Prevention of violence against children and women

The situation

Namibia is grappling with endemic levels of violence against children and women. Every day women, girls and boys are beaten, assaulted or raped, often by people they know. Violence not only scars the survivor for life, it also hinders economic development through injury, long-term debilitating physical conditions, health care costs, early pregnancy and poor educational performance. Children who were abused are more likely to become violent adults, transmitting violence from one generation to the next.

Violence against children takes place in families, homes, schools, communities and online. It is associated with crime, the use of weapons, gangsterism, human trafficking, living on the streets, harmful traditional practices, gender-based violence, cybercrime and assault by authority figures such as the police.

In schools, children experience a whole range of violations at the hands of other learners, ranging from bullying and cyber-bullying to being punched or being forced to do things with their bodies against their will. Furthermore, in poverty-stricken communities, transactional sexual relationships between teachers and students are likely to take place.

Violence in schools is also often a reflection of what happens in the broader environment, with arguments between parents at home or children’s wrongdoings being dealt with harshly. Children are not taught peaceful conflict resolution, and resort to violent means to settle disagreements.

33% of ever-married women aged 15–49 report having experienced physical, sexual and/or emotional violence from their spouse

50% of perpetrators of violence against women are most commonly the current husband or partner

7.5% of adolescent girls aged 15–19 have experienced sexual violence compared to 4.8% of 20–24 year-olds

19% of teenage girls aged 15–19 have started having children

73% of the 380 young people surveyed in four regions of Namibia reported that they had suffered corporal punishment at school

Source: Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2013; and Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention 2011

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UNICEF in action

All children and women have the right to be free from violence. In Namibia, UNICEF is working with partners to ensure that more vulnerable children and women benefit from integrated child protection and justice services by 2018. This also means increasing public awareness of violence and the devastating toll it takes on individuals and families.

Results for children

Major efforts have been made to bring national legislation in line with the international standards for the protection of children’s rights. Enactment of the Child Care and Protection Act 3 of 2015, combined with the Combating of Rape Act 8 of 2000 and the Combating of Domestic Violence Act 4 of 2003 will provide the legal framework needed to better protect Namibian children from violence.


The comprehensive police training curriculum on the protection of women and children was finalised in 2015 and will be incorporated into the national police training college curriculum. The new modules will enhance skills of police investigators and the specialised Women and Child Protection Units to investigate and refer cases of gender-based violence and other violations, prerequisites for successful victim support and conviction.

UNICEF is working with the Government to pilot a school safety programme in eight schools with high levels of violence and poor academic outcomes in the Ohangwena and Hardap regions. The pilot will inform the development of a framework on school safety.

Routine collection of data on reports of violence and abuse in Namibia was strengthened with the UNICEF-supported development of a database on case reporting, referral and management of protection cases. The database is housed in Childline/Lifeline, a non-governmental organisation, making it easier to link cases to government services.

What more needs to be done?

UNICEF is dedicated to building a safer Namibia for women and children. In partnership with the Government and other organisations, UNICEF will:

• Support research to better understand and address the drivers of violence against children and women in Namibia,
• Conduct an assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices of mobile technology and cyber safety for children and adolescents,
• Use communication for development as a strategy to raise public and parental awareness of violence against children and cyber safety,
• Strengthen the Government’s information system, routine administration data collection, management and analysis of child protection issues and violence against children and women,
• Roll out the new police curriculum to ensure an improved response to cases of violence against children and women,
• Strengthen the prevention and management of violence in and through schools.

UNICEF partners in preventing and responding to violence against children and women

• Legal Assistance Centre
• Lifeline/Childline Namibia
• Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
• Ministry of Health and Social Services
• Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
• Ministry of Justice
• Ministry of Safety and Security
• Office of the Prosecutor General
• United Nations Development Programme
• United Nations Population Fund
• World Health Organization