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All Children have the right to be protected from violence exploitation and abuse!

Protecting Children is everyone's responsibility. Violence against children includes emotional and physical abuse, neglect or negligent behaviour, sexual abuse and exploitation. It is often practiced by someone known to the child, including parents, other family members, caretakers, teachers, employers, and other children. Generally, only a small proportion of acts of violence, exploitation and abuse are

reported and investigated, and few perpetrators are held accountable.

Children in Guyana are exposed to various forms of violence, exploitation and abuse, including sexual abuse and exploitation, armed violence, trafficking, child labour, gang violence, physically and emotionally violent child discipline, and other harmful practices.

Child sexual abuse is an especially complicated form of abuse because of its layers of guilt and shame. What is frightening in Guyana, according to research, is that sexual abuse usually occurs at the hands of someone the child knows and should be able to trust—most often close relatives. Contrary to what many believe, it's not just girls who are at risk, boys and girls both suffer from sexual abuse. In fact, sexual abuse of boys may be underreported due to shame and stigma.

The Childcare and Protection Agency which was commissioned in 2011 has recorded an increase in the number of reported child abuse cases (all forms of abuse) from 886 in 2009 to 3,342 cases in 2013. There is nevertheless a decrease in the number of reported cases since 2011. As of 2012 and since the Agency was commissioned, a total of 489 children have been removed from abusive situations and placed in safe homes.

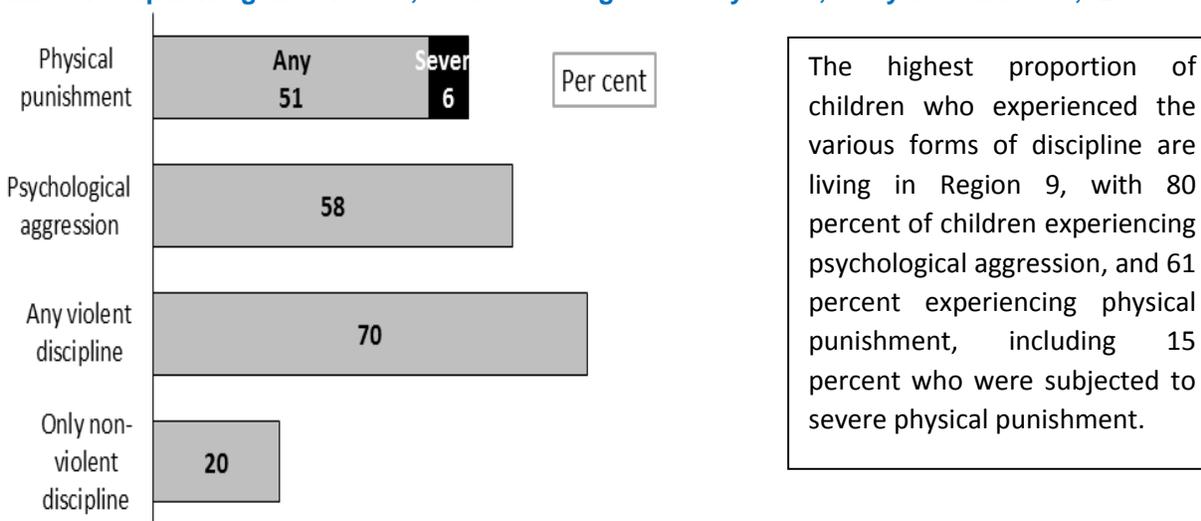
Sex of Child	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Boys	352	1343	1539	1543	1337
Girls	534	2034	2460	2146	2005
Total	886	3377	3999	3689	3342
Percentage of Girls	60	60	61	58	60

Child Discipline

In Guyana, children are also subjected to punishment, under the phrase of “child discipline”. According to the MICS5, the forms of punishment differ according to the child's age: while non-violent discipline somewhat increases and physical punishment decreases with age, psychological aggression and severe physical punishment remain common disciplinary methods across age groups. Overall, children ages 3-9 years are most subjected to some form of violent disciplinary measures than younger and older children. Violent discipline is associated with the education of the household head and the household wealth. Strikingly, 19 percent of children whose household heads have no education experience the most severe forms of physical punishment, compared with four (4) to seven (7) percent for those with at least primary education.

Moreso, corporal punishment is still largely practiced in most settings, including homes and schools and therefore presents a violation on the rights of the child, since this type of punishment e.g. pinching, whipping, shaking, beating, slapping, kicking, biting, burning, scalding, forced indigestion- swallowing pepper or “peppering” or punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child does NOT work or effective and does harm the child- both in the short and long term. This includes emotional problems, development of mental problems, behaviour problems as adolescents and behaviour problems as adults.

Child disciplining methods, children age 1-14 years, Guyana MICS5, 2014



Our commitment to reduce violence against children and women

Guyana has put in place a legislative environment to protect children against sexual abuse/violence, including the enactment of the Sexual Offences Act of 2010, signalled its intent to operationalise the Family Court and openly discuss the issues of corporal punishment through a parliamentary select committee. However, there are still a number of challenges that must be overcome for the protection of all children and this includes accelerating the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights the Child (2013) on issues of violence, neglect, maltreatment, sexual

and economic exploitation- including child labour. The wealth of laws, governing the rights of children, including the both the Sexual Offences Act and the Protection of Children Act, must be hurriedly implemented.

UNICEF Response

Preventing and responding to violence and abuse is essential to ensuring children's rights. UNICEF works in partnership with both Government, CSOs and the wider UN family to prevent violence and advance the protection of children throughout Guyana. UNICEF recognises that no institution or body can prevent, treat and respond to violence on its own and we need to "join hands" for the protection of all children.

Way Forward

There is need for:

- ✓ Broadly, we need to strengthen systems at all levels, given the interrelated nature of child protection- this includes operationalising a fully protective and enabling environment which **prioritises protection and prevention**, review and address issues concerning data collection and quality standards to ensure adequate planning and investment, improve governance, management and enforcement of the standards for all children- with a 'child protection" and child rights" lens, continuously improve capacities by investing in infrastructure and funding and for investigation, treatment and follow-up. Through this we must not forget the critical importance of building and supporting strong, safe loving families and ensuring that all communities change harmful attitudes which lead and encourage any form of violence and abuse.
- ✓ In the short term, the approval and roll-out of the draft national plan of action for the implementation of both the Sexual Offences Act, 2010 and the Domestic Violence Act, 2006 is urgently needed. This, among other things, will provide impetus for closer collaborations with all ministries to coordinate activities and ease referrals to each other; to prevent violence in all settings, protect children from different forms of violence, and ensure survivors receive proper care and support.
- ✓ There is also a need to invest in the capacity building of all service providers, families and communities to protect children.
- ✓ Operationalize of the Family Court building to provide a victim friendly court environment.
- ✓ Nationwide implementation of campaigns in schools, to ensure reporting of abuse and prevention
- ✓ Promote and support positive attitudes and practices, which supports the safety of all children.