



UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

9. VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

There are many different kinds of community. Community is where children live or where they meet with others to play sports, worship or play. It also the streets where many children live or work. And it is also the community children enter when they go on-line through their computer or mobile phone. In all of these places children may experience violence.

- Children living or working on the street are at risk of violence linked to gang rivalries or heavy-handed law enforcement.
- They are also at risk of being forced into providing sexual services. Children on the streets are particularly vulnerable to trafficking into both sexual and labour exploitation.
- Boys aged 15-17 are 3.5 times more likely to die as a result of homicide than those aged 10-14. Much violence stems from disputes between friends, fuelled by guns, drugs and alcohol.
- The competitive nature of sport can result in maltreatment of children as parents, coaches and others attempt to mould them for success. Malnutrition, excessive training and substance abuse are all reported to be used in some instances. Children in competition risk violence from other children and parents on and off the field. There have been reports of sexual abuse by coaches.
- Within faith communities, some abusers have used their privileged position as spiritual leader to abuse children sexually.
- In the on-line community, abusers attempt to 'meet' children in chat rooms and forums to groom them and lure them into sex. Children are too often confronted with violent images and are drawn into role playing in multimedia games and websites. Cyber-bullying is a growing problem as the anonymity of the Internet and mobile phone technology allows bullies to act with impunity.
- Refugee and other displaced children living in 'temporary communities' also face violence. Research in Africa cites the lack of safe public spaces as a risk for refugee girls. Many camps lack secure buildings, law enforcement, sanctuary for victims, and means of reporting and redress.

Recommendations include:

- Implement strategies to reduce immediate risk factors such as easy access to drugs and alcohol, possession and carrying of weapons and use of children in illegal activities.
- Reduce social and economic inequalities; encourage and assist local and municipal governments to provide safe recreational opportunities and public places for children.



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- Fully implement domestic laws against trafficking in human beings; ensure that victims of trafficking are not criminalized.
- Design and implement child-rights training within police forces; educate police on the stages of child development and appropriate management of children under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Strengthen efforts to combat the use of information technologies including the Internet, mobile phones and electronic games, in the sexual exploitation of children and other forms of violence.