest in him and his mother moved abroad five years ago. Since then, his great-grandmother has taken care of him. However, she tended to resort to verbal and physical abuse as a method of education. At school (Plovdiv School for Deaf Children) he had few friends and only seemed able to communicate with his great-grandmother. He was very aggressive towards his peers and solved any issue of conflict by fighting.

The BBBS programme has matched Mihail with a hearing volunteer, and this has brought about a drastic change in his behaviour in school and with his family. He is more open and has begun to search for contact with other children, including those with normal hearing. His teachers and relatives have noticed that he is more willing to participate actively in school lessons and appears more composed. He has also participated in new activities, developing his social and group interaction skills. Mihail waits for the meetings with his 'big brothers' with great enthusiasm and has been trying to prepare himself in the best possible way. The programme has also positively affected Mihail's family. His great-grandmother has started to talk with him more often and to use more effective education methods. The school counsellor has noticed that the father has taken more interest in the boy and started to meet him more often. As a result, Mihail's whole environment has changed in a positive way.

Ethiopia
The Love for Children Organization

The Love for Children Organization (LCO) is an Ethiopian NGO established in 1999. LCO's vision is to see all Ethiopian children growing up in an environment that gives them the opportunity to become self-reliant and productive members of society. The organisation focuses on addressing and advocating for the rights and needs of disadvantaged children. It works to bring about lasting improvements in their lives through strengthening the institutions that support them. LCO currently operates in Addis Ababa in five *kebele* (districts).

Ethiopia has many needy and vulnerable children and LCO conducts several programmes. One of the main activities is to create a better future for orphans and other children who live on the streets. This includes running a childfriendly centre that caters for children's social, recreational and health needs and providing community-based care for orphans and vulnerable children. The organisation also caters for the mothers of these children, helping them to develop the skills they need to earn a living and provide for their children themselves. A revolving credit fund has given many women the opportunity to start up their own businesses.

Many children are orphaned through HIV/AIDS, and LCO runs an HIV prevention programme aimed specifically at street children and their mothers. Experience has shown that street children are more likely to listen to health and welfare advice when this is delivered by their peers. The Red Children (see box), a group of former street children, have thus been recruited and trained to communicate messages about HIV/AIDS to mothers and children living on the streets.

In partnership with the Oak Foundation, LCO is running a pilot project that aims to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. This is achieved through a programme that helps them to strengthen their resilience. The programme communicates through special Red Children who have been trained in identifying and dealing with sexual abuse/exploitation and promoting life skills. These children disseminate information on the causes and consequences of sexual violence. In addition, they motivate sexually abused girls to get together and discuss their experiences. This has led to the formation of special 'clubs', which can form a voice for action. The club members have conducted a number of panel discussions on the problem of sexual abuse and exploitation.

This project is making encouraging progress. The problem of sexual abuse has long been hidden or ignored, but now the general public and those involved are beginning to discuss the issue more openly. This includes a change in attitude on the part of the police and other concerned organisations. Now the problem is more openly recognised, the victims have better access to medication and counselling services. In addition, skills training for abused girls helps them to deal with their past and plan ahead for a brighter future.

The Red Children

The Red Children are former street children recruited and trained by LCO. They wear red uniforms to signify that they are alerting others to the dangers of living on the streets. In addition to raising awareness of the dangers of HIV/AIDS, they help reunite lost street children with their families or relatives, they report sexual and physical abuse to the police and other concerned institutions, they conduct non-formal education by teaching illiterate children to read and write, and they encourage street children to attend evening classes and advise them on how they can build a proper income.

El Salvador
Joining forces, opening spaces

Marisa de Martínez, Asociación CINDE para el Desarrollo Infantil y la Promoción Humana

The Asociación CINDE para el Desarrollo Infantil y Promoción Humana (CINDE International Centre for Child Education and Human Development) was founded in 1989 to help women with small children who live and work in impoverished urban areas and under precarious conditions, an all too common situation in Central America. The majority of these women are street sellers who subsist on the sale of a variety of articles and who work all hours without any kind of guarantee. They carry out their work on busy streets with their young children, who are breastfed or sleep on makeshift cardboard beds on the ground amid the hustle and bustle, while their mothers offer their wares to passers-by.

The CINDE Childhood Development Centres were opened to improve the children's welfare and offer support to the mothers. They care specifically for children aged 6 years or less, since this is the age at which the vital foundations for future development are laid. The first centre was opened in the town of Soyapango, with support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, and the model has been applied to two other centres in the metropolitan area of San Salvador in Mejicanos and Zacamil. Today, 300 children under 6 years old are taken in on a daily basis.

The urban context
Soyapango and Mejicanos are the most densely populated towns in the country, with over 5,000 inhabitants per square kilometre. They are run-down areas with few public services, overcrowded living conditions (some dwellings house up to five families), streets packed with street sellers and high unemployment. These conditions often lead to turbulent relationships within families and between inhabitants. Parents, particularly mothers, live in a constant state of tension brought about by the struggle for survival. This often affects their mental health resulting in coercive and sometimes violent behaviour towards their children.

Young people have uncertain futures and many are obliged to work from an early age, thus missing out on their education, a situation that favours the formation of violent juvenile gangs. Many adults are forced to migrate to the USA to find work, splitting families apart.

The majority of family groups in the project's target population are led by a single mother. These women generally have a low level of education and their income comes mainly from casual or domestic work. Average earnings are USD 50 per month, while a basic monthly family shopping basket costs USD 130. The result is that 50% of under-fives are malnourished.

Dealing with the problem
Initial project activities aimed to address the mothers' violent behaviour towards their children. It was alarming to note the degree of brutality used to physically punish children. Wounds caused by beatings had to be treated, children were sent to hospital suffering from bruising and the official child protection institution was kept informed. The hardest part was tackling the women: "I hit her last night because she asked me for food and I had nothing to give her", shouted Sofía, a 23-year-old widow and street-seller with three children. Talking to Sofía and other women in similar circumstances has helped project staff understand their problems and develop an appropriate training plan. These are desperate women whose human rights have been trampled on and who had been left to fend for themselves and their children with little moral or financial support. Training and counselling that allows them to become free from their guilt, understand the reasons for their aggression, develop their self-esteem and start to love themselves will help to unlock the tenderness inside them and allow them to express affection towards their children.

Forging a future

At the end of 1989, CINDE asked the Department of Psychology of the University of Central America for assistance. This was given in the form of a methodological project, formulated and implemented by a team of five 5th year undergraduate students. Over six months, the students conducted twelve 90-minute meetings and three 6-hour workshops with the mothers. The agenda involved getting them to understand the different types of violence against children and its consequences, as well as children's need for affection and security. The sessions were successful to some extent in changing attitudes, but the effects did not last very long. The centres continued to deal with verbal, psychological and, to a lesser extent, physical abuse.

Project staff then began to visit the children's homes and develop relationships with their mothers and this started to inspire trust, friendship and intimacy. The mothers began to tell their personal stories and air their worries and aspirations, revealing the tragedy of poverty in all its manifestations. This had a large effect on the project's educational team, a factor that was to be decisive.

As a result of this greater understanding, the project changed its methods of intervention. These women's lives, marked by social exclusion, would not be transformed by discussions and advice from 'experts'. Instead, they needed to take the initiative themselves. This led to the formation of the CINDE mothers' circles. These provide a space where the women can talk amongst their peers, hold discussions and offer advice. Trying to answer questions as simple as "Who are we?" and "What do we want to get out of life?" has helped them discover that they are all facing the same reality of an uncertain future.

The questions the women came up with helped them discover the origins of their negative attitudes towards their children and the harm they were doing. Comparing their personal stories and how they had been affected by their childhood experiences, they discovered that many had been victims of sexual abuse. There were memorable moments of attentive listening and catharsis, which inspired a feeling of belonging and created firm friendships.

Training and counselling helps parents, particularly mothers, to understand the reasons for their children's aggression and develop their own self-esteem.

Further progress was made by asking "What do our children need?". The women discovered that their daily struggle for survival prevented them from seeing beyond material things. And they began to make commitments: no more shouting, insults or blows, but a focus on strengthening their relationships with their children. They began to suggest positive alternatives that would keep the family united and help them to overcome their difficulties.

At the same time, the women started craft, hairdressing and dressmaking workshops, community savings and loan banks, CINDE support groups, family trips to the beach, etc. The mothers who join now find it easy to feel part of the social dynamic of CINDE.

Providing continuity

When they reach 7 years of age, the children attending the CINDE day centres have to start school. To provide some continuity for both children and their mothers, project staff came up with the idea of children's Saturday clubs. These offer integrated activities such as help with school work, play facilities, arts/crafts and sports, all designed to develop their sense of self-worth. Older children are encouraged to help the younger ones and have a say in which activities are provided.

After three years of positive experiences, the Saturday club idea was extended to five days a week. Children and teenagers attend these sessions, where they can get help with their school work, strengthen their friendships, organise communal activities and continue to grow emotionally and socially. The centres support the efforts of the children and their mothers to stay in high school until they graduate. In 2004 the project celebrated its first success, the graduation of Evangelina. Her mother, Doña Consuelo, sells hairpins, combs and similar items on the streets of Soyapango, and had only three years of schooling. She encouraged other mothers with the words "If I can do it, so can you".

CINDE awarded a diploma of recognition to Doña Consuelo for her efforts and for keeping the promise she had made 11 years earlier with her daughter. Now Evangelina has her own challenge: she has promised that she will obtain a university degree so that she too can say to the group "If I can do it, so can you". She is now studying physiotherapy and working as a waitress to pay for her studies.

Conclusions

It is important to note that it was the impoverished mothers themselves who showed the project the way forward. All they needed was a space, a meeting point and someone to listen and support them in their efforts to provide for their children. The project now has other challenges, including the organization of a savings and loan cooperative for the women and the production and commercialization of craft items. The children of this neglected sector of the population need continued support from their first months to the end of their basic education. The project will therefore aim to open additional Childhood Development Centres to widen the scope of its work.

Kenya

Making parents and teachers think about the effects of corporal punishment

Based on an interview with Rose Odoyo, Chief Executive Officer of ANPPCAN, Kenya

Corporal punishment has been technically banned in Kenya's schools since 1972 – but it is still a routine occurrence in the country's classrooms and homes, says Rose Odoyo, the Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya Chapter of the African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN).

"Many teachers don't know any other way to control children than through the cane," she says. "In fact, one teacher has even been to court recently in an attempt to have corporal punishment re-legalised. They still have the attitude of 'spare the rod, spoil the child'. But it is not hard to understand why, because they are overwhelmed. They often have class sizes exceeding 70, and they resort to the cane as their only way of coping."

For parents, too, underlying the widespread use of corporal punishment are the difficult economic circumstances which make it stressful for parents to cope in their daily lives. Children are left alone for long periods while their parents try to earn a living,

ANPPCAN was formed after the First African Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, a pan-African assembly held in 1986 in Enugu, Nigeria. Since then, ANPPCAN chapters have expanded into 20 African countries. In 1990, the Organisation of African Unity, now the African Union, awarded ANPPCAN observer status. The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights granted similar recognition shortly afterwards. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, ANPPCAN is registered as an international NGO.

and become idle and bored; the combination of neglected children and stressed parents is a breeding ground for casual violence as the easiest form of discipline.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, afflicting Kenya as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, makes the problem worse.

"So many orphans and vulnerable children are mistreated by their caregivers. When their parents die and they are sent to live with more distant relatives, the standard of care they receive often suffers as a result. They can be taken out of school and used for child labour – because even though primary schooling is theoretically free in Kenya, there are still maintenance fees and other levies to be paid, plus the costs of books, uniforms, shoes and meals. The rights of orphans and vulnerable children are not respected to the same degree, and this includes a greater vulnerability to violence." (Rose Odoyo, ANPPCAN)

ANPPCAN tries to counter violence through sensitisation and awareness raising. For six years they have been running a Child Rights Awareness and Legal Education Programme in Korogocho, a non-formal settlement on the outskirts of Nairobi, and have now moved to the Soweto area of Embakasi Division to run the Soweto Child Rights Development Programme. These programmes work to raise social consciousness of both the legal and moral responsibility to stand up for the rights of the child.

Strategies include popular theatre, workshops and talks, and establishing child rights clubs in

community institutions. Communities are made aware of telltale signs of abuse, and children told what to do if they are being abused. In the worst cases, ANPPCAN provides direct legal help to victims of violence.

"We try to make parents and teachers think about the effects of corporal punishment," says Rose Odoyo. "What does it tell children when you discipline them with violence? It tells them that it's okay for the powerful to use violence to get their way in life. We inform parents and teachers about the results of our research, which show the negative effects corporal punishment has on children. It makes them anxious and angry, undermines their trust in adults, and affects their education – they may drop out of school when they are afraid of being beaten. Our experience shows that children who are repeatedly subjected to corporal punishment become cold and unreachable. There is no longer any effective communication between them and their parents."

ANPPCAN explains to parents and teachers about more positive discipline techniques. The essential element is setting clear and simple rules and explaining the reasons for them. "Children need to understand what's considered right and wrong. This is often a problem in schools, where teachers say one thing and prefects say another. It is very confusing for a child to be punished when they don't know what they've done wrong. Parents need to show interest in their children and reward good behaviour." Setting a good example is another key: "We explain to parents that they must not drink and fight, and schools that they must put more effort into tackling bullying, which is a big problem."

Child participation is central to ANPPCAN's approach. They encourage parents to involve their children in discussing the rules for good behaviour, and schools to hold school discussion fora in which teachers, prefects and children can talk through their problems. Despite resistance – many parents and teachers see corporal punishment as the only feasible answer to behavioural problems which have their root in peer pressure, the effect of the mass media, and in children themselves – these public education campaigns are having some effect. The school discussion evenings are a technique which has met with particular enthusiasm and success.

"It is very confusing for a child to be punished when they don't know what they've done wrong. Parents need to show interest in their children and reward good behaviour." (Rose Odoyo)

Another strategy is to make corporal punishment more visible as an issue through techniques such as a regular weekly radio programme, aired on KBC national radio every Saturday, which features youth participation.

ANPPCAN is now working with like-minded Kenyan NGOs to lobby for a training programme to get more expert counsellors and child psychologists into schools, and to propose to the Ministry of Education a set of national guidelines and put together a training manual on positive discipline techniques for teachers.

Colombia

Treatment and prevention for child victims of domestic violence

José Juan Amar Amar and Diana Tirado García, University of North Barranquilla, Colombia

Despite ever-increasing awareness of children's rights, the fact that child victims of domestic violence still exist shows that the practices that violate these rights persist. In the case of Colombia, factors such as social exclusion, lack of healthcare, drug taking and internal political conflict aggravate family tensions, particularly in the urban population of over three million. Many urban dwellers are threatened by armed gangs and some have personally witnessed extreme violence or murder. When children are moved to a city, they are often affected badly by the change in their environment. They may become aggressive towards their siblings, fight with their parents and make demands for food that cannot be met. This behaviour exacerbates tension in a family that may be already struggling to make ends meet, and often results in the parents punishing their children aggressively, either through verbal or physical abuse.

A huge number of Colombian children are the victims of domestic violence. This may be due to migration or, more likely, to the fact that many families know no other way of bringing up their children. To initiate a programme of prevention and post-traumatic care, the University of North Barranquilla and the Bernard van Leer Foundation collaborated on a scientific study suitably adapted to the Colombian socio-cultural context.

The main question underpinning the project was "What is the best way to work with families who have a history of domestic violence – especially with the children?" The project attempted to answer the question, first by establishing the situation faced by vulnerable children, then by developing and implementing a support system to meet their needs.

Establishing the situation
Child victims of domestic violence present a number of psycho-social characteristics that can be classified under four headings:

1. Deprivation. In addition to suffering physical and sexual abuse, child victims of domestic violence are often denied affection or emotional support. Their parents may provide inadequate food and clothing, exhibit a lack of interest in their needs and problems, and fail to talk to them. The pain of deprivation is long lasting. The more violent the situation, the more demanding of attention and affection the child becomes and feelings of sadness and loneliness can become unbearable. Typical statements made by children who are deprived of the affection and care of their families are "My mummy and daddy don't care for me" or "I play on my own because nobody wants to play with me". These children are often timid and withdrawn and their behaviour shows insecurity. In the case of permanent deprivation due to abuse, children survive by withdrawing into themselves, becoming isolated and exhibiting aggression towards their peers.

2. Hostility between peers. "Stupid idiot, that's not right, you're thick". Phrases like these are the result of systematic aggression directed towards children by their parents. The result is that children imitate their parents, often releasing their bottled-up anger in recurrent acts of violence towards their peers. Children who lack guidance in how to listen with empathy and resolve problems through cooperation, instead witnessing aggression, belligerency or contempt, are more likely to show this negative behaviour in their relationships with others.

Abused children also experience feelings of loneliness and emptiness, which lead them to build a protective barrier against the world around them. This is exhibited in typical behaviour such as inappropriate vocabulary (swearing at their peers and teachers), violent games that are inappropriate for their age, intimidation of their peers and other expressions of aggression.

3. Fear. Valls (2003) states: "The experience of feeling terror is an antecedent experience that leads to violence. However, it would be a mistake to consider terror to be the only traumatic experience and to link all traumas to a single event".

While fear is necessary for the process of learning, the experience of fear takes on different meanings depending on the environment. For an abused child or one who witnesses violence in the family, fear is associated with the behaviour of another person. There is no doubt that children are affected when they witness fights between their parents. Their reactions include crying, becoming tense and rigid, blocking their ears, hiding and covering their eyes. They believe that in this way the stressful stimulus will cease to exist. The youngest children suffer physiological changes, including elevated heart rate and blood pressure. The stress of living with quarrelling parents can affect the development of the autonomic nervous system and reduce the child's ability to solve problems.

4. Trauma. Trauma in children is due not only to physical violence, but also to emotional or material deprivation and the breakdown of family and community ties. Often it is the conditions of daily life that affect them more than the abuse itself. Not all children who have been victims of extreme violence, either directly or indirectly, suffer from psychological trauma, but Valls (2003) argues that all of them experience some kind of suffering. He goes on to say that the impact of the traumatic event depends on the way in which it is assimilated into the personal history of the individual or the history of the group.

Practical therapy and support
The project's programme of practical therapy and support is based on these four psycho-social characteristics of child victims of domestic violence and addresses the children's problems primarily through art and play activities. These were chosen as the core part of the programme because both are essential for every child. Play is vital for the development of physical and motor skills, reasoning abilities, capacity for affection and social/cultural norms. It is the basis of learning and gives meaning to a child's life. Valls (2003) maintains:
"For a child, play is a privileged moment of new encounters with the world and of positive interactions with others. It doesn't take trauma away, but it is a new experience that one can depend on while inventing a new life for oneself for today and tomorrow. While playing, the child is in a 'potential space' between the internal and external realities, a protective bubble that filters out the aggressions of the external world and the equally destructive internal feelings of resentment, aggression and fear".

Similarly, Castillo (2003) suggests:
"Art as a strategy is a community intervention technique that has been validated in the educational, health and social spheres by numerous projects with children. The development of a child through artistic expression can be one of the ways to satisfy the needs of a creative and sensitive human being who has the ability to apply their knowledge, possesses psychological resources and who does not experience difficulties in their relations with other people or with their surroundings".

Following the suggestions of Valls (2003), the programme seeks to provide a focal point for children in crisis situations. This comprises three linked aspects: a) direct intervention with the children; b) training for local staff; and c) support for the families and wider community. A longer-term objective has also been added: that of helping the families and local communities to create binding social agreements that will prevent the abuse of children in the future and provide support systems that guarantee respect for human rights, especially those of children.

The programme works closely with child and family centres run by the Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare). The activities are mainly workshops facilitated by a group of psychologists who have undertaken diagnostic work in the field of children and domestic violence. The workshops provide activities that address the specific needs of individual children, using playtime and drama to help them lose their fear of physical contact and start to form more normal relationships. The dramatic improvisation exercises use puppets and then real-life examples from both children's and parents' lives to uncover their histories. The children are encouraged to tell stories and to respond to the investigators' questions by acting out the roles of fathers, mothers, older siblings and peers. This helps clarify where they see themselves in the domestic and socio-cultural contexts. These workshops help the children to not only express and focus their emotions, but also to learn how to care for their physical health, to protect themselves from strangers and to present themselves well.

The workshops also encourage the parents to participate in activities with their children, helping them develop more peaceful and appropriate techniques of child rearing. Many parents appreciate the chance to exchange views on topics such as domestic violence and children's rights. Families who have taken part in the workshops appreciate the chance to think and reflect as individuals. They feel comfortable and value the opportunity to learn basic forms of theatrical and creative expression. Each person has taken charge of their own learning and addressed problems in their own way. This has helped them decide what to do next and where to go to seek help.

The programme also aim to create links among the main groups of people who influence the children, i.e., their parents, teachers and the wider community. Teachers play an important role and are a key component of the play therapy. In addition to helping parents see the need for change, they can mediate between the child victim and the abuser.

Conclusions
The techniques used in this project have proved very useful, both for the child victims of domestic

Photo: Courtesy UNIVERSIDAD DEL NORTE

Activities such as playtime and drama help children lose their fear of physical contact and start to form more normal relationships

violence and their parents. Play and artistic expression allow them to become more open and grow in confidence. In addition, working in groups brings a feeling of community support into the home. The parents, especially the mothers, appreciate the chance to tell their stories, share their problems and have someone who listens to them. The children especially appear to open up when expressing themselves through play and drama.

Such programmes of psycho-social intervention for child abuse are therefore more than a social service. They can help people change and become masters of their own destiny, especially in the case of the victims. The methods used here introduce new ideas to both children and adults: not only the right to be protected, but also how to develop new skills to confront adversity.

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Jamaica
Hope for Children

Richard Troupe, Founder and Executive Director, Hope for Children Development Company

It took children's groups, including Hope for Children, 10 years of determined advocacy to get the Child Care and Protection Act 2004 onto the statute books in Jamaica. This piece of legislation largely embodies the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and should be a major step forward in reducing, among other things, violence against children.

Having won that battle, though, now we're faced with an even bigger one – because getting a law on the statute books is not the same thing as achieving real change on the ground. Many of the provisions of the Act have not yet been implemented. We applaud the recent appointment of Mrs Mary Clarke, the Children's Advocate, but the much-anticipated National Register for child abuse has not yet been realised.

But the most important challenge we are facing is to make sure people know about the Act, what it says, and why it's important.

Hope for Children has especially been concentrating on raising awareness of one particularly important provision of the Act, which makes it mandatory to report incidence of child abuse. When there is suspicion or evidence that children are being abused, teachers are now mandated by law to report this.

We have partnered with the Jamaica Coalition on the Rights of the Child and 30 early childhood education institutions affiliated to the South West St Andrew Association of Basic Schools to support this mandatory reporting. We have involved a senior family court judge to talk to educators about what the law means. Our aim is to demystify the law, to explain to teachers and principals what are their obligations under the Act, and get them to support it.

Crisis
Tackling violence against children is a difficult issue in Jamaica because there are deep-seated

cultural causes underpinning it. Corporal punishment, or 'flogging', has traditionally been seen as an integral part of child-rearing. Since it has been banned in schools, its incidence has reduced, but teachers complain that they have not been given any alternative procedures for disciplining children. The ban has consequently created a sense of crisis.

Flogging is not the only kind of violence in schools. Child-on-child violence has become a major problem in some areas, with growing numbers of students bringing knives or cutlasses to school in their schoolbags. The problem is so bad the government has launched a campaign to try to get weapons out of schools, with designated police officers assigned to some schools.

Child-on-child violence is a spillover from the culture of gang violence that afflicts many of the communities in which we work, with groups of young men fighting over women, drugs, guns, or sometimes political issues.

This means children are exposed to violence from an early age. And they lack positive male role models. In some of the areas where we work, as many as 90% of children are growing up in female-headed households. To make matters worse there are high rates of unemployment and poverty among these single mothers, many of whom are themselves practically still children, having become pregnant as teenagers.

These are the fundamental issues that lie behind violence towards children. And some of those incidences of violence are very serious and shocking. For example, in April 2005, Shanika Anderson, a 6-year-old member of our organisation, was abducted from a local market. Her body was found the following day; she had been brutally raped and murdered.

In Shanika's name we are now launching a campaign to highlight the issue of missing children; 762 persons who were reported missing in Jamaica in 2005 are still unaccounted for. And in the first few months of this year alone, over 300 people have been reported missing, the majority of them girls aged between 11 and 19 years.

We need to get communities involved in helping the authorities to tackle violence against children. Helping teachers to fulfill their obligation to report evidence of abuse is one of several vital steps. Another is improving parenting skills.

In June 2005, we received funding of over JMD 4.8 million (EUR 60,000) to train 600 parents from the 30 early childhood education institutions we partnered with. We were happy with the results. Out of the 600 parents we targeted, 571 enrolled in the course and 479 graduated, after 22 hours of training.

One of the reasons the programme went well was that we were clear from the start about what we expected of participants – they needed to attend at least seven of the 10 sessions to get a certificate of completion. We also put great effort into identifying someone in each of the institutions who would serve as a community motivator, phoning around and making visits beforehand to talk to the parents about the sessions and remind them to attend.

Another important success factor is that we involved the parents right from the start in defining what they wanted to achieve from this training. We asked them, what does it mean to be a good parent? How will you know, at the end of this course, if you've become a better parent?

Some of the most common responses were that they would hug and kiss their children more, beat them less, spend more time with them, talk and listen to them more, help them with their homework, or attend the Parent Teacher Association. Once the parents themselves had set their own targets, they developed more of a sense of ownership of the training sessions.

Hope for children uses drama to promote public education about stopping violence and respecting the rights of the child.

We asked the parents to score themselves before the course, midway through and at the end of the course, using their own indicators. And we were able to point out to them how they were assessing their skills at parenting in ways that don't cost money. This is an important thing for them to realise. You don't have to be in employment to be able to hug your children.

Although we were generally pleased with the outcome of this training course, we had one major disappointment – only 5% of the parents who attended it were fathers. So we're now working on a prototype course, along with other agencies, specifically to reach out to young men and teach them parenting skills. We know this will need a different approach, and we will need to package the course specifically with men in mind.

We have written a proposal to run this prototype course with 200 fathers. If it goes well, one of our aims is to run these training sessions in prisons. This would be a valuable place to reach young men who are not being good fathers to their children, to try to make them think about how they could be more responsible and better role models when they're released.

Talk show
Useful as they are, training sessions can only reach so many people. So we're also making use of the mass media in our efforts to demystify the Child Care and Protection Act and reduce the levels of violence against children.

Twice a week, Hope for Children hosts a one-hour talk show on Roots 96.1 FM, a community radio station which has over 450,000 listeners. We talk about our methodologies of work, and advocate for giving a greater priority to implementing the provisions of Act. The programme has been very successful, and we have been asked to host a special four-hour programme based in one of the communities which has the biggest problems with violence.

Finally, we make use of drama as a tool to promote public education about stopping violence and respecting the rights of the child. Our drama group, comprising children aged from seven upwards, has devised a production entitled "Talk Done Tome Fi Action" which highlights these issues. To date the organisation has staged 15 live performances for a combined audience of approximately 4500 people. All the performances have been well received.

Hope for Children is hoping that within the next 15 months, its drama group will be staging live performances in 15 state-managed places of safety and children's homes, and that we can also find the funding to produce a DVD so it can reach an even wider audience.

We are especially proud of our drama group because we strongly believe in involving children in advocating for their rights. We are not a paternalistic organisation – we draw our strength from the grassroots of children who want to make a difference in their own neighbourhoods. For Hope for Children, children are not just recipients of services, they are agents of change.

Hope for Children Development Company

Hope for Children Development Company (HCDC) has eight youthful staff and over 250 community volunteers. We emerged from the institutionalisation in 1992 of two community-based interventions: Camp Hope, a summer rehabilitative residential programme initiated in 1986 to improve the coping skills of at-risk children, and the Urban Children's Project, which was funded by Save the Children–Canada, established in 1988 and which organised young people to provide a homework programme, sports and recreational activities.

Hope for Children's mission statement is: "To improve the quality of life of children in extremely difficult circumstances in the inner city communities of South and South West St. Andrew through programmes that enable their development, enhance their creativity and promote their rights and responsibilities, utilising strategies of community development, child advocacy and development training, in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child."

In its first nine years, HCDC concentrated on children between 9 and 14 years of age. In early 2000 we made a strategic decision to shift our programme focus to children within the age group 0-8 years, believing that this is the most important stage of a child's development and the one that has the most potential to deliver long term societal returns on investment.

Since 2001, in partnership with the Bernard van Leer Foundation through our Child Support Project, HCDC has been building the institutional and programme capacities of 30 early childhood education institutions to improve services to over 2000 children. Among other things we provided scholarships for the training of over 80 teachers and principals, upgraded seating and toilet facilities in schools, and procured outdoor play equipment.

Conflicts and togetherness in child daycare centres

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When children play together, they experience the same social issues as adults. During play they learn the social skills and rules that form the basis of our society, for example, learning to share, caring for each other and showing respect for the uniqueness of every human being. Carers in childcare centres can help young children develop their democratic values and skills. This article focuses firstly on studies of peer relations and how young children learn and construct rules in peer conflicts. Secondly, it explores how teachers can foster and co-construct positive relationships and a feeling of group cohesion with young children and how they may intervene in children's conflicts from the perspective of democratic social life in the peer group.

Introduction

Samuel (2 years 3 months) walks around. He sees a beautiful lady's bag on the table. He doesn't know that it belongs to Megan (2 years 9 months), who has carried it with her all day and just left it there for a moment. Samuel takes the bag. Megan has a bit of a fright, shouts "No!" and tries to pull the bag out of Samuel's hands. But Samuel keeps a firm grip on the bag. Then they start pulling, and they are equally strong. Megan has the receiver of a telephone in her other hand and she hits Samuel on his hand. This makes Samuel even more determined. Then Megan gives him a smack with the receiver on his head. That hurts! Samuel clutches his head and, screaming loudly, he runs to the teacher. Megan follows him with her eyes, conscious of her guilt.

These kinds of conflicts occur often between children, although physical harm is more the exception than the rule. In this example Megan knows that she has done something wrong. Her posture, the way she holds her head, the way she looks, all show that she is conscious of guilt. Megan knows that hitting is not the way to solve problems and that there is a clear moral rule not to hit. Early in their life most children get acquainted with these kinds of social rules: rules of ownership and sharing, power, fairness, generosity, etc. So how do children learn these rules from such an early age?

The social and moral development of young children in group settings in daycare centres is a relatively new field of research and there is an abundance of rich descriptive work about this emergent democratic life. It has become clear that studying the communication between the teacher and the individual child (for a long time the dominant way to do research in child care centres)

falls short of fully understanding the complex interactions between teachers and young children in group settings (Ahnert et al., in press). Studies of interactions between 0–4-year-old children and their teachers often start from a socio-constructivist theoretical approach. In this approach the focus is the development of the child in its socio-cultural context. These studies are inspired by Piaget (1967), viewing the child as an active learner who discovers the world by which it plays an important role in the construction of its own development, and by Vygotsky (1978) regarding development from the perspective of co-construction of shared meanings and appropriation of cultural tools in the social context (see also Brennan 2005; Singer and de Haan 2006). Teaching is thus conceptualised as a collaborative process of teacher and children. The teacher looks for a balance between taking the lead and giving children the lead.

Shared meanings and togetherness

Young children show an interest in each other from an early age. From around 2 months of age they will touch one another, make noises to draw another child's attention, stare and smile at each other (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Simple series of interactions can be observed from the age of 8 or 9 months old and, from 18 months old, they will imitate each other (Camaioni et al 1991; Rayna and Baudelot 1999).

When children begin to talk, their non-verbal interaction can be alternated with verbal chants, and these may last for a long time. Dunn (1988) observed a child of 24 months playing a 40-minute duration "loola loola loola" chanting–laughing–prancing game with an older child. Singer and de Haan (2006) noted two 3-year-old girls mixing their Moroccan mother tongue with the Dutch language of the daycare centre in a "pattoyaaaaaaaa, pattoypattoypattoya" long, rhythmic verse. The function of this kind of imitation is "to establish co-presence, joint attention, and shared or agreed-upon knowledge that cemented the dyad" (Katz 2004), and it may be seen as an early step towards verbal communication (de Haan and Singer 2001).

According to Van Emde et al (1991) and Howes and James (2002), early psychological patterns of understanding are based on procedural

knowledge, that is knowledge of how things are done together. Especially important are the infant's most emotionally engaging experiences with caregivers, and later on also with age mates. When the child cries, he or she expects specific soothing rituals that the caregiver and child have developed; when the child laughs he or she expects to elicit a shared game. Ritualised interactions, such as playing 'peekaboo', help the infant learn the rules of reciprocity or give and take. Shared procedural knowledge is crucial for the development of a 'moral self'. A sense of reciprocity is present in all moral systems, i.e., 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. Moreover, the predictability of shared procedural knowledge empowers the young child. He or she knows how to influence his parents, teachers and peers, and experiences a sense of agency, i.e., that she or he can take the lead to obtain a goal. In short, co-constructed procedural knowledge has multiple functions: making contact, developing a mutual understanding and a sense of togetherness and belonging, developing a sense of control and agency, and a establishing a moral sense of reciprocity. It is the basis of learning the moral rules of a culture.

Co-constructing social and moral rules in peer relations

The conflict between Samuel and Megan (see introduction) shows that young children are acquainted with moral rules. There is a firm consensus that conflicts help children to learn the moral rules of a culture (Piaget 1967; Vygotsky 1978; Killen and Nucci 1995). In daycare, children are continually making social choices when they take an object from another child, permit another child to play with them and their friends or do things that another child doesn't like. These are all learning moments, through which the child becomes a social and moral person.

Children are faced with conflicting wants and interests. On the one hand, conflicts make them aware of the need to belong and have good relationships. They also motivate young children to reconcile after a conflict with their caregivers or peers (Verbeek et al 2000). On the other hand, conflicts make them aware of their own agency and their opponents' desires, and of social and moral rules. During conflicts children learn to deal with conflicting rights and to co-construct rules with their peers.

Megan smacking Simon. Stills from a video taken at the daycare centre.
Video stills from Frank Hamers for Bureau Mutant, The Netherlands.
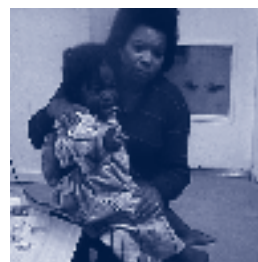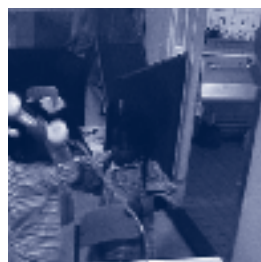
What rules do children learn through their conflicts in daycare? The most frequent types of conflicts in daycare are disputes over ownership or possession of objects, action encounters or physically irritating behaviour, entry disputes or conflicts about joining into the play of other children, and arguments about ideas (Shantz 1987; Singer and De Haan 2006). Object and action conflicts are the most frequent in 2- and 3-year olds (Shantz 1987) but, as the children begin to play at a higher cooperative level, disputes about ideas become more frequent.

When children compete for an object, they learn to cope with the contrary rules of 'share your belongings' and 'respect another's possessions'. They also learn social skills like not snatching, taking turns and playing together. In a quarter of all conflicts, 2- and 3-year olds use strategies to de-escalate the conflict by showing positive emotions (smiling and gently touching), giving an alternative object, asking questions, proposing a compromise or taking turns (Singer and De Haan 2006).

In physical encounters, children learn the basic moral rule of 'don't hurt one another' and they have to discover the boundaries between respect for 'another's physical domain' and 'valuing physical intimacy'. The social skills of not intruding and touching only when the other child agrees are very difficult for young children to abide by. Pim (3 years 8 months), for instance, has trouble understanding why the other children don't like to join in his rough-and-tumble play. Because of his need for physical contact and his impulsivity, he repeatedly falls into minor conflicts and his advances are frequently rejected.

In entry or territorial conflicts, the opposing rules of 'respect another's social domain' and 'be generous and share with newcomers' are central. If a child wants to play with another child, he/she has to compromise and adapt his/her style of play (Corsaro 1979; Garvey 1984). Garvey (1984) suggests three 'don'ts' for successful entry: "don't ask questions for information", "don't mention yourself or show your feelings about the group or its activity"; and "don't disagree or criticize the proceedings". Parallel play where children play a similar game physically close to another is a useful strategy and allows a child to watch and figure out what the others are doing.

Arguments about opposing ideas help children to learn the rule 'respect another's ideational domain'. Opposing ideas may be seen in all kinds of play. The most advanced form in the social domain is pretend play. To play together, children have to coordinate their pretend acts and extend each other's contributions into a narrative. As each child takes its turn, there is potential for agreement or opposition. Children have to know how to interweave their concern for relationship and agency with the complex requisites of pretend play. According to Vygotsky (1987), play is 'memory in action' and enables children to elaborate on their representation of social situations. In this way they get acquainted with social structures by enacting the roles and rules in their play. In addition, acting according to how they should behave in a certain situation can prevent the child from reacting too impulsively in play situations and in later life.

The teachers' role

The quality of peer interactions depends to a large extent on the teacher's group management and supportive behaviour. Three levels of teacher–peer relationships can be distinguished: a) the teacher and the individual child in a group setting, b) the teacher and group together, and c) teacher intervention in peer conflict.

The teacher and individual child. Supportive, responsive interactions with teachers are very beneficial for the child (Kontos 1999; 1996). Most early childhood experts agree that the individual child–teacher relationship is vital for establishing the emotional security of the child in group settings (Howes and Ritchie 2002). Therefore most daycare centres stress the importance of individual care.

A good child–teacher relationship is especially important when the child has to be involved in group activities. Brennan (2005) analyses how, in case of non-negotiable rules, the teachers created an affective mutual understanding between themselves and the child. During group activities, these teachers aimed to make personal contact by working alongside the children, touching them, smiling and using encouraging language. According to Brennan, the teachers created a 'culture of tenderness', communicating that they cared for all the children.

The teacher and group affiliation. In a meta-analysis of studies of the quality of caregiver–child attachments in day-care group settings, Ahnert et al (in press) found that the group-related sensitivity of the teachers is a better predictor of children's attachment security than the teacher's sensitivity towards the individual child. In this respect, studies of enhancing a sense of belonging and security in group settings are illuminative. Shared procedural knowledge is crucial for the development of a sense of belonging between individuals. But rituals are also important in the creation of group affiliation because they motivate children to participate in the group (Brennan 2005; Hännikäinen 1999). Rituals and routines make the world predictable and safe, and central values are communicated at a concrete level of action (Butovskaya et al 2000; Corsaro 1997). Appropriate rituals include those to celebrate a birthday, console a hurt child, or keep in touch with a sick playmate or teacher.

Teacher intervention in peer conflicts. Young children playing in group settings have a mean of 5–8 conflicts per hour (Shantz 1987). In general these conflicts are short, lasting 18 seconds on average (Singer and de Haan 2006). Between a quarter and a third of all conflicts are solved with the teacher's help (Singer and de Haan 2006; Singer and Hännikäinen 2002). In 80% of cases, children will continue playing together after the conflict, whether there is a teacher intervention or not (Singer and de Haan 2006). Probably, the desire to continue with their joint play is stronger then the urge to win (De Waal 2000).

In general, then, young children do not need their teacher to resolve their conflicts. So should teachers refrain from intervening in conflicts? Of course, teachers have to intervene immediately in cases where children are bullying each other. Singer and de Haan (2006) found that teachers do intervene in 74% of the serious conflicts in which children cry or hurt each other. With smaller conflicts and disagreements, teachers were involved in only 16% of the conflicts.

What kind of interventions do teachers perform? Singer and Hännikäinen (2002) and Singer and de Haan (2006) found that half of the teacher's interventions could be classified as a form of high

power strategy, in which the teacher follows his/her own agenda solely to restore order. In this type of intervention, the teacher may become part of the conflict (Sims et al 1996). Teachers may find it difficult to decide what solution is most acceptable. In most cases, they will not know the full history of the situation and a mediating role will be the most promising approach. Teachers intervene in this way in about 45% of children's conflicts (Singer and Hännikäinen, 2002; Singer and de Haan, 2006). Although teachers may be very clear about rules and appropriate behaviour, the basic attitude in mediating should be sensitivity to the logic of all children involved in the conflict.

Buzzelli (1995), Göncü and Cannella (1996) and Singer and de Haan (2006) found daycare teachers adopted a number of mediating strategies. These can be grouped into three R's: Recognise, Resolve and Reconcile. The first involves recognizing the logic in the conflict by soothing the children, asking questions and listening to their point of view. In this way, the teacher shows that all the children are important.

The second step involves using a range of strategies to resolve the problem. The teacher asks for or suggests what children may do: "Look, when you give Samuel the purple stamp, you may have the orange one"; proposes an alternative or compromise: "Cas may have the plates, and you the forks and knives"; suggests a verbal approach: "Ask if you can sit on the seesaw"; and uses humour to relax everyone. These strategies help the teacher remind the children of a simple set of shared moral rules:
- reciprocity: taking turns;
- equality: all children may have a piece of fruit;
- individual rights: she has got it for her birthday;
- relationship: Billy is so young, you have to help him a bit;
- leadership: if you want to join, you have to adjust.

The final step is to introduce strategies to help the children reconcile and restore the relationship. The teacher asks for a plan: "How can we make Rodni happy again?"; gives advice: "Look, you can do it together"; compliments the children: "That's nice. You may say thank you when Branco gives it to you"; or refers togetherness: "It is so nice when all the children take part".

These strategies provide a structure to help the children behave in a positive way. When children are upset, they may need a moment to stand still, think, and get out of a spiral of growing anger. In this way children may redirect their emotional energy. In the long term, these mediating tools may help children to regulate their emotions and direct their behaviour (De Haan and Singer 2003).

Conclusions

Recent research into peer interaction reveals that young children are more able social beings than was previously thought. Their curiosity in others and their desire to communicate gives them a strong force for achieving basic social capabilities. Young children appear to be able to create a sense of togetherness, and they do this in their own way through actions and words.

Although the family context is a rich resource for learning social and moral rules, daycare centres are becoming an increasingly common environment for young children. Here, they become real little citizens in their interaction with teachers and peers. Their day-to-day conflicts teach them about ownership, inclusion and exclusion processes, respect for physical and psychological territories and the ideational world of others. In short, daycare centres are the first places where many children learn about democracy.

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Further reading

Websites

The United Nations Secretary General's study on violence against children

In 2001 the United Nations General Assembly asked UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to prepare a comprehensive global study on violence against children. The Study is led by an independent expert, Paulo Pinheiro, and supported by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF and WHO. It will be completed in 2006.

www.violencestudy.org/r25

CRIN website: Violence against children

The aim of this website is to offer a shared platform for civil society to exert an influence on the UN Study on Violence Against Children. It provides access to established and state-of-the-art information on the many aspects of the study, including information about regional activities and children's participation in the study.

www.crin.org/violence

International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001–2010)

The year 2000 was the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The United Nations initiated a global movement for a culture of peace to create a "grand alliance" of existing movements that unites all those already working for a culture of peace. This movement is now growing with the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001–2010).

www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_sum_decade.htm

Global Intitiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children

Launched in April 2001, this initiative aims to speed the end of corporal punishment of children across the world.

The Global Initiative aims to:
- form a strong alliance of human rights agencies, key individuals and non-governmental organisations against corporal punishment;
- make corporal punishment of children visible by building a global map of its prevalence and legality, ensuring that children's views are heard and charting progress towards ending it;
- lobby state governments systematically to ban all forms of corporal punishment and to develop public education programmes;
- provide detailed technical assistance to support states with these reforms.

www.endcorporalpunishment.org

Child-rights.org

This is the World Vision International resources site on child rights. It provides access to reports and publications on the situation of children, with recommendations on how child rights issues can be addressed. There is a section on "violence against children" (keyword) where some relevant resources in this field are shown.

www.globalempowerment.org/PolicyAdvocacy/pahome2.5.nsf/crnews?OpenForm

Save the Children

This site provides access to a wide range of resources by Save the Children, classified by subject.

www.rb.se/eng/Programme/TheUNStudyonViolenceagainstChildren.htm

Traumaweb

The purpose of this site, the homepage of the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma, is to provide the most up-to-date information on the topics of trauma and stress. Here you will find helpful advice on how to overcome the after-effects of psychological trauma and begin the road to recovery.

www.traumaweb.org

Childhood International Congress

The "Childhood International Congress: violence, public institutions and policies" takes place 19–22 September 2006 in São Paulo, Brazil.

www.mackenzie.com.br/universidade/psico2/1o_congresso_internacional/ingles

Publications

Child protection information sheet: Violence against children
UNICEF, 2006

www.unicef.org/protection/files/ViolenceagainstChildren.pdf

Council of Europe actions to promote children's rights to protection from all forms of violence
Innocenti Publications, UNICEF, ICDC, 2005

The Council of Europe was established to defend parliamentary democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Pursuing the fundamental rights of everyone to respect human dignity and physical integrity, the Council is making a powerful impact on the protection of children from all forms of violence across the continent. Its varied components have contributed to making violence against children more visible – and thus revealed the size of the task remaining to prevent and eliminate it. This publication summarises and references the most relevant actions.

www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/european_standards.pdf

Children and violence
Innocenti Digest 2
UNICEF, ICDC, 1997

This publication explores violence by and to children, using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as its framework. The focus is on interpersonal violence, both intrafamilial and extrafamilial. Sexual abuse and exploitation are included because, although they do not necessarily involve violence or coercion, the vast majority of evidence indicates their generally harmful physical and psychological effects. Children's involvement in armed conflict is also discussed, as are the prevalence of violence involving children and the reasons why children become violent.

www.unicef-icdc.org/publications

Violence against children: What do NGOs know? What do NGOs say?
NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2006

An analysis of information relating to violence available in NGO reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child from 1990 to 2005. This study provides a broad outline, with the aid of graphics, of how violence is reported in the different "settings" established by the UN Study on Violence Against Children (home, school, institutions, community, workplace) and according to regions.

www.crin.org/docs/NGO_Group_NGOs_and_VAC.doc#_Toc127941161

Safe Learning
Save the Children UK, 2006

How to support the educational needs of children and young people affected by domestic violence: a practical guide for schools and domestic violence services. This guide will be of interest to education professionals, particularly headteachers and child protection coordinators in schools and local authorities, and staff in domestic violence organisations.

www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk/jsp/resources/
home.jsp?section=publication

Faces of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean
World Vision, 2002

The aim of this study is to humanize the statistics of violence which, although sufficiently alarming on their own, still fall short of conveying the devastating scope and impact of violence on the lives of its victims and society in general. Through the faces of violence revealed in its chapters, and the stories victims have shared in their own words, this publication presents a brief but comprehensive picture of violence, its causes and effects in Latin America and the Caribbean. In so doing, the authors hope to contribute to current analyses of a crisis that confronts and challenges all of us – governments, international institutions, civil society and concerned individuals – to work for the promotion and establishment of an alternative and lasting culture of peace throughout the region.

www.wvi.org/imagine

Love, power and violence: A comparative analysis of physical and humiliating punishment patterns
Pepa Horno, Save the Children - Spain

This report summarises findings of the training experience promoted in South America, Central America, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Spain by the International Alliance Save the Children Task Group on Physical and Humiliating Punishment during 2003 and 2004.

www.rb.se/NR/rdonlyres/8715A8C3-AA8F-4224-
8FF9-8DBF36FED32D/0/Lovepowerandviolence.pdf

Learning to live together: Preventing hatred and violence in child and adolescent development
David A. Hamburg and Beatrix A. Hamburg, Oxford University Press, 2004

The aim of the book is to enhance understanding of the great danger and some sources of animosity between human groups and to focus on developmental processes by which it should be possible to diminish orientations of ethnocentrism, prejudice and hatred. It emphasizes the need to grasp our common humanity to reverse the cycles of hatred and violence, and makes the case for peace education as an integral part of human development

www.oup.co.uk/isbn/0-19-515779-6

Listen up! Children talk about smacking

This report presents the views and experiences on 'smacking' of over 70 young children living in Wales (UK). Researchers met with children in primary schools and after school clubs throughout Wales and using an alien character called Splodge, asked them a series of questions about smacking – what it is, what it feels like and why it happens.This report presents the answers that children gave and reviews the key messages on smacking that young children have for adults, both parents and policy makers alike. Children's experiences and views on smacking provide a powerful insight into the effect of hitting children and provide a clear message that children are people too and that hitting children is wrong.

www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk_cache/scuk/
cache/cmsattach/3819_Listen_Up!_Smacking_
Report_E.pdf

Punitions et violences à l'école
B. El Andaloussi, ATFALE, UNICEF, 2001

This study about violence against children in primary schools in Morocco reflects on the improvement of the educational quality of the schools in Morocco. Taking children's views into account, the study reconstructs the school

disciplinary system. It does so by describing the causes of sanctions, the objects used for discipline and the type of punishment given to pupils. At the same time, it seeks to see whether this disciplinary system responds to parents' expectations and how aware children are of their rights.

For PDF copies, send an email to
atfale-1@menara.ma

Setting the standard: A common approach to child protection for international NGOs
Tearfund & NSPCC, 2003

The standards contained in this document have been designed to provide the basis for agencies to develop effective safeguarding measures and to ensure that through awareness, good practice and robust systems and procedures, their staff are well placed to protect children.

http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/
Child+development/Child+protection.htm

Early childhood, domestic violence, and poverty: Helping young children and their families
Susan Schechter, Editor, School of Social Work, University of Iowa, 2004

This series of papers addresses a widespread but often hidden challenge: how to mobilise community and programmatic resources to provide responsive help to young children and families affected by both domestic violence and poverty. The six papers in this series are designed to offer practical guidance to organisations that encounter and help these families. They were specifically developed for community-based agencies working with families that confront family violence along with the multiple difficulties linked to poverty, such as inadequate income for healthcare or childcare, lack of affordable housing, immigration problems, and/or family stress exacerbated by poverty.

www.nccev.org/violence/domestic.html

News from the Foundation

Recent publication

Where the heart is: Meeting the psychosocial needs of young children in the context of HIV/AIDS. By Linda Richter, Geoff Foster and Lorraine Sherr

Where the heart is is an opinion piece developed through a series of four workshops convened by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in preparation for the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto in August 2006. A five-point "Call to action" prefaces the publication, stressing the importance of family- and community-based care and government provision of universal integrated services.
ISBN 90-6195-091-0. 54 pages.

Forthcoming

Young children, HIV/AIDS and gender: a summary review. Working Paper 39. Deevia Bhana and Farhana Farook. With Robert Zimmermann.

An estimated 6,000 youths a day become infected with HIV, an average of one new infection every 14 seconds. The most socially and economically disadvantaged young people appear to be especially at risk of infection, and young women in developing contexts are at the greatest risk. The rate of HIV infection among girls is rapidly outstripping the rate among boys. Girls already account for nearly 60 per cent of the infections in sub-Saharan Africa, where the pandemic is most serious.

This Working Paper adopts the hypothesis that this pandemic can be confronted already in early childhood. The first section outlines key factors that determine the quality of early childhood development and care. The second section examines restrictive conceptions of gender and their negative influence on early childhood development. The third section discusses ways in which gender discrimination boosts the risks of HIV infection especially among girls and proposes adjustments in gender-oriented norms of behaviour and attitudes that might be more appropriate in the context of the dangers of HIV/AIDS. The fourth section describes the elements of a programme of early childhood

education, not yet produced, that might assist young children themselves in confronting gender discrimination and HIV/AIDS now or later in their lives. The rights of children and women as enshrined in key international conventions, agreements and declarations and the special situation of AIDS orphans are briefly considered in the annex.

Annual Report 2005

The Foundation's 2005 *Annual Report* looks back at a year of significant internal change in the Foundation: we have put the preparations in place for a new way of organising our grantmaking in 2006, by programme area rather than by geographical location. The Report's theme essay looks at the specific challenges of one of the foundation's three new programme areas, Social Inclusion and Respect for Diversity. The Report also provides an overview of the Foundation's grantmaking in 2005, gives a progress report on the Tsunami Support Fund and includes a Spanish executive summary.

Bernard van Leer Foundation
Investing in the development of young children

The Bernard van Leer Foundation, established in 1949, is based in the Netherlands. We actively engage in supporting early childhood development activities in around 40 countries. Our income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958.

Our mission is to improve opportunities for vulnerable children younger than eight years old, growing up in socially and economically difficult circumstances. The objective is to enable young children to develop their innate potential to the full. Early childhood development is crucial to creating opportunities for children and to shaping the prospects of society as a whole.

We fulfil our mission through two interdependent strategies:

- Making grants and supporting programmes for culturally and contextually appropriate approaches to early childhood development;

- Sharing knowledge and expertise in early childhood development, with the aim of informing and influencing policy and practice.

The Foundation currently supports about 150 major projects for young children in both developing and industrialised countries. Projects are implemented by local actors which may be public, private or community-based organisations. Documenting, learning and communicating are integral to all that we do. We are committed to systematically sharing the rich variety of knowledge, know-how and lessons learned that emerge from the projects and networks we support. We facilitate and create a variety of products for different audiences about work in the field of early childhood development.

Bernard van Leer Foundation