

Extracts from World report on Violence against Children
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Study on Violence against Children, October 2006

Chapter 1 → An end to violence against children (pg21)

Create accessible and child-friendly reporting systems and services:

I recommend that States should **establish safe, well-publicized, confidential and accessible mechanisms for children**, their representatives and others to report violence against children. **All children**, including those in care and justice institutions, **should be aware of the existence of mechanisms of complaint**. Mechanisms such as telephone **helplines** through which children can report violence, **speak to a trained counselor** in confidence and ask for support and advice should be established and the creation of other ways of reporting violence through new technologies should be considered.

Retrospective studies, questioning young adults about their childhood experiences, reveal that the majority of child victims did not talk to anyone or approach child protection services during their childhood, even in States which have highly developed systems. Reasons included not knowing where to go for help, a lack of services, and lack of trust in the services or in some cases fear of reprisals from the perpetrator.

In many countries, certain professional groups are under a legal obligation to report any concerns about violence against children under mandatory reporting systems. In a few countries, the public are under the same legal duty. The Study has heard varying views about mandatory reporting. It is essential that every Government should review existing reporting systems and involve children or young adults with recent experience of child protection services in the review.

In every locality and every setting which includes children, there should be well-publicized and easily accessible services required to investigate reports or indications of violence against children. There should also be access to services where children can go to talk in confidence about anything that is worrying or hurting them. Providing confidential services for children – services which guarantee that they will not report to others or take action without the child's consent, unless the child is at immediate risk of death or serious harm – remains controversial in many countries. Making confidential services available to children, including those most vulnerable to violence, challenges outdated concepts of parental 'ownership' of their children. Yet what we now know about intra-familial violence demands that children should have the rights to seek confidential advice and help.

Chapter 3 → Home and Family (Pg 81)

Breaking the silence

One of the cornerstones of any strategic response must be to break down the silence in which most children endure episodes of physical, psychological or sexual violence at home. Consultations and reviews repeatedly demonstrate that children – however much they fear and dislike the violence they experience – **do not feel they have any place to make their feelings known, or they may even consider that such feelings are 'legitimate'**. Many feel shame or blame themselves, while others stay silent for fear of provoking further violence, or insensitive interventions which could make their overall situation worse.

Within the general trend to lay more emphasis on child consultation as an integral component of programme planning and interventions with children, **child-friendly methodologies for consultation and action-research have been developed**. These, coupled with counseling and communications skills, have also been used to enable children to open up to adults they regard as safe about their intimate and painful experiences. In some small-scale examples, notably in India and Brazil, children who have been trafficked by their families and have few trusting relationships with adults have organized themselves to provide mutual support and avoid further exposure.

Child helplines are gradually becoming more common: as already noted, **discussion in confidence with a counsellor by phone allows some children to report what is happening to them and seek help**. Helplines or hotlines have been set up by various NGOs in order to help children escape from abusive situations; they are used in the Philippines and Cambodia by children experiencing violence as domestic helpers in the homes of those who are not their parents.

Chapter 4 → Schools and Educational Settings (Pg140; Pg 155)

Laws and law enforcement

[...] Children and their representatives in all such placements **should have immediate and confidential access to child-sensitive advice, advocacy and complaints procedures** and ultimately to courts where necessary, and legal assistance. In institutions, there should be a requirement to report and to review any violent incidents.

Listen to students and encourage participation

Governments and their partners should actively promote and support the **involvement of students** in the design, development, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programmes, including through access **to confidential complaints or reporting mechanisms**. Participatory, gender-sensitive, and inclusive school management structures should be promoted and students should be equipped with the necessary skills and given opportunities to be involved, with special attention given to the participation of vulnerable children.

Chapter 5 → Care and Justice Institutions (Pg 205; Pg 212; Pg 217)

Legislative action

Guarantees that the voices of children and their families will **be heard should have a basis in law**, rather than just guidance or institutional procedure manuals. **Legislation must ensure that simple, accessible, independent and safe complaint mechanisms should be provided to children in institutions**. Children and their representatives should also have access to an appeals process if they are not satisfied with the response to their complaint.

Complaints mechanisms

Children in both care and justice systems should have **simple, accessible and safe opportunities to complain about the way they are treated without risk of reprisal**. Children should also have opportunities **to express themselves freely** and verbalize their concerns, particularly for those reluctant to access formal complaints mechanisms. Children

and their families should also have an appeals process if they are not satisfied with the response to their complaint.

Ensure court systems are sensitive to the needs of children and their families

Governments should ensure that child victims, including those who have witnessed family violence, **are not re-victimised** during the justice process nor subjected to extended or drawn out cross-examination or other legal processes. In line with the Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (ECOSOC Resolution 2005/20), **all investigations**, law enforcement, prosecution and judicial processes should **take into account the needs of these children in terms of their age, sex, disability and level of maturity**, and fully respect their physical, mental and moral integrity. If it is in their best interests, children should be accompanied by a trusted adult throughout their involvement in the justice process. Moreover, **the child's privacy should be protected**, his or her identity and confidentiality respected, and he or she should not be subjected to excessive interviews, statements, hearings and unnecessary contact with the justice process. Consideration should be given to the use of **video-taping** and other testimonial aids such as the use of screens or closed-circuit televisions. Unnecessary contacts with the alleged perpetrator, or their defence counsel, should be eliminated. Speedy trials should also be ensured, unless delays are in the child's best interests.

Chapter 6 → Places of work (Pg 269)

Set up services for children to report violence and escape from it.

Governments should ensure that **working children should have a means of reporting violence** against them to people whom they can have trust, and who can help them to leave the workplace or obtain redress. These services may **include hotlines** so that children can summon assistance, and if necessary be rescued and placed in emergency care.

Chapter 7 → Community (Pg 321; Pg 328; Pg 337)

Police reform and training at community level

[...]Other potential ways to prevent police violence include **increasing the numbers of women serving as police officers**, providing independent complaints mechanisms, and improving the pay and status of police officers.

Reporting services

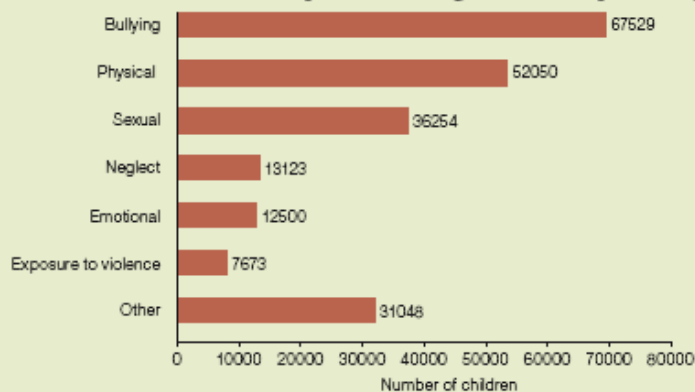
Reporting systems that are not only available, but **accessible** to children and young people, can be a critical part of a comprehensive approach to protecting children. Protecting confidentiality and providing a high-quality service are also important. Such systems can also **provide access or referral**, in a coordinated way, to trained professionals and referral to social workers, or health professionals, or law enforcement, as needed. An increasingly popular mechanism for community settings is **the child helpline**, a phone service that links children in need of care and protection to services and resources. In 2003, it is estimated that about 11.3 million calls were made to child help lines during that year. Children's reasons for calling included requests for crisis intervention, rehabilitation, counseling or just needing someone to talk to. Approximately 9% of the calls were related to abuse and violence, while a significant number were from children being exploited commercially, including those forced to work as beggars or involved in bonded child labour.

Extending access to help lines

Child Helpline International (CHI) is a global helpline network which was established in 2001 and by the end of 2005, comprised 78 network members. The greatest increase in members has been among developing countries. The global network provides support for existing helplines as well as for countries interested in initiating them, and has been active in advocating countries to set up such services. In 2005, the Tunis Agenda at the World Summit on Information Society called on every country to have a local, easy to remember, toll-free number for children to call.²⁴⁷ CHI is also extending its services to the Internet by providing an online counselling service called Chiworld (www.chiworld.org). The website is a multilingual gateway to the helpline in member countries for children who do not choose to use the telephone, but are still in need of care and protection.

FIGURE 7.3

Breakdown of violence reported through ChildHelpLines (globally)



Source: ChildHelpLine International (2005). Submission to the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. Amsterdam, ChildHelpLine International.

Provide effective reporting systems for children

Governments should ensure that effective reporting systems for children are established. They allow children who are victimized to reach trained professionals, who can, if necessary, refer the case to social workers, or health professionals, or law enforcement. In community settings, these may include child helplines as well as formal mechanisms such as **community advocates for children**.